

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF HOME OFFICE FILES 1979 TO 1999

Interim Report on contacts on child abuse
between the late Geoffrey Dickens MP and the
Home Office.

HM Revenue and Customs Investigator

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. In February 2013 the Home Office Permanent Secretary commissioned an Independent Review of all Home Office files from 1979 to 1999 to identify any information received about organised child sex abuse. An experienced investigator from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is leading the Review with additional oversight provided by HMRC's Director of Criminal Investigation.

1.2. The Independent Investigator has produced an Interim Report based on the examination of over 400 Home Office files and a targeted search for material directly relevant to contacts on child abuse between the late Geoffrey Dickens MP and the Home Office. The findings will be updated if the Review identifies additional relevant material in the ongoing wider search of Home Office files which is expected to be completed by June 2013.

1.3. The Independent Review has confirmed that the Home Office did receive information from Mr Dickens in November 1983 and in January 1984 about alleged child abuse. Copies of the material have not been retained but a Home Office file contains a copy letter dated 20th March 1984 from the Home Secretary in response to Mr Dickens. The letter confirms that the information was considered at the time and that any matters requiring investigation were referred to the Police.

1.4. The letter is not suitable for publication as it contains details of one case of alleged child abuse from which it would be possible to identify the victim. However, the following extract explains how the information which Mr Dickens provided was handled at the time.

"Dear Geoff,

You drew my attention to a number of allegations concerning paedophilia when you called here on 23 November and in subsequent letters.

I am now able to tell you that, in general terms, the view of the Director of Public Prosecutions is that two of the letters you forwarded could form the basis for enquiries by the police and they are now being passed to the appropriate authorities. In other cases there either seems to be inadequate evidence to pursue prosecution, for example the lady who wrote about PIE¹ advertising but did not secure any example of the material complained of, or they have already been dealt with in some way by the courts or the police."

¹ Paedophile Information Exchange

1.5. Mr Dickens was a robust campaigner on child protection issues and used Parliamentary Privilege to name alleged offenders if he believed appropriate action was not being taken. He challenged his own Government on child protection issues in Parliament and in the media when he disagreed with policies or decisions. The Independent Review has found no evidence of Mr Dickens expressing dissatisfaction about the action taken in respect of the information he had passed on.

1.6. On 17th March 1986 in his response to a debate in Parliament about the use of Parliamentary Privilege, and referring to information he had received about alleged child abuse, Mr Dickens said:

"I always sent the files to the Home Office, which investigated the cases for me, and in many cases to the chief constables concerned."

1.7. On 31st March 1987 during his speech in a Parliamentary debate on the admissibility of video evidence in court proceedings Mr Dickens said:

"I should like to place on record my thanks to the Home Office and the departments within the Home Office for following up the many cases that I keep sending to it. I should also like to thank the Attorney-General. They have been very helpful and a strength to me in my campaigns."

1.8. Full details of these statements are publicly available via www.parliament.uk in Hansard reports of Parliamentary business.

1.9. The Independent Investigator's Interim Report and a full copy of the relevant Home Office file have been passed to the Metropolitan Police Service for information in relation to their current investigations of allegations of historic child abuse.

2. Introduction

2.1. This Independent Review and report was commissioned by the Home Office Permanent Secretary in February 2013 and commenced on 4th March 2013. Full terms of reference are at Appendix A.

2.2. The Review is being led by HMRC's Grade 6 Head of Internal Governance Civil Investigation (the Independent Investigator) reporting directly to the Permanent Secretary. Independent professional oversight on any potential criminal matters is provided by HMRC's Director of Criminal Investigation. No such issues have arisen to date.

2.3. Following an initial assessment of the task by the Independent Investigator it was agreed that the work should be completed and reported in two stages. This interim report deals with correspondence, reports or papers from, and to, the former Member of Parliament Geoffrey Dickens in relation to child abuse, or any related matter. It is based on the examination of over 400 Home Office files and a targeted search for material most readily identifiable as directly relevant to contacts between the Home Office and Mr Dickens.

2.4. A final report will be produced by 31st May 2013 addressing the full terms of reference and covering all relevant material held by the Home Office for the period 1979 to 1999. The final report will highlight any additional matters relevant to correspondence with Mr Dickens which may come to light during the more extensive ongoing search of Home Office files.

3. Background – Geoffrey Dickens MP

3.1. Geoffrey Kenneth Dickens was born DPA 1931. He held posts as Parish, District and County Councillor in the period from 1968 before becoming Conservative MP for Huddersfield West in 1979, and then for Littleborough and Saddleworth from 1983 to 1995. Mr Dickens was married with two sons. He died on DPA 1995.²

3.2. Available Home Office records, reports of parliamentary proceedings and media reports show that for most of his 17 years as an MP Mr Dickens raised concerns about the abuse and sexual abuse of children, including the investigation of alleged offenders, the punishment of offenders and compensation for victims. He also served for a period on an all-party parliamentary children's group and was a trustee of the charity Childwatch.

3.3. Mr Dickens occasionally threatened to use, and did use, Parliamentary Privilege to name alleged offenders if he believed appropriate action was not being taken. He was also willing to challenge the Conservative Government on child protection issues in Parliament and in the media when he disagreed with policies or decisions.

3.4. On 17th March 1981 he named diplomat Sir Peter Hayman in two written questions asking the Attorney-General to prosecute Sir Peter for sending and receiving pornographic material, and to consider the security implications of entries within his diaries. The Attorney-General replied that he agreed with the Director of Public Prosecutions' decision to prosecute two people who had exchanged extreme material on 'systematic killing by sexual torture of young people and children', but not to proceed against a further nine people, including Peter Hayman, for carrying on correspondence of an obscene nature.³ (In May 1984 Sir Peter was convicted of committing an act of gross indecency with a lorry driver in a public lavatory and fined £100 with £45 costs.)⁴

3.5. On 23rd August 1983 The Sun reported that Mr Dickens had written to Home Secretary Leon Brittan asking him to outlaw the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE). Mr Dickens reportedly said, "If I get fobbed off with replies that the present law is adequate to protect children then I shall whip up a revolt... And I am warning the Government, my own Government that I mean business."

