

Young man dies after being shot by police Taser gun in Manchester, England

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On July 10, Jordan Begley, a 23-year-old factory worker, died after being hit with a Taser gun fired by police at his home in Gorton, a district of Manchester, England.

Reports said that he died shortly after a 50,000 volt charge Taser gun was fired at him inside his home at 8 p.m.

The circumstances around his death are still unknown, with Greater Manchester Police (GMP) only announcing they responded to an emergency 999 call stating “there was a man with a knife” at a residence in Beard Road in Gorton. GMP’s statement continued, “Officers were dispatched immediately and arrived in eight minutes. On arrival a Taser was discharged to detain a 23-year-old man.” Regarding Begley’s death, the police have refused to give any details, stating only that at “some point” after he was Tasered, “he suffered a medical episode”.

According to a report in the *Daily Mail*, “up to a dozen officers—some of them armed”, turned up at Begley’s house prior to the shooting.

Anger over Begley’s death quickly mounted, with his mother Dorothy telling friends, “They’ve killed my son, they’ve killed my son.”

Adam McAllister, 22 who had been a close friend of Begley for eight years, said, “There was a row in the house, someone called the police and suddenly eight police officers bashed the door in and Tasered him in the front room. His mum was distraught and angry”.

He told the *Daily Mail*, “It was just a domestic and then the police arrived. There was some discussion outside before Jordan went into the house. These officers followed him into the house, turfed his mother out and then they Tasered him and now he’s dead. I feel like my friend has been murdered. Police are saying he had a knife and was dangerous but no one

saw him with a knife.”

He told another newspaper, “He has black eyes and strangulation marks around his neck. A Taser would only leave a small mark.”

Lee Wilkie, 25, a neighbour told the local newspaper, “He [Begley] was a good lad, a quiet lad, and he was very well-liked. People around here are just in total shock and really angry as well, why did they have to Taser him?”

The incident occurred just after Begley had finished a work shift at the Sivori’s local ice cream firm, in nearby Levenshulme, where he had been employed for at least three years. According to one media report Begley became involved in an argument with a neighbour and his mother called the police.

At the time of the incident Begley’s employer, Peter Sivori, had been driving past when he saw Begley outside the house with the police. Sivori said he was 30 or 40 yards from the incident. “He waved at me and tried to explain to the police that I was his employer, so a policeman came over and asked: ‘Is that true?’” he said. “The lad was pointing to me. He seemed to be in good condition then.”

Sivori said police told him they had received a complaint and told him to move on. “I thought they were quite aggressive. All I can say is that I think if I’d have been able to speak to him, I’d have calmed him down. I would have tried to help the lad.”

Begley had recently been diagnosed with an underlying heart condition.

On July 12, it was reported that an initial post-mortem on Begley, by a home office pathologist, proved inconclusive as to cause of death. The Independent Police Complaints Commission tasked with investigating Begley’s death said that further tests will be carried out.

His death brings the total number of people who have died in England and Wales after being shot by a Taser since 2006 to 10. Begley is the third person from Greater Manchester to have died in such circumstances.

The use of Tasers is on the increase in the UK, with an estimated three people a day being shot by police. A Freedom of Information request found that in 2011, UK police deployed Tasers 4,461 times compared with 3,219 times in 2010, an increase of almost 40 percent. They were fired into people 1,081 times, an average of almost three occasions every day, compared with 744 times in 2010. Greater Manchester Police fired Tasers the most in 2011, on 195 occasions, with London's Metropolitan Police firing them 101 times.

In April this year, police were called to an incident in Plymouth, England in which a 32-year-old man, Andrew Pimlott, had doused himself with petrol and was reportedly threatening to kill himself. He was subsequently shot with a Taser, causing him to burst into flames. He died five days later, suffering from serious burns. At the time, the police reported from the hospital saying that he had non-life-threatening injuries. Neighbours had described hearing an explosion and seeing Pimlott "fully on fire".

Recent figures show that Tasers are also being used by police on teenagers as young as 12. Figures obtained by *OpenWorld News* through Freedom of Information requests to police forces across the UK, show that over just the last three years, Tasers were drawn at least 194 times against children 16 and under, with at least 24 were actually shot by the Taser. *OpenWorld News* found that a 12-year-old girl was shot with a full 50,000-volt charge in St Helens by Merseyside Police after she was said to have obtained two knives and threatening to harm herself. A Taser was also aimed at a 13-year-old girl who was suffering from a mental health imbalance.

There are 13,794 police officers in England and Wales who are trained to use Tasers. Following the killing of the soldier Lee Rigby earlier this year, the Police Federation lobbied the government for the numbers of Tasers in use on the streets to be trebled.

Taser guns are misrepresented by authorities internationally as a "non-lethal" weapon, only used to subdue people. However there are growing criticisms of its supposed safety. Amnesty International has compiled figures that indicate that in the US, 500

hundred people have died since 2001 after a Taser has been used.

Taser International, the company that manufacture's Tasers, have consistently denied that the weapon is unsafe and have fought back in court when people have questioned their safety. They often fall back on a victim's medical condition, citing a weak heart or even possible drug abuse.

Since 2006, there has been mounting evidence that challenges the safety of the Taser from a number of peer reviewed studies. Dr Douglas Zipes, one of the world's leading cardiac electrophysiologists, published in the journal of the American Heart Association in 2012, the first peer reviewed study of Tasers. This demonstrated that the darts used to attach the wires connecting the Taser to the human body can cause sudden death.

A recent report published in *Frontiers in Physiology*, a scientific journal in Switzerland—where there have been more than 100 related deaths in recent years—has suggested that the use of the Taser can also stop breathing.

Global experience testifies that these deadly weapons are now being used to force people to obey the police, simply by threatening their use, and are being used routinely on a daily basis in the UK and throughout the world. By May last year, it was estimated that Tasers had been used on three million occasions by police forces globally.



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