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Not-Guilty - Met Firearms Officer Who Killed Chris Kaba!

A Metropolitan Police firearms officer has been found not guilty of the murder of Chris Kaba. Chris Kaba, a 24 year old Black man, was fatally shot by Martyn Blake, a firearms officer from the Metropolitan Police on 5 September 2022 in Streatham, London. He was unarmed. On 5 September 2024, Metropolitan police forced the car Chris was driving to stop believing it was linked to a firearms incident the previous night in nearby Brixton. The car was not registered to Chris and was not stolen. The officers did not know who was driving the car. Chris was unarmed and had his hands clearly visible on the steering wheel. Blake rushed out of his car and within a few seconds shot Chris in the head.

During the trial, Martyn Blake described having seen Chris as a "Black male who looked comparatively young and athletic". The prosecution argued that the trained firearms officer decided to shoot "precipitously" whilst the car was stationary and hemmed in at the back with no risk to anyone as the other officers were not nearby. They also argued that Martyn Blake deliberately made false and exaggerated statements to create an element of danger that did not exist when he decided to shoot Chris. Martyn Blake was charged with Chris' murder by the Crown Prosecution Service on 20 September 2023. At no point did the defence put in an application that he had no case to answer for. Today, the jury at The Old Bailey has found him not guilty.

Following the jury's verdict, Chris' family made the following statement: "Today, we are devastated. The not guilty verdict leaves us with the deep pain of injustice adding to the unbearable sorrow we have felt since Chris was killed. No family should endure the unimaginable grief we have faced. Chris was stolen from us, and this decision shows his life — and many others like him — does not matter to the system. Our son deserved better. The acquittal of Martyn Blake isn't just a failure for our family, but for all those affected by police violence. Despite this verdict, we won't be silenced. We are deeply grateful to everyone who stood by us and fought for justice. We will continue fighting for Chris, for justice, and for real change. Chris' life mattered, and nothing can take that away from us."

Temí Mwale and Kayza Rose of the Justice for Chris Kaba Campaign "Today is a devastating moment for the Kaba family, our community, and the nation. Martyn Blake's acquittal is painful proof that our lives are not valued by this system. The fight for accountability, justice, and racial equity has spanned decades, and we honor all those who have contributed. Despite today's verdict, our commitment remains unwavering. For the Kaba family, justice was never just about a conviction - it's about systemic change, a fight we will not abandon as a campaign. This outcome reinforces the harsh reality that police can kill without consequence. No one can be safe while the police can kill with impunity. We stand with the families who lost loved ones before Chris, still seeking justice. This verdict is not the end - it only strengthens our resolve. Now is the time to join the fight for a future where justice and accountability are the norm, and no one is above the law. True justice for our community must go beyond the criminal legal system. It must deliver real repair, healing, and lasting transformation. *Rest in Power Chris Kaba.*

Deborah Coles, Director of INQUEST: "It is difficult to reconcile the verdict with the evidence heard at the trial and the shocking reality of an unarmed Black man being shot in the head.

It is clear from our work that when the police kill, they seek to operate above the law. This verdict must not now be used by the police lobby to further dilute police accountability. We know that Chris' death is not an isolated case but part of systemic racism and stereotyping that equates Black men with dangerousness. For decades, Black men, have disproportionately been killed by the police. However, the conviction of one police officer does not stop the violence, racism and misogyny entrenched in police culture and practice. Real justice and accountability is when the deaths and harms of policing stop. To achieve this, we must urgently redirect resources away from police and into communities."

Daniel Machover and Ellie Cornish of Hickman and Rose, who represent the family: "In this case, the IOPC once again failed to treat the officers involved in a death as suspects from the start, instead labelling them as 'significant witnesses,' as is too often the norm. After any death following police contact, key officers should be treated as suspects right away, with their status changed to witnesses only if appropriate after an initial investigation. Police officers expect to be treated as witnesses, but for real accountability, this needs to change within both the police and the IOPC. If a member of the public is directly involved in someone's death they're invariably treated as a suspect - why should police officers be different? Public trust depends on holding police to the same standard. This trial revealed that treating officers as suspects offers them better legal protection than the current 'Post Incident Procedure,' which applies until someone is considered a suspect. We need more trials like this, not fewer, but it requires stronger investigations and a shift in mindset at the IOPC and CPS."

