

For immediate release 6 JANUARY 2006

INQUEST TO OPEN INTO DEATH IN NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE CUSTODY OF JOHN MCDONNELL

HM Assistant Deputy Coroner for Eastern District of North Yorkshire, John Sleightholme,
sitting at:

Golden Lion Hotel,
High Street,
Northallerton

10 am Monday 9th January 2006

The inquest into the death of 33 year old John McDonnell in police custody at Scarborough Police Station opens on Monday 9th January and is expected to last 4 – 5 weeks.

John McDonnell died after being taken to the station by officers who had been called to his parents' house, where he was suffering a fit. Ambulance staff who had preceded the police had refused to treat or even assess John when they were told that he may have taken cocaine.

John's father, Bill McDonnell said: "When the police arrived they handcuffed him and brought my son downstairs into the lounge. There was one officer at his head, another with his knee in the centre of his back and a third person holding his feet down. They took him out of the house, saying they were taking him to Scarborough."

Bill and his wife Annie wrongly assumed they meant Scarborough Hospital and went there themselves to see how John was progressing. It was here they were eventually located by police officers who gave them the tragic news that John had died in police custody less than an hour after arriving at the police station.

Bill and Annie were devastated and are taking legal advice from Manchester based law firm Pannone & Partners, for whom solicitor Nadia Kerr said:

"The circumstances of John's death are tragic. His father's honesty in disclosing his son's recreational drug use, has precluded John from receiving the very obvious medical help he needed. John McDonnell was a fit and healthy 33 year old who was in full time employment. He died in a police cell without being medically assessed and without being seen by the police doctor who was present at the station on the night. It is to be hoped that the inquest discovers exactly what happened on the night and the events that led to his death. The communication between the police, ambulance services and John's parents seems to leave a lot to be desired."

INQUEST lawyers Group member Colin Hutchinson from Garden Court Chambers will be representing the family at the inquest.

Notes to editors:

INQUEST is the only non-governmental organisation in England and Wales that works directly with the families of those who die in custody. It provides an independent free legal and advice service to bereaved people on inquest procedures and their rights in the coroner's courts.

Further Information	www.inquest.org.uk
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