

House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS381)

Home Office

Written Statement made by: **The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May)** on 12 Mar 2015.

Undercover policing

When I made my statement to the House on 6 March 2014 [Official Report column 1061], announcing the findings of the Stephen Lawrence Independent Review by Mark Ellison QC, I announced that there would be a judge-led statutory inquiry into undercover policing and the operation of the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS). I said that before an inquiry could be set up, it would need to wait for the conclusion of any criminal investigations into SDS officers and the conclusion of Mark Ellison's further review into potential miscarriages of justice involving undercover police officers.

It has become apparent during the course of both the criminal investigations and Mr Ellison's review that these are significantly larger pieces of work than were envisaged previously. Therefore, in light of the public interest in having a statutory inquiry start as soon as possible, I have decided to establish the inquiry whilst ensuring that the progress of existing work is not affected. The inquiry will be chaired by Lord Justice Pitchford, a highly experienced criminal judge of the Court of Appeal, and will be established under the Inquiries Act 2005.

My officials will consult Lord Justice Pitchford and interested parties to the inquiry over the coming months on setting the terms of reference, with a view to a further statement as soon as possible after Parliament resumes. The role of the inquiry will be to consider the deployment of police officers as covert human intelligence sources by the SDS, the National Public Order Intelligence Unit and by other police forces in England and Wales. The inquiry will review practices in the use of undercover policing, establishing justice for the families and victims and making recommendations for future operations and police practice.

Mr Ellison will be providing his report to my right honourable friend the Attorney General at the end of March and will be published as soon as possible thereafter. The criminal investigations into SDS officers are ongoing. In addition, Stephen Taylor has submitted his review into the Home Office's knowledge of the SDS to the Home Office Permanent Secretary and a copy has been made available today on gov.uk and placed in the House Library.