



INQUEST

TRUTH, JUSTICE & ACCOUNTABILITY

INQUEST is the only charity combining specialist support for bereaved people following a state related death, with the influence to achieve change in legislation, policy and practice.

For over 35 years we have been the driving force behind improvements in the investigation and inquest process and the support offered to bereaved people.

We are entirely independent of government.



What families want is effective change so others don't die because of the same failings. The involvement and support of INQUEST brings all this together. I have a lifelong loyalty to INQUEST. They provide support you just can't get from anywhere else – Bereaved brother



POLICY • ADVICE • CAMPAIGNS

inquest.org.uk

Who we are

INQUEST provides expertise on contentious deaths and their investigation to bereaved people, lawyers, advice and support agencies, the media, parliamentarians and policy makers.

Our specialist casework includes death in prison and police custody, immigration detention, mental health settings and deaths involving multi-agency failings or where wider issues of state and corporate accountability are in question.

Founded in 1981, we campaign alongside families and others to access the truth, hold those responsible to account and effect meaningful change to prevent future deaths.

The Inquest Handbook

This free guide is available to all bereaved families and friends who have been affected by a sudden death involving an inquest and offers information on the inquest process, family rights, legal advice and support.

You can also access the handbook online at [inquest.org.uk](https://www.inquest.org.uk)



What we do

Specialist casework:

We work directly with bereaved people, empowering them through the post-death processes of investigation and inquest to establish the truth about a death in the care of the state.

Campaigning:

We use the direct evidence from our casework, alongside statistics and rigorous research, to exert pressure on public bodies and government and drive systemic change.

Sharing knowledge:

We are the only organisation with a comprehensive overview of deaths in custody and detention. We use our expertise and statistics to track patterns and trends and situate deaths in their broader social and political context.

Social justice:

We work to improve the investigation and inquest process for all. We campaign for non means-tested public funding for families in state-related inquests and stronger post-death investigations. We lobby to ensure that government, state and corporate bodies are held to account and that action is taken in response to systemic failings.



Thank you most sincerely for kindling the flame that led the NHS trust to finally answer our questions. You have been a real backbone when we have felt like crumbling – Bereaved mother



How we work

Our policy, parliamentary, campaigning and media work is grounded in our day-to-day experience of working with bereaved people.

Our integrated approach is crucial to families, not only in making sure their voices are heard and trying to ensure that state institutions are held to account, but also in changing policy and practice to prevent future deaths.



Ever since I was introduced to INQUEST as Chief Inspector of Prisons, I have held it in the highest regard. Now, as a parliamentarian, I have frequent cause to praise and thank it for the quality of its briefings – Lord Ramsbotham



Our values

We work to empower bereaved people, who are often excluded from exercising their legal rights, and to ensure that their collective experience is heard by policymakers, parliamentarians and the wider public.

We are committed to challenging racism and discrimination in all areas of our work and have raised concerns about the systemic discrimination, inequality and poverty behind many deaths in custody and state care.

Our way of working is collaborative and we are non-judgemental in relation to the background or actions of an individual who has died.

Family voice

The Family Reference Group, made up of people directly affected by a contentious death, supports and contributes to INQUEST's work from a family perspective. The Family Forum offers a space for mutual support, helping bereaved families to cope with the stress, anxiety and stigma of a death in custody or detention and empowering them to take on the unique challenges they face.

For more information visit us online at inquest.org.uk

Our specialist focus

Our casework has identified concerning patterns across deaths in state care. We conduct in-depth work on key issues, including:

- The treatment and deaths of **children and young people** in all custody and detention settings.
- The treatment and deaths of **women in prison** and the need for investment in specialist woman-centred alternatives to custody.
- The deaths of people from **black and minority ethnic communities** and the disproportionate number following the use of force.
- The **use of force and restraint**, including dangerous policing practices.
- The rise in the deaths of people with **mental ill health in custody and detention**.

The Skills and Support Toolkit

Produced with the help of families whose relatives died in custody or detention, this resource is designed to help families develop the skills they might need while also coping with the aftermath of a death in state care. It includes information on communicating with officials, dealing with media interest and mounting a campaign.

You can access the Toolkit online at [inquest.org.uk](https://www.inquest.org.uk)

- The need for an **independent investigation framework** in response to deaths in health care settings, particularly of those in mental health detention and patients with learning disabilities.
- The efficacy of **investigation bodies** including the IPCC and PPO.
- A **national 'learning' body** to oversee the implementation of changes recommended by post death investigation and inquests in response to individual deaths.
- The right of bereaved people to automatic **non means tested funding** for representation at state related inquests to end the disparity between bereaved individuals and public bodies.
- The strengthening of legislation to ensure that no provider is free from **public scrutiny**.

