

Stephen Lawrence murder: police bugged meetings with witness

Senior officer is understood to have approved decision to secretly record meetings with Duwayne Brooks and lawyer



📷 Duwayne Brooks, who was found by the Macpherson inquiry to have been victimised by police. Photograph: John Stillwell/PA

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Tue 25 Jun 2013 18:11 BST

Scotland Yard is facing new pressure over the [Stephen Lawrence](#) case after it emerged officers bugged meetings with the main witness in the case, Duwayne Brooks, and his lawyer.

The Guardian understands the decision to secretly record the meetings was authorised by a senior [Metropolitan police](#) officer. Brooks and his solicitor were unaware of the recording.

Brooks was found to have been victimised by police by an official inquiry, headed by Sir William Macpherson, in 1999, despite being a surviving victim of the attack that claimed Lawrence's life.

The decision to subject him to covert recordings came after this finding and after the Met had vowed to change following the Macpherson report.

Brooks was with Lawrence on the night the pair were attacked by a racist gang in south-east [London](#) on 22 April 1993.

The recordings took place in 1999 or 2000. At least two meetings were recorded, a source with knowledge of events said. Present were Brooks, his solicitor Jane Deighton, and police officers.

One meeting took place at the offices of Deighton's law firm in Islington, north London.

A "728" form, used by the Met, bears the name of the senior officer who authorised the decision to covertly record Brooks.

The meeting was asked for by officers from Operation Athena Tower, which the Met launched after it was chastised by Macpherson and which was a renewed effort to catch Lawrence's killers, who were then still free.

It was headed by the former deputy assistant commissioner John Grieve.

"It was covertly recorded after permission was obtained," a source said of the alleged bugging.

Responding to the allegations, the Met issued a statement promising that "an investigation into the circumstances of what took place has now been started". It will be conducted by Deputy Assistant Commissioner Fiona Taylor, who is in charge of professional standards.

On Tuesday Deighton said police asked to meet Brooks and his solicitor to update them on the Lawrence murder investigation.

Brooks's solicitor Deighton told the BBC: "It does feel that there has been a persistent attempt from 1993 up to these meetings in 1999 - maybe even beyond - to undermine Duwayne Brooks's reputation. That is horrific," she said.

"Since he was 17, he has been haunted by the police seeking to undermine him, seeking to arrest and prosecute him and it has been up to the courts to defend him.

"He is now being haunted again by police wrongdoings scattered over the last 30 years that are emerging without warning and they are there to drag him down.

"It is a scandal that any individual should have to live through this for 30 years."

The development comes after a former undercover officer, Peter Francis, [revealed to the Guardian](#) he had been asked find information to smear and undermine the family of Stephen Lawrence. He also said he had been asked to find "dirt" on Brooks, at a time when he was the potential main witness in any prosecution over the racist murder of the gifted 18-year-old student.

The revelations led the home secretary to ask two existing inquiries to examine the claims made by Francis.

The former Scotland Yard chief Brian Paddick said of the news that Brooks had been targeted by covert recordings: "This happened in 1999-2000, after the Macpherson report. Why are they secretly recording Duwayne Brooks? This is after Macpherson has criticised the police treatment of him saying he was victimised by the police."

In a BBC interview, Deighton said the news was "horrific" and that at least one of the meetings took place at the request of the police.

She said since 1993 the police had tried to undermine Brooks and, asked for his reaction, said: "His reaction is that if it is true, it is a scandal."

Brooks is now a Liberal Democrat councillor in Lewisham, south London. He has also been recently appointed as an adviser on stop and search for the London mayor's office of policing.

He was charged after the Lawrence murder with violent disorder but cleared after a judge ruled the case against him was an abuse of process.

Brooks has long alleged a police vendetta against him.

In a [1999 Guardian interview](#) Brooks said police waged a campaign to smear his name: "I was repeatedly stopped and searched after the murder. When the police found that I had no criminal record they used other means to try to discredit me."

At one of three identity parades officers accused him of stealing cans of soft drink.

The Macpherson report in 1999 attacked the Met for the way they treated Brooks: "Mr Brooks was the victim of racist stereotyping," it concluded.

[From 1993, when he survived the attack that killed Lawrence, to 1999,](#) Brooks was repeatedly arrested and stopped by the police. He was even stopped under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

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