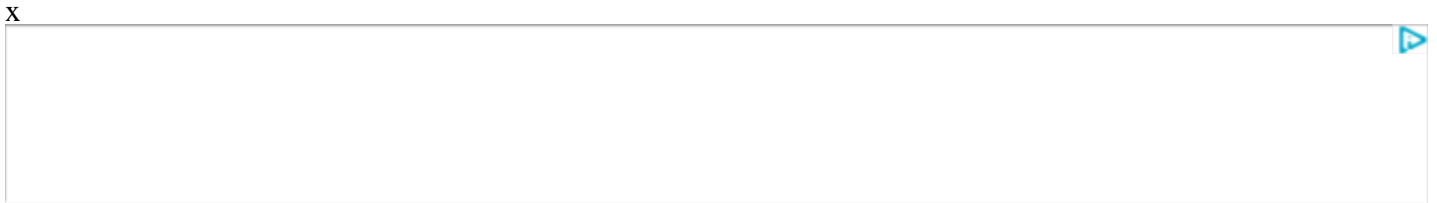


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## Police Facing 'Serious Drag' On Morale

**A string of scandals and budget cuts have left police morale and public confidence at an "all time low", says the Police Minister.**

12:30pm UK, Sunday 07 July 2013



**Video:** Minister Admits Police Morale Low

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Sir Peter Fahy, Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, tells Sky's Murnaghan programme the impact of negative publicity does affect the whole force.

**Video:** Chief: Officers Feel 'Undervalued'

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By Clare Fallon, Sky News Reporter

Police morale has been significantly undermined not just by cuts but by scandals such as the alleged smear campaign of Stephen Lawrence's family and the Hillsborough cover-up, the Police Minister has suggested.

Damien Green said recent allegations involving the improper behaviour of the police have had a "really serious drag" on serving officers as well as harming public confidence in them.

In an exclusive interview with Sky News, the minister said that despite complaints by the Police Federation that cuts are harming frontline officers, crime is falling.

He added that the historic actions of some members of the police have significantly contributed to discontent among the ranks.

"Morale is always difficult at a time when you've got difficult spending decisions to be made but also I think recently the various allegations we've seen about the way the police behaved in the past are a really serious drag not just on morale but on public confidence," he said.

"So we will take steps to make sure the police are more transparent, to make sure that there's a proper code of ethics that everyone knows about and everyone knows the detail of how they should be behaving ... so we can carry on changing the culture so again like a modern public service the police are self-confident and open and transparent."

Last year, it emerged that South Yorkshire police officers had attempted to cover up details of their role in the Hillsborough disaster that left 96 Liverpool fans dead in 1989.



The Met Police has been accused of smearing the family of Stephen Lawrence

And only last month the Metropolitan Police was accused of using undercover officers to try to smear the family of the murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence during the investigation into his death in 1993.

Both cases are now the subject of investigations.

But the Chairman of the Police Federation - which represents rank and file officers - insists cuts are having a major impact.

Steve Williams told Sky News the police service has shouldered more than its fair share.

"Bobbies are feeling aggrieved at what they perceive to be attacks by the Government on the service. We're facing the comprehensive spending review second round of cuts and we feel that they've been too deep, too fast - and they've affected service delivery."

Mr Williams concedes though that negative headlines about the conduct of police have also had an impact.

"It doesn't help when things are reported in the media about some misdemeanours ... that (are) police officers in the minority and it's right and proper that we get rid of those. But that said, the media tend to suggest that it's the whole of the police service and that does tend to affect morale. That in conjunction with the attacks on pay, terms and conditions of police officers clearly does have an effect on morale up and down the country."

But Mr Green hit back at the Police Federation claims, saying it has resisted Government cuts and changes to working

practices.

"It's a quasi-trade union so you would expect it to say those sorts of things. But actually individual officers going about their day to day business are reforming, are doing things differently.

"We've seen, for instance, forces taking up cameras worn on the body so they can record evidence much more efficiently. It's that kind of willing adoption of new technology that helps to make the police more efficient and that's why crime is falling."



There are 12,500 fewer police officers since the coalition came to power

According to figures released by the Home Office earlier this year, the number of police officers in England and Wales has fallen to its lowest level in 11 years.

Since the coalition came to power in 2010 there has been a decrease of more than 12,500 police officers.

Speaking ahead of a major conference this week on the future of the policing, Mr Green said the service needs to be brought into the 21st century.

"We've been doing hugely radical reform to the police for the past three years and it's working - crime has fallen by more than 10%. And doing that at a time when we all know the squeeze is on public spending and the police have had to bear their share of that - that's huge credit to everyone involved. But that reform needs to carry on. We can't stand still.

"Obviously any change is difficult. Change at a time of austerity is going to be difficult. But the fact is crime has continued to fall despite all the reforms. Some of them have involved painful decisions but nevertheless if you can release the police to do their job by cutting bureaucracy, by organising them better so they can get out on the streets, then what you see is more effective policing. And that's what we've been seeing."

Speaking on Sky's Murnaghan programme, Home Secretary Theresa May, said: "The vast majority of police officers are out there and they are working with integrity and honesty, and doing the job that the public wants them to do.

"Sadly, of course, the police as a whole get a bad reputation if there are some who are not doing that.

"It is important that where there have been criminal offences, there has been criminal corruption that has taken place, that that is found and that justice is done and that people are brought to justice."

Sir Peter Fahy, Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, added: "They (police officers) are affected by what feels like a constant stream of negative stories at the moment. But you've got to bear in mind that some of my officers weren't even born at the time of Hillsborough. And things like undercover policing are carried out by a tiny number of officers. But of course the impact of all the negative publicity does affect the whole force.

"I talk to my officers and they'll say absolutely, morale is low. But on the other hand I love my job and I'm really passionate about what I do. And what I see, day in day out, is officers going to extraordinary lengths, working ridiculous hours, taking personal risks to try and serve the public."

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