

Hundreds of police officers accused of sex abuse in England and Wales - inquiry

 [theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/dec/08/hundreds-police-officers-accused-sex-abuse-inquiry-finds](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/dec/08/hundreds-police-officers-accused-sex-abuse-inquiry-finds)

Jamie Grierson

08/12/2016

Hundreds of police officers are being accused of sexually abusing victims and suspects in what a senior police watchdog has called “the most serious corruption issue facing the service”.

Forces across England and Wales received 436 allegations of abuse of power for sexual gain against 306 police officers, 20 police community support officers and eight staff in the two years to March but inspectors believe the problem is even more prevalent than the numbers suggest.

Despite the large numbers, there is evidence that only 40 officers or staff have been dismissed for abusing authority for sexual gain in a similar period.

Vulnerable individuals, including domestic abuse victims, alcohol and drug addicts, sex workers and arrested suspects were among those targeted by officers and staff, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) said.

Victim groups have said the findings are “deeply concerning” and involved some of the most vulnerable people in society.

Mike Cunningham, inspector of constabulary and former chief constable of Staffordshire police, said: “This is the most serious corruption issue facing the service. What can be worse than a guardian abusing the trust and confidence of an abused person? There can be no greater violation of public trust.”

“It is probably more likely the problem is more serious than the numbers reported back to us,” he added.

“In many cases the victims are vulnerable people. They are victims of domestic abuse, they’re victims who might have been arrested and they have drug or alcohol dependency. It is an exploitation of power where the guardian becomes the abuser.”

One of the most high-profile cases of police officers abusing their power in recent history was that of [Stephen Mitchell, who was jailed for life in 2011](#) for raping and sexually assaulting vulnerable women he had arrested.

Mitchell, who was a constable with Northumbria police, abused heroin addicts, shoplifters and a disabled teenager by offering them help while in custody, then demanding sexual favours afterwards.

Earlier this year, DS Robert Dawson, a Metropolitan police officer who had sex with a vulnerable alleged rape victim, was formally dismissed from the force. A tribunal heard that in 2010, while investigating an allegation of serious sexual assault, [Dawson engaged in an inappropriate sexual relationship with the victim](#).

PC Simon Salway, who had sex with vulnerable witnesses and victims of crime, and fathered a child with one of the women he exploited, was [found guilty of six charges of misconduct in a public office](#) at Luton crown court last year.

HMIC found that more than a third (39%) of the allegations of abuse of authority for sexual gain involved victims of domestic abuse. As part of its research the inspectorate carried out an online survey of domestic abuse practitioners between July and August. Sixty-eight practitioners (16%) of the 414 who took part said victims of domestic abuse had disclosed that an officer or member of police staff had abused their authority to exploit them or develop an inappropriate relationship with them.

The chief executive of the domestic violence charity Refuge, Sandra Horley, said: “Widespread reports of police officers exploiting women for sexual gain ... are horrific – but unsurprising.

“Refuge is glad HMIC’s report has shone a light on this issue, following a consultation with domestic violence practitioners including our frontline staff. The police are meant to protect the public from harm; how can women be expected to report their abuse, if they fear the police will abuse them all over again? Women have the right to safety and protection.

“Refuge commends the work HMIC has already done in improving the police response to domestic violence; we hope this report will mean an end to what is an appalling abuse of power.”

Mark Castle, chief executive of the independent charity Victim Support, said: “These allegations are deeply concerning. The victims involved are some of the most vulnerable people in our society, who have been exploited by the people they should be able to trust the most, the police.

“In order to maintain public confidence in the police it’s critical that forces recognise this behaviour as the serious corruption that it is and report all cases to the IPCC to ensure that they are thoroughly and robustly investigated.”

The HMIC findings formed part of a broader inspection of police legitimacy, which concluded victims’ satisfaction with the way they were treated by police remained high. [The investigation was ordered by the then home secretary, Theresa May.](#)

But the inspectorate said forces still needed to become more proactive in rooting out officers and staff abusing power for sexual gain. This could involve profiling officers to single out those who might be likely to commit such abuse.

Cunningham said one of the reasons the inspectorate believed the figures belied a greater problem was that forces in England and Wales did not have a consistent and coherent approach to tackling the problem.

Not all forces class the abuse of authority for sexual gain as a serious corruption issue, which HMIC says they should. This would mean any allegation would be automatically referred to the Independent [Police](#) Complaints Commission (IPCC) for investigation.

HMIC was only able to find 40 cases on the national disapproved register in which officers or staff were dismissed for abusing power for sexual gain during the period in which more than 400 allegations were received.

“What’s less clear is what’s happening with those allegations, how those allegations are being pursued, how they translate into gross misconduct hearings and sackings,” Cunningham said.

HMIC said the problem remained despite recommendations in a 2012 IPCC report on the issue, which appear to have not been acted on.

