

Olaseni ('Seni') Lewis, deceased

6 October 2017

Statement by Seni's parents, Aji and Conrad Lewis:

"Our son, Seni, died because of the prolonged restraint in which he was held down by police officers while he was a patient in a mental health hospital.

"We had taken Seni to hospital because we thought it was the best place for him when he became ill. But instead of receiving the help and care he needed, he met with incompetence, hostility and worse: from the management and staff at the hospital, who were so poorly trained that they felt it necessary to call the police to deal with him when he was agitated; and even more so from the police officers who answered that call.

"Six of those officers have been required to face charges of gross misconduct in relation to their handling of Seni: they held him face down, shackled with his hands in two sets of handcuffs and his legs in two sets of restraints. They held him down like that, in a prolonged restraint which they knew to be dangerous, until he went limp. And even then, instead of treating him as a medical emergency, they simply walked away, leaving Seni on the floor of a locked room, all but dead. That is how we lost our beloved son.

"We don't want any other family to suffer as we have suffered. We don't want anyone else to go through what our son went through. This disciplinary process and its outcome today will be meaningless unless the Metropolitan Police – and the police service throughout the country – learn to recognise in practice that what happened to Seni is simply unacceptable.

"As a first step, we renew our call to the new Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick, to meet with us, so that we may help her to take responsibility for Seni's death: to understand the lessons that need to be learnt, so that other families need not go through what we have had to endure."

Ends