

PRESS RELEASE

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INQUEST OPENS INTO THE DEATH IN POLICE CUSTODY OF ADRIAN COLDWELL

10am Monday 18 February 2008

Sitting before HM Coroner for West Yorkshire, David Hinchliff
Wakefield Coroner's Court, 71 Northgate, Wakefield WF1 3BS

The inquest into the death of Adrian Coldwell opens on 18 February 2008 at Wakefield Coroner's Court and is expected to last for two weeks.

Adrian Coldwell was found partly suspended by a cord from his track suit bottoms in a cell in Pontefract police station on 17 December 2004. He had a history of self harm and was already known to police as presenting a suicide risk. Adrian had twice been arrested and taken to the police station as a place of safety under section 136 of the Mental Health Act, the most recent occasion only three months before his death.

Adrian's family are concerned about several aspects of the care he received during his time in police custody. The inquest is expected to explore a number of key concerns:

- Why, given his history of self harm, was Adrian apparently able to use a cord from his track suit as a ligature whilst in a police cell.
- Why were prescription drugs apparently given to Adrian by non-medically qualified police staff and what effect might these have had on his state of mind.
- Whether it is the case that routine checks on Adrian during his night in police cells did not take place and that it was at least two hours between the final check and Adrian being found.
- Whether a written error in taking down Adrian's name led to police not having access to his record of mental health difficulties and self harm.
- Did poor cell maintenance, leaving a gaping intercom switch as a potential ligature point, contribute to his death?

Notes to editors:

1. 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 and conducts policy work on the issues arising.
2. Adrian's sister Jayne Sharp is represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group member Ruth Bunday.

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