Armed Police Have a Dangerous Job - That Doesn't Mean They Should Be Less Accountable

Gaby Hinsliff, Guardian: The home secretary mustn't let herself be held to ransom over the Chris Kaba case. Officers need her support, but so do the public and grieving families: Dalian Atkinson was a gifted Premier League footballer in his youth. But by the summer afternoon that he died, he was a vulnerable man in the middle of a breakdown, standing outside his father's house in Telford, shouting about being the Messiah. Two police officers summoned by neighbours were "terrified", a court heard. Atkinson was Tasered for far longer than guidelines allow, and when he finally hit the ground, PC Benjamin Monk kicked him hard enough in the head to leave bootlace imprints. It later turned out Monk, who was convicted of manslaughter in 2021, hadn't disclosed criminal cautions for theft and drunkenness before joining the force.

A black sporting hero; a white officer with a history of dishonesty; a degree of violence that turns the stomach. Out of a dozen cases in 34 years involving police officers facing murder or manslaughter charges, Atkinson's is still the only one to meet the bar juries seemingly set for convicting in morally troubling cases that often elicit little public sympathy. Jurors seem particularly willing to give officers the benefit of the doubt over split-second judgment calls few of us might want to make, with no on-duty officer in history convicted of shooting a suspect dead. This week a jury took only three hours to clear Met firearms officer Martyn Blake of murder over the shooting of Chris Kaba, an unarmed black man driving a car linked to a firearms incident the night before, who had tried to ram his way free from a police stop. (The jury wasn't told that Kaba was a gang member also captured on CCTV shooting a man in a crowded nightclub the week before, because Blake didn't know that either when he fired).

For Kaba's grieving family, this latest in a string of acquittals was proof the police "can kill with impunity", as a campaigner said. Police chiefs, conversely, have responded by demanding more

safeguards against prosecution. Though the home secretary, Yvette Cooper, has agreed to demands that officers in such cases remain anonymous until convicted – not unreasonably, given the threats reportedly made against Blake and his loved ones – she has ordered an independent review into some of the more questionable asks on the National Police Chiefs’ Council wishlist, alongside a crackdown on police vetting and an overhaul of CPS guidance on charging officers. It’s time to get to the bottom, once and for all, of why successful prosecutions are so rare.

Arguably the last people in the world who need more freedom from scrutiny is a Met unit already accused of having senior officers over a barrel. A 2022 review led by the crossbench peer Louise Casey, following the murder of Sarah Everard by a serving officer, found a “deeply troubling” culture in a specialist firearms squad with a reputation for considering itself untouchable. Officers transferred out over alleged sexual misconduct were later quietly returned, and petty fiddles such as gaming overtime were routine. Casey heard of one senior Met officer telling others that “it was all right to ‘colour outside the lines’ – to bend and break rules – because firearms officers are harder to replace than other officers and need to be cherished”. Firearms officers are all volunteers and their seniors know that if they downed weapons en masse, the result would be potentially catastrophic for London. The army was on standby for the end of Blake’s trial, in case of mutiny.

The home secretary cannot, however, let herself be held to ransom. If the police have real evidence of being overzealously pursued, obviously it must be heard: if you accept that bad Ofsted reports can push headteachers to the brink, it’s unreasonable to deny that the fear of going to prison can weigh heavily on officers, especially when investigations drag on for years. But let us also hear from those who think justice is already almost impossible to get and who understand the human consequences of some of the NPCC’s more technical-sounding demands, such as making it harder for inquests to return verdicts of unlawful killing against police officers.

Ian Tomlinson was a newspaper vendor, found dead in the street of what a flawed post-mortem initially identified as a heart attack, only for a chance video to surface of a police officer pushing and striking him. After much agonising, the then director of public prosecutions announced that the officer couldn’t be charged without proof of how Tomlinson died. That decision was only reversed by an inquest verdict of unlawful killing, though the officer was ultimately acquitted of manslaughter. That DPP, by the way, is currently the prime minister.

It’s true that we expect extraordinary things of firearms officers. Of the two other fatal shootings investigated in the year Kaba died, one involved a white man with a knife who attacked a police station and charged headlong at a Derbyshire firearms officer, who held off firing until the man was barely arm’s-length away. The other was a white man in Cumbria, holding a knife to a young child’s throat. He was shot after repeatedly refusing to drop the knife, and the child survived. The skill and steadiness under pressure involved in both cases is astonishing, and the consequences of a mistake unimaginable. I certainly couldn’t do it. But the same is true of brain surgery, and that doesn’t render surgeons above the law. Cooper’s review should work with an open mind, but also with open eyes. It cannot just settle for whatever level of scrutiny the Met is grudgingly prepared to accept.

CCRC: Case Involving Disputed Confessions Sent to Northern Ireland Court

Mr Cummings applied to the CCRC in 2018 making several arguments about his conviction. The CCRC made a provisional decision not to refer the case.