3.6. On 23rd August 1983 the Daily Express reported that Mr Dickens was ready to expose famous names in the Commons. He said they included "big, big names... people in positions of power, influence and responsibility." He went on to say that thousands of people had written to him with information and that "when I can prove the allegations I will name these people..."

² The Independent obituary published DPA 1995.

³ Hansard.

⁴ The Daily Express 17th May 1984.

3.7. On 24th August 1983 the Daily Mail quoted Mr Dickens saying that he had “a list of about three dozen certainties.....mostly prominent people – show-business and public figures” who were involved in child sex abuse and who he planned to name to MPs in October.

3.8. On 17th March 1986 Parliament debated the abuse of Privilege after Mr Dickens used written questions to the Attorney General to name a clergyman and a doctor as alleged child sex abusers. The Speaker reminded Members about the appropriate procedures.⁵ The following week the Times newspaper reported the resignation of an unnamed clergyman at the centre of child sex abuse allegations. The Times stated that Mr Dickens had been prevented from naming the clergyman in Parliament by the Speaker.⁶

3.9. On 19th December 1988 Home Office Minister John Patten and other MPs praised Mr Dickens in Parliament for the way he presented and supported the then Criminal Justice Bill which included measures to allow the Attorney General to challenge unduly lenient sentences and to remove some restrictions on the use of the unsworn evidence of children in court.⁷

⁵ Hansard.

⁶ The Times 22nd March 1986.

⁷ Hansard.

4. Recent Developments

4.1. Recent media reports have claimed that Mr Dickens handed two 'dossiers' relating to organised child abuse to the Home Secretary in 1983 and 1984. The reports variously claim that the 'dossiers' were not acted upon, are lost, or were subject to a cover-up as senior establishment figures were said to be named within them.

4.2. In a written Parliamentary Question Tom Watson MP has asked for copies of the 'dossiers' and any correspondence between the Home Office and Mr Dickens to be placed in the House of Commons Library. Holding answers on 1st and 14th February 2013 from Minister of State for Crime Prevention, Mr Jeremy Browne, stated:

"The information requested may no longer be held centrally by the Department. The Department is committed to pursuing all avenues in respect of this issue and we are researching all papers that are available to us to establish whether the information is held. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of my response in the House Library."⁸

4.3. A number of other reviews and investigations are ongoing in relation to the handling of previous investigations into alleged child abuse and current allegations of historic abuse.

- In October 2012 the Metropolitan Police Operation Yewtree enquiry into alleged child sexual exploitation by Jimmy Savile and others moved from an assessment to a formal criminal investigation having identified over 200 potential victims.⁹
- Metropolitan Police Operation Fernbridge is investigating allegations about activity in the early 1980s at the Elm Guest House and Grafton Close care home.¹⁰ The Elm Guest house was subject to a previous investigation in 1982 which resulted in the 1983 convictions at the Old Bailey of Carole and Haroon Kasir for running a disorderly house.
- Metropolitan Police Operation Fairbank is assessing other information passed to them by Mr Tom Watson which has not yet reached the threshold for criminal investigation.¹¹

⁸ Hansard

⁹ Metropolitan Police Internet Site

¹⁰ Metropolitan Police Internet Site

¹¹ Metropolitan Police Internet Site

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- The director general of the National Crime Agency is leading a review of the Police investigations into abuse in North Wales care homes during the 1970s and '80s and will investigate any fresh allegations of historic abuse. An initial report is due in April 2013.¹²
- In November 2012 Mrs Justice Macur was appointed to consider the scope of the 2000 Waterhouse Inquiry into the abuse of children in care in North Wales and whether any specific allegations of child abuse falling within the terms of reference of that inquiry were not investigated.¹³
- On 12th March 2013 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies (HMIC) published "Mistakes were made", the report on their review into allegations and intelligence material concerning Jimmy Savile between 1964 and 2012. HMIC plan to do further work on information management and use of the Police National Database during a Review of Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation later this year.
- The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) has written to seven Police Forces asking them to review all relevant material in relation to their handling of information relating to the late Jimmy Savile to establish whether there are conduct matters that should be referred to the IPCC. These Forces are West Yorkshire, Surrey, Sussex, Thames Valley, Greater Manchester, the Metropolitan Police Service and Lancashire.

¹²Hansard report of Home Secretary's statement in Parliament on 6th November 2012.

¹³Ministry of Justice press releases on 28th November 2012 and 8th January 2013.

5. Home Office Records

5.1. In 1980 the Home Office introduced a central database to record details of manual files. The Records Management System (RMSys) is a 'Dos based' system which was last upgraded in 2009. Fuller details about the system, including any limitations, planned improvements, and relevant records retention policies, will be included in the final report when the ongoing searches of RMSys have been completed.

5.2. RMSys contains data fields such as 'File Number', 'Storage Location', 'File Title' and dates relating to file management. The 'File Title' field is searchable for key words, either directly or via a Microsoft Excel data query function which reports results in spreadsheet format along with data from other fields as required. Both methods include the capability to search for multiple words and phrases, and to search for part words (such as 'paed') to reduce the risk of a record being missed due to misspellings.

5.3. This basic functionality appears sound and, to date, it has been effective in identifying hundreds of potentially relevant files for manual examination. However, the data within the system causes a number of limitations which mean that it cannot be relied upon to pinpoint files on detailed subject matters – including named individuals - or to provide an absolute assurance that all relevant files have been identified.

