

For immediate release – 10 February 2006

**INQUEST TO OPEN INTO DEATH IN METROPOLITAN POLICE CUSTODY OF PAUL YORKE**

**HM Coroner for West London, Mrs. Alison Thompson, sitting at:  
Fulham Coroner's Court  
25 Bagley's Lane,  
Fulham,  
London, SW6 2QA**

The inquest into the death of 38 year old Paul Yorke in police custody at Heathrow Police Station opens on Monday 13th February 2006 at 10am and is expected to last 5 days.

Paul Yorke, a homeless man, died in police custody on Monday 3 November 2003, having been arrested on Saturday night at Heathrow Airport for being a “prohibited person” and therefore banned from entering the airport. He was charged and detained in the cells and was due to be produced at court on the Monday morning. Prior to Mr. Yorke’s arrest he had been given his methadone dose for the weekend and had consumed an amount of alcohol.

Between his arrest and his death on Monday morning, Mr. Yorke was seen by 3 forensic medical examiners. He was prescribed medication and was deemed fit for detention. According to the police, in the hours preceding his death, Mr. Yorke was observed and the entries note that he was “checked and correct - asleep on bench”. At 7.05am on Monday morning, however, police discovered Mr. Yorke unresponsive and not breathing. An ambulance was called and Mr. Yorke was transferred to Hillingdon Hospital where he was pronounced dead at 8.03am.

This case again highlights the need to examine police codes of practice with regards to the regularity and extent of custody officers’ observation of vulnerable detainees, the depth of FMEs’ examinations and the recommendation that an individual is fit for detention. There are also issues as to the *care* of those detained when it is clear that they are vulnerable to the risks associated with either drug or alcohol abuse and/or withdrawal.

INQUEST lawyers Group members Marcia Willis Stewart, of Birnberg Peirce & Partners, acts on behalf of the family and Henrietta Hill from Doughty Street Chambers will be representing the family at the inquest.

**For more information or comment please contact:**

Gilly Mundy, Senior Caseworker, INQUEST	020 7263 1111
Marcia Willis Stewart, solicitor, Birnberg Pierce	020 7911 0166
	www.inquest.org.uk