



Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Gangs and youth crime](#), HC 199

Tuesday 20 January 2015

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Written evidence from witnesses:

[Home Office](#)

Members present: Keith Vaz (Chair), Michael Ellis, Paul Flynn, Dr Julian Huppert, Tim Loughton, Mr David Winnick.

Questions 183 – 237

Witness: **Rt Hon Lynne Featherstone MP**, Minister of State for Crime Prevention, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Minister, welcome back to the Home Affairs Select Committee. My apologies for keeping you waiting. As part of our inquiry into gangs and crime, we were hearing from members, former members and those with an interest in helping us to deal with this problem. Some of the same questions we will put to you. I am very grateful to you for being here today. You have a huge list of responsibilities, such that I don't know how you sleep at night, on everything from drugs to retail crime to public health, alcohol, sexual violence, animals in science regulation, British Transport Police reform, and firearms. I counted 25 different areas of responsibility. One of the areas that I want to start with is FGM, not just because you have responsibility for this but because of the great campaigning work that you did before you became a Minister over a number of years, both in your previous portfolio and in your previous time at the Home Office. It must be a source of pride to you, or delight, that someone is at last being prosecuted. We cannot, of course, talk about the individual circumstances, we all know that, but someone at last is being prosecuted. You must be pleased about that, but also embarrassed that after 30 years of successive Governments, not just this one but the one before, nobody prior to the recent prosecution was prosecuted.

Lynne Featherstone: Indeed. I am very proud of the FGM campaign because there are a number of survivors who worked for years to get the attention of Government. Although bits and pieces were done, as you rightly say it did not become mainstream. Fortunately, with a bit of planning, it did become mainstream.

Q2 Chair: What was the tipping point, do you think? You said, "With a bit of planning".

Lynne Featherstone: The tipping point was I was at the Home Office and Daughters of Eve came to see me. They took me by the collar and shook me and said did I realise this was child abuse

and violence against women and would I please do something about it. At that point, I left to go to DfID and I walked into DfID and said, "This is going to be a mission and we are going to do this". Timing is everything as well because there was an African-led movement. The UN banned it worldwide. There was the opportunity to support an African movement and then bring it back to the diaspora here.

Q3 Chair: Ministers were not doing the prosecuting. Your predecessors, going back 30 years, Labour Ministers, Conservative Ministers and yourself, none of them managed to do what happened the last time we had the DPP. Basically, two prosecutions in 30 years, and if you compare it to France, in France you have had quite a series of prosecutions, haven't you?

Lynne Featherstone: To be honest, Chair, I am not a great fan of the French methods. I know they have had prosecutions but they have not really eradicated FGM. We need prosecutions, there is no doubt about that, and I have no idea why none happened in the past. I think there was a lot of—

Chair: You only have two now; let's not jump about too much.

Lynne Featherstone: Well, indeed, but so it begins and, of course, you know we have done a consultation, which has just finished, on mandatory reporting because we need more referrals.

Q4 Chair: I will come on to that in a minute, but do you think two prosecutions in 30 years is enough?

Lynne Featherstone: Well, I think two prosecutions—

Chair: Sorry, can I just finish? When we went to France and when we heard evidence from France, they were doing better than we were as far as prosecutions were concerned. Secondly, we were not impressed, as you saw in our report, by the lead from ACPO and what they were proposing to do. We just felt that the prosecuting authorities were not prosecuting those responsible. Are we putting our hook on these two prosecutions and just saying there is nothing else to be done?

Lynne Featherstone: No, I think we are doing the very opposite of that, but we have been looking at how we can increase prosecutions. When the consultation is considered, there are a number of issues that we have to look at with regard to the consultation responses, whether that relates to the type of sanctions or the number of people who are worried about it. Nevertheless, my view is this is absolutely necessary. It will clarify for front-line professionals what they have to do. They will no longer have to wonder what they have to do, and consider should they or should they not. We will get referrals to the police.

Q5 Chair: Of course, we will get referrals to the police. As you know, we produced a number of recommendations. Of the recommendations that we made following our report, how many have you accepted?

Lynne Featherstone: Almost all of them, I think. I do not have the responses here, but my understanding is it was most of the report.

Q6 Chair: On your view on mandatory reporting, we know you have a consultation going. The Committee was very clear that professionals, doctors who saw FGM, had a duty to report because we felt that the Royal Colleges were a bit flaky on this. They tended to rely on confidentiality. Your view is that they should report and if they do not report they should be prosecuted, is that right?

