


# Officers deny 'unwitting racism' following IPCC review on death in custody

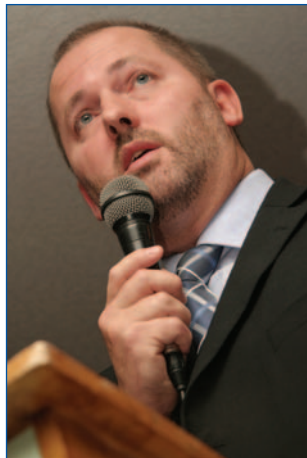
 Humberside Federation has hit out at the Independent Police Complaints Commission's findings over the death of Christopher Alder branding them 'wholly unjustified'.

The Alder report, looked at the events leading up to the death of Christopher Alder, a black man, who died in police custody at Hull on April 1 in 1998.

Nick Hardwick, chairman of the IPCC, spoke about the findings of the review earlier this month, which included reference to three of the five officers involved being guilty of 'unwitting racism'.

Jon Savage, chairman of the Humberside Federation, who represents the five officers involved, said: 'All the officers involved are deeply disappointed by the outcome of this review and strongly dispute the IPCC's findings. The officers concerned categorically deny that they were in any way neglectful of their duties or that their handling of the situation was influenced by race. They also deny that any of them were guilty of racism, unwitting or otherwise.'

The IPCC based their conclusions of unwitting racism on a number of aspects of behaviour by the officers which included 'the willingness to attribute 'bad atti-



**Jon Savage, chairman of the Humberside Federation, says findings are 'wholly unjustified'**

tude' on his part rather than to any physical injury; the reluctance to touch or rouse him once at the police station; the language used: 'coloured' of 'negroid appearance'.

Mr Hardwick said: 'I believe the failure of the police officers concerned to assist Mr Alder effectively on the night he died were largely due to assumptions they made about him based on negative racial stereotypes. It was not within my terms of reference to consider to what extent these behaviours were typical of the

force as a whole either then or now and I have not done so.'

The IPCC review is the fourth examination of the circumstances surrounding Mr Alder's death, none of the previous examinations raised concerns over racism.

All the officers involved were cleared of manslaughter and misconduct by the Crown Court back in 2002. They were also cleared of any misconduct by an independent disciplinary tribunal in June 2003.

Mr Hardwick said that officers had failed to cooperate with the review but that he believed the Alder report set out a 'full, impar-

tial and independent answer to the questions that Christopher Alder's family and others have asked about his death.'

Mr Savage responded: 'The officers also wish to make clear that, despite numerous requests having been made, the IPCC refused to allow them to access to all of the evidence upon which the IPCC based their findings. Consequently, the officers were denied the opportunity to make any proper representations to the IPCC in response to some very serious criticisms which have been made against them.'



## Fact box

The terms of reference for the review carried out by the IPCC into the events leading up to Christopher Alder's death and after were:

- To identify and take account of the concerns of the family of Christopher Alder in respect of his death
- To consider the circumstances surrounding his death
- To produce a report on the evidence surrounding his death that will include a view on whether or not the approaches taken at the criminal and disciplinary proceedings may, or may not, have been different had the investigation been conducted in a different way
- To make any recommendations for the benefit of policing that may arise from the review

**The IPCC report is published in full on the Home Office website at [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)**

## Facts relating to the Alder review:

- Christopher Alder, 37, from Hull, had been taken to Hull Royal Infirmary having sustained a head injury in a fight which had taken place in April 1998 during an evening in Hull City Centre.
- Mr Alder was arrested for breach of the peace and was taken to Queen's Garden's Police Station where he died a short while later.
- In August 2000, a coroner's inquest returned a verdict of unlawful killing.
- The five officers involved in the case were cleared of manslaughter and misconduct following a criminal trial at Teesside Crown Court. The Judge directed the jury to acquit all five officers after hearing conflicting medical evidence on why Mr Alder became unconscious and what had killed him.
- In June 2003 the same five officers were cleared of any professional misconduct by an independent police disciplinary panel.
- In 2004, David Blunkett, then Home Secretary, asked the IPCC to conduct a review of the case following a documentary by the BBC