5.4. The system is fundamentally dependent upon the owners of papers retaining them and deciding to include them in central filing arrangements. There is some scope, as in any paper based system, for staff to simply retain papers locally and then dispose of them when they no longer need them – either through ignorance of the procedures, misjudgements on the significance of material or, in extreme cases, to deliberately circumvent procedures. However, this risk is significantly lower in relation to more serious matters which tend to be dealt with by more than one Home Office team – sometimes each running a separate file - and involve several staff.

5.5. Files are numbered and recorded based on the year manual files are produced for central recording and this may be several months after an issue or chain of correspondence first begins. Also, material may continue to be added to a file for years after its creation. For example, one file with a prefix PN 94, indicating the year 1994, contained a letter dated 14th May 1996 which was of some relevance to the wider review.¹⁴

5.6. Data about the content of the file is limited to what has been included in the 'File Title' field and as such provides limited scope for specific searches based on detailed file content. For example a Policy file¹⁵ called 'Crime Procedure, Monitoring

¹⁴ File Reference PN 94 0049/0057/001/

¹⁵ File Reference POL 90 1100/0002/007/

Child Abuse, Misc Correspondence' did contain information relevant to the Independent Review, whereas another Policy file¹⁶ called 'Crime Procedure, (Nottinghamshire) Child Sexual and Ritual Abuse' did not. Both files also have identical 16 character reference numbers apart from the very last digit.

5.7. RMSys also records files which have higher levels of security classification but the file titles are sanitised before entry to ensure that 'confidential' or 'secret' material is not stored on the system. This limits the reliability of RMSys as a tool for identifying specific files which may be relevant but which contain more sensitive information.

5.8. There is scope for manual error and variation in how the file data is input to RMSys. Errors in entering file reference numbers could result in a file which never existed appearing to be missing, or could result in an irrelevant file being examined. Errors in spelling, or variations in the use of punctuation or abbreviations, could prevent a file being identified when specific search terms are used. For example, searches for 'Paedophile Information Exchange' and 'PIE' failed to identify a potentially relevant file¹⁷ which included 'P.I.E' in the title. (The record of the file was subsequently identified in a search relating to Mr Oxley¹⁸ but it had been transferred to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) who report that it has been destroyed.)

5.9. Operators report finding the system cumbersome to use and searches have to be informed by an understanding of the available fields and divisions within the database. For example, 'live' and 'archived' files have to be searched for separately. This increases the risks of errors in file searches where either the operator or those requesting searches are not clear on what is needed and what can be delivered.

¹⁶ File Reference POL 90 1100/0002/009/

¹⁷ CRI 81 0472/0007/015/

¹⁸ Mr Oxley was a teacher who claimed to have infiltrated PIE and passed information to the Police.

6. Search Methodology

6.1. Given the scale of the task and the limitations described above, the Independent Review has adopted the following 4 Phase approach to identify relevant files.

- Phase 1. An initial physical examination of the contents of over 400 files identified and produced by the Home Office as being potentially relevant based on a RMSys search on terms such as 'child sexual abuse' and Mr Dickens' name, plus potential misspellings.
- Phase 2. A more targeted RMSys search for files most obviously relevant to correspondence between the Home Office and Mr Dickens, based on specific subject matter and names which have been linked to Mr Dickens in other files examined or in the media.
- Phase 3. A wider search, based on criteria produced by the Independent Review and informed by the results of Phases 1 and 2. This aims to capture more 'correspondence' files from relevant Home Office teams (where similar files have been found to contain relevant material) and to cover additional subjects such as 'children's homes', 'care homes' and more named individuals and locations. This has produced a list of 263 additional files which may contain relevant material and which are currently being retrieved from storage for physical examination.
- Phase 4. A review of records in selected Home Office units, such as the Private Office, Departmental Security Unit, and the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism which may hold additional information about more highly classified files, their contents and whereabouts.

6.2. The first 2 Phases have been completed. Work on Phases 3 and 4 is ongoing and is currently on target to be completed in time to produce the final report by 31st May 2013.

7. Other Inquiries

7.1. Searches of Hansard for the period 1979 to 1995, and of media reports for the core period 1982 to 1984, have been completed to identify any further reports of contact between Mr Dickens and the Home Office.

7.2. On 17th April 2013 the Independent Investigator met the Detective Chief Inspector leading the current Operation Fernbridge inquiries to establish whether they have any information about material or information which may have been provided by Mr Dickens, either directly or via the Home Office. The Police had no relevant information at that time and their focus must be on the investigation of current and historic allegations of abuse. However they have agreed to advise the Independent Investigator if anything comes to light during the course of their work. This is now the most realistic prospect of recovering any copies which still exist of the 1983/1984 correspondence.

7.3. One current Home Office employee has been identified who was serving in 1983/1984 and who was copied in to internal memos relating to the Dickens correspondence. The individual has been given sight of the relevant file as an aid to memory but confirms that they have no recollection of dealing with the correspondence or related issues. Given the passage of time they cannot remember any further detail about the content of the correspondence.

7.4. Five Home Office personnel have been identified who were directly involved in dealing with the Dickens correspondence at the time. Initial inquiries have established that one of these currently works in a senior role for another public sector employer and could be approached if necessary. Another is understood to be deceased and the remaining three in retirement. We believe that the latter may be readily traced if necessary either via a senior serving Home Office employee and networks for retired staff, or through pension details.

7.5. However, it is highly unlikely that an approach would produce any further documentary evidence and we would be relying on their memories of matters which occurred almost 30 years ago. There is some risk that the approach could generate intrusive media interest for the individuals involved. The Independent Investigator does not therefore recommend pursuing this potential line of inquiry but recommends that the Police are made aware of it so that they can consider whether or not it is relevant and necessary for their own investigations.

