

ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE LINKED TO WESTMINSTER

An overarching inquiry into allegations of child sexual abuse and exploitation involving people of public prominence associated with Westminster

August 2017 Update Note

1. The Inquiry is publishing a notice today inviting applications for core participant status in the Westminster Investigation. This document provides an update on the matters that the Inquiry proposes to explore in this investigation, and the methodology that will be adopted. This Update is intended to amplify the published (and recently amended) Definition of Scope for this investigation, and should be read with that document.
2. This statutory inquiry was established in 2015 against a backdrop of widespread public concern about allegations of a 'Westminster paedophile ring', and other similar allegations to the effect that politicians and other prominent individuals associated with Westminster had been involved in the sexual abuse of children, which had been ignored or even deliberately suppressed by those in power.
3. These allegations were especially disturbing because they concerned the conduct of elected representatives. They affected public confidence in the individuals and institutions responsible for running the country.
4. In the two years since the Inquiry was set up, there have been significant developments in the investigation of these allegations. A series of police investigations has taken place, including most notably Operation Midland, which has itself been the subject of a review by Sir Richard Henriques. The IPCC has conducted - and has now almost concluded - investigations into a number of allegations of police misconduct relating to Westminster child sex abuse. A range of other investigations and reviews have taken place.
5. The Inquiry considers that its own investigation into allegations of child sexual abuse linked to Westminster continues to be of significant public interest. Such an investigation is an important part of the Inquiry's overarching investigation into the extent to which State and non-State institutions may have failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. In accordance with the terms of the Definition of Scope for its Westminster investigation, the Inquiry will consider evidence relating to:

- (i) Allegations of child sexual abuse committed by persons of public prominence associated with Westminster and how these came to light;
 - (ii) The findings of relevant investigations, including police investigations, IPCC investigations, and other reviews and inquiries (including other investigations within this Inquiry), about the involvement of persons of public prominence associated with Westminster in child sexual abuse;
 - (iii) Whether there is evidence of conspiracy, cover-up, interference or tolerance in relation to child sexual abuse committed by persons of public prominence associated with Westminster or allegations thereof;
 - (iv) Whether governmental, political and law enforcement institutions were aware of and took appropriate steps in response to allegations of child sexual abuse;
 - (v) Whether there are adequate safeguarding and child protection policies in place within political parties, government departments and agencies. The broader matters to be investigated are also likely to require some consideration of policies and / or practices that have been in operation in the past.
6. The Inquiry is determined not only that it should consider these matters, but also that it should do so in a proportionate way. Accordingly, the Inquiry's work will be directed in part at reviewing, collating and aggregating the work of previous investigations, some of which may not currently be in the public domain. It is hoped that by approaching its work in this way, the Inquiry will be able to focus at the public hearing on issues not already considered by others, in particular the extent of any institutional failure to respond properly to allegations of child sexual abuse, or any other institutional failure to protect children from sexual abuse.
7. In conducting the Westminster investigation, the Inquiry will also take account of evidence gathered by other investigations within the Inquiry. These will include but may not be limited to the Cambridge House, Knowl View and Rochdale investigation (which will consider allegations relating to the late Cyril Smith MP) and the investigation into institutional responses to allegations concerning the late Lord Janner of Braunstone QC.
8. An important element of the Inquiry's work will be to conduct a detailed disclosure exercise. The process of requesting, inspecting and where necessary obtaining disclosure of relevant documents held by government, political parties, the intelligence and security agencies, law enforcement agencies and prosecuting authorities relating to issues within the scope of the investigation is already well underway. Relevant

documents are being considered carefully and will be disclosed to core participants in due course.

9. Paragraph 2.2 of the Definition of Scope as originally published identified as an issue to be considered in this investigation:

“the media reporting of allegations falling within paragraph 1 above, including consideration of whether the current legislative framework strikes an appropriate balance between encouraging the reporting of child sexual abuse and protecting the rights of the accused;”.

The Inquiry is committed to addressing questions as to the way in which the media reports allegations of child sexual abuse, including the appropriateness of the current legislative framework. However, these questions are not specific to Westminster and the Inquiry has decided that they should be examined separately as a more generic issue, taking into account relevant materials and information. Accordingly, this paragraph has been removed from the amended Definition of Scope, and will not be considered as part of this investigation. The Inquiry will make a further announcement of how it plans to address this issue in due course.