



HOUSE OF LORDS

Conduct Committee

6th Report of Session 2019–21

The conduct of Lord Ahmed

Ordered to be printed 16 November 2020

Published by the Authority of the House of Lords

Code of Conduct for Members, Guide to the Code of Conduct and Code of Conduct for Members' Staff

The present Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords was agreed on 30 November 2009. Amendments to it were agreed by the House on 30 March 2010, 12 June 2014, 25 February 2016, 9 February 2017, 3 April 2017, 30 April 2019, 18 July 2019, 16 March 2020 and 8 July 2020.

The Guide to the Code of Conduct was proposed by the Committee for Privileges (2nd Report, Session 2009–10, HL Paper 81) and agreed by the House on 16 March 2010. The Guide was amended on 9 November 2011, 6 March 2014, 13 May 2014, 24 March 2015, 25 February 2016, 9 February 2017, 3 April 2017, 30 April 2019, 18 July 2019, 16 March 2020 and 8 July 2020.

The Code of Conduct for House of Lords Members' Staff was agreed on 13 May 2014. Amendments to it were agreed on 24 March 2015, 30 April 2019, 18 July 2019, 16 March 2020 and 8 July 2020.

Review

The Codes and Guide are kept under review by the Conduct Committee. Recommended changes are reported to the House and take effect when agreed by the House.

The members of the Conduct Committee are:

Baroness Anelay of St Johns
Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood
Cindy Butts (lay member)
Mark Castle (lay member)
Andrea Coomber (lay member)
Dr Vanessa Davies (lay member)
Baroness Donaghy
Baroness Hussein-Ece
Lord Mance (Chairman)

Advice

The Registrar of Lords' Interests advises members of the House and their staff on their obligations under the Codes of Conduct.

Address: Registrar of Lords' Interests, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

Email: lordsregistrar@parliament.uk

Telephone: 020 7219 3112/3120

Registers of Interests

A list of interests of members and their staff can be found online:

<http://www.parliament.uk/hlregister>

Commissioner for Standards

The independent Commissioner for Standards is responsible for considering any alleged breaches of the Codes of Conduct.

Address: The Commissioner for Standards, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

Email: lordsstandards@parliament.uk

Telephone: 020 7219 7152

Website: www.parliament.uk/hl-standards

Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Helpline

0808 168 9281 (freephone) Support@ICGShelpline.org.uk

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Report from the Conduct Committee	7
Introduction	7
The complaint	7
The Commissioner's investigation and findings	8
Lord Ahmed's appeal	8
The Committee's deliberations	9
Appeal against the findings	9
Appeal against the recommended sanction	14
Annex A: Commissioner's main report	17
Executive Summary	17
Chapter 1: Summary of allegations and investigation	24
Ms Zaman's complaint	24
Lord Ahmed's response	24
Chapter 2: Investigation and evidence	26
Key events	27
Key evidence	29
Letter to Commissioner Dick and the reply from DSupt Prins	29
Mobile phone data retrieved by Ms Zaman	30
Police interviews	31
Interviews during this investigation	31
Structure of this report	31
Chapter 3: 21 February–2 March 2017	33
Ms Zaman's introduction to Lord Ahmed on 21 February 2017	33
Evidence	33
Finding	33
Whether Lord Ahmed was aware from the start that Ms Zaman was vulnerable	33
Evidence	33
Analysis	36
Finding	37
Dinner at the Sahara Grill and the letters to and from the Metropolitan Police	37
Evidence	37
Analysis	46
Findings	49
Ms Zaman's alleged wish not to be identified to the police or to meet them	50
Evidence	50
Analysis	53
Finding	55
Chapter 4: 2 March–September 2017	57
Alleged sexual assault after the dinner at the Sahara Grill	57
Evidence	57
Analysis	63
Finding	66
Lord Ahmed's communications with the police in 2017	66
Evidence	66
Analysis	68