Lynne Featherstone: Well, we have to consider what the appropriate sanction should be because—

Chair: No, but is that your view?

Lynne Featherstone: Yes, I absolutely think they have to report and I do not know how—

Chair: If they do not report, they should be prosecuted?

Lynne Featherstone: There should be a sanction against them. Whether that is actual prosecution, we need to look at the—

Q7 Chair: As you say, you have been campaigning for many years. What sanction do you think is appropriate?

Lynne Featherstone: It would depend on what stage and what. If they have committed it, there is no question about prosecution.

Q8 Chair: You are talking about the professionals here?

Lynne Featherstone: Yes, I am talking about the professionals.

Q9 Chair: Yes, but I am talking about a professional not performing FGM, which is clearly a criminal offence now—

Lynne Featherstone: But now not—

Chair: Mandatory reporting is if you see a young girl or a woman and she has FGM and you fail to report it.

Lynne Featherstone: At this point, I would like to look at the responses to the consultation.

Q10 Chair: Do you not have a view?

Lynne Featherstone: Yes, I have a view that in the end, if a consultant or a professional does not report, I think there may be a range of sanctions. It could be anything—

Q11 Chair: What is the worst and what is the least?

Lynne Featherstone: The worst sanction is prosecution. I do not know because I have not been advised on the parameters.

Q12 Chair: Why would you need advice on this? If you have been campaigning on this for all your life, as you have just said, if you have two departmental responsibilities—

Lynne Featherstone: Because I think that putting—

Chair: Sorry, can I finish? Ministers are always making great speeches about this. The police are saying they are prosecuting. Give us your view rather than the advice you have received.

Lynne Featherstone: Ultimately, prison would be at one extreme end and retraining would be at the least end, depending on the circumstances.

Q13 Chair: Right, so depending on the circumstances you would either send someone who has not reported FGM to prison if they are prosecuted or you would get them retrained?

Lynne Featherstone: I think the more likely is they would be disbarred from their profession.

Chair: Yes. There is a range that starts with prison, disbarring—

Lynne Featherstone: At the very far end there, yes, and at the other end—

Q14 Chair: Yes. That is extremely clear and very strong and I think people will be delighted to hear that that is happening. We were very concerned also about the lack of co-ordination between the various agencies. We had compelling evidence from people like Comfort Momoh, Leyla Hussein and others that social workers were seeing something; they were in a silo. Professionals were seeing something else, doctors were seeing something else, the police were seeing something else, and nobody took a grip. Since our report and since you have come back to the Home Office with your campaigning zeal, are you reassuring this Committee that there is now better co-ordination?

Lynne Featherstone: I am not sure that it is happening yet, but one of the missions of the new FGM unit is to drive co-ordination across both Government and outreach in the country, to work with safeguarding boards and other professionals. I think that multi-agency approach and proper co-ordination is the answer to this. I would have to write to you about the details of any programme that we are putting into place. This has been a very rapidly evolving process. A process that has commenced at last, thank goodness, and I am pleased by it, but we still are at the beginning rather than at the end.

Q15 Chair: Of course, but why are we at the beginning, bearing in mind Government has been seized on this for 30 years? You have known about it for many years. You have been the leading campaigner on this before you became a Minister and, indeed, afterwards. You have set up a centre now, have you not? How would you assess the way in which the centre is operating?

Lynne Featherstone: The FGM unit?

Chair: Yes.

Lynne Featherstone: It is just starting. It is about to go and do outreach and training with the safeguarding boards.

Q16 Chair: Has it done any outreach since it has been set up?

Lynne Featherstone: I do not think it has gone out. It is working with the charity FORWARD UK to go out and deliver the training workshops for the local safeguarding boards. It is also doing a series of FGM conferences. It is focusing on areas obviously with high prevalence in the UK because we have to start where prevalence is; it is also working with Border Force, working with the College of Policing to improve—

Q17 Chair: It does sound a bit like officials talking to officials. We can all organise conferences. I think what the public and Parliament wanted with our report was more concerted action from your centre, which was heralded as this great development. At the moment, it sounds very much like officials sitting round tables talking to other officials. I am sure you, as someone who has campaigned in this area, do not feel that it is doing what you want. Is it? Having more conferences?

