



Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming: follow-up](#), HC 203

Tuesday 9 September 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Former researcher](#)
- [David Crompton](#)
- [David Crompton](#)
- [Shaun Wright](#)

Members present: Keith Vaz (Chair); Ian Austin, Nicola Blackwood, Michael Ellis, Paul Flynn, Lorraine Fullbrook, Dr Julian Huppert, Mark Reckless, Mr David Winnick.

Questions 173 – 575

(PRIVATE SESSION)

Witnesses: **Jayne Senior**, Former Project Manager, Risky Business; **Former Researcher**, Home Office funded research and development project, and **Dr Angie Heal**, Research Associate, Justice and Sexual Violence Project, gave evidence.

Q173 Chair: This is a private session of the Home Affairs Select Committee. That means there will be a transcript of the proceedings, which will be a record of our conversation with the witnesses, but it is not being broadcast. In accordance with the wishes of the former researcher, we will not refer to you by name in the open session that will begin later on. We will refer to you as “the researcher who was commissioned to do work on the subject”. Although, Dr Heal and Jayne Senior, I understand that you are happy for us to use your names in respect of evidence that we hear later on. Is that right? Thank you. You are welcome to stay—obviously I know that the former researcher will want to leave—to hear the open session. We are very happy to have you here.

I am not going to go into a long history of the Rotherham issue, because the Committee published a report last year into this and there has been a great deal in the public domain. All those sitting round the table are members of the Home Affairs Select Committee but we are also being joined by Sarah Champion. Sarah, do you want to come and sit at the dais for this session so everyone can see you? Sarah Champion is the MP for Rotherham. You may or may not know Sarah from your past dealings with her. We also have members of staff present who are associated with the Committee.

If I may start with the former researcher. Obviously some of the members of the Committee saw the “Panorama” programme last week, and I am particularly interested in the research that was commissioned by the Home Office and paid for by Luton University and the Home Office; the very important research that you produced. In your research I think you identified 270 victims of trafficking, young men and women who were abused in Rotherham. Is that figure correct or do you have other figures for us?

Former Researcher: No. Obviously it was a long time ago but I do believe that that figure was correct. The only correction that I would make is that it was purely young women, not young men at the time. That was predominantly because the Risky Business project in which I was located was a service that was set up for young women.¹

Q174 Chair: The second question relates to what has happened to this research. The Committee has written to Mark Sedwill, the Permanent Secretary, asking for a copy of the research, but we are dealing with the Home Office here and it is 12 years. We do not necessarily get everything we ask for. Do you have a copy of the report that you wrote?

Former Researcher: No, I don’t.

Q175 Chair: How many copies were written?

Former Researcher: How many copies were made of the final report?

Chair: Yes.

Former Researcher: To the best of my knowledge and belief, I certainly circulated a number of copies and that would have been to my manager at the council. I believe that copies were circulated to senior managers in the council and by that, for the point of clarity, I mean to the Director of Education, the Director of what was then Social Care. I believe that I would have sent a copy to District Commander Burbeary; a copy would have gone to CROP—now PACE—in Leeds, because they were joint partners in the bid and in the pilot. A copy was sent to the Home Office evaluators, which was the team that were based at the University of Bedfordshire in Luton.

Chair: So several copies? This is not just one?

Former Researcher: Yes, a copy was sent to the Home Office directly. How many copies were made following that I couldn’t say. The reason that I am unable to assist the Committee in producing a copy of the report is because, following the events leading up to that report being written, I made a decision to put all of my data, research, the copy of the report, everything into a box and put it out of my possession. I felt as if it was toxic. I wanted to draw a line under it. I wanted to move on with my life.

Q176 Chair: Of course. Where is that box?

¹ Note by witness: I should have corrected Mr Vaz as the research was commissioned and funded by the Home Office and evaluated (but not paid for) by the University of Bedfordshire.

Former Researcher: I gave it to CROP in Leeds—they are now called PACE—who were the joint partners in the pilot. I did that because I felt that they would be good safekeepers for it. When Andrew Norfolk’s articles appeared in *The Times* in 2012, I went back to CROP and said, “Could I have it back, please?” and what they were able to give me were several boxes but the report wasn’t there. All I have been able to recover from the Report is chapter four, which I think the Committee have before them this afternoon.

Q177 Chair: After you presented this report somebody gained access to Risky Business, and we understand from the “Panorama” programme—perhaps you can clarify this—that the drawer in the filing cabinet that contained your files and data, all that was removed.

Former Researcher: Yes. That wasn’t after I submitted the report. What I was required to do was submit interim data to the Home Office evaluators. As I understand it, they were required to assess the data to make sure that the pilot was, I suppose, meeting the aims and objectives of the research and report back to the Home Office. What I was asked to do was submit interim data, so it was that that I submitted including the 10 case studies that I had been asked to produce as part of the pilot work. The report came later. I have attempted in my summary of evidence to explain the chronology of events. It was after the submission of that data that the Risky Business office was entered.

Q178 Chair: Yes. Now just tell us—and then I am going to go to the other witnesses and open this up—are you saying to this Committee that it is very clear, as a result of what you wrote, that there was probably nobody in authority in Rotherham—no agency, no department, including the police—who was not aware of the contents of this report, of the serious issues concerning grooming?

Former Researcher: I would find that highly unlikely that there was no knowledge, not just because of the evidence that was submitted, not just because of the meetings that went on, not just because of the information that I was giving to senior managers but also the fact that we did presentations to the area child protection committee and so on. So I find that highly unlikely.

Q179 Chair: Thank you. Dr Heal, in answer to that question, you have produced a number of extremely important reports over a number of years, which no doubt you have circulated. There is no point in writing a report and not circulating it to others. Would you confirm what the former researcher has just said? In your view, having written so many reports about issues to do with drugs and other issues of that kind, indeed, including the stand-alone reports and six-monthly updates, do you think there was anyone in Rotherham—councillor, senior police officers and others—who was not aware of this problem in Rotherham?

Dr Heal: My reports went to the police predominantly but also to the Drug Action Team, to the Community Safety Unit and some of them also went to the Government office in Leeds, the Crime Reduction Team at that time. I know certainly they read it there because somebody came to see me about it after the 2003 report. Now I sent the reports out, whether or not they were read, I do not know, but they certainly should have been. They did not go particularly high in the council from my circulation list, but if somebody took the decision not to escalate that up, having read those reports, then I think questions need to be asked of them as well.

Q180 Chair: Jayne Senior, in answer to that last question, obviously the first specifically relate to the former researcher. You have been involved in Risky Business from 1999 to 2011.

Jayne Senior: Yes.

Chair: That is a very long period of time.

Jayne Senior: A very long period.

Chair: The Committee has only known about the issues of grooming in Rotherham for about 18 months when we started our inquiry after we saw the articles by Andrew Norfolk, otherwise we would probably not have started this inquiry. Do you think that people in authority and power in Rotherham—councillors, police, Crown Prosecution Service, senior officers of the council—would have been aware of what was happening there?

Jayne Senior: Categorically, yes, I would say that they would be aware.

Chair: You need to speak up a little.

Jayne Senior: Yes. Categorically, yes, I would definitely say they were aware. I have reports of intelligence, young women risk assessments categories, meetings, going all the way back to 2003 that went to the highest level in the police and the highest level in the council, including how many young people we were working with, how old they were and an explanation of what they were involved in, who they were involved with, and any intelligence including: car registration numbers, mobile telephone numbers, dates of birth, names and addresses.

Chair: Thank you.

Q181 Ian Austin: May I ask the former researcher about the fact that there has been a lot of reporting about your being subjected to hostility, unpleasantness, it sound horrendous to be honest.

Former Researcher: It was.

Q182 Ian Austin: Are you able to tell us who were subjecting you to that?

Former Researcher: Yes, I am. My own employers, who were Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

Q183 Ian Austin: Specifically who?

Former Researcher: It came via my line manager, who was Christine Broadhurst-Brown. I also had several unpleasant meetings with other senior managers, including somebody called Rod Norton. But in terms of the personal intimidation and hostility, I would say that was almost exclusively South Yorkshire Police.

Q184 Ian Austin: Was that Inspector Davies?

Former Researcher: No, two police officers, who I don't know, made me fear for my personal safety.

Ian Austin: Really?

Former Researcher: Yes.

Ian Austin: Because they did what?

Former Researcher: I was pulled over in my car on one occasion and I was specifically asked was my MOT up-to-date, was my car tax up to date, did I have insurance, I had better check that my car tyres were correct, did I have any brake lights out, to the point where I said, "Are you warning me or are you threatening me?" and he said, "I'll leave that up to your imagination but I don't want to see you here again". I had another conversation with somebody, a police officer, and he said to me, "Wouldn't it be a shame if these men found out where you live" and—

Ian Austin: "Wouldn't it be a shame—"

Former Researcher: "If these men"—that is the suspected abusers—"found out where you live" and at the time I was in the process of moving house and my husband and I took two decisions. One was to install a security system in our house and the second was not to tell anybody was where we were moving to. I cannot describe to you what it was like.

Ian Austin: It is horrendous.

Former Researcher: So I think now the Committee may understand why at the end, after writing this report, I drew a line and I walked away.

Chair: Thank you.

Q185 Ian Austin: The other thing I was going to ask, obviously we have all these people coming in after you, I know what I want to ask but I am just interested in what would you want us to ask. What is a key point as far as you three, what is a key thing you would want to say?

Jayne Senior: For me I would like to ask the question why the information and the intelligence that was shared monthly and sometimes weekly was never enough to be used to go out there and hunt these people down, so maybe half of these children would have not been harmed. I have information here on perpetrators in 2006 who were still active in 2011 and 2012.

Q186 Dr Huppert: I think we are all shocked by the whole thing, but I think the description just given by the former researcher—coercion and threatening—is really awful. Can I ask you about this raid that happened because in your writing you say that it would have involved people, having the key codes of locked doors, logging into various computers, I think, a whole set of information.

Former Researcher: Yes.

Dr Huppert: How many people would have been able to do that? How many people are there who would have had all of the necessary codes, passwords, keys; whatever?

Former Researcher: Very few.

Q187 Dr Huppert: Can you name all the people who it could be?

Jayne Senior: Yes, I could. There would have been myself—

Chair: I am sorry, Ms Senior—

Jayne Senior: Sorry, I just do not want to shout.

Chair: If you have to shout you may have to.

Jayne Senior: There would have been myself, xx, a part-time admin worker and there would have been Christine Broadhurst-Brown at the end of the project, and before the end of the project Kerry Byrne was managing the project and she had a key for the filing cabinet as well.

Q188 Dr Huppert: Given that there was no sign of forced entry, only those five people—

Jayne Senior: Yes. There was no forced entry, no.

Dr Huppert:—could possibly have done this.

Jayne Senior: I went into work on the Monday morning following it happening, and the first thing that the caretaker said to me as I went through the first door is, “You’ve had a lot of visitors in and out of your office this weekend. What has been going on?” I did not have a clue what he was talking about and when I went into the office at the time, the only evidence was a little plastic tag on the floor that said “Home Office”. So I got the key because the cabinet was locked. We opened the cabinet and the whole of the Home Office stuff was missing, everything.

Q189 Dr Huppert: To make sure I understand, there are five people who could have got in but the caretaker said a lot of people. Did he say more? Did he know or recognise any of the people who had come in?

Jayne Senior: He just said there had been a lot of activity in our office, people in and out all weekend.

Q190 Dr Huppert: You did not ask him who they were. Presumably he would know and recognise all five of you, the five possible people. He would presumably know who you were.

Former Researcher: Yes. That happened and then as we were recovering from the shock of that, the computer was opened and we see what has happened on the computer. Then as we are literally reeling from that, we then get the manager coming in saying, “The key players’ meeting has been cancelled. This is what is going to happen” and then I was suspended. It moved so quickly. I think we were—to use an expression—punch-drunk. We were reeling from it.

Q191 Dr Huppert: Did you report it to the police?

Former Researcher: It was suggested to us there was no need to do that because it hadn’t been a break in. There was no sign of forced entry.

Q192 Dr Huppert: Suggested by who?

Former Researcher: Christine Broadhurst-Brown.

Dr Huppert: Who is?

Former Researcher: Who then became my line manager, who then became the manager of the Risky Business project.

Q193 Dr Huppert: Just to be clear, so somebody who had complete access to all of this has virtually said not to tell the police?

Jayne Senior: Yes.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Q194 Lorraine Fullbrook: I would like to ask Ms Senior, you said that categorically in your monthly information and your paper trail that people at the highest level of the council and the police would have known about this.

Jayne Senior: Yes.

Lorraine Fullbrook: Can you give us the specific names of those people?

Jayne Senior: Could I just quickly give you the summary then? Because I have done you a summary.

Lorraine Fullbrook: Sure, absolutely.

Jayne Senior: In 2003 I did a data information sheet in relation to all children who were working with the project—

Lorraine Fullbrook: This was on a monthly basis?

Jayne Senior: This was a one-off yearly report to start with, and I was asked to do that for Sonia Sharp, the police and for managers in social care.

Q195 Lorraine Fullbrook: When you say “the police” who specifically?

Jayne Senior: I cannot remember unfortunately who it went to in 2003. In 2005, I was asked to work with the police to do an audit on all cases that had come to the sexual exploitation forum. I worked very closely with the Missing From Home police officer, Chris Barron, to look at all the minutes over a six-month period, and we looked at the risks of the young women and any actions that anybody should have taken. That was given to every member of the forum, which was members of every organisation: health, education, police, social care and the voluntary sector.

Q196 Lorraine Fullbrook: Is that what would have been called “the key players”?

Jayne Senior: It became after as the key players, yes. I then sent an email following that in 2005 to my manager, Chris Broadhurst-Brown, raising all my concerns that there were young women that were being discussed over a six-month period and there had been no actions taken, so the final action would be “To discuss at the next meeting” and then in March “To discuss at next meeting” and then in May, and it would just continue. So we never actually discussed young women that were classed as being high risk. We kept putting it off.

I was then asked to compile a report—in either the back end of 2006 or early 2007—by Joyce Thacker, and the report was for Shaun Wright. It was basically a complete overview of the Risky Business, including the cost of staff, how many young people, what categories they were at, if they were at risk, list of perpetrators, addresses, and there is a copy of that report here.

Q197 Lorraine Fullbrook: What was Shaun Wright’s position at that time in 2007?

Jayne Senior: He was not the Police and Crime Commissioner, he was the—

Lorraine Fullbrook: Was he the head of children’s services?

Jayne Senior: Yes, Cabinet member for children’s services, yes. That was about looking at putting some funding in because a lot of the staff were on temporary contracts and it was about getting a little bit more money.

Q198 Lorraine Fullbrook: That report was through Joyce Thacker for Shaun Wright in his position as Cabinet member for children’s services?

Jayne Senior: Yes. To look at the funding, yes. That is in here because I have had to break—

Q199 Chair: Could you let us have a copy of that?

Jayne Senior: This file is for you.

Chair: Is that it? Would you leave it with us before you go? Is it for us?

Jayne Senior: It is for you, yes, but—

Chair: We will return it if you would like. We will copy it and keep it. Just be very clear, because he is coming to give evidence, this information was given to Shaun Wright?

Lorraine Fullbrook: In 2007.

Jayne Senior: It was Joyce Thacker asked me to do it, to look at the funding.

Chair: So she had seen it?

Jayne Senior: Yes. It was sent to Joyce Thacker, yes. Basically it is financial information on the Risky Business project, staffing caseloads and confidential information, how many referrals and who had made the referrals to the project, what work we had done in schools and in groups and keys to categories because—

Q200 Chair: Is this an annual report-type thing or does it contain casework?

Jayne Senior: This was a funding report.

Chair: It is a funding report. Because we cannot read it in the next 10 minutes, does it contain details of cases?

Jayne Senior: Details of cases, date of birth of young women, how many times project workers—

Chair: All right, thank you.

Jayne Senior: Then it has categories at the end where we as a project have decided whether they were low, medium or high risk.

Chair: I see. Thank you.

Lorraine Fullbrook: You have just asked some of my questions, thank you very much, Chairman.

Chair: Apologies.

Q201 Lorraine Fullbrook: Were there outcomes that you wanted on that report for the funding?

Jayne Senior: Yes, because part of—

Lorraine Fullbrook: Did you put down your outcomes or recommendations?

Jayne Senior: No. On this report we had had an away-day with Christine Broadhurst-Brown, as a staff team, to look at how we could take this forward because we were led to believe there was going to be quite a bit of funding going to be made available, and one of the things that we were asking for was a multi-agency team based around Risky Business and getting some of the police involved in getting social care, so we got, like, direct working on a day-to-day basis but in a building somewhere where young women could come along and feel quite safe and supported.

Lorraine Fullbrook: Sure, and that was made clear in that report in 2007?

Jayne Senior: Yes. That was done on the training day; we had an away-day that the council paid for at a hotel in Sheffield where we got together as a team and we built a project that we thought was second to none. Then I had to prepare all the financial background for it to go to Joyce for them to look at the costs of that.

Q202 Lorraine Fullbrook: Which would be signed off by Shaun Wright?

Jayne Senior: Yes.

Chair: Thank you. Thank you, Lorraine Fullbrook.

Lorraine Fullbrook: Could I just ask one further question?

Chair: Yes, of course.

Q203 Lorraine Fullbrook: It is for the former researcher, if I may. The five people on the raid. Was the keypad able to be reset by anybody else?

Former Researcher: The keypad—you are talking about the inner door?

Lorraine Fullbrook: Yes.

Former Researcher: If you are familiar with buildings that have a coded key lock where you enter a code and then you can enter through.

Lorraine Fullbrook: Sure.

Former Researcher: It was one of those so—

Lorraine Fullbrook: It can be reset?

Former Researcher: It could be reset, yes.

Q204 Lorraine Fullbrook: By any one of the five people or anybody outside those five people?

Former Researcher: Can I clarify what you mean by reset?

Lorraine Fullbrook: As in the number the five people all had, which got you entry, can you reset it to zero, zero, zero and get entry, change the number?

Former Researcher: No.

Jayne Senior: No. If anybody was concerned then the caretaker had to reset the keypad.

Q205 Lorraine Fullbrook: Was there anyone in those five people, or the caretaker, that you suspected were working with the people who made the raid and removed the Home Office files?

Former Researcher: I am sorry, I am not clear.

Lorraine Fullbrook: Of the five people who had the keypad, and the caretaker could reset the keypad, is there anyone you suspected of those five people, and the caretaker who could reset it, who were working in conjunction with the people who made the raid and took the Home Office files?

Former Researcher: I am sorry, I cannot say.

Jayne Senior: I don't know.

Q206 Mr Winnick: Dr Heal, if I could ask you one or two questions. You were appointed as far back as 2002, were you not, by the police?

Dr Heal: I was, yes.

Q207 Mr Winnick: But to look into drugs, basically. Am I right?

Dr Heal: That is right.

Q208 Mr Winnick: How soon after your inquiries into those aspects did you come to the view that there was—as described in the report on Rotherham—links between drugs, drug dealing and child sexual exploitation?

Dr Heal: Straight away. My first report looked at crack cocaine use in South Yorkshire and supply, and it was through that research that I did over several months—I went to Sheffield as well because similar issues existed in Sheffield, or still exist, and then I met the Jayne through that. There is a 2002 report that is solely about crack cocaine use and supply, but it does reference sexual exploitation and the alleged perpetrators were perpetrators of sexual exploitation. So I made those links straight away in 2002.

Q209 Mr Winnick: What you discovered was it anywhere near the scale of what has now been revealed?

Dr Heal: I was really shocked the other week when—no, I did not realise it was that. I never got into the statistics. It was more qualitative research around the issues and trying to raise awareness across the county.

Q210 Mr Winnick: As I understand it, your report was not discussed by the council. Am I right?

Dr Heal: I don't know. I don't know what happened to it. I think it did get discussed. I went to one meeting with the council. In Professor Jay's report I think she said it was 2004. I went to the meeting of the Community Safety Partnership. I sent lots of reports

out. These were just a few. I sent lots of reports out on a number of different issues across South Yorkshire Police and the partnership agencies. I don't know what happened to a lot of those reports.

Q211 Mr Winnick: That is the local authority, but you were appointed by the South Yorkshire Police.

Dr Heal: I was employed by the police but I was funded by the four drug action teams in South Yorkshire, so it is a partnership post.

Q212 Mr Winnick: What was the police reaction?

Dr Heal: To—

Mr Winnick: To what you discovered over child sexual exploitation.

Dr Heal: Well, nothing.

Mr Winnick: Was there any interest?

Dr Heal: No, not until 2006 and I have to say—if you don't mind me saying—that I had a slightly similar experience to the former researcher because at the end of 2006 there were efforts made by the police to downgrade me by two grades, which would have been a loss of between £7,000 to £10,000, so I immediately found another job and left.

Q213 Mr Winnick: One last question. Much has been made about that there was sensitivity; people did not want to raise the issue at senior level because of the ethnic issue. But in this particular case undoubtedly the culprits were of Asian origin. Did you feel that was the position or do now accept that was just a lazy response because people could not be interested, those in authority simply could not be interested in the horrors that were happening?

Dr Heal: I think it was a very complex issue. I think that is part of it and, as I said, in Sheffield there are similar problems but it is a different ethnic mix. There are some Asian men involved but not just Asian men, and we had similar problems in Sheffield trying to get a response from the police. It was not a police response to not tackle the issue. We all know that the police are not always bothered about being accused of racism. They have been accused of racism in the past and they have still acted. I was involved very closely observing one direct operation and indirect operations that targeted suspects in black and minority ethnic communities. Across the force that was not a policy, so for me in Rotherham they certainly were not tackling suspected perpetrators of a number of—it was drug crimes as well in the Asian community, so I think there was something else going on. Whether it was a too close and unhealthy relationship with the council, whether they were protecting their own interests, their own positions, but I don't think it was just around the race issue as far as I am concerned.

Mr Winnick: Thank you.

Q214 Chair: Thank you. Do you both agree with that, Jayne Senior and the former researcher, or do you think there was a reluctance to take on the Pakistani community? Jayne Senior, be honest with us.

Jayne Senior: For me, through speaking to managers and speaking to people that worked on the ground, the social workers, the police officers, I was always given three reasons over the whole of the period, and I was told quite categorically that I could not mention the race or ethnicity in any training that I delivered and was told that was it. I used to get a lot of comments—especially by the police—that these girls made a choice; it was a lifestyle, the way that they lived. Obviously we would challenge that, and that was said in open meetings sometimes with others. We also used to get told on numerous occasions, “Where is your evidence? Where is your evidence?” We were project workers, we were youth workers, we were not police officers, and we believed that we gave enough information for them to get the evidence.

