

Supplementary written evidence submitted by Fiona Laskaris (PCO0084)

Third Memorandum of Evidence for Home Affairs Select Committee Review of the IOPC

1. I am concerned that the West Yorkshire Police have misled the Committee in their published evidence (PCO0074). This has caused me great distress and I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to provide a further written submission setting out my specific concerns.
2. In their response to my evidence the police have produced a timeline of events leading to my son Christopher's murder based on the timeline produced by the coroner in a legal ruling dated 31 January 2019, but with significant alterations. Therefore, what they have stated to be a "factual response" is factually incorrect and in my opinion very misleading.
3. I have sent the original legal ruling, incorporating the coroner's timeline, to the clerks to the Committee for verification purposes.
4. The coroner's staff are employed by the West Yorkshire Police so they would have been familiar with the original timeline and the legal ruling would have been sent to them as well as to us. It was clear throughout the inquest process that the police worked very closely with the coroner.

Specific Concerns re Police Timeline

5. My specific concerns relate to the following timeline extracts in the police evidence (changes from original in bold):

*"08.10.16 CL is arrested. **West Yorkshire Police (WYP) force entry to CL's premises to effect the arrest. WYP remain at the site until contractors arranged by the landlord secured the premises.***

10.10.16 CL informs Leeds City Council he wants no further involvement with them.

13.10.16 Leeds City Council arrange for a temporary door to be fitted to the property."

Concern 1 - "WYP force entry to CL's premises to effect the arrest"

6. As I stated in my evidence, and as referred to by the murder trial judge in court, the police forced entry to Christopher's home due to welfare concerns. They didn't go to his home in order to arrest him as their evidence to the Committee states.

7. This was specifically confirmed to us in two separate e mails from the police in August 2017, not long after the murder trial, in which they stated:

"Officers were on patrol in the area and passing his flat when a coffee jar came through his window officers forced entry to his flat fearing a domestic incident was in progress".

8. It was confirmed again by the West Yorkshire Police when the case was reported in The Daily Telegraph on 2nd December 2019 and the welfare check was referred to in relation to the forced entry.

9. The police's response to my complaint disclosed that the door had in fact been broken down by two special constables working, apparently without supervision, on a Saturday morning. They did then arrest Christopher and take him into custody but did not break down his door in order to do this, but to check on the welfare of the occupant of the flat. The police confirmed to us in their e-mails that the officers didn't know who lived at the property until they got inside and found Christopher alone, distressed and living in a state of serious neglect.

Concern 2 - "WYP remain at the site until contractors arranged by the landlord secured the premises"

10. The police say the door was "secured" but by this they mean they boarded Christopher out of his home with no arrangements for him to regain access. The boarding was then ripped off – we still do not know how, as none of his family and friends did this and the police have not been transparent about their involvement – to enable him to get back in, thus rendering it unsecured, as confirmed by the IOPC.

11. The police are aware that in January 2019 the IOPC upheld my complaints against them about their involvement with Christopher, which they had denied following their own internal investigation. The IOPC cited a number of specific failings which the force had not acknowledged and, in relation to the securing of Christopher's door, stated:

"It is not known how Christopher got in to the flat after getting home... It is true to say that the property was left secure as per the obligations of the force. However, if the resident is then forced to break back in, it must then be left insecure."

12. The IOPC concluded on the evidence:

- that Christopher's home was **left insecure for five days** after special constables broke his door down, leaving him vulnerable and at risk. Then only a temporary door, rather than a permanent door, was fitted.
- that a like for like door had not been fitted straightaway as the police had claimed, but instead the doorway had been fully boarded up and the boarding was then ripped off; and
- that the police failed in their duty to safeguard Christopher, failing to recognise his vulnerabilities and obvious care and support needs, and the risk to him of exploitation and abuse. This was despite having recorded that he had Asperger's Syndrome and Bi-polar disorder.

13. The murder trial and all the other corroborative evidence confirmed that it was during the 5 day period before the temporary door was fitted that the killer and his girlfriend wandered into Christopher's home opportunistically as passers-by, having noticed the broken-down front door. Christopher had severe social phobia linked to his autism and didn't meet people out and about. It was well documented that he led a very reclusive lifestyle and was afraid of strangers.

Concern 3 – "10.10.16 CL informs Leeds City Council he wants no further involvement with them."

14. Christopher had been provided with inappropriate mental health support for his condition and discharged himself from Adult Social Services - part of Leeds City Council - on 10th August 2016 (two months before the door was broken down) as reported in the coroner's timeline, not on 10th October 2016 (two days after the door was broken down) as stated in the police evidence. He told his mental health support worker, who had been nagging him to tidy his flat and telling him off, that he didn't want him to come any more.

15. I am really concerned about this date alteration because it appears to suggest that Christopher was in some way responsible for the failure of the council to provide him with a functional front door as a matter of urgency after the police broke it down.

16. Yet Christopher's requested discharge was specific to Adult Social Care and the request was two months earlier. That entry on the coroner's timeline has been **moved chronologically by two months**.

17. Furthermore, Leeds City Council confirmed to me in a letter dated 9th May 2019 that, following the police request on 8th October 2016 to board up the door and window, they had no contact from either the police or Christopher after that and no request to fit a temporary door.

Conclusion

18. The recently published Independent Panel Report on the Daniel Morgan murder case stated:

"Concealing or denying failings, for the sake of the organisation's public image, is dishonesty on the part of the organisation for reputational benefit and constitutes a form of institutional corruption."

19. In Christopher's case the West Yorkshire Police, as well as concealing/denying failings, appear to have adopted a strategy of victim blaming – as detailed in my previous evidence and above – as a means of deflecting responsibility for their own serious safeguarding failures. This has greatly multiplied our suffering and distress following a deeply traumatic bereavement and in my opinion is shockingly disrespectful to my dead son and very callous.

20. Nearly five years after Christopher's tragic death there has still been no investigation into why such a vulnerable young man with autism was left in this terrible situation, repeatedly exposed to exploitation and abuse, many miles away from his concerned family, and ultimately murdered by a known violent criminal out on licence who wandered into his home as a passer-by after the police left him with no functioning front door for 5 days. This has left us feeling that to the authorities Christopher's life, as a disabled person, simply didn't matter.

21. There are multiple unexplained inconsistencies and unanswered questions – mainly linked to the police – relating to the circumstances leading to Christopher's death.

22. We are greatly concerned that the IOPC seem unable or unwilling to address these despite serious issues of concern being brought to the attention of Director General, Michael Lockwood. I believe this lack of effective response allows "institutional corruption" to flourish, as demonstrated here.

23. Unfortunately, as result of our experiences with the IOPC, we have now lost all trust and faith in the organisation's ability to hold the police to account when appropriate and necessary, and to work towards the proper protection and safeguarding of some of the most vulnerable members of our society when they come into contact with the police.

24. To prevent anything like this happening to anyone else we are therefore calling for an independent review of Christopher's case and would greatly appreciate any support the Committee members can give us to secure this.

July 2021