

Commissioner Angela McLaren
City of London Police

14 August 2023

Dear Commissioner McLaren

My gratitude to you and your officers for your current supportive policies towards the LGBT+ community. It is excellent progress.

However, previously, for many decades, attitudes and practices were very different.

To draw a line under the past extreme persecution of LGBT+ people by UK police, including your force, I hope you will agree that some expression of remorse is appropriate.

We do not expect an apology from the police for enforcing historic homophobic laws. What we are requesting an apology for, is the often abusive and threatening way those laws were enforced - ways that would be deemed illegal and unacceptable today.

Sir Mark Rowley has already said sorry on behalf of the Metropolitan Police and backed it up with a new LGBT+ plan for London and the appointment of LGBT+ Community Liaison Officers in every London borough.

A similar apology has been made by the Chief Constable of Sussex, Jo Shiner.

We hope you can follow suit.

Their stance is backed by the Chief Constable of Northumbria, Vanessa Jardine, in her capacity as the lead on LGBT+ policy among chief constables across the UK.

The call for Chief Constables to apologise is also endorsed by the National Police LGBT+ Network of serving LGBT+ officers.

Other Chief Constables are actively considering making an apology and are liaising to this end with their officers and local LGBT+ communities.

In the past, your force, and many other forces, devoted massive and disproportionate resources to hunt down LGBT+ people for consenting behaviour that harmed no one. This zealotry went way beyond mere law enforcement.

While you are not responsible for past wrongs, you are head of the force that witch-hunted us and wrecked LGBT+ lives.

I would respectfully request that you put the past behind us by apologising to the LGBT+ community so that we can move forward together.

I hope you recognise the merit and importance of an apology to the LGBT+ community. It would help further improve LGBT+ trust and confidence in the police, which we all want.

In the decades before the full decriminalisation of homosexuality in 2003 in England and Wales, your officers went out of their way to target and arrest gay and bisexual men for consenting, victimless behaviour. They were often excessive, harsh, vindictive, and cruel.

There was a de facto policy of sometimes releasing the names, addresses and workplaces of arrested men to the media, which led to public humiliation, ostracism, evictions, sackings and even violent attacks.

In some cases, gay bars, clubs, and even private birthday parties were raided. Same-sex couples were arrested for kissing, cuddling, and holding hands in the street. Heterosexual couples engaged in similar behaviour were not. This was malicious homophobic policing, and it wrecked lives.

Upon conviction, these men were often jailed and beaten in prison. Others were hit with huge fines. Many lost their jobs, homes and marriages. Some were bashed by homophobic mobs, driven to mental breakdowns and attempted or committed suicide.

With the stigma of a criminal conviction for a homosexual offence, a lot of the victims of police shaming had great difficulty in getting jobs and housing. Their lives were ruined by the police targeting consensual acts that harmed nobody.

I hope you might consider a formal apology to the LGBT+ community and that we can arrange an appropriate time and place to do this.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Tatchell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Peter Tatchell,
Director, Peter Tatchell Foundation
56 Salisbury Place, London SW9 6UW - 07795 077 065