Finding	69
Contact between Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed between 2 March and 14 July 2017 and Lord Ahmed's behaviour during this time	69
Evidence	69
Analysis	70
Finding	71
When did Ms Zaman see the reply from the police dated 3 May 2017?	71
Evidence	71
Analysis	75
Finding	77
When did Ms Zaman go to Lord Ahmed's house?	78
Evidence	78
Analysis	79
Finding	79
Why did Ms Zaman go to Lord Ahmed's house in September 2017?	79
Evidence	79
Analysis	86
Finding	87
Chapter 5: September–November 2017	89
How the sexual relationship began	89
Evidence	89
Analysis	92
Finding	93
Ms Zaman's allegation that Lord Ahmed spiked her tea	93
Evidence	93
Analysis	95
Finding	95
The basis of their relationship until it ended in November 2017	95
Evidence	95
Analysis	96
Finding	97
Chapter 6: November–December 2017	98
Whether Ms Zaman was passed to X	98
Evidence	98
Finding	98
Deleting messages from Ms Zaman's phone	98
Evidence	98
Analysis	99
Finding	99
Chapter 7: Lord Ahmed's allegations that Ms Zaman's account cannot be trusted	100
Allegations made in Lord Ahmed's written statement of 23 July 2019	100
Ms Zaman's doubts about whether Lord Ahmed had written to Commissioner Dick	100
WhatsApp messages confirming Lord Ahmed was taking up Ms Zaman's case	102
Ms Zaman's alleged claim that Lord Ahmed forced her to have sex with him when she first visited his house	103
Allegations made in Lord Ahmed's written statement of 18	

November 2019	104
Invitation to dinner at the Sahara Grill	104
When Lord Ahmed was out of the country	104
Ms Zaman's recollection of the contents of the reply from the police	105
Ms Zaman having offered money for false statements	105
Allegations made in correspondence	106
Ms Zaman's disagreement with the outcome of the police's review of her case	106
Ms Zaman's text to X	108
Allegations made in Lord Ahmed's response to the revised draft factual report, sent to me on 13 March 2020	109
Ms Zaman lied to and deliberately concealed important information from Lord Ahmed	109
Ms Zaman's allegations against Lord Ahmed are malicious	110
Ms Zaman lied when she said she had discussed the assault on 2 March 2017 with Lord Ahmed	110
Ms Zaman set up a fake Facebook account	111
Analysis	111
Finding	111
Ms Zaman's mobile phone evidence	111
Lord Ahmed's allegation	111
Analysis	113
Finding	113
Chapter 8: Conclusions	114
Application of the Code	114
Parliamentary duties and activities	114
Behaviour Code provisions and personal honour	114
Principles of conduct in public life	115
Application to this case	116
Was Lord Ahmed carrying out a parliamentary activity in relation to Ms Zaman from February to November 2017?	117
Allegation: Lord Ahmed put his hand on Ms Zaman's upper thigh, which was unexpected, uninvited and unwelcome	119
Allegation: Lord Ahmed failed to progress Ms Zaman's complaint and lied to her about his actions and intentions	119
Allegation: Lord Ahmed exploited Ms Zaman even though he knew she was receiving treatment for anxiety and depression	121
Co-operation with my investigation	121
Chapter 9: Overview and recommended sanction	123
Overview	123
Lord Ahmed's submission in mitigation	124
Background and character	125
Any previous breaches of the Code	125
The effect of these findings	126
The length of time that has passed since the incident	126
The appropriateness of the sanction to the breach	127
Recommended sanction	128
Annex B: Lord Ahmed's main appeal document	131
Introduction	131
Summary of grounds of appeal	131

Ground 1: Procedural Irregularities	132
Principles of natural justice	132
The irregularities	134
Ground 2: The Commissioner's findings are flawed and not based on evidence	138
The complaints which were not upheld .	138
The flawed findings	141
The Complainant's vulnerability	141
The Complainant's desire not to be identified	141
Alleged sexual assault outside the Sahara Grill	142
Receiving the response from the police	142
Evidence undermining the Complainant's credibility	143
Ground 3: New evidence casts doubt on the credibility of the complainant	145
Ground 4: The recommended sanction	145
Conclusion	147
Statement of D	147
Statement of L	150
Appendix 1: Complainant's response to Lord Ahmed's appeal	155
Appendix 2: Lord Ahmed's response to complainant's response	162
Appendix 3: Commissioner statement on role of Sam Evans	170
Appendix 4: Lord Ahmed's response to Commissioner's statement on role of Sam Evans	174
Annex C: Commissioner's supplementary report	179
Summary	179
Chapter 1: Introduction	181
Matters for consideration	181
Process	184
Chronology of events and alleged events described in the evidence	184
Chapter 2: Claims and allegations in D's and L's accounts	187
The statements of D and L that they had been told in April 2018 that Ms Zaman had a reputation as a liar and had made false allegations against J	187
Analysis	188
Summary of evidence and analysis	189
L's statement that he had been told in April 2018 that Ms Zaman was estranged from her family	190
Analysis	190
Summary of evidence and analysis	191
D's statement that Ms Zaman had volunteered to him in April 2018 she had lied in her allegations against Lord Ahmed	191
D's account	191
L's account	192
Ps account	193
Ms Zaman's account	194
Analysis	194
Summary of evidence and analysis	198
Ms Zaman's allegation, in her written response to the new material, that D had spoken to her father before the Newsnight broadcast, asking him to discourage her from involvement in it,	