A case in which there are doubts about the integrity of interview statements has been sent to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal by the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC). Christopher Cummings was convicted at Belfast Crown Court in 1980 on one count of

causing an explosion outside a branch of the Ulster Bank in Stewartstown, County Tyrone on New Year’s Eve 1978, and two counts of being a member of a proscribed organisation. Mr Cummings was interviewed by police several times. Mr Cummings did not sign any statement presented to him by Police. Police claimed he made admissions about the bombing and his connections to the Provisional IRA. At trial the prosecution relied on these Police interviews and unsigned written statements, and the defence argued the statements had been fabricated. The defence argument wasn’t accepted, and Mr Cummings was sentenced to 16 years imprisonment, reduced to 12 years on appeal. He was released from prison in the late 1980s.

However, Mr Cummings’ representatives obtained a new expert report which supported their contention that the Police statements could not be relied upon. The CCRC also identified new information about the previous conduct of some of the interviewing officers. After further analysis, the CCRC believes there is now a real possibility the Court of Appeal will not uphold Mr Cummings’ conviction.

More Than 1,000 Drone Incidents at Jails in England and Wales Last Year

Incumbent on Prisons to Make Better Citizens, Not Better Criminals.

Josh Halliday, Guardian: Exclusive: MoJ attempts to fight back against brazen deliveries that often include household items like ketchup alongside drugs. The number of drones seen carrying drugs into prisons soared to more than 1,000 last year as police waged a “constant battle” against gangs flying in cocaine and cannabis from miles away. Official figures reveal the number of drone incidents at prisons in England and Wales has risen almost tenfold since 2020, climbing to 1,063 incursions last year. The Ministry of Justice has attempted to fight back against the often-brazen deliveries – which can even include household items like shower gel and tomato ketchup – by introducing new counter-drone laws in January. But the huge value of drugs behind bars, where they can fetch three to five times their street value, has made it a serious supply route for organised crime groups.

Figures published by the Ministry of Justice reveal that the number of drones sighted or reported around prisons in England and Wales more than doubled between 2022 and 2023. Last year’s total of 1,063 incidents was also more than double the total recorded between 2019 and 2021, in a sign of how the aerial smuggling route has taken off. The true figures are likely to be much higher given many successful drone deliveries go undetected. Gangs have been known to fly more than £1m worth of cocaine and other drugs into a single prison over several night-time missions.

Robert Knight, the governor of HMP Manchester, said the 150-year-old prison needed help to tackle the “massive problem” of drugs being flown in. Speaking after inspectors raised the alarm about “catastrophic levels” of drug abuse in HMP Manchester, Knight said: “We do not deny that it is a massive problem for us.” Knight said corrupt officers were also smuggling contraband into the Victorian prison but that the biggest threat was from drones.

Some prisoners have been known to use kettle filaments to burn holes in windows so aerial deliveries can be flown straight to their cells. Det Supt Andy Buckthorpe of Greater Manchester police said it was a constant battle for authorities to keep up with the criminal gangs and their associates inside. Buckthorpe said gangs were headhunting highly skilled drone pilots from the non-criminal world to ferry their huge cargo to prison cell windows in Amazon Prime-style deliveries. Chris Rainford, a former fire service officer who trains police forces to use drones, said the phenomenon was really difficult for the authorities to tackle. “Some of the drones can go up to 10km [6.2 miles] so they [the pilot] could quite easily be sat in a car at least several hundred metres away, if not a mile or two miles away,” he said. The more sophisticated drones, worth several thousand pounds, are about a metre wide and equipped with thermal imaging, allowing them to transport several kilograms of illicit goods under the cover of darkness.

New laws introduced in January made it a criminal offence to fly drones within 400 metres of any closed prison or young offender institution in England and Wales. Drone operators that break the rules could face fines of up to £2,500 while those found smuggling illicit items will face up to 10 years in prison. Some prisons have introduced counter-drone technology to detect when unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are nearby but few, if any, are thought to actively block the devices from approaching. Mike Smith, the air safety manager at Ruas Drone Training in Newport, south Wales, said one of the reasons for this was that signal blockers also interfered with technology such as CCTV and car key fobs. Other air defences also have their limitations. Dutch police briefly tried using highly trained eagles to capture drones out of the sky but abandoned the trial because the birds were too unpredictable. Smith said: “The problem with prisons is that serious and organised crime are generally one step ahead of most people – and they’ve got more money than anyone defending it has.”

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said: “Prisons were left in crisis by the last government and figures like these demonstrate the need for robust action to get the situation back under control. “Staff have worked hard with the police to stop drones and bring those criminals responsible to justice. But it is clear we must do more and we will announce further measures in due course so that prisons make better citizens, not better criminals.”

