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GOVERNMENT PUBLISHES REPORT OF PRIVATE REVIEW OF THE ISSUES ARISING FROM THE DEATH OF JOSEPH SCHOLES

Today the Home Office finally published the Lambert Report into the issues arising from the death of 16 year old **Joseph Scholes** in HMYOI Stoke Heath in March 2002. It is over four years since his death and since then a further five children have died in custodial settings.

We are awaiting the imminent decision of the Court of Appeal as to whether the government should act on the recommendation of HM Coroner for a public inquiry into Joseph's death. The Lambert Review has been conducted behind closed doors and the family has had no opportunity to meaningfully participate.

Yvonne Scholes, Joseph's mother said,

I'm disgusted that I was refused any opportunity for meaningful input into this review. It is a disgraceful reflection of the Home Office's attitude towards me that they have ignored my request for a copy of the report and instead chose to email it to my solicitor just hours before publication. The report does not address the key issue which is why Joseph was sentenced to what was in effect a death sentence.

Deborah Coles, co-director of INQUEST said:

The key question unaddressed by this review and other inquiries is why it is that this country continues to send so many children to damaging and dangerous institutions that cannot meet their complex needs. The way to tackle the serious issues of self harm, mental illness and the deaths of children as well as the revolving door syndrome is for an end to child imprisonment and investment in community based alternatives.

Yvonne Scholes' need to know why her son died and to prevent future deaths of children has inspired a nation-wide campaign for justice, winning support from all the major penal reform, child welfare and human rights groups. Early Day Motion 2410 was tabled in the House of Commons by her constituency MP Chris Ruane on 20 June 2006 renewing the call for a public inquiry, and has already received 73 signatories to date.

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Note to Editors

- On 24 March 2002 Joseph Scholes, a deeply vulnerable and disturbed boy with a history of self harm and suicide attempts hanged himself from the bars of his cell in Stoke Heath Young Offenders Institution. The inquest into his death heard very disturbing evidence about the treatment and care of Joseph while in Stoke Heath. Despite a well conducted inquest there were crucial issues that were outside the remit of the inquest including juvenile sentencing policy, pre sentence and placement procedures and the adequacy of the juvenile estate to accommodate vulnerable young people.
- Since 1990, 29 children aged 14-17 years old have died in penal custody, five of these dying after Joseph Scholes
- The Court of Appeal application R (on the application of Mrs Yvonne Scholes v The Secretary Of State For The Home Department) took place in the High Court on 18th and 19th July. Counsel for the family were Tim Owen QC (Matrix Chambers) and Hugh Southey (Tooks Court Chambers) instructed by Mark Scott solicitor at Bhatt Murphy solicitors.
- A detailed briefing paper outlining the case for a public inquiry, *Why Are Children Dying In Custody?*, is available from the INQUEST website.