



MP Ellie Reeves

Last Saturday marked 30 years since Stephen Lawrence was killed in a racist attack. As a teenager growing up in Lewisham at the time, I still remember the huge hurt this caused, and this injustice was one of the things that led me into politics.

The Macpherson report, published in 1999 concluded that the original investigation into Stephen's murder had been incompetent and that the Met police were institutionally racist. Over two decades on from this, the Casey Review, published last month said that 'the Met has yet to free itself of institutional racism'.

This is beyond shameful. But as we know, the toxic culture at the Met goes beyond this. The Casey Review also identified institutional misogyny, homophobia, and discrimination "baked into the system".

Shockingly the report detailed how both Wayne Couzens, who raped and murdered Sarah Everard, and the serial rapist David Carrick were influenced by Met errors and the toxic cultures in the force. Carrick believed his position made him "untouchable", whilst the Met's failure to catch Couzens for previous offences made him feel "invincible". Despite clues to their danger both were given a gun, passed vetting and posted to respected commands.

But failures like this aren't just isolated to the Met. A recent FOI looking at the number of officers across the UK between 2020 and 2022 being investigated for sexual and domestic violence offences, including rape, sexual assault and abusing their position for sexual purpose, found there were 244 closed cases and 73 ongoing. Not a single one had resulted in a conviction.

While it has always been the approach of police forces to label criminality by officers as the work of "bad apples", this litany of ignored incidents speaks volumes. The public need to have absolute trust and faith in those that are there to protect them. That's why Labour has long called for a complete overhaul of police standards, including new mandatory national standards on vetting, training, and dealing with misconduct within the police.

As well as this, we need a new approach to policing that gets officers back on the streets and ensures there are specialisms to deal with rising violence against women and girls. That's why we have outlined how we will deliver 13,000 more neighbourhood officers, specialist rape and sexual assault units in every force and domestic violence call handlers in every control room.

The Casey review is an urgent wake-up call for the whole of policing. But I'm worried the government doesn't have the understanding or the political will for the change needed. Until they do, reports like the Macpherson and the Casey Review will just keep coming and coming with nothing ever changing. We cannot let this happen.

ellie.reeves.mp@parliament.uk

020 7219 2668

