



Communities and Local Government Committee

Oral evidence: Jay Report into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, HC 648

Monday 23 February 2015

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Evidence from witnesses:

Panel 1 (Questions 434-487)

Panel 2 (Questions 488-525)

Watch the session

Members present: Mr Clive Betts (Chair); Simon Danczuk; David Heyes; Mark Pawsey; and Chris Williamson.

Panel 1 Questions [434-487]

Witnesses: **Louise Casey CB**, Director General, Troubled Families, Department for Communities and Local Government, gave evidence.

Q434 Chair: Good afternoon and welcome, everyone, to this, our fifth evidence session in our inquiry into child sexual exploitation following the Jay Report on Rotherham. Before we begin, I just want to ask members to put on record their interests they may have in this matter. I am a Vice-President of the Local Government Association. I also have a close friend, Councillor Sioned-Mair Richards, who is a councillor in Sheffield and was for a time a part-time scrutiny officer in Rotherham council.

Chris Williamson: I have two members of staff who are elected members on Derby City Council.

David Heyes: I also have two elected members working for me.

Simon Danczuk: My wife is a councillor and members of my constituency staff are councillors.

Mark Pawsey: Two members of my staff are local councillors.

Chair: Just to be clear about what we said from the beginning of our sessions into this issue, what we have been trying to do is not necessarily to look at the blame of an individual or individuals but to look at the culture of the authority in Rotherham that may have prevented it investigating and combating child sexual exploitation; to look at whether Rotherham is an outlier—is exceptional—or is representative of what could be a more endemic problem of child sexual exploitation across the country; and particularly today, both now and in our later session, to look at the operating and impact of the Ofsted inspection regime and what that provided in terms of information when they conducted their inquiries during the period that we are looking at. To begin this evidence session, welcome and thank you very much for coming, Louise, today. Could I just ask for our records that you say who you are and the capacity in which you are coming before the Committee?

Louise Casey: My name is Louise Casey and I am here as the inspector in the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council inspection recently.

Q435 Chair: Thank you for coming so quickly after your report. I think you have probably had a chance to have a bit of a holiday in between completing the report and coming to see us; I am sure that was well deserved after the length of period of inspection you undertook. When you were appointed to go into Rotherham on the Secretary of State's behalf to inspect what was happening there, I think the feeling may have been that you were going into an authority that had had these very serious issues raised in the Jay Report and was trying to put things right and move forward, and you were going there to assist in that process. That is not how it turned out, is it? Your report says something rather different from that.

Louise Casey: Yes. That would be accurate. I did not expect the local authority to be in quite such a state of denial about the problem. I also did not expect the authority to be in quite such difficult and, frankly, dire circumstances as it turned out to be. Yes, the inspection took a different route, really. First, we had to assure ourselves that the evidence and information that we had was very thorough about what had happened over a long period of time; and, secondly, we had to conduct a probably wider inspection than was possibly anticipated at the beginning. I also was quite surprised at the level of denial of the problem, in the ways that I outline in the report.

Q436 Chair: In essence, then, what you found in terms of the historical reasons for the problems with child sexual exploitation confirmed what Professor Jay had found, but then you went on to explain that you felt the authority had not learnt the lessons and was not moving forward, which is slightly different from what Professor Jay indicated to us. She was saying the authority had got things really badly wrong but was trying to move forward and there were some signs of improvement, but you did not find any signs of improvement.

Louise Casey: No, I did not find much light. The authority at times looks as if it might cling on to certain inspection reports or certain information. It does a lot of commissioning of external reports to come in and look at it, so at face value you think, "This area is open to learning and change", yet if you look right across the piece, it did not change sufficiently. It did know that it had a problem of child sexual exploitation. It knew about it and it did not do a good enough job. If anything, what it did was close down the one bit of extraordinary good practice that Rotherham had above and beyond anybody else in the country, which was an outreach service to young victims of child sexual exploitation. It was a much more difficult exercise than we anticipated in terms of hoping and anticipating that colleagues in the public sector would have been significantly more open to the fact that victims had not been treated well and continued not to be treated well. We found that very concerning. You can see at one point in the inspection report we put a chart together of all the different inspections that have been done by Ofsted and their predecessors, looking back over quite a long period of time. That is on page 69. That shows without a doubt that all of these issues have been raised over so many years, including with corporate governance inspections and all of the others, and yet not enough change happened on the back of that.

Q437 Chair: To the here and now, one of the issues that you found and that Professor Jay highlighted was a certain culture in the authority of—to use the shorthand version—intimidatory leadership, probably. The former leader and deputy leader of the council were specifically mentioned. The former leader of the council did not come to see you to have a conversation with you. If they had gone, ought that not have indicated that that intimidatory style of leadership had changed and there was a chance to get the authority moving forward in the right direction?

Louise Casey: No. If only this was about changing certain individuals. What we found in Rotherham, which we account for in the report, was an overwhelming culture across a series of different factors. Firstly, in my mind you have, frankly, a local authority at points that is simply inept, including during the era that Paul Lakin was responsible for as the leader at that point. He and the collective leadership made

decisions and mistakes during that period, but if you look back across the 14-year period, the governance and management of the local authority simply was not good enough. If you put that alongside a culture where there was bullying and sexist behaviour that intimidated people and got in the way, and then put that alongside the race issue, which was an uncomfortable truth that nobody was prepared to talk about effectively and properly, that as a combination of factors is fairly unusual, in my mind, and that is where simply changing certain people would not have been sufficient. I also think the public in Rotherham probably have had enough of their local authority just not being able to grip this and manage it, and I think that the victims in Rotherham have probably also more than had enough, and that what is needed in certain cases—in certain times—is a fresh start.

The inspection report is significantly more damning than I anticipated when I set off to Rotherham, Chairman, but we did it thoroughly. We had more staff than somebody like Professor Jay did. Remember as well we were operating this inquiry using inspection regimes, so we could request any document and we could ask to see any member of staff. We were pretty thorough. Professor Jay was not doing that; she was doing an inquiry in a different type of way. Ours is quite thorough in terms of looking at the local authority in terms of competence and culture.

Q438 Chair: Taking away the democratic powers of councillors is one thing; restoring them at some point—having an end to the process of commissioners—is another. Have you got ideas about how that process should be worked through? We talked about a year as a possible timeframe. When will we know it is right to hand democratic responsibility back to elected representatives?

Louise Casey: I have offered to re-inspect the local authority should the next administration ask me to do that. More importantly, the Secretary of State has decided to put in quite a significant level of intervention and to appoint commissioners. He clearly said in his statement to the House that from day one those commissioners should be considering whether powers can be handed back to the executive. My own view is that for any area—but Rotherham is the one I have been closest to in the last six months—it is right that it is done properly but speedily. It is not just about democratic control; my view is that this place needs to be fixed with quite a significant level of intervention that gets in and assists the staff in getting back on their feet, listens to victims properly, and restores a sense of confidence in the local authority, particularly around child sexual exploitation but more generally in Children's Services. I do not believe areas are not fixable and I would be disappointed if in four to five years' time people were

still having commissioners in Rotherham. My own view is that the area should be sort-out-able in a shorter period of time.

Q439 Chair: And you see yourself going back and doing a re-inspection to see whether those conditions have been met.

Louise Casey: We have simply made the offer. It felt like the right thing to do, but there are other people who can check those things and do those things. Some are probably better than me at doing it as well. That is a matter for others to decide.

Q440 Chair: Just finally from me, the Secretary of State's actions in the end, based on your findings, were slightly different from the ones you recommended. You talked about commissioners monitoring what the council was doing and, if necessary, intervening. Effectively, the Secretary of State decided to take over the executive authorities of the council completely through the commissioners. That is a fairly fundamental change, is it not?

Louise Casey: I think the intention is the same. For me, the most important thing was that we did not look at every single bit of the local authority. We did not look at, for example, adult services to vulnerable people. So, if you were in his shoes, you might be thinking—and this is what I think he was thinking, because it was there in a meeting—that you wanted the security of handing out the executive powers to commissioners who then could check other services that we had not looked at in the same level of detail as we did Children's Services; you would then have assurances that those were handed back having gone through a test of commissioners. I understand that entirely. In any case, this is all a matter for him, Chairman. My job was to write the inspection report and make my recommendation. In a way, it is up to him what he does, but I do understand the logic of where he has gone with it and what he has decided to do.

Q441 Chair: So the logic is that different parts of the service provision in Rotherham could be handed back to the council and council officers on a phased basis.

Louise Casey: Yes, indeed. I think that is the logic behind it all, and I would strongly support that. I found what I found in Rotherham; it is for others to check whether other things are in the same state.

Q442 David Heyes: You have referred, Louise, to the "uncomfortable truth" of the race issue in Rotherham. Perhaps you could just comment on how you think that came about. In particular, what

should the authority have done about it and what should they be doing about it in the future?

Louise Casey: The starting point was probably incredibly well-meaning, in that there was clearly a fear that talking about the Pakistani heritage community and a minority within it as being perpetrators of child sexual exploitation would label that wider community and create community tensions. That was an extraordinarily short-sighted approach to dealing with the problem. Look where they found themselves, with the EDL marching through the town and setting up camp in the police headquarters grounds.