Former Researcher: I have had a long time to think about this and I have to say, Chair, I am no clearer to answering that question 12 years on. There are a number of explanations but, given the length of time that concerns have been voiced in Rotherham, given the people of seniority that it has been continually raised with, those explanations seem less and less likely and I am sorry I cannot assist but there is no explanation that quite seems to fit any more.

Q215 Michael Ellis: If I can say at the outset, I am full of admiration for all three of you and thank you for what you did and tried to do. I am absolutely convinced that Risky Business must have saved lives, frankly, with some of the women that you were dealing with. So I very much want to say that. To the former researcher, it is quite clear that you feel you were undermined from the very top. Is that a fair characterisation?

Former Researcher: Yes.

Q216 Michael Ellis: You have spoken about threats from police officers who stopped your car and things of that sort. I do not suppose you got their collar numbers or anything that could help identify them even after this distance?

Former Researcher: I don’t suppose it will surprise the Committee to hear I was so astonished and frightened that I was just glad to get in my car and leave.

Q217 Michael Ellis: Yes. Is it correct—I think I have read in the press that there was one family in particular where there was abuse of 54 girls in one family?

Former Researcher: Yes.

Q218 Michael Ellis: When one family is referred to how many people are you talking about?

Former Researcher: Three brothers.

Michael Ellis: Three brothers abused 54 girls?

Former Researcher: And later another brother, a younger brother then came in to the equation.

Jayne Senior: A little bit later than that there was another brother.

Former Researcher: Yes.

Q219 Michael Ellis: This was a Pakistani family?

Former Researcher: Yes.

Jayne Senior: Yes.

Q220 Michael Ellis: Was that the subject of your reports and complaints?

Former Researcher: Yes.

Q221 Michael Ellis: Nothing was done?

Former Researcher: If I tell you—and I am happy to leave the Committee with a copy—that the mapping exercise, which I have referred to in my summary, pulled together all of the information that I had collected. Those brothers feature very heavily. I produced that mapping exercise to be able to go and say to the police, “Look at the amount of information we have. Surely, in all of this—”

Michael Ellis: Fifty-four girls, three brothers?

Former Researcher: Yes.

Q222 Michael Ellis: Do you know where those brothers are now?

Former Researcher: I know where some of them are.

Q223 Michael Ellis: Are they at liberty? Are they still free?

Former Researcher: Oh yes, yes.

Michael Ellis: They have not been prosecuted?

Former Researcher: No.

Q224 Michael Ellis: Did you go and see the then chief constable at any point? Was it Hedges at that point? This is before Meredydd Hughes?

Former Researcher: No. I wrote a letter; I wrote two letters. It got to a point where there was what I perceived as a serious incident, when I took a young woman to the police station who was prepared to make a statement. Jayne is quite right, one of the things that

we—and I think Dr Heal had a similar experience—were constantly told is, “There is no evidence and we cannot do anything until a victim takes responsibility and comes and makes a formal complaint”, which we thought was totally unrealistic and would never happen. We were saying, “Look, there are other policing models”.

I took Inspector McKenzie to Nottingham with me, because they had had a very successful police operation where they had managed to ensure the conviction of several offenders without any evidence from witnesses who were victims of abuse. But we kept coming back to this blockage. We had one young woman who said, “I will give a statement” and we thought, “Oh that is absolutely fabulous”. When I took her to the police station so she could meet the person who would be doing the interview and become familiar with surroundings and prepare for the interview, she received it was either a telephone call or a text from her younger sister, her 11 year-old sister, who had been picked up by the perpetrator that she was about to make a complaint about, and the context of it was, “I know where you are and what you are doing”, and—

Q225 Michael Ellis: Sorry, to interrupt, but the police must have told—they must have known that you were helping a complaint to be prepared from this woman and they picked up her younger sister?

Former Researcher: The police did not pick her up, the perpetrator picked her up.

Michael Ellis: The perpetrator did. But what I mean is the police must have told the perpetrator. Is that the only explanation?

Former Researcher: It is one possible explanation.

Q226 Michael Ellis: Did that stop your witness from giving evidence?

Former Researcher: Oh yes, yes, and she made a comment that I could not disagree with, “You cannot protect me” and I thought, “No, actually I can’t”.

Q227 Michael Ellis: Did you then contact the chief constable, Hedges?

Former Researcher: So then what happened was I complained to my manager about what had happened and said, “This cannot continue. Lives are being put at risk” and we decided on two courses of action, one of which was to produce the mapping exercise that I have spoken about. The second was to write a letter to the chief constable and to also write to the District Commander at Rotherham Police, who was Christine Burbeary, and that is the letter that the Committee has in front of them. I sent the letter to the chief constable by post and I handed in the letter to the District Commander at Rotherham Police station. That set off a whole chain of events where I was, first of all, summoned to a meeting at the police station with District Commander Burbeary, I would use the term “furious”. She was furious. She said to me, “The chief constable has received your letter. I’ve received your letter. You’ve gone over my head”. I remember her waving it at me, “This is not how I do business”. I was then pulled into a meeting with Rod Norton who was my manager’s manager, who said, “The chief constable received your letter. He telephoned the chief executive asking for an explanation”—

Michael Ellis: Sorry, the chief constable telephoned the chief executive of the borough?

Former Researcher: Yes, of Rotherham Borough Council.

Chair: This is Mr Fitzgerald?

Former Researcher: This is Mr Fitzgerald. Basically saying, “Who is this woman? Why has she written to me? Why don’t I know anything about this?” and the Director of Education responded saying, “I don’t know anything about it”.

Q228 Ian Austin: Who was the chief constable at the time?

Former Researcher: Mike Hedges.

Michael Ellis: So it was Hedges.

Former Researcher: Mike Hedges, yes.

Michael Ellis: He was before Meredydd Hughes, is that right?

Former Researcher: Yes, that is correct.

Q229 Michael Ellis: What year was that do you think?

Former Researcher: That was October 2001.

Chair, you asked me if I could give assurances that those at the highest level had knowledge. That is how I have that assurance.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Michael Ellis: Could I just ask one other thing?

Chair: Yes.

Q230 Michael Ellis: Your report that you sent through, I noticed that the Home Office never published it.

Former Researcher: No.

Michael Ellis: Do you have any explanation for that?

Former Researcher: Again, I think I have dealt with it in my summary of evidence, but when I was put under pressure to alter the data, I did inform the Home Office of what was happening, I informed the Home Officer evaluators. I was initially assured of support and then was just cut adrift, no telephone calls, no emails were returned after that date. I can only assume—and this is pure supposition—that they thought it was some kind of employment dispute and they decided to distance themselves from it.

Michael Ellis: So they never published the work that you had undertaken?

Former Researcher: I didn't finish the work.

Chair: Thank you. Nicola Blackwood. We need to move on, colleagues, because we have a very full session.

Michael Ellis: These are very important answers.

Q231 Nicola Blackwood: Former Researcher, I want to follow on, I understand some of the allegations that were made against your report at the time were that it was inaccurate and exaggerated. I want to confirm with you that Professor Jay's inquiry had found that none of this was confirmed and that, in fact, the inquiry confirmed the findings of your report all these years later.

Former Researcher: Indeed.

Q232 Nicola Blackwood: I wonder whether, subsequent to this report being published, you have been contacted in any way by South Yorkshire Police to investigate any of these activities, to find out any of the police who harassed you, their names and identities, to follow-up on any of these incidences.

Former Researcher: No. I have been contacted by South Yorkshire Police and I am currently assisting them in providing whatever information I can.

Nicola Blackwood: Who is that? Who has contacted you?

Former Researcher: It is the Major Investigations Team at Wath, and they are aware of what happened because in the early stages I was extremely reluctant to talk to them. I did not want to revisit what happened. So they are aware of those incidences, not in any great detail but as far as I am aware they are not investigating them now.

Nicola Blackwood: They are not investigating them?

Former Researcher: No. They are investigating the information about CSE activity that I had at the time that I supplied to the police.

Nicola Blackwood: But they are not investigating the harassment against you personally?

Former Researcher: No.

Nicola Blackwood: Do you want them to investigate the harassment against you personally?

Former Researcher: Yes. I think it was disgraceful conduct and—

Nicola Blackwood: Yes. Have you made a complaint?

Former Researcher: No, I haven't. Maybe that is something I need to consider doing.

Q233 Nicola Blackwood: Okay. Are they investigating the theft or the removal of the reports from Risky Business offices?

Former Researcher: Not as far as I am aware because technically it was not a theft. I think that is the difficulty.

Q234 Nicola Blackwood: But, given the reports that have emerged and the impact that it has had on the subsequent treatment of CSE in the area, nobody has come, they haven't asked to interview the caretaker, they haven't spoken to you about what happened?

Jayne Senior: I was asked about it last year and I got an email in 2013. I did receive a telephone call after Andrew Norfolk's report came out in *The Times* I think, asking if I would give the background and an explanation to what happened during that period of time. I did speak about the case studies and names that I could remember and a very clear background to what happened and what went on subsequently, the theft and what happened to the former researcher as well.

Nicola Blackwood: You received a telephone call but nothing subsequent to that?

Jayne Senior: No. I received a telephone call and I was asked if I would send anything I could remember to do with any of the case studies of the girls, and there is a copy of that email in here that was sent in 2013 after I had left the council.

Q235 Nicola Blackwood: If I could follow up on some of the comments you made about the 2007 report—which you produced for Shaun Wright through Joyce Thacker—which included details of cases and perpetrators and caseloads and so on. Could I ask why Joyce Thacker was asking for that at that point? What was her position at that stage in 2007?

Jayne Senior: I am not quite sure whether Joyce at the time—could you tell me what year Joyce became assistant?

Nicola Blackwood: She became the Strategic Director of Children's Services in 2008. I think she joined Connexions in 2002. Was she chair of Risky Business Steering?

Jayne Senior: She was chair of Risky Business Steering Group in approximately 2003-04 and she resigned when she became deputy to Sonia Sharp.

Q236 Nicola Blackwood: When was that?

Jayne Senior: I think it may have been about the end of 2006-07, I think.

Nicola Blackwood: Sonia Shaw was the director?

Jayne Senior: Sonia Sharp, yes. When Sonia left—

Nicola Blackwood: Sonia Sharp. She was the director of Children's Services.

Jayne Senior: When Sonia left Joyce applied for that job and got that position. I am not sure of an exact timeline of those dates but she would have probably been either the assistant or the director.

Q237 Nicola Blackwood: Because one of the comments that was made in this report was that a particular characteristic and problem in the way in which CSE was dealt with in the area was there was professional jealousy between Children and Young Person's Services and Risky Business, and that made it very difficult when Risky Business tried to refer young people who they felt were at risk of CSE to Children and Young Person's Services, and there were all sorts of issues with thresholds and so on. If Joyce had gone from being chair of Risky Business Steering Group to being deputy chair and then Strategic Director of Children's Services, and was aware of all these reports because they all went right up to the very top, which we see evidence through these reports, why do you think that that was?

Jayne Senior: I believe for a long time we were seen as exaggerating the problem and making out that there was probably more of an issue than what there was. Also we would categorise young women as being quite high risk because of the CSE and we would refer them into social care and cases would be closed because they did not meet the low threshold, and it just became a constant battle for anybody, and we had things like, "This is a 14 year-old. This is a teenager. We're dealing with babies". So we were taking on roles of being like social workers, police officers, health workers, just trying to sustain some kind of normal living for these children merely to function.

Q238 Nicola Blackwood: But if Joyce was the chair of Risky Business Steering Committee in 2003, that was when Dr Heal was producing her reports.

Jayne Senior: Yes.

Nicola Blackwood: Those were being seen by the Risky Business Steering Committee, weren't they?

Dr Heal: I was part of the Risky Business Steering Group with Joyce for a while.

Q239 Nicola Blackwood: So she saw all those reports, did she?

Dr Heal: Yes.

Q240 Nicola Blackwood: Would she have seen your reports in 2002, do you think?

Former Researcher: I never personally encountered Joyce. I don't know if she was in employment at Rotherham at that time.

Q241 Nicola Blackwood: She started with Connexions then. I am trying to work out if she was aware of the scale of the CSE.

Jayne Senior: I would probably say in 2002 Joyce would not have been aware of the Home Office pilot. I cannot see at that time how she would have received a copy being in

Connexions. I can in the later period because they merged, but at that time I would probably say that Joyce would not have had a copy of the Home Office report in 2002.

Q242 Nicola Blackwood: What about the other members of the Steering Committee and the other members of the senior management, it is very hard for them to give the appearance, which is being upheld now, that it was not known across the leadership who were there then and many of whom remain now.

Jayne Senior: Yes. Absolutely, yes.

Chair: Thank you. Lorraine Fullbrook, a quick question, then Mr Reckless, and then we must move on.

Q243 Lorraine Fullbrook: I would like to ask you all in each of your opinions why do you think the police did not take your information and your intelligence and investigate these cases?

Chair: Very quickly; a quick answer from each of you.

Former Researcher: I cannot give you a quick answer. It is very difficult to understand and there are a number of explanations. I think only the police can answer that. I cannot speculate. I am sorry.

Lorraine Fullbrook: It is just in your opinion why you think—

Former Researcher: In my opinion I think they did not see the children as victims of crime. I think that perhaps they were worried about resources and the sheer effort it would take to investigate. I think in part they believed that it was being exaggerated or that it did not reflect the real scale of it. I think in part there was a sense that because the young women would not come and make complaints, they would not help themselves, so why should professionals help them. The opinions and personal judgments from the police force, along with the professionals I encountered, were disgraceful. They totally forgot that we were dealing with children being abused.

Dr Heal: In Sheffield we were told, “Burglary and car crime are our policing priorities set by the Government and, therefore it’s out of our control” and maybe that was the same—

Lorraine Fullbrook: And this was from the beginning, from 2002?

Dr Heal: Yes, when they did answer. They mostly ignored them but there were a couple of meetings we were told, “Burglary and car crime are our policing priorities”.

Q244 Lorraine Fullbrook: Ms Senior, what do you think?

Jayne Senior: Children were angry, they were frightened and they swore. They did not come across, in the stages of grooming, as being victims, and I believe for a long time they were not seen as being worth saving.

Q245 Lorraine Fullbrook: So this is just total ignorance and ignoring on behalf of the police?

Jayne Senior: Derogatory names used against the girls, “If she stops going there and stops getting in cars” and things like that were used in many meetings. These girls have no choice, and the way that they put that front on was their attitude because they had a little bit of control.

Chair: Thank you. Mr Reckless, and then we really must move on.

Q246 Mark Reckless: Why was Risky Business set up in Rotherham initially?

Jayne Senior: There was a little bit of research done on a very, very small grant—I think it was about £1,500—in 2007, because workers were coming forward saying that they were working with victims of CSE and they had nowhere to go and there was nowhere to refer on to.

Mark Reckless: In 2007, is that correct?

Jayne Senior: Yes, and it was like a very small—1997, sorry. I apologise, 1997. There was a little bit of research done and it was put into a Health Action Zone grant, which was successful, and I was interviewed and appointed in 1999.

Q247 Mark Reckless: May I ask the former researcher, do you regret applying for this job or do you feel any satisfaction in having helped exposed what is now so publically discussed?

Former Researcher: I have no regrets. I spent an incredible time in Rotherham. I met some amazing young women; some amazing children. I met some professionals who were doing a fantastic job. It was an absolute privilege to spend time with the Risky Business project and it opened my eyes to child protection issues that I needed to address, which is what I have done throughout my subsequent career.

Chair: Thank you. Nicola Blackwood has a very quick question.

Q248 Nicola Blackwood: It is a very quick question. It is just to Ms Senior about the 2005 audit. It says in Professor Jay’s report that there was a decision made to remove the young girls who were pregnant or who had recently had children, from the at risk files. Why was that decision made?

Jayne Senior: I don’t know exactly. A lot of children were removed from registers and files. There is the minutes of one of the meetings where it says, “Referred to teenage pregnancy nurse. Remove from forum”. I don’t know.

Nicola Blackwood: Yes. I do not know why you would use pregnancy or recently having had a child as a lower risk category.

Jayne Senior: I don’t know. I don’t know.

Nicola Blackwood: That seems to have been a decision that was made. You do not know why?

Jayne Senior: I don't know why, no.

Nicola Blackwood: All right. I thought—

Former Researcher: If I can offer something on that. What I encountered certainly was a shift of focus on to the baby, whether that be unborn or of a born child, and I certainly worked with one young woman throughout who was not seen as being at risk. There were constant references to this man being her 'boyfriend'. He was invited to the antenatal meetings and so on; and then he was sentenced to a term of imprisonment for violent offences including witness and intimidation, and brutality. Subsequently her child was regarded as being at risk, and there were threats made to remove the child into the care system to protect the child from the same man who had targeted and abused this young woman since she was 13 years-old!

Nicola Blackwood: Thank you. That is helpful.

Jayne Senior: There is a referral in here for a young woman that was living independently at 16 with her baby and men were going to the house and taking other children, and she was reporting that herself. She had been a victim and was reporting it and asked to be moved because she was in absolute fear, and the baby was removed because the baby was seen as being unsafe when 20, 30 men a night were turning up to have sex with her and other children while she had to sit outside the bedroom door and listen.

Chair: May I say to the former researcher, Dr Heal, Jayne Senior, on behalf of the Committee, thank you very much for coming in? We wanted to hear from you because you have very important evidence to give to us. We will be recommending that the Rotherham inquiry, once it has been set up—and two co-chairs are coming in to see us at the end of this session—should hear from you as well. In the case of the former researcher, it might be in private. But I think you all have very worthwhile evidence to give and we are at a loss to know why these matters were not progressed earlier, but we are very grateful to you for coming in here and we promise you this: the Committee will be producing a short report based on what we have seen over the last two weeks, that we will continue to monitor this until Parliament rises in March of next year. We will not leave it for some time in the future. We will come back to this issue again and again and again until we see progress and you get the justice that you deserve also, as people who have watched what is happening but have not been able to see a conclusion to what you have done.

Sarah Champion, thank you also for coming. We are now going into open session. You are welcome to stay on the side to watch the proceedings. Jayne Senior and Angie Heal you are also welcome to stay at the back if you wish with Sarah. That is fine.

Q249 Michael Ellis: Did you want to say something?

Jayne Senior: Can I say one last thing to all of us, really? Unless you have experienced what these children have experienced none of us will ever walk in their shoes, but maybe what we all now need to do is walk alongside them and recognise that these kids deserve a life.

Chair: Thank you. Because of the anonymity of the former researcher, arrangements have been made for you to go out through a side door. We will adjourn the Committee for five minutes to give people the opportunity to get ready for the open session. Thank you for coming. Thank you very much.

Witnesses: **Chief Constable David Crompton QPM**, South Yorkshire Police, and **Meredydd Hughes CBE QPM**, former Chief Constable, South Yorkshire Police, gave evidence on oath.

Q250 Chair: This is the Committee's continuing inquiry into child grooming and, in particular, our monitoring of the situation in Rotherham. Our first two witnesses are David Crompton, the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire, and Meredydd Hughes. The Committee has decided that all the evidence on Rotherham this afternoon should be given under oath. Under the Parliamentary Witnesses Oaths Act 1871 and the Perjury Act 1911, false evidence given to the Committee under oath is subject to the penalties for perjury. The issues we are considering today are very serious indeed and it is essential that we have full and accurate answers to all our questions. The Clerk will now proceed to administer the oath.

Meredydd Hughes: I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give before the Committee shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

Chief Constable Crompton: I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give before the Committee shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

Q251 Chair: Thank you very much. I will start with you, Chief Constable. First of all, thank you for providing the information the Committee has asked for. Certainly whenever we have asked you to let us have that information you have been very timely in producing it. We are most grateful for that, but I think you want to start with an apology to this Committee concerning the evidence you gave last Tuesday in respect of a question I put to you about the number of prosecutions and convictions in the South Yorkshire area. I think you told this Committee that there were 104 convictions. Subsequent to that, following a conversation I think your press officer had with Radio Sheffield, he disclosed that that information was wrong and you subsequently wrote to me with the new information. Could you explain how that happened?

Chief Constable Crompton: Chair, yes, I do apologise. It was a genuine mistake on my part. I did get the figure of 104 correct. I thought it was convictions. It was in fact prosecutions and I have written to you formally to correct that and also provided a lot more detail as to what those figures comprised. However, I would like to emphasise it was a genuine mistake on my part. I was not trying to mislead anybody.

Q252 Chair: The Committee accepts your apology. We have the list. I have had a look at the list. There are 68 convictions on there. We will publish the list today because most of this information is in the public domain. What I noticed was the fact that a number were repeat offenders, even though there were convictions and the figure seems obviously lower than what you said last Tuesday but higher than what we expected considering that it was zero

between 2010 and 2013. Is it right that a number of those convicted are people who have repeatedly been involved in these activities?

Chief Constable Crompton: I have not gone through the names to check whether they have previously been involved. What I was interested in doing was providing the Committee with the correct information about convictions, prosecutions and ongoing cases. It may be that some of them are repeat offenders. However, I do not have the information with me in relation to that.

Q253 Chair: Chief Constable, we have just heard some very compelling evidence in private from a number of individuals, including Dr Heal, Jayne Senior from Risky Business and a researcher who had been commissioned by the Home Office in Luton and produced a report in 2002 concerning child grooming in the South Yorkshire area. I appreciate you were not the chief constable then, but you have probably seen articles in newspapers and you have heard about this evidence last week. Have you sought to obtain for yourself a copy of the Home Office research document that has been the subject of so much interest?

Chief Constable Crompton: I have and we were provided it by Professor Jay. We did not have it in our possession but I have seen the document.

Q254 Chair: You now have a copy of that report?

Chief Constable Crompton: Yes.

Q255 Chair: Have you now been able to read that report and try to understand why no action was taken over so many years by South Yorkshire Police?

Chief Constable Crompton: I have read the document and, yes, it is unclear to me what action was taken as a result of it.

Q256 Chair: The evidence we have heard was not only shocking to us but quite harrowing in respect of a number of the cases that were mentioned. I and I think other members of the Committee, but they will question you in a moment, find it incredible that the police seemed not to know about what was happening in the South Yorkshire area, in particular in Rotherham. We have accepted, as I think you have accepted, what Professor Jay has said, that it is impossible that anyone could not have known what was going on there. Do you now accept the serious failings that occurred, not just under your leadership but under the previous leadership of Mr Hughes, who we will question shortly, over a period of time? You have really let the people of Rotherham down, have you not?

