

**PRESS RELEASE OCTOBER 15<sup>TH</sup> 2004**

**DAMNING INQUEST VERDICT ON SELF INFLICTED DEATH OF AN  
IRISH MAN IN BRIXTON PRISON**

Today at Southwark Coroner's Court the jury at the inquest into the self-inflicted death of Terry Doyle in HMP Brixton returned the following verdict:

"At 15.40 on 9 May 2002 Mr Doyle was found hanging in a cell whilst on remand at Brixton prison. Mr Doyle killed himself whilst suffering from severe depression. We have highlighted failures that we feel directly contributed to Mr Doyle's death:

1. Ambiguity surrounding interpretation of levels of observation required for the wing between medical and discipline staff which raises shortcomings in training procedures. Furthermore, staff were not made aware that Mr Doyle was on a detoxification regime.
2. Failure throughout to follow the procedures of the F2052SH and acknowledge its importance as a vital means of communication between discipline and medical staff.
3. Following the incident of hanging on 8 May 2002 the steps taken to prevent Mr Doyle hanging himself again were totally inadequate:
  - a. Failure to carry out proper assessment and adequately recognise the risk of suicide
  - b. Lack of management of incident by senior officers and follow fully the correct procedures
  - c. Over reliance on cell sharing to adequately manage self harm
4. Assumptions and misconceptions led to repeated missed opportunities to move Mr Doyle to the Health Care Centre where beds were available."

Comment

This demonstrates the impact that recent legal developments have had in allowing juries to return fuller verdicts. INQUEST considers that the jury's verdict is the clearest possible demonstration that there was in fact much that the new Governor should have been anxious to learn from this inquest. Instead he current governing Governor of Brixton prison claimed that he had nothing to learn from this inquest given that the death had occurred prior to his appointment and the delay that had ensued between the death and the inquest. However, much of the evidence was heard from staff who are still employed at the prison and who remain utterly confused with regard to the operation of suicide prevention policies in the prison.

However, there was a further reason why the Governor should have been anxious to learn the lessons of this particular inquest. In consequence of a ruling by the Coroner, the jury did not learn that between 10 December 1999 and Terry Doyle's death in May 2002 some 8 men died at their own hands at HMP Brixton – about double the national average.

Moreover, 6 of those men were of Irish nationality/ethnicity. Of the remaining two deaths one was of a foreign national and the other - a Roman Catholic from Glasgow. There were two deaths on 10 December 1999 and further deaths on 24 July 2000, 17 October 2000, 7 February 2001, 30 March 2001, 23 March 2002 and finally that of Mr Doyle in May 2002. The 4 deaths immediately before Mr Doyle's death were each of Irish men.

The Prison Service does not monitor suicide and self harm statistics by Irish ethnicity nor does it monitor the numbers of Irish men and women in prison. However, in September 2002 HM Inspectorate of Prisons sampled 10% of the inmate population at Brixton. 4 prisoners or 6% of the sample said they were Irish. The internal prison service investigation concerning this cluster - the Heavens Report - considered reception questionnaires which invited all prisoners to define their nationality. About 2 or 3% of all Brixton prisoners defined their nationality as Irish. Thus, the rate of suicide among Irish prisoners was truly extraordinary and demonstrative of a cluster that cried out for investigation and consideration long before Mr Doyle's death. The Prison Service claims that it was not until the penultimate death in the cluster – that of Patrick Gavin on 23 March 2002 – that the existence of a particular problem was identified. However, the cluster had been the subject of comment in the Irish press long before Patrick Gavin's death. At any rate no investigation whatsoever was undertaken prior to Mr Doyle's death and certainly no precautions were put in place to manage the risk – this failure was itself in breach of national policy. Since Mr Doyle's death the only consideration of the cluster given by the Prison Service has been a woefully under resourced, inadequate and wholly internal investigation which had no realistic prospect of identifying the operative causes.

The Prison Service in general and Brixton Prison in particular have demonstrated a shocking level of complacency with regard to these deaths. INQUEST is concerned that this same complacency is prevailing in the management of the prison today.

Self-Inflicted deaths in Brixton Prison in the last 5 years							
Name	Cause	Sex	Ethnicity	Age	Status	DateOfDeath	Classification
Shah Rahman	Hanging	M	Asian	23	Sentenced	28/09/2004	Self-Inflicted
Abidemi Folarin	Hanging	M	Black African	35	Awaiting Sentence	25/03/2004	Self-Inflicted
Andrew Lloyd McLeggan	Hanging	M	UK White	31	Trial	28/12/2003	Self-Inflicted
Terry Joseph Doyle	Hanging	M	Irish White	29	Sentenced	12/05/2002	Self-Inflicted
Patrick Maloney	Hanging	M	Irish White	31	Sentenced	23/03/2002	Self-Inflicted
Michael Barry	Hanging	M	Irish White	31	Awaiting Sentence	30/03/2001	Self-Inflicted
Kevin Sheridan	Hanging	M	Irish White	41	Remanded	07/02/2001	Self-Inflicted
Derek Fegan	Hanging	M	Irish White	37	Remanded	17/10/2000	Self-Inflicted
James O'Pray	Unknown	M	UK White	33	Sentenced	24/07/2000	Self-Inflicted
Timothy Fulton O'Shea	Hanging	M	Irish White	30	Remanded	10/12/1999	Self-Inflicted
Ertan Uzum	Hanging	M	Turkish	25	Remanded	10/12/1999	Self-Inflicted
Rafael Queiros	Hanging	M	White Portugese	32	Sentenced	08/11/1999	Self-Inflicted
William Scott	Hanging	M	UK White	42	Unsentenced	28/01/1999	Self-Inflicted

# n q u e s t

Website	<a href="http://www.inquest.org.uk">www.inquest.org.uk</a>
Deborah Coles Co-Director	020 7263 1111
Fiona Murphy Solicitor	020 7729 1115
Communications Officer	020 7263 1111 <a href="mailto:communications@inquest.org.uk">communications@inquest.org.uk</a>