

Met chief summoned to explain why police stole identities of dead children

Deputy assistant commissioner Pat Gallan summoned before MPs to respond to revelations officers used IDs of children



John Dines, an undercover police sergeant, as he appeared in the early 1980s when he posed as John Barker, a protester against capitalism. Dines's alternative identity used that of a child who had died. Photograph: Guardian

Rob Evans and Paul Lewis

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A senior police chief has been summoned to parliament to explain why [police secretly authorised undercover officers to steal the identities of around 80 dead children](#).

Pat Gallan, the Metropolitan [Police](#) deputy assistant commissioner in charge of the complaints department, will respond to the revelations at a parliamentary committee hearing on Tuesday.

An investigation by the Guardian has revealed that police infiltrating protest groups have for three decades adopted the identities of dead children, without informing or consulting their parents.

Two undercover officers have provided a [detailed account](#) of how they and others used the identities of dead children.

Keith Vaz, chair of the home affairs select committee has said he is "shocked" at the "gruesome" practice.

"The committee will hear from those who have been involved in undercover operations as well as their victims," he said. "I have asked the deputy assistant commissioner Pat Gallan to deal with the issues that have arisen."

Gallan is head of the Met's department for professional standards.

The Guardian has established how police officers were equipped with fabricated identity records, such as driving licences and national insurance numbers, in the name of their chosen dead child. They also visited the family home of the dead child to familiarise themselves with the surroundings and conducted research into other family members.

Scotland Yard has already announced an investigation into the controversy. It said it had received one complaint - believed to be a reference to a suspected police officer who was undercover in 2003 - and said it could "appreciate the concerns that have been raised". The force said that the practice of using the identities of dead children is not currently authorised.

The operation is known to have been orchestrated by the Special Demonstration Squad, a secretive Met unit disbanded in 2008. Dozens of SDS officers are believed to have searched through birth and death

certificates to find a child who had died young and would be a suitable match for their alias.

The officers then adopted the entire identity of the child as if the child had never died. One police officer has said the process was like "resurrecting" a dead person's identity.

The disclosure comes after two years of revelations concerning undercover police officers having sexual relationships with women they are spying on. Eleven women are currently bringing legal action against the Met for damages.

Vaz said: "The activities of undercover police officers caused disbelief when they were revealed in 2011. These revelations [about the use of dead children's identities] are shocking. I congratulate the Guardian on their investigation. To have used the identities of dead children without the knowledge or consent of their parents astonishes me. It sounds gruesome. "

The committee will also hear from Harriet Wistrich and Jules Carey, two lawyers who are representing women who say they were duped into forming intimate relationships of up to nine years with the spies.

Mark Kennedy, a police officer who lived among environmental activists for seven years and was exposed in 2011, will also give evidence. It is understood the committee has granted him permission to give testimony in private.

Meanwhile Lord Macdonald, the former director of public prosecutions, [has called for a public inquiry into undercover policing following the revelations.](#)

Macdonald said the police appeared to have "completely lost their moral compass", suggested some units had "gone rogue" and said the "drip, drip, drip" of "seedy and corrosive" stories threatened to undermine public confidence. An inquiry was needed to ensure such tactics were still not being used, he said.

- This article was amended on 4 February after new information from the office of Keith Vaz. His office previously said another senior Met officer, Cressida Dick, assistant commissioner in charge of counter-terrorism, would appear.

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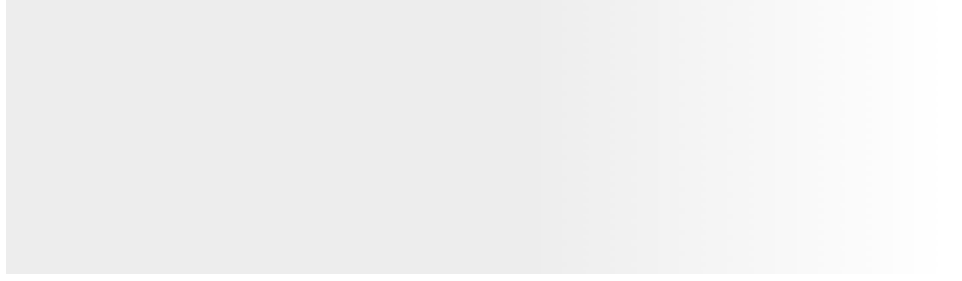
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