In her speech to the Police Federation conference earlier this year, May said: “We know of officers who develop inappropriate relationships with victims of domestic abuse. They have ignored their professional duty and their moral responsibility, and instead abused their position of power to exploit victims. We do not know the true scale of this, but everyone in this room will know it goes on far more than we might care to admit.”

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Crime

Rapist police officer jailed for life

Stephen Mitchell sentenced to life in prison for raping and abusing women he arrested while working for Northumbria force

Helen Carter

Tuesday 11 January 2011 14.54 GMT

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Stephen Mitchell, 42, who was given life in jail after being convicted of raping

A former police officer who raped and sexually assaulted vulnerable women he had arrested was jailed for life today.

Stephen Mitchell, 42, who was a constable with Northumbria police, was convicted last November of two rapes, three indecent assaults and six counts of misconduct in a public office. He was cleared of three rapes, two indecent assaults and two counts of misconduct.

Mitchell was given two life sentences today and told he would not be eligible for parole for at least seven-and-a-half years.

The five-week trial at Newcastle crown court heard he preyed on

and sexually assaulting
vulnerable women.

Photograph: Northumbria
police/PA

women he met while on duty.

Mitchell, originally from

Glasgow, raped and sexually abused heroin addicts, shoplifters and a disabled teenager by offering them help while in custody, then demanding sexual favours afterwards.

He blackmailed one of his victims by claiming she would not be able to get her children back from local authority care unless she complied with his demands.

Following the trial, questions were being asked about Northumbria police's recruitment policies after it emerged Mitchell had been charged with a serious sexual assault while serving in the army in the 1980s.

The charge was subsequently dropped before coming to court in Edinburgh and he was not convicted of any offence. But there is concern about whether the Northumbria force was aware of his past when it accepted his application. He joined the police in 1991 after leaving the army.

During his trial, it emerged that in 2007, the force punished him when it was discovered he had had sex with a woman he had met as part of his duties. But he was not dismissed.

A year earlier, he had been fined three days' wages for looking up his wife's new friends on the force computer after the couple had separated. He was finally dismissed from the force in March last year after he was charged with the serious sexual offences.

One of his victims, a mother of three, now 34, who is a former heroin addict, said he had destroyed her life.

She first met Mitchell when she was arrested on a theft charge nine years ago. When she was released from prison, he offered to help get her children back. He gave her a bag of heroin, then gave her a lift to a shop to buy foil and a lighter so she could take the drug.

The woman said he threatened he would plant heroin on her and ensure she never got her children back if she did not do what he ordered. Mitchell then raped her in his car.

"I am on antidepressants and diazepam because of what he did to me," she said. "I used to wash myself

with Dettol because I felt so dirty and now I can't have kids because of the damage that has caused."

Mitchell claimed the women colluded against him after rumours circulated about him. He told one of the victims that nobody would believe a junkie.

Another victim, from Newcastle, was a heroin addict when Mitchell arrested her for shoplifting in 2002. She said: "He took me to the cells and the next thing I knew he came down with a cup of tea for me and a cigarette, which I thought was really strange.

"He came towards me and kissed me on the lips. It was more than just a peck and I was completely taken aback."

When she was begging on the streets, he would repeatedly target her.

She said: "He would come over and start telling me how much he fancied me and how pretty he thought I was. At the time I just thought he was a bit pervy." He would give her lifts and talk about his marriage problems, then try to kiss her, she said.

"It happened about 10 times. I didn't think it was too serious and I went along with it because I felt like he was always doing me favours and I didn't want to tick him off by saying anything."

She added: "I'm pleased justice has been done in my case but there are other charges he was cleared of. At the end of the day it was one person's word against another and the jury had to go on the evidence they were presented with."

Jim Campbell, of Northumbria police, said Mitchell was an "evil and manipulative" man who had lied on his police application form by not revealing the charges in Edinburgh. "There is no place in the police service for such evil and manipulative behaviour," he said.

Campbell added that the Northumbria police counter-corruption unit had been improved since the investigation began. "Had we been aware of his arrests or prosecution, he would never have been allowed to join Northumbria police."

The case had done "horrendous" damage to the force's reputation, he said.

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UK news

Policeman who slept with rape victim could dodge gross misconduct charge

A decision to let DS Robert Dawson retire would contradict new regulations by Theresa May to stop officers avoiding disciplinary action by quitting the force



Detective Sergeant Robert Dawson. Photograph: David Mirzoeff/National Pictures

Sandra Laville

Wednesday 24 June 2015 18.58 BST

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A Metropolitan police detective who admitted having sex with a rape victim intends to retire and avoid disciplinary action for gross misconduct in direct contradiction of new rules brought in by the home secretary.

Robert Dawson, a detective sergeant from the Metropolitan police's specialist sex crime unit, has admitted sleeping with a woman who had made an allegation of rape that he was investigating.

