

Transcript of interview with Neil Hudgell and Chief Inspector Lee Broadstock by Martha Kearney. Today, BBC Radio 4. Sat 11/12/21, 8.30 am (approx.).

Martha Kearney:

The time now is twenty-seven minutes to nine. The victim's families have called it one of the most widespread institutional failures in modern history. Stephen Port murdered four young men between June 2014 and September 2015 by giving them the date rape drug GHB, and the inquest jury decided that police failures probably contributed to three of the four deaths. The first body, that of Anthony Walgate was found outside Port's flat, the others, Gabriel Kovari, Daniel Whitworth, and Jack Taylor were found in a churchyard and ruins very close to the flat. The Metropolitan Police is now facing accusations of institutional homophobia.

Martha Kearney:

Well, we're joined first of all by Neil Hudgell who's a lawyer for the families. Good morning.

Neil Hudgell:

Good morning.

Martha Kearney:

And just give us a sense of what's been going through the minds of the families after the conclusion of the inquest yesterday?

Neil Hudgell:

Well, as you can imagine, a whole range of emotion. I think vindications one of them, there's a common thread from day one here of families not being listened to, told that their loved ones had either taken their own lives, or had suffered the consequences of a lifestyle that involved the recreational use of drugs, young gay men, and it was just one of those things that their lives ended in that way so there's a level of vindication because what they've been saying all along is that their loved ones didn't lead this sort of lifestyle, something was wrong here, and eventually, after seven years, they've been listened to. So there's a sort of... They've got to this point where all along they've thought, "Have we been at this? Is there more that we could have done? Have we fallen short in getting to the bottom of investigation?" But as they've heard the evidence unfold over a two-month period, the minds of the police have been so closed that they've come to this realisation that there was nothing more that they could have done to serve their loved ones at any time during this process.

Martha Kearney:

It's very difficult to hear that if the police inquiry had been different, perhaps three of the four deaths might not have happened.

Neil Hudgell:

Yeah, absolutely. And again, I think that the jury's findings were pretty strong on that, that my clients, the families all believe that Gabriel, Daniel, Jack would've been here today had the police, both at a local level and at a senior level, done their job right in the first place in investigating Anthony's death and the sort of ridiculous version of events that Port gave when he was initially apprehended about it.

Martha Kearney:

Now, the Metropolitan Police, they have apologised, but they've also said, "We don't see institutional homophobia."

Neil Hudgell:

54 Well, there's two things to say on that. The apologies look to be hollow to my families. The police have
apologised where they needed to, where there's been a dispute in what's been said by whom and
57 where, they've taken the view that they can either not recall or disagree with families on the issue.

Martha Kearney:

60 What's the evidence for institutional homophobia?

Neil Hudgell:

63 Well, there's a number of things that have come out in terms of the language that's been used in
documentation, in approaches to some of the families. There was a non-recognition of the relationship
of Daniel's partner when there was dealings after his death, and analysis of the suicide note, for
66 example, but you see the Met have tried to spin this and say that there was no evidence of
homophobia. This wasn't an issue that was put to the jury because there was no evidence of it. The
coroner made no ruling on that and, in fact, said that there was some evidence certainly that the
69 families and their friends believed that there were, but because of the legal gymnastics performed by
the Metropolitan Police and their legal teams, this was an issue that was not put to the jury. And this is
why the families are very cynical and very concerned that lessons in relation to that particular issue
72 haven't been learned. If the Met don't recognise that there is homophobia within the force, or at least
there were allegations and matters that need to be addressed, and that in itself is a very fundamental
problem.

Martha Kearney:

75 OK, Neil Hudgell, lawyer for the families. Thank you. We can talk now to Chief Inspector Lee
Broadstock who's Secretary of the National LGBT+ Police Network and also Chief Inspector in
78 Tameside. Good morning.

Chief Inspector Lee Broadstock:

81 Good morning.

Martha Kearney:

84 What lessons do you think are there to be learned from this?

Chief Inspector Lee Broadstock:

87 There are clearly lessons for the local investigation team that will be picked up by the Met, but I think
there's some real wider learning here of how we listen to concerns around any issues of any LGBT bias,
also lessons to be learned around how we deal with offenders who use GHB as their modus of
90 operating to commit some really heinous and terrible crimes.

Martha Kearney:

93 Do you think that there was homophobic behavior shown in this investigation?

Chief Inspector Lee Broadstock:

96 It appears to be a completely terrible investigation that happened and, as has been said, the inquest
coroner didn't want the jury to consider that and I think it's going to be considered in a wider review.
And we really welcome the IOPC reviewing the investigation from the start so I think we really need to
99 wait to see the report from the coroner and the IOPC to see if there is any evidence of homophobic
bias.

Martha Kearney:

102 Because that's what the families are saying. They're saying that if the four gay men had been four
women, their cases would've been investigated, four white women, actually, they said their cases
105 would've been investigated much more thoroughly.

Chief Inspector Lee Broadstock:

108 Yes. I hear exactly what they're saying and I think their feelings we have to accept as a national
network. We'd love to speak to them to understand where the Met haven't listened. Some of the
111 evidence and some of the documentation we haven't received yet as a National Network from the Met,
and we want to work with the Met to understand if there has been any homophobic bias. And if there
has, how we learn those lessons, truly learn those lessons, and then change some cultures and
114 behaviours in policing because no one from any LGBT background should be treated any differently as
a victim to any other part of ...

Martha Kearney:

117 And certainly, the Metropolitan Police say that wasn't the case. They say they do see all sorts of errors
in the investigation which came together in a truly dreadful way, but we don't see homophobia on the
part of our officers.

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Chief Inspector Lee Broadstock:

123 Well, that's what we need to see further detail on before we can, as a National Network, make any
comment on. And as I say, we haven't received that detail yet on, but I can see why the families feel
that there has been homophobic bias and my thoughts are with the families at this time. And we want
to work with the families and the Met Police and the wider LGBT community to understand and get
126 evidence of any potential homophobic bias within policing, and then if that is documented in evidence,
then it needs to be the real watershed moment that this should be in policing to make sure that we
would remove any LGBT bias within policing.

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Martha Kearney:

132 Okay. Chief Inspector Lee Broadstock, earlier, Neil Hudgell. Thank you both.

END.