Lynne Featherstone: I think conferences and raising awareness is absolutely crucial. With the best will in the world, Chair, one of the real inhibitors in terms of prosecutions and everything else to do with FGM has been the lack of confidence of those front-line workers to deal with FGM. Every time you go out and you do training and they get more confident, the more chance we have of their taking action. I think that is absolutely critical to the success.

Q18 Chair: Sure. Final question from me: do you feel like Norman Baker, that being at the Home Office is like wading through mud, or are you happy?

Lynne Featherstone: Put it this way, Chair, I do not feel like Norman Baker.

Q19 Chair: You do not? Do you feel happier than Norman Baker? Do you think when you sit there as a Minister you are getting things done?

Lynne Featherstone: Yes, of course, and I always did at the Home Office. I am sure Norman did, too.

Chair: Well, that is not what he told the Committee. We should have sent you the transcript.

Q20 Dr Huppert: On FGM, one aspect you have spoken about in the Chamber before is the need to have compulsory education about it in schools. Have you made any progress in persuading the Department for Education about that?

Lynne Featherstone: Not as much as I would like. I have absolutely no hesitation in saying for myself, and I have said it from the Dispatch Box, that I believe there should be mandatory education, particularly starting in areas of high prevalence. I also think all schools should have an FGM safeguarding policy. There is a whole range of things that we need to be doing, but there has been a difference of opinion in Government about what can and cannot be mandatorily taught in schools.

I think in areas of high prevalence particularly, but ultimately everywhere, education is absolutely crucial, and working with parents, too. There is one primary school—I cannot remember if it was in Bristol or Cardiff—with the first FGM safeguarding policy for a primary school. One of the issues is the communities in which some of this is practised, Somali or other, are very closed off.

One of the access points not just to children but to the parents is at school, and obviously in the secondary school for those children to know how to be able to raise the issue.

The other thing I think we are going to find as we go along this track in the future is that where the matter is raised—I have a secondary school in my own constituency, Hornsey School for Girls—you then beget a need for support services and counselling and a whole range of things, the trauma of bringing out what has happened to you or what might happen to you as a girl, which needs other support. As we go along, we are going to learn more and more about what needs to be in place to support this whole agenda.

Q21 Dr Huppert: As you probably know, this Committee formally agreed that there should be this compulsory education, so good luck in that particular regard.

Can I ask about gang violence, firstly, and particularly, as we have been hearing from various people, women and girls, involved in gang violence? The Home Office has said that there is very little hard data on the number of women and girls involved in gang violence and the impact of serious violence on girls and women by gangs is largely hidden. It is clearly not very helpful if we do not really know what is going on. What are you doing to try to understand?

Lynne Featherstone: Again, I think this is the first time that a Government has recognised some of the other issues involved in ending gang and youth violence. Before this, we did not look at girls; we did not look at mental health; we did not look at a whole range of issues that are hugely important. Now it has been recognised and, in fact, only yesterday I was visiting our youth YPAs, young people advocates, who are working with the girls. Last time I was at the Home Office I launched the scheme with 13 young people advocates and I think as we go forward it will become less and less hidden. Numerically, I was visiting Safer London as well and they were talking about something like 700 advocates across the areas in which they are working. Of course, as we are able to roll out those schemes and increase those programmes hopefully as we go forward in the future, we will be able to map numbers more accurately. For now, we do not have accurate numbers but we do know the really devastating harm that is done to girls who get involved with gangs or are gang nominals themselves.

Q22 Dr Huppert: We just heard from young people about the background. One of the things they were highlighting, their principal call—there were a number of things—was better youth services, more things for people to do, better engagement for young people in what was being planned. Again, that is not a Home Office function, but do you think there is an acceptance that there are national benefits from resolving that within CLG?

Lynne Featherstone: I think one of the things we have learnt is it is one thing to go in, early intervene, rescue and have one-to-one peer mentoring, all of the pathways that are offered, but if there is no pathway through life alongside getting out of the gang itself or that influence, then the chances are you will go back to where you were. I think the involvement of Jobcentres and health services are extremely important, but I have not taken it further than that at this point myself.

Q23 Dr Huppert: I hope you might have a chance to talk to some of the people who we spoke to. I am sure they would be happy to share their experiences and suggestions. One last question if I can, Chair, about child sexual exploitation, which is not quite the same thing. As you probably know, the

Office of the Children's Commissioner inquiry said there were 2,409 children and young people subject to sexual exploitation in gangs and 16,500 at risk from a range of ethnicities, genders and so forth. Are those figures that you would agree with and what are we doing to try to tackle that specific aspect of gangs?

