

INQUEST PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

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POLICE MUST BE REMINDED THEY CANNOT ACT WITH IMPUNITY FOLLOWING ALARMING RISE IN DEATHS AFTER THE USE OF FORCE

The deaths of Philip Hulmes after he was hit with electric probes from a police Taser in his home in Over Hulton, near Bolton on 23 August; of Jacob Michael following police restraint and use of pepper spray on 22 August; and of Dale Burns following police restraint and use of a Taser on 16 August highlight a disturbing trend in deaths following contact with the police. Already in 2011 there have been five deaths in circumstances that involved the police use of force excluding firearms. In 2010 there were four deaths that clearly followed the use of restraint by police.

Helen Shaw, INQUEST Co-Director, said:

The shocking reports about three tragic deaths in eight days following the use of force by police highlights INQUEST's growing concern about deaths following contact with the police. For too long there has been a pattern of cases where inquest juries have found overwhelming evidence of unlawful and excessive use of force or gross neglect yet the police do not seem to have learnt the lessons from these previous deaths. Whilst we await the outcome of the inquests and investigations into these recent deaths it is imperative that the police are reminded that they cannot act with impunity.

Notes to editors:

Further information	www.inquest.org.uk/statistics/deaths-in-police-custody
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1) INQUEST casework and monitoring records the following deaths involving police custody/contact and/or use of force:

January-August 2010: 11 custody/contact deaths and no fatal shootings - one death involved the use of a Taser. None were BAME deaths

January-August 2011: 16 custody/contact deaths and 2 fatal shootings - two deaths involved Tasers, two CS/PAVA spray, and 8 are BAME deaths.

(Note: The total number of police custody/contact deaths INQUEST monitored in 2010 was 16, including one BAME death and one fatal shooting.)

2) INQUEST provides a general telephone advice, support and information service to any bereaved person facing an inquest and a free, in-depth complex casework service on deaths in custody/state detention or involving state agents and works on other cases that also engage article 2 of the ECHR and/or raise wider issues of state and corporate accountability. INQUEST's policy and parliamentary work is informed by its casework and we work to ensure that the collective experiences of bereaved people underpin that work. Its overall aim is to secure an investigative process that treats bereaved families with dignity and respect; ensures accountability and disseminates the lessons learned from the investigation process in order to prevent further deaths occurring.