8. Files Relating to Contacts Between Mr Dickens and the Home Office

8.1. The Phase 1 and 2 searches identified a total of 101 files relating to possible contacts between Mr Dickens and the Home Office in the period 1979 to 1995. Of these 91 are no longer available – 77 are recorded as ‘destroyed’, 12 as ‘presumed destroyed’ and 2 as ‘not found’.

8.2. The titles of the 91 files as recorded on RMSys indicate their broad content was as follows:

- 22 file titles relate to the classification and control of the content of publications and the media, or to the licensing and control of ‘sex shops’.
- 30 file titles relate to investigations or court cases which were either already ongoing or completed at the time, or to sentencing, or to compensation for victims in sex abuse and other criminal cases.
- 29 file titles relate to other crime or administrative issues not directly related to sex offences.
- 3 file titles indicate that Mr Dickens has written on behalf of another party but give no indication of the subject matter.
- 2 files, both from 1990 and with consecutive file numbers, are titled ‘Child Abuse-John Patten Meeting with Geoffrey Dickens MP 25/06/90’¹⁹ and ‘Child Abuse, Satanism: Meeting with Geoffrey Dickens MP’²⁰ respectively. Both files are recorded as ‘destroyed’ but two further files, called ‘Crime Procedure, Attacks on Women and Children, Monitoring Child abuse – Miscellaneous Correspondence’²¹ and ‘Police Operations Against Crime, Child Abuse, General Papers’²² have been found which contain material about this meeting which is summarised in Section 11.
- 5 file titles do refer to child abuse but it is not apparent from the titles whether they would have contained specific information or allegations of child abuse or general representations e.g. about legislation or sentencing issues.

8.3. Based on findings from the examination of over 400 files to date the Independent Investigator considers it highly unlikely that files grouped within the first four bullet points would have contained any new information, allegations or evidence about child abuse.

¹⁹ CL 90 0004/0005/005/

²⁰ CL 90 0004/0005/006/

²¹ POL 90 1100/0002/007/

²² PCP 90 0014/0011/001/

8.4. Of the 10 files recorded as still retained, 5²³ are currently being recalled. Their recorded titles indicate that they are highly unlikely to contain any relevant material but they will be examined for completeness as they do refer to Mr Dickens.

8.5. Five of the 10 files have been recovered and examined by the Independent Investigator. One refers to a letter from Mr Dickens enclosing correspondence from a retired Police Inspector regarding capital punishment and pensions/compensation for injured Police Officers and dependents. A copy of the Officer's letter is enclosed in the file²⁴ and it does not contain any information about child abuse.

8.6. The remaining 4 files (two of which are referred to in the penultimate bullet point at paragraph 8.2) do contain relevant information which is summarised in the following sections.

²³ PCP 92 0003/0001/001/, PN 94 0008/0434/002/, PN 94 0058/0313/001/, VCC 94 0001/0001/188/ and REC 07 0007/0037/319/

²⁴ POL 93 0507/0001/004/ 'Reply Yo [Sic] G Dickens MP'

9. Information Provided by Mr Dickens' on 23rd November 1983 and 18th January 1984 – 'The Dossiers'

9.1. Copies of the so called 'dossiers' have not been found to date and, as the targeted search of Home Office files for material related to Mr Dickens has been substantively completed, it is highly unlikely that copies still exist within the Home Office.

9.2. However, one Home Office file²⁵ has been identified and secured which contains a copy response from Home Secretary Leon Brittan to the allegations Mr Dickens raised 'when you called here on 23rd November 1983 and in subsequent letters'. Mr Brittan's letter is dated 20th March 1984 and is copied at Appendix B.

9.3. The following brief timeline and summary of the content of the letters is constructed from details within the Home Office files and from the Hansard record of Mr Dickens' statement in Parliament.

9.4. **On 23rd November 1983** Mr Dickens met Mr Brittan and passed on two letters he had received.

- The first, possibly from a [Name Redacted] complained that her son had become involved in homosexuality at the age of 16 while he was working at Buckingham Palace [DPA]
- The second, initially reported as a case involving a civil servant, was found to be a letter from a civil servant – an HM Customs and Excise employee complaining that details of addressees of detected postal importations of pornography were not routinely passed to Police.

9.5. **On 17th January 1984** Mr Dickens writes and encloses a second batch of letters.

9.6. **On 18th January 1984** Mr Dickens makes the following statement in Parliament:

"My right hon. Friend will know that the Home Secretary kindly consented to investigate any cases of child abuse that I bring to his knowledge. However, perhaps the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland does not know that, sadly, this morning I handed a further dossier to the Home Secretary-"

"That dossier contained allegations of a child offence in a children's home."²⁶

²⁵ POL 84 0479/0015/002/ Royalty Protection. Personal Protection. Allegations of Paedophilia at Buckingham Palace

²⁶ Hansard.

9.7. **On 20th March 1984** the Home Secretary writes in response to the correspondence passed on by Mr Dickens on the 23rd November 1993 and 18th January 1984.

9.8. Mr Brittan's letter (and internal memos within the Home Office file) indicate that material in the second set of letters had been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration and that those which 'could form the basis for enquiries by the police....are now being passed to the appropriate authorities'.

9.9. The letter goes on to say:

'In other cases there either seems to be inadequate evidence to pursue prosecution, for example the lady who wrote about PIE advertising but did not secure any example of the material complained of, or they have already been dealt with in some way by the courts or the police.'

9.10. The Home Office considered publishing this letter at the time but decided against it. The file does not set out the rationale but does note that it may avoid 'resurrecting the Palace story'. In addition, it is clear that there was some potential for the alleged victim to be identified from the content of the letter – a consideration which is still relevant today.