Chief Constable Crompton: In my previous evidence I accepted the fact that things had not been done in the way they should have been in the past. I have accepted the contents of the “Jay Report”. I would make the point that things are better now than they used to be and that is evidenced in the “Jay Report”. However, I do accept that things should have been done differently in the past and that is previous evidence that I have given.

Q257 Chair: When you gave evidence to us you said 12 new victims had come forward since this matter was published.

Chief Constable Crompton: Until last Tuesday it was 12. We now have 25.

Chair: Twenty-five new victims?

Chief Constable Crompton: Yes.

Q258 Chair: How are you ensuring that these victims are not going to be let down as previous victims have been let down? Bearing in mind what has happened over the last few weeks, how do you make sure that they are going to get justice, you personally?

Chief Constable Crompton: I can say with absolute conviction there is not one single member of my police force, and there are 5,000 of them, who is not absolutely clear about how serious an issue this is. We have invested significant extra resources into dealing with this as a problem. I think I gave the Committee the figures of the staff that we have deployed into these types of investigations, which have risen from three in 2010 to a figure of 62, which is where we stand today, and we have plans in place to deploy a further 26. In answer to your question: yes, we are seeing further complaints coming in—

Q259 Chair: Yes, I understand that. You did tell us that last week—

Chief Constable Crompton: We already have plans—

Chair: —but I am asking you now on these 25 new victims—I accept you were not chief constable before the period we mentioned, but you have come to this Committee with original evidence on two occasions. Last week you said it was 12. This week it is 25. You have given me a very good account of your overall resources. How are you personally going to ensure that these 25 victims are going to get justice? Not the fact that you have a bigger team, how do we know that we can trust you and your force on these 25 new victims? Put to one side the 1,000. These 25 since last week, how do we know that you are looking at this personally?

Chief Constable Crompton: The staff at Rotherham know of my interest. I have put personal messages out to the force. Clearly nobody in my force lives in isolation from the media, which has reported these matters very heavily. As I have said, there will not be a single person in the force who is not convinced that this is top priority and I intend to make sure that we will resource this properly and deal with all of these cases no matter what we need to do.

Q260 Chair: Mr Hughes, let us turn to you. Thank you for coming. I know you had difficulties in getting here because you had other commitments. What is your current employment?

Meredydd Hughes: I am a non-executive director of the Sheffield Children's Hospital and I run my own consultancy businesses and road safety companies.

Q261 Chair: The consultancy businesses are concerning what issues?

Meredydd Hughes: Security and public order.

Chair: This is largely abroad, I think you told me.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes, that is correct.

Chair: In the Middle East.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes, indeed.

Q262 Chair: Thank you for coming here today. I was very, very surprised at your statement that you made last week to the media in which you say you cannot remember any of these issues concerning child sex grooming in the area that you were chief constable and deputy chief constable for so many years. I find that very hard indeed to believe, that someone of your intelligence and capability could tell the press that you cannot remember any of this. Mr Hughes.

Meredydd Hughes: I am listening, sir.

Chair: That is a question.

Meredydd Hughes: Right. I have had the opportunity now to see the four reports that have been considered by your Committee among all the other evidence. I can say without equivocation, although I suppose I should be advised to say “to the best of my memory”, that I have not seen three of those reports before, particularly the Home Office report or Angie Heal’s report of 2003 or 2006. They are not in a format I would expect to see. I am not an idle man. I am not the sort of person who runs an organisation at arm’s length. I have been out on patrol in Rotherham with officers. I have visited the council chambers. We have held police authority meetings there. I have been to community groups. There has even been an inspection by Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary into the Rotherham division in 2004-2005 with a follow-up of that that specifically looked at intelligence.

Some of the reports, I frankly felt sick last night when I read. I am not immune to the ideas that this is a hideous crime and I am deeply embarrassed, but I can say with honesty that, at the time that I was both deputy and chief constable, I had no idea of the scale and scope of this type of organised crime.

Q263 Chair: Mr Hughes, we find this impossible to believe because we have heard evidence of the most compelling nature from people who have operated in Rotherham for all the years that you were chief constable and you are coming before this Committee and saying the first time you knew about this was when you read these reports. We find it impossible to believe, Mr Hughes, that while you were chief constable none of this came across your desk, that no one ever said to you reports had been written, that there was concern about grooming. Even after Andrew Norfolk wrote about it in *The Times*, did you take any steps after you ceased to be chief constable to try to find out why nobody had told you what was going on until now?

Meredydd Hughes: I am distressed that nobody told me at the time. I did not run a police force with a culture where those who bring bad news or speak truth to power are treated badly, quite the reverse. We had a system in place with repeated visits by the assistant

chief constable and others to all our districts. The 2010 report is a force-wide strategic report and starts throwing up the scale of the problems. To that point I had no idea of the scale and scope of these issues.

Q264 Chair: In all the meetings you had with Shaun Wright, for example, when he was chair of Children's Services—

Meredydd Hughes: I never had a meeting with Shaun Wright when he was chair of Children's Services.

Chair: You never met him?

Meredydd Hughes: No.

Q265 Chair: You have never met the leader of the council, Roger Stone?

Meredydd Hughes: Yes, I met the leader of the council, together with other leaders of the council at meetings where largely budgets and funding were discussed.

Q266 Chair: Nobody has ever mentioned this to you?

Meredydd Hughes: No.

Chair: Nobody has ever said there was a problem of child grooming in Rotherham?

Meredydd Hughes: No, and I am—

Q267 Chair: In the whole of South Yorkshire?

Meredydd Hughes: —very aware that I am on oath, sir. Now, perhaps it would help the Committee if I explain the structure of operational policing in South Yorkshire.

Chair: Not really, no.

Meredydd Hughes: Okay. Well, if you already know it then I can explain to you that you should be aware that you have independent operational divisions with their own budgets.

Q268 Chair: Mr Hughes, we do not need an explanation. Some of us have been doing this job for a while. Thank you for that. It is about you and your knowledge and I am telling you that this Committee does not accept that you did not know anything about child grooming in your area when you served as deputy chief constable and chief constable and we have had the most compelling evidence. Even if we accept that you knew nothing about it, and I accept that while you were chief constable you were co-ordinating the papal visit in 2010; you were planning the 2012 Olympics and you were involved in other activities. I understand you had major national responsibilities: leadership of sporting events, firearms, public order, emergency planning, road policing, which Mr Ellis will be questioning you about. You had all these national responsibilities, but you did not know what was happening in South Yorkshire about grooming. Is that what you are asking us to believe today?

Meredydd Hughes: I am certainly saying that I had no understanding of the scale and scope of the issues that are going on in Rotherham that are the subject of your inquiry.

Q269 Chair: Not a single case passed your desk? Not a single comment from anyone?

Meredydd Hughes: They do not come across the chief constable's desk and I am not some strategist who is not interested in these things. I was the patron of the missing person's charity that is mentioned in this group and it did not get mentioned at those meetings and events that I was at with them. This is not something I would have turned a blind eye to, nor something I would have wilfully ignored.

With respect to the evidence you have been given, those who know me personally know that I would not turn a blind eye or cover up incidents of child grooming. I take no pleasure from this. I have had a 32-year police career and yet on this issue I have signally failed the victims of these criminals and it hurts. It is something that I loathe but to say that I am either misleading or lying to this Committee, I can only answer by saying I welcome the fact that there will be an independent inquiry into the documentation and the whole history of this force in respect of this.

Q270 Chair: You are saying to this Committee you knew nothing about any of these issues while you were chief constable or deputy chief constable?

Meredydd Hughes: While I was deputy or chief constable I had no understanding of the scale and the scope of the problems that have come to light.

Q271 Chair: When the articles started to appear in *The Times* written by Andrew Norfolk two years ago, what inquiries did you make then, when it got into the public domain, about what was happening under your watch of chief constable?

Meredydd Hughes: I made no formal inquiries. I did not go to the force and ask them. I have not come here prepared with two years of preparation about what happened. I had moved away from policing. I was involved for a short time, as you are aware, in a prospective bid to become the police and crime candidate. That was a salutary experience. The selection panel rightly decided I was an unsuitable person to be in that role and they were correct in that matter, not from any personal reasons but structurally it was completely wrong. I should never have allowed myself—

Q272 Chair: Thank you. We do not want to know about that.

Meredydd Hughes: Well, that sets the context of the fact that, frankly, I saw the articles, I was horrified by the articles—

Chair: But you have made no inquiries.

Meredydd Hughes: —but I did not make formal inquiries.

Chair: Thank you very much. That is very helpful.

Q273 Michael Ellis: You were deputy chief constable for two years and then chief constable for seven. Is that correct?

Meredydd Hughes: That is correct.

Q274 Michael Ellis: That is a very long time to not know what is going on in your force area, is it not?

Meredydd Hughes: It is a very long time not to know what is going on in one part of my force area and the final report is in 2010.

Q275 Michael Ellis: You were in a very senior position of responsibility. You have said repeatedly to the Chairman of this Committee that you knew nothing about it. Assuming for a moment that is true, it was incompetence on your part to be in such a highly paid position and not to know that child exploitation on an industrial scale was going on within your force area. At the very least you were grossly incompetent and negligent in the functioning of your duties. Is that not correct?

Meredydd Hughes: I do not agree. I had set in place a series of structures, not just one, that I reasonably believed would lead to any issues coming to light. I have had no whistle-blowing letters. I have had nothing that comes across through informal meetings. When you are running a large organisation across a number of boroughs you have to rely upon systems and structures to get the information.

Q276 Michael Ellis: We will come to that in a moment, Mr Hughes, but, as far as you are concerned, you were focused on a war against the motorist, weren't you?

Meredydd Hughes: Where do you get that from?

Michael Ellis: You were focused on a war against the motorist and, until such time as you were involved in a speeding matter yourself, that was the main focus that you were involved in, was it not?

Meredydd Hughes: No, it was a temporary—

Q277 Michael Ellis: You were well known for it, while industrial-scale child exploitation was going on in your force area.

Meredydd Hughes: It is an interesting point. It is not borne out by the facts. I have not taken part in a war on the motorist. I was the head of ACPO Roads Policing. I instituted, and I am proud of it, a doubling of the number of people breath-tested. While I was there, there was a significant reduction in the number of people killed and injured on the roads.

Michael Ellis: Could I—

Meredydd Hughes: No. I am sorry. My character is being impugned that I would somehow be more interested in road safety matters than in looking after the safety of the citizens of Rotherham. It is not the case. I deeply regret the oversight, but it is wrong to impute it because it is some kind of media-driven statement.

Michael Ellis: I am sorry, Mr Hughes, you have—

Q278 Chair: Order, Mr Ellis. This is a question. I do not think you are treating these proceedings with the proper respect they deserve, Mr Hughes.

Meredydd Hughes: I apologise for that.

Chair: Mr Ellis is putting perfectly proper questions to you. It is not media driven that he asks these questions. These are appropriate questions as part of a parliamentary inquiry and you are not doing yourself any favours in the way in which you are responding to Mr Ellis's questions.

Meredydd Hughes: Thank you, Chairman. I shall respond appropriately.

Q279 Michael Ellis: Mr Hughes, you are keen to talk about the structure of your force. There was more than one assistant chief constable under you.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Q280 Michael Ellis: I presume one of your assistant chief constables would have been responsible for dealing with children and young people.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Michael Ellis: That would be the normal structure?

Meredydd Hughes: The responsibility would probably be split between the two in the sense that many of the initial contacts would be part of the day-to-day uniformed operations within Rotherham, but the specialist crime would come under another—

Q281 Michael Ellis: The specialist crime of child exploitation would have had the overall supervision of one of your assistant chief constables?

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Q282 Michael Ellis: That assistant chief constable should report to you with a summary of his duties. You are his line manager.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Q283 Michael Ellis: Would there be emails or correspondence of any sort between your assistant chief constable then responsible for child protection and safety in your force area that would allude to these matters?

Meredydd Hughes: I don't know. I have not checked. It would be the subject of an independent inquiry. I cannot check.

Q284 Michael Ellis: But you would have received them. You would have received reports from your assistant chief constable, your member of staff, and he or she would have reported to you on child exploitation, because presumably they would have accepted there was some child exploitation going on in your force area. You must have received reports on this matter and I think this Committee would like to see those reports. You must recall the communications that you had with your assistant chief constable. What was his or her name?

Meredydd Hughes: There were at least four over the period we are discussing.

Q285 Michael Ellis: Who was responsible for child protection?

Meredydd Hughes: I do not have that information to hand.

Q286 Chair: Sorry, you cannot remember the names of your assistant chief constables?

Meredydd Hughes: I had a number of assistant chief constables over an extended period. Which one had which responsibilities at times, I cannot tell you right now. I have made no inquiries into this.

Q287 Michael Ellis: Mr Hughes, you are very keen to absolve yourself of responsibility and talk about the command structure in your force area. I am asking you about one of your assistant chief constables who would have been tasked with this area and who would have reported to you on a regular basis about these issues. That is what I think we need to get to the bottom of. Perhaps you will provide the names of your assistant chief constables to this Committee in writing, Mr Chairman, if that is in order.

Meredydd Hughes: Chairman, that will be entirely—

Chair: Could we have your final question, Mr Ellis?

Q288 Michael Ellis: Was there any briefing, Mr Hughes, between you and Chief Constable Crompton at any point on this matter? When did you finish your tenure as chief constable?

Meredydd Hughes: 9 October 2011. There was an interregnum—bad phrase, apologies—between my role and that of Mr Crompton taking it up when there was another acting chief constable.

Q289 Michael Ellis: How long was that?

Meredydd Hughes: Six months.

Q290 Michael Ellis: Six months. Apart from the acting six-month period, Mr Crompton was your full-time successor. Did you brief Mr Crompton about these issues or anything to do with child exploitation when you handed over office?

Meredydd Hughes: I would not have had done because I was not aware of the scale and size of this.

Q291 Chair: Yes, thank you. Just remind this Committee, who was the chair of the Police Authority while you were chief constable? Would you remember that? Would you remember the chair of the Police Authority, Mr Hughes?

Meredydd Hughes: There were three or four chairs during this period.

Q292 Chair: Give me one of the names. Can you remember any of the names?

Meredydd Hughes: At this moment I am, as you can tell, under a degree of tension. I prefer to supply you with the names in due course.

Q293 Chair: You do not remember any of the names; not one name of someone who chaired the Police Authority who you must have met on a regular basis?

Meredydd Hughes: I did and I am struggling—

Chair: Can you give me one of the names.

Meredydd Hughes: No, sir, I cannot, not now.

Chair: None of the names you can remember?

Meredydd Hughes: No, sir.

Q294 Nicola Blackwood: I will come to you first, Mr Crompton. We had some rather disturbing evidence from a Home Office researcher in private evidence. She was asked to do a report into what was then considered child prostitution between 2001 and 2002. At the time this was labelled as “inaccurate and exaggerated” and she was treated with hostility and anger by South Yorkshire Police—I am using the words of Professor Jay from her report. However, Professor Jay also confirms the findings of her report and calls the treatment of this researcher “deeply troubling”. In addition to what has been published in the report, the researcher told us that she was threatened in her car at night by two police officers who told her, “Wouldn’t it be a bad thing if some of these men”, which she explained meant these perpetrators, “found out where you lived?” She feared for her life and all the files that were related to her report were removed over a weekend from the Risky Business office.

In evidence she, Dr Angie Heal and Jayne Senior, who was at the time the head of Risky Business, said that they could name all five individuals who had the key code and the key for the filing cabinet and who could have accessed those files, but that there had been no police investigation into what had happened both in terms of the harassment of the researcher but also in terms of the removal of the file. The only thing that had happened was that Jayne Senior recalls one phone call in 2013 after a report that had come out in *The Times* written by Andrew Norfolk.

I wondered, first, what progress had been made in investigating the disappearance of the files given that there is a witness, a caretaker who apparently saw a number of people coming in

and removing those files and also that apparently there were a limited number of people who could have accessed them. Secondly, the Home Office researcher said she would like the harassment against her, which sounds very severe, to be properly investigated by the police.

Chief Constable Crompton: The question of the harassment, it is the first time I have ever heard that and, of course, we will look into that because it sounds like a serious matter. We will deal with that.

In relation to the missing files, since this has been raised we have been going back through our records and cannot find any mention, any report or any computer printout within our records of that happening. Now, I entirely accept it has happened but you have asked me what we have done. We have been going back to see if there is a report or some further information about this and at the moment we cannot find any.

Q295 Nicola Blackwood: Could you just clarify, do you mean you have no record of the files being removed or you have no record of the 2013 phone call and any subsequent activity?

Chief Constable Crompton: The 2013 phone call, that is the first time that has ever been mentioned to me. I was not aware of that. We cannot find any reference within our records to removal of the files being reported to us or involving South Yorkshire Police.

Q296 Nicola Blackwood: What action are you going to take now to make sure that those individuals who have given evidence to us, who have been trying to get justice for these victims for 15 years, who have been disbelieved and treated exceedingly badly, are going to be treated as though, first, they are believed by your police officers and, secondly, that those police officers who treated them in that way are properly disciplined?

Chief Constable Crompton: That probably brings us to the arrangements so far for getting all of this investigated independently, because I think the best way to go about this is for this to be handled outside South Yorkshire Police so that the public have confidence that these matters are dealt with appropriately. I am in ongoing negotiation with the National Crime Agency who are at this stage, in principle, willing to take ownership of such an inquiry to give it that level of independence. The matters that you raise, which are clearly serious matters, would rightly fall within the ambit of that investigation so that it was done independently.

Q297 Nicola Blackwood: How long do you think that will take, given that these individuals have been waiting for 15 years?

Chief Constable Crompton: It will be as fast as we possibly can. We have identified a possible retired chief constable to run the investigation. I accept entirely that, on the one hand, we would want to be seen to move quickly on this. On the other, I have to balance that with the need for anything that is done to be, in the eyes of the public, seen to be independent. We will progress it as quickly as we can, but I think is better progressed independently.

Q298 Nicola Blackwood: Will you personally undertake to ensure that the very serious issues relating to the Home Officer researcher are passed on to the NCA, because I am deeply shocked by what I have heard and those activities must be included in the pass-over?

Chief Constable Crompton: You have my absolute assurance that they will be passed on to the National Crime Agency, yes.

Q299 Nicola Blackwood: Mr Hughes, is it right that you were chief constable from 2004 to 2011?

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Q300 Nicola Blackwood: You claim that you only read the reports last night?

Meredydd Hughes: The 2010 report I am familiar with but for the other three reports, the first time I have seen them, as far as I can remember, is last night.

Q301 Nicola Blackwood: Okay, because obviously in Professor Jay's report it gives the main findings of the 2006 report, which was published by a Dr Heal who was funded by the South Yorkshire Police. The findings were that in Rotherham there is an established sexual exploitation scheme, very organised, involving systematic sexual and physical violence against young women and that young women are being trafficked to other towns and cities, predominantly in the north. It also includes the finding that there was a high-profile media campaign about trafficking from eastern Europe.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Q302 Nicola Blackwood: Are you telling me that you were not aware of a high-profile media campaign?

Meredydd Hughes: No, that is to do with the UK Human Trafficking Centre that we established in South Yorkshire. This is why, if I had known, I am not uninterested or disinterested in these hideous crimes. When we had evidence, after an operation in Sheffield and another campaign, that there were large numbers of women and young people being trafficked into the area, we took the lead in setting up the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre.

Q303 Nicola Blackwood: This report links the serious and systematic sexual exploitation of young girls with gun-running and drug-running in Rotherham and links it to trafficking to the wider area, which I would say is quite a serious threat risk to Rotherham. You said earlier in your evidence that most of your meetings were about budgetary matters but I would imagine that you had other meetings about threat assessment. Would this issue not have been raised in risk assessment and threat assessment meetings?

Meredydd Hughes: To the best of my memory, Rotherham's problems were about burglary, domestic crime, domestic violence, car crime and those issues. I am sure I would have remembered if we had a serious problem brought to the fore in this regard. This is an

intelligence report. I do not recall seeing it. The creation of the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre has been a matter of pride and it is now part of the National Crime Agency.

Q304 Nicola Blackwood: What about during 2008 to 2010 when Operation Central was ongoing?

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Nicola Blackwood: You were not aware of that?

Meredydd Hughes: Well, I was aware that Operation Central was dealing with a group of offenders who had been arrested.

Q305 Nicola Blackwood: You were not briefed on that in the context in which those offenders were—

Meredydd Hughes: Not in the scale and scope of all the other problems that we now see are coming up.

Q306 Nicola Blackwood: But when you found out that such a large-scale operation was necessary, did you not ask for a briefing from those involved and speak to the victims and try to understand the background?

Meredydd Hughes: I did not.

Q307 Nicola Blackwood: You did not. Did you meet any of the victims involved in Operation Central?

Meredydd Hughes: No, I did not.

Q308 Nicola Blackwood: Did you meet any of the specialist police who were involved in the case, the SIO?

Meredydd Hughes: Not to my knowledge.

Nicola Blackwood: Not to your knowledge?

Meredydd Hughes: No.

Q309 Nicola Blackwood: You do not remember? Did you meet the senior investigating officer who was running Operation Central?

Meredydd Hughes: I am on oath. I can't remember.

Q310 Mark Reckless: Mr Hughes, you referred just now to the priorities being burglary and car crime and, interestingly, we were told the same by our previous witnesses. When they

came again and again with the child exploitation in Rotherham, they were told, “Well, sorry, we are not going to deal with this because we are focused on burglary and car crime”.

Meredydd Hughes: Awful.

Q311 Mark Reckless: Whose decision was that?

Meredydd Hughes: That is not a decision that they got from me. Their responsibility is the protection of life and property and burglary and car crime are identified by the community as being the problems brought to the fore as priorities and they are dealt with, but there is no dictat from the centre to say you can only investigate a particular category of crime.

Q312 Mark Reckless: Weren't there Government priorities set centrally at that time?

Meredydd Hughes: There were, but I am not seeking to evade responsibility. I am not seeking to try to blame somebody else about things like targets being set. There is a lot of flexibility at a force and at a local level to set what is considered appropriate for a force.

Q313 Mark Reckless: When these people were told that the police were not going to deal with the child exploitation because the focus was on burglary and car crime, what are you saying about that?

Meredydd Hughes: I say that is wrong and they should not have been told such things.

Q314 Mark Reckless: But surely you were the chief constable that was setting priorities—

Meredydd Hughes: Yes, I was the chief constable.

Mark Reckless: —and you have just told us those priorities were burglaries and car crime.

Meredydd Hughes: There were a number of priorities over an extended period of time. They are priorities. They do not exclude important other crimes and if a local priority, which clearly this was, was crime in Rotherham against people it should always have been there on a priority list. It is not something you then suppress because you are going to investigate—

Q315 Mark Reckless: We are talking about the child exploitation in Rotherham.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Mark Reckless: I think the Chair asked you three times whether you were aware of any of this and each of those three times you replied, I suspect with a carefully-prepared phrase, that you were not aware of its scale and scope. What were you aware of?

