**UK National Human Rights Institutions (EHRC, NIHRC & SHRC)**

**Text of statement to 28th Meeting of UN Human Rights Council**

Joint oral statement on the protection of the human rights of persons with mental health issues detained by the state

General Debate, 13 March 2015

“Dear Mr President,

This is a joint statement on behalf of: the Equality and Human Rights Commission; the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Scottish Human Rights Commission (A Status NHRIs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

In recent months, concerns have been raised about the deaths of adults with mental health conditions after being detained in police cells, hospitals and prisons in the UK. Between 2010 and 2013, 367 adults with mental health conditions died of “non-natural”[[1]](#footnote-1) causes whilst being detained by the state in police cells and psychiatric wards. During the same period, 295 adults died in prisons of “non-natural causes”.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently conducted an inquiry into this issue[[2]](#footnote-2). The framework of the inquiry was based on Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights which obliges the states who are signatories to that treaty to protect the right to life.

As NHRIs, we believe that human rights give essential protection to everyone. This is particularly important for people with mental health conditions, who are some of the most vulnerable people in our society, even more so when they are being detained by the state.

All member states should protect the human rights of people in detention who have mental health conditions. All agents of the state should ensure the provision of a safe and respectful environment to minimise risk for vulnerable individuals in those circumstances. In all detention settings there should be robust and independent mechanisms in place to investigate when non-natural deaths occur and to ensure a structured approach to learning lessons from previous deaths and near deaths.

We recommend that individual agencies ensure that: they keep detainees safe and that they improve staff training on mental health conditions and also that joined up working is ensured between different agencies.

We encourage all state agencies to monitor the numbers of people being detained who have mental health conditions and the severity of these conditions. This information can then be used and shared across state agencies to protect and reduce risk to those individuals.”

1. One of the following categories: self-inflicted/suicide, deaths caused by another person including homicide, other non-natural deaths including overdose and accidental deaths and deaths the cause of which is unknown. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Preventing Deaths in Detention of Adults with Mental Health Conditions [↑](#footnote-ref-2)