Prison Officers Dismissed For Joking About Inmate’s Suicide

Haroon Siddique, Guardian: Two prison officers at HMP Wandsworth have been dismissed for joking about an inmate’s suicide on a WhatsApp group. After the 21-year-old prisoner killed himself, messages celebrating his death were posted on a group containing 27 members of staff employed at the south-west London jail. According to the Times, which was passed the messages by a whistleblower, hours after the inmate’s death, the prison officer Kevin O’Farrell asked if the deceased was the person referred to as “the fuckwit”. A colleague said: “Former fuckwit.” O’Farrell wrote “Splendid if so. Total prick.” He also wrote “utter cunt, no loss” and “good, I hope he suffered”.

Another officer, Armin Naroozi, shared a gif of a man dancing, alongside the words: “Another one bites the dust.” He wrote: “If he wasn’t such a cunt, I might have felt sorry for him.” An officer reported the messages to the governor and O’Farrell and Naroozi were sacked last year for unprofessional conduct. The other staff in the group were given warnings and guidance.

The mother of the inmate, who asked for him not to be named, told the Times she was “totally broken” after finding out about the messages. She said: “My boy was challenging in some ways, I know he was, but he didn’t deserve this. He was funny, he was always laughing. He lived for his basketball and won so many medals for athletics. He got in with the wrong crowd. Everyone says that but he really did. These are meant to be prison officers. They haven’t apologised to us. Do they know how it hurts when you lose a child? I can’t stop thinking, were any of the officers making his life hell before?” She expressed gratitude in relation to the officer who spoke out “but there were so many who didn’t do anything”.

In the WhatsApp group, officers openly joked about assaulting prisoners, including the tennis champion Boris Becker, who spent a few weeks there after being jailed for hiding assets during bankruptcy, and talked about getting revenge against an inmate who assaulted a staff member, the Times reported. Officers are also said to have shared misogynistic messages, mocked a gay prison officer’s appearance, and joked that a gay prisoner particularly enjoyed jail shower time and about colleagues taking drugs. Naroozi, now unemployed, told the Times he was “full of remorse and regret” for sending the messages and was “shocked” that a written apology he said he had writ-

ten to the dead prisoner’s family had not been passed on. “It was something that I fully regret and I live with for the rest of my days,” said Naroozi. He said conditions at the prison were awful and claimed governors “threw us under the bus”. O’Farrell did not respond to the Times’s requests for comment. HMP Wandsworth has been called the worst prison in England and Wales and described as having “inhumane conditions”. Earlier this year, the prison officer Linda De Sousa Abreu admitted misconduct in a public office after being filmed having sex with an inmate. A Prison Service spokesperson said: “This was truly despicable behaviour that tarnishes the hard work of the overwhelming majority of our prison staff. The two officers involved were dismissed last year when these messages came to light and their actions were reported to police. Where officers do fall below our high standards, robust action will be taken as was the case here.”

Unanimous Acquittals For Murder, Manslaughter, Attempted Murder

Doughty Street Chambers: The case concerned the murder of a 17-year-old young man CB and the attempted murder of his friend, JP, also aged 17 years, on Sunday 7th May 2023. Both young men had come to High Wycombe to deal class A drugs on the Max Line. There were 5 defendants; D1, was a violent dealer on a competing drugs line – the Turk Line. The other four defendants, including Mr Hall KC and Ms Smith’s client, were homeless or itinerant class A drug users.

The Crown alleged that D1, armed with a machete, had robbed the two young men the day before and told them to leave High Wycombe. The young men had not heeded this warning and continued trafficking class A drugs in the area. D1 returned the next day to rob the young men and exact revenge with murderous intent. The Crown case was that the drug addicts joined in a conspiracy to rob, and a plan to kill, or had at the very least formed a conditional intent to do so. The jury accepted there had been a plan to rob the young men of some drugs and money and that D1 killed CB and attempted to murder JP. However, the jury wholly rejected that Mr Hall KC and Ms Smith’s client had joined any murderous plan to exact revenge or had assisted or encouraged that enterprise in any way.

The court heard complex legal argument concerning the admissibility and use of bad character (joined to this trial was an additional count of attempted murder which D1 was alleged to have committed at a youth offending unit while on remand), joint enterprise, and the court’s approach to overwhelming supervening acts post-Jogee. The learned judge’s legal directions ran to 38 pages.

Neglect Led to Self-Inflicted Death of Autistic Woman at HMP Eastwood Park

A jury in Bristol has concluded that the self-inflicted death of a vulnerable woman in prison was contributed to by neglect by the prison. Kayleigh Melhuish, known as Kay, was 36 years old at the time of her death. She had six children. Kay had mental ill health and was diagnosed with autism, ADHD and complex post-traumatic stress disorder. Her autism meant that she was sensorily sensitive, in particular to noise. She had a history of self-harm and suicide attempts. Kay had never been to prison before but was remanded to Eastwood Park Prison on 15 June 2022. Professionals immediately wrote to Eastwood Park to express their concern about her risk of suicide, and to warn staff about how difficult Kay would find an environment which was unfamiliar, heavily controlled, often arbitrary, and noisy. Her family, her psychologist and her solicitors all warned them. These messages were passed on, and the prison did move reasonably quickly to have Kay assessed by a specialist neurodiversity practitioner who was working a day a week at the understaffed prison at the time. This person has since left and has not been replaced. However, the jury heard: That almost no staff had read the communication support plan that the neurodiversity practitioner had prepared.