and that this was probably at Lord Ahmed’s request	198
Analysis	200
Summary of evidence and analysis	200
D’s account that W told him that The Sun was pulling out as it believed the allegations to be false	201
Analysis	201
The statement of D that Ms Zaman told him in 2018 that she was seeking to create or use a #MeTooMyLord campaign to increase the impact of her allegations against Lord Ahmed	201
Analysis	202
Lord Ahmed, D and L	202
The relationships between Lord Ahmed, D and L	202
D’s initial refusal to be interviewed	206
The circumstances leading to D and L giving statements to Imran Khan & Partners in June 2020	207
Analysis	209
Summary of evidence and analysis	210
Chapter 3: Evidence of other witnesses who dealt with Ms Zaman in 2018 and 2019	211
Z	211
Analysis	211
W	212
Analysis	213
G	213
Analysis	214
U	214
Analysis	215
Chapter 4: Evaluation and consideration of previous findings	216
Conclusion	217
Appendix 1: Lord Ahmed’s response to Commissioner’s draft factual supplementary report	219
Appendix 2: Further submissions from Lord Ahmed on Commissioner’s supplementary report	243
Appendix 3: Complainant’s response to Commissioner’s supplementary report	259
Annex D: Transcript of Lord Ahmed’s appeal hearing	260

The conduct of Lord Ahmed

REPORT FROM THE CONDUCT COMMITTEE

Introduction

1. The Conduct Committee has considered a report by the House of Lords Commissioner for Standards (“the Commissioner”) on a complaint from a member of the public about the conduct of Lord Ahmed.¹ The procedure in cases such as this is set out in the *Guide to the Code of Conduct*.² Under this procedure, the Commissioner investigates allegations against members. If she finds that a member has breached the Code of Conduct, she recommends an appropriate sanction for the Conduct Committee to consider. The member may appeal to the Committee against the Commissioner’s findings and/or sanction.
2. The Committee has considered Lord Ahmed’s appeal against the Commissioner’s findings and recommended sanction.³ As part of his appeal Lord Ahmed introduced new evidence which the Committee remitted to the Commissioner for further investigation, and the Commissioner’s report on the new evidence⁴ was also considered alongside further appeal documentation from Lord Ahmed.⁵ Throughout the appeal process Lord Ahmed’s submissions were shared with the complainant and her responses were considered.⁶
3. This report includes allegations of sexual misconduct and of racism which some readers may find upsetting or offensive.

The complaint

4. The complaint was complex and is set out in detail in the Commissioner’s report. In summary, Tahira Zaman is a member of the public who was put in contact with Lord Ahmed to help her make a complaint to the Metropolitan Police about a faith healer whom she believed had exploited innocent men and women financially and sexually. Her complaint against Lord Ahmed was that when she asked him for help he initially made unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature with her and later held out the promise of using his influence to help her, when in fact his aim was to have sex with her.
5. The Code of Conduct only applies to behaviour in the course of a member’s parliamentary duties and activities. The allegation was that the behaviour complained about was related to parliamentary duties and activities because Ms Zaman approached Lord Ahmed in his capacity as a member of the House, and that Lord Ahmed responded in that capacity, as evidenced by the fact that the letter he wrote to the police on her behalf was on House of Lords’ headed paper. The Commissioner notes at paragraph 10 of her report that, when she first received this complaint in 2018, she rejected it because at that point the Code contained a narrower scope of “parliamentary duties”.

1 Annex A

2 www.parliament.uk/hl-code

3 Annex B

4 Annex C

5 Annex C, Appendix 2

6 Annex B, Appendix 1 and Annex C, Appendix 3

We agree with the Commissioner that the introduction in 2019 of the wider scope of “parliamentary duties and activities” brought this case within the scope of the Code.

