

Allegations of child sexual abuse linked to Westminster

Investigation report

February 2020

Summary [▶ Read in full](#)

The Allegations of child sexual abuse linked to Westminster investigation report found that for decades there have been significant failures by Westminster institutions, including political parties, in their responses to allegations of child sexual abuse. This included failing to recognise abuse, turning a blind eye to it, covering up allegations and protecting high-profile offenders, including politicians.

The Inquiry heard evidence of too much respect being paid towards people of public prominence, from political parties to the police and prosecutors.

It also heard evidence of individuals linked to Westminster carrying out child sexual abuse. However, there was no evidence of any kind of organised 'Westminster paedophile network'.

This is the Inquiry's 11th investigation report and was published in February 2020. A public hearing was held in this investigation in March 2019.

Key findings [▶ Read in full](#)

In the 1970s and 1980s, MPs including Sir Cyril Smith and Sir Peter Morrison were known or rumoured to be active in their sexual interest in children, but were protected from prosecution (Executive Summary, v).

The report found that Westminster institutions were complacent about child sexual abuse and indifferent to the plight of victims. In particular, institutions regularly put their own reputations or political interests before child protection (page 148).

Giving evidence, former Liberal Party leader Lord Steel said that because allegations against Smith had arisen before Smith joined the party, he saw "no reason, or no locus to go back to [it]". This failure to recognise the risks was a failure of responsibility, and the fact that the offences were not recent was irrelevant (Executive Summary, xi).

Meanwhile, senior officials in the Conservative Party knew about allegations concerning Morrison for years but did not pass them on to police. He became Margaret Thatcher's Parliamentary Private Secretary in 1990 and was knighted a year later (Executive Summary, xii).

Recommendations [▶ Read in full](#)



Recommendation 1

The criteria for forfeiting (giving up) all honours must be formally extended to include convictions, cautions and cases decided by trial of the facts involving offences of child sexual abuse. This must be set out in a published policy and procedure, which must include a clear policy on how forfeiture decisions are made public. The Inquiry expects the Forfeiture Committee to take a lead on this matter.

Recommendation 2

The Cabinet Office should look again at the policy on forfeiting honours after a death, in order to consider the viewpoint of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

Recommendation 3

Government, political parties and other Westminster institutions must have whistleblowing policies and procedures which cover child sexual abuse and exploitation. Every employee must be aware that they can raise any concerns using these policies and that the policies are not limited to concerns specifically to do with a person's job.

Recommendation 4

The Cabinet Office must make sure that each government department reviews its child safeguarding policy or policies in light of the expert witness report of Professor Thornburn. They must also publish procedures to accompany their policies, so that staff know how to put their department's policy into practice. All government departments must update their safeguarding policies and procedures regularly, and get expert safeguarding advice when doing this.

Recommendation 5

All political parties registered with the Electoral Commission in England and Wales must make sure that they have a comprehensive safeguarding policy.

They must also make sure that they have procedures to accompany their policies, so that politicians, prospective politicians, staff and volunteers know how to put their party's policy in place. The policies must be published online. All political parties must update their policies and procedures regularly, and get expert safeguarding advice when doing this.

The Electoral Commission should make sure political parties keep to this recommendation.

▶ [Read the responses to our recommendations here](#)



This rapid read document is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the report. It is a plain-language summary that includes information about the report's context, findings and recommendations.

© Crown copyright 2022. This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To see this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3. This publication is available at www.iicsa.org.uk. Please send any enquiries about this publication to us at contact@iicsa.org.uk