Stop Stealing Our Pensions

Alan – HMP Ashfield: I would like to publicly invite any law firm to consider taking a class action lawsuit against the government. The case I would propose concerns whether or not a state pension is a benefit or an entitlement. Like hundreds of others, on entering prison my state pension was stopped. I had paid in over a lifetime of work, as did all my employers, the contributions dictated by government towards my state pension. The only stipulation at the time of payments starting was that when I could claim the state pension on reaching the age of 65, and it would cease on my death. There was no contract to sign, nor any other conditions apart from the fact that I needed to make sufficient contributions. How the government used the funds paid in was entirely at their discretion. My argument is that as I made regular payments, as would be the case with a private pension, then the government is wrong in stating that this is a benefit.

If the government wished to make the case that the pension is going towards the cost of keeping me in prison, then they are clearly in contravention of the discrimination rules laid out in the Equalities Act. Thus, people over the retirement age, if entitled to a state pension, are being unfairly disadvantaged. It is worth bearing in mind that in the past, when a private pension fund has failed or defaulted on making payments to those entitled to them, then the government has stepped in. This new Government have the opportunity to overhaul the prosecution system and its draconian measures, perhaps copying Norwegian or Swedish models where they have far fewer incarcerated people per head of population and have drastically reduced the level of reoffending. In Norway they are actually closing prisons, unlike Britain which is scrambling to build new prisons just to keep pace with the intended increased level of prisoners, many more of whom will be of pensionable age.

Failure to Investigate Trafficking of Slovak Woman to UK

In Chamber judgment¹ in the case of *B.B. v. Slovakia* (application no. 48587/21) the European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been: a violation of Article 4 (prohibition of slavery and forced labour) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The case concerned proceedings taken in Slovakia in response to an allegation that Ms B.B. had been trafficked in 2010 to the United Kingdom where she had worked as a prostitute for at least a year. In those proceedings, an individual was convicted of pimping. The Court found in particular that the authorities had limited their efforts to establish the facts to those relevant to the assessment of the actions of the perpetrator as pimping. The facts on the surface had presented a plausible accusation of human trafficking, which the authorities had been under an obligation to investigate, but had failed to do.

Principal facts: The applicant, B.B., is a Slovak national who was born in 1990 and lives in Banská Bystrica (Slovakia). She is of Roma ethnicity. B.B. was initially brought up in State care and then moved in with a family, for whom she worked as a maid and whose son she was made to marry. She had a child, who was taken into State care. She became homeless. In 2010 a certain Y arranged for B.B. to go to the United Kingdom to work as a prostitute. She worked there for a year, giving Y all her earnings, and managing his household. She was provided with drugs.

B.B. was eventually taken into the care of the Salvation Army in the UK. She returned to Slovakia in 2012 under a programme for the support and protection of victims of human trafficking, and on arrival was registered with a State-supported charity (Charita) as a victim of human trafficking, until the Government informed the charity that Y had been charged with pimping (rather than human trafficking). In June 2012 B.B. began receiving treatment for schizophrenia.

Charita sent information concerning B.B.'s ordeal in the UK to the police. The police in Banská Bystrica noted human trafficking concerns, but the force in Humenné, which had

jurisdiction, treated it as pimping, and ultimately charged Y with that offence. In May 2013 the police investigator received a report from the UK authorities which was interpreted as their having concluded that B.B. had been trafficked. Y was indicted for pimping in 2013 and initially acquitted, but the acquittal was quashed and a new trial followed.

On 30 November 2015 Y was found guilty as charged and sentenced to one year's imprisonment, suspended for 16 months. That judgment was upheld by the Regional Court, which noted that only the prosecution service was allowed ordinarily to appeal to allow Y's actions to be examined under human trafficking rather than pimping. In June 2017 the Minister of Justice lodged an appeal on points of law on behalf of B.B. That appeal was declared inadmissible by the Supreme Court in June 2018. Two constitutional complaints lodged by B.B. were unsuccessful, the first as premature, and the second found inadmissible by the Constitutional Court in May 2021. Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court: B.B. complained, in particular, that the Slovakian authorities' failure to treat the offence as one of human trafficking, rather than pimping, had been incompatible with their obligation to carry out an effective investigation into a credible suspicion that she had been subjected to human trafficking, and thereby to a violation of her rights protected under Article 4 of the Convention (prohibition of slavery and forced labour). She also relied on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life).