Meredydd Hughes: Child sexual exploitation exists all over the United Kingdom and I saw it myself as a young police officer when—

Chair: Mr Hughes, we do not want the history of this. Mr Reckless has asked you a specific question about your awareness, since we are concerned with you and not the history of what is happening nationally. Do you want him to repeat the question? Would that be helpful?

Meredydd Hughes: Yes, please.

Q316 Mark Reckless: Three times the Chair said, “Are you aware of any of this?” and three times you replied you were not aware of the scale and scope. What were you aware of?

Meredydd Hughes: I was aware of the fact that child sexual exploitation, the grooming of young people, exists all over the United Kingdom and so offences would be everywhere.

Q317 Mark Reckless: But in South Yorkshire burglary and car crime were greater priorities?

Meredydd Hughes: In terms of volume crime that you are dealing with, partly yes; at different times, different offences. I have never seen child sexual exploitation come to the fore as a priority above those.

Q318 Mark Reckless: Do you think relations grew too close, perhaps even too cosy, between South Yorkshire Police and some of the councils in the area, including Rotherham?

Meredydd Hughes: I didn’t feel it was ever a cosy relationship. There were political difficulties in both Doncaster and Rotherham at the time. I thought it was a professional relationship. I worked hand-in-glove, I hope, with local councillors to put in place appropriate policing.

Q319 Mark Reckless: My question is perhaps whether you should have been working hand-in-glove to the same extent with the local councillors and, in particular, when you received a report from someone working for Rotherham Council mapping the extent of child sexual exploitation around Rotherham, was it appropriate that that was dealt with by a reference back to the chief executive of the council on the presumption that it might have been—

Meredydd Hughes: I am sorry. I don’t know what report that is. I am not being difficult. I do not know what that document specifically is.

Q320 Mark Reckless: Following the Home Office mandated pilot and then, when that work was not taken any further by the police, following the meeting where they were told burglary and car crime were the priorities, the researcher then mapped the extent of child exploitation and reported it to South Yorkshire Police and whoever was responsible in South Yorkshire Police, I am not sure whether colleagues will remember whether we were told—

Meredydd Hughes: What year was this?

Mark Reckless: —who individually that was, then just reverted that back to the chief executive of Rotherham Council and did not investigate it.

Meredydd Hughes: If that had happened it would not be appropriate, but I have no—

Mark Reckless: But you don't—

Meredydd Hughes: I am not quite sure what year it is or—

Q321 Mark Reckless: You do not know about that and you do not accept that relationships were too close and cosy with Rotherham's councillors?

Meredydd Hughes: Delivering the reductions in crime overall over that period, which the South Yorkshire Police did with partners, requires close partnership working. It has almost invariably been positive. I think we are seeing somewhere where it was not so.

Q322 Mark Reckless: Yes, but does it not also require investigating crimes when they are committed—

Meredydd Hughes: Crime has to be investigated.

Mark Reckless: —rather than just referring to partner and, on their say so, not taking further action?

Meredydd Hughes: I would not support such behaviour. Crime needs to be investigated.

Q323 Mark Reckless: Can you just describe the process when you applied to be the Labour Party's candidate as Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire? What process did you go through? Was there any scrutiny or initial interview and who was involved in that?

Meredydd Hughes: I was invited to apply by a group of MPs who were concerned about the quality of the candidates they were getting and wanted to enhance the field. I think it is fair to say they did not want me, I am not that vain. We were not interviewed as such. There was quite a list put together and then I went through a series of different interviews with stakeholders, trade unions, and then a hustings process.

Q324 Mark Reckless: You had the trade unions. Were any Labour Rotherham councillors involved in that process?

Meredydd Hughes: There would have been. The hustings in Rotherham are almost full of—

Mark Reckless: Full of Rotherham Labour councillors?

Meredydd Hughes: Councillors and political figures from the Labour Party in Rotherham, yes.

Q325 Mark Reckless: Does that not suggest that relationships were too cosy and the Labour Party itself has something to answer for in terms of what its councillors in Rotherham did and how they work with the police, including police that later applied to be Labour Party candidates?

Meredydd Hughes: It is a matter of record that I came bottom of the selection process, so I do not think it was that cosy. Can I just add one quick point?

Chair: Yes.

Meredydd Hughes: The relationship was never cosy in that regard and I was never a political party member while a chief constable. I worked hard for 32 years so that nobody could tell my political background.

Q326 Mark Reckless: Was there an overly cosy relationship at any point between South Yorkshire Police and the Pakistani community within Rotherham and, particularly, Labour councillors from that Pakistani community?

Meredydd Hughes: I do not think so, certainly not on my part. I did seek to build good relationships with all minority communities across South Yorkshire. That does not extend to turning a blind eye to criminal offences.

Q327 Mark Reckless: It appears that it did extend to that. The question is how that happened?

Meredydd Hughes: But not in my years and, in fact, one incident I do recall is when an Imam was arrested for a specific offence and we had a major inquiry afterwards.

Q328 Chair: You do remember something then?

Meredydd Hughes: Yes, thank you, Chair.

Q329 Mark Reckless: Yes, but not the scale or the scope?

Meredydd Hughes: No, I do not.

Q330 Mark Reckless: You will not go beyond that and tell us what you do remember?

Meredydd Hughes: I cannot at this point. I am trying to be honest.

Q331 Mark Reckless: You do not remember anything or you do not remember the scale and scope; which is it?

Meredydd Hughes: I do not remember the scale and scope. I am well aware of child sexual abuse across the whole of the United Kingdom.

Q332 Mark Reckless: In South Yorkshire, were you aware of a specific and particular problem in Rotherham and particularly involving the Pakistani community in Rotherham? Was that something you were aware of at any time in your service as the deputy and then chief constable of South Yorkshire? You are on oath already, Mr Hughes, so there is no need to—

Meredydd Hughes: I am on oath. The report in 2010 is very clear about the scale and scope.

Q333 Chair: No, Mr Reckless is asking about you. He is not asking about the report.

Meredydd Hughes: I knew from the report at that point.

Q334 Mark Reckless: But you knew nothing except from reading that one report in 2010?

Meredydd Hughes: That is the report I remember reading.

Q335 Mark Reckless: Is that really a credible position, Mr Hughes?

Meredydd Hughes: It is true and I look forward to the inquiry.

Mark Reckless: I hope for you it is.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes, I understand that.

Q336 Chair: Mr Hughes, you say you look forward to the inquiry. This is an inquiry.

Meredydd Hughes: I look forward to it in that regard.

Q337 Chair: This is a parliamentary inquiry. There is no such inquiry that you would look forward to in the future as if you can put off all your answers for some time in the future. We are seeking facts from you, that is why we put you on oath, and we will be producing our own report and conducting our own inquiry. When Mr Reckless puts a point to you it is to get an answer now, not some time in the future.

Meredydd Hughes: Chairman, I apologise. I am not seeking to avoid answering your question. I am seeking to be accurate.

Mark Reckless: It was also the Chair's question three times. I do not know whether you would like a final opportunity to answer it or whether we are not going to get anything further.

Q338 Chair: Are we done? We do not remember anything? Is that your position?

Meredydd Hughes: I said I do not recall the scale and scope of the problems in Rotherham at that time. I am sorry.

Q339 Mark Reckless: Have you discussed that answer with professional advisers before coming in?

Meredydd Hughes: No. On Friday morning I was in the Middle East. I have come back over the weekend and I have appeared today.

Chair: We are extremely grateful to you for coming back from the Middle East.

Q340 Paul Flynn: Mr Crompton, last week you told us that you were in a position where you had no choice but to reveal to the BBC person the planned raid you were going to make on Cliff Richards' home. The words "extortion" and "blackmail" were used, suggesting that the BBC had evidence that they could broadcast that would upset your inquiry in some way. Do you want to change your evidence on that in the light of what the BBC told us?

Chief Constable Crompton: Sir, I did not use the words "extortion" or "blackmail".

Q341 Paul Flynn: No, they were put to you. I think you said that blackmail was too strong a word, but you accepted that it might have been extortion.

Chief Constable Crompton: I accepted we were in a difficult position.

Q342 Paul Flynn: Regardless of that, your claim was that the BBC had evidence that left you no choice. Do you still believe that?

Chief Constable Crompton: We were in a difficult position. In fairness, having heard the BBC's evidence, there was probably another option that could have been taken, which would have been to consult the BBC. However, I do think it is rather simplistic for it to be put across that they would just simply have said, "Oh, yes; that is okay".

Paul Flynn: But the BBC's evidence was that—

Chair: Mr Flynn, we just need to fill everyone in that we do have the emails between you and the BBC, which we have put on our website.

Q343 Paul Flynn: You do not want to change anything? I think the BBC's evidence was that the person involved was on a fishing expedition. There had been lots of accusations on social media and so on accusing all sorts of people of all kinds of offences and the journalist was on a fishing expedition and he mentioned a number of things. One of them was the name of Cliff Richard, at which point you spilled the beans. You told him everything: where you were going to, that there was a complaint. You even sent a photograph of his house just in case the helicopter got the wrong view. Now, that is not what you told us last week. What evidence do you believe now that the reporter had that he could have published? Knowing this is the BBC. It is not a tabloid newspaper. This is the BBC with an ethical position. What did the reporter have that you were afraid he could publish?

Chief Constable Crompton: My staff heard from the BBC reporter that he had everything that they had as part of the investigation. I said that last week and I repeat it now.

Q344 Paul Flynn: Did you read the BBC's evidence where that was flatly contradicted?

Chief Constable Crompton: I have not read the BBC's evidence but I am aware that it has been contradicted, yes.

Q345 Paul Flynn: I do not want to labour the point but perhaps Mr Crompton can have a look at the evidence and he will know what was said against it.

Mr Hughes, I think we all, as members of this Committee, feel very disturbed by the evidence we had in the private session. Perhaps the most alarming part of it was the suggestion that one of the witnesses gave to us that she had all this information of these terrible things that were going on, but instead of getting co-operation from the police she had a veiled threat from the police. What is your reaction to that?

Meredydd Hughes: I am appalled.

Q346 Paul Flynn: We have had dreadful reports on the Metropolitan Police, Operation Tiberius. I do not know if you are familiar with it. Without repeating any of the confidential things in it, it amounts to staggering evidence that there were groups of police working in collusion with criminals to carry out criminal acts, some of them under cover of the organisation of Freemasons. They could not meet in pubs and they could not meet in clubs, but they were members of the same Masonic Lodge. This is a deeply shocking report. Were you aware, at any time when you were serving as a police constable, of groups of policemen working in collusion with criminals?

Meredydd Hughes: No. Not in terms of personal knowledge of criminals, no.

Q347 Paul Flynn: I think we all appreciate what a shock this would come to you if you were not aware of these things. Looking back on this, how would you have run your job as a chief constable so that you would have been aware of what was going on? We know what the three people who gave evidence before us today were telling you about. There seemed to be a Berlin Wall between them and you. What would you have done, in hindsight, in the way you carried out your job?

Meredydd Hughes: I find that a difficult question because I believed that the systems we had in place brought to the surface issues that needed to be dealt with by policing. We had others in positions of authority who are keenly interested in improving the performance of the force, and that is not some kind of numerical idea but delivering improvements to people's lives. I would want to strengthen the structures. I do not think I have the opportunity to fully articulate the structures we had at the time. It is not the largest force in the country but it is not the smallest. I just wish that I had had better arrangements for people who felt they were not being heard to come through.

Q348 Paul Flynn: Part of the evidence we had was that there was a sort of canteen culture among the police that made them prone to believe that these young women and children who were victims of these dreadful acts were somehow responsible for themselves. Would you be aware of that?

Meredydd Hughes: I am aware of that. That has been common in other places as well. It is not appropriate. They are victims and I am distressed that we were still making those mistakes.

Paul Flynn: I am grateful to you. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much. Could I just remind colleagues we have three other witnesses and the possibility of a Division at 5.30 pm where we will have vote and then come back.

Q349 Mr Winnick: Mr Hughes, you may feel that the questions have been somewhat unfair.

Meredydd Hughes: No, I do not. I do not feel they are unfair.

Q350 Mr Winnick: Good. I am pleased to hear that and, of course, what we are trying to do is to find out precisely why action was not taken when you were in a position of such seniority. You have said, and you will correct me if I am wrong, that you were not aware, in any way whatsoever, of the scale of the criminal offences being committed.

Meredydd Hughes: Correct, yes.

Q351 Mr Winnick: I am sure that surprises my colleagues. Certainly it surprises me because in the report that you have read, the independent inquiry into what happened in Rotherham, reference is made to the reports by Dr Heal. She was in fact commissioned by the South Yorkshire Police and their partners to look into drug taking and the rest. As a result of her work, she came to the conclusion pretty quickly that there were in fact important links between drugs, drug dealing and what we are now dealing with, namely child sexual exploitation. That was 2002.

Meredydd Hughes: Dr Heal's report is later, is it not?

Chair: It is later.

Meredydd Hughes: 2003—

Chair: 2002 is the Home Office report.

Meredydd Hughes: I take the principle of the question, which is that that is quite early on. It has taken some time. We were often running operations particularly against drug dealers and armed criminals, predominantly, as I recall, across Sheffield not in the Rotherham area.

Q352 Mr Winnick: The difficulty that arises is simply this: you were deputy chief constable—

Meredydd Hughes: In 2002 to 2004.

Mr Winnick: Yes, and then chief constable.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Mr Winnick: These terrible offences that you admit were taking place—you do not question that?

Meredydd Hughes: I do not question that, no.

Q353 Mr Winnick: These terrible offences against young women, including rape and other very criminal offences, were taking place, as it were, under your nose as chief constable, but you knew nothing about it?

Meredydd Hughes: No. Correct. You look at the recorded crime figures. You are looking at the data to establish the problems. I had no knowledge of this.

Chair: Thank you, Mr Winnick.

Q354 Mr Winnick: No, I am not quite finished, if I may, Chair. This is the difficulty that I face. How can you explain that you held the most senior possible position as chief constable and were simply not aware of what was happening on the streets of Rotherham?

Meredydd Hughes: I thought I had a picture of all the force areas, not just Rotherham but all the boroughs that under my responsibility. I thought I had good relationships with local authorities and others who would bring data to me in different ways, other than recorded crime figures. I thought I had the relationships that would alert me to issues that needed attention and I was wrong.

Q355 Mr Winnick: Now, an apology?

Meredydd Hughes: I have made an apology. I reiterate my apology. I am devastated that I could be in this position.

Mr Winnick: This is something you will live with for the rest of your life.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Q356 Ian Austin: In 2002 we have been told that the Home Office researcher went to your predecessor a detailed report criticising the approach to child sexual exploitation in Rotherham. Did you know anything about that at all?

Meredydd Hughes: No. I have looked at it. I have never seen that report.

Q357 Ian Austin: You have never heard about it?

Meredydd Hughes: No.

Ian Austin: Even when you became chief constable?

Meredydd Hughes: No.

Q358 Ian Austin: Apparently your predecessor, instead of investigating it or commissioning some sort of investigation or whatever, just called up, as we heard a moment ago, the chief executive of Rotherham Council and demanded to know why he had been sent this. You know nothing about any of this?

Meredydd Hughes: I do not know anything about that.

Q359 Ian Austin: Apparently, at this point the people that had done the research underpinning all of this were shouted out and treated in a hostile way by Inspector Davies, at the time. An Inspector Davies. Do you know about this?

Meredydd Hughes: No, we have several hundred inspectors in the force, but I have never heard of that incident.

Q360 Ian Austin: Mr Crompton, do you know if this Inspector Davies is still working?

Chief Constable Crompton: I could not tell you, sir. There may be more than one Inspector Davies and, going back to whenever this was, that is hard for me to answer.

Q361 Ian Austin: Last week I asked you about the case of an 11 year-old girl who was found who, having said that she had been sexually abused, was subsequently found just a few weeks later in a derelict house with a number of adult males yet she was arrested for being drunk and disorderly. I asked you about a 12 year-old girl who had been having sex with up to five men and the police officer said that apparently this had been 100% consensual in every incident. I asked you about two fathers who tried to rescue their daughters from being abused and they were arrested themselves. Have you looked into any of this?

Chief Constable Crompton: Yes.

Q362 Ian Austin: Do you know who the police officers are?

Chief Constable Crompton: The first case that you mentioned about the arrest for drunk and disorderly is a matter that we are now going to be referring to the IPCC. We do know who the officers were in the case. I think the main officer in that case retired some years ago. The latter case of the fathers, I think one of them we struggled to find in our records but certainly the second one we can find. That was a case where—

Chair: Mr Crompton, could you write to us about those individual cases? Send us a note.

Chief Constable Crompton: We will do if that helps, yes.

Chair: Thank you much. I am sorry; we just need to move on.

Q363 Ian Austin: What does it say about the culture of a police force? The culture is set at the top. How can you have a police force where those sorts of decisions and that sort of behaviour occurs: refusing to take seriously children complaining of sexual abuse, alleging that it is consensual and an inspector presented with the evidence shouting at the people who are trying to bring it to light? What does it say about the culture of the force that you are running?

Meredydd Hughes: That is an appalling example. I have to say that it does not reflect the culture of the rest of South Yorkshire Police and I am confident about that. There is a lot of work that has been done about that, but it is not the time to—

Q364 Chair: How would you know that, Mr Hughes, when you are telling this Committee that you do not know about anything else and you cannot remember anything else? How can you tell us that?

Meredydd Hughes: I am answering your questions very specifically. Obviously we have done lots of work on the culture, making police officers accountable for the work they have done and issues like that.

Q365 Dr Huppert: Mr Hughes, can I go back even further in history, which may test your memory, because I am interested to know whether you were told anything when you became chief constable about this? You have told this Committee repeatedly that you knew nothing about this, which presumably means that your predecessor did not tell you anything about it. I think we may need to try to find out from that. Mr Hedges was your predecessor?

Meredydd Hughes: Yes, he was.

Q366 Dr Huppert: There was not an interregnum on that or there was?

Meredydd Hughes: No. I arrived, remember, as Mr Hedges' deputy. I had a two-year handover.

Q367 Dr Huppert: There would have been ample opportunity for him to talk to you.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Q368 Dr Huppert: I know he has told the BBC that he was completely unaware of this. He said very much the same thing that you have said, but we have had quite compelling evidence that there was a letter sent to the chief constable and to the district commander. Indeed, the chief constable, we are told, complained to the chief executive of the council about this behaviour and to the district commander who then complained further, which strikes me as knowing something about it. We have questions there, but you are absolutely clear that Mr Hedges never mentioned anything to you; it was in none of the briefing documents you would have received in a hand-over; that as deputy you never knew anything about it. Is that right?

Meredydd Hughes: That is my position. I am sorry that sounds equivocal. That is what I believe to be the truth.

Q369 Dr Huppert: I think we will have to find out how come he was not aware of this letter that was sent to him, but I accept that is not a question you can answer.

Mr Crompton, I think you have quite a problem. You have a police force where there are now real questions from the public. As was mentioned earlier, we have heard the shocking suggestion police officers in South Yorkshire Police, before your time I accept, threatened people who said things they did not want to know. There is an issue here because I had always assumed that what was going on here was essentially some incompetence, that police

officers, social workers, a range of people did not take this seriously enough, but what we have heard about police officers threatening people, about the break-in where files were stolen and then people were advised not to report this to the police, which is why I think there is no record, that sounds more than people just not treating this with the seriousness it deserves. It sounds like an active conspiracy involving police officers.

How can you go about looking into that sort of thing? There will certainly be an investigation. Also, how will you reassure the public aside from that investigation? I am sure you are as horrified as we are that there are police officers conspiring to cover these things up, but how can people in Rotherham trust any police officer from South Yorkshire, whether they are involved or not?

Chief Constable Crompton: The simple answer to this question is that I have given this Committee an absolute commitment that we will deal with the disciplinary issues that come out of this and that when people see that that happens, clearly that is always a deterrent and that is one way of dealing with. A second and more important way is it is partly about what the chief constable says at the time. People listen to what the chief constable says. They listen to the messages and the important messages, but it is about what people believe in the force as well. I think I can sit here with some confidence today and say that every single member of the force knows that child sexual exploitation and all the issues around it are incredibly important and is under no illusions about the way that we will treat this going forward. I am absolutely committed to getting to the bottom of it. If there are any disciplinary matters, and some of these are being raised with me for the first time today, you have my absolute commitment we will get to the bottom of them.

Q370 Dr Huppert: I think the test is whether the people of Rotherham have that, but we will find out about that.

One last question for Mr Hughes. You were not successful in becoming a police and crime commissioner. We accept that. If you had been elected as police and crime commissioner and then all of this came out and you had the track record of failing to deal with it, do you think you would then consider your position to be tenable?

Meredydd Hughes: I am well aware of the consequences of my answer. I would have resigned by now.

Q371 Lorraine Fullbrook: Mr Hughes, I would just like to read something to you from the report, “It is hard to describe the appalling nature of the abuse that child victims suffered. They were raped by multiple perpetrators, trafficked to other towns and cities in the north of England, abducted, beaten and intimidated. There were examples of children who had been doused in petrol and threatened to be set alight, threatened with guns, made to witness brutally violent rapes, threatened that they would be next if they told anyone. Girls as young as 11 were raped by a large number of male perpetrators.” It was said in the report and from the evidence that we received in the private session this morning that it was not a case that you did not know, but that you treated these victims, these many child victims, with total contempt, saying that it was a lifestyle choice for children as young as 11. What do you say to that?

Meredydd Hughes: That is an appalling thing to say. It is a dereliction of duty. It is wrong.

Q372 Lorraine Fullbrook: Do you admit that your behaviour—

Meredydd Hughes: Mine?

Lorraine Fullbrook: —in not knowing has been a dereliction of duty?

Meredydd Hughes: I do not think I was derelict in my duty but I certainly have questions to ask myself.

Q373 Lorraine Fullbrook: But you were the person responsible at the time.

Meredydd Hughes: Yes.

Lorraine Fullbrook: Therefore, you are accountable.

Meredydd Hughes: I am and I am here and I will be accountable to other inquiries and it is not something I can look on with anything other than a sense of horror, but if I had been aware of them, I would have dealt with them because they are criminal acts.

Q374 Chair: You say in your statement to the press, “I accept that my leadership should receive scrutiny.” This is part of that scrutiny. You have accepted that your level of competence and indeed the level of scrutiny you gave to the job was not up to standard. Is that right? Is that what you said to Lorraine Fullbrook?

Meredydd Hughes: I have certainly accepted that I wish I had done more.

Q375 Chair: If you were found to have failed to act properly what is the sanction against you, Mr Hughes?

Meredydd Hughes: I have no idea.

Q376 Chair: What is the point of saying, “My leadership needs to be scrutinised”, if there is no sanction?

Meredydd Hughes: That is a matter for others.

Q377 Chair: What do you think it should be since you are in this reflective mood and you say that you should ask yourself questions about what you were doing? What is the sanction when you are found to have acted not according to the standards that you think you should have been up to?

Meredydd Hughes: I leave that to others to decide, sir.

Q378 Chair: You are quite happy for any sanction? If you police pension perhaps is subject to removal, you are quite happy with that?

Meredydd Hughes: These matters are subject to regulation and law.

Q379 Chair: No, I am asking you, you are quite happy if that were to happy?

Meredydd Hughes: I am happy that I am dealt with in accordance with the law of the land.

Q380 Chair: I think we find, on this Committee, your evidence totally unconvincing. We think there are still serious questions to be asked of the way in which you conducted yourself. Your contrition today is welcome, but I think that it needs to go much further and certainly we will be referring the evidence you gave to us today to the bigger Rotherham inquiry that the Home Secretary has announced.

Mr Crompton, as far as your evidence is concerned, can you just clarify: is it correct that one of your officers has now been charged with a child sex offence involving a young girl of 15?

Chief Constable Crompton: Yes. That was reported in the media about 10 days or two weeks ago.

Q381 Chair: How did this come about and was there a long investigation into this? Why does this come into the public domain now?

Chief Constable Crompton: We investigated our own officer. We prosecuted our own officer and quite rightly so.

Q382 Chair: In respect of the IPCC, we have seen a letter from Anne Owers. I do not know whether you have seen the letter that she sent me. I will send you a copy. It is still this Committee's belief that the investigation into South Yorkshire should not be conducted by another police force but instead by an independent body like the IPCC or Her Majesty's Inspectorate. We believe that is the best way, given the history of the way in which South Yorkshire has dealt with this matter. We look forward to being kept informed of your personal commitment to looking at these cases.

Chief Constable Crompton: I will do that.

Q383 Chair: One final point about Commissioner Wright. We have seen a copy of a letter that Commissioner Wright gave you on the day he became the police and crime commissioner. Do I need to refresh your memory or do you know the letter that I am referring to?

Chief Constable Crompton: I will have seen it before, but I have not looked at it.

Q384 Chair: In that letter he sets out his priorities as commissioner. None of those priorities in the five blobs that are in that letter refer to these matters. Was that a surprise to you?

Chief Constable Crompton: That was entirely in his domain.

Chair: Of course it is, yes.

Chief Constable Crompton: I would have to refresh my memory as to what exactly was in the letter. I was certainly aware that there were issues around child sexual exploitation. However, it was a matter for him as to what he determined to be his top priorities.

Q385 Chair: In respect of your meetings with him over the last few years, how many of those meetings with Commissioner Wright related to these matters?

Chief Constable Crompton: In fairness, the subject of child sexual exploitation featured on almost all of those meetings without exception.

Q386 Chair: He was aware of what was happening?

Chief Constable Crompton: Yes.

Q387 Chair: From the very beginning?

Chief Constable Crompton: Yes.

Q388 Mark Reckless: Chief Constable, you were saying that the police and crime commissioner had written a letter to you setting out his five priorities for South Yorkshire Police, but you do not remember what they are?

Chief Constable Crompton: I would have to refresh my memory. I would have read it at the time.

Q389 Chair: There are seven priorities. I have the letter here dated 22 November. None of the seven priorities mentioned refer to victims of child sex abuse though it is mentioned in the letter further down, in one of the paragraphs.

Chief Constable Crompton: In fairness, Chair, I would say that whatever is written in the letter probably was not matched by the reality in terms of the commitment to deal with child sexual exploitation.

Chair: Mr Crompton and Mr Hughes, thank you for coming. May I inform the Committee that I have stood down the final two witnesses, Mr Wanless and Mr Whittam, because of the length of time it has taken to question these witnesses? We will have them in at the start of the next session, when they have completed their report. I have given them my apologies for standing them down because of time constraints.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Martin Kimber**, Chief Executive, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, and **Joyce Thacker**, Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, gave evidence on oath.

Q390 Chair: May I ask colleagues to ensure that for these witnesses, we accept for the record the information that has been given so far. Mr Kimber and Mrs Thacker, the Committee has decided that all witnesses giving evidence today should be put on oath. Under

the Parliamentary Witnesses Oaths Act 1871 and the Perjury Act, false evidence given to the Committee under oath will be the subject of penalties for perjury and the Clerk will now administer the oath to both of you.

Joyce Thacker: I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give before the Committee shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

Martin Kimber: I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give before the Committee shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

Q391 Chair: Mr Kimber, yesterday you announced your resignation as the Chief Executive of the council.

Martin Kimber: I did, sir.

Chair: Why did you resign, Mr Kimber?

Martin Kimber: I had attended a Cabinet meeting the week before. It was a deeply emotional meeting. I was horrified at the scale of the sexual abuse that had been uncovered across Rotherham. I feel terribly sorry for all of the victims, all of their families. I asked myself whether I felt I could have done any more. I accept my share of responsibility. I felt that in the context of Rotherham people—and the town has been badly, badly shaken by this—that it would be far easier for the town to be able to come out of the grieving process and begin healing if it has visible new leadership, and that is why I took that decision.

Q392 Chair: Indeed. The Committee welcomes that decision. On reflection, do you think you should have resigned when your leader of your council resigned as soon as the report was published?

Martin Kimber: No, on reflection I don't, because I think the report says some positive things about what has happened within Rotherham during my tenure. I did want time to reflect on the report and, as I have already indicated, one of the questions I have asked is whether I felt I could have done more. Certainly I would have wished to have done far more, so I think I took the decision at the right time.

Q393 Chair: Yes. You are currently on a salary of £130,000 a year.

Martin Kimber: No, it is more than that, sir. It is £160,000.

Chair: £160,000?

Martin Kimber: That is right, sir.

Chair: So you will resign in December with a full pension, is that right?

Martin Kimber: I have pension entitlement. I have not decided whether I shall take that or not. Under the pension rules I have broad flexibilities. I have given my resignation, three months' contractual notice, which of course—

Chair: Are you entitled to any compensation for that?

Martin Kimber: There is no compensation. I have had no such discussion and neither would I, just for the record.

Q394 Chair: Now you say you take your share of responsibility, which as I say the Committee welcomes, but you went before the council and you talked about other officers and the way in which the council has dealt with this matter over a number of years. I appreciate you became Chief Executive in 2009 but some of this relates to the period 2009-14.

Martin Kimber: It does, sir, yes.

Chair: It does, yes. You found that there was insufficient evidence to refer any individual—including, for example, Joyce Thacker—for disciplinary hearings. Is that right?

Martin Kimber: In the context of the report, which is very general, that is correct. The report provides an evidence base for me to look at a range of other things and I am currently looking at a range of other things.

Q395 Chair: But you understand the concerns of the public, and indeed Parliament. Here we have a situation where we have heard of industrial scales of child abuse, the resignation of the leader of the council, your own resignation because you feel you are partly responsible for what has happened and the failure to act. But at the end of the day, nobody is disciplined, nobody is referred for further action. Mrs Thacker retains her position, which she has held—which has been intimate to these discussions—over a long period of time. You have not recommended anyone being suspended. You have not criticised anyone. You have not disciplined anyone. You have taken it all on your shoulders and you are waiting until December to finally give up. It is an orderly transition. It is not a kind of emergency decision like Councillor Stone's, is it?

Martin Kimber: No, sir.

Chair: You understand the concern of the public: nobody seems to be held to account.

Martin Kimber: No, sir, that is not the position. As I have indicated, the report provides information to enable me to undertake further inquiries but, of itself, it does not give me sufficient information to be able to consider disciplinary action. So I am in the process of doing a number of things—

Q396 Chair: Sorry, insufficient evidence. Whose advice did you take on that? Because you are the Chief Executive, presumably you will have taken legal advice—

Martin Kimber: I have indeed.

Chair: —as to whether or not people have done so.

Martin Kimber: I have indeed taken—

Q397 Chair: Is that internal advice from your borough solicitor?

Martin Kimber: No, I have taken legal advice twice from leading counsel on the approach that I should follow.

Q398 Chair: Is it your worry that if you start disciplining people—like, for example, Mrs Thacker or somebody else in the council who is intimately involved in these matters—that they might then turn around and take the council to court? Is that the worry you have?

Martin Kimber: I have no worries, sir. During the course of my tenure there have been several disciplinary actions, including people working within Children and Young People's Services. They have always been undertaken properly, having regard to the council's policies and of course employment rights, and so—

Q399 Chair: We understand the employment issues, please do not misunderstand me. We are concerned with what Professor Jay said that there was a collective failure of political and officer leadership.

Martin Kimber: Yes.

Chair: That is more than Mr Stone and you, is it not? You are not the entire officer leadership.

Martin Kimber: We are dealing with a period of time here that stretches across 17 years.

Chair: Sure, but in the period that you have been chief executive. We are not talking about prior to 2009. Even though it may be that you knew about Rotherham Council, we cannot hold you responsible for that. In respect of 2009 to 2014, you were the chief executive but there were other officers. Professor Jay is not just talking about you, is she?

Martin Kimber: No, but Professor Jay, when she talks about collective leadership, is not talking about the period from 2010 to 2014, where indeed she acknowledges there has been substantial improvement. She is talking about a prior period of time across the full range of her study from 1997 through to 2013.

Q400 Chair: Sure. But in the report of 2005—the Rotherham child abuse report that led to the famous seminar—this is the conclusion, “Nobody could say I didn't know about child sexual exploitation”.

Martin Kimber: Yes, the report does say that.

Q401 Chair: Joyce Thacker, who is sitting on your left, who is the head of Children's Services, chaired an organisation called Risky Business. This Committee has heard compelling evidence from witnesses in private—including the head of Risky Business, Jayne

Senior—in which it is very, very clear that Joyce Thacker had in her possession detailed reports about child sex grooming in Rotherham, and nothing was done about it.

Martin Kimber: That is the first time that knowledge has come before me today.

Q402 Chair: So there is other information that you do not have?

Martin Kimber: It appears so, and indeed—

Q403 Chair: You mean you never asked about Joyce Thacker's position on Risky Business? You did not know she was chair of the steering group?

Martin Kimber: I am sorry, sir, I wasn't avoiding—

Chair: No, no, it is okay, you can wait until the bell finishes. We have plenty of time. Mr Kimber, we are going to adjourn the Committee. You can have time to reflect on my question and I will come back and ask it to you again. We will then be seeing Commissioner Wright after you and Mrs Thacker. Thank you. The Committee is adjourned for 10 minutes.

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

On resuming-

Q404 Chair: I call the Committee back to order now that we are quorate. Mr Kimber, I put to you, I asked you whether you knew that Joyce Thacker was the chair of the steering group of Risky Business. Did you know that?

Martin Kimber: I didn't, sir, no.

Q405 Chair: You didn't?

Martin Kimber: No.

Q406 Chair: Have you heard of Risky Business?

Martin Kimber: Yes, I know it well.

Q407 Chair: How often do you meet Joyce Thacker?

Martin Kimber: I meet with Joyce on a daily basis.

Q408 Chair: Has she ever disclosed to you that prior to becoming the Director of Children's Services, she chaired the steering group of Risky Business?

Martin Kimber: I am testing my memory, sir, because I don't want to mislead. I don't think that has ever been expressed to me but I am testing my memory.

Q409 Chair: What I and other members of the Committee and the public must think is here is Mr Kimber; he is a decent man; he has taken his share of responsibility; he is stepping down as chief executive in December; he has not decided whether or not to take his full pension, he is going to think about that; but he has come along to the council and he has said, “All other council officers seem to have behaved sufficiently well for nobody to be referred for disciplinary action”. On the other hand, we have a very big and substantial report from Professor Jay that talks about collective failures of political and officer leadership over a number of years. We have the Home Secretary coming before the House of Commons announcing another inquiry into Rotherham. We have everyone saying how dreadful the situation is and how they have failed to act in an appropriate way, but the head of children’s services is still in place. We are talking about very serious allegations of abuse going over a number of years, of course some very recently—we have just heard from the Chief Constable, 25 new cases since the Jay Report was published—but you have suspended nobody. You have asked nobody to stand aside even temporarily; you have referred nobody for disciplinary action at all. Irrespective of the Jay Report, your instinct has not been to try to clear out the stable. Why is Joyce Thacker still in her position, bearing in mind the Committee and the public have heard so much about the problem with children’s services?

Martin Kimber: My instinct, sir, is to do things properly. As I have already indicated to you, I have taken advice on the appropriate approach. The Jay Report provides me with some base information but it lacks specificity and the reason for that is to protect anonymity, as you would expect. Consequently I am doing a number of things to add to the information base, including having asked Professor Jay a number of questions to assist me.

Q410 Chair: No, we are not talking about the criminal investigations. We are talking about the job that you have, for which you are paid £160,000, to be able to reassure the public that your chief officers are doing their job properly. The Home Secretary has announced an inquiry into Rotherham and the person who presumably controls the files of children’s services in Rotherham is one of the people who presumably is going to be subject to the most intense scrutiny, Joyce Thacker, but you have left her in place. This is what I can’t understand. You have not even said, “Will you stand aside while this inquiry is going on?” You have left her and all of her colleagues in their positions. I find this very hard to understand.

Martin Kimber: I have indicated, sir, that I am in the process of going through to take additional information. You can be reassured if that additional information tells me that I need to do anything, I will do it. I have evidence in place that I have taken such decisions in the past and I will do so in the future if I need to, quite properly—

Q411 Chair: Sorry to speak over you, Mr Kimber, but since you gave evidence to this Committee two years ago, tell me how many senior council officers involved with children’s services have been asked to leave by you as chief executive? Not now because of the Jay Report but since the articles by Andrew Norfolk appeared and since our last report 18 months ago, tell me the name of one officer who has been asked to leave.

Martin Kimber: No one has been asked to leave, sir, but as I have already indicated to you, there is a range of evidence, including the Jay Report itself, which indicates that at

least since 2010 services have been fit for purpose, albeit clearly there needs to be improvement. It is also clear from the report that there have been some very severe failings in the past.

Q412 Chair: We know all the good news because that was the first line of your press release. We read that. Joyce Thacker, you have been involved in Rotherham Council since 2006 when you joined as deputy head of children's services.

Joyce Thacker: Yes.

Chair: What responsibility do you take as a result of this damning report by Professor Jay?

Joyce Thacker: Firstly, can I say that we commissioned this report in Rotherham? We wanted to lay bare what had gone on for years and years and this was an opportunity to do that, Chair. It has been very hard over the years to get this as a priority in the council, to get it understood, and we were very grateful to Andrew Norfolk for his exposé in *The Times*. It might not have felt like that at the time but it enabled us to get it on the agenda and then we commissioned this report so we could understand the scale of the issue. Quite frankly, the scale of the issue is shocking. We didn't know that, but we wanted this report commissioned so we could understand what had gone on for many, many years in Rotherham.

Q413 Chair: Are you telling this Committee that until this report was published you knew nothing about the scale of child grooming, irrespective of the report published by this Committee 18 months ago, irrespective of what you yourself knew as chair of the steering group of Risky Business, when a report, this file, was passed to you containing a huge amount of information about the crime of grooming that was taking place while you were chair of Risky Business? You are telling me and this Committee that you needed Professor Jay to tell you this; you did not know yourself?

Joyce Thacker: I have known ever since I have been involved in Rotherham, and indeed chaired the Risky Business project, that there was a huge issue of child sexual exploitation in the town. There was a small group of people in a small project, a youth line project, who were desperately trying to get their voice heard, and I agreed to take on chairing this as the independent chair so I could help pull partners together. They were finding it incredibly difficult to get people to listen to them and have their voice heard.

Q414 Chair: If you knew about this, what have you been doing about it since 2006 when you have had an enormous amount of power as the head of children's services? For part of that time your lead councillor was Shaun Wright, who is now the police and crime commissioner, who will be giving evidence shortly to this Committee. You and Shaun Wright knew about the scale of child abuse. Is that right?

Joyce Thacker: We knew about child sexual exploitation, child abuse, admittedly, but we did not know about the scale of it. We had reports from Risky Business annually that set out who they were working with. Those reports were regularly brought to the Area Child Protection Committee, as it was, and then into the Safeguarding Children Board. Those

reports came regularly and set out what the priorities were in the work that we were trying to do. Since you have asked me what I have done, I have worked hard to improve things in Rotherham, to make sure that it was understood that it was everyone's business tackling this.

Q415 Chair: Yes, but, Mrs Thacker, I don't think the Committee thinks that you have done enough over the years. My question to you is: why are you still in post, bearing in mind you were the deputy head of children's services from 2006; you became the head of children's services; prior to that you headed Risky Business. You have known about this all along. You are one of the threads in respect of what has been happening. Why are you still in post? Why have you not gone to Mr Kimber and said, "Given the responsibility that I have as the head of children's services, I will step aside while this inquiry that has been commissioned by the Home Secretary takes place. Either I will resign, like Mr Kimber has done, or I will step aside because I control all the files and all the information in this department"? Why have you not resigned?

Joyce Thacker: I have given that a lot of thought, I can assure you, Chair, and I am not stepping aside for the simple reason that I remain accountable to the people, the children and families of Rotherham. I take personal responsibility for every incident of child abuse and I work tirelessly with my staff. When I first took on my position there was 43% vacancies in children's services. Every post was covered by agency workers and I have worked extremely hard to make sure that we are now, for example, at 4% vacancy level. I have made sure that our staff take their responsibilities seriously.

Q416 Chair: Mrs Thacker, we have heard you before, 18 months ago when we knew about this, and you said everything was going fine. We have had evidence today that you knew about this even earlier, hence the file that the Committee has obtained. You knew about all this. How could you be accountable to the people of Rotherham and the children of Rotherham when you have failed them in such a way. Shouldn't you in all decency and honesty step aside from your post to allow others to be able to do a proper investigation into what has happened? You clearly have not been able to do anything in this job for all these years. Why do you think you are going to do things now?

Joyce Thacker: I am sorry, Chair, I do not accept what you are saying. I have worked extremely hard to improve services in Rotherham. I have made sure that we have brought in good, resourced services. I have fought hard to protect front-line social care when budgets were under desperate pressure. I have made sure that we have a fully accomplished child sexual exploitation team. I have worked hard with colleagues to make sure we have a good offer today. It clearly has more to improve on, but I do think I take my responsibilities very seriously and, no, I do not intend to resign from my position.

Q417 Chair: In 2005, a report written said, "Nobody could say I didn't know about child sexual exploitation". You are just telling the Committee today that you do not think your voice was heard, so who was not listening? Was it Mr Stone? Was it Mr Kimber? Was it Mr Wright, who previously was the lead councillor? Who was not listening to you, Mrs Thacker?

Who is responsible? If you are not responsible, who did not listen when you tried to raise this issue?

Joyce Thacker: I actually took the position in Rotherham. I did not have to come and work in Rotherham.

Q418 Chair: No, sorry, I want to know who did not listen to you. You have just told the Committee that you tried to do something but people were not listening. Who was it? Was it Mr Kimber? Was it his predecessor? Was it Councillor Stone? Was it Mr Wright? Was it other councillors? Was it the police chief? Was it the Crown Prosecution Service? Who failed you?

Joyce Thacker: Locally, at the time, when I was chair of Risky Business for I think it was 2005—I cannot recollect exactly the day I started chairing Risky Business but I think I started chairing from about 2005—I can remember vividly—

Q419 Chair: No, who failed you? Your memory is very—

Joyce Thacker: I am trying to explain to you, Chair, how it works.

Chair: No, I want to know who you think. I know how it works. I think the Committee knows how it works. We have looked at this issue for a number of years. Who failed you? Who did not act when you turned up at those meetings with Mr Kimber and you said, “Look, Mr Kimber, why don’t we take appropriate action?” Who did not do what you wanted: Mr Wright, Mr Kimber, Mr Stone, the Chief Constable? Who did not do what you wanted?

Joyce Thacker: Mr Kimber has always taken appropriate action. He has supported us in the improvements that we have made since 2010. When Mr Kimber arrived—

Q420 Chair: Okay, so it is not Mr Kimber. Is it Mr Wright, then?

Joyce Thacker: Mr Wright received reports. I remember in July 2008 when I became responsible for Children’s Services—

Chair: So he knew?

Joyce Thacker: He knew. He received reports, an annual report, I recollect, in July 2008 on Risky Business, on the work we were doing, the extent of the work we were doing at the time.

Q421 Chair: So Mr Wright is responsible. What about Mr Stone? Did he know?

Joyce Thacker: I do not know if Mr Stone knew. The reports—

Chair: He is the leader of the council.

Joyce Thacker: I always work through my Cabinet Member. My Cabinet Member received reports.

Q422 Chair: Was it Mr Wright?

Joyce Thacker: It was Mr Wright.

Q423 Chair: So it is Mr Wright?

Joyce Thacker: I would take decisions where those reports would go.

Q424 Chair: If you were pointing a finger at who did not listen to you, it would be Mr Wright?

Joyce Thacker: Mr Wright received reports.

Q425 Lorraine Fullbrook: You have known about child exploitation generally in Yorkshire since 1998 when you worked for Barnardo's.

Joyce Thacker: I did not work for Barnardo's, sorry, to correct you.

Q426 Lorraine Fullbrook: Were you not one of the key people promoting the national launch in Bradford of Barnardo's "Whose Daughter Next?" campaign?

Joyce Thacker: That is right. I was a partner with Barnardo's.

Q427 Lorraine Fullbrook: Okay, sorry, a partner with Barnardo's. You have known about child exploitation in Yorkshire since 1998?

Joyce Thacker: Yes.

Q428 Lorraine Fullbrook: In 2007, you commissioned a report for Shaun Wright, who was then the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, followed up by away-days and so on. There are paper trails. There is monthly information and intelligence, which were shared with all partners and key stakeholders. Knowing that nothing was being done about the work you had been doing all of these years, how many times did you make a complaint to South Yorkshire Police that nothing was being done?

Joyce Thacker: I did not formally make a complaint, but the first ray of hope came when Matt Jukes started in South Yorkshire as the District Commander in Rotherham. Matt Jukes took this issue extremely seriously. He was a really good person to work with and began to understand the severity of the issues. I commend Matt Jukes as someone who understood the issues because before that, quite frankly, people were finding it difficult for the police to take any notice of this issue.

Q429 Lorraine Fullbrook: When was this? When did Matt Jukes take over?

Joyce Thacker: I think Matt Jukes came in around 2006-2007.

Q430 Lorraine Fullbrook: But the former chief constable claims not to have known anything about this, so obviously your message was not getting through.

Joyce Thacker: Absolutely, and I heard what he had to say, but trying to work locally with the borough commanders at the time, clearly it was not being taken seriously. There were junior officers coming to meetings at Risky Business who were not taking things forward, I suspect, clearly to the previous South Yorkshire police chief.

Q431 Lorraine Fullbrook: We have heard that there was a dereliction of duty by the former chief constable. Do you think that you have been responsible for a dereliction of duty in your role?

Joyce Thacker: I look back and I think could I have done more and absolutely, yes, I could have done more. The benefit of hindsight is a wonderful thing, but I can assure you that I did try hard to maintain this on the agenda in Rotherham. I felt acutely aware of the issue. I have known about child sexual exploitation for longer than 1998. I worked in Keighley when Ann Cryer was there desperately raising this issue. I fully am aware of the impact of child sexual exploitation and I saw it as my duty to keep reminding people in Children's Services that this was a serious issue.

Q432 Lorraine Fullbrook: You accept that there was a dereliction in your duty and that you have never made a complaint to South Yorkshire Police about the lack of action for child victims?

Joyce Thacker: I do not accept there is a full dereliction of my duty. With hindsight, I am saying to you I could have done more. But I would say to you that since Matt Jukes came in, he took this issue on and worked closely with us at Risky Business as well as the council. Matt was the first person that seemed to really understand the gravity of the situation.

Q433 Lorraine Fullbrook: But failed to let his chief constable know?

Joyce Thacker: I cannot comment on that.

Q434 Nicola Blackwood: Mrs Thacker, I just want to pick you up on a point that you made at the last session when you gave evidence to us. You said to the Chairman at the very beginning of your evidence that you viewed prosecutions as the icing on the cake, and at that point in 2013 there had only been five prosecutions of child sexual exploitation related cases in Rotherham. Now there have obviously been 104 prosecutions. Have you changed your mind?

Joyce Thacker: I have always viewed that prosecution is the most vital deterrent. I think my choice of language was unhelpful at that previous session, but what I was trying to say was it is really important to have prosecutions. It is the most important deterrent and what you have from the previous evidence given is a real sea change and prosecutions coming forward in Rotherham and, indeed, South Yorkshire.

Q435 Nicola Blackwood: Just to be clear to any victims who might be watching this who are seeking justice and fear that previously they have not been believed, if they come forward now the council and the police will work together vigorously to seek justice for them?

Joyce Thacker: Absolutely. I can assure you there is utter determination on that.

Q436 Nicola Blackwood: Thank you. The second point is that in your comments to the Chairman you said that the council welcomed Andrew Norfolk's stories, but is it not true that Rotherham Council actually asked South Yorkshire Police to conduct a criminal investigation against the leak that had initially led to *The Times*' reporting? Is it not also true that they hired a legal team to secure a High Court injunction barring publication of one of his articles as recently as 2012?

Joyce Thacker: I don't know about a legal team and injunction. I cannot honestly recollect that.

Q437 Chair: You are telling this Committee that you have not heard of Rotherham Council seeking legal advice to stop publication?

Q438 Nicola Blackwood: This was a case that was dropped when Michael Gove said that this information should be in the public domain.

Joyce Thacker: This was a serious case review, sorry, it was not an article published by Andrew Norfolk. This was a serious case review, which is a very different matter.

Nicola Blackwood: Well, yes, but there was—

Joyce Thacker: Indeed, Professor Jay does cover this in her report.

Chair: Mrs Thacker, just one second; Nicola Blackwood, just finish.

Q439 Nicola Blackwood: As I understand it, part of the High Court injunction was to prevent Andrew Norfolk from reporting the case.

Joyce Thacker: It was not reporting the case, no, not at all. In my estimation, it was him producing the serious case review in full that was the issue. Professor Jay indeed touches on that in her report.

Q440 Nicola Blackwood: Was the finding after all of that had fallen away that what was attempted to be removed in the redactions was not just the details that would have protected the victim but also aspects of failures of the council?

Joyce Thacker: No, none whatsoever, and Professor Jay does cover that in her report. She does not say we attempted to cover up. She does say some of the redactions she queries but does not think in any way it covered up our actions. My only ever intention with Child S serious case review was to protect her remaining family.

Q441 Nicola Blackwood: You stand by your claim that at all times you have welcomed Andrew Norfolk's stories in *The Times* and you have at no point attempted to prevent it, including the point at which you have asked South Yorkshire Police to conduct a criminal investigation into the leaker?

Joyce Thacker: The concern about the leaks was what other information does somebody have that might come out and actually be dreadful for a child or a victim if they were not knowing it, and that is my concern. That is just to make sure that whatever information is there is in safe hands. He did report responsibly, but there may have been other information that was in the public domain that would have been a serious breach of data.

Q442 Nicola Blackwood: Right. I also would like to take you back to the comment that you made that you did not realise the scale of the problem and some of the evidence that we received in private session from Jayne Senior, Dr Heal and a Home Office researcher. Obviously, you were the chair of Risky Business Steering Group. Was it 2003 to 2004?

Joyce Thacker: No, it would be later than that. I think it would be 2005. I remember stepping down when I got the position as the senior director of Children's Services in 2006 because it would have been a conflict of interest.

Q443 Nicola Blackwood: Okay. You would then have been involved in some of the reports that Dr Angie Heal would have shared, which included analysis of the links between drugs running, guns running and serious abuses and exploitation that was widespread across Rotherham in 2006? She was clear that she shared that with the steering group of Risky Business in 2006.

Joyce Thacker: I can recollect Dr Heal sharing that information. I can recollect that it was in police hands. I cannot recollect what happened with it from there. I remember that it was frustrating because the police as a group did not seem to be taking it seriously and I recollect Dr Heal's frustrations with that.

Q444 Nicola Blackwood: How can you reconcile your evidence to the Committee that you did not realise the scale of the problem with the main finding of the 2006 report, which described the continuing abuse having gone on for a number of years, "With an established sexual exploitation scene that was very organised and involved systematic physical and sexual violence against young women, that involved young women being trafficked to other towns and cities, predominantly in the north, which involved a level of intimidation, physical beatings and rape among exploited girls considered by multiagency staff to be very severe and their situation to be very serious"?

Joyce Thacker: I think when we came last year I recollect we discussed then that the evidence was about 600 historic cases. What Professor Jay has uncovered is 1,400.

Q445 Nicola Blackwood: Oh, I see, so it is the difference between 600 girls being abused and 1,400 girls?

Joyce Thacker: None whatsoever. I remind you last year when I gave evidence it was about the fact that we talked about 600 then. Professor Jay in all her work has come up

with 1,400 victims, which is absolutely shocking. One person being abused through any form of abuse, particularly sexual exploitation, is one victim too many. It deeply, deeply saddens me when children have to go through this experience, but to learn now from the report that we received at the same time that others got it, that it is 1,400 is deeply shocking.

Q446 Nicola Blackwood: But you are clear that you knew about this and the scale of about 600 from as far back as 2006?

Joyce Thacker: No, we talked about 600 last year as the evidence that came out then.

Q447 Nicola Blackwood: But given that we are talking about systematic physical and sexual abuse, women being trafficked, severe and very serious physical beatings and rapes, this was a 2006 report, which you claim you are aware of.

Joyce Thacker: I am aware of; I cannot recollect the detailed content of it. But what I can say is it was severe in terms of the nature. It was the numbers I am saying is the shock because that is the issue.

Q448 Nicola Blackwood: Can I just field one more issue? You were chair of the Risky Business Steering Committee in 2005?

Joyce Thacker: I think so, yes.

Q449 Nicola Blackwood: This would have been when the joint paper was done between the police and Children and Young People's Service about rationalising the role of Risky Business as to whether it would be more strategic and who would have access to the forum, is that right? Is that true?

Joyce Thacker: Goodness, I honestly cannot recollect that. I cannot recollect that now.

Q450 Nicola Blackwood: Because the issue to do with this report was the police carried out an audit of about 87 files resulting in them proposing a large number of girls being removed from the sexual exploitation forum and, therefore, not having access to the kind of support that would be necessary. The judgment made by Professor Jay is that this was part of a failure of the professional relationship between Risky Business and the Children and Young People's Service, and that this was an ongoing problem. I just wondered if as the chair of Risky Business and later deputy chief executive and then chairman and then chief executive at Children's Services you were already aware of this problem during this audit process in 2005 why you did not fix that when you became the chief executive.

Joyce Thacker: I cannot recollect the detail. I did not sit on the forum. The forum was practitioners who met together and considered cases.

Q451 Nicola Blackwood: No, but this was something that was conveyed to senior managers in the CYP and was something that Risky Business was very concerned about and was conveyed all through the Safeguarding Board and so on.

Joyce Thacker: Yes, I believe it went to the Safeguarding Board. I do not think the issue about changing the registration of victims went to the Safeguarding Board, but I could be wrong on that. I cannot recollect that.

Q452 Chair: Thank you. Can we just be clear because both you and Mr Kimber are on oath? You are saying that you were unaware that the council sought to prevent Andrew Norfolk and *The Times* reporting details of the case of Laura Wilson, a 17 year-old girl who was groomed and subsequently murdered? Are you telling this Committee that you were unaware that the council was seeking an injunction?

Joyce Thacker: Chair, I can say the injunction was against the full publication of the Child S serious case review of Laura Wilson.

Q453 Chair: Who was dead at the time?

Joyce Thacker: Absolutely.

Q454 Chair: Right, so how would that information come into the public domain when the victim was already dead? What was the problem?

Joyce Thacker: The victim has family, Chair, family who are still living in Rotherham, one of whom—

Q455 Chair: You did not think of asking the family?

Joyce Thacker: We did ask the family. The family were fully involved. I met with the family.

Q456 Chair: Thank you. Mr Kimber, did you know about this? You as chief executive would have known that council taxpayers' money was being spent on this injunction. You authorised it, did you?

Martin Kimber: I did know about it, Mr Vaz, yes.

Q457 Chair: Did you authorise it?

Martin Kimber: I cannot recollect whether I would personally have authorised it, but I would not generally need to. I would need to check that for you. What I can say is that my recollection is similar to Mrs Thacker's, that it was not an intent to prevent publication of an article. It was an intent to prevent publication of the unredacted version of the serious case review.

Chair: Right. Well, it would be very helpful if you could send those papers to the Committee.

Martin Kimber: I will happily confirm whether I authorised that or not.

Chair: Please. Please send those papers to the Committee.

Q458 Ian Austin: Mrs Thacker, the thing I do not understand about all this is that you said you knew there was a problem with child sexual exploitation and grooming and that it all improved in 2006-2007 when a new police commander was appointed. But it has been during this period that hundreds more girls have been abused. How could that have happened if it was being taken as seriously by you and the police as you have told us this afternoon?

Joyce Thacker: I can honestly say the working relationship with the police significantly improved when Matt Jukes arrived. It had been difficult before then. You will know that Risky Business passed evidence after evidence on to the police at the time and it felt like nothing was being taken seriously. I am afraid we cannot stop child sexual exploitation, much as I would like to do. If I could stop it, I would, but there are bad people out there intent on harming children.

Q459 Ian Austin: When you say Risky Business passed evidence to the police before 2006-2007 and it was not taken seriously, they also passed lots of evidence to you and the police since then. I have to say it looks to me as if it was not taken seriously then either. I have a list here of probably a dozen occasions on which reports and details came to you and Mr Wright, and the police as well, and clearly not enough was done to tackle that. Most of these perpetrators have still not been arrested, let alone prosecuted and convicted. The other thing that I have been told is that at least two members of staff reporting to you told people trying to bring all of this to light to shut up, to stop talking about this, to stop trying to raise this. Has that ever been put to you? Has that ever been suggested to you? Do you know about that?

Joyce Thacker: Well, I would be absolutely appalled if any person reporting to me said that to any member of my staff. Frankly, that is so important that we protect children and if somebody had said, "Stop talking about it" or whatever they had said, I would be very, very annoyed with that. I would take appropriate action against them.

Q460 Ian Austin: That has never been suggested to you that that has ever happened?

Joyce Thacker: The first I saw that was in the Jay Report.

Q461 Ian Austin: Okay. Can I just ask the chief executive? I know the Chair touched on this before, but why did you say immediately on publication of the Jay Report that no disciplinary action would be taken and then put out a press release pretty much straight away saying that Mrs Thacker's job was safe, even though you had not at that point clearly had a chance to review the report and its findings?

Martin Kimber: I do not think I have ever issued a press release indicating anybody's job was safe. What I did say on publication of the Jay Report is exactly as I have said to you today. The report itself does not provide evidence for disciplinary action, but it provides

base material to allow me to gather further information. If that information indicates to me that I need to consider disciplinary action, then indeed I will do so. Of course, there is evidence coming out today, some of which I have never heard before.

Chair: Thank you. We will give you a copy of this evidence.

Q462 Paul Flynn: I want to refer to the relationship with Members of Parliament. You have mentioned Ann Cryer, who is a greatly respected former Member of this House known for her great courage and persistence. Could you tell us about the talks you had with Ann Cryer and what the outcome was of the efforts that she made?

Joyce Thacker: I am digging deep in memory now, but Ann Cryer was MP in Keighley. I was the area manager for the youth service at the time in Keighley. We were working with Barnardo's "Streets and Lanes" project. We were piloting some work with Barnardo's in Keighley. Ann Cryer was aware of this work and took a keen interest in that work and was keen to raise this at the highest possible level, which she did go on to do.

Q463 Paul Flynn: My difficulty is finding out why this vast amount of evidence, abuse on such a tragic scale, did not come into the public domain, was not well known, was not a major scandal. I am wondering where the Berlin Wall is. There is another MP who did an interview, a former Rotherham MP, Denis MacShane, and he talked of raising the issue. He very candidly said, "I was a coward" in that he said he did not continue, he did not persist with his complaint. Have you any view there of where the buck stopped? Who was responsible for stopping this becoming what it was with prosecution and so on?

Joyce Thacker: I think police taking evidence forward. They were given lots of information about specific incidents. It then goes into the police domain. The police then look to whether they build prosecutions, follow up investigations, and then pass that on to the Crown Prosecution Service. I know that Risky Business and youth work staff worked tirelessly to give information over and nothing seemed to be done about it. I can only lead to the conclusion that the police received information at the time and did very little with it or felt they did not think it was enough information to take forward.

If I can just come back to Denis MacShane—you mentioned him—Denis MacShane came and spoke; he was our keynote speaker. I did mention the event—I know you are not keen on conferences—but I was trying to get MPs to listen to this issue. Denis MacShane came and was our keynote speaker at the event in 2006, which we held in Rotherham to raise awareness on child sexual exploitation. I have tried tirelessly to raise this issue across a range of spheres.

Q464 Paul Flynn: The worrying thing is that none of this appeared to work. I can recall Ann Cryer's very courageous identification of the alleged perpetrators and so on, a completely fearless Member of Parliament. I just wonder why that did not produce results. I am still puzzled as to was it the ignorance of the police, was it the attitudes of the police who victimised these young people? What was it that stopped this coming into the public domain and being dealt with earlier?

Joyce Thacker: There could be a range of issues here, sir. When you look at the case studies and you hear about the police thinking it was consensual, no child agrees to their abuse. No child agrees to their abuse. They cannot consent to their own abuse. I do not think that was as well understood then as it is now. I think now we have a much more open debate nationally. Here we are discussing these very issues. Ann Cryer I think paved the way for doing that. Denis MacShane in his own way tried. He came and spoke about trafficking at the time. Denis spoke about that and the work they were doing on trafficking in South Yorkshire and there were police present in that audience. We have tried to raise issues. As I said earlier, hindsight, could we have done more? Absolutely, without question we could all do more with the benefit of hindsight, but I can assure you I have tried at appropriate opportunities to raise this issue among all the other duties that I do in my post.

Paul Flynn: I am grateful to you, Mrs Thacker.

Q465 Mark Reckless: You say you and Denis MacShane tried to raise the issue, but I believe Denis MacShane said that the one issue he did not want to raise was the prevalence and concentration of this offending behaviour within the Pakistani community in Rotherham. Why was that?

Joyce Thacker: I don't know why Mr MacShane said what he said, but I think there was absolutely a fear culture in the community. I do often think that people were frightened of raising the issue. I do not think that is anything to do with the ethnic issue. I think it is a genuine fear.

Q466 Mark Reckless: Who did you fear?

Joyce Thacker: I did not fear anyone, really, in that sense. I raised these issues. We brought reports to the Area Child Protection Committee, which fell under the Safeguarding Children Board.

Q467 Mark Reckless: Mrs Thacker, what I really cannot understand is how you were so ineffective in raising these issues once you became the Director of Children's Services. Did you have ultimate management responsibility for all the social workers in Rotherham working with children?

Joyce Thacker: In 2007, can I say that the first operation that the Jay Report refers to goes largely unreported. That was the first serious issue where Matt Jukes and his team worked tirelessly with our staff to prosecute a man who had had offences against children. Then in 2008 it was Operation Central and we went on from there. We have raised issues and there have been successful pieces of work since that time.

Q468 Mark Reckless: The people we spoke to from Risky Business earlier said that they had been very hopeful, given you had chaired Risky Business, when you took over at Children's Services. They were hoping things would change, but they say it was not just the police. Even though you say the police changed that is not what they say. They also said that they were always trying to press social workers to take these young girls on to their caseload

and they would not do so very often. Those people were reporting directly to you. Why were they so resistant of looking after these young girls?

Joyce Thacker: Social workers did not directly report to me until July 2008. I was not responsible for managing social workers until that time.

Q469 Mark Reckless: Okay. You are then telling us that after that time that was no longer the case and you dealt with it? Again, that does not seem consistent with the evidence we got earlier.

Joyce Thacker: There were differences of opinion at the time about child sexual exploitation.

Q470 Mark Reckless: But you were in charge of Children's Services?

Joyce Thacker: That is right, and you will see improvements were made from about 2009 onwards.

Q471 Mark Reckless: Okay. You said that Shaun Wright received an annual report from Risky Business. You seem to be slightly dumping him in it because he had that annual report, but surely he should have got much more than an annual report from Risky Business. Shouldn't you as the director reporting to him have been consistently raising this issue and demanding action rather than just relying on him reading a report from Risky Business once a year?

Joyce Thacker: I am not dumping this issue on Shaun Wright, none whatsoever. I am just trying to explain to—

Q472 Mark Reckless: So it was your fault for not raising it with him sufficiently?

Joyce Thacker: No, I am not saying it is my fault. We would meet regularly. We would talk about issues. He was briefed on the operation in 2007. He was briefed on the operations in 2008 and onwards from that. We did share information.

Q473 Mark Reckless: You shared information, but whose fault was it that insufficient was done to deal with it?

Joyce Thacker: I think collectively we are all at fault for not doing it, but I think in hindsight—

Q474 Mark Reckless: You said Mr Kimber always acted appropriately before. Are you now saying he is collectively responsible with you for these failures?

Joyce Thacker: Professor Jay asked me a question. She said why—

Chair: Sorry, Mrs Thacker, would you answer the question that Mr Reckless has put, not answering the question by referring to Professor Jay?

Joyce Thacker: Apologies.

Chair: You are here; she is not. Can you answer Mr Reckless' question?

Joyce Thacker: Mr Kimber has always acted appropriately. He has been made aware of issues. He has given me full support in tackling these issues. You will see we have had instances where we have developed practice. Now what we have is a far different offer in Rotherham. Regrettably, what those victims had—

Q475 Mark Reckless: Mrs Thacker, throughout this period we are told that people when they came to Rotherham Council were not believed. It was thought the problem was exaggerated. People did not want to deal with what was going on largely in the Pakistani community. Social workers would not take these girls on to their casework. You surely more than anyone else were the point person who should have dealt with that and failed to do so.

Joyce Thacker: It takes a long time to change the culture of an organisation, sir. I can say that.

Q476 Mark Reckless: Okay. Mrs Thacker, are you still monitoring the political leanings of foster parents in Rotherham?

Joyce Thacker: I would just say that regardless of political persuasion people are entitled to become foster parents if they are fit for purpose to do so.

Q477 Mark Reckless: Would you be able to work with a UKIP council should one be elected in Rotherham next May?

Joyce Thacker: I am working already very closely with the opposition on this matter. All of them have come for CSE awareness raising as members so, yes, I am working very closely with them already.

Q478 Mark Reckless: Do you understand the degree of public anger there would be if you were to take any pay off or take any legal action against Rotherham Council either now or after next May in light of your own failings on this issue?

Joyce Thacker: The public are very angry now and they are right to be so.

Q479 Mark Reckless: With you?

Joyce Thacker: With us all and with me in particular, absolutely.

Q480 Chair: Thank you. Just to confirm for the record, I said Mr Kimber was on £130,000 a year. You said £160,000, Mr Kimber?

Martin Kimber: That is correct, sir.

Q481 Chair: Your salary is £130,000, is that right, Mrs Thacker?

Joyce Thacker: With pension contributions, yes. I get £115,000 a year.

Chair: Thank you. Michael Ellis has the final question.

Q482 Michael Ellis: Mr Kimber, is it a rotten borough council that you have been presiding over that, first, blames victims; secondly, blocks complaints of horrific child sexual abuse and exploitation over a prolonged period of time; and, thirdly, seeks an injunction against *The Times* newspaper, who quite frankly with Andrew Norfolk have done more to expose this incident than a lot of very highly paid public servants who are a disgrace to the public service? *[Interruption.]*

Chair: Order, order. We must have no noise from the gallery.

Michael Ellis: How much, Mr Kimber, did you waste of taxpayers' money on the legal action against *The Times* newspaper seeking to block them from doing the public service that they did? How much? How much did those lawyers cost?

Martin Kimber: To try to deal with your questions, the last one first, I do not know, sir, but I can let you have the answer in writing.

Q483 Michael Ellis: Roughly? Over £100,000? Over £200,000?

Martin Kimber: It would be nowhere near that.

Q484 Chair: Would you let us have a note?

Michael Ellis: Perhaps you will let us have a note.

Martin Kimber: I will, sir. In the context of me working with a rotten borough, I do not recognise—

Michael Ellis: Rotten borough council.

Martin Kimber: Rotten borough council, I do not recognise what you say in the context that I personally would never allow a position where victims were blamed. It is absolutely not acceptable that that inference—

Q485 Michael Ellis: That is what Professor Jay's report says.

Martin Kimber: Professor Jay's report does not say it is from 2010 onwards and I have been the Chief Executive from the very end of 2009. I am giving you my position of the council that I recognise. I absolutely would not allow that to happen.

Q486 Michael Ellis: Right. Let me ask you this, then. When *The Times* broke the story, your response as a local authority was to ask the police to investigate who leaked it to them. Is that not right? Is that not right, Mrs Thacker?

Joyce Thacker: We have already covered that, sir, in previous questions.

Q487 Michael Ellis: Just answer the question; I do not care whether you have covered it or not. Was that your response, to actually look for the leaker to the story rather than get to the bottom of the gravamen of the story itself?

Joyce Thacker: It was important that we protected innocent people's data being released to goodness knows who.

Q488 Michael Ellis: The data were more important than the child abuse victims?

Joyce Thacker: No, it was important that we protected innocent people. I did not know what anyone might have.

Michael Ellis: Mrs Thacker—

Chair: Mr Ellis, could you just let Mrs Thacker finish?

Michael Ellis: Would you like to finish, Mrs Thacker?

Joyce Thacker: No, it is fine, thank you, Chair.

Q489 Michael Ellis: I understand you told the *Rotherham Advertiser* in September of 2012, Mrs Thacker, that you would ask the police to investigate the leak. You were focused on the leak. It beggars belief, doesn't it? Instead of being focused on what Norfolk and *The Times* were reporting, you were trying to waste taxpayers' money on finding out who leaked it.

Joyce Thacker: As I just reiterate to you, sir, I wanted to make sure that we had no private and confidential information of innocent people out there in the public domain.

Q490 Chair: Thank you very much. Mr Kimber, you have resigned for the reasons that you gave us and we welcome what you have said and done, but we are very troubled that as part of the collective leadership no further action has been taken against anyone else. You presumably believe that Rotherham deserves a fresh start. It has lost its Leader of the Council. You have resigned as Chief Executive. Is that right? Do you believe that Rotherham Council deserves a fresh start after all this?

Martin Kimber: I indicated, sir, when I resigned that I thought that my leaving would be a very visible sign of a new beginning and that is my position. As I have also indicated, I would be looking very carefully at fresh information that comes forward that would allow me to build on the Jay Report and consider whether I need to take any further action. I have already indicated to you that I have a pedigree of taking such action if, indeed, it is needed.

Q491 Chair: Well, it is the view of this Committee that the evidence we have received from Joyce Thacker today has been unimpressive and we believe that she should be asked to step down, to reflect on her position and, if she does not do so, she should resign. Of course, at the end of the day, Mrs Thacker, it is a matter for you what you do. We do not accept your

evidence that you raised this and nobody was listening to you, though we will hear from Mr Wright shortly. We believe that you—having received the evidence today from Risky Business where they tell us that 100 names were in this file that was given to you in 2006; this went up to 600 names when you gave evidence to us and it has now reached 1,400 names—should have been aware of this as you were intimately involved in these matters and that you should resign as a matter of conscience and in order to try to cleanse the council of the leadership that it has had so far. That is the unanimous and collective view of this Select Committee.

Joyce Thacker: I have made my position quite clear, Chair.

Q492 Chair: We know that. You have made your position clear at the beginning, and I think that the attitude you have displayed today and the unimpressive nature of your evidence only adds to that. You might like to bear that in mind, Mr Kimber, since you still have three months before you go. I am sure you would not like your legacy to Rotherham to be you have gone and the rest of those responsible are still there. I am sure since everyone has so much respect for you in the council, you will use your persuasive power to try to cleanse the council of the past to give the people of Rotherham, and the young people of Rotherham in particular, a future. Thank you for coming in today.

Martin Kimber: Thank you, sir, and as I have indicated I would always act properly.

Chair: I would hope you would act properly. Thank you for coming in today.

Examination of Witness

Witness: **Shaun Wright**, South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, gave evidence on oath.

Q493 Chair: Mr Wright, thank you very much for coming to give evidence today. Can I say I am most grateful to you? When I wrote to you and telephoned you there was no hesitation on your part in coming to give evidence. Unlike other witnesses, you immediately accepted the invitation of the Committee. I want to apologise for keeping you waiting beyond the time that we allocated for you. Thank you for sitting patiently to listen to what other witnesses have said. We are most grateful. Mr Wright, the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, Ed Miliband, the Leader of the Labour Party, the Deputy Commissioner and others have all called for your resignation. You are still there. Before you answer my question as to why you are still there, the Committee has decided to put you on oath. The reason why we are doing so is that if evidence is given falsely to the Committee on oath, the clauses of the Perjury Act come into effect and that is a very serious matter. Before we proceed and you answer that question, I am going to ask the Clerk to administer the oath.

Shaun Wright: I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give before the Committee shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

Q494 Chair: Now, perhaps you would like to answer that question.

Shaun Wright: Yes, Chairman. Thanks very much for inviting me. I value being present today and being given the opportunity to share my thoughts on this matter with you. Clearly—

Q495 Chair: Well, can I just explain? It is not a matter of sharing thoughts. These are questions from a parliamentary Committee.

Shaun Wright: Of course.

Chair: You have now gone on oath, so it is not a discussion or a sharing of comments. It is not a seminar. It is a question and answer session.

Shaun Wright: I recognise that, Chairman. Addressing the point that you have put to me about the various individuals calling for my resignation—

Chair: Sorry, could you speak up, Mr Wright?

Shaun Wright: I can, indeed. I basically think that resigning would have been perhaps the easy option given the last fortnight with the various criticisms that have been made and the effect that that has had on both myself and my family. Having said that, I am prepared to field any criticism and to be held to account by anyone, any inquiry, including yourselves, Chairman, in relation to my activities for the period 2005 to 2010.

Q496 Chair: Of course, but this is not about accountability to inquiries, which could take several years. This is the Prime Minister of the country, the Home Secretary, the leader of the party that you have been a member of for how many years?

Shaun Wright: Over 20.

Q497 Chair: Presumably, you respect democracy because it is because of democracy that you are sitting where you are.

Shaun Wright: Indeed.

Q498 Chair: All these people say, “We have no confidence in you” and the public appear not to even want to come to your weekly or monthly surgeries to share information with you. I spoke last night to the chair of the police and crime panel that is supposed to scrutinise you, Councillor Harpham, and he is very clear that you should resign. He says that is the view of every other member of the crime panel. To whom do you think you owe this great duty when everyone in the country appears to be saying, “Resign because of what we have heard”? I am just wondering to whom is the duty owed if it is not due to all the people I have just mentioned.

Shaun Wright: There is a duty to the people that I got elected to serve; that is the people of South Yorkshire. Like yourself, Chairman, I take that duty very seriously to the electorate. Having said that—

Q499 Chair: There is a very easy way of dealing with that, Mr Wright.

Shaun Wright: Not at all.

Chair: Of course there is, and that is for you to put your record before the people of South Yorkshire, as other people who serve as elected representatives have done when their conduct has been called into question, not by one or two newspapers but by the entire political establishment. Everybody has called for you to go. Isn't the best way to test the views of the public for you to resign and then offer yourself for re-election by the people of South Yorkshire? Isn't that the best way that you can get everyone to put their faith in you and what you have done? Why are you not doing that?

Shaun Wright: I was elected in 2012, Chairman, to serve a term of office for a period of three and a half years. I am now I think 20 months into that period of office and I am happy to stand by my record during the period that I have been the Police and Crime Commissioner. I have not heard any criticism whatsoever from anyone about the role that I have fulfilled as Police and Crime Commissioner and the record and the evidence that I have supplied to the Committee demonstrates very clearly how seriously I have taken this since I have been the Police and Crime Commissioner. I am very happy to stand on that record.

Q500 Chair: Well, on the contrary, your record does not display that at all, Mr Wright. What your record says is, and what Professor Jay says, that this was continuing beyond 2012. You have said, I think, to Sky TV that because you have resigned once as the lead member for Children's Services, that, in fact, purges all your responsibilities and, therefore, once you resigned in 2010 there is no reason for you to resign again. Now, that is a very odd position to be in, is it not, to have said to the television audience that you have already done this once in 2010 and everyone knew about your part in all this so there is no reason to resign again? That is what you said to Sky TV.

Shaun Wright: Chairman, what I said to a number of media outlets was that I was accounting for the period 2005 to 2010 and at the end of that period of office, being the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, I felt it appropriate on the back of the Ofsted report in 2009 that I should stand down at the subsequent election in 2010, which I did in 2010 in the May. Of course, that was on the back of the Ofsted judgment coming in in late 2009. I took the view, and also took advice, that the best course of action would be to go in the May rather than the December when the report was published, and that is what I did. I did not resign on the basis of the issue of CSE because over—

Chair: Mr Wright, are you really hiding behind the fact—

Shaun Wright: Chairman, please let me finish the answers. I have been waiting very patiently, as you know, to come along today and give this information and I am very keen to give it.

Q501 Chair: What is the information you wish to give?

Shaun Wright: Well, the information is that I received four reports during the five years that I was in that position.

Chair: No, we will ask you about that information.

Shaun Wright: In terms of the external reports, I do not recall one single external report from Ofsted or any other organisation that flagged CSE as being a significant issue. Now, as elected individuals, we are not the experts in any of these areas so we look to a range of indicators. Over that period of time, not one member of the public came to a surgery of mine, not one local councillor asked me a question either in my political group or at full council, not one local MP in Rotherham raised the issue or a case of CSE for those five years. Not one external report raised CSE as a significant issue over that five years.

Chair: Mr Wright, we do not accept any of that. None of that is accepted.

Shaun Wright: That is the facts.

Q502 Chair: Now let me ask my question without you interrupting me. We do not accept any of that. We know that you attended a seminar in 2005.

Shaun Wright: No, I did not.

Chair: We know that you were aware of what had happened at that seminar. We have heard evidence today on oath from the woman who headed Children's Services that you were given every report. We have heard from Risky Business in evidence to this Committee that you knew about this. We know that you resigned in 2010 because you said you wanted to take your share of the responsibility. You must have read newspapers when you became the Police and Crime Commissioner because Andrew Norfolk's articles in *The Times* were very clear about what was happening in Rotherham. We do not accept for one moment the evidence that you have just given that you did not know that this was an issue. We accept as a Committee that you did know. We accept the evidence that has been given by people who have come here before this Committee and gave evidence before the Committee last year that you were well aware of what was happening. That is our view as a Committee, so we do not accept that you did not know. We do not accept that not a single councillor raised it with you because we have had evidence on oath from others that you did know about this.

Shaun Wright: Can I address that point, Chairman?

Chair: Of course.

Shaun Wright: Thank you. In 2005, I came into this role and I asked the then strategic director for a state of the nation report from each of her deputies to bring me up to speed with the issues in relation to the Children and Young People's Service department. As Professor Jay recognises, there was no mention of CSE in any of those state of the nation reports.

I received the first report about CSE in June 2007. That was over two years into the role. At that point, I referred it to the children's scrutiny committee. I also asked for a members' seminar and I also endorsed the action plan put to me by the officer responsible for this area of work. I subsequently received the next report on this in July 2008 and at that point I was not satisfied that sufficient resources were being put into Risky Business and I asked for a report to come back. That report was brought back to me five months later in November 2008 and at that stage I increased the resources going into Risky Business by 80%, from £64,000 to £110,000. I also asked for another report to be brought back to me,

which came back to me on 29 January 2009. At that stage, there had been a revised action plan endorsed by the Children's Safeguarding Board of which then I accepted and endorsed further the action that had been taken with the additional resources that had been put in place.

I then did not receive another report about CSE until I left office in May 2010, so I had four reports and I acted entirely appropriately on each of those reports. I subsequently attended the Local Children's Safeguarding Board, which as you know is independently chaired, and I attended that around September of 2009. At that meeting, there was a report presented to the Local Children's Safeguarding Board. I was only there in an observer capacity, but at that meeting it was shared with the meeting that Rotherham had been very proactive and ahead of the game in relation to dealing with CSE. One of the directors attending that meeting said, "Yes, and this information or good practice should be shared with the rest of the country". There was no indication to me throughout that period of office that there was a significant problem with CSE.

Q503 Chair: Well, we do not accept that, obviously. You must have been the only one in Rotherham not knowing about it.

Shaun Wright: Well, that is the facts, Chairman.

Q504 Chair: Even Joyce Thacker, who this Committee does not have much confidence in based on her evidence, even she said that you had these reports and you were well aware of it.

Shaun Wright: Chairman, I have just outlined the reports that I received.

Chair: Sorry, can I just finish, Mr Wright?

Shaun Wright: Indeed.

Q505 Chair: In your letter to the chief constable, it is not one of your priorities, despite having resigned in 2010 to take your share of the responsibility in 2010, as you told Sky TV. Despite all that, it was not one of your priorities; you did mention it in your letter that it was not a priority. So we do not accept what you have said to us because you are the only one saying that you knew very little about what was going on. We do not accept this evidence. It is not based on any of the other evidence. You have no corroborative evidence from anyone else in respect of this matter.

Can I just ask, finally, do you feel you are protected in remaining in your post by the fact that, in effect, nobody can remove you? The legislation does not give Parliament or the crime panel or anyone else the prospect of removing you as the Police and Crime Commissioner. In fact, it is a defect in the legislation that no Police and Crime Commissioner, once elected, can be removed. Do you know if there is any way that you can be removed from your office?

Shaun Wright: Chairman, it has no bearing whatsoever on the decision that I have taken to remain in office.

Q506 Chair: No, I am asking you a question. You are a Police and Crime Commissioner. When you get a new job, you must know who can get rid of you. That is what people normally do. We know that every five years the electorate can get rid of us, and you can be got rid of at an election, but in between your election as a Police and Crime Commissioner and today and, indeed, to the end of your term, even if the crime panel on Thursday says they have no confidence in you, even though Sheffield Council has called for your removal, even though I understand Doncaster Council has asked for a copy of that resolution so it can call for your removal, even though the Prime Minister can call for your removal and the leader of your party, you cannot be removed under the legislation.

Shaun Wright: My understanding, Chairman, is that the same rules apply to MPs as apply to Police and Crime Commissioners.

Q507 Chair: So you cannot be removed?

Shaun Wright: I think you can be removed if you break the law, yes.

Q508 Chair: Yes. You do not feel you have done that?

Shaun Wright: No.

Q509 Mr Winnick: When you were elected as Police and Crime Commissioner, you did so as the Labour candidate. Do you accept, Mr Wright, that the reason you got elected was simply because you were the Labour candidate, not because of any individual merits? That applies to Members of Parliament and not simply to your own candidature at the time. Do you accept that?

Shaun Wright: Mr Winnick, that is entirely acceptable.

Q510 Mr Winnick: You were elected because you were the Labour candidate?

Shaun Wright: I think what all politicians recognise is that if you are a member of a political party, then, of course, it carries weight with the electorate and you get votes accordingly, yes.

Q511 Chair: Sorry, excuse me, Mr Winnick. Mr Winnick was saying were you elected as the Labour candidate; presumably a yes?

Shaun Wright: Of course.

Q512 Mr Winnick: Yes. That was not in doubt, but what I wanted to confirm was that you received your votes because you were not Mr Wright as such; you were the Labour Party candidate?

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Q513 Mr Winnick: Now that the Labour Party has withdrawn its support, a party that you have belonged to for many years—20 years did I hear?—do you have no concern that when that party has joined others in saying that you should resign your position for all the reasons you are aware of, that has no effect on you whatsoever?

Shaun Wright: The values that I stand for, the principles that I apply to my role and the priorities that I set in my manifesto, which were aligned with the Labour Party, have not changed at all.

Q514 Mr Winnick: The Chair has referred to a number of organisations, local authorities and the rest that have called for your resignation, and obviously you were perfectly aware of this before today's hearing. Mr Wright, could you let us know which organisations have urged you to stay in your position as Police and Crime Commissioner?

Shaun Wright: Yes. I have had lots of individual letters and texts of support from a range of individuals, but I have not asked their permission to share that with you today.

Q515 Mr Winnick: I see. Let us get this clear. You mentioned individuals, but no organisation, local authorities or whatever have said, "Mr Wright, you must stay in your position", am I right?

Shaun Wright: No, that is not correct, no.

Mr Winnick: Correct or not?

Shaun Wright: No, it is not correct.

Q516 Mr Winnick: Which organisations have urged you to stay?

Shaun Wright: Well, as I said, I—

Mr Winnick: You mentioned individuals.

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Mr Winnick: Let us be quite clear about what we are talking about. We will come to individuals in a moment, Mr Wright.

Shaun Wright: Sure, yes.

Mr Winnick: But organisations?

Shaun Wright: I assume that the individuals that are attached to those—

Q517 Mr Winnick: No, Mr Wright, you are on oath. You must try to answer questions. It is simple. The questions I have put to you so far are hardly complex. They are simple questions. We will come to individuals in a moment because I will be interested in that aspect. Organisations, local authorities or whatever, have any such organisations urged you to stay?

Shaun Wright: If I can answer the question, please, Mr Winnick, lots of individuals that are associated with different organisations have given me their support. Whether that represents their organisations is a matter for them.

Q518 Mr Winnick: Well, I must take that as a no as far as organisations. Now, individuals, you have said that you have received support from individuals who have written to you, presumably?

Shaun Wright: Some have, yes, and some have called, yes.

Q519 Mr Winnick: Could you give us any account of the numbers? Were there hundreds of emails and letters coming to you saying, “Mr Wright, under all circumstances you must not give in to pressure, you must stay in your position”? Is that accurate?

Shaun Wright: I have had in excess of 100 messages of support.

Q520 Mr Winnick: From individuals?

Shaun Wright: From many councillors, MPs and other individuals, yes.

Q521 Mr Winnick: I see. We will reflect on that. It is reported in the press today, Mr Wright, that eight years ago you met with victims of child abuse, though you had told us in your previous written evidence that you had not done so. Do you recollect any meetings with victims of child abuse?

Shaun Wright: I think as I said previously, Mr Winnick, I have met many victims with a different range of vulnerabilities who have been victimised in one way or another. What I was alluding to in that previous written submission was that as an elected councillor it would have been entirely inappropriate for me to ask to meet young victims of child sexual exploitation and ask them to explain to me or give me the details of the circumstances where they found themselves being a victim. I have never done that and neither would I deem it appropriate. But yes, I have met victims of child sexual exploitation but predominantly once they have become adults and wanted to offer that information up to me.

Q522 Mr Winnick: You were the lead member, of course, for Children’s Services between 2005 and 2010, yes?

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Q523 Mr Winnick: When did you first become aware of the amount of child abuse and exploitation that was occurring in Rotherham?

Shaun Wright: Sure. I think, like everyone else, I have been aware of CSE or child abuse in a sexual form for many years. I cannot honestly say I was aware of the scale or the industrial scale that has been identified by Professor Jay until I read the Professor Jay report. I have never been aware of that industrial scale of CSE in Rotherham either during

my term of office, 2005 to 2010, or indeed post that period, though I do recognise, certainly since 2012 with various publicity around the country and, indeed, in Rotherham, and then, of course, Operation Yewtree, that this has been incredibly prevalent, much more prevalent than I think I or the public were aware of.

Of course, on the back of that, that is why a lot more action is now being taken because it has been evidenced quite clearly in a range of different ways, not least the Deputy Children's Commissioner that gave evidence to yourselves a couple of years ago. On the back of that report, much more action has now been taken both by Rotherham local authority and, indeed, South Yorkshire Police. That is why I made it a priority when I took office as Police and Crime Commissioner.

Q524 Mr Winnick: When we read the independent report in the inquiry, which has been quoted on a number of occasions obviously today, when we know what was happening in Rotherham, the exploitation, the grooming, rape, other criminal offences of the most serious nature, you were the lead member in the years mentioned by me, those five years. Do you accept any responsibility?

Shaun Wright: I recall three particular—

Q525 Mr Winnick: I should say—let me finish my sentence—do you accept any responsibility that hardly any action was taken at all?

Shaun Wright: I have always accepted responsibility for any role that I have taken. In this instance, what Professor Jay clearly identifies is systemic failure across a range of different organisations and I was part of that arrangement at the time. I take responsibility for that and it is a huge regret and I have apologised to the victims. Of course, an apology to the victims is nowhere near enough. The first apology should come from the offender, from the perpetrator who committed these offences. That is the first apology, but the best apology that anyone in my position can do or can give to the victims is to do our utmost to make sure that they receive the support that they need to recover and also that we put in place proper measures to prevent it from happening to other people. Whenever I speak to victims of crime, they accept after a period of time that the best thing that they can do—and a lot of victims actually turn to this, as we know—is endeavour to make sure that it is prevented from happening to anyone else.

Q526 Mr Winnick: Mr Wright, since Rotherham has become notorious, unfortunately, as a result of the horrors that have now been fully revealed, bearing in mind the very important position that you held on the local authority and now Police and Crime Commissioner, don't you at least reflect that it would be in the public interest—in confidence, in Rotherham alone—that you should resign your position? Wouldn't that be the most honourable position that you could take, instead of clinging on against almost unanimous opposition in Rotherham, I would imagine, no less but in the country as a whole? Isn't that a way in which you could honourably serve the people of Rotherham, if only for the last time in a public position, simply by resigning?

Shaun Wright: Mr Winnick, I have done nothing but reflect on my position and I am determined that the best that I can do by victims—past, present and potential future

victims—is to stay in my role and see through the work that I have set in train since I came into office as Police and Crime Commissioner.

Q527 Chair: That is even though many of the councils who deal with you will not deal with you in the future, like Sheffield and other councils. They have made it very clear that they would have no confidence in you, they won't deal with you. How can you do your job when so many of the major organisations that you need to deal with just will not deal with you, when the Home Secretary will not deal with you? How on earth can you carry on with your job?

Shaun Wright: Chairman, if you are seriously suggesting that people will ignore this problem on the back of what their personal views are—

Chair: No, you, Mr Wright, not the problem.

Shaun Wright: No, no, Chairman—

Q528 Chair: I don't think there is any indication that anyone does not have a grip of the problem. The issue is not the problem, Mr Wright, and you are not the owner of this problem and, therefore, the saviour of these young girls. You are one of those who stood by, it seems. I am saying that all these people are saying they will not deal with you, they want you to go, they have no confidence in you. How can you do your job effectively in those circumstances?

Shaun Wright: Local authorities and other statutory agencies, including myself as a Police and Crime Commissioner, have statutory responsibilities to serve the public and that would not prevent the local authorities, any other organisation or, indeed, myself from pursuing what needs to be pursued in terms of dealing with an effective service for the people of South Yorkshire.

Chair: Presumably they can carry on and do the work without you.

Q529 Michael Ellis: Mr Wright, you have said that it is a source of deep regret for you that you knew nothing about this until the media raised it. You said that, didn't you? That was untrue, wasn't it?