The Commissioner’s investigation and findings

6. The Commissioner’s investigation took place under the terms of the 8th edition of the *Code of Conduct* and *Guide to the Code*. This edition incorporated provisions relating to bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. However, these new provisions applied only to behaviour that occurred after 21 June 2017, which is halfway through the events in this case.⁷ Under this and previous editions of the Code of Conduct members were required to “act always on their personal honour”. The Commissioner has investigated the complaint on the basis that sexual misconduct and abuse of power are not consistent with personal honour, an approach endorsed by our predecessor Committee for Privileges and Conduct.
7. The Commissioner’s investigation is set out in detail in her report. The executive summary of her report set out those allegations which she concluded, on the balance of probabilities, were true, and those allegations which she considered were not proven.
8. On the basis of these findings the Commissioner concluded as follows.⁸
 - “I find that by sexually assaulting Ms Zaman on 2 March 2017, Lord Ahmed was therefore in breach of the Code by failing to act on his personal honour.”
 - “I find that by failing to progress Ms Zaman’s case and lying about his intentions Lord Ahmed was acting without honesty or integrity. As such he was therefore failing to act on his personal honour and was in breach of the Code.”
9. The Commissioner made two other findings:
 - “I find that Lord Ahmed exploited Ms Zaman emotionally and sexually even though he knew she was receiving treatment for anxiety and depression.” This, the Commissioner found, “exacerbates the seriousness of his breaches of the Code”.
 - “[On] important issues Lord Ahmed persistently gave deliberately inaccurate and misleading accounts to conceal his behaviour towards Ms Zaman ... I consider that in conducting himself in this manner he has failed genuinely to co-operate with my investigation. He has failed to act on his personal honour, as evidenced by his dishonesty and lack of integrity.”

Lord Ahmed’s appeal

10. The grounds for appeal are limited by the Guide to the following:
 - the Commissioner was plainly wrong in her finding;
 - points of process;

7 This restriction has now been removed and complaints may be made regardless of when the alleged conduct took place.

8 Annex A, executive summary

- the emergence of significant new evidence; or
 - the severity of the sanction.
11. Lord Ahmed appealed on all four of these grounds. Although he did not deny that a sexual relationship had taken place, he did deny other aspects of Ms Zaman’s account and he did deny that he was in breach of the Code of Conduct.
 12. The Committee’s first task was to assess the new evidence which he submitted. Lord Ahmed asserted that the new evidence cast serious doubt on the credibility of the complainant, to the extent that it should cause the Commissioner to rethink her conclusions.⁹
 13. We concluded that the new evidence was of sufficient potential significance to warrant being investigated. We therefore remitted the matter to the Commissioner “to reconsider any aspects of her findings and recommendations in the light of her investigation and evaluation of the fresh evidence and for her to make thereafter a new or revised report as she may think fit”. Our consideration of the other points raised on the appeal was paused while the Commissioner undertook her supplementary investigation.
 14. The Commissioner accordingly investigated the new evidence, and made a supplementary report on it to us. She concluded that the new material did not provide any basis for amending any of the conclusions or findings set out in her first report, nor for altering her recommended sanction.¹⁰
 15. Lord Ahmed subsequently sent to the Committee further submissions in relation to the Commissioner’s supplementary report which we treated as additional points to be considered at appeal.¹¹

The Committee’s deliberations

16. The Committee was mindful of the clear statement in the Guide to the Code that it is not our role to reopen the Commissioner’s investigation. The grounds for appeal are limited to those set out in paragraph 10 above.

Appeal against the findings

The emergence of significant new evidence

17. We first considered the Commissioner’s report on the new evidence and Lord Ahmed’s observations on that report. The Commissioner’s conclusion on the new evidence was:

“The accounts provided... could not be corroborated by any independent evidence. In contrast, the evidence of other witnesses supported Ms Zaman’s challenge to their accounts. Because of this lack of independent corroborative evidence, inconsistencies in their evidence and the unlikely nature of aspects of their accounts, I do not consider that the new material provides any basis for amending any of the conclusions or findings set out in my earlier report, nor for altering my recommended sanction.”¹²

