

Witness Name: Eleanor Phillips
Statement No.: 1
Exhibits:
Dated:

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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Witness Statement of Eleanor Phillips

I, Eleanor Phillips , will say as follows:-

1. I joined the Director of Public Prosecution's ("DPP") office in 1973 as the personal secretary to one of the assistant secretary of public prosecution. Sir Norman Skelhorn was the Director of Public Prosecutions at that time. Prior to joining the DPP's office I was a corporal in the Royal Air Force.
2. In 1974 I became the senior personal secretary to Norman Skelhorn. Sir Thomas Hetherington became the DPP in 1977. From 1977 to 1980 I was Sir Thomas' press officer, parliamentary clerk and private secretary. It was a very small office. Before Sir Thomas became DPP the policy in the Department was that no information should be given to the press. There was no Press Office. All calls from the Press were put through to the then Establishment Officer, Bill Adams who is now deceased. An Establishment Officer was the equivalent of the Civil Service equivalent of Human Resources.
3. In 1978 Sir Thomas started to implement changes to the Department. He created a Private Secretary, which was me, with responsibility for dealing with press enquiries and Parliamentary questions. I was sent to the Central Office of Information on a Press Officer's training course. In addition an experienced press officer at the Home Office became my mentor. She used to come to the DPP's office to help deal with calls if something big came up. The events I describe below was not one of those occasions.
4. During my time as press secretary to Sir Thomas I recall the department receiving a telephone call from a paper with an enquiry about Cyril Smith. I cannot recall the date of the telephone call although I have since been shown documents to suggest that it was likely to have been on or about 24 April 1979. I was not present in the office on the day the first telephone call came in. A secretary, whose name was Frances, answered the phone. She was secretary to the then Deputy Director. I understand that she checked with the Registry. The Registry confirmed that there was a file on Cyril Smith but that it was a closed file. It would therefore not have been kept in the Department.