

13 March 2025

Simon Foster
West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner
Lloyd House
Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6NQ

Dear Mr Foster,

Apology sought from you and West Midlands Police

I want to express my gratitude to you and West Midlands police officers for your current supportive policies towards the LGBT+ community. This progress is commendable.

However, for many decades, attitudes and practices were starkly different. UK police forces, including yours, subjected LGBT+ people to extreme persecution. Indeed, West Midlands Police were some of the most vicious and aggressively homophobic police in Britain. They did much more than merely enforce unjust, discriminatory laws. Officers enforced the law in a bigoted and often unlawful way.

West Midlands Police devoted excessive resources to hunting down LGBT+ people for consensual, victimless behaviour. Officers engaged in **harassment, entrapment, raids on gay bars and clubs, and public shaming**—destroying lives.

Same-sex couples were abused by officers and arrested for merely holding hands or kissing. LGBTs leaving gay venues were bullied, threatened and sometimes shoved and arrested when they stood outside on the pavement talking to friends.

Your police maliciously released the names and addresses of arrested gay/bisexual men to the media and neighbours, which led to **public humiliation and ostracism, job losses, evictions, marriage break ups and even violent attacks**. Many victims were **jailed, fined and driven to mental breakdowns or suicide or attempted suicide**.

Meanwhile, West Midlands Police largely **ignored homophobic violence and other hate crimes**. The bashing and murder of LGBTs mostly resulted in **sub-standard investigations** and **rarely any public appeals** to track down the perpetrators. The police aim was persecution, not protection.

While you and the current officers are not responsible for these past wrongs, you are now PCC for the West Midlands – a force that once oppressed the some of the very people it was meant to serve and defend.

To draw a line under this past injustice, I urge you to consider offering **an official apology to the West Midlands LGBT+ community** and securing the agreement of the Chief Constable, Craig Guildford, do the same.

Is that possible?

We approached your Chief Constable in 2023, seeking an apology, but our request was dismissed outright - twice! A requested meeting was refused. When we met him at Birmingham Pride we found him rude and dismissive. He cut short our polite conversation and walked away.

This is particularly shocking because the West Midlands Police apologised the black community in 2020 for their ill-treatment. If the police can say sorry to the black community, why can't they also say sorry to the LGBT+ community?

We think it is time for a West Midlands apology, especially when so many other forces have recognised past wrongs and already said sorry.

We are **not** seeking an apology for the enforcement of historic homophobic laws. Instead, we request an apology for **the abusive and often unlawful** way those laws were enforced—tactics that would be deemed unacceptable today.

In response to our #ApologiseNow campaign, So far **21 UK police forces** have issued apologies: Metropolitan, City of London, Sussex, Merseyside, Police Scotland, Northumberland, Durham, Derbyshire, Suffolk, Devon & Cornwall, Dorset, North Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Gwent, West Mercia, Nottinghamshire, Avon & Somerset, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire and Gloucestershire.

For example, Sir Mark Rowley, on behalf of the Metropolitan Police, apologised and backed it up with a new LGBT+ action plan and the appointment of dedicated Community Liaison Officers in every London borough. Similar new LGBT+ policies have been adopted by other forces as part of their apology.

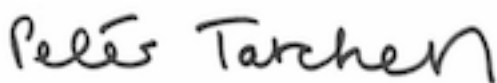
This case for a police apology is supported by **Vanessa Jardine, Chief Constable of Northumbria and the UK's police lead on LGBT+ policing**, and by the **National Police LGBT+ Network**.

At an event in Liverpool, LGBTs whose lives were affected by police witch-hunts spoke about the emotional importance and psychological uplift of Merseyside's police apology.

A formal apology by you and the Chief Constable would acknowledge the history of past victimisation - the precondition for a respectful partnership moving forward. It would also help rebuild the trust and confidence of LGBTs in the police, encouraging more to report hate crimes, domestic violence and sexual assaults - which is what we all want.

I hope you will recognise the significance of this request and agree to discuss when and how to best deliver an apology.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Tatchell
Director, Peter Tatchell Foundation