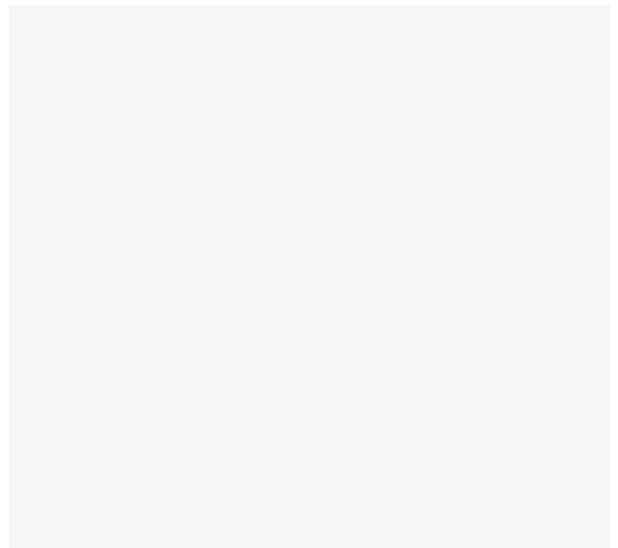
The officer was acquitted of a criminal charge of misconduct in public office earlier this month but is still facing a gross misconduct hearing for inappropriate behaviour with a victim.

Although he was still an officer under suspension, he applied to retire from the force 10 days ago – a decision that is being challenged by the victim and the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC).

Fiona Taylor, the deputy assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan police professional standards department, lifted Dawson's suspension last week, paving the way for him to retire.

The woman said in a statement to the Guardian: "I am very distressed to learn that his suspension has been lifted and he is allowed to return to work as a police officer again. I expected a hearing as a consequence of my complaint. He should be disciplined for what he did. He should not be able to retire like nothing happened.

"I feel so scared that a police officer could do that to me when I was at my most vulnerable and that nothing is being done about it. I feel even more vulnerable now because I have no faith in the justice system or the police to protect me.'



The decision by Taylor appears to be in direct contradiction of new rules brought in by home secretary, Theresa May, this year to prevent police officers resigning or retiring to avoid disciplinary action that could lead to their dismissal. She had previously said that 144 police officers facing gross misconduct investigations resigned or retired and escaped any sanction between December 2013 and August 2014.

A statement from the Met suggested the force was still considering an application from Dawson to retire, but no final decision had been made. The officer, the spokesman said, was on restricted duties, following the lifting of his suspension.

However, legal sources close to the case said the Met had no power to prevent Dawson from retiring now that he was no longer under suspension.

Dawson was put under investigation by the Met's professional standards department after the woman made a complaint that in 2010, while investigating her rape, the detective had abused his position to groom her and have sex with her.

She reported being raped in 2009 by a work colleague. Dawson, a detective from the Sapphire Unit in Stratford, east London, led the investigation, often visiting her at home on his own.

The detective was charged with a count of misconduct in public office and faced trial at Southwark Crown court this month. Dawson, who had access to the woman's medical records, which detailed her history of depression and self harm, admitted to the jury that he had sex with the rape complainant on one occasion. He denied a second sexual encounter.

The 49-year-old married officer said he felt sorry for the victim when the Crown Prosecution Service announced they were not going to charge her alleged rapist. "I felt the only person she would talk to is me and I wasn't going to leave her," he told the jury, denying that he was grooming or wooing her.

The court heard Dawson sent her texts, including one saying: "U R not alone. I am here and always will be. I think U R so brave, I wish I could do more." Other texts were littered with smiley faces and kisses, including one that urged the woman to "trust me x".

A jury [acquitted Dawson of the criminal charge of misconduct in public office](#) earlier this month, but he still faces a disciplinary case of gross misconduct for inappropriate

behaviour with a victim.

In January, [May introduced new regulations](#) to stop officers avoiding disciplinary action by quitting a force. May said the idea of officers avoiding disciplinary action by leaving directly damaged public confidence in the police.

“The public rightly expects police officers to act with the highest standards of integrity and for those suspected of misconduct to be subject to formal disciplinary proceedings,” said May. “The ability of officers to avoid potential dismissal by resigning or retiring is an unacceptable situation.”

• This article was amended on 25 June 2015 to make it clear that Dawson’s application to retire has not yet been approved.

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Herts police officer Simon Salway who had sex with domestic abuse victims while on duty is dismissed

By [Hertfordshire Mercury](#) | Posted: March 23, 2016

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PC Simon Salway found guilty of gross misconduct today

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A disgraced Hertfordshire policeman who had sex with vulnerable witnesses and victims of crime has been struck off from the force for life for gross misconduct at a hearing today (Wednesday, March 23).

PC Simon Salway – who fathered a child with one of the women he took advantage of - was found guilty of six charges of misconduct in a public office at Luton Crown Court on December 22 last year.

The 39-year-old Stevenage resident was sentenced to three years in prison on January 5 for his crimes.

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These six charges of misconduct concern his dealings with five different women.

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He was acquitted of a seventh misconduct charge involving another woman.

Salway, a married man, had denied all the offences.

