

Mr Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester
GMCA, Tootal Buildings,
56 Oxford Street,
Manchester M1 6EU

16 April 2025

Dear Mr Burnham

Apology from you and Greater Manchester Chief Constable to LGBTs

I want to express my gratitude to you and Manchester 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. Greater Manchester police subjected LGBT+ people to extreme persecution. They were some of the most vicious and aggressively homophobic police in Britain; putting huge resources into targeting the LGBT+ community for consenting victimless behaviour.

The Chief Constable in the 1980s, James Anderton, boasted of his vendetta against the LGBT+ community. At the height of the AIDS pandemic in the 1980s, when gay and bisexual men were dying agonising deaths and suffering immeasurable discrimination and hate crime, he denounced gay men as “swirling around in a cesspit of their own making.” Motivated by his homophobic religious beliefs, he ordered the police to ‘go after’ LGBTs.

The Greater Manchester force devoted excessive resources to hunting down LGBT+ people for behaviour that harmed no one. Officers engaged in **harassment, entrapment, agent provocateurs, raids on private parties and public shaming**—destroying lives.

The **release of the names and addresses** of arrested men to the media and subsequent publication in local papers led to **humiliation, ostracism, job losses and evictions**. Many were **assaulted in the street and had their homes and cars vandalised. As victims of homophobic crime, they got no help or protection for the police. Some were driven to mental breakdowns or even attempted suicide.**

We are **not** seeking an apology for the enforcement of historic homophobic laws. Instead, we request an apology for the abusive and often unlawful **manner** in which those laws were enforced by Greater Manchester police—using tactics that would be deemed unacceptable today, such as beating up gay men coming out of gay bars, insulting them as “AIDS carriers” and “f*cking queers”, threatening them with bashing or arrest if they did not promptly leave the bar area, arresting same-sex couples for a good night kiss, raiding LGBT+ birthday and Christmas gatherings etc.

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.

Sir Mark Rowley, on behalf of the Metropolitan Police, apologised within a few days of the campaign’s launch and backed it up with a new LGBT+ action plan and the appointment of dedicated Community Liaison Officers in every London borough. This is the kind of apology-plus that we want to see from all forces across the country, including Greater Manchester.

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

At a police event in Liverpool, LGBTs whose lives were devastated by police witch-hunts spoke about the comforting and healing nature of Merseyside police's apology, showing the value to affected individuals of saying sorry.

To draw a line under this past injustice, I urge you and your Chief Constable to consider offering an expression of remorse.

We approached your Chief Constable, seeking an apology, but our request was ignored.

We think it is time to now reconsider this apparent refusal to say sorry; especially when so many other police forces have agreed that an apology is need and have already made one.

While you are not responsible for these past wrongs, as Mayor you have oversight of the Greater Manchester police – a force that once persecuted the very people it was meant to protect.

A formal apology by both you and the Chief Constable would be an important acknowledgement of this abusive, shameful history of homophobic oppression.

This apology would help rebuild trust between the police and the LGBT+ community, thereby encouraging more LGBTs to report sexual assaults, domestic violence and hate crime - which is what we all want. This positive improvement in police-LGBT+ relations has been reported by many of the forces that have already made apologies.

My understanding is that as Mayor you have the power to compel the Chief Constable to apologise, if he continues to refuse to say sorry voluntarily. I respectfully request that you exercise that power if the Chief Constable remains intransigent.

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

Yours sincerely,



Peter Tatchell

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"All human being are born free and equal in dignity and rights ..." Article one of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights