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'White backlash' revealed at Scotland Yard

SCOTLAND Yard is experiencing a "white backlash" from its own officers who are furious at the time "wasted" on diversity issues, a shocking internal Met Police report has found.



The news is sure to come as yet more bad news for Scotland Yard

A worrying complacency about race has seeped into all echelons of the Metropolitan Police, the report says, adding that the lessons from the Macpherson inquiry into the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993 risk being forgotten.

The Met's Diversity Health Check report found many officers believe "white, heterosexual males were being passed over for promotion" and that there is a "growing antagonism towards diversity" in the force.

The survey reported an abdication of leadership, with managers failing to deal properly with under-performing ethnic minority staff for fear of accusations of racism.

"[This] has an effect on other team members and breeds resentment," the report found.

It also noted that the painful memories of the Macpherson Report, which accused the Met of "institutional racism", were in danger of fading away because a "significant proportion" of staff will have joined the force since its publication in 2002.

It said: "The corporate memory of Macpherson is not ingrained into the new recruits or as they become new leaders, as the Metropolitan Police Service does not teach the history of policing.

"If it were to do so, it would include pivotal moments in history. A sound understanding of what policing by consent means and the fact that it is underpinned by winning community trust and confidence is required."

The report suggested a "complacency" on race issues and cited poor attendance at Diversity Executive Board meetings and the dropping of recruitment and retention targets as evidence.

Circulated among horrified Met bosses last June, the report's findings were only made public when the Independent Commission on Mental Health and Policing published its own "watershed" survey on Friday.

It revealed it too had found racist attitudes among officers when dealing with mentally ill people from ethnic minority communities.

The Commission said young Afro-Caribbean men were "particularly vulnerable" and had suffered more from the "disproportionate use of force".

It was while analysing the causes of those issues that the Commissioners examined the Met's own internal report.

The Commission said the Met concluded an "increasing 'white backlash' as recruitment, retention and progression of female and black and minority ethnic staff has improved".

MP Keith Vaz, the chairman of the Home Affairs Committee, last night described the findings as "deeply worrying reading".

He said: "Both the Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe and the new head of the College of Policing, Alex Marshall, have told the committee that they want to eradicate any elements of racism from the force and this is especially important when mental health issues are concerned.



Keith Vaz said that the finding were 'deeply worrying'

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"We will revisit this issue when Sir Bernard next comes before the committee."

Lord Adebowale, the chairman of the Independent Commission on Mental Health and Policing, is due to meet Home Secretary Theresa May with his findings tomorrow.

The Commission's report calls for a transformation of attitudes towards mental health in policing and urges the Met and other forces to improve awareness training for officers.

Lord Adebowale many of the deaths in police custody could have been avoided if practices had been better.

He estimated that Scotland Yard handles 600,000 mental health related calls every year and that the issue should be a "core part of day-today Met Police business".

Professor Betsy Stanko, assistant director of corporate development at the Met, said: "It's important to think about this issue of mental health now like we did with domestic violence 15 years ago.

"This should be a watershed in the role of policing."

A Scotland Yard spokesman said: "The Metropolitan Police Service Diversity Health Check has a number of recommendations that will help the MPS develop.

"It was also one of a number of things that informed the Commissioner's decision to ask Lord Adebowale to conduct an independent review of mental health issues.

"This has produced a series of recommendations that we broadly accept."

Meanwhile, the Met is bracing itself for more criticism this week when a private investigation into the death of Sean Rigg, a 40-year-old musician and schizophrenic who died in police custody in Brixton in 2008, reports its results.

The probe was sanctioned by Mr Rigg's family.

Two serving and one retired Met officers were arrested in March and are due to answer bail this month.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission said they were arrested on suspicion of perverting the course of justice over evidence given at inquest.

An inquest found last August that officers had used "unsuitable" force after arresting Mr Rigg before his death August 21, 2008. The musician had a 20-year history of mental illness.

He had been acting violently and officers put him in handcuffs and held him in the prone position for eight minutes.