The other issue is that this went on over quite a long period of time and became quite an embedded culture. We found that same culture in the here and now. The learning, surely, for all of us is that we have to talk about things even if they are difficult. It should not be difficult to talk about a minority of perpetrators, whether they are Pakistani heritage or Irish people that arrived 30 years ago. Those things should not be out of bounds in terms of a conversation, if you see what I mean, and they clearly were in Rotherham. Where that gets you is to a place where many people that we interviewed said, "Well, we would not use taxis and we would ask our kids not to". Do you see what I mean? There was this knowledge of it—to call it an elephant in the room would not be sufficient; I cannot tell you—and this extraordinary inability to, frankly, sometimes say the expression "Pakistani heritage community" or "Asian" out loud. That does such a disservice both to that community and to probably the vast majority of people who drive taxis in Rotherham, who I am sure do not do anything wrong at all.

I feel the inability to talk about it and people being told not to mention it or to say it as something different, when the vast majority of front-line staff and others confirmed to us that the perpetrators and alleged perpetrators were from that community, ended up in a situation that meant that perpetrators were not pursued and that neither the area police nor the local authority did a good enough job. It came out of this wrangling with themselves as to how to talk about it. Does that make sense? Sorry; I went on too long.

Q443 David Heyes: It does, but the surprising thing about it is that the people you described who should have been protecting the children, many of whom you would expect would be educated, intelligent, skilled and highly-trained people, were not more competent at dealing with this than taking the simplistic view that it is politically incorrect to talk about "Pakistani heritage". What was it within the authority that suppressed people who ought to have had the skills to deal competently with that just through their job training?

Louise Casey: There are a number of issues that we highlight in the report; it is not one single issue. I do not want to go into specific individuals, but clearly there were some people who were quite powerful within the local authority who people found it difficult to stand up to. There were some individuals who used undue influence, potentially, in terms of how they conducted themselves. That sent a message out. You have got a broader culture of people not being able to challenge, not being able to discuss and not being able to scrutinise anyway. Layer into that the fact that you have got an ethnicity issue at play that nobody else wants to talk about. In my mind, I feel the leadership, the management and the culture is what is responsible in a situation like that and needs to step up.

Q444 David Heyes: How does that get created, though, Louise? That is the important question, is it not? The people who you do not want to name—and I am not asking you to name them—I guess would include people from the Pakistani heritage community. Some of the councillors were of Pakistani heritage.

Louise Casey: Indeed.

David Heyes: They would be the suppressors.

Louise Casey: To bring it into a different way of trying to talk about it without naming individuals, it was obvious, as we chapter in here, from the front page of *The Times*, a paper that they may not have liked or may have liked—I do not know; whichever way, it was a national newspaper—that that was not discussed in any cabinet meeting. It was not discussed sufficiently, in a way—in proper meetings—that you would expect to happen. In 2008, there was an operation called Operation Central, which we talk about in here and we looked at in some detail. We then compared that with the later operation, called Operation Czar. In both those cases, it was Pakistani heritage community perpetrators and alleged perpetrators. That sort of thing is talked about.

At one point towards the end of the inspection it became clear that still at the moment the police and community child sexual exploitation team are not registering the ethnicity of the perpetrators. In a way, this thing becomes ingrained after a while. I think it just got extremely difficult for them to talk about. The sad fact is that when you step back from all of this and you have done interviews, you have looked at children's care files, you have looked at Section 47 strategy meetings—you have looked at all these things—writ large in those documents and in those meetings is that child sexual exploitation is happening, with large numbers of perpetrators talked about, many of them from the

Pakistani heritage community, and we as a public sector in Rotherham did not do enough about it.

Q445 David Heyes: My original question to you was about what action the commissioners who will be running the local authority for the foreseeable future need to be taking to get the fundamental cultural change that is implicit in what you say.

Louise Casey: The starting point is to look at the information they have got and start talking about it; to do a different type of dialogue, for example, with licensed taxi drivers; and to engage with the Pakistani heritage community in the widest form that they possibly can. There are other areas of the country that have dealt with really difficult issues; it does not seem beyond the wit of other areas of the country to deal with some of these very difficult issues. Rotherham, under commissioners or under any other type of administration, needs to step into this space and not deny that it has a problem with child sexual exploitation, or that many of those perpetrators are going to be from the Asian or Pakistani heritage community.

There are two big goals here, really: first, that we prosecute some of these perpetrators for the crimes that they have taken against these children over such a long period of time; and, secondly, that victims and, frankly, the wider public in Rotherham do not have to feel the shame of living there because it is an area that tolerates this type of thing against their children. Forgive me, Chairman; I am going back to what you asked me. On a daily basis, going about our inspection, we met the public of Rotherham, and people would say to me, "I just feel ashamed to live here". That is not right. Those people have done nothing wrong and they do not deserve that in their town, really. That is why the intervention—whether it is what I recommended or what the Secretary of State is now doing—has to be really powerful and has to make a difference in terms of real action in that town in a short period of time.

Q446 Mark Pawsey: The Committee is interested in understanding how we have got to where we are and, from there, what recommendations we might make to prevent this kind of thing from happening elsewhere. There was a report. It was the Jay Report. It was quite a substantial report. One assumes that if the Jay Report had been taken seriously by the council and the councillors then perhaps your report would not have been necessary in the first place. How did the councillors respond to the Jay Report on receipt of it? Perhaps you might tell us how they should have responded.

Louise Casey: By the time we got there, which was only a few weeks, probably, after Professor Jay published her report, I was disappointed

to find so many individuals that were already starting to say, essentially, a version of, "She did not get the maths right" or, "It was not very well evidenced" or, "She did not interview me" or, "She did interview me but she did not get my job title right", though to the more worrying end of, "Well, if there are 1,400 victims, where are all the perpetrators?"—as in, a doubt as to whether this had happened. If one looks at that response in the history of their responses, it is not unusual. I have never done an inspection of this kind before; I have never worked for an inspectorate.

I found the power of the inspection to require people to talk to you, to be honest and truthful, and to give you any documentation that you asked for a very liberating and interesting use of the inspection power, because, essentially, as I think you are aware, it is quite an unusual set of things to be asked to look at by a Secretary of State—to look at political correctness, for example, and then taxis. We had a particular set of powers that Professor Jay did not have at her disposal, a bigger team, and those sorts of things. The answer to your question is that there was that extraordinary backdrop of an ability to ignore. Their own local strategic safeguarding chair had arrived in Rotherham, written a good read-out of their own child sexual exploitation report and, to his unending credit, said both to us and to a public forum in Rotherham that he was then ignored for a year. Do you see what I mean? This, again, to me is a very interesting dynamic in an authority that just felt very closed, did not feel it was very good at challenge, did not feel it was very good at scrutiny, had had one single dominating political power for quite a long time, was not very open to debate, and these sorts of things. That is my reading of what happened.

Q447 Mark Pawsey: But you have told us that you had greater powers and greater resources than Jay. Do you think there was an error, then, in the terms of reference of Jay? Do you think Jay should have in the first instance been the kind of report that you have since done, or do you think there was not enough evidence to do that at the time?

Louise Casey: Not at all. What Professor Jay did was extraordinary. What she did was entirely and clearly get under the skin of what was happening in Rotherham. She managed to surface the issue of child sexual exploitation in a way that in my mind nobody could possibly ignore in Rotherham or, indeed, nationally. It was a significant wake-up call, surely, for many areas of the country to think again. She did a very thorough and good job. We were undertaking a statutory inspection of the authority, which is a very different process that was looking at the best-value duty about continuous improvement and whether the authority would be able to do that.

Q448 Mark Pawsey: That goes back to my previous point. What should the councillors have done on receipt of the Jay Report? What would you have liked to have seen when you arrived some weeks after its publication?

Louise Casey: It is very much the position that the Chairman talked about at the beginning of this, which is an authority that had thought, "Yes, we have made some mistakes; yes, we have not got this right at all. There are victims. It does not really matter what the overall number is; we are not going to quibble over it. We are going to re-look at our service to victims of child sexual exploitation and we are going to get our act together".

Q449 Mark Pawsey: Alright, but Professor Jay did seem to indicate that there was some evidence of the council starting to get its act together. You found otherwise. Why did you take a different view?

Louise Casey: For the reasons outlined in the report. We were incredibly thorough and, as you can see, we did not find that they were ready to change as significantly as they should do. In the report, at some stage I talk about a meeting that happened in mid-September, where I found it quite interesting and, indeed, worrying that out of their top two concerns as a local authority their first was budget—that is entirely understandable—and their second was the Jay Report, not in relation to whether they were running a decent children's service and that children were protected in Rotherham, but that it was affecting the reputation of Rotherham. That was September 2014. That is a full nine months after Professor Jay had been in the place; it is a full 12 months after the articles in 2013. In my mind, that, amongst many other bits of evidence that we have compiled in this report, showed that their history of not facing up to problems would be the same. I was potentially concerned that they would do the same with my own, if I am honest.

Q450 Mark Pawsey: What was your view of the partnership board that was set up with the LGA in September? Did you think that was a cosmetic exercise? Do you think they were there to get under the skin of the problems and deal with them?

