

8

DPA

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Professor Alexis Jay
FREEPOST
IICSA INDEPENDENT INQUIRY

12 February 2017

Dear Professor Jay

IICSA – Rochdale Inquiry

My name is David Edward Moffat (D.o.b. [DPA]). I was a councillor in Rochdale from 1980 to 1996, firstly representing Littleborough Ward for four years, and then Middleton North Ward for 12 years. I was a leading member of the Council from 1986 to 1992, serving as Chair of the Recreation, Libraries and Arts Committee and I was also as a member of the Policy and Resources Committee and the Chairs' Panel.

I was married to Mary Moffat for almost 30 years until her untimely death on 1st March 1999. Mary was a fellow Labour councillor and served as Chair of the Education Committee in Rochdale from 1986 to 1992, Mary ceased to be a councillor in 1992.

In respect of your Rochdale Inquiry, during the period in which reports of the abuse and exploitation of vulnerable children at the residential Knowl View School were made to officers of the council, I as a leading councillor at the time was not aware of them. I was not provided with any information or report by officers, nor was any briefing or report provided to the committees I sat on; which included the important Policy and Resources Committee and Chairs' Panel.

Moreover, it was never mentioned to me by my late wife, Mary, or indeed by any other elected member of the council or council officer. As you can imagine, politics and all the big issues facing the Council were daily topics of conversation between Mary and myself. At no time was Knowl View ever raised.

Mary had a very strong Christian faith and was a deeply moral person. She cared passionately about children. She was throughout her working life a teacher; her last post being the Head of Modern Languages at Whitworth High School. Improving the prospects and life chances for all children, but particularly those who faced disadvantages, was Mary's life's work. It was this passion which brought her into local politics, to stand for election to the council and to become Chair of Education. The wellbeing of children was at the core of her beliefs, both professionally and politically.

I know that had Mary been told of the full extent of the serious issues surrounding Knowl View and the abuse the children were being exposed to, she would have discussed it with me.

The Chair of Education was responsible for the overall political and policy direction of the service. The management of the service was delegated to, and the responsibility of, the Director of Education. Had Mary been made aware of the extent and seriousness of the events taking place at Knowl View, and was concerned about any failings of the education service and its officers in dealing with these issues, she would have done something about it. She would have raised it with the Chief Executive; and given that it involved the wellbeing and safety of children, had she been made aware that children were in danger because council officers were failing to act, she would have gone to the police.

It is my firm belief that the then Director of Education's assertion to the Inquiry that Mary was kept fully informed about the events at Knowl View is not correct or true, and she has not provided any substantive evidence of details of meetings, notes etc., to support this. Mrs Kavanagh knew only too well that had Mary been fully informed of the situation she would have fiercely challenged officers as to their actions (or lack of them) to ensure the safety of these vulnerable children; and held the officers to account. Mary always put children first in everything she did.

It is important that the Inquiry is aware of the culture of the Council organisation at this time. I was the chair of a major council committee and my experience was one of having to fight to get information from officers. It was a constant struggle to be kept informed about the major issues facing the council, and this permeated across all council departments. Senior managers kept elected members at arms length, particularly when dealing with controversial matters.

I trust this information is helpful to the Inquiry. Please contact me if you require any further information, clarification or assistance.

Yours sincerely

DPA

David Moffat