Lynne Featherstone: Sorry, I do not quite understand. Are you talking about gangs in general or this particular aspect?

Dr Huppert: The question is about this particular aspect that the Office of the Children's Commissioner highlighted, because 2,500 children and young people being sexually exploited in gangs within a year is obviously a very large number.

Lynne Featherstone: That is a very high figure, but what we know now is that child sexual exploitation is huge, not just in terms of gangs. It is just huge. I do not have any particular answer to that other than the work we are doing with gangs and girls. Child sexual exploitation is another area, if you like. It is treated differently.

Q24 Michael Ellis: Can I move on to the stop and search thing, Minister, please? A new scheme for best practice was introduced just before Christmas I think it was, so only a few weeks ago, aiming to increase transparency by recording the outcomes of stop and search. Frankly, it has gone wrong over the years. A disproportionate number of black people have been stopped and this has caused considerable resentment, understandably so, in many communities. I think the Home Secretary has recognised that. Regarding transparency, I appreciate that it is very early days because it has only just started but how do you anticipate that going forward? Do we also have some work to do? For example, anecdotally there are some reports that a disproportionate number of young women and girls are being asked to carry weapons or contraband because it is perceived that fewer women and girls are stopped and searched by police. They are being given this responsibility by other members of the gang because they are less likely to be caught. What do you have to say about that?

Lynne Featherstone: Okay, so there were a couple of issues in what you asked. I thought the Home Secretary was spot-on in terms of the whole revision around stop and search. During the consultation, it was the lack of confidence that people had in the police, looking at the police. Now they have to link cause and effect, if you like, the outcomes. They also have to be transparent, as you rightly said, and there is also a community trigger. That community trigger is orchestrated, if you like, by the people and each force has to ensure that the local community are provided with the opportunity to influence how it is set up, how many complaints are levelled, how they are dealt with, what would set off the trigger, and so on. I think that will change confidence over time provided it is delivered as envisaged.

Obviously, gang members are more likely to be carrying weapons than the average young person and, as you rightly say, because girls are stopped so much less than boys, there is an incentive for the boys to hand weapons or drugs or whatever to the girls. We are quite clear and if reasonable suspicion has been clarified and if the police have reasonable grounds on which to stop someone, they should stop girls just as much as they should boys. However, it is an area that we think we need to look into a bit further, so we will be working with the National Crime Agency to take this further to see if there is anything more we can do on that particular aspect. There is absolutely nothing that should stop a police person who has reasonable grounds for suspicion stopping a girl.

Q25 Tim Loughton: Minister, can I come back to gang violence and then perhaps go back to child sexual exploitation as well? There has been a degree of criticism about the progress of the Home Office's plan on the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme. Indeed, some of the people we spoke to informally think the situation is getting worse rather than better. There was no annual review of that programme, which is normally produced in December. Do you think the programme is being effective? If so, how and when are we going to have an update on it?

Lynne Featherstone: I think it is very effective. I think we have a really good story to tell on gangs and the progress that we are making. I can read you a list of quotes from the various areas who have been well reviewed. In the first year, we published the review and that was considered to be a success by 29 priority areas that we went to. The findings from the first year have guided what we have done in the second year. Without reading you a whole list, year 1 identified aspects where we could build on; in year 2—that is 2013-2014 and I will come on to this year, which is late, as you say—we focused more on issues such as cross-border working, improving referral routes for gang members and promoting data sharing. That is what came out of the interviews and the face-to-face and online surveys. This year, the programme has been focused on expanding to another 10 areas because it has been so successful. The feedback we have had is that it has been successful—well, I will read you the quotes.

Q26 Tim Loughton: Well, everything you have said so far sounds a bit “processy” and there has been specific criticism from the Manchester gang research network about the empirical evidence on which you base your success. So far I am hearing success based on ticking boxes about processes. Do you think there are fewer people involved in gangs, there are more people coming out of the cold, as I would call it, from gangs into the mainstream? Has gang violence lessened? Those are the sorts of measures that would be more understandable to judge its success.

