

Sussex Police apologise to family of woman who reported attack

Published: 17:34 Tuesday 19 January 2016

Sussex Police has apologised to the family of a woman who was found dead in a Brighton hotel shortly after she reported she had been attacked at home.

Clare Cruttenden, 30, was found dead in The Granville Hotel on February 19 2014 after she told police she had been attacked and tied-up.

A Sussex Police spokesman said the response by officers to the incident “fell way short of our standards” and confirmed one of the officers involved had been dismissed for gross misconduct .

The apology comes after the conclusion of a six-day inquest into the death of Miss Cruttenden, of Quebec Road in Hastings, which found she had killed herself whilst the balance of her mind was disturbed.

Speaking after the inquest at Eastbourne Magistrates’ Court today (January 19), Superintendent Nick May from Sussex Police’s East Sussex division, said, “The six day inquest has heard of Clare’s tragic death and the events surrounding it and our thoughts and sympathy, as they have been since that night in February 2014, are with her family and friends.

“The jury retired to consider their verdict on Tuesday morning and the conclusion of the coroner was that Clare killed herself whilst the balance of her mind was disturbed.

“Due to our being in contact with Clare so close to her death we referred it to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), as is usual in these circumstances, and they asked us to investigate under their supervision.

“Deputy Chief Constable Olivia Pinkney has visited Clare’s family and apologised to them. She apologised for the level of service that Clare received that night, which was far from that people in Sussex Police usually receive in the vast majority of cases.

“As a result, Damon Deans-Cane, then a detective constable based at Hastings, faced a gross misconduct hearing on May 9, 2015, where he was found guilty of gross misconduct in dealing with Clare two days before her tragic death and he was subsequently dismissed from Sussex Police.

“Three other officers were also been subjected to formal disciplinary action.

“The service those officers gave to Clare when they attended her home two days before her death fell way short of our standards and we take that very seriously indeed.

“From the outset, we have looked very closely at how we deal with such vulnerable people and at how we prepare our officers and staff to face these challenges to ensure that they get the service and support that they need. We will now consider what has been covered by the inquest, along with the Coroner’s comments, to see if there is further learning or work that needs to be carried out.

“It has been nearly two years since Clare’s death and I hope that now that her family and friends will find some form of closure to assist in dealing with their grief.”

<https://www.hastingsobserver.co.uk/news/sussex-police-apologise-to-family-of-woman-who-reported-attack-1-7170012>

Police officer dismissed after hotel death

Published: 16:20 Tuesday 19 January 2016

A Sussex Police officer has been dismissed after a woman who claimed she was being abused was found dead in a Brighton hotel, an inquest heard today (January 19).

A jury heard how Clare Cruttenden, 30, of Quebec Road, Hastings, died of an overdose of insulin after booking into The Granville Hotel on February 18, 2014.

A day earlier (February 17) Miss Cruttenden told police she had been attacked and tied-up by a stranger in her home.

The jury heard officers investigating the scene began to believe the allegation to be false and confronted her.

Friends of Miss Cruttenden, who saw her later that day, said she was angry at not being believed by officers.

The next morning she travelled to Brighton and booked a room at The Granville, where she was found dead on February 19.

Sussex Police confirmed one officer, Detective Constable Damon Deans-Cane, was dismissed from duty following an investigation of the incident.

The jury heard how Miss Cruttenden was known to officers in Hastings before the incident as she had reported a series of allegations, including both rape and assault.

They also heard officers were instructed to ensure all calls involving Miss Cruttenden be responded to by two or more officers who should record the incident on body-worn cameras.

Officers had also raised concerns for her mental health in January, 2014, after she was admitted to The Conquest Hospital with an overdose of insulin.

Police, social services and hospital staff identified Miss Cruttenden as a possible health risk as a result of this incident and work was underway to help her.

Coroner Alan Craze said, "The serious tragedy of this case is the professionals who met Clare had identified actions but these actions did not have time to be taken."

During the inquest, Professor Robert Peckitt, a consultant forensic psychiatrist, said he believed Miss Cruttenden may have had a personality disorder.

Mr Craze said, “It is never going to be something which can be proven beyond reasonable doubt. But on the balance of probabilities she was suffering from a personality disorder which could explain some of the perplexities of this case.”

The jury is expected to record a conclusion later today.

<https://www.hastingsobserver.co.uk/news/police-officer-dismissed-after-hotel-death-1-7169743>