9 Annex B, paragraph 105

10 Annex C, paragraphs 265–267

11 Annex C, Appendix 2

12 Annex C, Summary

18. Lord Ahmed's response to this report contained a number of complaints about the way in which the supplementary investigation was conducted. We therefore considered whether there were serious points of process that undermined the Commissioner's findings in her supplementary report.
19. The Committee considered Lord Ahmed's criticisms that the Commissioner should have pursued other lines of inquiry and that she was biased in her selection and treatment of witnesses in her supplementary investigation. On the issue of witness selection, two examples cited in Lord Ahmed's appeal were that the Commissioner should have sought more information from the police about why they did not pursue the complainant's allegation of rape, and that the Commissioner should have sought information behind the judicial review which upheld the police decision. We see no inconsistency whatever between the Commissioner's findings and the decision of the police not to pursue the allegation of rape. The allegation the Commissioner was investigating, a breach of personal honour as a member of this House, is of a wholly different character, and outwith the remit of the police and the standard of proof for its determination is the balance of probabilities taking account of the nature and seriousness of the charge, and not the criminal standard. On the issue of treatment of witnesses, we noted that the Commissioner addressed the allegation that she had treated witnesses differently in paragraph 107 of her supplementary report. Having considered each of these appeal points we did not find any of them to be of a nature which could throw doubt on the Commissioner's clear conclusions.
20. One of Lord Ahmed's key allegations was that the Commissioner was "affected and infected by racist views" in her approach to the second investigation. This allegation was based on a question which the Commissioner put in an interview where she said she had been told, and did not know "whether this is true or not", that in traditional Muslim societies men are inclined to stick together when allegations are made about their behaviour towards women, and asked the witness whether it was true. Lord Ahmed states in his appeal that "the mere fact of her asking it is abhorrent in that it gives purchase and succour to racism through stereotyping and exposes the Commissioner's thought processes". Lord Ahmed also alleged that the Commissioner had used racial and religious profiling by seeking the assistance of an imam who was not from the same community within Islam as him.
21. We considered these two accusations very carefully. In relation to the interview question about Muslim men, the Committee noted that the Commissioner was referring to comments made by Ms Zaman and another witness during their interviews. She was testing their evidence with other witnesses. There is nothing in the Commissioner's actual reasoning in her report to lead us to think that, in drawing her conclusion that the witness was lying about the new evidence, the Commissioner relied on racial stereotypes.
22. As to the imam, the Commissioner's supplementary report, paragraph 168, explains that it was Lord Ahmed who suggested that she speak to an imam on the question of whether it was customary in Pakistani culture for people to attend the funerals of family members of people they know where there was not a personal relationship, but as a mark of respect. We also note that despite the religious and cultural differences between the imam and Lord Ahmed, the Commissioner did not draw any adverse opinions or findings about Lord Ahmed from the imam's evidence. On the contrary, she noted that the imam "whilst noting that Islam encompassed a range of customs

and practices, broadly confirmed Lord Ahmed's characterisations of cultural norms". We therefore do not uphold these points in Lord Ahmed's appeal.

23. In summary we do not believe that the Commissioner was affected or infected by racist views and reject that aspect of Lord Ahmed's appeal.
24. Viewing Lord Ahmed's challenge to the rejection by the supplementary report of the new evidence more broadly, we see no possible basis on which to disagree with the Commissioner's overall evaluation. The new evidence depended upon, or was sought to be supported by, the occurrence of what she found, for very solid reasons, to be a series of unlikely events. For example:
 - (a) the suggested voluntary admissions by Ms Zaman in April 2018 when speaking by telephone to [D], to the effect that she was setting out to lie about and destroy the reputation of Lord Ahmed at a time when she was seeking national publicity in *The Sunday Times* and elsewhere for her case that he had misused her; [D] was a journalist whom she had never met, and with whom she had been put in touch by [W], a journalist contemplating an article about Ms Zaman's complaints who had sought [D]'s assistance; [D] said that he in turn had contacted [L], another journalist, and they both said that [L] had suggested that [D] establish friendly relations with Ms Zaman and verify the truth before publication of any article supporting her;
 - (b) the failure by [D] or [L] to tell [W], Lord Ahmed or anyone, at any relevant time before April 2020, about Ms Zaman's suggested admissions; in particular, the failure to do this in April 2018 and before or after the *Newsnight* broadcast about Ms Zaman's complaint in February 2019—about which the Commissioner found that [D] knew in advance, Lord Ahmed being the only likely source of such knowledge;
 - (c) the coincidence that Ms Zaman's suggested voluntary admissions came to light, and were then immediately brought to Lord Ahmed's attention by [D], in April 2020 when Lord Ahmed chose to seek a character reference from [D], with whom he asserted that he was not on close personal relations; in this connection the Commissioner also had solid ground for her contrary conclusion that Lord Ahmed's and [D]'s relationship was not the neutral, professional contact which they deliberately misrepresented it to us and the Commissioner to be; this included the Commissioner's finding that [D] had visited Ms Zaman's father at Lord Ahmed's instigation in early February 2019, before the *Newsnight* broadcast about Ms Zaman's complaints, to encourage Mr Zaman to persuade Ms Zaman to withdraw from the broadcast;
 - (d) the extraordinary coincidence that [D] should in August 2020 ask his secretary to read aloud the transcript of his interview with the Commissioner, leading the secretary then to recall her hitherto unmentioned presence with [D] in a car during, and the overhearing by her of, the conversation in April 2018 in which it is said that Ms Zaman made the voluntary admissions.
25. Viewing the matter as a whole, the Committee sees no basis for any challenge to, and has no reservations whatever about the correctness of, the Commissioner's wholesale rejection of the new evidence.