Shaun Wright: I've never said that.

Q530 Michael Ellis: You have suggested that it was a deep regret to you that until the media reported it you didn't know anything about it. But, as has already been alluded to, an abused girl told Andrew Norfolk of *The Times* that she sat in a room with you—when you were the Labour Cabinet Minister with responsibility for child protection at Rotherham—at the offices of Risky Business, an outreach group for children, and gave you a detailed graphic account in either 2005 or 2006 of abuse that she had suffered. Do you actually now recall that meeting because I understand it was a harrowing graphic account? Do you recall that meeting taking place?

Shaun Wright: No, I do not recall that meeting taking place.

Michael Ellis: You don't recall that meeting taking place.

Shaun Wright: No.

Q531 Michael Ellis: Mr Winnick asked you about your Labour Party standing. How were you selected as the Police and Crime Commissioner in 2012 after you had resigned in 2010 from your position at the borough, due to the child abuse scandal? Why is it that you were selected to stand in the Labour interest at that time?

Shaun Wright: Just to address the last point first, I didn't resign in 2010 because of any child abuse scandal. I resigned in 2010 because of a poor Ofsted report that had got nothing to do with CSE. I then, subsequently, served on the Police Authority for two years and then submitted my application to the Labour Party, along with many other individuals of the Labour Party, and went through a rigorous selection process, which resulted in me receiving the majority of ballots.

Q532 Michael Ellis: I see. Isn't there an organisation of Police and Crime Commissioners called the APCC, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners?

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Michael Ellis: You are part of that, are you not?

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Q533 Michael Ellis: Did you have an office of responsibility within that organisation area of interest?

Shaun Wright: Indeed, yes.

Michael Ellis: What was it?

Shaun Wright: I sit on a number of committees representing the APCC. One is the Home Office Taskforce on Sexual Violence to Children and Vulnerable Adults. Another is the HMIC Performance Management group and the other one is the National Police Air Service.

Q534 Michael Ellis: Despite your resignation from your Cabinet position at Rotherham in 2010, you are selected to stand in 2012 as the Police and Crime Commissioner and then while Police and Crime Commissioner you are selected to have responsibility for child violence and exploitation among the PCCs, is that right? Are you still holding that position now?

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Q535 Michael Ellis: Isn't that an outrage, Mr Wright? Isn't it a disgrace that you are currently responsible, among all the Police and Crime Commissioners, for the sort of area that we are examining now in this Committee, child abuse and exploitation that took place on a horrific scale in the Rotherham area?

Shaun Wright: Chairman, any working group requires people with some knowledge and experience of the area that is in hand.

Q536 Michael Ellis: Yes, and you have some knowledge and experience on the matter, you are remembering that much, Mr Wright. How did you get selected for that position? Did you put yourself up for it? Did someone select you for it? How did you get yourself into that position?

Shaun Wright: I put my name forward.

Michael Ellis: You put your name forward and was it supported by anyone?

Shaun Wright: I can only assume that it was endorsed by the APCC.

Michael Ellis: There are 40-odd Police and Crime Commissioners. If somebody is interested in road traffic or if somebody is interested in anti-terrorism matters they might put their name forward for those areas. You put your name forward for the child abuse and exploitation area.

Shaun Wright: Yes, there's two representatives, there's myself from South Yorkshire and there's the Commissioner for Humberside.

Q537 Michael Ellis: Did your party have any interest in that because I understand that there is one Conservative and one Labour for most of these areas?

Shaun Wright: That is right.

Q538 Michael Ellis: Did your party have a concern in your selection in that area?

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Q539 Michael Ellis: They supported you for that. When did you go on to that position?

Shaun Wright: That was around this time last year.

Q540 Michael Ellis: Has the Labour Party instructed you to resign from that position, as you have been removed as holding the Labour whip, I understand? But as you hold the position with responsibility for child exploitation among the Police and Crime Commissioners, thanks to Labour support, do you not think you ought to resign from that as well?

Shaun Wright: Chairman, I am there to represent the people of South Yorkshire, as well as the APCC and I have been supported to sit in a range of committees like every other Police and Crime Commissioner. I uphold that responsibility and I attend those meetings and I endeavour to impart any information that I can to—

Q541 Michael Ellis: What exactly would it take for you to resign, Mr Wright? Don't answer that question. Can I just ask one other brief thing, Mr Vaz, please? I think you mentioned that MPs or an MP had contacted you offering support, is that right?

Shaun Wright: Several, yes.

Michael Ellis: Who?

Shaun Wright: I won't share that information, that is private.

Chair: Mr Wright, just to remind you that you are on oath.

Shaun Wright: Sure.

Chair: The powers of this Committee include calling for papers and information that witnesses may believe is private if we believe that we have been misled, so we can also call for information regarding people's text messages.

Shaun Wright: Yes, yes.

Chair: You have said that a number of these people have texted you to tell you of their support, so we have the power to ask for those records to come before the Committee, just so that you know before you get any further into this.

Q542 Nicola Blackwood: Mr Wright, I would just like to clarify a point that you made to the Chairman regarding your resignation in 2010. In your resignation statement you said, "I reiterate my apology to them and I take full responsibility for my part in the collective failures which took place at Rotherham Council during the time I was in office and, indeed, to that end I resigned in 2010."

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Nicola Blackwood: Given the fact that this was regarding the Rotherham report I think that everybody understood that to mean you were talking about the failures regarding child sexual exploitation. Are you now saying that that is not why you resigned and it was in fact due to the poor Ofsted report?

Shaun Wright: Indeed, I have always maintained that position, yes.

Nicola Blackwood: In fact you have never taken any responsibility or been held to account for failures regarding child sexual exploitation.

Shaun Wright: As I indicated, Ms Blackwood, in 2010 I still was not aware of the scale of abuse that had been taking place.

Q543 Nicola Blackwood: Okay, in that case, can we just go back a little bit? You claim not to remember your meeting with the victim who has come forward and says she gave you a graphic account of her abuse in the offices of Risky Business, as early as 2006. Do you also claim not to have seen any of the reports of 2006 written by Dr Heal, which found that there was an established child sexual exploitation scheme involving systematic physical and sexual abuse, trafficking of young women to other towns, intimidation, physical beatings, rape,

which was being considered by multiagency staff as very severe and their situation is very serious. The staff, who I presume, at that point were working for you?

Shaun Wright: I do not recall seeing any of those reports. In fact I was not even aware of those reports until the Jay Report came out.

Q544 Nicola Blackwood: Right. At that point, were you on the Police Authority as well?

Shaun Wright: I joined the Police Authority in June 2010.

Nicola Blackwood: 2010, okay. The first you heard of this or you claim that you understood this was 2007 when Joyce Thacker says that she—and this is confirmed by evidence that we heard in private from Jayne Senior, who was head of Risky Business at the time—prepared a report on Risky Business, which was a funding report that was specifically for you and, apparently, that report included 100 cases.

Shaun Wright: The first report I received was 30 June 2007 and that report—

Q545 Nicola Blackwood: Yes. How can you claim that in 2010, when you resigned, you were not aware of the scale of child sexual exploitation if you received a report in 2007?

Shaun Wright: I received a report in 2007. I do not recall it indicating the scale of child sexual exploitation at that time.

Nicola Blackwood: So, 100 cases is not a big number?

Shaun Wright: What I did with the report was I endorsed the actions that were being recommended by the officers and that's very clear. I also referred it to the Children's Scrutiny Committee—

Nicola Blackwood: Any of the actions that you took—

Shaun Wright: I also asked for a seminar to be held for all members in 2007.

Q546 Nicola Blackwood: A seminar was a good response to child sexual exploitation?

Shaun Wright: No, I endorsed the professional judgment of the officers that wrote the report that outlined a number of recommendations which I endorsed.

Q547 Nicola Blackwood: But the evidence that we heard in private was that for 15 years professionals who were working on the front line, including Jayne Senior who was the head of Risky Business, including Dr Heal who was writing her reports for the police and for your members of staff, and including the Home Office researcher who felt like her life was under threat from police who intimidated her because they didn't like what she was finding and reporting, were giving the information to your members of staff and this was passed to you in a report in 2007. Some of it was acted on in an actual operation between 2008 and 2010, Operation Central, which led to convictions. Did this not raise any red flags with you?

Shaun Wright: Of course. Can I answer two points there, please?

Nicola Blackwood: Yes.

Shaun Wright: The first is when I was interviewed by Professor Jay she said in a quote and I wrote this down, “I have seen—

Nicola Blackwood: I don’t think it is helpful if you selectively quote the good bits from Professor Jay’s report.

Shaun Wright: I am not.

Nicola Blackwood: I am just asking you a question about what happened at the time with—

Shaun Wright: I am trying to answer that. I am trying to answer that, Ms Blackwood.

Nicola Blackwood: Okay, but I would rather that you just said in your own words, rather than quoting from the report.

Shaun Wright: I want to say it in my own words but it is very succinct and it said, “I have seen every report that was ever brought to you. I have read every minutes of every meeting that ever took place here.”

Nicola Blackwood: You have. Right, carry on.

Shaun Wright: “I’ve looked at the state of the nation reports that you requested when you took office in 2005 and I was staggered at how little information was provided to you.” Now—

Q548 Nicola Blackwood: Yes, but you are claiming that you had the 2007 report—

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Nicola Blackwood: You had the 2008 to 2010 information that came out with Operation Central. In my constituency we had a case called Operation Bullfinch, which you may be aware of and I attended court, I heard the evidence and that made me talk to my Chief Constable, go and meet the social workers, meet the victims and find out exactly what was going on in my constituency. I didn’t wait for a report to be presented to me. I knew what was going on because I went and found out. I find it extraordinary that you had a report prepared for you by the professionals who have told us that they knew everything that was going and no one was listening, that you had an operation that went to criminal convictions and you still claim that you resigned for another reason.

Shaun Wright: Indeed, the Operation Central commenced in 2008, it wasn’t brought to court until around October 2010 after I had left office.

Q549 Nicola Blackwood: Mr Wright, there is no one who is watching this who will understand how you can possibly answer with the answers that you are giving. Do you not

believe that there is anybody else who can do your job better than you were doing it and that it would give victims and parents more confidence in the system in South Yorkshire Police?

Shaun Wright: I think I am doing a very good job and I am able to evidence what has been put in place since I took up office.

Q550 Ian Austin: You can't, on the one hand, say, "I didn't know anything about the scale of the problem" and then, on the other, say, "I doubled the amount of money that went to Risky Business". Those two things—

Shaun Wright: Entirely compatible.

Ian Austin: They are not, they are contradictory.

Shaun Wright: I don't see that.

Ian Austin: If you did not know about the scale of the problem, why did you double the money?

Shaun Wright: Because a report came to me in 2008 with a set of officer recommendations. I wasn't satisfied that enough consideration had been given to the additional demand. I asked for further analysis and for a report to be brought back. That analysis took place and the report was brought back in November 2008 and at that stage then, based on that analysis, I endorsed the officer recommendations and increased the budget to £110,000.

Q551 Ian Austin: If you were taking it so seriously, why did you say to Andrew Norfolk, the reporter who has done more than anybody else in the media to expose all of this, when he asked you about this in 2012, "Why are you picking on Rotherham?"

Shaun Wright: I didn't use those words. What I said was, "This is a very broad problem for the whole country and I hope that your piece will show some balance."

Ian Austin: He has attributed direct quotes from you, "Why are you picking on Rotherham?" Are you saying that is not true, you did not say that?

Shaun Wright: When I read the article I was quite cross with being misquoted.

Q552 Ian Austin: Okay. I want to go back to this event at Risky Business because that girl says that she—you claimed last year that you didn't meet any sex-grooming victims to learn of their experiences during this whole period, that is what you told the Committee last year. But this woman says that she met you at the event at Risky Business and she says, "I am taking it personally. I made him a mug of tea that day. We were telling him how it became normal for us, that we complained and nobody had done anything, that in the end we accepted it because it became a way of life." These are her words. She says—this is a quote from her—"I told Shaun Wright what I had to do to three Pakistani men in the back of the car. Names were named. He acted shocked but we never saw him again." Are you really denying that level of detail, that that happened?

Shaun Wright: I am quite surprised, Mr Austin. If I had had that conversation, I am pretty sure I would have remembered.

Ian Austin: Okay. I have spoken to people who tell me that in addition to that girl that at least one person who was present at that barbeque who is prepared to swear that you were there.

Shaun Wright: I never denied that I didn't visit the International Centre. I don't recall when I did. I do recall that I visited the International Centre on at least one occasion and I don't recall—

Q553 Ian Austin: Did you go to the barbeque, do you remember that?

Shaun Wright: I don't recall the barbeque, no.

Q554 Ian Austin: What event was it then?

Shaun Wright: Pardon?

Ian Austin: What event was it when you went to Risky Business?

Shaun Wright: I think there was a report about the future of the International Centre and the sustainability of it. It is a very large council building and the council were looking for some savings—

Q555 Ian Austin: The people connected with Risky Business told me they had a series of events and they invited people like you, council officials, people involved in this issue in Rotherham, they said there were a whole series of events to which people in those positions were invited and at which they met girls with whom they were working. If you are saying that you did not go to that you must be one of the—to be honest, I can't believe it. If all these other people went to a series of events like that, why wouldn't you have gone during the whole period that you were in charge of Children's Services?

Shaun Wright: I said I don't recall going along to that event.

Ian Austin: No, come on—

Shaun Wright: Excuse me, I said I don't recall going along to the event and I don't recall that conversation taking place.

Ian Austin: I am sorry, but the minute someone says, "I don't recall" nobody believes them, I am afraid because it is a way of not answering the question.

Shaun Wright: It is the honest answer.

Q556 Mark Reckless: Mr Wright, have you taken legal advice prior to your frequent employment of the phrase, "I do not recall"?

Shaun Wright: No.

Q557 Mark Reckless: Are you familiar with Lewis Hymanson Small, the firm?

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Mark Reckless: Can you tell me about them?

Shaun Wright: Lewis Hymanson Small are dealing with some legal aspects of the Hillsborough inquiry.

Q558 Mark Reckless: Okay, and Burton Copeland?

Shaun Wright: Yes, I think they are involved with it too.

Q559 Mark Reckless: Okay. How much would their involvement be in terms of financial cost?

Shaun Wright: At the moment the bill for the Hillsborough inquiries, from a South Yorkshire Police budget perspective, is around about £7 million.

Q560 Mark Reckless: Okay, because on the cost centre for the Police and Crime Commissioner for July there are amounts adding up to £872,097 being paid to Burton Copeland and a sum of £1,200,323 to Lewis Hymanson Small Solicitors.

Shaun Wright: Yes.

Mark Reckless: Can you give us your assurance that all those sums are to do with Hillsborough and none of them are to do with your present predicament?

Shaun Wright: Correct.

Q561 Mark Reckless: Do you feel you are being scapegoated by the Labour Party?

Shaun Wright: It has been very painful having to resign from the Labour Party after so many years of service to them. In the end, people take different positions for different reasons and I have taken my position. I feel a duty to serve out my term of office and the Labour Party have taken their position for their reasons and it is for them to answer why.

Q562 Mark Reckless: Why are other past and present Labour councillors in Rotherham not resigning either from the Labour Party or from Rotherham Council? Should they not take their share of responsibility too?

Shaun Wright: Mr Reckless, I am not here to account for other people's decision making. I am here to account for mine and everyone needs to search their own conscience as to their part, their role, what they knew and what they did in terms of tackling this issue. I have made my position very, very clear about what I knew and what I did on the back of that knowledge, and I have taken my share of responsibility for all that.

Q563 Mark Reckless: Do you not find it surprising that, given what was known over previous years, your resignation from your position in charge of Children's Services is from the political side and your being found a position on the Police Authority by the Labour Party pretty immediately after your resignation and then winning with over 50% of the vote the Labour Party selection for the PCC? Isn't there some inconsistency, if not hypocrisy, in the position the Labour Party now take towards you?

Shaun Wright: As I said, Chairman, departing from my membership of the Labour Party has been one of the most painful things I have ever had to do.

Q564 Mark Reckless: Can you answer my question, please? Is there not a degree of inconsistency, if not hypocrisy, in the position of your former party?

Shaun Wright: It is for the Labour Party to explain what their position is and why they took it.

Mark Reckless: But from your perspective—

Shaun Wright: From my perspective I found it very painful.

Mark Reckless: You don't deny the words.

Shaun Wright: From my position I found it very painful to be put in a position to have to leave the Labour Party.

Q565 Mark Reckless: But would you consider that to be either inconsistent or hypocritical? You can surely answer in terms of your perception of that.

Shaun Wright: I am not going to criticise the Labour Party on this matter.

Q566 Mark Reckless: One final question, could you describe your working relationship with Joyce Thacker?

Shaun Wright: Very, very good. Very, very good.

Mark Reckless: No complaints about her.

Shaun Wright: Joyce Thacker has worked with children and young people for her entire career and I first got to know Joyce in 2005. At that time she was the chief executive of South Yorkshire Connexions Service. When she applied to be the Deputy of Children and Young People's Director I sat on the interview panel and—

Mark Reckless: You were responsible for her appointment.

Shaun Wright: I sat on the interview panel with another four councillors and made the appointments.

Mark Reckless: Did you then prevent her dealing directly with the leader of the council? She said—

Shaun Wright: Absolutely not. Absolutely not, no.

Q567 Lorraine Fullbrook: Mr Wright, you say that one of the most painful things you have had to deal with is your departure from the Labour Party. I suggest that it is a minimum of 1,400 children who are victims of this, of which you are culpable. Mr Winnick asked how many organisations and individuals had given you messages of support and you said around 100. How many emails, letters, texts, phone calls have you had asking for your resignation and for you to go?

Shaun Wright: I don't know but it probably would be a similar number.

Lorraine Fullbrook: Around 100.

Shaun Wright: I really don't know.

Lorraine Fullbrook: A similar number, you said a similar number.

Shaun Wright: There has been a range of views expressed in different ways, so there's been petitions for and against, there's been emails, there's been letters, there's been texts, there's been phone calls, people—

Q568 Lorraine Fullbrook: Are you saying there is more asking for you to go than to stay?

Shaun Wright: It is difficult to determine. There has been local polls and national polls and the ones that I take most seriously are the ones that are held in South Yorkshire. Those are the people that I represent.

Lorraine Fullbrook: I suggest, as an elected representative, you should take them all seriously.

Shaun Wright: As you know, as a politician, you don't always take all the polls to heart when they are presented, do you?

Lorraine Fullbrook: Er, yes.

Shaun Wright: Okay.

Q569 Lorraine Fullbrook: Can I ask, you say that your position carries statutory duties, your position as Police and Crime Commissioner in South Yorkshire carries statutory duties, I suggest that you are not fit to carry out those statutory duties and, therefore, not fit to hold your office?

Shaun Wright: I couldn't disagree more.

Lorraine Fullbrook: You do not disagree with me.

Shaun Wright: Of course I disagree with that proposition, yes.

Q570 Paul Flynn: Isn't the reason that you are not resigning is not because of your love of duty but your love of the salary?

Shaun Wright: Absolute nonsense—

Q571 Paul Flynn: Wouldn't you agree that you are a busted flush, you are a dead PCC walking? No one will take you seriously in future. You will have no influence. What is the point of continuing?

Shaun Wright: I have already outlined the reason for that, Mr Flynn. It is because I have set in train what I stood for election to do and I am going to see that through.

Q572 Paul Flynn: Can I tell you that having been here 26 years, having served on thousands of meetings of Select Committee, you are the least credible witness I have ever come across? I don't believe what you are saying. If you would like to give some indication when you talked about the MP supporting you, I would love to see some evidence of that. I do not mean MPs just writing in and sending a friendly message but MPs, you are telling us, have asked you to continue in office, is that true?

Shaun Wright: I have received messages of support from MPs, yes.

Q573 Paul Flynn: No, that is not what my question is. How many MPs have asked you to continue in office?

Shaun Wright: I have not had any MPs ask me to continue in office but I have messages of support from MPs.

Q574 Paul Flynn: You will get friendly messages, you have been around for a long time and I am sure your pals will send you a friendly message saying, "There, there, don't take it to heart". But there is no support for you, except your own love of your salary, isn't that true? It is the only reason you are carrying on.

Shaun Wright: That is absolutely not the case, Mr Flynn.

Paul Flynn: I listened to you fairly and it is all—

Shaun Wright: Mr Flynn, I spent 25 years in a range of voluntary roles, as the school governor, as a magistrate, a variety of unpaid roles.

Paul Flynn: I blush at my own party. I have been a member of this party for three times as long as you and I am rather ashamed of the fact that I have shared a party with you. What you have revealed yourself to be here today is a charlatan who is in love with office, in love with a salary and you are a disgrace. You might well bring down the office that you hold because there is no way of getting rid of Police and Crime Commissioners and you will be quoted as an example of why the whole process of appointing Police and Crime Commissioners is a terrible mistake, wouldn't you agree with that?

Shaun Wright: Not at all, no.

Q575 Paul Flynn: How many people voted for you? What was the percentage who voted for you?

Shaun Wright: 51%.

Paul Flynn: No, no, but what was the percentage of the electorate who voted for you?

Shaun Wright: There was a 15% turn out.

Paul Flynn: Exactly, and what percentage of those did you get?

Shaun Wright: 51%.

Paul Flynn: No, no, all right.

Shaun Wright: I got 51% of the votes cast.

Paul Flynn: I know but what did the other candidates get? There was 15% of the total, so what was the percentage of the electorate that you had? I would say it was 8%, 9%, something—

Shaun Wright: Yes, it would be in that region.

Paul Flynn: There was at least 90% who didn't vote for you and you can't claim any electoral mandate from them. I think on the grounds of hanging on to what little shreds of dignity that you have you should resign.

Chair: Mr Wright, thank you for coming to give evidence today. It is the unanimous view of this Committee that you should resign immediately. We believe that public confidence in the role of the PCC is of critical importance and we do not believe that you command the confidence of the public, bearing in mind those organisations who work with you who have said that you should resign. You have mentioned your family and how tough it has been for them in the last two weeks. For your own sense of honour, if you believe that that exists, then you should resign immediately.

I will be writing to the Home Secretary to ask her to look at the legislation on PCCs because there isn't any at the moment, to see if there can be a possibility of emergency legislation or an amendment to deal with a situation such as yours because it is unsatisfactory, in our view, that someone should be able to say to the public who elected them, "I am just carrying on" no matter the stacks of evidence that we have heard that calls into question your evidence to us today, which we find entirely unconvincing. That is why—and I can't remember this ever happening before from a Select Committee in terms of a public official who has been elected—that we call for your immediate resignation.