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### **Justice Minister welcomes Deaths in Custody Annual Report**

The Forum for Preventing Deaths in Custody is today publishing its second annual report. The Forum, an independently chaired body comprised of key government and non-government stakeholders, exists to learn lessons from deaths in custody across the various custodial settings and to prevent the recurrence of such deaths.

The Forum's report summarises its work over the past year and suggests a number of issues it considers warrant further work by the Independent Advisory Panel, which forms part of the Ministerial Council on Deaths in Custody and will replace the Forum in April.

Justice Minister Shahid Malik MP, who will chair the new Ministerial Council on Deaths in Custody, today welcomed the 2007/08 Annual Report of the Forum for Preventing Deaths in Custody.

Shahid Malik said:

"Every death in custody is a personal tragedy for those who are left behind. Reducing deaths in custody remains a priority for the government, and that is why we have supported a radical overhaul of the machinery for dealing with this important issue.

"The new Ministerial Council on Deaths in Custody will commence work in April 2009. I am keen to build on the good work of the Forum for Preventing Deaths in Custody, and to further contribute to our learning from deaths in custody across all custodial settings in a bid to reduce the number of those deaths".

John Wadham, Forum Chair and Group Legal Director for the Equality & Human Rights Commission, said:

"This report, the Forum's final publication, is a timely record of the steady progress made in many important areas in which the Forum has played a key role. The report also acknowledges that there is still much work to be done and offers suggestions of the key areas still in need of development.

“I am grateful to all those who have contributed to the Forum’s work since it was set up in 2005 and hope that the new Ministerial Council on Deaths in Custody will carefully consider the issues we have raised in this final report.”

### **Notes to Editors**

1. The Report records a slight increase in the number of deaths across all custodial sectors in England and Wales, from 550 during 2006/07 to 577 during 2007/08. The number of deaths remains lower than in 2004/2005 and 2005/2006, which were 590 and 586 respectively.
2. The establishment of the new Ministerial Council on Deaths in Custody was announced by the Ministry of Justice in July 2008. It will replace the existing Forum for Preventing Deaths in Custody and Ministerial Council on Deaths in Custody. It will become operational in April 2009
3. The Forum for Preventing Deaths in Custody is independently chaired and made up of key government and non-government stakeholders. It exists to learn lessons from deaths in custody across the various custodial settings, to help prevent future deaths
4. Learning these lessons will continue to be central to the work of the new Ministerial Council. From April 2009, members of the existing Forum and Roundtable, as well as other stakeholders and independent experts, will instead sit on the Ministerial Council
5. Further information on the Forum, and its 2007/08 Annual Report, can be found at the Forum website, [www.preventingcustodydeaths.org.uk](http://www.preventingcustodydeaths.org.uk)