26. In his observations on the supplementary report, Lord Ahmed also sought to introduce further new evidence in the form of a short statement by a third party which he did not raise in his original appeal or in his interview with the Commissioner in relation to her report on the evidence, but submitted late in that investigation. The Committee considered that this statement bore no relationship to the two new statements introduced at appeal, could have been submitted at that point, and in any event shed no useful light on Lord Ahmed's conduct towards Ms Zaman.
27. The Committee accordingly dismissed Lord Ahmed's submissions on the supplementary report and upheld the Commissioner's finding that the new material did not provide any basis for amending the conclusions or findings set out in her earlier report.
28. The Committee then returned to considering the main report of the Commissioner and the appeal against the findings in that report.

Points of process

29. In considering points of process, the key question for the Committee was whether there were any procedural irregularities of sufficient seriousness as to make the investigation unjust and call into question the findings.
30. Lord Ahmed raised a number of points of process in his appeal. We considered each of them in turn but concluded that none of them constituted or evidenced points which could undermine the Commissioner's findings.

"Plainly wrong"

31. We also considered Lord Ahmed's argument that the Commissioner's findings were flawed and not based on evidence, i.e. were "plainly wrong". The standard of proof set out in the Code is the balance of probabilities, so for each allegation the Commissioner had to decide whether it was more likely than not to be true.
32. In considering whether the Commissioner was "plainly wrong" in her key findings, the Committee was mindful that this is a high bar. In the ordinary judicial system, an appellate court will give considerable weight to the findings of the first instance judge (the parallel here being the Commissioner) who has the advantage of seeing all the parties, witnesses and evidence. Only on the rarest occasions, when convinced that the first instance decision was plainly wrong, will an appeal body be justified in overturning the first instance decision on an issue of fact. That could occur, if it could be said, in particular, that the first instance decision was one which the judge could not reasonably have reached or if it had been made with no basis in evidence. An appellate body is not there to say whether it thinks it would have reached the same conclusion.
33. The Committee did in this case have reservations about one area of fact found by the Commissioner. That concerns whether Lord Ahmed knew or realised before late July 2017 that Ms Zaman was willing to be identified to, and meet, the police and misled the police when he told them in April 2017 that she wished to remain anonymous and therefore would not meet with them. Ms Zaman set out her complaint to Lord Ahmed in a statement "To whom it may concern" in which she said that she did not want to give her name as I wish to remain anonymous" and sent it him on 22 February 2017

with an email questioning whether to mention [J] in the statement because, if she did, it might affect her anonymity. But in the course of his evidence, the Commissioner records, Lord Ahmed went further and insisted that Ms Zaman had specifically told him on or before 2 March 2017 that she did not want her identity to be known to the police at all (irrespective of any assurances the police might give about protecting it from others). We do not question the Commissioner's finding that "Lord Ahmed was deliberately untruthful" to the Commissioner in his accounts of a specific explanation of this nature being given him by Ms Zaman at this time and/or, as he at times stated, after she saw the police letter of 3 May 2017; and that his probable motive in that respect was in order to create "clear blue water between the conclusion of his activities as a parliamentarian and the start of his sexual relationship with Ms Zaman".¹³

34. However, the opposite, namely that there was at that time a discussion in which Ms Zaman positively told Lord Ahmed that she was willing to have her identity disclosed to the police, despite her communicated wish for anonymity, does not follow; and would on the face of it be inconsistent with the letter dated 2 March 2017 which Lord Ahmed wrote based on what Ms Zaman said in her email of 22 February and draft statement. Ms Zaman also saw the letter, in which she was carefully referred to as an informant who wished to remain anonymous, and she made no objection to it. The Commissioner did not find that Ms Zaman ever explicitly said to Lord Ahmed before July 2017 that she was willing for her identity to be disclosed to, and to meet, the police.
35. Nonetheless, we found nothing in Lord Ahmed's appeal to persuade us that there was anything plainly wrong about the Commissioner's overall finding, that Lord Ahmed breached the Code of Conduct by failing to act on his personal honour:
 - (a) in sexually assaulting Ms Zaman on 2 March 2017 after they had dinner to discuss the complaint she wished to make to the police; and then
 - (b) in exploiting her emotionally and sexually by lying about his intentions to help her between August and November 2017.

As to the second of these, the Commissioner found that Lord Ahmed knew that he was dealing with a vulnerable person, who was undergoing treatment for anxiety and depression and who had already made clear that she did not want a sexual relationship. He nonetheless misleadingly induced her to visit him at his house under the pretext of offering to assist her as a member of the House of Lords in relation to the matters she had wanted to be raised with the police, when his true motivation was to induce her into a sexual relationship which on this occasion he succeeded in bringing about, lasting over the next three months.

