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GROUNDBREAKING NEW BOOK ON CHILD DEATHS IN PENAL CUSTODY RECEIVES CRITICAL ACCLAIM AND A CALL FOR ACTION IN PARLIAMENT TODAY

In the Care of the State? Child Deaths in Penal Custody in England and Wales written by Dr Barry Goldson and Deborah Coles and published by INQUEST was launched today in parliament at a well attended meeting. The book is the first detailed analysis of child deaths in penal custody ever to be published and presents key conclusions and recommendations which, taken together, make a case for:

- the abolition of prison custody for children;
- a comprehensive review of child deaths in penal custody;
- the creation of an independent 'Standing Commission on Custodial Deaths';
- a full public inquiry into the death of 16-year-old Joseph Scholes who died in prison in 2002.

Chaired by Baroness Vivien Stern, Senior Research Fellow at the International Centre for Prison Studies, the launch meeting heard from the book's authors Dr Barry Goldson, senior lecturer in sociology at the University of Liverpool, and Deborah Coles, co-director of INQUEST. Also speaking were Lord David Ramsbotham, former Chief Inspector of Prisons and new member of the House of Lords and Yvonne Scholes, mother of Joseph Scholes.

Welcoming the publication of this important book Baroness Vivien Stern said of the authors:

"In writing this authoritative text these two people have made an enormous contribution to social justice and human rights.

Lord David Ramsbotham, added:

"This is a splendid book and forms the most momentous part of the campaign for a public inquiry into the death of 16-year-old Joseph Scholes and will move this matter forward." He also said that he would; "entirely endorse the



● 89-93 Fonthill Road, London N4 3JH ● Tel: 020 7263 1111 ● Fax: 020 7561 0799
● Email: inquest@inquest.org.uk ● Website: www.inquest.org.uk
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recommendations made in this book” particularly “the need for a Standing Commission into Custodial deaths.”

Yvonne Scholes, mother of 16-year-old Joseph Scholes who died in HMP YO1 Stoke Heath said:

“In the Care of the State?” should be compulsory reading for both ministers, and the people of power who shamelessly condone the continuing abuse of child prisoners. I say to them ‘hold the book in your hands, let your eyes read the words, but hear the message with your heart.’

Dr Barry Goldson said: “This is the first detailed and sustained analysis of child deaths in penal custody ever published in the UK. It is an authoritative book and I hope it will make an impression in terms of policy makers in a crucially important area of penal custody.”

Deborah Coles INQUEST’s co-director said:

“It is difficult to convey the anger, sadness and frustration I feel that despite the deaths of 28 children in penal custody since 1990 there has never been a public inquiry. This book documents the damaging, dangerous and deadly consequences of imprisoning some of society’s most vulnerable children. The current investigation and inquest system fails the legacy of the children whose lives have been lost in custody and their families. It also fails the wider public interest in ensuring that lessons are learnt and future deaths avoided. This book and its recommendations is a call to Government to take decisive action.”

Attendees at the launch included Baroness Neuberger, Baroness Linklater of Butterstone, Baroness Howe, Lord Dholakia and Earl of Listowel. Andrew Purkis OBE, the Chief Executive of The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund was also in the audience as it was their funding of a three year project on youth deaths that enabled INQUEST to publish the book. Representatives of leading penal reform and children’s rights charities were also present as well as representatives from the Churches Criminal Justice Forum.