

**MEDIA RELEASE****11<sup>th</sup> October 2016****No corporate homicide charges to be brought against South London and Maudsley NHS Trust.****Decision comes six years after the death of Seni Lewis.**

Six years after Seni Lewis's death, the CPS has confirmed that South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (SLAM) will not face any criminal charges following the corporate homicide investigation by Devon and Cornwall Constabulary which began in August 2015.

Delays to the investigative process have prevented a public inquest into Seni's death from taking place.

Seni Lewis was 23 years old when he died following prolonged restraint at the Bethlem Royal Hospital in South London on 31st August 2010.

Seni was a successful graduate and had no history of mental illness. His family brought him to hospital after he started to exhibit odd and agitated behaviour. Within 18 hours, he had collapsed in the course of prolonged restraint involving 11 police officers from the Metropolitan Police Service. He never regained consciousness and was pronounced dead four days later on 4th Sept.

There has been an exhaustive and prolonged investigation since Seni's death in 2010:

- Two IPCC investigations.
- An HSE investigation (which is pending the conclusion of the inquest).
- In 2015, a belated decision was made that further criminal investigation into potential homicide offences by SLAM and its staff was necessary which was undertaken by Devon and Cornwall Constabulary.

**Seni's mother, Ajibola Lewis, said:**

*"Six years after Seni's death and we are still no closer to the truth. We have been shamefully let down: first, by how Seni was taken from us; second, by the IPCC in its inadequate investigations; third by the Metropolitan Police in their reluctance to cooperate with the disciplinary process, and finally by the delay that the latest investigation has had upon the inquest timetable. We have never received an adequate explanation as to why it took nearly five years for an investigation into SLAM to be launched. We now look to the Coroner to open an inquest so that we can finally get some answers and start to grieve".*

**Deborah Coles, director of INQUEST, said:**

*"INQUEST's casework highlights this is by far an isolated case. Unacceptable and extensive delays are common place and incredibly traumatic for families grieving in such public circumstances. There has never been a corporate manslaughter prosecution for systemic management failings since the deaths in custody provisions of the Corporate Manslaughter Act came into force in 2011. The outcome of these prolonged investigations yield little comfort for families in delivering democratic accountability of state bodies".*

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**Sophie Naftalin, solicitor for Seni's family, said:**

*"The anguish that has been caused to our clients and their family by this delay cannot be overstated. They have lived with Seni's death every day since he was taken from them over 6 years ago. The Coroner must now promptly confirm a new timetable for the inquest to ensure that the family get the answers that they so desperately seek and which they have patiently waited for. Any further delay to the inquest timetable will in our view amount to a violation of their right to an effective investigation and would be intolerable for this family".*

INQUEST has been working with the family of Seni Lewis since his death in September 2010. The family is represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group members Raju Bhatt and Sophie Naftalin from Bhatt Murphy Solicitors.

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

Please refer to INQUEST the organisation in all capital letters in order to distinguish it from the legal hearing.

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INQUEST provides specialist advice on deaths in custody or detention or involving state failures in England and Wales. This includes a [death in prison](#), in [police custody or following police contact](#), in immigration detention or [psychiatric care](#). 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.

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