

Summary of case for media outlets

The Metropolitan Police has paid compensation to a young black man who was handcuffed, assaulted and searched by police officers whilst he was talking to his friend in Deptford, southeast London because of racial profiling by the officers.

Background

In April 2020, Mr Tallan Bent was singled out by officers as he was sat on his bicycle whilst talking to his friend who was in his car. The officers' suspicion arose when they saw the car stationary in the road, at which point they had not seen Mr Bent. Nonetheless, on passing the car and seeing Mr Bent, the officers solely approached and stopped him and not the driver of the car, under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

The officers racially profiled Mr Bent on approach and despite complying with the officers' requests to be searched, Mr Bent was assaulted, handcuffed and searched. During the course of the apprehension, Mr Bent was humiliated in his home area with the attendance of several police vans and car, and as a result numerous officers. Our client raised his concerns about racial profiling during the course of the search, not least because the officers had not apprehended his friend who is of similar age but white, and merely considered a bystander. On searching Mr Bent, no drugs were found.

Complaint and civil claim

This event had a significantly negative impact on Mr Bent, and caused him harm and distress. He has dedicated considerable time and energy since to seek accountability via the police complaints system. The resultant investigations have been a painful process for our client which has involved reliving the trauma of the event and has been made more painful because of the unwillingness of the investigating officers to subject their fellow officers' conduct to any sort of meaningful and just scrutiny.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct ('IOPC') had to review the inadequate investigations conducted by the Metropolitan Police on two occasions, and in turn upheld our client's complaints. However, the IOPC's final report was unsatisfactory. The complaint process took close to two years yet was perfunctory.

The officers' reasons for the search were that our client was wearing a number of layers, which according to the officer was *"not appropriate for the mild climate"* and that Mr Bent *"could be concealing items on his person"*. They also mentioned that the bike he was *"perched on"* was too small for an adult which supposedly indicated *"that the bike may not belong to [Mr Bent]"*, namely not the basis on which to lawfully stop and search him. As a way to achieve accountability for the way he was treated, our client brought a legal claim against the Metropolitan Police, for (amongst other things) direct discrimination, harassment, assault and false imprisonment.

Whilst there is significant evidence to support these claims, the Metropolitan Police deny liability but has settled the matter prior to court proceedings.

Quotes

Mr Bent commented *"I'm very disappointed with the way I was treated by the Police. I find it hard to believe that the police are still targeting young black men. The only reason for this seems to be racial discrimination and it has to stop. I hope that by bringing my claim against the Police I have shone a light on their failure to respect my rights and I want people who*

experience mistreatment by the police to know that they can make their voice heard. I find it shocking that the complaint took so long to resolve, and I strongly believe the complaints process needs reform.”

Bharine Kalsi, a Partner at Deighton Pierce Glynn, the law firm representing Mr Bent added, *“we regularly receive enquiries from people who have experienced discrimination at the hands of the Metropolitan Police Service, and even with the evidence stacked against its officers the force continues to deny liability. This is a troubling trend, which extends to other police forces across the UK.”*