



Home Office

Home Secretary

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[www.gov.uk/home-office](http://www.gov.uk/home-office)

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Sir Richard Henriques

16 March 2021

Dear Sir Richard,

May I start by expressing my great sympathy to those who have suffered so much as a result of this dark chapter in the history of policing. I have heard first-hand from Lady Brittan of the shattering impact of Operation Midland. I am aware of the damage that the false allegations wrought on Mr Proctor, his reputation and his livelihood. I have huge respect for the way the late Lord Bramall remained stoic in face of such injurious claims. As Home Secretary, responsible for policing in England & Wales, I feel a sense of profound regret for the harm that has been caused to them, their families and others impacted by the errors of Operation Midland.

In your recent open letter to me, you set out a number of important questions about Operation Midland and the subsequent investigation by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). I wanted to start by addressing your request that I ask an independent police force to investigate the conduct of MPS officers involved in authorising and applying for search warrants, and those in the IPCC and IOPC whose duty it was to investigate. I'm sure that you will understand that, as Home Secretary, I have no legal basis on which to do so or to require a police force to conduct an investigation. Police forces are operationally independent - a vital principle that prevents political interference in specific policing matters.

Instead, my focus has been to ensure that the mistakes you enumerated, and the harm they caused, cannot happen again. That is why I asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary to undertake a comprehensive inspection into the extent to which the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) had learned from Operation Midland and made genuine, lasting changes to the way it conducts investigations. The Inspectorate concluded that, whilst the MPS had been initially slow to respond, they were making good progress under Operation Larimar, a project to deliver improvements against your recommendations and those of the IOPC in the Operation Kentia Report. The Commissioner and her team have provided me with periodic updates, setting out the substantial changes they have made, particularly in relation to safeguards around the application for search warrants. I shall consider how best to receive assurances that the

checks and balances in the MPS, and other forces, are working to ensure that allegations of non-recent child sexual abuse are investigated both thoroughly and impartially.

In relation to your questions around promotion of officers under investigation and separately the relationship between any compensation paid to those impacted by Operation Midland and the decision that no officers had a case to answer for misconduct, I have asked the Commissioner to write to you directly. You will understand that, while I can provide you with general principles around promotion and compensation, it is for the MPS to justify these specific decisions. I have also asked the Commissioner to provide you with an update of the programme of work that the MPS have undertaken on the basis of your recommendations.

You raise some entirely reasonable questions in relation to decisions made by the IOPC during the course of their investigation, Operation Kentia. I have also had concerns about the efficacy of the police watchdog and this is why I asked Director General Michael Lockwood to set out his plan for improving public confidence in his organisation following the publication of the Operation Kentia report. This was published last year and sets out the IOPC's progress since it was formed in 2018, as well as further plans for improvement. They have certainly made progress in the timeliness of their investigations, but there is much more to be done and I will continue to work closely with Michael Lockwood to ensure this happens.

I cannot explain the specific decisions made by an organisation independent to myself, so I have asked Mr Lockwood to write to you directly to answer your questions. I have also requested that his response is made available to the public so that any outstanding matters can be picked up by the Home Affairs Committee as part of their ongoing inquiry into the police complaints system.

Finally, you ask about the decision of the MPS not to pursue witnesses A & B. I can confirm that this matter is currently being independently investigated by Merseyside Police.

I hope that this response has been helpful. I will await further responses from the MPS and IOPC, but I would welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss these with you.

I would like to finish by once again expressing my regret that this caused so much pain for those falsely accused and their loved ones. The mistakes of Operation Midland must not be allowed to happen again. I believe that we have made significant strides towards achieving that aim and I will not be swayed until we achieve it.



**Rt Hon Priti Patel MP**