# Seven British Transport Police officers dismissed over offensive WhatsApp messages revealing deep-rooted cultural issues



Seven officers of the British Transport Police (BTP), including both current and former personnel, have been dismissed following revelations of deeply disturbing messages exchanged in a private WhatsApp group. This group, dubbed "Team 3 Secret Service," was uncovered during an investigation into unrelated domestic abuse cases in October 2023, drawing immediate condemnation from police leaders for its content, which openly mocked vulnerable populations and trivialised violent acts.

The internal misconduct proceedings revealed a pattern of shocking communications that included jokes belittling women, disabled people, and victims of crime, some of which were so outrageous they bordered on criminality. Notably, one officer suggested stabbing a waitress who bore an anti-police tattoo, while others made light of sexual violence and hinted at grisly scenarios, such as discussing keeping a woman under the floorboards. Such exchanges were described by senior officials as "offensive in almost every way possible," demonstrating a culture that undermines public trust in law enforcement.

Legal counsel for the Appropriate Authority, Aaron Rathmell, characterised the officers' behaviour as grossly incompatible with the standards expected of police officers, emphasising that these messages, despite their occurrence in a private context, echoed a dark undercurrent that poisons public confidence in policing. Rathmell referenced the Angiolini Inquiry—an investigation triggered by the murder of Sarah Everard by a serving Met officer—which has underscored the vulnerabilities in police culture and the urgent necessity for reform.

Assistant Chief Constable Charlie Doyle articulated the gravity of the situation, stating, "Those who have sent these messages have shown complete contempt for the public they serve." His remarks highlight an essential truth: the privilege of holding a police warrant card is tarnished by such displays of misconduct. This incident serves as a sobering reminder of how jokes and banter can serve as a veneer for unacceptable attitudes, a reality that has been echoed in numerous cases across police forces in the UK.

The issue of inappropriate behaviour among police officers is not isolated. In a recent case involving officers from Dorset Police, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) confirmed that Gross Misconduct had been proven against a serving officer and three ex-officers for sharing similarly offensive messages. The reputational damage stemming from such incidents extends beyond individual dismissals, as they challenge the very ethos of policing, which is built on integrity and public trust.

Additional reports of misconduct in various police forces, including the Metropolitan Police, have revealed systemic issues of discrimination and harassment that share chilling similarities with the BTP case. Previous investigations found officers mocking vulnerable individuals and sharing graphic and derogatory material, leading to widespread concern about the culture within these organisations. For instance, eight officers from the Met faced consequences for sharing discriminatory messages that included offensive comments regarding a disabled child.

The BTP's handling of this situation—while immediate and decisive—signals a clarion call for comprehensive reforms across UK's law enforcement agencies. It indicates a recognition that fostering an environment of respect and professionalism is critical for the credibility of police forces. The ramifications of these actions are far-reaching and necessitate a commitment not just to punitive measures, but to a profound cultural transformation within policing.

In addressing the conduct of the officers involved, Doyle stressed the importance of accountability in safeguarding public trust. With a commitment to weeding out inappropriate behaviour, the BTP, along with other police bodies, is faced with the monumental task of instilling a culture that prioritises respect, understanding, and a true commitment to public service. The importance of such change cannot be overstated, as the legitimacy of policing in the eyes of the public hangs precariously on the actions and attitudes of those sworn to protect them.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14763265/messages-police-officers-WhatsApp-group-sacked.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14763265/messages-police-officers-WhatsApp-group-sacked.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/gross-misconduct-proven-against-group-dorset-police-officers-over-offensive-whatsapp-messages)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14763265/messages-police-officers-WhatsApp-group-sacked.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://news.sky.com/story/met-failed-to-investigate-police-whatsapp-group-containing-graphic-photos-of-women-ex-officer-says-12426152), [[4]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/met-police-iopc-mps-norfolk-constabulary-college-of-policing-b2242472.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14763265/messages-police-officers-WhatsApp-group-sacked.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/apr/13/eight-met-officers-guilty-of-misconduct-over-discriminatory-whatsapp-messages)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://news.sky.com/story/metropolitan-police-officers-who-made-fun-of-katie-prices-son-in-secret-whatsapp-group-guilty-of-gross-misconduct-12856434)
* Paragraph 6 – [[7]](https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/our-work/learning/discriminatory-and-inappropriate-comments-made-officers-within-whatsapp-group)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14763265/messages-police-officers-WhatsApp-group-sacked.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/gross-misconduct-proven-against-group-dorset-police-officers-over-offensive-whatsapp-messages> - In January 2025, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) found gross misconduct proven against one serving and three former Dorset Police officers for sharing offensive messages in a WhatsApp group. The messages included racist and misogynistic content, leading to the dismissal of the serving officer and the resignation of the former officers. The IOPC emphasized the importance of challenging such behaviour to maintain public trust in policing.
3. <https://news.sky.com/story/met-failed-to-investigate-police-whatsapp-group-containing-graphic-photos-of-women-ex-officer-says-12426152> - In October 2021, former Metropolitan Police officer Paige Kimberley alleged that the force failed to investigate a WhatsApp group containing graphic photos of women. She claimed that after raising concerns, her role was removed, and no action was taken against the group members. The Metropolitan Police stated they were assessing the tribunal's findings but could not comment further at that time.
4. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/met-police-iopc-mps-norfolk-constabulary-college-of-policing-b2242472.html> - In December 2022, six police constables from the Metropolitan Police Service, Civil Nuclear Constabulary, and Norfolk Constabulary were dismissed for being part of a WhatsApp group that shared 'grossly offensive' messages. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) found that the officers breached professional standards, leading to their dismissal and inclusion on the College of Policing barred list.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/apr/13/eight-met-officers-guilty-of-misconduct-over-discriminatory-whatsapp-messages> - In April 2023, eight Metropolitan Police officers were found guilty of gross misconduct for sharing discriminatory messages in a WhatsApp group between 2016 and 2018. The messages included racist, sexist, and homophobic content, leading to the dismissal of the officers and raising concerns about the culture within the force.
6. <https://news.sky.com/story/metropolitan-police-officers-who-made-fun-of-katie-prices-son-in-secret-whatsapp-group-guilty-of-gross-misconduct-12856434> - In April 2023, eight Metropolitan Police officers were found guilty of gross misconduct for sharing offensive messages in a secret WhatsApp group. The messages included derogatory comments about Katie Price's disabled son, Harvey, highlighting issues of discrimination within the force.
7. <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/our-work/learning/discriminatory-and-inappropriate-comments-made-officers-within-whatsapp-group> - In March 2023, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) published findings on discriminatory and inappropriate comments made by officers within a WhatsApp group. The investigation involved officers from the Metropolitan Police Service, Norfolk Constabulary, and Civil Nuclear Constabulary, leading to disciplinary actions and highlighting the need for cultural change within policing.