Conclusion

36. **The Conduct Committee accordingly dismisses the appeal of Lord Ahmed against the Commissioner's findings that he breached the Code of Conduct by failing to act on his personal honour in the course of his parliamentary activities.**

¹³ Annex A, paragraph 144

Appeal against the recommended sanction

37. We now turn to Lord Ahmed's appeal against the Commissioner's recommended sanction of expulsion from the House. This is based on her findings of breach and the aggravating circumstances she identifies including that Lord Ahmed knew that Ms Zaman was vulnerable, that he did not cooperate with the investigation, and that he has shown no remorse. The Commissioner concludes that "His use of his parliamentary status to offer illusory help to a vulnerable Ms Zaman undermines the reputation of the House of Lords as a whole, as it undermines trust in the honesty and trustworthiness of its members."
38. Lord Ahmed made submissions in mitigation. The majority of these, along with the Commissioner's consideration of them, can be found at paragraphs 566–594 and in Appendix 11 of the main report.¹⁴ But Lord Ahmed also developed some points in his grounds of appeal against the Commissioner's main report and addressed some points relevant to mitigation in his oral submissions before the Committee. His submissions, taken together, addressed:
- (a) his background, activities in life and good character, in support of which various references were also relied on;
 - (b) the fact that this was the first time he had been found in breach of the *Code of Conduct* or anything similar;
 - (c) the devastating impact the report and any subsequent expulsion would have on his personal, matrimonial and public life;
 - (d) the fact that the *Guide to the Code* says that "the longer ago the conduct occurred, the more certain the Commissioner should be of the need for such a sanction before recommending it."; and
 - (e) the inappropriateness of any severe sanction in the light of the fact that the sexual relationship was consensual and in light of the nature of those breaches which have been found by the Commissioner and which have also been endorsed by the Committee; and in particular the disproportionality of the Commissioner's recommended sanction of expulsion.
39. On point (a), the Committee accepts that Lord Ahmed has made a long and substantial contribution to public life. On point (b) the Committee also accepts that in some cases commission of a first offence can be a relevant mitigation, particularly in the case of minor breaches, and that the Commissioner's conclusion at paragraph 575 of the Commissioner's main report should be qualified accordingly. On point (c), like the Commissioner, the Committee further accepts that the effect of the report and any sanction will be severe on Lord Ahmed's personal and family as well as his public life. However, as the Commissioner indicated, the imposition of an appropriate sanction must sometimes have such an effect. On point (d), we agree with the Commissioner that this passage in the *Guide* was focused on the presently irrelevant situation of conduct that occurred before the passage of the 2015 Act which allows the House to expel its members. The behaviour in this case took place well after that Act had been passed. The length of time that has

¹⁴ Appendix 11 to the Commissioner's report is not printed here but is available to members of the House on request to the Clerk of the Journals

elapsed since an offence was committed may sometimes be relevant, but it is not substantial in this case.

40. The Commissioner's finding that Lord Ahmed was uncooperative and dishonest and so failed to act on his personal honour in relation to her investigation, in core areas of both the Commissioner's main and her supplementary investigations on which the Committee has relied in this report, combines with the fact (also noticeable in his appearance before us) that he has continued to deny any wrongdoing and has shown no indication of any regret, remorse or understanding of the inappropriateness of his conduct or its effect on a vulnerable victim. The risk of repetition also cannot be excluded. These facts (about which the Committee has no doubt in the light of all the material and information before it) mean that Lord Ahmed has no claim to the benefit of any mitigation in any of these areas.
41. The aspect which has given the Committee the most cause for thought is the appropriateness of the recommended sanction. In that connection, the Committee also bears in mind that, while it has accepted the Commissioner's central conclusions relating to the two main aspects involving sexual misconduct in the course of performance of parliamentary activities, as set out in paragraph 35 above, it has expressed its reservations on one subsidiary aspect (see paragraphs 33–34 above). It is on the appropriateness of the sanction for the two findings of breach only that the Committee will therefore focus.
42. Lord Ahmed cited the words of Baroness Hayman on the introduction of the Bill allowing for expulsion, namely that "Expulsion is obviously a hugely weighty and heavy step". She expressed the hope that the provision for it "would simply lie unused and that there would never be conduct that would provoke the possibility of the House being asked to agree to expel a member". We accept the guidance in the first sentence and would have hoped that the hope in the second sentence could always be realised.
43. What conduct calls for the most severe sanctions will necessarily depend on the nature, responsibilities and public perception of the relevant profession, employment, calling or role in question. The Committee has considered the role, responsibilities and public perception of membership of the House and the seven principles of public life which underpin the Code. The public rightly expects parliamentarians to be held to a high standard of conduct as well as honesty and, when members fall short egregiously, the trust and confidence in Parliament of the public as well as of those working inside the House, and those having dealings with members of the House, are all undermined.
44. We accept that it is possible to think of even more serious breaches of the Code than the present, and we have considered the full range of sanctions at our disposal including whether a lengthy period of suspension would be an acceptable substitute for or alternative to that which the Commissioner proposed.
45. We have nevertheless come ultimately to the conclusion that it would not be appropriate for this case to lead simply to a period of lengthy suspension followed by re-admission to the role, responsibilities and privileges of membership of the House. The abuse of the privileged position of membership for a member's own gain or gratification, at the expense of the vulnerable or