At a conduct hearing today the head of the three-man panel, chief constable Jon Boutcher, heard how Salway, had "used his position as a police officer to form inappropriate and sexual relationships with women he met through the course of his duties".

Sergeant Elizabeth Slaughter who presented the evidence against Salway said the 13-year veteran of the force had abused his position of authority for the majority of his career.

Salway who was not present at the hearing had joined the police in 2003 and began taking advantage of victims of crime and witnesses in 2006 and this continued until 2014.

Sergeant Slaughter said his behaviour towards his victims, including women who had been domestically abused, ranged from flirting, "cuddling and kissing" in his car, to sexual encounters – much of which happened while he was on duty.

Summaries of five witness statements were read out at the hearing detailing how many of the victims had lost confidence in the police force.

In his concluding comments Mr Boutcher said PC Salway had acted "to fulfil his own sexual gratification" and eroded the trust the public had in the police when he abandoned the victims at a time "when they needed his help".

These actions were deemed to amount to gross misconduct and his subsequent expulsion was welcomed by Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Assistant chief constable Bill Jepshon said: "His dismissal is a symbolic step in ridding the force of a corrupt officer who callously took advantage of the position of trust placed in him without any concern for the consequences of his conduct.

"Sitting in his prison cell Simon Salway will now have plenty of time to reflect upon his actions.

"As an organisation we will continue to support his victims in any way we can.

"Consideration is being made to seize his pension."






Police and crime commissioner, David Lloyd said: "It is essential that police uphold the highest standards of conduct throughout their duties and in their private lives.

" I welcome the fact that these misconduct panels are now open to press and public as the transparency will contribute greatly to public confidence and reassurance.

"They bring even greater levels of fairness and openness to police misconduct matters."

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Domestic violence

Police treatment of domestic abuse victims to be investigated

Theresa May says too many victims being let down by 'shameful attitudes' of some officers and orders major inquiry



Theresa May: 'We know of officers who develop inappropriate relationships with victims of domestic abuse.'
Photograph: Will Oliver/EPA

Alan Travis Home affairs editor

Tuesday 17 May 2016 14.21 BST

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This article is 7 months old

[Theresa May](#) has ordered a major inquiry into the police treatment of domestic abuse cases and vulnerable victims.

The home secretary told the Police Federation's annual conference that there was still evidence of too many [victims being let down](#) and "shameful attitudes" on the part of some police officers, who even exploited their position to develop inappropriate relationships with domestic abuse victims.

She said new powers to tackle domestic abuse, including on controlling or coercive behaviour, were effective but were "not being used anywhere near as systematically as they could be".

The inquiry, to be carried out by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), will

investigate the scale of the problem of officers abusing their position of power to exploit victims.

May told delegates in Bournemouth: “We continue to see examples of the same shameful attitudes that HMIC uncovered in 2013. We know of officers who develop inappropriate relationships with victims of domestic abuse. They have ignored their professional duty and their moral responsibility.

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“We do not know the true scale of this, but everyone in this room will know it goes on far more than we might care to admit. Victims of abuse are still being let down and reports not being taken seriously enough. The right skills, training and commitment to protect the vulnerable are still not held by every single police officer.”

May’s sixth annual address to the conference had a strong valedictory feel to it, which led Steve White, the federation’s chairman, to ask her whether she would be moving on shortly from the job of home secretary. She shrugged in response. Unlike some previous years, her speech was greeted by a short burst of polite applause.

May acknowledged that the federation had started a process of reforming itself but strongly criticised “questionable and opaque spending”, including £10,000 “leaving presents”, clothing allowances and “what appear to be holiday homes within an overall property portfolio worth some £31m”.

But it was her strong analysis of the need for the police to make further progress in tackling domestic abuse and protect vulnerable victims that she put at the centre of her speech.

The home secretary acknowledged that real improvements had been made in the last two years since officers were revealed to have accidentally recorded themselves calling a victim “a bitch” and “a slag” and one victim disclosed that she had overheard the responding officer say: “It’s a DV [domestic violence], we’ll be a few minutes then we’ll go on to the next job.”

She said more victims were coming forward and the first conviction for coercive control had taken place, with many more cases pending. It was not only victims of domestic abuse who were neglected by the police, she said, but also victims and survivors of child abuse, of rape, stalking and harassment, and young girls trafficked and held as slaves.

“These crimes are still investigated with different tools and often less urgency than

crimes you are more accustomed to or more comfortable with, but which pose much less risk to individuals and communities.

“As HMIC found last year, not a single police force in England and Wales is outstanding at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm and supporting victims, and 31 forces are judged to be either inadequate or requiring improvement. That suggests that substantially more police forces are effective at tackling drug dealers or stamping out antisocial behaviour than are effective at protecting vulnerable victims from rape, domestic abuse or modern slavery.”

May promised there would be more specialist investigators tackling domestic abuse and in particular rejected the use of restorative justice in cases of serious domestic violence without considering possible psychological damage despite official guidance that it should be considered in every case.

