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Former girlfriends of undercover policemen appear to stand good chance of winning

Eight women planning to sue police chiefs over emotional trauma allegedly caused by undercover policemen appear to be in a strong position

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Over the weekend came news which may unsettle police chiefs during their festive breaks. Eight women announced that they have started legal action against police chiefs. The eight say they were "deliberately and knowingly deceived" into forming long-term intimate relationships with undercover policemen. The deception caused them huge emotional trauma and pain, they say in their legal argument.

Articles on this news can be found [here](#) and [here](#), along with the [statement drawn up by the eight women](#).

The women appear to be in a strong position. It seems probable that the case will never actually go to court. The question is - would police chiefs really be happy to fight a case in court where the eight women tell heart-breaking stories of how they were deceived by the undercover policemen for years and years? These stories would be recounted day after day for the public to hear. To say the least, it would not be flattering to the police's reputation.

To take just one example, the women point out in their statement that the long-term relationships ended when the men suddenly vanished, pleading a variety of excuses - they were depressed, they needed to "sort their heads out", they were on the run from the police and the such like.

But in reality, say the women, the men were being recalled from their undercover deployment on the orders of their superiors. The eight say: "After the women formed loving relationships with these men, they disappeared when their posting ended, leaving the women to cope with the trauma of not knowing whether or not the person they were in love with would return, not knowing if they should be worried or angry and trying to discover what was real and what was not."

Aside from the personal aspects of the case, police chiefs would almost certainly have to disclose documents describing the clandestine work of the undercover policemen - what instructions their superiors gave them, what

information were they collecting, why they were taken off their undercover deployments and so on.

Police chiefs are surely unwilling to allow the inner workings of such a secret operation to be aired in a courtroom. They have not even admitted officially the existence of one of the covert units, the [Special Demonstration Squad](#) which was set up in 1968 and operated for many years. They are also pretty secretive about the existing covert unit, the [National Public Order Intelligence unit](#).

So police chiefs face the classic question - do they want all their dirty linen to be produced in a courtroom for all to see? Odds on, they won't. The alternative is to offer an out-of-court settlement to each of the eight. The women would surely be offered favourable terms if that did happen.

So far the police have said little, other than they are considering the contents of a letter from the eight's lawyer, [Harriet Wistrich](#) of London law firm Birnberg Peirce. [Jim Boyling](#), the undercover police officer who infiltrated animal rights and environmental groups, has denied any wrongdoing, adding that - as the lawyers for the women "have indicated they intend to bring an action against the Metropolitan police - the proper venue to determine whether there is any truth in the allegations is the court and not the media".

Over the weekend, [one activist blogger paid tribute to the](#) "bravery and dignity" of the women. The blogger, in the blog known as Bristling Badger, wrote that "they have not hired publicity agents to splash them across the press for money, nor are they going for their specific cops individually."

"Instead, by going anonymously they emphasise the way police invaded their personal lives; by going collectively they demolish the lie that relationships were forbidden and [Mark Kennedy](#) was one rogue officer; and by suing the Met as an institution they go for the real villains and give the best chance of bringing the workings of this murky corruption out into the light."

As part of any settlement, the eight want an end to this kind of conduct. [They say](#) : "We are bringing this case because we want to see an end to the sexual and psychological abuse of campaigners and others by undercover police officers. It is unacceptable that state agents can cultivate intimate and long lasting relationships with political activists in order to gain so called intelligence on those political movements."

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