Louise Casey: At the point that Professor Jay published and in the aftermath of that, the then-leader was very open to people coming in and trying to help. He wanted to work with the improvement board. I have to say to you that the idea of a group of people coming in once every few weeks and having a meeting and looking at things just is not a match for the types of problems that are in Rotherham and were in Rotherham. An improvement board might be something that is helpful now, when there is a set of commissioners in place. That, again, is a

matter for the Local Government Association, Rotherham and the Department for Communities and Local Government to resolve. The improvement board was not a match for 14 years' worth of ineptitude, incompetence and denial around an issue that is about exploiting children. Of all the issues that we in public life think that we hold dear, it is the protection of the most vulnerable. If an area can walk away from the protection of the most vulnerable, that in my mind needs a response on the scale that we talked about in the inspection. It needs a response that is significantly more than an improvement board.

Q451 Mark Pawsey: In your answer to Mr Heyes, you spoke about some people having "undue influence". Are you satisfied that those people who had undue influence are no longer in a position to exercise any influence?

Louise Casey: I just have to check with the Chairman what the terms of appearing before the Select Committee are, because my legal position is that I have no protection unless I am—

Chair: You are covered by privilege.

Louise Casey: The answer to that question is yes. Ask me the question again, because I started to panic when I heard you say "people".

Mark Pawsey: You spoke about some people having undue influence. Have those people that you identified as having undue influence been removed from positions where they can continue to exercise influence?

Louise Casey: Yes, they have.

Q452 Mark Pawsey: So the authority is in a better position now to move forward.

Louise Casey: Yes, it is.

Q453 Chair: Could I just ask one follow-up to that? I absolutely understand the sensitivities. Bearing in mind what you were saying about a phased transfer back to the authority and hopefully—maybe—a year before things go back completely, depending on how they proceed, despite the problems you found there, were there any glimmers of light around on the basis of which the authority could move forward? Were there some individuals who were getting it, were recognising it and wanted to do the right thing?

Louise Casey: We found—and this is why we wrote it at the very beginning of the report—that there were many people in Rotherham,

particularly at less senior levels, who really just wanted to turn in a good day's job and did not want to be working in an environment where this was happening on a day-to-day basis. They talked about looking up and thinking, "Where is everybody? Where is the leadership?". I do feel there are an awful lot of decent, good people who work in Rotherham who, again, are brought into disrepute by this. That is what makes it so difficult. You cannot let that happen. Most people who work in Rotherham I am sure do not set about not to protect children, but that happened in Rotherham and continued to happen for far too long. So, yes, there are.

Also, there are people who used to work in things like Risky Business who continue to go above and beyond what they are supposed to be doing, really, to help historical victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Always one of the worries about these sorts of scenarios is that what happens is that people come in at the top, they stay for a bit and then they go again. What Rotherham needs is a consistent approach from decent, good people to lead them out of this. I am not suggesting it needs to take forever, but some of those staff need to be listened to. Some of the solutions to what is happening in Rotherham lie in the hands of victims, because they have very clear views on what type of support they want; they lie in some people who used to work there who do not anymore, who are able to support those victims; and they lie in some of the front-line staff that we met.

Q454 Chair: Any of the councillors?

Louise Casey: Yes. I did not go in to test the councillors, as it were; I looked at the collective outcome, but I am sure that there are some councillors in Rotherham—in the party that is in power currently—who can do a very good job, yes.

Q455 Simon Danczuk: Louise, your report says: "We have concluded that whilst the council has followed its own procedures, these have not always ensured that it has taken, and continues to take, appropriate action against staff potentially guilty of gross misconduct". Your report then goes on to say, "no one has been held to account for the serious failures Professor Jay identified". What should be done with senior officers within Rotherham?

Louise Casey: Quite a number have now left and gone, so in a way that is a matter for others. In terms of what we found, we were not tasked with investigating disciplinary issues according to staff over what turned into a 14-year period to look at. We did look at their HR processes and, as you say, we found them failing or not fit for purpose, or whatever expression we used at that point. Where we did find evidence of senior culpability, we did name those senior councillors and

we identified those staff in the report whether they work there now or not, and they are identifiable in the report. The other thing is that I have been very clear—and it is very good to be able to say this—that the Local Government Association are very supportive, as I am, of the review of social workers in the area, which, in fairness, commenced before we arrived. The local authority did that. Secondly, the employers of all staff that used to work in Rotherham who are now working in other local authorities or public services around the country need to take a look at those individuals and satisfy themselves that they should be doing what they are doing, and I know a number of local authorities are doing that. In a way, our job was to establish whether this place was fit for purpose in terms of HR. The answer to that question is “no”. It becomes a matter for others, in some ways, to hold individuals they are still employing to account.

Q456 Simon Danczuk: It is good that your report has named those individuals, but do you think that there needs to be some sort of change—particularly where a senior officer has left the authority or even retired—whether it is in legislation or in some other way, to deal with people who have really failed residents in this way?

Louise Casey: I could say this is matter for others, but I will give you my view. Where you are within one of the professions, like social work, there are different professional standards. What is interesting about Rotherham is that it shows that if you do not sit in one of those professions, where your conduct is externally monitored, as it were, then essentially, yes, you can move elsewhere. I personally think that is an issue that the Local Government Association and others—Government as well—should look at, because what you potentially have is individuals who have got compromise agreements then moving on and nobody looking back. Part of the problem in some of these circumstances is that anybody who has worked in Rotherham, in a way, everybody will look at now. That is how it is going to be, unfortunately, for many decent, hardworking, highly competent people in Rotherham; they are also caught up in this. You are right to say perhaps there is something that people should look at, particularly, Mr Danczuk, for senior people. As senior people, we are paid well and we have to take some responsibility that goes alongside that. The compromise-agreement culture does not help with that.

Q457 Simon Danczuk: Let me turn to Risky Business, this quite innovative, dynamic project that early on was really advocating for the victims of this abuse; it was championing their cause and trying to get their concerns and the abuse that they were receiving on the agenda within the local authority. That was then subsumed into the council’s

department and really dissolved; effectively, it closed down. Do you think that was done deliberately?

Louise Casey: Do I think that the professional jealousy of Risky Business was a professional jealousy that was deliberate and present? Yes, I do. Do I think that contributed to the closure of Risky Business? Yes, I do. Do I think that was a huge mistake? Undoubtedly. It happened over a long period of time. To say it was subsumed into central Children's Services just is not an accurate reflection of the circumstances. Essentially, as it was subsumed, it lost most of its staff and, despite the fact that the youth service within Children's Services continued and continues to offer some form of outreach, it was nowhere near what Risky Business was doing when it was at its best.

It was not just Risky Business; when Risky Business was set up, there was a like-minded group of individuals that went beyond some of the people I know you have spoken to, and all of those individuals wanted to do a lot to tackle this problem. They ranged from managers who were running the children's homes and knew that taxi drivers were coming to their doors and taking the girls away and knew it was not good, there were a lot of people who wanted to do something about it. The sadness for me is that over such a long period of time they were not listened to. They were not taken seriously. The giant of child protection, really, is not the type of approach that will necessarily work. As I put in my report, yes, at that point this was a minority of the caseload of Children's Services overall, but my God what a dreadful set of circumstances those adolescent and teenage girls were living in, and they were girls who were in the protection of the local authority.

Because the Children's Services social care model is essentially constructed and built around inter-familial abuse to do with essentially younger children in families, they could not get their heads round the idea, really, if I am being gentle about it, or decided not to. Some of the victims talked about knowing full well that they were waiting until they turned 16 or 18 and then they could be struck off. The girls knew that both the police and others wrote them off as slags, as runaways and as troublemakers. I have no doubt—and some of them have said to me—how difficult they would have been when they were that age, but our job is to do a better job in those circumstances than was done to those girls, really.

It is a combination of things: of professional jealousy and of this giant of Children's Services. Even if it was well-meaning, the idea you could deal with a 13-year-old or 14-year-old who has come from a terrible background, who has been sexually abused and physically abused by her own family and then taken into care, who has gone through foster carer after foster carer and it has broken down, who has ended up in a children's home, who has been groomed by a very sophisticated, nasty

piece of work and knows to hand over the phone, to hand over the money, to hand over this and to hand over that, and who is pulled into his world of abuse and nastiness, with a 35-day assessment or a referral process or a parenting course just does not work. The sad fact is at points Rotherham were ahead of the game with their Risky Business model; they possibly were doing things that some other colleagues around the country were not doing. It is a tragedy that they then did not have the bravery and courage to continue with that project.

Q458 Simon Danczuk: We can have you and we can have Professor Jay—we can have professional reviews of how all that worked—but do the police need to look at the failures within that department?

Louise Casey: South Yorkshire Police more generally need to look at the failure to the victims in Rotherham full stop. The interesting thing about Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council is they had no choice but to be inspected. They have to pay for their own inspection. Every member of staff that we asked to see had to see us or else we would infer something negative from that. We could look at any document that we wanted to look at. We left no stone unturned. We took much longer than I know colleagues wanted us to, because we wanted to be utterly thorough. In my view, that same scrutiny has not happened to South Yorkshire Police.

