

## **PCA COMPLETE INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH OF ROGER SYLVESTER 1<sup>st</sup> November 2000**

The investigation into the death of Roger Sylvester in police custody is now complete and the file is now with the Crown Prosecution Service for them to consider whether criminal charges are to be brought against any of the police officers involved.

Sheila Sylvester, Roger's mother said;

"It is now ten months since Roger died after being restrained by eight Metropolitan police officers outside his home in Tottenham. I am dissatisfied with the Essex police investigation. This process has been woefully inadequate, not impartial and poorly supervised. Roger died just as the MacPherson report into the death of Stephen Lawrence was published. We had hoped that this would bring in a 'post Lawrence' era of open and accountable policing and that the investigation would reflect this. Not so ! The investigation has not centred on the behaviour of the eight officers who laid hands on my son that fateful night. Their actions were not investigated with the thoroughness and rigour that would have been the case had they been civilians. This is unjust. Instead Essex Police chose to investigate Roger, the victim, in an attempt to blame him for his own death. The spotlight will now fall on the Crown Prosecution Service who on the basis of the Essex report will have to decide whether any of the officers should be charged. I therefore await their decision with bated breath. "

Deborah Coles Co-director of INQUEST said:

"The culture of secrecy that surrounds deaths in police custody and their investigation means that Roger's family, who have the greatest need to find out how he died, will be denied the investigating officers report into his death. Public confidence in the criminal justice system and the way it deals with deaths in police custody can only be restored when the whole decision making process is open, independent and subject to proper public scrutiny. "

Daniel Machover, partner at Hickman & Rose, solicitors for the Sylvester family, said:

"The Metropolitan Police have blocked access to information which the family should have been given, even before a decision by the CPS. I share the family's sense of frustration that information, which is not first-hand witness evidence, is denied them, putting an unnecessary shroud of secrecy over the entire investigation. The Commissioner has not acted in the spirit of openness, which was supposedly ushered in by a recent Home Office Circular on pre-inquest disclosure to bereaved families whose loved ones have died in police custody.

"The current system allows the police force under investigation to claim ownership (and veto the release) of documents generated by the investigating police force. This cannot be right. One police force should not investigate another one in such serious cases but, while an independent investigative body is still denied families, forces under investigation should step back and allow families as much disclosure as possible, as early as possible."