Lynne Featherstone: To give it some context, it is not the easiest thing to measure because it does not happen in isolation. The scale of what we are doing is quite challenging, but the level of police-recorded crime for selected violent offences are also included. We are looking at 10 to 19 year-olds, and the violent crime that is committed in an area. I do not have finite results and the numerical proof so that you could say it has dropped because of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence, EGYV. There is a whole range of things going on. Do not forget also it is not a top-down driven approach. We are not collecting that kind of information. We are working with local areas. The reason they like it is it is flexible. We can go back to them, I suppose, but it would be incredibly bureaucratic to get measurements. They say there have been improvements to strategic leadership around tackling gangs and youth violence, increased involvement of other agencies, including voluntary and the community sector, new improved approaches to special issues like with various gangs and girls. They are not measurables, but these are new areas where we are working for the first time. As we pare down on this and continue, of course, we will try to ask local areas to be more exact about their reporting. At the moment, we are doing it by interviews, online surveys, and so on and so forth. It is not scientific, if that is what you mean.

Q27 Tim Loughton: It is not scientific. It is a challenging one to measure.

Lynne Featherstone: It is qualitative.

Tim Loughton: But at the moment virtually everything you have said has been based on processes and involvement of certain people dealing with the problem, which does not

necessarily imply that that problem is being resolved or is getting better. Anyway, finally on that, when is the review going to be published that would normally be in December?

Lynne Featherstone: It will be published in the next few weeks. The only reason it was held back is that we added in 10 new areas and we want to be able to include that in what will be the final annual review before the next Parliament.

Q28 Tim Loughton: Okay, that is helpful. Child sexual exploitation: you are the cross-departmental Government Minister lead on CSE and Norman Baker was before you, yes?

Lynne Featherstone: Yes.

Q29 Tim Loughton: Right. What progress has been made post-Savile given that CSE has never had such a high profile? What is happening now that was not happening before the documentary that happened in October 2012?

Lynne Featherstone: Okay. I have not briefed myself specifically on child sexual exploitation today, but I am now chairing the cross-panel group, the national group, and I attend the Secretaries of State meetings. There is an action plan to move things forward. I think the last meeting of the Secretaries of State is happening virtually in this next week and the final recommendation from that was specifically looking at Rotherham. The broader panel action plan has further things and I am sure we can share that with you.

Q30 Tim Loughton: That action plan was launched in November of 2011. I know because I launched it.

Lynne Featherstone: Well, there you are; you are probably more expert than I am.

Q31 Tim Loughton: What has happened three and a quarter years on?

Lynne Featherstone: I have chaired the most recent of those panels and everyone has been working in the areas in which they committed to. I honestly cannot give you that exact answer without having briefed myself, because I have chaired only that one meeting.

Q32 Tim Loughton: Why do you think the independent panel inquiry, of which we are hearing more later this session, has been such a shambles so far?

Lynne Featherstone: I think part of it is the Home Secretary wanting to get it right. Obviously, with two chairs resigning, for which she has appeared before Parliament to apologise, I think it is very difficult to find a perfect person and I think in both cases that reasons came to light. I think she is very exercised, or advised, about wanting to make sure this panel has the appropriate powers so it can compel witnesses to appear before it. She has met with survivors a number of times. I am sure for any inconvenience caused it is still much better to get it right because it will be under such scrutiny and there are so many different people—

Q33 Tim Loughton: Is it the Home Secretary's fault, then, you are saying?

Lynne Featherstone: I am not saying it is the Home Secretary's fault. I am saying—

Q34 Tim Loughton: Could she have done it differently?

Lynne Featherstone: No, I do not think she could have done it differently. Unlike my predecessor, who thinks it was like wading through mud, I do not find the same. I think she is an impressive Home Secretary who cares passionately about this issue and will take it forward. I have absolutely no doubts about that, even though she is the other party to the Coalition.

Q35 Chair: Our next session, as Mr Loughton has pointed out, is about the panel. We have heard information, which we expect to get confirmed shortly, that members of the panel have been intimidated in respect of what they can say. You are the Minister responsible, aren't you? You are the junior Minister?

Lynne Featherstone: Yes.

Q36 Chair: Were you involved in the briefing meeting that occurred?

Lynne Featherstone: No.

Q37 Chair: Were you aware that the panel had a briefing meeting in advance of their attendance before this Committee today? Were you aware that there was a meeting of the three witnesses?

Lynne Featherstone: I am not aware of a meeting but it would not surprise me if any group of people was not briefed in some terms about coming before you, Chair.

Q38 Chair: No, it is not a question of nerves, Minister. This is a very serious matter. You are the Minister responsible. You are the junior Minister responsible.

