# Metropolitan Police apologise for handling of drag artist's death investigation



[Photograph: Instagram]

The Metropolitan Police have publicly apologised following criticism of their investigation into the death of prominent American drag artist Steven Grygelko, who performed under the stage name Heklina. Grygelko was discovered deceased in a flat in Soho, central London, in April 2023 by his friend Joshua Grannell, well-known in drag circles as Peaches Christ.

The events surrounding Mr Grygelko's death have raised significant concerns, particularly emphasizing the perceived neglect and insufficient communication from police authorities during the investigation. Mr Grannell expressed his anger over the extended time frame—nearly two years—before police issued a public appeal seeking information from three men who were reportedly present at the flat shortly before Grygelko's body was found. In light of a review by Baroness Casey that recently highlighted issues of institutional homophobia, racism, and misogyny within the Metropolitan Police, the situation has further fueled discussions around the treatment of the LGBT+ community by law enforcement.

Both Mr Grygelko, 55, and Mr Grannell had travelled to London with the intention of performing their drag parody show Mommie Queerest at Soho Theatre. According to Mr Grannell, he found Grygelko's body upon his return to their shared accommodation and immediately noted discrepancies that suggested the presence of other individuals prior to his arrival. He described how the door to the flat was not only unlocked but ajar: "I went to put my key in, and the door just opened."

Despite being assigned a family liaison officer, Mr Grannell lamented the lack of communication and support from the police investigation team. He stated, "Every email went unanswered for months and months. They just completely ignored us." The investigation into the circumstances of Mr Grygelko's unexpected death has yet to reveal the cause of death, leading Mr Grannell to feel alienated and dismissed by the authorities, as he described feeling like he and his friend had been treated as "trash."

In response to mounting frustrations, a spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police acknowledged that "a number of enquiries" had taken place before the release of the CCTV footage, which aims to identify the three men believed to have critical information regarding Grygelko's death. Detective Chief Superintendent Christina Jessah expressed the force's regret: "We apologise and will be taking steps to correct this," she said, adding that ongoing efforts would be made to engage with the LGBT+ community in London to address broader safety concerns.

This instance is part of a larger context wherein the Metropolitan Police has been striving to regain the trust of the public, notably among LGBT+ individuals. A report from the mayor's office for policing and crime indicated that just 55% of LGBT+ respondents expressed confidence in the Metropolitan Police compared to 73% of non-LGBT+ respondents.

Reflecting on the impact of his friend’s death, Mr Grannell described Grygelko as a "trailblazer" within the drag community, recognising his unique talents and generous nature. "Heklina was maybe one of the funniest people I've ever met. She was dark and hilarious, and what she didn't want the world to know was that she was secretly kind," he remarked. Mr Grannell shared his ongoing struggle to comprehend the circumstances surrounding his friend's untimely death, labelling the experience as “the most nightmarish life-changing experience of my life.”

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

## Bibliography

* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news> - This URL could provide general news coverage on the Metropolitan Police's handling of investigations and their efforts to address community concerns, although specific details about Steven Grygelko's case may not be available.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news> - The Guardian often reports on police investigations and community relations, which could include discussions around the Metropolitan Police's interactions with the LGBT+ community.
* <https://www.met.police.uk/> - The official Metropolitan Police website may provide updates or statements regarding ongoing investigations and efforts to improve community relations, including those related to the LGBT+ community.
* <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime> - The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime could offer insights into broader policing strategies and community confidence surveys, including those involving the LGBT+ community.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime> - The Independent often covers UK crime news and police investigations, potentially including discussions on institutional issues within law enforcement and their impact on marginalized communities.
* <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/> - Stonewall, a prominent LGBT+ rights organization in the UK, may provide perspectives on how police actions affect the LGBT+ community and efforts to improve relations.