

Release of the reports and other material relating to the death of Blair Peach

On Tuesday 27th April 2010 the Metropolitan Police Service made the reports into the death of Blair Peach available to the public.

Blair Peach died on 24th April 1979. The day before he had attended a protest in Southall and received a head injury which led to his death.

At the time of his death there was a thorough investigation which stated that fourteen witnesses said they saw a police officer hit Blair Peach and that there is no evidence which shows he received the injury in any other way.

This of course is and has always been a grave concern to the MPS.

We have gone to great lengths to ensure that all investigative options currently available have been exhausted. To this extent the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have provided us independent advice stating that there is nothing which would currently justify carrying out a further investigation.

Considering the understandable amount of public interest and the significant amount of time that has passed, now that we have had this advice from the CPS, we want to share the reports with the family of Blair Peach and the public.

We acknowledge the stress, suffering and upset his family and friends must have felt at the time of his death, and subsequently. We hope that in sharing the reports now we have provided some help in the family's understandable quest for the facts of what happened that day in 1979.

We recognise that it is incredibly important for the family and friends of Blair Peach to be given details about the investigation and its findings. Consequently we are releasing a huge number of related documents as well as the main reports, this amounts to over 2,500 pages in total.

The main reports are three written in July 1979, September 1979 and May 1980 by former Commander Cass, who was asked to lead the investigation into Blair Peach's death. Reports were written by two former Detective Chief Inspectors in December 1979 and March 1980. The first report concerns an allegation that two particular officers had been responsible for the death of Blair Peach. Investigation showed these two officers were not on duty at Southall at the time of the death. The second report relates to this same allegation and to a separate allegation of assault from a member of the public. In August 1999 former Commander Quinn carried out a review to ascertain whether there were any further lines of enquiry that would further the investigation.

The other material we are releasing includes: the hundreds of witness statements taken at the time, medical reports and the decision of the then Director of Public Prosecutions.

You will notice that the documents have been redacted to prevent the identification of members of the public and police officers who contributed to the investigations into Blair Peach's death. All redactions were completed by external counsel and go no further than is necessary for compliance with our legal duties.

It is important to remember that the majority of these documents were produced thirty years ago and that they reflect the way policing was rather than is. Despite this, at the time the investigation by Commander Cass was commended for being thorough and determined by the then DPP and Secretary of Police Complaints Board.

On 27th April the Commissioner, Sir Paul Stephenson, said:

"I made a public undertaking to publish our material relating to Blair Peach's death. Today we have done just that.

"As a police officer with over thirty four years service reading and being briefed on the investigation reports leaves me feeling deeply uncomfortable. Thirty one years later we have still been unable to provide the family and friends of Blair Peach with definitive answers regarding the terrible circumstances of his death. That is a matter of deep regret.

"After a thorough review of all our material I asked the Director of Public Prosecution to provide a further reassurance that through being transparent we would not inadvertently endanger any potential prosecution. The CPS has now confirmed there are no further realistic avenues that we can pursue. I am of the clear view that the right place for these documents is the public domain."