Anonymity for Firearms Officers on Trial Following Chris Kaba Shooting

Firearms officers who face trial for shooting suspects will not be named unless convicted, the Home Secretary has proposed in new reforms. The Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, said the Government will introduce a 'presumption of anonymity' for firearm officers being investigated. This follows the case of police officer Martyn Blake, who was cleared of murder for the death of Chris Kaba. As covered in *The Justice Gap*, a judge lifted an anonymity order restricting the release of the officer's name after a challenge by media organisations. When addressing the House of Commons, Yvette Cooper said, 'when officers act in the most dangerous situations on behalf of the state, it is vital they and their families are not put in further danger during any subsequent legal proceedings.' The right of 'anonymity' will be put in place unless decided otherwise by the judge, depending on the case. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley has welcomed these reforms and stated the current system of accountability of the law is 'unbalanced and fails to secure the confidence of the public and officers.'

Deborah Coles, *INQUEST*, a charity supporting the family of Chris Kaba and other victims of state-related deaths, has previously said that providing anonymity for police officers 'goes against the principles of an open and transparent justice system.' She argued that 'the rule of law must apply equally to police officers.' *Diane Abbott*, MP for Hackney and Stoke Newington, said in the House of Commons 'nothing could be more damaging for police community relations' than the idea that police officers are above the law. *Abimbola Johnson*, a barrister and member of the National Police Chiefs Council, warned that the Kaba case was not a 'typical case' and should not be used to push for legislative change. Quoted by the BBC, she said, 'it is already extremely rare for us to see police officers being prosecuted under the criminal justice system for action they have conducted whilst in the line of duty.' The Home Office also laid out plans to 'speed up processes' between the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), as well as introducing a 'presumption of dismissal' for police officers who are found guilty of certain criminal offences. The head of the CPS, Stephen Parkinson said 'it is crucial that police officers are able to use their powers with legal certainty and clarity, always balanced with the public's need to see the highest levels of scrutiny and accountability.'

Yvette Cooper - Home Secretary - Police Accountability

Twelve months ago, the previous Government launched a review into the accountability systems for police use of force and police driving. The previous Home Secretary set out an interim response in March, which the Labour party supported, and I welcome his work. The review was not completed by the election, and although we have continued to draw on evidence from police and civil society organisations, we were unable to say more publicly in the run-up to the trial, so today I will update the House. The accountability review found that the current system for holding police officers to account is not commanding the confidence of either the public or the police. Accountability and misconduct proceedings are too often plagued by delays stretching for years, which is damaging for complainants, police officers and police forces alike. The system has become more complex, with confusion over multiple thresholds for different investigations, and a lack of clarity, especially on specialist capabilities.

There are also wider concerns about the misconduct system. The focus when things go wrong can end up being entirely on the decisions of the individual officer, so system failings such as poor training, unmanageable caseloads or wider force practices are not sufficiently considered or followed up, meaning that too little changes. At the same time, as we saw following the Casey and Angiolini reviews, in cases where someone is not fit to be a police officer, it is too hard for forces to remove them, and communities feel that no one is held to account. The public must be able to expect that when officers exceed the lawful use of their powers or fail to meet proper standards, there will be rapid and robust processes in place to hold them to account. Police officers who act with integrity and bravery to keep us safe each day need to know they have strong public support. If officers lack the confidence to use their powers, following their training and the law, public safety is put at risk.

Let me turn to the policy measures. First, we will take forward the three measures proposed by the previous Government in March to strengthen and speed up the system. We will align the threshold for the referral of police officers from the Independent Office for Police Conduct to the Crown Prosecution Service to that used by the police when referring cases involving members of the public. Currently the threshold is lower for police officers—that is not justified. We will allow the IOPC to send cases to the CPS where there is sufficient evidence to do so, instead of having to wait for a final investigation report. And we will also put the IOPC victims' right-to-review policy on a statutory footing to ensure that there is an appeal mechanism for bereaved families when a decision is made not to seek a charging decision.

Then we will go further. When officers act in the most dangerous situations on behalf of the state, it is vital that those officers and their families are not put in further danger during any subsequent legal proceedings. We will therefore introduce a presumption of anonymity for firearms officers subject to criminal trial following a police shooting in the course of their professional duties, up to the point of conviction. We will also ensure that the highly specialist nature of particular policing tactics and tools is reflected in relevant investigative guidance. That includes ensuring that in investigations of police-driving incidents, evidence from subject-matter experts and in-car video footage is considered at the earliest possible opportunity, and, more widely, that an officer's compliance with their training and guidance is appropriately taken into account in investigative decision-making.

