INQUEST
TRUTH, JUSTICE & ACCOUNTABILITY

Deborah Coles, Director of INQUEST
Introducing INQUEST

• Independent NGO formed in 1981
• Free specialist casework service to bereaved people following deaths in custody, detention and other contentious deaths such as Grenfell Tower.
• Evidence based policy, research and legal work; primarily informed by the collective experience of the bereaved people we work with.
• Coordinates INQUEST Lawyers Group, a national pool of lawyers who represent bereaved families and share values and aims of INQUEST.
• Regularly publishes journal INQUEST Law, including relevant articles, case notes and case law updates.
Gareth Myatt, 15, died in a child prison, Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre, after being restrained in his cell by two prison officers in 2004.

Jimmy Mubenga, 46, died on a flight after being restrained by G4S security guards, privately contracted to deport him by the UK Home Office.

David ‘Rocky’ Bennett, 38, died whilst a detained mental health patient, following restraint by four nurses in 1998.

Deaths in UK detention

• In prisons in England and Wales:
  • In 2016 there were 345 total deaths, 120 of which were self inflicted, the highest numbers on record.
  • The rate of self-inflicted deaths more than doubled since 2013, and the number of incidents of self-harm continues to reach record highs.
  • 11% of prison deaths since 1990 were of BAME people (disproportionately fewer than the BAME population), though many of the deaths of BAME people have been particularly concerning.

• In UK immigration detention:
  • So far in 2017 there have been 9 deaths of immigration detainees in prisons and immigration detention centres, the highest number on record.
  • A third of all deaths in immigration detention since 2000 have been of African or Caribbean people.
Sean Rigg, 40, died in Brixton Police station whilst suffering mental ill health, following restraint by police in August 2008.

Olaseni Lewis, 23, died whilst a voluntary inpatient in a mental health hospital after restraint by police in September 2010.

Mark Duggan, 29, was fatally shot by police in London in 2011. Community unrest following his death led to the London Riots.

Sheku Bayoh, 31, died after being arrested & restrained by up to nine police officers in Kirkcaldy, Scotland in 2015.
Deaths of BAME people in police contact (England & Wales)

• Since 1990 there have been a total of **1633 deaths** in custody or contact with police, but **0 murder or manslaughter prosecutions**.

• 14% of these deaths (1990-2016) were of people from Black, Asian & minority ethnic groups (BAME); proportionate to the UK population.

• However the proportion of BAME deaths in custody where use-of-force or restraint is a feature is **over two times greater** than it is in white deaths in custody.

• **38% of police deaths involving mental health are of BAME people** (11 out of 14 of whom were Black African or Black British)

  - INQUEST casework and monitoring 1990-2016
Police officers on their involvement in the restraint related death of Kingsley Burrell:
“...he’s extremely strong he has no pain threshold whatsoever and he’ll go from being a nice guy to wanting to kill you”

“he was pumped up you could see the veins in his arms and neck”

“he was aggressive, he will fight his strength was something that I’ve never seen before”

“very very strong, strongest person I’ve ever had to deal with”

Police officers on their involvement in the restraint related death of Olaseni Lewis:
“The sound and tone didn't suggest he had difficulty in breathing, more something on the inside of him, an aggression and a ferociousness that couldn't be controlled.”

“I had to use all my strength to get him into a position that was safe for him. He seemed intent ongoing on his front. He was hyperventilating, incoherent.”

“We didn't immediately call a doctor [when he became unresponsive] because we weren't 100 per cent sure if he was definitely unconscious or not breathing. We left the room in case he was feigning, passing out as a ploy to escape.”
Disproportionate use of force

During 3 months (April and June 2017) the Metropolitan Police, London recorded nearly 13,000 incidents of force used by individual officers, over half of which on BAME people (36% on black people, 10% on Asian people, the majority on men).

During a 3 month trial on the use of spit hoods in London, 23% of uses of spit hoods on men were on black men, and out of the 11 women it was used against, 8 were black women.
In just five weeks this summer:

- **Edson Da Costa**, 25, died in East London following restraint by police six days earlier. - 21 June
- **Darren Cumberbatch**, 32, died in Warwickshire following restraint by police. - 19 July
- **Shane Bryant**, 29, died in Leicestershire following restraint by members of public and police two days earlier. - 15 July
- **Rashan Charles**, 20, died in East London following restraint by police officers and a member of public. - 23 July

*Pictured left to right*
The persistent use of unacceptable levels of restraint is of particular concern. Situations where a young unarmed man, often black, not suspected of any serious offence and in a reasonable state of health is confronted by a group of police officers, dies in an ensuing struggle and yet no-one at an individual or corporate level is found to be at fault, have resulted in untold anger and mistrust directed towards the criminal justice system.

- INQUEST report
Recommendations:

• Access to legal resources and independent support for families after a death.
• Critical independent voices.
• A robust independent and effective investigatory body.
• Use of force data and deaths in custody disaggregated by ethnicity.
• Tackling discrimination, through recognition of racial disproportionalities, within investigations, legal processes and police training.
• Accountability for those responsible; at individual and corporate level.
• An oversight framework on learning from deaths.