

Blunkett to review murder law

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A full-scale review of the law on murder is being launched by the Government, Home Secretary David Blunkett has announced.

This follows a damning report in August by the independent Law Commission - which advises on changes to the law - which said legislation governing murder was "a mess".

The review will be the first comprehensive review of murder laws for more than half a century.

Mr Blunkett stressed that the Government was committed to retaining the mandatory life sentence.

The Law Commission said a major overhaul was required - including a rethink of whether murder should always carry a life sentence - because of "the breadth and depth of discontent" with the current law.

Mr Blunkett said the law needed to be "clear, comprehensive and fair" to "ensure public confidence" in the criminal justice system.

The murder review will begin next year, said a Home Office spokesman.

It will be led by the Home Office but will involve outside organisations, and its terms of reference have yet to be announced.

The Law Commission's consultation exercise showed 64 respondents out of 146 - including 21 judges - believed a mandatory life sentence for every case of murder was "indefensible and should cease".

It was incorrect to roll all types of murder from serial killings to mercy killings into one single category, it added.

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