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Met police launch inquiry into construction worker blacklisting

Move reverses earlier decision not investigate claims of Met police involvement in compiling 3,200-name blacklist



📷 Shadow business secretary Chuka Umunna, who led a Commons debate on blacklisting last month, welcomed the Met's decision. Photograph: BBC/PA

Matthew Taylor and Will Hurst

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The [Metropolitan police](#) have launched an investigation into allegations of collusion in the blacklisting of construction workers. Officers are alleged to have handed information on individual workers to the blacklist, keeping thousands of builders and electricians out of work and driving some into long-term destitution.

This month it emerged that the Met **had dismissed a complaint** from the Blacklisting Support Group which claimed police involvement in compiling the 3,200-name list that came to light in 2009.

After growing concern among politicians and union leaders, however, the decision has been overturned and the force confirmed on Thursday that an inquiry was under way.

"An investigation is now being carried out under the supervision of the Independent **Police** Complaints Commission," the Met said. "It would not be appropriate for us to comment further at this time."

The information commissioner's office said last year that some of the content on the blacklist could only have come from the police or security services.

The files were collected by the Consulting Association, a clandestine organisation funded by major names in the construction industry.

Dave Smith, the leader of the Blacklist Support Group, welcomed the announcement, telling Building magazine: "There are entries on some blacklist files that are surveillance reports about anti-racism demonstrations that took place nowhere near a building site. We have other evidence to suggest that this information was compiled by undercover police officers.

"There are entries on other blacklist files that contain private, sensitive information that has never been in the public domain and that no manager or director of a building firm would ever have access to."

The shadow business secretary, Chuka Umunna, who last month led a debate in the Commons on blacklisting, welcomed the police investigation as a positive step in getting to the "full truth".

He said: "Serious allegations that some information on blacklist files came from members of the police and security services ... need to be looked into fully as part of getting to the bottom of the blacklisting scandal."

Sarah McSherry, a partner at Christian Khan solicitors, the firm representing the Blacklist Support Group, called for the investigation to be handled entirely by the IPCC given the Met's decision to "non-record" the original complaint last November.

She said: "We will be making further representations to the IPCC that, given their deplorable lack of knowledge of the Police Reform Act and the seriousness of the allegations of widespread corruption and criminal behaviour on the part of Metropolitan police officers, the [Met's Directorate of Professional Standards] DPS should have no involvement in the investigation of this complaint, which should be the subject of an independent investigation by the IPCC."

Unite welcomed the news of the IPCC investigation into blacklisting. Unite's assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail said: "What more evidence does Vince Cable and this government need that there needs to be a full 'Leveson' style inquiry into blacklisting. There needs to be a full and transparent investigation, backed by statutory powers, into all the allegations associated with the sordid spying enterprise called the Consulting Association (CA).

"The Business Secretary must immediately make plans to put in law genuine protections against blacklisting conspiracies. This should include making

blacklisting a criminal offence up to and including imprisonment for the culprits."

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