Q459 Simon Danczuk: Sorry; I phrased the question badly. Do the police need to investigate whether there was any culpability in terms of the officers within the department failing the victims?

Louise Casey: Forgive me. I understand—I think it is a matter of public record—that South Yorkshire Police have referred some individuals over this period to the Independent Police Complaints Commission. I think they have done. My point is that is too easy a solution for those victims. I am sorry; I am probably speaking right outside my brief to you, but the police have to step up and accept the same level of responsibility to those victims and those perpetrators as the local authority. We were asked to inspect Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and we have left no stone unturned. It is a pretty thorough and damning report. The same level of scrutiny has not happened of what happened to the police in Rotherham over that time period.

Q460 Chair: And that needs to happen.

Louise Casey: In my view it should happen, yes.

Q461 Simon Danczuk: My final question is about missing documents. You say in your report: "The critical work [Risky Business] undertook is now missing from RMBC". There are also suggestions that taxi operators' manual files are missing and some children's case files are missing. Is it possible that there are missing documents that could have helped prosecute cases against the rapists of children?

Louise Casey: That is very hard to judge, if I am direct with you about it. What I do know is that the papers that I know you asked Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to produce were produced. They are not perfect. They certainly gave what they had of the "key players" minutes—which Professor Jay was not given—to us. There are about 15 sets of those minutes.

We also know that over time periods, as I have put in my report, there are discussions about files going missing. We definitely established, having looked at that information and other information that was supposedly missing from Risky Business but was found in the first floor of Riverside House—a lot of it was, anyway—that the idea that people did not know what was happening was not true. For some people who have appeared before you and others, these missing papers from 1999 and 2003 are really a validation that they attended meetings, that they were minuted and that the police were there, health was there, social care was there, and not enough was done by the girls.

As to whether there is perpetrator information missing from this period, I would find that really hard to judge. There are people who are worried that that is the case. I cannot answer that question, in all honesty; I do not know what the answer is. I am hopeful that South Yorkshire Police, with the National Crime Agency, will grip the perpetrator information—not just one or two but the lot of them—and at least try to audit whether anything can come of the information that they already hold, but, again, as I put in the report, we are concerned about the victim care of young women, in the main, who will be called forward and asked to be witnesses in those cases. I am concerned about how they are being helped in that process. Even if the police got their heads around the files and all the rest of it, the other part of that has to be how they are helping these women—because they are women now.

Q462 Chair: There is not very much evidence of any of that happening, is there, at present?

Louise Casey: There has not been at all, but I understand that in the current set of papers from the cabinet meeting of Rotherham in relation to their budget, they have now put a further amount of money into trying to establish a service that will be for the historical victims of child

sexual abuse and exploitation, which is a great and good thing if they get that right.

Q463 Chris Williamson: I want to move on to scrutiny and whistle-blowing arrangements. Scrutiny can be an incredibly important and powerful tool when it is used appropriately. I just wonder whether you can give us your thoughts on why you think the scrutiny function in Rotherham failed so badly.

Louise Casey: I thought as a Select Committee you might ask me about this. The scrutiny question is quite interesting, because it is really the overall failure in terms of challenge. What you have is a local authority with a very dominant single party over a long period of time, which can be a really helpful thing in certain circumstances in getting things done, but there was no challenge there; there was certainly a very weak opposition that does not appear to have done much challenging or scrutinising over this time period. So, there is that. There is then the culture of some bullying, sexist and intimidating behaviour, which makes challenge much more difficult.

Chris Williamson: From?

Louise Casey: From individuals that I have named in the report, but it is a cultural issue. It is not just the former leader; it was something that came up repeatedly.

Chris Williamson: But it is elected members rather than staff.

Louise Casey: It is both. There were staff who also behaved in a way that reinforced that culture. We mention a couple of the examples in the report. You have got a very closed political dominance structure and a very weak, incompetent or non-existent opposition. Alongside that, you have got an overwhelming culture and one of the most difficult issues was never talked about, which was race and ethnicity in relation to child sexual exploitation. Then, on top of that, they laid their scrutiny function low. The scrutiny officers we met we thought were pretty decent people trying to do a good job, but if you have a leader that says, "Nothing is going to scrutiny unless it comes via me for five months" or scrutiny is resourced by the other directors so the only way that something goes on a scrutiny committee is if the head of this or the head of that says, "Yes, that is fine; I will resource looking into that" then it is a very weak function. But the scrutiny function within the local authority has to be seen within that wider culture.

Q464 Chris Williamson: Would you suggest, then, that there was a lack of resources made available for scrutiny? Was that a real problem? Was it seen as a lower priority within the overall scheme of Rotherham?

Louise Casey: More than lower priority; I do not think people particularly wanted to listen to anything that was bad news. That is what I am saying about the culture of speaking out. Even though I am sure the people there will always argue for more resources, I do not personally necessarily think this is a straightforward issue of, "If only we had more staff in scrutiny". No matter how many staff you have got in scrutiny, if the leadership and the executive management say, "We will decide what comes to scrutiny, we will decide how it comes to scrutiny and how it is discussed" then it is not really open to scrutiny. It is not scrutinising, is it? That is a different process, really.

Q465 Chris Williamson: Scrutiny, though, if it is used effectively, can scrutinise outside of the local authority's own boundaries, as it were, and look at other agencies. Other agencies obviously had a role in this whole agenda. I wonder whether you have got any comments about lack of resources, or whether resources had anything to do with why scrutiny was not only not scrutinising effectively internally but also not scrutinising effectively the other agencies' involvement, or lack of it.

Louise Casey: In fairness, we saw on the health scrutiny side that that seemed to be quite an effective way of doing it. More profoundly, with respect to the scrutiny of partners, who was scrutinising that the police did not do enough—they did something, but certainly not enough—for 14 years? Who was scrutinising holding the police to account?

Q466 Chris Williamson: Would you suggest that the scrutiny committee there ought to be doing that? Is that something they ought to be looking at? Ought they be calling the police to account?

Louise Casey: The cabinet should probably be asking the police what they are doing, and the police should be asking the local authority what they are doing. Clearly, there needs to be a greater sense of robust discussion between those two bodies.

Q467 Chris Williamson: But scrutiny, where you can call up witnesses and so on, is the formal function, is it not, really, for that? They may have these kinds of conversations with the cabinet—peer-to-peer in that sense—but in terms of bringing people in public, as it were, and scrutinising, would you suggest that that ought to be a role that is fulfilled by the scrutiny committee in these particular circumstances, or in other local authorities, for that matter?

Louise Casey: Yes, I am sure it would help. Part of the issue in Rotherham is there was not enough debate, enough challenge or

enough discussion, both within partnerships and more broadly, and scrutiny plays an important part in that. Their team was under-resourced in terms of other experiences around the country. If the opposition is so small or so weak, scrutiny has to be a more important function in those sorts of circumstances and people need to embrace it slightly more. It was not particularly welcome in Rotherham, in the way that we talk about in the inspection report.

Q468 Chris Williamson: You have touched on this a little bit, but in circumstances like in Rotherham, where it is dominated by one political party—this applies in all local authorities of difficult political persuasions where one party is dominant—does that inevitably means that scrutiny is impaired as a consequence?

Louise Casey: No, it does not have to be, does it? Not at all. The issue is that it was in Rotherham.

Q469 Chris Williamson: You do not think the fact that it was dominated by one political party necessarily was the issue here.

Louise Casey: As I have outlined, it is one of the circumstances that was at play in Rotherham. It had one dominant political party and one dominant leader, it was not open to scrutiny and it had a weak opposition, and alongside the factor of this intimidating type of atmosphere—some officers were both intimidating and operating in that environment—that is a recipe that does not make challenge and discussion about difficult issues very easy. Scrutiny can be part of the solution to discussing these sorts of difficult things. It should have been in Rotherham, and probably should be in other local authorities around the country.

Q470 Chris Williamson: Just before I move on to whistle-blowing, could I just ask you this? Is it the calibre of the councillors sitting on the scrutiny committee and undertaking that scrutiny function in Rotherham that is the main problem, or is it the culture of the organisation? Which of those is it, do you think, or is it both?

Louise Casey: We did not go into the calibre of people on scrutiny in the inspection report, so it would probably be wrong for me to talk about that now, but I do say that the calibre and capability of councillors was very mixed and that when you have people in cabinet positions or key roles like chairs of scrutiny, they have to be very good at what they are doing and very skilled, particularly in an environment where you are standing up against a big majority that may not want to listen to you. Calibre is always important in any job in any walk of life; I just think that in relation to the scrutiny issue in Rotherham, whether it was better resourced or less resourced, better chaired or better not

chaired, it was not a welcome part of what the local authority leadership—both management and members—wanted to hear.

Q471 Chris Williamson: Do you think there is an issue about the status of the scrutiny function? Just in terms of elected members going onto an authority, if they are aspiring to make a big impact, the tendency, is it not, is to seek a position in the cabinet and to take on a portfolio, rather than necessarily going down the scrutiny-function route? Have you any evidence of that? Do you think that is an issue? Would that come into the cultural—

Louise Casey: I could not comment beyond Rotherham, if I am honest with you. It would be unfair, because it draws a wider policy conversation that it is probably not right for me to comment on.

