# Inquest finds police failings contributed to tragic death of Lewis Johnson during high-speed chase



The recent inquest into the tragic death of Lewis Johnson, an 18-year-old former Crystal Palace youth footballer, has revealed significant failings by the Metropolitan Police during a high-speed chase in February 2016. The jury found that these shortcomings played a critical role in the events that led to Johnson’s fatal collision with a lamp post in Clapton, east London. This outcome has provided a measure of solace to his mother, Ann Torpey, who has fought tirelessly for justice since her son’s death nearly nine years ago.

The pursuit began after officers received reports of mobile phone thefts allegedly involving Johnson and his companions. During the chase, which reached speeds in excess of the limit, Johnson exhibited increasingly reckless riding behaviour. This included driving on the wrong side of the road and mounting the pavement, actions the jury concluded were influenced by the aggressive manner of the police pursuit behind him. Torpey shared her relief, stating, “The jury agreed with us... I felt as if a 10-stone weight had been lifted from me,” illustrating the emotional toll of nearly a decade spent seeking truth amidst legal challenges and investigations.

The jury’s findings spotlighted the inexperience of the officers involved. The police driver lacked the necessary qualifications for motorcycle pursuits, and the investigation highlighted a disconcerting lack of communication and knowledge regarding police policy on such operations. The report noted that the police vehicle often followed too closely, thereby instilling additional pressure on Johnson, which likely impacted his decision-making during the chase.

This incident is part of a troubling trend within London’s policing framework. According to data from the Independent Office for Police Conduct, there were 24 deaths resulting from police pursuits in England and Wales in 2023-24, indicating rising concerns over the safety protocols during high-speed chases. Freedom of Information data reveals that the number of police pursuits has nearly doubled from 2,779 in 2019-20 to 4,111 in 2024-25, with a substantial proportion resulting in collisions.

Torpey believes that her son’s decision not to stop for police was rooted in fear, stemming from previous negative encounters with law enforcement. She contended that Johnson had engaged in "wrong things" but asserted he was not a bad person, highlighting the complexities of youth caught in challenging circumstances, including postcode disputes and their associated risks. “Lewis was my absolute... I will continue to live my life for my other children, but every night when I go to sleep, I know that when I wake up the next day, I’ll be a step closer to being with Lewis again,” she shared, capturing her profound loss.

In March 2022, a misconduct hearing found two officers involved in the pursuit had acted inappropriately, with one officer continuing the chase without appropriate authority. This panel deemed the officer’s conduct as falling short of necessary standards. However, in Kingston Crown Court, the same officer was acquitted of causing death by dangerous driving, underlining the complexities within legal accountability in such tragic situations. The disparity between the inquest findings and previous court rulings highlights ongoing tensions around police conduct during pursuits.

Chief Superintendent Brittany Clarke, responsible for the area where the incident occurred, expressed her condolences and reiterated the commitment to reviewing the coroner’s recommendations carefully. "We have a clear policy on when and where a police pursuit should take place. We recognise the dangers of these incidents and officers should adhere to the national guidelines issued by the College of Policing," she stated, indicating ongoing reforms within the force.

As Lewis Johnson's family continues to navigate their loss, the inquest findings serve as an essential reminder of the urgent need for comprehensive reviews and reforms within police pursuit protocols, ensuring such tragedies are prevented in the future.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/26/mother-of-18-year-old-lewis-johnson-killed-in-london-police-chase-welcomes-inquest-findings> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/26/mother-of-18-year-old-lewis-johnson-killed-in-london-police-chase-welcomes-inquest-findings> - An inquest jury found multiple failings by police officers in the case of Lewis Johnson, an 18-year-old former Crystal Palace youth player who died in February 2016 after a high-speed police chase in Clapton, east London. Officers pursued Johnson following reports of mobile phone thefts. The inquest, nine years after his death, concluded that the police pursuit influenced Johnson's dangerous riding, leading to a fatal collision with a traffic light pole. Johnson's mother, Ann Torpey, welcomed the findings, expressing relief after years of legal challenges and investigations.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-58889155> - A Metropolitan Police officer, PC Paul Summerson, was cleared of causing the death of moped rider Lewis Johnson during a high-speed chase in 2016. The court heard that Johnson died after swerving to avoid a van and hitting a pole. Prosecutors alleged that Summerson's driving fell 'far below' the expected safety standards during the pursuit. The jury deliberated for 80 minutes before returning a not guilty verdict. The incident occurred in Stoke Newington, north London, and was part of a series of legal challenges and investigations into Johnson's death.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/lewis-johnson-moped-driver-death-met-officer-paul-summerson-trial-b960117.html> - PC Paul Summerson, 44, was found not guilty of causing death by dangerous driving after pursuing 18-year-old Lewis Johnson and his passenger, Louis Kyriacou, through north London in 2016. The police believed Johnson and Kyriacou were involved in a 'smash and grab' theft. During the chase, both vehicles reached speeds over 50mph, weaving through traffic. The collision occurred when Johnson swerved to avoid a van and struck a pole. Summerson's defence argued that he was not to blame for the van driver's actions leading to the crash.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-58794646> - A Metropolitan Police officer, PC Paul Summerson, was accused of causing the death of moped rider Lewis Johnson during a high-speed chase in 2016. The court heard that Johnson died after swerving to avoid a van and hitting a pole. Prosecutors alleged that Summerson's driving fell 'far below' the expected safety standards during the pursuit. The jury deliberated for 80 minutes before returning a not guilty verdict. The incident occurred in Stoke Newington, north London, and was part of a series of legal challenges and investigations into Johnson's death.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-58875172> - Prosecutors alleged that a Metropolitan Police officer's pursuit of moped rider Lewis Johnson before a fatal crash 'fell far below' the safety levels expected. PC Paul Summerson, 44, pursued Johnson and his passenger, Louis Kyriacou, both 18, through Stoke Newington in 2016. Johnson died from injuries sustained when he swerved to avoid a van and hit a pole. The officer from Colchester denies causing death by dangerous driving. During the chase, both vehicles reached speeds of more than 50mph, weaving in and out of traffic.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-48095471> - An inquest heard that police cars following three teenagers on a moped were repeatedly told to pull back before it crashed, resulting in the death of one teenager, Tyereece Johnson, 16. The pursuit across south London had not been authorised. The trio were being tracked by a police helicopter feeding information on their location to cars on the ground. The court was told that on at least two occasions, a female officer could be heard saying over the radio: 'Can you try not to follow the vehicle too closely please?'