



Eleanor Rathbone Social Justice Public Lecture Series 2023-24

Women's deaths in prisons: struggles for truth, social justice and accountability

Deborah Coles

Wednesday 5th June, 5:00pm – 7:00pm

School of Law and Social Justice Events Space – ([Campus Map](#))



INQUEST is the only charity in the UK that focuses exclusively on state-related deaths. The lecture will focus upon the charity's thematic work on deaths of women in prison. It will explore the commonalities between cases and across different prisons and the questions that this raises regarding failings in the state's duty of care, the striking lack of learning from numerous investigations and inquests and further failures to implement official recommendations. The final part of the lecture will look at what is to be done in terms of progressing social justice, challenging systemic cultures of complacency, immunity and impunity and INQUEST's goal to obtain democratic accountability and systemic and transformative social change.



Deborah Coles is the Director of INQUEST and leads on its strategic policy, legal and parliamentary work. She has considerable expertise in working to prevent death and ill-treatment in all forms of detention and for more effective accountable learning after state-related deaths. Deborah has served as an independent expert advisor to numerous committees and inquiries. She was the special advisor to Dame Elish Angiolini, the chair of the Independent Review of Deaths and Serious Incidents in Police Custody, and she was a member of both the Advisory Group to the Harris Review of deaths of children and young people and the Corston Review of women in prison. Deborah also represents INQUEST as a member of the Government's Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody and was a longstanding member of the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody. She is also an advisor to Clean Break Theatre Company and, in 2023, she was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Essex for her work on human rights and equality issues.

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