



PRESS STATEMENT

National Black Police Association Statement on the Government's Review of Police Misconduct

The National Black Police Association (NBPA) welcomes the Government's decision to undertake a comprehensive review of the police misconduct and accountability system.

For too long, misconduct investigations have taken an unacceptable amount of time to conclude. Justice delayed serves no one. It leaves complainants waiting for answers, places enormous strain on police officers and staff and undermines confidence in policing's ability to hold itself to account.

However, if this review is to restore confidence, it cannot simply focus on making the system quicker. It must ask a much more fundamental question: is the system fair, proportionate, independent and trusted by both the public and those who serve within policing?

Through our work supporting over 6,000 Black, Asian and minority ethnic police officers and staff across the United Kingdom, the NBPA has repeatedly seen misconduct processes used in ways that appear disproportionate and, at times, vexatious. We have supported members who have found themselves under investigation after raising legitimate concerns about racism, discrimination or organisational culture. While allegations of misconduct must always be investigated, misconduct procedures must never become a tool that discourages officers and staff from speaking truth to power.

The human impact is profound. We have supported members whose mental health has deteriorated significantly during lengthy investigations, whose careers have stalled, whose reputations have been damaged before any findings have been made and whose families have endured immense emotional, financial and personal hardship. Even when officers are ultimately exonerated, the damage is often irreversible.

The review must also confront the longstanding issue of racial disproportionality. Independent reviews, including Baroness Casey's review of the Metropolitan Police, have demonstrated that Black and Asian officers are disproportionately subjected to misconduct processes. Similar concerns have been raised elsewhere across policing for many years. If this review is serious about fairness, it cannot ignore the evidence or treat disproportionality as a secondary issue. It must examine why these disparities exist and what structural reforms are needed to eliminate them.

The NBPA is increasingly concerned by the direction of travel in policing and, in particular, whose voices are shaping Government policy.

Following the fatal shooting of Chris Kaba and the unprecedented decision by authorised firearms officers to hand back their firearms authorities, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Mark Rowley, publicly argued that the police accountability system required reform. Government responded with the Police Accountability Rapid Review lead by ex- Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Tim Goodwin OBE QPM. Sir Mark also advocated for the abolition of independent Legally Qualified Chairs in police misconduct hearings and this was swiftly removed with no review. The government then appointed former Metropolitan Police Commissioner Lord Bernard Hogan-Howe to lead the so-called independent review into police force structures - one of the most significant reforms to policing in decades. Now, the Government has appointed former Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner Dame Lynne Owens to lead the review of the police misconduct system.

We want to be clear: this is not a criticism of Dame Lynne Owens personally, nor of those who have been appointed to undertake these reviews. Each has given distinguished public service. However, it is entirely legitimate to ask why policing reforms of national significance continue to be shaped by individuals so closely associated with one police force.

The Metropolitan Police remains under intense scrutiny following findings of institutional racism, misogyny and serious cultural failings. Yet it increasingly appears that the Metropolitan Police's leadership and former leaders are setting the agenda for reforms that will affect every police force in England and Wales. That risks creating the perception that policing is defining the solution to problems that require genuinely independent scrutiny.

We are equally concerned that Government appears to be listening most closely to a relatively small number of senior policing voices calling for reduced external scrutiny and accountability, while the voices of officers, staff associations, community representatives and those who have experienced unfairness within the system are too often overlooked.

Policing should never see accountability as something to be resisted. Accountability is one of the foundations of policing by consent. It strengthens public confidence, protects officers who act professionally, exposes poor practice where it exists and creates opportunities for learning and improvement. An increasingly defensive approach from some Chief Officers risks placing institutional reputation above fairness, transparency and public trust.

The NBPA has long argued that the current system requires more independence, not less. We continue to advocate for a fully independent police misconduct and grievance system that commands the confidence of the public, police officers and police staff alike. Independence is not simply about who conducts an investigation; it is about ensuring confidence that decisions are free from institutional influence, conscious or unconscious bias and organisational self-interest.

This review presents an important opportunity. It must do more than shorten investigations. It must address racial disproportionality, protect those who raise legitimate concerns, strengthen genuinely independent oversight and deliver a misconduct system that is fair to everyone.

The NBPA will engage constructively with this review and continue to advocate for reforms that reflect the principles upon which British policing was founded: fairness, integrity, accountability and policing by consent.

Policing will not rebuild confidence by reducing accountability. It will rebuild confidence by ensuring accountability is independent, proportionate, timely and fair. That is the standard against which the NBPA will judge the outcome of this review.