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## Metropolitan police

# Operation Midland has not found enough evidence to charge any suspects

Former Tory MP Harvey Proctor likely to face no further action as Guardian reveals state of Scotland Yard inquiry into claims of establishment sexual abuse



Harvey Proctor and the Scotland Yard chief Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, who has faced criticism for his force's

handling of sexual abuse allegations made by a source known as Nick. Composite: Rex/PA

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Operation Midland detectives investigating claims of sexual abuse by prominent establishment figures believe their main witness is still credible, but have not uncovered evidence to support criminal charges against any suspects.

The Guardian understands that the Scotland Yard investigation has found evidence pointing to the credibility of aspects of the account given by “Nick”, who has been the subject of attacks on his reputation.

Related: [Police child abuse inquiries: Operation Yewtree to Operation Midland](#)

Nick’s claims have led to allegations against well-known public figures, including lords Bramall and Brittan, who were named in the media as suspects but never charged. Subsequent criticism of the Metropolitan police investigation has been so toxic that it threatened the commissionership of Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe.

The claims made by Nick, who is now middle aged, relate to the period between 1975 and 1984, when he was aged between seven and 16. Detectives still have lines of inquiry to pursue and believe witnesses who may be able to help prove or disprove the claims are yet to come forward.

The current standing of the £2m investigation is as follows, the Guardian can reveal:

- No specific dates of alleged attacks have been established, nor has any direct evidence of murder been uncovered, or specific links to homicide victims.
- In one instance Nick correctly described the interior of a military premises in southern England, where he claimed abuse had taken place. The details he provided were not publicly available, and the premises itself is not open to the public, making it likely he had been there at some stage, police concluded.
- Detectives have not been able to disprove Nick’s credibility, nor establish that his central claims could not have happened.
- An informal review, conducted six months into the investigation by a senior officer with no previous connection to the team, concluded there was sufficient substance to

continue the homicide and sexual abuse inquiries.

- Most of the detectives drawn from the Met's sexual abuse and homicide divisions believe Nick is credible.
- The investigation has so far not uncovered enough evidence against a living person to reach the standard of reasonable suspicion necessary to make an arrest.

The extent of the progress in the controversial investigation will fail to satisfy critics who believe detectives have fallen for a fantasist. But for others, the indirect support found for some of Nick's account may explain why detectives have continued with the investigation for almost 15 months.



Lord Bramall. Photograph: Neil Munns/PA

The Crown Prosecution Service is unlikely to be asked to consider any charges by police unless new evidence emerges. If that situation does not change, it is likely the former Tory MP Harvey Proctor will be told he faces no further action.

Bramall, whose home was searched and who was interviewed under criminal caution,

was told last month that inquiries into him had been dropped. Proctor is believed to be the only living person investigated by Midland officers who has not been told he faces no further action.

One of the tasks for the team of detectives is to ensure their inquiry can withstand scrutiny from the Goddard inquiry, set up by the government to look into the scale of sexual abuse in Britain and claims of cover-ups.

If Goddard was to find the Met investigation deficient, not only would the force face further reputational damage, but detectives and police chiefs could face disciplinary or even criminal investigation, even if they have retired.



Lord Brittan, the former home secretary.

The Met is also facing claims, some from former officers, that it covered up child sexual abuse. At least one source in recent days has suggested the Met would probably carry out a similar style of investigation again if faced with similar claims from a source of equal credibility. This would be the case even if the Met adopted the recent suggestion by Hogan-Howe that claimants of sexual abuse should not automatically be believed.

In December 2014, the then head of Operation Midland said Nick's claims were not just credible but true. The Met has now withdrawn the assertion that the claims are true.

The officer, Det Supt Kenny McDonald, made his statement not just to follow the Met's policy to believe victims until evidence to the contrary emerges, but after experienced detectives from two teams had concluded his accounts were true. McDonald said in December 2014: "Nick has been spoken to by experienced officers from the child abuse team and experienced officers from the murder investigation team. They and I believe what Nick is saying is credible and true."

Hogan-Howe has faced strident calls to apologise to Bramall, 92, a D-day veteran who rose to become a military chief, after he was investigated for abuse following Nick's claims.

The Met has apologised for aspects of its handling of an investigation into the former Tory minister [Leon Brittan](#) over an allegation of rape dating back to 1967. Lord Brittan was also investigated as part of Operation Midland. Hogan-Howe is expected to meet Lady Brittan, the former home secretary's widow, this week.

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