

**OPEN summary of CLOSED session
20 October 2020**

Witness 1

Following his evidence in OPEN session, the witness also provided evidence in CLOSED session. The reason for this was as stated by the Chair in her ruling dated the 5 March 2020¹. The following is a summary of those parts of his evidence that can be stated in OPEN:

The witness provided a summary of Leicestershire County Council (LCC)'s corporate knowledge of contact between Lord Janner and a complainant of historical child sexual abuse.

The witness gave evidence concerning Lord Janner's alleged access to children in LCC children's homes through informal arrangements that were in existence at the time. He acknowledged that the operation of these schemes varied from home to home and that whilst some required references, others employed a trial period. The witness confirmed that there were no criminal records checks at that time and suggested that any kind of vetting procedure or policy would not have made any difference in the case of Lord Janner, given the likelihood that such checks would not have resulted in any issues being raised.

He said that evidence from the time indicated that the Director of Social Services had been aware of the contact between Lord Janner and children from the home, but that nothing suggested that she was aware of any allegations of sexual abuse.

When asked, the witness confirmed that he had not found any documentation suggesting that there were visits by other dignitaries to LCC children's homes, similar to those alleged to have been undertaken by Lord Janner.

The witness agreed that whilst an investigation had been conducted into allegations of child sexual abuse against a member of LCC's staff, no such investigation had been carried out in respect of the allegations concerning Lord Janner. He said that he understood that this was because the officer was an employee of LCC and "*...it was the view of senior officers at the time that any investigation was a matter for the police*". He stated that LCC "*certainly*" should have investigated the allegations against Lord Janner and that the failure to do so "*...reflected a very different culture at the time in the way the council was run*". He added

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<https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/17767/view/2020.03.05-notice-determination-following-preliminary-hearing-20-february-2020.pdf>

that LCC regretted not taking steps to investigate Lord Janner or to notify other child protection authorities which may have had contact with Lord Janner about the complaints.

The witness confirmed that he had seen no evidence to indicate that if the police decided to take no further action against a member of staff, that LCC went on to conduct its own investigation and to consider whether the staff member posed a risk to children. He also acknowledged that there had been a failure to invoke disciplinary measures and to suspend staff against whom allegations of abuse had been made, stating that it was “...*symptomatic of the culture at the time, which was a reluctance to confront difficult issues*”.

Witness 2

The Inquiry also heard evidence from a former senior manager of the LCC. For the same reasons, his evidence was given in CLOSED session. The following is a summary of those parts of his evidence that can be stated in OPEN:

The witness described the general response to allegations of child sexual abuse during the 1970s and early 1980s, acknowledging that children were simply not believed. He reflected that it was “...*very, very difficult for people who were not involved at the time to understand what the level of ignorance was...not only in the local authority, but even amongst the police and other agencies*”.

Referring to the allegations against Lord Janner, he stated that taking any action would have been “...*controversial...it would have been difficult to manage. That is not a reason for it not happening*”.

He suggested that there would have been “*more caution*” about reporting a person of prominence and that he recalled a comment being made between LCC officers that Lord Janner had “...*very powerful solicitors and he would not hesitate to employ them*”. The witness acknowledged that this comment might suggest that people were hesitant about making a complaint against a person such as Lord Janner, “...*as opposed to the man next door*”.

The witness said that he would have hoped that there would have been, and believes that there should have been clear guidance in place, concerning visitors to children’s homes, but that his extensive enquiries had not uncovered any such guidance. He said that when he joined LCC in 1974, he was not aware of there being any formal ‘social aunt / uncle’ scheme in Leicestershire, but that it was possible that one might have existed. He said that he could not recall any other example of an MP visiting a children’s home during his career.

The witness also gave evidence that in 1993 a group of ex-residents from LCC children’s homes approached County Hall with a journalist from the Leicester Mercury, indicating that



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they wished to raise concerns about their time in residential care and to make statements concerning Lord Janner. He referred to a record of an interview he had with one ex-resident. The ex-resident had not personally raised any concerns about Lord Janner, but had said that there was a further individual who wished to come and talk to someone about Lord Janner, but was feeling extremely nervous about doing so. The witness stated that he did not believe anyone subsequently came forward to speak to him.

Reflecting on the period, the witness identified a number of shortcomings that he said meant that abuse had not been identified or dealt with properly at the time, including: the lack of a complaints procedure; the lack of effective training of staff; a lack of effective supervision and management of the children's homes; a lack of a culture in which staff and children could report concerns; and a lack of training in a range of areas.

Witness 3

The Inquiry also heard evidence from a former Director of Social Services of the LCC. For the same reasons, his evidence was given in CLOSED session. The following is a summary of those parts of his evidence that can be stated in OPEN:

The witness explained that when he became the Director of Social Services, he took over a "*dysfunctional*" department from a former Director who had no experience of child care. He stated that following his appointment he had set up a special division called 'Children's Services' and appointed an officer to head the division.

He said that at the time, there was no complaints procedure for when children wanted to complain. He said that from 1994 onwards, a complaints procedure was introduced and it was headed by a different assistant Director, outside of the operations branch, which "*had the benefit of being somewhat independent*".

He accepted that the lack of a complaints policy contributed to the failure by LCC to detect allegations of abuse in the 1970s and 1980s and said that if there had been such a policy, "*...children would have been listened to, there would have been action taken and we would have gone to the police*".