Q472 Chris Williamson: Okay. If I could move on, then, to whistle-blowing, whistle-blowing policies were in place in Rotherham. Why do you think they failed?

Louise Casey: For all of the reasons that we have talked about. This place was not kind on people that spoke difference. One of the most extraordinary things is that in these meetings about child sexual exploitation, attended by the police, by people in children's social care, by Risky Business and others, essentially they were blowing a whistle but without a capital "W" and they were ignored and then closed down. As I put in the report about whistle-blowers more generally, when they came forward to talk to us, many of them said, "I would never do that again. It was the worst experience of my life". People got very upset; they felt that they were punished very harshly for being whistle-blowers.

I must sound like a terribly boring broken record, but in an area where they had these three or four big issues—this ineptitude and incompetence; this dominance; a sense of not being prepared to talk about, frankly, something everybody should have been talking about, which is sexual abuse and exploitation of their children, in many cases by alleged perpetrators that were from the Pakistani heritage community; alongside a situation of intimidating, bullying and sexist behaviour—that is not exactly a place that it is very easy for a whistle-blower to come out into. As you see in the report, we talk about a couple of the cases where it was not an easy experience for them. They had procedures in place, but—again, this is something that is interesting in relation to the inspection overall—we felt quite a lot of their procedures were strong. They had a small but good team in scrutiny and they had good procedures. That will not shift it if the over-riding culture is something that does not—

Q473 Chris Williamson: Finally, what do you think this Committee should be recommending to make whistle-blowing more effective? What could be done? What ought to be recommended, do you think?

Louise Casey: If I were a chief executive of any local authority right now, I would want to do what we did, which is review the last load of whistle-blowers and what happened to them, and possibly even go and see some and see what that experience was like. In all of these things, we can have the best procedures in the world; the issue is what is happening to the person on the receiving end of those procedures. At the end of the day, the only way to test that is to listen to somebody who has gone through that experience. You asked me what should now be done in relation to victims. Somebody other than me at a senior level in Rotherham needs to go and listen to the experience of those victims—and listen hard—so that any service that is set up meets their needs and is not just a procedure and a strategy that has also been ticked off. I would say the same thing about the whole coming forward and whistle-blowing.

Q474 Simon Danczuk: In answer to our question, “Do you think Ofsted failed the children of Rotherham?” Professor Jay said: “To some extent, yes”. What is your assessment, Louise, of the performance of Ofsted in Rotherham?

Louise Casey: All inspection has essentially failed the children of Rotherham in relation to child sexual exploitation, and I would include Ofsted in that, in a nutshell. I noticed that you have been taking evidence from people who have worked in Ofsted; I was quite struck by that. For me, it is really important that the local authority, the police and others in Rotherham take primary responsibility above and beyond all others for letting those children down over that sustained period of time. It is Rotherham that is to blame for that. Ofsted, as I put in that chart, repeatedly told them about weaknesses and failings that they did not listen to, but if I was in Ofsted’s shoes, when I read that report I would be thinking, “That was not our finest hour. I do not think we did a good enough job”.

Q475 Simon Danczuk: What about the LGA’s idea that we should have more joined-up inspections rather than just relying on individual ones?

Louise Casey: Is that their idea? I have a slight fear of something called a “joined-up inspection” because potentially what it means is that you just have a collection of people with their own structures that they want to look at, in their own timeframes, in their own language. You

might have HMIC looking at one thing—the constabulary one—the people from the youth offending world looking at their thing using their structures and language, and somebody else coming from Ofsted who is looking at their stuff. The person on the receiving end is now not just managing an Ofsted inspection every so often—and the resources we now spend on managing those is something to be considered—but is on the receiving end of multiple different inspections, all of whom are looking at their own structures and their own systems.

One of the interesting learnings out of this is that if you want to get under the skin of something and you want to look at an issue in an area then sometimes what it might be useful to do is send in a group of people that are not straight-jacketed by their systems, as it were, and stand back and use the inspection powers to investigate and try to get under the skin of something, hopefully in the way that we tried to do here. If that is what a multiple inspection turns into, that is fine, but I do worry that all you do is have five different bureaucracies looking at something bureaucratically rather than trying to get under the skin of something.

Q476 Simon Danczuk: What you are saying is that Ofsted could certainly learn from the way that you have done the inspection.

Louise Casey: You have to ask yourself what you want Ofsted to do, I suppose. The Government need to work that one out.

Q477 Simon Danczuk: Sorry to cut across you, Louise. The public want to rely on Ofsted to go in and observe what is going on in the authority and reach the conclusion and tell them whether the authority is doing a proper and right job or not. On various occasions in Rotherham, they kept telling them they were doing alright and, “You do not have anything to worry about”.

Louise Casey: It is interesting, is it not? We have reached obsessive levels with this type of stuff in the inspection team. At points, Rotherham was given some glimmers of hope. One was a paper-based exercise that was certainly not the type of inspection that is done now. Their inspection frameworks—as I think they call them—develop over a period of time and they have got more sophisticated, or they have changed. Rotherham would cling on to anything that was dangled before them as good news.

I am not letting Ofsted off the hook, incidentally; I need to be absolutely clear that I do not think they necessarily always got it 100% right, but you cannot get over the fact that they repeatedly found weaknesses. We have this culture now, do we not, that you are as good as the last inspection? If that is the culture, you are not going to

look back. We had the privilege, really, of being able to look back over a very long period of time and look at inspection reports done not just by Ofsted but by their predecessors. We looked at everything—at corporate governance reviews and the lot—and Rotherham bucked all of them. Of course one needs to then scrutinise the inspectors, but inspectors do a point-in-time look at an area; they write a report and they send it in.

For me, inspection needs to be kept separate from improvement. I know you have asked that of other people, so I thought I would mention it and take the floor. Essentially, if the same group of people that are responsible for inspecting are also then tied in with improvement, then it does not feel to the public, and certainly to me, that that is a clean enough scenario. That is just my view; it is not necessarily something I should have a view on.

Q478 Mark Pawsey: I just wonder if I might press you on the matter of resources that the council allocated to Children's Services. Particularly in recent years we have seen local authorities come under pressure on funding, and it might be a very easy conclusion to draw that there were problems in Children's Services and that was because they were not given enough money. What is your assessment of that?

Louise Casey: Again, if only it was a single individual or about money then this would be an easy thing to solve. That simply was not what we found. Rotherham did not do a good enough job in relation to this over a very long period of time, including when people would describe it as having significantly more money. Over a long period of time, including from 2007 onwards, you see a decline in Children's Services, and at points you saw a greater investment in Children's Services that was not mirrored in significant improvements. One is always concerned about money and resources, particularly in the age of austerity, which is where we find ourselves now, but Rotherham was not found failing because of money; it was found failing because it let children down.

Q479 Mark Pawsey: In 2014-15, the council did find some additional funds for Children's Services. Were they spent wisely or was that money simply wasted?

Louise Casey: You can see in the report that Malcolm Newsam, the children's commissioner, double-checked the Ofsted inspection in October/November and we ourselves followed it up to just be sure that they were right. As we were there, during the course of that inspection, their front door—the way that children start the process of getting help—was not safe. I do not think it is an issue of money; it is an issue of competence and culture within the local authority.

Q480 Mark Pawsey: If additional funds were to be made available to an authority facing problems such as Rotherham, how do you think they could be spent? What additional expenditure could help solve some of the problems that Rotherham faced?

Louise Casey: Somebody is going to have to pick up the bill for the commissioners, for my inspection, and probably for a number of other things, which I am sure will not be easy for them, but the starting point has to be—

Mark Pawsey: But that money will not be spent for the benefit of the victims.

Louise Casey: That is my point. The starting point has to be making Children's Services safe and reaching out to victims—going and finding victims, not just hoping that they knock the door. The lives of people that we know have been sexually exploited by these perpetrators over the last 15 years are devastated and destroyed, and Rotherham needs to spend any money it does have on getting that right and getting it right now.

Q481 Mark Pawsey: But would more staff, grander buildings and more events for young people to get involved in help?

Louise Casey: No, not necessarily. Grander buildings?

Mark Pawsey: Grander buildings for children's homes. I am just thinking about additional resources and more facilities.

Louise Casey: Sorry; forgive me. Potentially, but what it needs fundamentally is a service that will reach out to these girls on their terms. They closed it down. They need to re-open it. On top of that, they then need to reach out to the historical victims, who will need things like family therapy and support if ever they go near a court room. Getting them into that court room and getting them through that is going to be no mean feat at all. Now some of them have brought children into the world themselves and are struggling as parents because they started out awfully young because of the type of abuse that they experienced. They are the sorts of things that we know how to do and we know how to get right. I know that Rotherham now, in fairness to them, are considering those issues and wanting to get that right. For me, that is the starting point.

Q482 David Heyes: I think you said to me earlier, Louise, that you knew that other authorities have got this right—that there were good

exemplars. Do I take it from that that you did do some comparative work to look at what happened in other local authorities?

Louise Casey: In relation to child sexual exploitation?

David Heyes: Yes.

