



12<sup>th</sup> October 2021

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By e-mail

Dear Caroline,

**Suspension of police officers under criminal investigation from active duty**

Thank you for your letter to the Commissioner of 4<sup>th</sup> October on the important review she has commissioned into professional standards, which she has asked me to respond to on her behalf.

I do know that the Commissioner found it very helpful to discuss the review, along with a number of other matters which we know are of grave concern to the public when she met with you, your fellow Assembly Members and the Deputy Mayor last Friday. I would like to reiterate that everyone in the Met knows that it will take time to rebuild trust and we are working hard to do this

In your letter and again in the AM meeting, you raised a query about the suspension of officers from duty when questions are raised about their conduct, with particular reference to recent media coverage of a WhatsApp group. You asked why officers alleged to be part of this social media group have not been removed from duty entirely while the case is investigated. Under the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, an officer may not be suspended without first considering the option of alternative deployment and placing the officer on alternative restricted duties. Each decision around suspension or restrictions is carefully considered on an individual basis.

There are a range of restrictions that can be imposed on officers under investigation that seek to protect victims and witnesses and enhance public confidence. Examples include:

- Preventing contact with a specific victim or witness
- Preventing contact with the public
- Preventing access to police systems
- Only working in the confines of a police building or other agreed location

Therefore, in some cases, we take the view that it is better for our officers to work under close supervision and restrictions than be off work on full pay under suspension, where the public get no value from them at all.



The grounds for suspension are reviewed every 28 days and restrictions are reviewed on any significant update in the case, for example an officer who is under investigation getting charged for the offence, and so can and do change through the length of an investigation.

More broadly, when any formal allegation of sexual misconduct is brought, each case will be judged on the specific facts around the case, and a determination will be taken on whether further action should be taken, including whether that individual should be suspended and taken off duty.

Separately, you ask about reports of a female officer raising concerns about inappropriate and derogatory language in another social media group and that her complaint about 'vulgar and sexist' messaging was ignored. With regret, a reply was not sent regarding the wider issues raised in that letter. A full reply has now been sent to the correspondent, and those experiences and concerns have now been shared with Commander Rachel Williams who is delivering our immediate priorities to rebuild trust,.

You may also have seen that, on Friday 8 October, the Commissioner was able to confirm that Baroness Casey of Blackstock will lead an independent and far-reaching review into our culture and standards of behaviour. She will also assess to what extent our current leadership, recruitment, vetting, training, communications and other processes can be improved. Baroness Casey is extremely experienced and highly respected and will ask the difficult questions needed for this thorough review. This will build a stronger Met, ensure lasting improvement to our service to London and public confidence in us. I hope her appointment and the significant urgent actions we are taking will go some way to provide immediate and vital reassurance to Londoners.

In addition, I have also published an article internally, to remind all staff and officers of the principles on the appropriate use of social media, and reiterated to them that our high professional standards must extend to all forms of communications, both on and off duty.

As we discussed, there have been a range of other announcements over recent weeks to help the Met and the wider policing world address issues which have been brought into such sharp focus recently. The Commissioner and I welcome the inquiry announced by the Home Secretary into the case of Wayne Couzens which will also look into specific issues around vetting practices, professional standards, discipline, and workplace behaviour. We are also pleased that the Prime Minister has launched a Home Secretary-chaired taskforce to drive cross-government action on tackling violence against women and girls to help maintain public confidence in policing. We will play our full part in both the inquiry and the taskforce, contributing openly to deliver action where it is needed to rebuild confidence.

There is much work to do here, to improve practices across policing and to help increase public confidence. We are determined to do everything we can to make sure the public can continue to trust officers to keep them safe. I hope you will agree that the announced review demonstrates how seriously we take this and our commitment to making the changes needed around safety for women and girls in London.

Yours sincerely,

**Sir Steve House QPM  
Deputy Commissioner**