9.11. A fuller analysis of the reported content of the two sets of correspondence has been compiled from references in the Home Office file, Hansard and from media reports and is at Appendices C and D. Much of this is impossible to corroborate given the passage of time but it has been made available to the Police in case it is of any assistance in their current investigations and in case they can identify any of the correspondence as a by-product of their own review of historic allegations.

9.12. The key points are that the material received from Mr Dickens was considered at the time, appropriate action was taken, and he was sent a written response.

9.13. On 14th November 1984, following a trial of three alleged members of the Paedophile Information Exchange there were media reports²⁷ that Mr Dickens was to meet Home Secretary Leon Brittan on 15th November 1984 to press for a change in the law. However, although Mr Dickens continued to campaign for more action against PIE, the Independent Review has not identified any subsequent reports from that period, in either Hansard, the media or the available information about Home Office files, of Mr Dickens complaining about a lack of response or action in respect of the two sets of correspondence he had passed on.

²⁷ 14th November 1984 The Express.

10. The Childwatch 'Dossier' - April 1988

10.1. During his speech in an Adjournment debate on Occult Societies on 27th April 1988 Mr Dickens said:

“Never again can it be claimed that our Law Officers are unaware of the growing menace. I have now warned Parliament, and that warning is duly recorded in the Official Report of our proceedings. **It is my intention in a few weeks' time to hand a dossier to the Home Office, compiled by Childwatch and me.** We must then discuss how best to proceed to safeguard children. There will not be an easy answer, but we may learn from discussions with certain American states. It is certain that black witchcraft and Satanism will not go away unless we unite to drive it away.”²⁸

10.2. An undated background note within Home Office file²⁹ CRI 88 0476/0006/009/ 'Child Sexual Abuse' refers to this and records that 'nothing has been received'. The note refers to an attached copy Hansard extract which bears a date stamp of '-4 May 88'.

10.3. This suggests that the note could have been written within just a few working days of Mr Dickens' statement and therefore too soon for him to have provided the material. However, the file does not contain any further mention of material from Childwatch or Mr Dickens and it would have been the natural place to have recorded or filed anything which was subsequently received. The Independent Investigator can find no record in Hansard of Mr Dickens mentioning this 'dossier' again, even though he did continue to speak about child protection matters.

10.4. Earlier in his speech on 27th April 1988 Mr Dickens appears to indicate that any specific information he had about child abuse was already before the courts or under investigation:

“How can we be sure that our facts are accurate? Having spoken to parents who have alleged that their children have been assaulted, and knowing that police charges have been brought against several accused recently, we must await the court hearings, because of the sub judice rules. Other cases involving over 20 children alone have been brought to my notice and are under investigation. A child's diary confirmed the parents' fears, and interviews with children have been tape recorded.”

10.5. Current online summaries of the background to Childwatch recount its origins in a BBC 'That's Life' appeal to viewers to help find out more about child abuse. The programme received thousands of completed questionnaires and telephone responses and set up a team to review them to make a programme on child abuse.

²⁸ Hansard.

²⁹ This file also relates to Mr Dickens' private member's motion on Child Protection on 19th December 1988.

10.6. One report³⁰ states that the BBC Childwatch Team met with childcare professionals and the Police to set up the Childline telephone helpline for children.

10.7. Given this additional background, it is likely that the Childwatch 'dossier' referred to by Mr Dickens contained statistical information or sanitised accounts in order to argue for assistance from policy makers, rather than specific allegations of child sex abuse.

10.8. This is consistent with subsequent events in 1990 where a Home Office file³¹ records an approach from Esther Rantzen to argue for the use of video recorded evidence of victims of child sex abuse. Ms Rantzen provided the Home Office with a file of letters she had received from victims supporting the proposed measure. The letters mainly related to previous cases and the victims' experiences in the criminal justice system. They did not contain names or addresses or any information which could have been used to investigate any specific cases.

³⁰ http://www.theparentsguideuk.com/historychildline_copy.htm

³¹ CRI 90 0553/0001/001/

11. Mr Dickens' Letter of 26th March 1990 to the Home Secretary and Meeting with Home Office Minister on 25th June 1990

11.1. Files POL 90 1100/0002/007/ 'Crime Procedure, Attacks on Women and Children, Monitoring Child abuse – Miscellaneous Correspondence' and PCP 90 0014/0011/001/ 'Police Operations Against Crime, Child Abuse, General Papers' both contain copies of a letter dated 26th March 1990 from Mr Dickens to Home Secretary David Waddington suggesting that legislation be introduced to make it illegal for anyone under 21 to be involved in 'secret occult gatherings'. The files also contain a note of a subsequent meeting between Home Office Minister of State Mr John Patten, Mr Dickens and others on 25th June 1990 where the proposal was discussed.

11.2. The note of the meeting records agreement that a written response to Mr Dickens' letter was not required but that the Home Office would consider the possibility of framing a suitable offence. Neither the correspondence from Mr Dickens nor the note of the meeting contain any specific information or allegation about child abuse, or any indication that such information had or would be supplied around that time.

11.3. Also, on 10th May 1990, in between writing to Mr Waddington and meeting Mr Patten, Mr Dickens had asked Parliament for a debate on 'the spread of satanism and devil worship in the United Kingdom and the involvement of children' but his request was refused.³² He did not make any reference to having passed specific information or allegations to the Home Office.

11.4. It is therefore highly unlikely that the two related files which have been destroyed (paragraph 8.2. penultimate bullet point) would have contained any new information, allegations or evidence about child abuse.

³² Hansard.

