



## Child sexual abuse linked to Westminster report - one page summary

This investigation was launched following major concerns about the way Westminster institutions handled allegations of child sexual abuse. The report examines seven key issues: police misconduct, political parties, whips' offices, the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE), prosecutorial decisions, the honours system and current safeguarding policies in government, parliament and political parties. A consistent pattern of deference towards people of public prominence emerged, with political status repeatedly valued above the welfare of children.

Former police officer Robert Glen told the Inquiry his team had enough evidence to prosecute Cyril Smith in the 1970s for sexual offences against young boys. However, he said the investigation was thwarted by senior officers who claimed it was “too political” (**Page vi**). Meanwhile, Liberal Party members, who were likely to be aware of allegations against Smith, did nothing to inhibit his political progress. The party leader at the time, Lord Steel, admitted to the Inquiry that he “assumed” Smith had committed the offences alleged in a Private Eye article, but took no action as it happened “before he was even a member of my party”. This report states the mere fact that the offences were committed before Smith became a Liberal MP was irrelevant and did not begin to relieve Lord Steel of the responsibility to inquire further (**Page 56**).

In the late 1980s, allegations arose that Peter Morrison, the Conservative MP for Chester, had been caught by police molesting a 15-year-old boy on a train at Crewe. The evidence shows his party made efforts to suppress these rumours rather than conduct a formal investigation. The focus of attention remained unswervingly on political consequences rather than the welfare of the child (**Page 62**). Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was aware of rumours about Morrison but did nothing, according to Lord Armstrong (**Page 77**).

Sir Peter Hayman held a number of important roles in the diplomatic service between 1964 and 1974, but was also heavily involved with PIE. In 1978, he was charged with sending obscene material through the post but escaped with a caution after his solicitor held a personal meeting with the Director of Public Prosecutions. However, his two co-defendants - one of whom was a bus inspector - were prosecuted for the same offence. This report concludes that his prominent position gave rise to special pleading for which he received special treatment (**Page 113**).

Even now, safeguarding remains a crucial problem for political institutions to address. In 2017, Green Party election candidate Aimee Challenor was able to appoint her father as her election agent, despite the fact he had been charged with 22 offences, including false imprisonment, rape and sexual assault of a child (**Page 141**).

The report finds that the Conservatives, Plaid Cymru, UKIP and the Cooperative Party still do not have proper safeguarding policies in place. While some came closer than others, no party met all the requirements for child safeguarding policies and procedures considered necessary by expert Professor June Thoburn (**Page 138**).

It is clear that Westminster has had major problems in its responses to the sexual abuse of children, and institutions must learn from past mistakes in order to better protect children in future.