

Inquiry launched into issues raised by Couzens conviction

Home Secretary Priti Patel has launched an inquiry to investigate the issues raised by the conviction of Wayne Couzens.

The Home Secretary shares the public's concern at the appalling circumstances of the abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard, and that the abuse of power by a serving Metropolitan Police officer risks undermining public confidence in the police. She is determined to do everything in her power to deliver improvements within policing and across the criminal justice system.

The inquiry will be made up of 2 parts. The first part will examine Wayne Couzens' previous behaviour and will establish a definitive account of his conduct leading up to his conviction, as well as any opportunities missed, drawing on the Independent Office for Police Conduct's (IOPC) investigations, once concluded.

The second part will look at any specific issues raised by the first part of the inquiry, which could include wider issues across policing – including vetting practices, professional standards and discipline, and workplace behaviour.

Additionally, the Home Secretary will write to the independent police inspectorate HMICFRS to commission a thematic inspection of vetting and counter-corruption procedures in policing across England and Wales – including forces' ability to detect and deal with misogynistic and predatory behaviour. She has asked for initial findings by the end of 2021, and these will be used to inform the inquiry into Couzens.

The inquiry will also draw on the conclusions of current investigations by the IOPC into various allegations and incidents throughout Couzens' career.

Given the need to provide assurance as swiftly as possible, this will be established as a non-statutory inquiry, but can be converted to a statutory inquiry if required.

The chair and terms of reference for the inquiry will be confirmed in due course.

The inquiry is as important for the brave, dedicated, and hard-working men and women in our police service, as it is for the public at large. They rightly want, and expect, their colleagues in policing across the country to uphold the same standards and values that they do – and this inquiry therefore seeks to deliver for them as well as the public.

In addition, the Prime Minister will launch a Home Secretary-chaired taskforce to drive cross-government action on tackling violence against women and girls to help maintain public confidence in policing. It will consider recommendations from the Inspectorate's review of the police's response to

violence against women and girls, led by Zoe Billingham, as well as the tackling violence against women and girls strategy, the end-to-end rape review, and the forthcoming domestic abuse strategy.

It will also look at how the police currently assess risk, threat and harm to the general public when responding to and investigating non-contact sexual offences (for example, flashing), which we know may lead to more serious or repeat offending.

The new group will report into the Crime and Justice Taskforce chaired by the Prime Minister. Minister for Crime and Policing, Kit Malthouse, and Maggie Blyth, the newly appointed top cop for violence against women and girls, will also attend. It will meet for the first time in the autumn.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Recent tragic events have exposed unimaginable failures in policing.

It is abhorrent that a serving police officer was able to abuse his position of power, authority and trust to commit such a horrific crime.

The public have a right to know what failures enabled his continued employment as a police officer and an inquiry will give the independent oversight needed to ensure something like this can never happen again.

The IOPC is [currently conducting](#) a number of investigations into matters linked to Wayne Couzens. These include the handling of allegations of indecent exposure by Kent Police in 2015 and the Metropolitan Police in 2021.