Inquest Lawyers Group

Integral to our work, the **Inquest Lawyers Group** provides specialist legal advice and representation to many families going through the inquest process and contributes to INQUEST's work on coronial reform. **Inquest Law**, the journal of the ILG, is a unique resource for all those concerned with the inquest system.

For more information visit us online at [inquest.org.uk](https://www.inquest.org.uk)

Our impact

We are consulted at a national and international level because of our knowledge and expertise in these areas. Our achievements include:

- We played an integral role supporting families and their lawyers through the historic new **Hillsborough inquests** in 2016, which concluded with an unlawful killing finding for the first time and exonerated both survivors and the 96 people who died.
- We lobbied for, influenced and informed the **Coroners and Justice Act 2009**, and led the successful campaign to safeguard the post of the first **Chief Coroner** for England and Wales.
- We successfully campaigned for the **Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007** to apply to deaths in custody, meaning that companies and organisations can now be found guilty of corporate manslaughter over deaths in custody.
- Our work led to the establishment of the **Independent Police Complaints Commission** and **Prisons and Probation Ombudsman** in 2004.
- We have advised and provided expert evidence to the **Corston Report** into vulnerable women in prison; the **Harris Review** on self-inflicted deaths of young people in prison; the **Independent Review of deaths and serious incidents in police custody**; and the cross-government **Care Quality Commission Review into the investigation of NHS deaths**, among many others.

- We are represented on the **cross-governmental Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody**.
- Our work to improve the rights of bereaved people at inquests into contentious deaths led to the use of **narrative conclusions** at inquests and **greater use of coroners' reports to prevent future deaths**. We have used Article 2 of the Human Rights Act to secure more **wide-ranging inquests** into deaths involving state bodies.
- We have been awarded the **Longford Prize** (2009) and twice received the **Liberty and JUSTICE Human Rights Award** for our work uncovering serious human rights abuses of children in custody (2007) and our work with the family of **Connor Sparrowhawk** and Bindmans Solicitors to improve the standard of care provided for people with mental health and learning disabilities (2016).

“

We award (the prize) to INQUEST for its remarkable perseverance, personal commitment and courage in an area too often under-investigated by the public authorities – Longford Prize judging panel

”

INQUEST produces a range of publications which can be accessed/purchased via our website:



INQUEST LAW magazine – Published three times a year by the Inquest Lawyers Group, INQUEST LAW keeps lawyers, coroners, academics, policy makers and other interested parties informed of legal developments relating to the inquest system and the investigation of sudden deaths.



Briefings and consultation responses – Our parliamentary briefings, independent review submissions, Family Listening Day reports and other insightful documents can be downloaded. These contain case studies and bring to life the experiences of bereaved families.



Reports and books – Over the years, we have published numerous reports uncovering flaws in the inquest and investigatory system and highlighting the underlying issues facing women, young people and those with mental health issues whilst in state detention.

We also provide the following information free of charge on our website:

E-newsletter – a regular update on our casework, policy and campaigning work and the impact we have on behalf of bereaved families.

Monitoring statistics – INQUEST has carried out comprehensive monitoring and collating of statistics relating to deaths in prison and police custody across England and Wales since 1990.

Media release archive – where you can access all of our media releases relating to specific casework and broader areas of our work.

INQUEST is a small charity, independent of government and entirely reliant on grants and donations, without which we could not continue our vital work.

Demand for our services is at an all-time high, not only from bereaved people seeking our expert casework following a death in state care, but from those needing our expertise on post-death investigations and the inquest process.

Please consider joining us as a supporter and giving a regular donation to contribute to our work.

Visit inquest.org.uk to:

- Make a one-off or regular donation
- Fundraise for us or organise an event
- Choose us as your corporate charity
- Leave us a legacy or in-memory gift
- Sign up for our e-newsletter
- Find out about volunteering with us.



I would like to express my thanks for the work INQUEST does so valiantly on behalf of bereaved families. If you were not present, there would be such a gap in the process that you would have to be created – **Peter Thornton, Chief Coroner (2012-2016)**



W inquest.org.uk

T **020 7263 1111**

 @inquest_org

 facebook.com/inquestUK

INQUEST covers England and Wales

INQUEST Charitable Trust Registered Charity No. 1046650

Registered Company No. 03054853 89-93 Fonthill Road, London N4 3JH