I also have established a rapid review of two specific areas where recent legal judgments have meant that we now have different thresholds for criminal, misconduct and inquest investigations, adding complexity, confusion and delay to the system. In particular, that review will consider the legal test for use of force in misconduct proceedings, and the threshold for determining short-form findings of unlawful killing in inquests. The independent review will be conducted by Tim Godwin and Sir

Adrian Fulford, and will report jointly to me and the Lord Chancellor by the end of January. I have asked for further work to be done on timeliness, standards and misconduct procedures as part of our wider policing reforms. My right honourable Friend the Attorney-General has invited the Director of Public Prosecutions to examine the CPS guidance and processes in relation to charging police officers for offences committed in the course of their duties. Following calls from civil society organisations, we will ask the College of Policing to establish a national 'lessons learned' database for deaths or serious injuries arising from police contact or police pursuits, so that when tragic incidents occur, there is a responsibility to ensure that lessons are incorporated into the development of police training and guidance, and to prevent the repetition of such events.

To rebuild public confidence in the wider standards regime for policing, we also need to ensure that there is faster progress in responding to the findings of the Angiolini and Casey reviews on vetting and standards. We will therefore take forward in this parliamentary Session previously agreed proposals to ensure that officers convicted of certain criminal offences are automatically found to have committed gross misconduct; to create a presumption of dismissal where gross misconduct is found; and to change regulations to enable chief constables to promptly dismiss officers who fail their vetting—there has been a glaring gap in the system there for far too long. We will go further to ensure that standards are upheld: we will ensure that there is a statutory underpinning for national vetting standards, and strengthen requirements relating to the suspension of officers under investigation for domestic abuse or sexual offences.

Finally, we need wider measures to restore confidence in policing and the criminal justice system across all communities. That must include further work to take forward the Met's London race action plan, on which action has already been taken, though the Met commissioner and the Mayor for London have made it clear that there is much more work to do. We need progress from the National Police Chiefs' Council on the national police race action plan. The Government are also determined to take forward further measures, ranging from the introduction of neighbourhood policing to new police force performance standards, to strengthen confidence in policing in every community across the country.

The measures that I have outlined are practical steps to rebuild confidence, tackle delays, provide clarity and ensure that high standards are maintained. For almost 200 years, policing by consent has been the bedrock of British policing. The Government are determined to take the necessary action to strengthen public confidence in the police, and to strengthen the confidence of the police when they are out on the street every day, doing the difficult job of keeping us all safe. Those are the twin goals that we must all work towards. I commend this Statement to the House”.

Father Goes on the Run to Escape 'Unfair' Indefinite Recall to Prison

Amy-Clare Martin, Guardian: A terrified father has gone on the run after learning he is to be hauled back to prison indefinitely over claims he has restarted a relationship with the mother of his children. Despite already serving his minimum term more than three times over, Matthew Booth, 33, is wanted by police on recall to prison for a crime he committed when he was just 15. So far, he has been hauled back to prison three times. But now probation has said he must return to prison yet again because they have been told he has restarted a relationship without notifying them.

However, both Matthew and the woman in question have told The Independent that claims they are back in a serious relationship are false. The pair, supported by campaign group IPP Committee in Action, are calling on the justice secretary Shabana Mahmood to use new powers to intervene and cancel his recall. Matthew, now a fugitive living in a tent, said: “What am I

going back for? What crime have I committed? If I had committed a crime I would understand. It's not happening, I would rather kill myself." Abigail Vernon, with whom he shares two young daughters, added: "He's still being punished for something he did when he was 15 years old. Every time he gets out and starts building his life back up again it gets taken away."

Matthew, from Bolton, endured a traumatic childhood and was handed an IPP for wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm after he intervened in a fight aged 15, hitting someone over the head with a brick to protect a friend. He later jumped on someone's head in a separate fight. He was told he must serve a minimum of two years and seven months when he was sentenced, aged 16. Although he admits his crimes were serious, he said: "It was my first custodial sentence. I needed help, not a life sentence." He served six years before he was first released in 2013. He met Abigail, now 29, the same year and they went on to have two daughters Ava, now 10, and Madison, seven.

The father was convicted of criminal damage in 2018 and sentenced to eight weeks, but because of his IPP sentence he was returned to prison indefinitely and served another seven months. He was recalled another two times over arrests that led to no further action, including once over a complaint by a neighbour which he said was false and malicious. Each time the arrests resulted in him serving more than a year further in custody. He was last freed on 22 November last year, after serving one year and seven months, despite being convicted of no further offences. "I am getting recalled every single time for no charges, no crime," he said. "How am I doing years because someone said something about me? I can't do it. I can't go there again and miss my children and not see my kids from inside prison. And just because they think I'm in a relationship – why should I do two years?"