“I simply do not believe it follows either the evidence or common sense to sit vulnerable victims across from perpetrators who for months and years may have destroyed their confidence, manipulated their mind, and beaten their bodies,” she said.

The domestic violence charity Refuge welcomed May’s rejection of the use of restorative justice in cases of intimate partner abuse.

Sandra Horley, the Refuge chief executive, said: “A ‘canteen culture’ of negative attitudes towards women still exists in forces where domestic violence is not taken seriously – ‘it’s just a domestic’ is still a refrain heard today.”

One [Police Federation](#) delegate was applauded at the conference later when he complained that May had given them “a telling off” over domestic violence without mentioning other agencies involved, such as probation and housing.

However, Steve White, the [Police](#) Federation chair, said he “couldn’t agree more with the home secretary” that domestic violence was a very serious issue that needed to be properly addressed.

“We understand the home secretary’s comments that ‘increasing caseloads and complex investigations [must not] slow improvement or hinder further change’. However, we would stress that it is these increasing workloads that our officers are trying to cope with, with fewer officers than ever before,” he said.

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Chelmsford detective cleared of misconduct over sex with rape complainant

By [chrisdyer](#) | Posted: June 15, 2015

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Det Sgt Robert Dawson was cleared by jurors at Southwark Crown Court

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A married detective who had sex with a rape victim he met while investigating her case has been cleared of misconduct in public office.

Det Sgt Robert Dawson, 49, of Stapleford Close, Chelmsford, said he did not find the woman 'attractive at all' and only wanted to support her "as a friend".

He was handed her case in May 2010 while working on the Met's specialist rape investigation team, Sapphire Unit, in Stratford, east London.

Prosecutors said the "bad boy" officer took advantage of the "disturbed" woman but had been unaware the "unstoppable diarist" was keeping a daily record of their interactions.

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When asked if he felt guilty over what he did, he replied: "I did. At that time I had 26 years' experience working with all sorts, I know how to investigate a crime... I thought it was a good case and I pushed it."

Dawson told Southwark Crown Court he would visit the complainant, who was in a turbulent gay relationship at the time, after work and have a general chat in her kitchen and occasionally sit with her in the lounge.

Dawson admits sleeping with the woman once on October 25, 2010, but has denied her claim that they were intimate for a second time in November.

"She stopped me from leaving, pushed me against the wall. I said 'I'm not doing this, I'm not doing this'."




He said he left her house, shut the door and the pair never saw each other since.

Three and a half years later, on January 7, 2014, Dawson was arrested at work.

But jurors found Dawson was found not guilty of one charge of misconduct in a public office between August 17 and November 30, 2010.

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News story

New regulations prevent police officers retiring or resigning to avoid dismissal

From: [Home Office](#)

First published: 12 January 2015

This news article was published under the
2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government

The Home Office regulations, which come into force today, will ensure police officers are held to account for their actions.

New regulations which stop police officers from resigning or retiring if they are subject to an allegation that could lead to dismissal come into force today (12 January).



Officers will be prevented from resigning or retiring until any case has concluded or has found that the officer will not face a dismissal hearing.

From 1 December 2013 to 1 August 2014, 144 officers resigned or retired whilst subject to a gross misconduct investigation, preventing them from being held to account for their actions.

A chief officer or Police and Crime Commissioner will only be able to consent to an officer's resignation or retirement if they are deemed medically unfit or in other exceptional circumstances, for example where a covert criminal investigation could be prejudiced.

These regulations aim to ensure that officers are held to account for their actions, that the truth can be established, that victims of police misconduct and their families are provided justice and that the police learn the full lessons of each incidence of serious misconduct.

Home Secretary Theresa May said:

- “ Direct damage has been done to public confidence by cases in which officers escaped justice by resigning or retiring where they might have been dismissed.
- “ The public rightly expects police officers to act with the highest standards of integrity and for those suspected of misconduct to be subject to formal disciplinary proceedings.
- “ The ability of officers to avoid potential dismissal by resigning or retiring is an unacceptable situation. That is why I have introduced these reforms to ensure victims and their families are not denied the truth of police misconduct.”

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By [Hertfordshire Mercury](#) | Posted: April 24, 2015

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Hitchin PC Leigh Brightman

A policeman accused of raping a 15-year-old girl has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Hertfordshire officer PC Leigh Brightman, 36, is charged with raping the teenager on August 9 last year.

He is also accused of making and possessing indecent images and a film of children, as well as misconduct in a public office between April 2009 and June 2014.

The officer from Tennyson Avenue, Hitchin, appeared at the Old Bailey today (April 24) and was told he will stand trial later this year.

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Hitchin policeman Leigh Brightman faces jail after arranging to have sex with a 15-year-old girl

By [Hertfordshire Mercury](#) | Posted: November 10, 2015

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Leigh Brightman

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A police officer who arranged to have sex with a 15-year-old missing girl and paid women he met through work for sex is facing jail.

