

The Case of Q's Daughter

In 1995 Q and her two children travelled to the UK to join her husband, who had emigrated here two years earlier. They and their son and daughter settled swiftly and happily into their new surroundings and the children were enjoying considerable success at school, with many new friends. On 22 April 1997, however, Q's life changed for ever. She was on the way home when she received a call from her husband telling her not to go home, but to go straight to the Police Station. When she arrived, the dreadful words were waiting for her: "Your daughter is **DEAD**." Q's husband and 4 year old son were with her at the Police Station. Q was criticised (by one of the officers there) for her reaction to the news - which was to be totally shocked and then hysterical - feelings she says she had never before experienced or displayed in her life - but which, for her, were totally natural and beyond her control. Why wasn't a doctor called?

Q and her family were not able to go back to their home, where the terrible tragedy had happened. They had to stay at a friend's flat for a while because they were told by the Housing Department that they were not considered a priority case for re-housing. Q says her immediate family came from abroad to be with them at such a dreadful time, but there was nowhere for them to stay. She says there are no words to describe the utter isolation and desolation they felt. Q says there was no provision, no structured help for a family in their situation. ***An emergency strategy to provide accommodation on impact for families who suffer homicide in their home, or who are under threat, is a necessity.*** Her role now was to plan a funeral while she was living a nightmare.

Meanwhile, Q still had responsibility for her 4 year old son who was suffering extreme trauma. Communication between Q and her husband became strained and then non-existent from the day their beloved daughter was murdered. They could not support each other and soon separated.

Q has now lost a daughter and is without a husband, her son has lost his sister and has no father at home. FROM A CLOSE, HAPPY FAMILY OF FOUR, Q's SON HAS NOW ONLY HIS MOTHER AT HOME.

No matter how warm or comfortable her home, Q says the emptiness was palpable. The only way she was able to have any contact with her daughter was at the cemetery. For the first five years she visited her daughter's grave every day, without really knowing why she went. Still not accepting the truth.

Q says she feels the police could have been far more sensitive and understanding towards her and her family at such a shocking, traumatic and tragic time. They should have put more effort into keeping them informed of progress and generally had more training in dealing compassionately with people in her awful situation. Just two years after the tragedy, the investigation team were moved on to another murder case, that of a well-known TV presenter.

In 2002 Q approached her MP who persuaded police to re-open the case. Interest was rekindled and soon after this police were able to match the killer's DNA and fingerprints to a case of rape. It was found that the perpetrator, who was an illegal immigrant, had previous convictions for sexual assault and rape in his native country, but had been let

out on bail, from where he fled to England. Here, he had failed to report for deportation and had 'disappeared' into the system, where he continued to commit crimes against women.

Q feels that the justice system in the perpetrator's native country failed her. She believes that immigration controls in the UK should also be much stronger regarding the investigation of illegal immigrants. The killer was later proved to have committed seventy crimes - and, it is thought, a previous murder - against women and young girls! ***It took 7 years to catch this killer.*** The past history of all immigrants should be scrutinized thoroughly, as in other countries, with fingerprinting and DNA sampling given priority to minimise the risk of similar tragic consequences.

Without DNA evidence, this case would not have been solved. Q was very relieved that DNA evidence was able to be used in court to ensure that the culprit was brought to justice and placed securely where he belongs - in prison.

A strong International DNA database is crucial, as we are aware of many criminals who escape justice in their own country by fleeing to another, knowing they are unlikely to be traced.

With such a history, why was an extremely dangerous man on the loose, given access to the UK and at liberty to murder again? What is being done internationally to prevent repetition of such crimes?