12. Further Work

12.1. All substantive work relating to contacts between the Home Office and Mr Dickens has been completed, leaving just 5 files which are being retrieved and which will be examined for completeness but which are unlikely to contain anything of relevance.

12.2. Work to address the wider terms of reference of the review is ongoing and will involve the physical examination of over 200 more files. Although the titles of these files do not contain references to Mr Dickens or to specific matters he is known to have raised, it is possible that they could contain relevant material – as did the files containing details of Mr Dickens' meeting with a Home Office Minister on 25th June 1990 (paragraph 11.1. refers). Any additional information will be highlighted in the final report - the Executive Summary highlights this possibility.

12.3. However, the ongoing Police investigations are now the most realistic potential source of any additional evidence about information provided by Mr Dickens. The analyses at Appendices C and D of references to the content of the correspondence he passed to the Home Office in late 1983 and early 1984 indicate that information was passed to the Police and that some had already been dealt with by the Police or the courts. Copies of these Appendices have been provided to the Operation Fernbridge Police who have agreed to let us know if anything of interest comes to light during their own ongoing inquiries.

13. Conclusions and Recommendations

13.1. The Independent Review has confirmed that the Home Office did receive information from Mr Dickens in November 1983 and in January 1984 about alleged child abuse.

13.2. Copies of the material have not been retained but a relevant Home Office file contains a copy letter dated 20th March 1984 from Home Secretary Leon Brittan to Mr Dickens. The letter confirms that the information was considered at the time and that any matters requiring investigation were referred to the Police.

13.3. Mr Dickens was a robust campaigner on child protection issues and, on occasions, threatened to use, and did use, Parliamentary Privilege to name alleged offenders if he believed appropriate action was not being taken. He was also willing to challenge his own Party on child protection issues in Parliament and in the media when he disagreed with policies or decisions.

13.4. Mr Dickens continued to campaign for more action against organisations such as the Paedophile Information Exchange, but the Independent Review has not identified any subsequent reports from that period of Mr Dickens expressing dissatisfaction about either the Home Office response or action taken in respect of the information he had passed on.

13.5. On the contrary, Mr Dickens confirmed in 1986 and again in 1987 that the Home Office had investigated and followed up cases he referred to them.

13.6. On 17th March 1986 in his response to a debate in Parliament about the use of Parliamentary Privilege, Mr Dickens said:

“It is five years since I named someone in the House of Commons, and it was a distasteful thing to have to do. I wish to be helpful. You will appreciate Mr. Speaker, that during the past five years letters have flowed to me containing allegations and details of cases that I should look into and demanding that I name various people, some very important. **I always sent the files to the Home Office, which investigated the cases for me, and in many cases to the chief constables concerned.** Therefore, I was jealously guarding, not misusing, parliamentary privilege.”³³

³³ Hansard.

13.7. On 31st March 1987 during his speech in a Parliamentary debate on the admissibility of video evidence in court proceedings Mr Dickens said:

“I should like to place on record my thanks to the Home Office and the departments within the Home Office for following up the many cases that I keep sending to it. I should also like to thank the Attorney-General. They have been very helpful and a strength to me in my campaigns.”³⁴

13.8. There is evidence that Mr Dickens intended to hand another ‘dossier’, which he had compiled with Childwatch, to the Home Office in 1988 and that in 1990 he wrote to the Home Secretary and met a Home Office Minister about a suggested change in legislation. There is no evidence to indicate that any of these contacts involved Mr Dickens passing specific information or allegations of child abuse to the Home Office.

Recommendation 1: Information about the possible contents of the correspondence received from Mr Dickens in 1983 and 1984 has been passed to the Police in case it is of any assistance with their ongoing inquiries. It is recommended that they are also given copies of this report and the existing Home Office file on the Dickens’ information so that they can fully assess any relevance to their work and to reduce potential duplication of effort in these matters.

³⁴ Hansard.

APPENDIX A: Terms of Reference.

To review all relevant Home Office files, records and other papers from the period 1979-99 and establish a picture of:

1. what, if any, material was provided to the Department in relation to alleged organised child abuse; and
2. what, if any, action was taken in relation to such allegations and whether relevant materials were passed to the police or law enforcement body to investigate; and
3. whether any member of Home Office staff was alleged or found to be involved or implicated in organised child abuse and what action was taken.

In particular the review should establish a full picture in respect of:

- Correspondence, reports or papers from, and to, the former Member of Parliament Geoffrey Dickens in relation to child abuse, or any related matter;
 - Any correspondence, reports or papers received or sent relating to the Paedophile Information Exchange as an organisation or topic;
 - Any correspondence, reports or papers relating to any Home Office employee alleged to have been involved or implicated in organised child abuse.
- (i) Where materials or papers or reports cannot be located or accounted for, the review should establish the reasons why they cannot be located and, if destroyed, whether this was within the Government guidance on retention and disposal of files and papers at that time.
 - (ii) Consider whether anything found would merit further investigation, including criminal investigation.

The review should provide to the Permanent Secretary:

- By 19th April 2013. An interim report relating to information received from Geoffrey Dickens MP, together with any relevant recommendations or findings, and an executive summary suitable for publication.
- By 31st May 2013. A final report covering the remaining terms of reference, together with any relevant recommendations or findings, and an executive summary suitable for publication.

In relation to point (ii), the review should draw immediately to the attention of the Permanent Secretary (without waiting for the final report) any matters considered to merit police investigation.

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APPENDIX B: LETTER DATED 20TH MARCH 1984 FROM HOME
SECRETARY LEON BRITTAN TO MR DICKENS.