PC Leigh Brightman, 36, organised for the teenage girl to come to his home for sex after he was sent her details to try to find her.

He knew she was vulnerable and had been reported missing by her mother, but instead abused his position to lure her to his home in Hitchin.

Brightman did not have sexual contact with the girl as he got cold feet, the Old Bailey heard, and he insists he sent her away because she was too young.

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When he was caught, Brightman came up with a bogus story about meeting the girl coincidentally after being handed her contact details in an alleyway.

The girl later accused Brightman of forcing her into oral sex rape, though the allegation was dropped by prosecutors.

The Hertforshire Constabulary police officer was due to stand trial accused of charges of misconduct, but pleaded guilty to some of the counts before the case could begin.

He admitted having sex over five years between April 2009 and July 2014 with a woman who he met when she was a police suspect.

Kevin McCartney, defending, told the court: "This was a relationship that was entirely consensual.

"She spoke quite highly of him and indicated there were occasions where he would lend her money if she had difficulties and expected nothing in return."

Brightman also paid a second woman for sex between April 2012 and August last year after meeting her through work.

She had complained to police about being harassed by her ex-boyfriend, but Brightman abused his position to start seeing her as well.

The court heard the officer had access to the personal details of both women and the girl through his job.

When Brightman was arrested in August last year, detectives also uncovered a stash of child porn at his home.

On Tuesday last week (Novemeber 3) Brightman admitted three counts of misconduct in public office and two counts of making indecent images of children at the start of his trial.

Prosecutor Kevin Barry said two more charges of misconduct, for visiting a third woman's home repeatedly and pestering another for sex, would be dropped along with a third charge of making indecent images of children.

Judge Mark Lucraft QC indicated that Brightman faces between 43 and 48 months in prison but he will listen to personal mitigation before passing a final sentence.

"On counts one and two, the crown's case has always been put on the basis that the sexual activity was entirely consensual", he said.

"There is no suggestion of force being use on the women but in each case the women were

vulnerable."

He said of the woman who was an alleged victim of harassment: "She was, like any member of the public, expecting the police to properly investigate any offence."

Judge Lucraft said the woman Brightman had a five-year relationship with, between 2009 and 2014, had battled an addiction to class A drugs, and spoke "very highly of the officer".

"But you can't ignore the backdrop in which it takes place", he said.

Brightman arranged for the 15-year-old girl to visit his home for sex on August 9, 2014, but Mr McCartney said there was no sexual contact.

"There can be no dispute having taken her details from information he had available to him because he was a police officer, he arranged for her to attend his home address for the purposes of sexual services", he said.

"But when there his account is for whatever reason he sent her, and the reason he gave in interview was she looked too young.

"Not only did no sexual activity take place but he sent her away because he was uncomfortable that she was too young."

He added: "I would suggest this was a spur of the moment decision made by the defendant, and there is reference to the difficulties he was having in his marriage."

When he was arrested, he had 162 suspected indecent pictures of children on a laptop as well as five videos and 11 photos on an iPad, the court heard.

He has pleaded guilty to having one indecent video and 117 of the pictures, having disputed that some of the images did not class as child porn.

He entered the pleas after a bid to sever the child abuse images from the misconduct trial failed and would have been considered by the same jury.

Brightman wore a smart grey suit to court, but determinedly covered his face with a raincoat outside to avoid being photographed.

The officer is currently suspended from duty, having served in Hertfordshire Constabulary in Watford, Hemel Hempstead, Rickmansworth and Hitchin, but now inevitably faces the sack.

Brightman, of Tennyson Avenue in Hitchin, pleaded guilty to three counts of misconduct in public office, and two counts of possessing indecent images of children.

He was cleared of two counts of misconduct in public office, one charge of possessing indecent images of children, and one charge of rape after the prosecution offered no evidence against him.

A spokesman for Hertfordshire police said: "Leigh Brightman's callous actions were exposed as a result of a pro-active police investigation which has been overseen by Hertfordshire Constabulary and involved a number of specialist teams including officers from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Professional Standards Unit.

"His guilty plea means that vulnerable victims will not have to endure the ordeal of having to give evidence in court.


"Leigh Brightman has betrayed the honour and values of Hertfordshire Constabulary in the worst way possible and is now facing a considerable custodial sentence."

Brightman will be sentenced on November 27.

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"The misconduct took place over a period of time, and in both situations you exploited your position as a police officer," he said.

"It's clear you were aware of their particular vulnerability throughout your dealings with them."


Brightman, who pleaded guilty to three counts of misconduct in a public office and two counts of possessing indecent images of children, will be the subject of a sexual offences prevention order for ten years once he leaves prison.

The former policeman, of Tennyson Avenue, Hitchin, worked for Hertfordshire Constabulary.

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Herts police officer Leigh Brightman who arranged to have sex with 15-year-old is struck off

By [Hertfordshire Mercury](#) | Posted: February 17, 2016

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Leigh Brightman

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A disgraced police officer convicted of possessing indecent images of children has been struck off the force for life.

