

Police forces to be made to look for evidence of undercover misconduct

Police minister Damian Green expected to tell chief constables to investigate amid Stephen Lawrence family smear allegations



'We may discover some very unpalatable truths, but it is better to discover them now than leave them hidden,' says the policing minister Damian Green. Photograph: David Jones/PA

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All police forces in England and Wales will be made to examine their archives to search for evidence of misconduct by undercover officers amid allegations surrounding the [Stephen Lawrence](#) murder inquiry.

The policing minister, [Damian Green](#), admitted the move could lead to "some very unpalatable truths" coming out, but added that it was better than keeping them hidden.

He is expected to tell the chief constables of the 43 forces they must carry out the searches following the revelation that an undercover officer was told to find information to smear the Lawrence family after the teenager's racially aggravated murder in 1993.

"Nobody who cares about the police wants to have a constant stream of historic scandals coming out," Green told the Sunday Telegraph. "That is why we are asking every chief constable to look at what may have happened in the past, and to do so as soon as possible.

"We may discover some very unpalatable truths, but it is better to discover them now than leave them hidden. What was clearly going on for too long was an inward-looking culture where police officers believed what they wanted to believe."

Green is also expected to announce that the new College of Policing is drawing up a code of ethics for officers, the paper reported.

"We will take steps to ensure the police are transparent," Green told Sky News on Sunday. "To make sure that there are is a proposed code of ethics that everybody knows about so we can carry out changes in culture."

On Saturday, it emerged that a retired senior Scotland Yard police officer had admitted authorising secret recordings of a meeting between Lawrence's friend Duwayne Brooks, his lawyers and detectives.

Former Met deputy assistant commissioner John Grieve said police officers had wanted "an unassailable record of what transpired" in meetings in 1999 and 2000.

Grieve, who was director of the racial and violent crimes taskforce between 1998 and 2002, told the BBC he deeply regretted any distress, dismay or

alarm that his decision may have caused Brooks, or Lawrence's parents, Doreen and Neville.

The claims affecting Brooks came after former undercover Met officer Peter Francis alleged he had been told to find information to use to smear the Lawrence family.

Brooks was waiting for a bus with Stephen Lawrence when the latter was murdered in Eltham, south-east London.

The secret recording is the latest scandal surrounding undercover officers in the UK, whose practices have been mired in controversy since allegations emerged that they had been using dead children's identities and engaging in inappropriate sexual relationships.

An investigation into undercover policing by the Met, named Operation Herne, is under way. And there are at least another seven on-going investigations as a result of police failings, which have so far cost £23m.

The home secretary, Theresa May, said the "vast majority of police officers are out there are working with integrity and honesty".

She told the Murnaghan Show on Sky News: "We've brought major reform into policing. There is still more to be done in relation to some of these issues which have been raised and questions that have been raised about integrity of policing.

"The College of Policing will be producing a code of ethics and integrity for the police, for example. That's a new body that we've set up to look at standards in the police.

"I think that the vast majority of police officers out there are working with integrity and honesty and doing the job that the public wants them to do.

"Sadly, of course, the police as a whole get a bad reputation if there are some who are not doing that, and as you say there has been a number of issues recently, a number of cases, some of which of course are historic but have really shocked people."

She said Green would be making a speech on the issue of undercover policing on Monday.

She added: "I think what's important is that what we realise is, that the majority of police officers are out there doing their job, doing it with honesty and doing it with integrity, and it is as difficult for them when a few are doing things, not acting with integrity."

Sir Peter Fahy, the chief constable of Greater Manchester police, said officers were experiencing low morale owing to the "constant stream of negative stories at the moment".

He told the Murnaghan Show : "I think if you carry out a survey of any public servants at the moment they would say that morale is low."

Referring to the Hillsborough independent panel report, which found evidence that South Yorkshire police attempted to manipulate the truth over the football stadium disaster, Fahy said: "They are affected by what feels like a constant stream of negative stories at the moment. But you've got to bear in mind, for instance, some of my officers weren't even born at the time of Hillsborough and things like undercover policing are carried out by a tiny number of officers.

"But of course, the impact of all the negative publicity does affect the whole force."

Fahy, who is also vice-president of the Association of Chief **Police** Officers, added: "There are a lot of judgments by armchair generals and almost professors in hindsight, not taking into context the state of society and things officers were being asked to do at the time some of these events occurred."

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