Louise Casey: We have, because of the profile of the inspection, come across some other areas, and that is the subject of my next report. It will look at how we can take a determined approach to how we tackle child sexual exploitation and perhaps learn from areas like Rochdale, which certainly have talked about getting it significantly better, and possibly Oxfordshire, Derbyshire and some of the others, and say, "Okay, we know bad things happened. Let us now look at what are the sorts of things that you would have in place". Sorry to harp on about this, but one of the reasons we put an appendix right at the back called "Tools and powers available to tackle child sexual exploitation" is because we were very struck that Rotherham did not seem familiar with any of these powers and did not seem to use them in relation to child sexual exploitation. They are sitting there ready for people to use to tackle, to change and to stop perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. I accept entirely that tackling child sexual exploitation is a really difficult issue—I do not think I have said that; I should have done—both in Rotherham and nationally. I do not underestimate how difficult it is at all. It is a really difficult thing to grip and to stop and to then prosecute. I just feel that Rotherham did not try hard enough.

Q483 David Heyes: Is it too early, then, to ask you if you have been able to form a judgment about whether Rotherham is an extreme outlier or we can perhaps expect similar problems in other local authorities?

Louise Casey: That is a hard question. As colleagues know, I have worked very closely with local government over a long period of time now, and I have to say that that combination of not facing up to uncomfortable truths; sexist, bullying and intimidating behaviour; and, frankly, ignoring what was being discussed in those meetings around violence, rape and abuse of children does not feel a familiar place for me in local government. I do not feel that that is typical of local government at all. I really do not. There was an unusual set of factors at Rotherham.

Can I sit before this Committee and tell you that Rotherham is the only place? No, I cannot, because I have not inspected anywhere else. Do I think the issue of child sexual exploitation is not being dealt with effectively? Most colleagues in local government certainly and colleagues across the divide are all now considering whether we are all doing a good enough job on child sexual exploitation, and the answer at

the moment is no, we are probably not. I do not think that is a political statement; I think everybody would agree that we are not getting it right around child sexual exploitation. For me, we just need to learn from some of the areas that have hit national profile but have now tried to re-gear their services and get something very practical, simple and straightforward out to people to say, "10 things to look at would look like this". I feel that we need to get on with that and get that out to help colleagues out there.

Q484 Chair: Just a couple of final points. As of today, as we sit here, who is responsible for grappling with these issues in Rotherham?

Louise Casey: I believe—you are probably more expert in the world of interventions than I am—that until the commissioners are appointed and commence, the leadership of Rotherham is still in charge, but you would have to ask somebody better than me—

Chair: We will ask the Secretary of State when we see him tomorrow, then.

Louise Casey: You can ask the Secretary of State tomorrow. The intern chief executive of Rotherham, Jan Ormondroyd, is excellent and throughout this process has tried to support both the politicians and getting things done. She is not politically in charge by a long chalk. Four of the existing cabinet members, who had nothing to do, in their view, with the previous issues, have stayed and are helping with this transition process. The four that were involved, as it were, with more of the history have gone completely; four have remained that were not in the middle of it all, and they have been working really hard to try to welcome and make sense of the commissioner process when it kicks off. The Secretary of State is really keen, as far as I understand, to get these commissioners appointed and into Rotherham as quickly as possible, which will be a very good thing, at which point my understanding is that those four cabinet members will stand down and the new leadership will take over.

Q485 Chair: You mentioned there is probably a need for an inspection of the police. For people in Rotherham going through the trauma of so many people looking at what is happening in the town where they live, they have had the Jay Report, which shocked them; they have now had your report, which has probably shocked them again—they were probably less surprised than they were when they got the Jay Report—and they have probably noted some Select Committee hearings going on. What they have not seen is anyone held to account for this. None of the perpetrators have yet been brought to court and charged. Is that not

quite shocking after all this time? Is it something that ought to worry all of us?

Louise Casey: Yes. Despite the fact that child sexual exploitation is a very difficult issue because of the manner in which evidence is gathered and so on and so forth, I am quite clear in here not enough has been done by the police and the criminal justice system to stop, prevent or hold perpetrators to account. The biggest thing we could do for victims, apart from running better services for them, is to get some of the perpetrators into a court room and into a cell. That is the type of justice that those victims will want. Yes, that would be correct, Chairman.

Q486 Chair: That is something we probably need to think about—the police’s responsibility there and your idea of an inspection of what they have been doing as well, which is interesting.

Louise Casey: I probably spoke out of my responsibilities, but for all that Rotherham are damned in here, they had to co-operate with a pretty tough inspection and we got every document that we asked for. It may be that the sum total of the various investigations and things that are going on is enough; it just does not feel that way to me right now.

Q487 Chair: Finally, you had powers to require people to come to speak to you, but the previous leader, Roger Stone, declined. Did you not have powers to make him come to see you?

Louise Casey: Not somebody who is no longer in post—he resigned completely during the course of the inspection. He stood down as leader when we started and he stood down completely whilst we were inspecting. He sent helpful information, which I refer to in the report, by email and via solicitors, but, no, he did not want to be interviewed. Neither did Shaun Wright, the previous Police and Crime Commissioner, who spoke to me by phone but was not prepared to be properly interviewed.

Chair: Roger Stone has agreed to come to see this Committee on 10 March, so we will be asking him some questions then, no doubt, on the basis of your report and Professor Jay’s report. Thank you very much indeed for coming this afternoon and being so open with the Committee in your responses to our questions. Thank you very much indeed.

Panel 2 Questions [488-525]

Witnesses: **Miriam Rosen**, Former Executive Director and Acting Chief Inspector, Ofsted, gave evidence.

Q488 Chair: We have our second session of this afternoon. Welcome. Just for the sake of our record, if you could say who you are and the capacity in which you are coming to the Committee this afternoon.

Miriam Rosen: My name is Miriam Rosen. I was Director, Education at Ofsted from April 2004 to August 2009. I was responsible in that role to HMCI for the inspections of schools, initial teacher education, joint area reviews and also, until 2007, learning and skills. From September 2009 to April 2010 I was Executive Director, deputising for HMCI and responsible for the outsourcing of early-years inspection. I retired in April 2010. I returned in July 2011 to be interim HMCI, initially for three months, later extended to six months, covering the gap until Sir Michael Wilshaw took up his post in January 2012. I am speaking on behalf of myself, clearly, as I have not been employed by Ofsted for some time. I was asked to attend the Committee because, as Director, Education, I was the director responsible for the joint area reviews in Ofsted.

Q489 Chair: Okay. You probably have not merely been here this afternoon and heard the session with Louise Casey but maybe you have read about the previous committee evidence sessions with individuals who have been in senior positions at Ofsted. You probably saw that we asked them about Professor Jay's comments when she came to see the Committee. We said, "Do you think Ofsted failed the children of Rotherham?" and she said: "To some extent, yes". Debbie Jones would not give us a straightforward apology—eventually she said the word "sorry"—but John Goldup apologised straightaway for Ofsted's failings in these matters. Are you going to offer an apology as well on behalf of your role in Ofsted for the failings of the inspections into Children's Services in Rotherham?

Miriam Rosen: I am very sorry that the young people of Rotherham suffered from abuse and sexual exploitation over a long period of time. I would like to reiterate the apology that Sir Michael Wilshaw, HMCI, gave to the Education Select Committee. He said that Ofsted did not get it right on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham and did not discover the extent of child sexual exploitation taking place. He ended up by saying: "Lots of people failed those children. We were one of them, and we need to put it right". So, yes, I would like to apologise.

Q490 Chair: That is in your personal capacity now.

Miriam Rosen: I have to speak personally because I am not employed by Ofsted.

Q491 Chair: Debbie Jones, looking back from her current position, said “mistakes were made”. Do you think mistakes were made while you were in a position of responsibility? If so, what were they?

Miriam Rosen: I could talk to you about the joint area review programme. Would you like me to do that?

Chair: If it helps us to understand why the inspections that Ofsted did did not highlight the issue of child sexual exploitation in the way that perhaps they should have done.

Miriam Rosen: It is right that the joint area review programme did not highlight the area of child sexual exploitation. I do need to explain a bit about it, though, because it was a quite complicated system, if that is okay with you.

Chair: I accept that, yes.

Miriam Rosen: The joint area review inspections were developed over a two-year period from 2003 to 2005. They were multi-inspectorate reviews. There were 10 inspectorates and commissions working together on these. The project was led by Ofsted but all the expertise on social care was provided by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. It was a significant achievement to get the 10 inspectorates working together to produce a joint inspection system.

However, looking back at it, there were things that were not ideal. For example, it was a very broad framework that we had, covering the five Every Child Matters outcomes—and it was in response to the Government’s Every Child Matters paper. This meant that we did not focus sufficiently on certain areas. There was some coverage on child sexual exploitation but there was not the focus on it that was needed. Looking back on it, we would have to say there was insufficient focus on it. We did not know then what we know now about the scale and scope of child sexual exploitation. I would have to say—this is back when we finished developing the inspections and started them in 2005, so it is quite a long time ago—we consulted widely with local authorities and with the social care sector, and there was not that realisation in the sector then that child sexual exploitation was such a major problem. There is that realisation now. It has come about gradually. John Goldup spoke about the importance of 2012—of the court case in Rochdale and of various reports that were published then, and the articles in *The Times*—and we do know a great deal more about it. It has led to a much more proactive approach by Ofsted. Although I am no longer in Ofsted, I have read about the new inspection system that has been brought in very recently, and that is taking a much deeper, more investigative approach to child sexual exploitation.