Former Hertfordshire constable Leigh Brightman was sentenced to four years in prison in November after admitting three counts of misconduct in public office.

A three-man panel, headed by chief constable Jon Boucher, also heard that 110 indecent images of a child, and a video, were found on his phone.

Following the three-hour hearing at Bedfordshire Police HQ, Mr Boucher condemned Brightman's actions.

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Mr Boutcher said: "The papers I have viewed and what I've heard leave me bewildered at the conduct of PC Brightman.

"This conduct has brought discredit on the police service.

"He has committed these crimes at a time when we are reaching out to people to report such offences. These crimes change people's lives forever.

"He was trusted with helping three people, but he has abused their trust and our trust that we placed in him.

"Rather than protect and help them, he has abused them through his position as a police constable.

"There can only be one outcome in this matter. I wish to express my deepest sympathy and regret for what PC Brightman has done for his reprehensible and criminal behaviour.

"I unreservedly apologise on behalf of the police force for what these victims had to go through."

Sergeant Elizabeth Slaughter, leading the case against Brightman, told the panel he had abused his position to form a "sexual and inappropriate" relationship with three females – one aged 15.

The first, Witness A, was arrested in 2009, as a vulnerable 17-year-old with Class A drug habit

Brightman who lived at on Tennyson Avenue in Hitchin, drove her to her home, and the pair swapped phone numbers and remained in touch for the next two years.

She reverted to drug use and also turned to prostitution, with Brightman even offering to assist her with this as a "minder", but this offer was rejected.

He visited her wearing police uniform and paid £120 to have sex with her.

Witness B contacted police in April 2012 to complain about a crime committed against her by her ex-partner.

Brightman and Witness B exchanged 1,000s of text messages, which clearly showed a sexual relationship had been formed within weeks.

These were dispersed with comment about his failure to deal with her initial complaint.

Again, Brightman visited her in uniform, driving a police car with the force radio on.

Sergeant Slaughter said: "The effect on witness B has been huge in her life and he has very much dented her confidence in police in general."

Brightman was tasked with finding Witness C, the 15-year-old, when she was reported missing, with Sergeant Slaughter describing her as a "very troubled girl".

Instead, he contacted her and arranged for her to come to his Hitchin home and have sex with him, although this never took place.

Brightman's counsel, Duncan Jones, offered no mitigation, having failed to get the case adjourned for six weeks because of a potential appeal against the sentence and conviction.

Mr Boutcher said: "I don't lose the fact he pleaded guilty to these matters in court

"Public confidence [in the police] would be affected significantly if these proceedings were not to continue as planned."




A statement from Hertfordshire Constabulary said: Leigh Brightman betrayed the trust placed in him by targeting such vulnerable victims with no care about the impact of his actions.

"We pay tribute to those victims who have shown considerable courage and dignity through-out the investigation.

"Brightman has not only let down this Force but the professional and dedicated colleagues who worked along-side him. Hertfordshire Constabulary will work tirelessly to protect victims of crime and deal with those offenders, without fear or favour, who choose to exploit the vulnerable for their own selfish gratification."

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Herts police officer Simon Salway who had sex with domestic abuse victims while on duty is dismissed

At Luton Crown Court yesterday the 39-year-old was jailed for three years by a judge who told him "You have let down the entire police force and its reputation."

Judge Richard Foster, the honorary recorder of Luton, told Salway "Police officers are in a special position of trust when dealing with such people and the public expect them to act with absolute integrity.

"Your conduct fell woefully short of those expectations.

"Over a period of some seven years, you used females with whom you came into contact in such circumstances as an opportunity to pursue a sexual relationship."

The officer was appearing for sentence having been found guilty at Luton Crown Court of six charges of misconduct in a public office concerning his dealings with five different women.

He was acquitted of a seventh misconduct charge involving another woman.

He had pleaded not guilty to all the offences.



Salway joined the force in 2003, and was based at Hatfield Police Station and is due to be dismissed from the force.

During his trial in December a jury heard that the officer had gone on a training course to deal with the victims of domestic violence.

As a result, Salway would be sent to the homes of female victims of domestic abuse to talk to them and take witness statements from them.

He should have been there to provide help, reassurance and assistance for the women, but Salway - a married man - instead targeted them for sex.

Prosecutor Gregory Perrins told the court "He was opportunistic and saw every encounter with a young vulnerable woman as an opportunity for sex."

The court heard some of the women were particularly vulnerable, being the victims of domestic violence at the hands of abusive partners.

PC Salway would follow a pattern of first winning their trust and then flirting with them before sending them sexual texts and messages.

The prosecutor said the officer had "wilfully abused" his position as a policeman over a sustained period of time as he came into contact with women who were the victims of crime or witnesses.

During the trial, the court heard he had had a full sexual relationship with two women, including one who gave birth to his child, and he had actively pursued three more, hoping to have sex with them.

