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### O'Loan to report on death of Paul Whitters

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A GOVERNMENT minister has acknowledged that more than 50,000 people living in deprived areas of Derr ... [more »](#)

## News





## Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan O'Loan to report on death of Paul Whitters

The Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan is due in Derry early next week to release details of an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of a local teenager who died after being hit by a plastic bullet in 1981.

15 year-old Paul Whitters was struck in the back of the head by a plastic bullet fired by the RUC during disturbances in Great James Street on 15th April 1981. He died in hospital ten days later.

A source close to the Ombudsman's investigation said it centred on how the police had investigated the killing.

"This has been a detailed and at times a difficult enquiry and Nuala O'Loan has taken a personal interest in it," the source said.

Paul O'Connor from the Pat Finucane Centre - who worked with the Whitters family during their campaign - welcomed the announcement of the report's publication and said that he hoped that it would bring some "peace of mind" to the Whitters family.

"It's been a long and hard three years for the family. This investigation was the first time that individuals who witnessed the shooting had proper statements taken. We welcome this investigation by the Ombudsman and we are hopeful that this will bring the case to some kind of conclusion.

"The report will not change the fact that Paul was killed. However we believe that this may provide some kind of peace of mind to the Whitters family. The Whitters family have not commented on the matter as yet but will be making a full statement early next week," he said.

Paul Whitters was among a group of teenagers who had been throwing stones at an RUC patrol at the time of the shooting. Shortly after the stoning, which was described as being of a minor nature, the RUC

left the street and took up positions inside a bakery.

Eyewitnesses to the shooting said that when the fatal shot was fired the stoning had stopped. The teenager was looking through a gate at the side of the bakery when it opened and an RUC officer fired at him from close range. Eyewitnesses also said that after the shooting the 15 year-old was dragged along the ground by the RUC.

At the inquest into the death held in December 1982, the RUC inspector who carried out the investigation admitted during questioning he did not make any door-to-door inquiries in the street. In a statement read out at the inquest, the RUC officer who fired the fatal shot claimed that he was 20 to 25 yards from the teenager but this was disputed by eyewitnesses, who said that he may have been as close as five yards from the boy.

The coroner, addressing the jury, said there was great conflict in the evidence and that it was hard to reconcile the different accounts of what happened.

Next week also marks the 25th anniversary of the death of 11 year-old Stephen McConomy from Dove Gardens, who was hit by a plastic bullet fired by a member of the British Army's Royal Anglian Regiment. He later died in hospital.

13 April 2007

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