Q492 Chair: Would it be fair to say that in the past, given you were pulling all these various inspection regimes together, it became a bit of a tick-box exercise that could not get behind into the culture and what really was happening in an authority?

Miriam Rosen: The joint area reviews were not a tick-box exercise. They were inspections, but they were looking at a very broad range of things within the local authority area—not just staying safe, but enjoying and achieving, health, and things to do with economic wellbeing. There were lots of things being covered. Because of the time and because of the resources of the inspectors there, they could not be covered in a great deal of depth. Now, inspectors are going in in a large team and looking at a much smaller, more focused area, so they can look at it in much more depth.

Q493 Chair: Nevertheless, do you think there is a more general point—maybe there has been some disagreement in the evidence we have had—that when councillors, who are in the end part-time, particularly if they are not a cabinet member, are getting a report, as they see it, about how their authority is doing and it says “adequate”, it does not exactly set the alarm bells ringing? Should councils be able to rely on a report by an independent organisation like Ofsted and take at face value what it says about the services in their authority?

Miriam Rosen: We would hope that they could rely on a report by Ofsted. I am very sorry that some of the reports perhaps gave a false reassurance.

Q494 Chair: Who challenges Ofsted? Ofsted is not held to account by anyone, really, is it?

Miriam Rosen: Ofsted is held to account. The accountability goes through Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector. He or she produces the annual report each year and appears before the Education Select Committee, and there is challenge and discussion from the Education Select Committee. That is the line of accountability.

Q495 David Heyes: Debbie Jones, when she was talking to us, referred to the failures being to do with frameworks used for inspection; she said things were missed because the inspection regime was based on a framework approach. Do you share that view? If so, why did you depend so heavily on that system? Clearly it failed to root out this kind of unacceptable activity.

Miriam Rosen: It is part of it, but the main problem was that at the time we did not have sufficient understanding about the scale, scope and nature of child sexual exploitation. Had we done so, the

frameworks would have addressed it. It was our understanding of that. I do not think it was just Ofsted and the other inspectorates—especially CSCI, because they were the specialists in social care—but it was also the sector as a whole. There has been a very large moving-forward in our understanding over the years. That has come through certainly in the Jay Report, that there has been a shift in people’s understanding.

Q496 David Heyes: So the children’s services inspectorate that was merged into Ofsted had no awareness of this as an issue either. Is that what you are saying?

Miriam Rosen: I am sure they had some awareness of it, but nothing like the awareness that we have at the moment. If you look back at the framework for the joint area reviews, which clearly I have done because I have been thinking about this since you asked me to come along, child sexual exploitation is mentioned but there is not a big focus on it. If you look at the guidance for inspectors, that is about asking the children’s views about it. That is extremely important, but if you look at the guidance that there was on protection of young children in the home, there was very much more extensive guidance there. We did not have the same understanding and the same sharp focus on it.

Q497 David Heyes: In December 2009, Ofsted made a very critical report of the council’s children’s safeguarding services that made no reference to child sexual exploitation. How could that be the case?

Miriam Rosen: That was a new framework that I did not have anything to do with, but I am aware of it. That framework looked particularly at the contact, referral and assessment centres and it looked at how social workers were going about their jobs. It was a two-day inspection and it picked up what was going on in those two days. It clearly found that practice was poor and said so very clearly, but because they were only there for two days, they may not have picked up on child sexual exploitation. It would have depended what had come in through the front door during those two days.

Q498 David Heyes: Is it a viable argument that it was a mistake to merge the children’s services inspectorate with Ofsted? For example, Louise Casey has referred to this issue that because educational attainment was improving in Rotherham in that period, that masked the failings of the Children’s Services function within the local authority.

Miriam Rosen: I do not think so.

David Heyes: Louise Casey certainly believes that that might be the case.

Miriam Rosen: Sorry, what exactly did she say?

David Heyes: She believed that the fact that educational attainment was rising meant the overall Ofsted inspection result was good, but that good report was masking the fact that Children's Services were inadequate.

Miriam Rosen: Is she talking about the 2006 JAR report?

David Heyes: 2010 onwards.

Miriam Rosen: The 2010 one. I had left by the time that report was produced, but as I understand it—because I have looked back at the frameworks—there was a focus on child sexual exploitation in that report, but clearly not sufficient. I do not think it was a question of a good performance in education masking a poor performance in child sexual exploitation and in children's social care. I would guess that what the inspectors found there and then was adequate; it was not so poor. An inspection is a snapshot; you do see what you see there, and that is presumably what they found. But we have still got the problem that there was insufficient focus on child sexual exploitation, even though there was more than earlier.

Q499 Simon Danczuk: The children in Rotherham knew that they were being abused. Parents, taxi drivers and members of the public in Rotherham knew that children were being raped. Risky Business, an organisation working with young people in Rotherham, knew all about this child sexual exploitation that was going on. From 2005, council officers and, indeed, councillors in Rotherham knew about this significant, dreadful problem. Why did your Ofsted inspectors not spot this?

Miriam Rosen: My reading of the 2006 report is that the inspectors did discover that there was child sexual exploitation going on. They spoke to Risky Business, they spoke to some of the children who had been helped by Risky Business, and they thought that Risky Business was doing a good job. I think many people do feel Risky Business was doing a good job. I think Louise Casey said it was "ground-breaking", or words to that effect. What they did not discover was the extent of child sexual exploitation. Why did they not discover that? They look at the authority's self-assessment and they look at documents provided by the authority. A close reading of the Jay Report shows that there were lots of different documents produced by the authority; some of them were clear about the extent and some of them were not—some of them did not mention it. I can only assume that the inspectors did not manage to get hold of the right reports. Because they were looking at a wide range of things, not just this one area, perhaps they did not dig in the way that people would do these days to get all the possible

reports. What I am convinced of is that if those inspectors had discovered just what the extent was, they would have pursued it. A social care inspector is not there to not help protect children; they want to help protect children.

Q500 Simon Danczuk: So the inspectors knew about child sexual exploitation back in 2006. That is what you said.

Miriam Rosen: They mentioned it. If you read the report, it talks about it and says that children were being assisted by Risky Business. We have not got the evidence base—this was nine years ago—but my reading of that report is that they spoke to Risky Business, they spoke to children, they concluded Risky Business was doing a good job and they credited them with that. That contributed to the good judgment. They did not know about the extent.

Q501 Simon Danczuk: In terms of how Ofsted works, then—you mentioned the inspection in 2009 in response to David’s question—they spot that exploitation is taking place in 2006 but they do not know the extent of it. How did your inspectors flag it up to future inspectors within Ofsted to say, “Just be aware that we think we are probably on to something here. Children are being exploited. When you go in and do that two-day inspection in 2009, or any inspectors that go in in between, why do you not have a look at this in a bit more detail”? How did that work, Miriam?

Miriam Rosen: Between the JAR inspections and the inspections that took place in 2009, I do not know whether those inspectors would have looked at the previous inspection report.

Q502 Simon Danczuk: Really, Miriam?

Miriam Rosen: I assume they did, but I do not know whether they did, because I was not concerned with the 2009 inspection.

Q503 Simon Danczuk: You have worked at a very senior level within Ofsted. Surely you would come to this Committee and say a basic concept of any Ofsted inspector when going into an authority would be to look at the previous years’ reports to flag up any potential aspects of what you might want to look into this time. You have not come and said that, have you?

Miriam Rosen: You are quite right that normally we do look at the previous reports.

Simon Danczuk: You did not have the confidence to say that that is what would be done.

Miriam Rosen: I just did not know, because it was a new system. You are probably right; they probably did.

Simon Danczuk: Well, they probably did not.

Mark Pawsey: Probably?

Miriam Rosen: I am sorry I do not know.

Q504 Simon Danczuk: Sorry, Miriam. They probably did not, because Ofsted do not reach any further conclusions after 2006 in any major way that hundreds of girls are being raped, do they?

Miriam Rosen: As the reports go through, some of them are inadequate and some of them are adequate. It is a shame that we see a variation in the judgments being made. The inspectors will have conducted the inspection and looked at what they could on the ground and drawn their conclusions appropriately.

Q505 Simon Danczuk: Did the staff you used to inspect children's services from 2007 onwards have adequate social work skills and experience that would have enabled them to work beyond the limited frameworks they were given?

Miriam Rosen: Almost all of the inspectors we had from 2007 onwards came to us from the Commission for Social Care Inspection. They transferred across. As time went by, we started recruiting new social care inspectors. A lot of them worked in senior positions in local authorities. They had training on the frameworks that they were doing; they also were being kept up to date with social care practice through the more senior social care inspectors in Ofsted.