The court was told how, in 2006, a woman who was being threatened by a man that he would burn her house down contacted Hertfordshire Police and Salway was sent to see her and take a statement.

Soon afterwards he began texting her.

He kissed her during one meeting and arranged on another occasion to meet her in a layby while he was on duty and in full uniform, where more kissing took place.

The jury then heard how, in July of 2007, a woman witnessed the robbery of a taxi driver outside her flat and, after calling the police, made a witness statement.

When she started receiving threats to withdraw her evidence, she contacted the police once more and Salway was sent to speak to her.

Even on that occasion, the jury was told that the officer was "chatting flirtatiously" with her and telling her she looked nice.

It was not long before the officer and the woman began a relationship together.

The court was told on the first occasion the officer visited her at her home to have sex, he got called away when a job came in over his police radio to attend a cannabis factory.

Afterwards, he returned to the woman's flat, where they had sex in her living room, the court was told.

Judge Foster was told it became a regular pattern for the officer to go to the woman's flat for sex.



At that stage she thought he was single but, in September 2007, she discovered he was married and ended the relationship.

A week later the court was told she discovered she was pregnant by the officer and gave birth to their child in May of 2008.

Mr Perrins then told the jury how in 2011 a woman contacted police after finding her ex-partner had taken property from her home.

It was PC Salway who was tasked with visiting her and, as he left two hours later, he kissed her on the lips, said the prosecutor.

The jury was told the woman eventually had to make it plain that she was not interested in a sexual relationship with him.

In October of 2013 another woman contacted the police after receiving threats from an ex-partner and PC Salway was sent to her home, where he took a statement from her.

The jury was told when the woman's partner ended up being cautioned, she was upset that he had been let off lightly and became upset during a meeting with the officer.

The prosecutor told the jury "When she got upset she let him hug her. When the hug finished she said he looked at her breasts and told her 'You've got quite a bust there, they are quite big aren't they?'"

Salway then got the woman to perform a sex act on him and afterwards he went back to work.

The prosecutor said on one occasion when the woman went outside her flat to smoke, PC Salway who was on duty, joined her in an alleyway, removed her clothes and instigated sex between them.

The court was told 825 text messages had passed between them and photos had also been sent.

That same year the officer is said to have met another woman after she contacted the police because of problems with an-ex partner.

Once again, said Mr Perrins, the officer was sent to speak to her and came across as "flirtatious."

Soon he was texting her and the court heard at first the woman appreciated the attention, but then noticed they were becoming inappropriate.

The court was told that between August and December of 2013 nearly 1500 text messages - many of which were sexual - had passed between them while he was on duty.

Messages he sent the woman included requests for provocative videos and photos of herself.

Finally, the court was told, the defendant made contact with two more women that same year, both of whom quickly realised he was overstepping the line.

Mr Perrins said the officer was arrested in March of 2014 and, in his locker at the police station, officers found three mobile phones that contained contact details for the women.

In an interview, he agreed he had fathered a child by one of the women, but said his contact with other women who were victims of domestic violence had remained professional.

He said one of the women had sent him a "sexual picture" of herself that he hadn't wanted and, as a result, he ended all contact with her.

In the witness box Salway accepted making a woman domestic violence victim pregnant in 2007, two weeks after taking a statement from her.

But he denied having regular sex with her.

He said they had sex on just the one occasion, which led to her becoming pregnant.

Prosecutor Mr Perrins said in a cross examination "She was a victim and a witness to crime. How do you explain that is not misconduct?"

Salway replied: "I had no further involvement with the case. I did not look on her as a witness."

He agreed he had sent her a photograph of his erect penis, but said he had not taken the photo while on duty.

Salway said that a text message from the woman referring to "our hot bodies rubbing together" was a "fantasy."

Mr Perrins said "This is not a fantasy, this is two people having regular sex."

The officer was arrested in early 2014 and it followed an investigation during which women who he had dealt with during the years were re-visited and asked about his behaviour.

One woman victim told investigators she wouldn't have reported the matter had she not been approached, telling them "At the time, I thought I wanted it. Everyone has a dream of wanting to be with a policeman in uniform."

Passing sentence, the judge said "The real victims in this case are not just the females concerned - indeed in every case the conduct alleged was consensual - but rather the public at large. On the jury's finding, your conduct was harmful to the public interest. You have let down the entire police force and its reputation.

"In particular, domestic violence is one of the greatest unreported crimes and misconduct such as that in this case, can hardly encourage victims to come forward to the police."

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
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
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David Atkins wanted on recall to prison

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A man convicted of battery and criminal damage who has links to Stevenage is on the run after breaching his licence.

David Atkins, 22, who is originally from Dover and could be in the Dover area has been recalled to prison for breaching the terms of his early release from jail.

Atkins was convicted in December last year for the offences which happened in October.

Anyone who has any information about his whereabouts is urged to contact DC Dave Vince on 101.

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