

Embargo until 15th May 2007

Police urged to learn lessons from gay murders



Independent advisors to the Metropolitan Police in London are urging them to learn from past mistakes in the investigation and prevention of the murders of gay and transgender people.

The Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Advisory Group has completed a review of 10 homophobic and transphobic murders. The review finds that, whereas the investigation of LGBT related murders has improved dramatically over the last 20 years, there are still many lessons to learn in preventing these violent crimes against LGBT people.

Bob Hodgson of the Advisory Group says: *“There were serious shortcomings with the investigations in the 80s and 90s. Nowadays, although we see an effective and professional approach to solving the murders, there are still lessons to be learned on the prevention side. The murder of Jody Dubrowski on Clapham Common in 2005 had striking similarities with the murder of Geoffrey Windsor three years earlier. In both cases, the rise in violence in the area was not detected prior to the fatal attacks.”*

The review team urges the police to develop a city-wide strategy to recognise and alert the community to patterns of rising homophobic and transphobic crimes. The review stresses the importance of building strong links between the police and local community groups. This means adequate resources for LGBT liaison officers.

Debbie Gold of Galop, a police monitoring group, says: *“We know that most homophobic and transphobic crimes are not reported to the police. We urge the police to continue to work with the community to tackle this problem - including by committing the necessary resources and creating systems to ensure these crimes are reported and that patterns of escalating attacks can be identified and responded to effectively.”*

The review also highlights the need for new ways to analyse crime information, in particular to recognise city-wide crime patterns that are not obvious in individual local police borough. At present, some information systems used by the police do not allow them to cross reference LGBT related information and identify potential crime hotspots.

The ground-breaking independent review is based on a thematic review of the case files by the Specialist Crime Directorate of the Metropolitan Police. It is the first of its kind for being commissioned by a group of independent advisors.

The review covers cases from 1990 to 2002. The report finds significant improvements in murder investigations since the high profile serial murders by Colin Ireland in 1993. Derek Lee, a member of the review team, points out: *“It was only through talking to community groups that the police started to link several murders in London to Ireland, but by then four gay men had already been killed. Today, LGBT related murder investigations routinely involve community advisors and LGBT liaison officers from the outset.”*

The Advisory Group's review will be published on May 15th. The Review Group is urging the Metropolitan Police to adopt the 22 recommendations in the report.

ENDS

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REPORT LAUNCH INVITATION

You are invited to attend the launch event for this report at Friends Meeting House, 173 Euston Road, London on 15th May at 10.30am. Please contact above to reserve a place.

Notes to Editors and Executive Summary attached

Notes to editors:

- The LGBT Advisory Group is a voluntary group of independent advisers working for better policing for LGBT people in London
- Independent Advisory Groups were set up by the Metropolitan Police after the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry
- The LGBT Advisory Group was formed in 2000 after the nail bomb attack in Soho which killed 3 people at the Admiral Duncan pub

Executive summary of report

The purpose of our review is to extract lessons to be learnt and to identify best practice from selected investigations of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) into lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)-related murders.

We have chosen six investigations from 1990 to 2002 with a total number of 10 victims: Michael Boothe (1990), Robyn Browne (1997), Jaap Bornkamp (2000), Geoffrey Windsor (2002), David Ridehalgh (2002) and the victims of the serial murders of Colin Ireland (1993): Peter Walker, Christopher Dunn, Perry Bradley III, Andrew Collier and Emanuel Spiteri.

Our primary source is a review of these cases that we commissioned from the MPS. This was performed by a team led by DI Stephen Dingvean of the Homicide Command of the Specialist Crime Directorate, focussing on four LGBT-related themes that we selected:

- Gender identity, sexual orientation and lifestyle of the victim
- Liaison with victim family and support networks
- Community liaison
- Media relations.

We have also identified several other common issues among these cases: public sex environments, reporting, information systems, independent advice and language.

The investigations in the early 1990s were hampered by a lack of understanding and sensitivity towards LGBT people and also by deep mistrust of the police within the LGBT community due to historical policing practice. Later investigations, on the other hand, were more effective in engaging with the community through the use of LGBT Liaison Officers and independent advisors.

The following summarises our key recommendations:

- Proactive prevention strategies are needed to avoid escalation of violent crimes. This requires pan-London coordination of intelligence and risk assessments.
- Increased levels of crimes should be communicated to vulnerable groups which may be hard to reach, *e.g.* sex workers and users of public sex environments.
- Much work is needed to encourage the reporting of homophobic and transphobic crimes. Channels for non-police and third-party reporting should be developed.
- The role of LGBT Liaison Officers is key to community liaison. This should be developed further through the sharing of best practice.
- Local independent advice is needed in addition to pan-London strategic advice. This requires engagement with local LGBT networks on policing issues.
- MPS and national information systems need searchable indices on LGBT-related information for effective analysis of intelligence.
- Awareness training is needed for officers dealing with LGBT-related crimes.
- The case review process for murder investigations must include a review of issues related to community liaison.