Lynne Featherstone: I do not believe there was intimidation.

Chair: Since you have said you do not know anything that is happening, it is odd that you have said that there is no intimidation.

Lynne Featherstone: Well, it—

Chair: Can you wait until I ask my question first?

Lynne Featherstone: Yes, I am sorry.

Chair: Were you aware that the counsel to the inquiry had a meeting with members of the panel about the evidence that they were to give to this Select Committee this afternoon? Were you aware of an instruction that they were given that they were to have one collective voice as to what was happening on the panel? I am asking you whether you were aware of this or you knew about this.

Lynne Featherstone: No.

Q39 Chair: You had no idea?

Lynne Featherstone: No.

Q40 Chair: As far as the deliberations of the panel are concerned, have you attended any of the meetings of the panel?

Lynne Featherstone: No.

Q41 Chair: Do you understand or are aware of why the meeting in Birmingham was cancelled?

Lynne Featherstone: No.

Q42 Chair: What exactly do you do as Minister of State for Crime Prevention in respect of this matter, then? What are your responsibilities if you do not know that a panel meeting was cancelled where they were to meet members of the public in Birmingham, which was on a website? You are coming before this Committee, but you are not aware of any briefing that occurred this morning; what are you aware of in respect of this inquiry?

Lynne Featherstone: I am aware of, as I said, the Secretaries of State meetings, which I have attended. I have attended two, and I have chaired one meeting of the national panel.

Q43 Chair: So you have been to a panel meeting?

Lynne Featherstone: I have been to a panel. Not that panel, sorry. What is it called?

Chair: Is there another panel?

Lynne Featherstone: This is not the independent panel inquiry.

Chair: Yes, that is the one I am talking about.

Lynne Featherstone: No, I have not attended that.

Q44 Chair: No, I know that; you said that. Which one have you chaired, then?

Lynne Featherstone: It is the overarching national panel for looking into child sexual abuse.

Q45 Chair: Have you seen the letter that the Home Secretary has sent to panel members?

Lynne Featherstone: No.

Q46 Chair: But you are the Minister responsible.

Lynne Featherstone: I am the Minister responsible but the Home Secretary has taken charge of the panel side of this issue.

Q47 Chair: Are you not the Minister responsible for sexual violence, sex offences, child sex offences review, prostitution and lap dancing?

Lynne Featherstone: And many other things, but I am not the Minister—

Q48 Chair: Violence against women and girls. You mean you have not seen this letter that has been sent to every member of the panel?

Lynne Featherstone: No.

Q49 Chair: You as the Minister responsible have not seen it?

Lynne Featherstone: No, I have not.

Q50 Chair: Have you asked to see it?

Lynne Featherstone: I did not know there was one to ask to see.

Q51 Chair: But it has been on the news.

Lynne Featherstone: Well, obviously, I have not seen it. I was in India and Burma last week so I may have missed it.

Q52 Chair: It is not last week, Minister. The Home Secretary wrote before Christmas. It is not about your visit to Burma. Before Christmas, the Home Secretary wrote a letter to members of the panel giving them three options as to whether or not they could remain. You are telling us you have not seen a copy?

Lynne Featherstone: I have heard about that letter. I have been briefed on the options. I have not seen the letter.

Chair: I for one think it is very unsatisfactory that this letter has not come to you.

Lynne Featherstone: It is.

Chair: Anyway, thank you very much for giving evidence today. Sorry, Dr Huppert has a question.

Q53 Dr Huppert: On the substantive issue about the allegations we have had about the panel members being told they cannot speak out, you say you did not know about this. Would you agree that it would be quite alarming if people who were survivors of this sort of thing were being told that they were not allowed to tell the truth about their experiences to a Select Committee?

Lynne Featherstone: I do not know what would have been said to them. If they are panel members, I do not know what the terms of their contract might be as being panel members. I am not included in the setting up of the panel, so I have not been involved.

Q54 Dr Huppert: But you would expect people to be able to tell the truth to a Select Committee?

Lynne Featherstone: Yes. Well, of course they can tell the truth, yes.

Q55 Chair: I for one think it is very unsatisfactory that you as the Minister who has responsibility for the child sex offender review and other issues should not know much of the information concerning this panel.

Lynne Featherstone: Indeed.

Chair: Will you go and find out now as a result of this hearing?

Lynne Featherstone: Indubitably.

Chair: Excellent. Minister, thank you very much.