Mr. Sutton
Mr. Parnham
Mr. de Bary
Mr. Bolton
Mr. Reed
Mr. Bartlett
Mr. Mangrove
Mr. Murrell
Mr. Spurgeon
Mr. Harris

Mr. Fitts

QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

20 March 1984

Dear Geoff,

ALLEGATIONS OF PAEDOPHILIA

You drew to my attention a number of allegations concerning paedophilia when you called here on 23 November and in subsequent letters.

I am now able to tell you that, in general terms, the view of the Director of Public Prosecutions is that two of the letters you forwarded could form a basis for enquiries by the police and they are now being passed to the appropriate authorities. In other cases there either seems to be inadequate evidence to pursue prosecution, for example the lady who wrote about PIE advertising but did not secure any example of the material complained of, or they have already been dealt with in some way by the courts or the police.

I need to respond in some more detail to the two cases which you raised with me initially and on which there has been some press comment.

The first case was reported as involving a civil servant. In fact the complaint came from an anonymous civil servant who, we have now established, works at Customs and Excise. It referred to a member of the public importing a number of photographs and slides of young boys, through the post from Holland.

I should explain that, whilst the importation of indecent or obscene articles is prohibited, a criminal offence only arises when there is a deliberate attempt to evade prohibition. Customs and Excise policy with regard to cases such as those involving indecent or obscene articles depicting children in sexual situations is to institute criminal proceedings where there is sufficient evidence. There have been at least six such prosecutions in 1983 all successful, some of which were against people in responsible positions. If, however, there is not sufficient evidence, they confine their actions to seizure of the articles concerned. That most often is the case with postal importation: simply to be the addressee of a postal package is not evidence of an offence. This is what happened in the case referred to by your correspondent where Customs seized and destroyed the photographs and slides but did not have the necessary evidence to prosecute. Beyond that, I do not think the Customs should supply to the police names and addresses of everyone receiving obscene or indecent articles, regardless of whether an offence has been established.

The second case on which there was some comment referred to a youth of 16 and his employment at Buckingham Palace [DPA]. His mother had written to you in very general terms to suggest that the young man had become a homosexual during his one year period of employment at Buckingham Palace and that he had alleged that homosexuality was prevalent there. The letter also said that the young man went to work in [DPA] following the end of his employment in the Royal Household and that he subsequently worked in [DPA].

I can confirm that the young man in question was employed at Buckingham Palace between [DPA] [DPA]. I understand that one year was then a normal period for someone in his position. As far as is known, he went direct to another place of employment but not to [DPA].

I have to say, however, that it is extremely difficult to comment on the accuracy of the allegations in the letter. The allegations are of a very general nature and a considerable time has elapsed since the events to which the letter refers. This puts substantial obstacles in the way of any more detailed investigation and, on the basis of this letter alone, it is difficult to conclude that it would be practicable to undertake such an investigation and to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Geoffrey Dickens. FSN M P

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2.

I need hardly assure you that the Royal Household is extremely concerned at these unsubstantiated allegations and it is, of course, their policy to take every step to avoid an occurrence of such as is alleged. There is nobody currently employed in the Royal Household who is under the age of 18.

I do understand, however, the distress expressed in the letter about the estrangement between the mother and her son and the reason for it and, as you know, I share your deep concern that the law should give adequate protection to children and should be properly enforced. For the reasons I have given, it is difficult to use the letter you gave me for this purpose; but I am sure this will not deter you and others from continuing to present specific evidence, if it comes to your attention, to the proper authorities.

2 over,

DPA

Appendix C: Home Office, Hansard and media references to the content of two letters which Mr Dickens handed to the Home Secretary in a meeting on 23rd November 1983.

1. The internal Home Office memo of 12th March 1984 and the Home Secretary's response to Mr Dickens contain the following descriptions of the contents.

2. The first letter.

- 'A letter from an anonymous civil servant'³⁵ subsequently identified as working in Customs and Excise and complaining that criminal proceedings were not being pursued following the seizure of postal importations of indecent or obscene material depicting children.³⁶ 'It does not involve, as some newspaper reports suggested, a civil servant receiving obscene material through the post.'³⁷
- The letter 'referred to certain past incidents but did not identify the department or section he worked for nor the names of the individuals involved'.³⁸
- 'It referred to a member of the public importing a number of photographs and slides of young boys, through the post from Holland.'³⁹ The Home Secretary's letter goes on to explain that 'in the case referred to by your correspondent.... Customs seized and destroyed the photographs and slides but did not have the necessary evidence to prosecute'.

3. There is an apparent contradiction within the last two bullet points in that the penultimate appears to describe a series of unnamed cases whereas the last references suggest a specific case. Either way, there is no record of Mr Dickens disagreeing with the summary and explanation which was provided to him in the Home Secretary's letter of 20th March 1984.

³⁵ Internal Home Office memo dated 12th March 1984.

³⁶ Home Secretary Letter to Mr Dickens dated 20th March 1984.

³⁷ Internal Home Office memo dated 12th March 1984.

³⁸ Undated draft response to Mr Dickens.

³⁹ Home Secretary Letter to Mr Dickens dated 20th March 1984.

Appendix C: Continued.