Q506 Simon Danczuk: We have heard with the questions from David about the limitations of the frameworks; we have heard from other witnesses that the frameworks were inadequate. I am really asking about your inspectors' abilities not to work within a framework but to listen and hear from people they met—some sort of emotional intelligence when they are out there. When did they first get training in spotting child sexual exploitation?

Miriam Rosen: I think that would have been later on. The training that they received before they came across would have been mainly in child protection, and although child sexual exploitation would have been mentioned, a lot of the training would have been about protecting young children in the home. But if these social care inspectors had come across, for example, inappropriate behaviour by social workers—

and I think that is partly what you are saying—I am sure they would have spotted that.

Q507 Simon Danczuk: Did anybody ever flag up child sexual exploitation in Rotherham to you?

Miriam Rosen: Not to me, no.

Simon Danczuk: But to others in Ofsted.

Miriam Rosen: That I do not know. If it had been discovered as a problem there that people were really concerned about, I am sure they would have flagged it up both through the social care part of the matrix and to me, but that inspection report did not come up to me for special scrutiny. The arrangement we had at the time was that I could not read all of the reports but I would have read ones about which there was concern. That one did not come through to me. I think it is going back to what I said earlier: that the inspectors, although they had discovered that some was taking place, thought it was being dealt with well by Risky Business and they did not know about the scale of it.

Q508 Simon Danczuk: Debbie Jones told us that Ofsted has sacked people where it has been proven that inspectors have got it wrong. How many inspectors have you sacked, Miriam?

Miriam Rosen: I think you mean my divisional managers, because I did not directly manage the workforce but they came up to me. I cannot answer that question. I do not know exactly. We would have to go back to Ofsted.

Q509 Simon Danczuk: Two? 20? 200?

Miriam Rosen: I really do not know. What I can tell you is that I had regular one-to-ones with my divisional managers and we always discussed staffing problems. If somebody was struggling, we would go through due process. They would be offered support; they would not just be sacked straightaway.

Q510 Simon Danczuk: You must have an idea of how many people were sacked.

Miriam Rosen: Yes. I suspect that very few were, or none.

Simon Danczuk: Or none.

Miriam Rosen: I cannot tell you exactly. I am aware that where people were struggling we went through due process and would offer support, and people sometimes resign at some points when you are

going through a process. I do not remember any being sacked, but you would have to ask Ofsted if it has got any records of this.

Q511 Simon Danczuk: Would it not have been an idea for you to meet more front-line inspectors instead of just going through your divisional managers, Miriam?

Miriam Rosen: I worked with inspectors. I did go out with inspectors. I went out frequently. I met them. Because I had quite a broad scope, what I had to do was delegate to my divisional managers, support them and hold them to account, but then also I would read things, I would go out on inspections and I would talk to people. I was taking a very active interest, I can assure you.

Chair: We have got some figures from Ofsted on inspectors who have been sacked as well, so we can consider those.

Q512 Chris Williamson: During your time at Ofsted, how closely did you work with other inspectorates or ombudsmen reviewing local authorities?

Miriam Rosen: Very closely. I was there at the time of the joint area reviews. The 10 inspectorates and commissions worked together to develop the joint area reviews and then to carry them out. This was a big task, because inspectorates tend to have different approaches and different methodologies, and we had to try to come up with a common framework and common approach that we would use in the joint area reviews, and this we did. Most of the inspections were carried out by five of the 10 inspectorates, but the others were still involved. They produced briefings for the inspections that we were holding and also, after each joint area review, we had a cross-inspectorate challenge meeting where the inspectorates could challenge the findings. All inspectorates were invited to the cross-inspectorate challenge meetings for each joint area review. They might not always turn up, but the ones that were involved always did. There was a lot of joint working there.

Q513 Chris Williamson: So you shared information.

Miriam Rosen: We were working together, so, yes, we shared information. We had briefings that came to us before each joint area review. The different inspectorates did not have to provide a briefing but they often did, so we could see what issues they were concerned about in the local authority.

Q514 Chris Williamson: Could you give us a flavour of the sort of information that you shared?

Miriam Rosen: It might have been something about Health saying that they were particularly concerned about the obesity levels in this particular authority, for example, or Education saying they were concerned about overall levels of achievement.

Q515 Chris Williamson: Could Ofsted inspections include a non-Ofsted specialist to offer challenge and scrutiny?

Miriam Rosen: You mean somebody who was a lay inspector?

Chris Williamson: A non-Ofsted specialist, yes.

Miriam Rosen: All the joint area reviews included people from different inspectorates. They were not all Ofsted inspectors.

Q516 Chris Williamson: So you think that was happening, then.

Miriam Rosen: The inspectors did challenge each other. That was part of the process. Although, for example, the social care inspectors would have led on making the judgments about social care, the judgments would have been confirmed at a team meeting and then again they would have been subject to challenge at the cross-inspectorate challenge meetings. There was a lot of joint working going on. Halfway through 2009, the system did change and we moved to the new inspections of contact, referral and assessment centres and the joint area reviews stopped. We did not have the same level of joint working after that, although we went into the comprehensive area assessment for a time, where we were working together with the Audit Commission. I should say that another aspect of the joint areas reviews is that they were going on at the same time as the Audit Commission was carrying out its corporate assessments, so we did triangulate our views with the Audit Commission. At a slightly different time, HMI Probation were carrying out their inspections in the local authority. They carried them out in advance of the joint area reviews but they deferred the report until we produced our report so that, again, we could do some triangulation of judgments there and see what had been found.

Q517 Chris Williamson: Debbie Jones told us that Ofsted was carrying out what appeared to be integrated inspection pilots with the Care Quality Commission, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and, where appropriate, prisons and probation. Would you agree that you were doing similar joint working during your period at Ofsted? From what you have just said, it seems that you were. Would that be fair?

Miriam Rosen: I think what she was referring to was looking at something quite narrow such as, for example, child protection, and having a lot of different inspectorates looking at it. Is that correct?

Chris Williamson: Yes.

Miriam Rosen: I am out of date as far as Ofsted goes, because I have not been there for three years.

Q518 Chris Williamson: What was the joint working when you were there, then? How did that work? You have referred to it, but Debbie Jones told us that they were carrying out what appeared to be integrated inspection pilots. Are you saying your joint working was a bit different to that—it was a bit more widespread and was not narrowly focused?

Miriam Rosen: I cannot really speak for what happened after I left in January 2012.

Chris Williamson: But during your period, though.

Miriam Rosen: I have just told you what was happening then. We were working together as 10 inspectorates and commissions carrying out the joint area reviews.

Q519 Chris Williamson: But that is different, though, you think, to what is happening under Debbie Jones.

Miriam Rosen: I do not know exactly what is being carried out at the moment, but I think they are looking at aspects such as safeguarding with a lot of inspectorates together, whereas we were looking at a broader framework. As I say, there was extensive joint working between the inspectorates in the period that I was in Ofsted.

Q520 Chris Williamson: So there were no silo problems, then, in your opinion.

Miriam Rosen: We found that we were doing things differently, but we tried to work through it in the development process so that we could come up with an agreed approach. Also, at the end of the first year of joint reviews, the inspectorates evaluated the process and the product and made changes to try to improve it. When you have a very big project like that, with 10 inspectorates working together, it is very difficult to get it absolutely right straightaway, so at the end of a year we thought about what we needed to improve, and we did change it slightly.

Q521 Chair: If the joint area reviews were so useful, why did they stop?

Miriam Rosen: They were too broad, really. That was one of the problems with them. They gave an overall picture of the authority—

Chair: But they could miss serious problems.

Miriam Rosen: Yes. If you want to get under the skin of something, there is an advantage to having a narrower focus.

Q522 Mark Pawsey: Miriam, in your remarks earlier you said a couple of things. I think you were referring to the period up to about 2007, but you said “we did not know then what we know now” about the extent of child sexual exploitation and you also said that there was not “sufficient understanding about the scale, scope and nature of child sexual exploitation”. Were you talking about Rotherham, or were you talking about the country as a whole?

Miriam Rosen: I think I am talking about Rotherham in particular, but I am not just talking about Rotherham, because if you think about some of the reports that have come through to us—the Rochdale trial—it was clearly going on in other places. The *Times* articles were mainly about Rotherham, but then we had the Rochdale trials and we also had the all-party report on children missing from care, and that was not just confined to one area.

Q523 Mark Pawsey: Really what I am driving at is: is what we now know was going on in Rotherham exceptional, or is it your concern that there could be many other Rotherhams across the country?

Miriam Rosen: I am afraid I do not know the answer to that one. We have a greater understanding of the scale of child sexual exploitation now.

Q524 Mark Pawsey: What was it that allowed it to happen in Rotherham, then, in your view and the view of your reporting?

Miriam Rosen: I suppose what I am saying is that when we went in in 2006 we did not discover the scale of it. We now know that there is more widespread child sexual exploitation than we knew about then and we know to look for it. Inspectors going into different local authorities now are actively looking for it.

Q525 Mark Pawsey: Therefore, if the inspectors are actively looking for it, are you confident that the fact that cases other than

Rotherham and Rochdale have not come forward means that there are not any others?

Miriam Rosen: I really do not know. I cannot answer that.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed for coming this afternoon and giving evidence to us. It is appreciated. Thank you.