

Understanding the Dytham Case and What It Reveals About Operation Talla

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Most people have never heard of the 1979 case R v Dytham, but once you understand it, you realise something very simple:

The police cannot lawfully refuse to hear your crime report.

They cannot pre-decide not to act.

They cannot reject evidence because it is inconvenient or politically sensitive.

And this goes straight to the heart of what happened under Operation Talla.

1. What the Dytham Case Was About

In 1979 a police officer, PC Dytham, witnessed a violent assault that led to a man's death.

He did nothing.

He didn't intervene, didn't call for backup and didn't even report it.

He simply walked away.

The Court of Appeal ruled that this was a criminal offence.

Why?

Because a police officer has a public duty to receive reports of crime, act on them and protect the public.

Failing to do so, especially deliberately, is misconduct in public office.

This ruling remains one of the clearest statements in British law that:

- Police are legally required to act when a crime is reported to them.
- Doing nothing is unlawful.

2. Why This Matters for Operation Talla

Operation Talla was the national policing framework during the Covid crisis.

Across the UK, thousands of people tried to report evidence of serious wrongdoing relating to vaccine harms and Covid-related policies and decisions.

But instead of receiving these reports, officers were:

- instructed not to take them,
- told not to issue crime numbers,

- ordered to reject vaccine-related evidence at the front desk,
- and in many cases refusing to even look at the material.

We now know this was not isolated or accidental.

It was systemic, reinforced by directives such as, in Scotland, the Speirs Directive of 25 January 2022, which told officers not to accept such reports at all.

That is exactly the kind of behaviour *R v Dytham* says is unlawful.

3. How Operation Talla Crossed the Legal Line

Applying Dytham here is straightforward:

A. The police cannot refuse to hear a crime report, but Operation Talla created blanket instructions to do precisely that.

B. The police cannot pre-decide “no crime” without receiving the evidence. However, under Operation Talla, refusal was pre-determined before the public even approached a police officer or a police station.

C. Internal policy is not a legal defence

The Dytham case makes it clear:

A police officer’s duty comes from the law, not from an internal directive.

If a directive requires unlawful behaviour, then the directive and the putting of it into practise are the problem.

D. Repeated, UK-wide rejection of reports by members of the public is far worse than Dytham

In Dytham, one officer ignored one crime. Under Talla, whole categories of potential crimes were shut down, throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – and that is far more serious.

4. Why the Public Should Care

The police exist to:

- receive reports,
- record allegations,
- investigate wrongdoing,
- protect the public,
- and uphold the rule of law.

Operation Talla inverted this. Instead of protecting the public, it protected the institution.

Instead of hearing evidence, it rejected it.

Instead of professional investigative curiosity, it showed pre-determined dismissal and rejection.

Put bluntly:

If the public cannot report a crime, then the rule of law collapses. And it has.

R v Dytham teaches us that a police force cannot lawfully ignore crime.

Operation Talla shows that, during Covid, they did exactly that - on a national scale.

5. The Simple Truth

Dytham proves that refusing to accept evidence, shutting down reports and declining to record crime is not just bad practice - it is actually unlawful.

Operation Talla's reporting obstruction breached that principle across all four nations of the UK.

This is why understanding the case of Dytham is vital.

It exposes the reality that many people instinctively felt:

Their reports weren't ignored by accident. They were ignored by design and British law is abundantly clear - the police had no right whatsoever to do that.