The father insists his probation officer was aware he and Abigail were dating and they would regularly discuss this in his appointments, but they were taking things slowly and have not re-entered a committed relationship. Abigail wants the requirement for him to notify probation over any intimate partnerships to be removed from his licence conditions. His parole board paperwork alleges it is required because he was previously abusive to her, but this is something she strongly denies. He has never been convicted of any domestic offences.

EDM 332: Oliver Campbell Wrongful Conviction

1) That this House welcomes the recent decision of the Court of Appeal to overturn the wrongful conviction of Oliver Campbell, who was convicted in 1991 and served over 11 years in prison; 2) pays tribute to the tenacity and dedication of Oliver, his loved ones and his lawyers Michael Birnbaum KC and Glyn Maddocks KC, who have worked tirelessly for more than two decades to clear his name; 3) notes that the Criminal Cases Review Commission was prepared to take a second look at this conviction and, on this occasion, decided correctly to refer this conviction to the Court of Appeal; 4) regrets that the Court of Appeal did not carry out a thorough investigation of the activities and actions of the Metropolitan Police officers in 1990 who were instrumental in obtaining a false confession from Oliver Campbell, which led directly to his conviction; 5) calls on the Government to launch an independent inquiry into the failings that led to this conviction and to publish its findings; 6) and further calls on the Government to review the iniquitous rules governing the payment of compensation to those who have suffered a miscarriage of justice, which were introduced by the coalition Government in 2014, the effect of which is that only those who can prove beyond reasonable doubt that they are not guilty of the crime for which they were convicted can successfully claim compensation following a decision of the Court of Appeal to overturn their conviction. - Tabled 29/10/2024 by: Kim Johnson, signed by 11 MPs

CCRC: Modern Slavery and County Lines Connections Referred to Crown Court

A conviction of a 14-year-old boy with potential modern slavery and county lines connections has been referred to the Crown Court by the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC). Mr FY was convicted of possession of a bladed article in October 2020. He was stopped by police and found to be in possession of a pair of scissors. He provided a false name. Later police enquiries found he had been missing from home for over a month. Upon advice, he pleaded guilty at a Youth Court and was sentenced to a 12-month referral order, which was later changed to an absolute discharge. The CCRC has considered that the defence under section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 would have been available for Mr FY when he was convicted, and therefore there is a real possibility the Crown Court will overturn this conviction. This application came to the CCRC from the charity 'Just for Kids Law' and we encourage anyone in similar circumstances to apply to us.

Government Estimates That 1 In 4 People of Working Age Have a Criminal Record

The Home Office reported that there were 12.6 million nominal records held on the Police National Computer (PNC) for individuals with a criminal element against their names (April 2024). As the MoJ extract of PNC is likely to be an undercount of all nominal records MoJ estimate that the number of people with a nominal record with a criminal element equates to 1 in 4 working age people. PNC is a database used by law enforcement agencies. The Home Office manage the PNC, and the MoJ receive a regular extract of data from the PNC. The PNC covers the UK. According to the MoJ extract of PNC data there were 9.4 million offenders of working age (16-64) with a nominal record (August 2024). Nominal records include not only those persons with convictions but also those with impending prosecutions, cautions, cases that require no further action and any other criminal justice activity on their record. Age was calculated as age at date of data extraction. Individuals were included if they met this criteria, regardless of the age at which their record was created or last updated.

Police Officers Watched Body-Worn Footage For 'Entertainment'

More than 70 Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) officers watched body-worn video footage of a drugs arrest for their "entertainment and amusement", an investigation has found. The footage was accessed largely "without legitimate purpose" at 20 police stations on 248 occasions between 2019 and 2022, including one officer who watched it 21 times. The Police Ombudsman's Office said "management action" had been taken against 74 officers, which is designed to improve their conduct. The PSNI said it accepted three of the recommendations made by the Police Ombudsman and that it had introduced additional safeguards around body-worn video. Another officer is the subject of an ongoing investigation into potential criminality in relation to accessing the material. The footage showed a person being arrested for possession of illegal drugs. 'Lack of Awareness' - During the incident, the arresting officer made an error administering a criminal caution, "causing a colleague to laugh in the background". The PSNI accepted a number of recommendations designed to address misuse of body-worn video. However, it rejected a suggested dip-sampling exercise - a random review - "to evaluate the scale of unauthorised access to the body-worn video system". The PSNI said it had introduced dip sampling by line managers as well as independent scrutiny via our newly established Service Accountability Panel which it was satisfied "achieved the same end result". Findings had been shared with the Information Commissioner's Office.