4. The second letter.

- 'Allegations of paedophilia at Buckingham Palace: [Name Redacted] letter'⁴⁰
- 'Allegations of homosexual offences by kitchen staff at Buckingham Palace'.⁴¹
This was a letter from a mother about her son who had been employed as a 16 year old at Buckingham Palace from [DPA]. The mother had written 'in very general terms to suggest that the young man had become a homosexual during his [DPA] period of employment at Buckingham Palace and that he alleged that homosexuality was prevalent. The letter also said the young man went to work in [DPA] following the end of his employment in the Royal Household and that he subsequently worked in [DPA]'.⁴²

5. There is no record in Hansard of Mr Dickens mentioning any of the above allegations in Parliament.

6. Examples of media reports at the time.

*"Mr Leon Brittan, the Home Secretary, was asked yesterday to investigate an MP's file of cases involving allegations of paedophilia in Buckingham Palace and the diplomatic and civil services. Mr Geoffrey Dickens, Conservative MP for Littleborough and Saddleworth, said he had asked for a meeting to press the Home Secretary for a change in the law to protect young children."*⁴³

*"A homosexual link between Buckingham Palace and the sex with children group PIE was claimed yesterday in a massive dossier of evidence by Tory MP Geoffrey Dickens. A sex scandal at the Palace involving a 16-year-old boy was just one of the cases in the file handed over by Mr Dickens to the Home Secretary Leon Brittan."*⁴⁴

*"The boy worked in the Palace kitchens... he was then given a job in [DPA] working for a [DPA] later named in court as a PIE deviant."*⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Internal Home Office memo dated 11th January 1984.

⁴¹ Internal Home Office memo dated 12th March 1984.

⁴² Home Secretary Letter to Mr Dickens dated 20th March 1984.

⁴³ 24th November 1983 The Times under the headline "MP alleges paedophilia at the Palace".

⁴⁴ 25th November 1983 The Express under the headline "Palace line to child sex scandal".

⁴⁵ 25th November 1983 The Express under the headline "Palace line to child sex scandal".

Appendix D: Home Office, Hansard and media references to the content of the documents enclosed with Mr Dickens' letter dated 16th January 1984⁴⁶ which he handed to the Home Secretary on the 17th January 1984.⁴⁷

1. The internal Home Office memo of 12th March 1984 and the Home Secretary's response to Mr Dickens contain the following descriptions of the contents.

- 'some of which relate to the cult "children of God" '.⁴⁸
- Two letters, from [Name Redacted] and [Name Redacted] were passed via DPP to officers who had been investigating the "children of God" cult.⁴⁹
- DPP advised that the other matters had either already been dealt with by the police and/or the courts, or would not merit further action.⁵⁰
- A letter from a 'lady who wrote about PIE advertising but did not secure any example of the material complained of'.⁵¹

2. Hansard reports Mr Dickens as saying:

- 'That dossier contained allegations of a child offence in a children's home.'⁵²

⁴⁶ Internal Home Office memo dated 12th March 1984.

⁴⁷ Hansard Report of Mr Dickens' statement in Parliament on 18th January 1984.

⁴⁸ Internal Home Office memo dated 12th March 1984.

⁴⁹ Internal Home Office memo dated 12th March 1984.

⁵⁰ Internal Home Office memo dated 12th March 1984.

⁵¹ Home Secretary Letter to Mr Dickens dated 20th March 1984.

⁵² Hansard Report of Mr Dickens' statement in Parliament on 18th January 1984.

Appendix D: Continued.

3. Extracts from media reports at the time.

- *“Mr Dickens has also collected information about the publicity methods of PIE – the Paedophile Information Exchange, which advocates sex with children”.⁵³*
- *“Mr Dickens has also collected information about the publicity methods of PIE – the Paedophile Information Exchange, which advocates sex with children. The Home Office is already investigating another of Mr Dickens’ dossiers about a homosexual link between Buckingham Palace and PIE.”⁵⁴*
- *“50-page dossier on the Paedophile Information Exchange, the group which wants to legalise sex with children.”⁵⁵*
- *“Mr Dickens said last night that he had also named a top television executive.”⁵⁶ “...who is alleged to have had sex with a child and has been seen with known paedophiles.”⁵⁷*
- *“religious cults involving young girls”⁵⁸*
- *“police accepting bribes from sex-shop owners”⁵⁹*
- *“a youth worker and young boys in his care”⁶⁰*

⁵³ 20th January 1984 the Daily Express.

⁵⁴ 20th January 1984 the Daily Express.

⁵⁵ 19th January 1984 the Daily Mirror.

⁵⁶ 19th January 1984 The Daily Mirror.

⁵⁷ 20th January 1984 the Daily Express.

⁵⁸ 20th January 1984 the Daily Express.

⁵⁹ 20th January 1984 the Daily Express.

⁶⁰ 20th January 1984 the Daily Express.

Appendix D: Continued.

4. Recent media reports.

On 10th February 2013 The Mirror online ran a piece titled: "Elm guest house: Home Office was warned by top Tory 30 years ago of VIP paedophile ring". The article says:

"The 50 pages contained information about suspected paedophile rings, police misconduct and the abuse of boys in a care home.

There are suggestions the dossier contained links to the notorious Elm guest house in south-west London which is currently the focus of the Met Police's investigation Operation Fernbridge.

But the file has disappeared.

It was presented to the Home Secretary by Geoffrey Dickens MP in 1984.

Later he had a half-hour meeting with the then Home Secretary Leon Brittan which Mr Dickens described as encouraging.

The MP for Littleborough and Saddleworth said he had been assured his allegations of a UK-wide paedophile ring would be fully investigated.

But there is no evidence Mr Dickens' findings were ever followed up and the Home Office admits it has no idea where the file is now."

5. On 24th February 2013 The Mirror online ran an article titled: "Tory MP's file on alleged VIP child abuse ring was destroyed by family". It says:

"The Sunday People revealed two weeks ago how Mr Dickens gave one dossier to the Home Office in 1984 but it apparently vanished.

The other was kept by the colourful MP for Littleborough and Saddleworth until his death at the age of 63.

That copy was ordered to be destroyed by Mr Dickens' widow [Name Redacted] who thought it was "too sensitive" to keep in the family home. She died last year.

Their son [Name Redacted] 49, told the Sunday People: "My father's file was destroyed after his death in 1995 because my mother considered it too sensitive to have hanging around the house. It had been many years since Dad had handed the other copy to the Home Secretary and unfortunately nothing had come of it."