less privileged, involves a fundamental breach of trust and merits the gravest sanction. Even though it is possible to think of even more serious breaches, the case in all its circumstances which we have set out crosses the threshold calling for immediate and definitive expulsion.

46. **The Committee recommends that Lord Ahmed be expelled from the House under Standing Order 12 (Expulsion or suspension of a member).**

Annex A: Commissioner's main report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report deals with a number of allegations against Lord Ahmed made by a member of the public, Tahira Zaman, with whom he had had a sexual relationship. Following a lengthy investigation, I have found that some of Ms Zaman's allegations are more likely than not to be accurate. Consequently, I have found that Lord Ahmed has breached the House of Lords Code of Conduct. The sanction I recommend to the Conduct Committee as a result is that Lord Ahmed be expelled from the House.

By its nature, any report into allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct will include content that some readers may find upsetting or offensive. My aim is to reflect fairly and fully the evidence I gather in the course of an investigation and not to censor or in any way minimise views expressed or material uncovered. I believe this transparency is essential to helping the House of Lords to be an institution where everyone is valued and respected, and where it is clear that bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are not tolerated. This means that reports into allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct will often make for difficult reading.

The findings and discussions in this case relate to sexual misconduct and a failure to act personal honour.

Ms Zaman's complaint

Tahira Zaman is a member of the public who, having allegedly experienced financial and sexual exploitation at the hands of a faith healer, S, was put into contact with Lord Ahmed in the hope that he would be able to help her make a complaint to the Metropolitan Police about S.

Her complaint was that, instead of helping her, Lord Ahmed used the possibility of arranging a meeting with the Metropolitan Police to lure her to his house, where he had sex with her, possibly after drugging her. They then had a sexual relationship that lasted from September to November 2017, during which time he continued to say that he was going to arrange the meeting with the Metropolitan Police.

During their sexual relationship she said that Lord Ahmed tried to pass her to an associate, X, for X's sexual gratification. She also told us that after Lord Ahmed ended their sexual relationship, this associate deleted or made her delete all messages and other data to and from Lord Ahmed from her phone, which she believed was at Lord Ahmed's instigation.

She also complained that Lord Ahmed had put his hand on her upper thigh at their second meeting, in March 2017, which had been unexpected and unwelcome.

The aspects of her complaint that could engage the Code of Conduct were that Lord Ahmed:

- put his hand on her upper thigh, which was unexpected and unwelcome;

- failed to progress her complaint and lied to her about his actions and intentions;
- lied to her by inviting her to his home to discuss the offer of a meeting with the police, when in fact his aim was to have sex with her;
- may have spiked her drink on her first visit to his house;
- tried to pass her to X, an associate of Lord Ahmed's, for X's sexual gratification;
- used X to delete compromising data about him from her phone; and
- exploited her emotionally and sexually even though he knew she was receiving treatment for anxiety and depression.

Lord Ahmed's response

Lord Ahmed told us that he had indeed offered to help Ms Zaman and had written a letter to the Metropolitan Police about her concerns. He had not identified her when he wrote, as she had said she wanted to be anonymous. When he told her that he had written to the police she said that she did not want to pursue the matter if this would involve giving her name to the police. His help as a parliamentarian ended at that point, he claimed, as there was nothing more he could do for her.

Lord Ahmed said that some months later they formed a social relationship and Ms Zaman showed she was interested in having an intimate relationship with him, which he politely rebuffed, saying that he was married and not interested. She asked to come to his house to discuss a proposal of marriage she had received and he agreed to this. He said that when she was at his house she instigated sexual contact and they ended up having intercourse, which he had not been expecting.

He did not accept that any of the potential breaches of the Code of Conduct had taken place. In particular, he said that, because his activities as a parliamentarian had ended in March 2017, and had lasted only a short time, his sexual relationship with Ms Zaman, which began in September 2017, was not in breach of the Code of Conduct.

He denied the alleged behaviour set out above.

Process

Our investigation was complicated, in that Ms Zaman had initially complained to me about Lord Ahmed in January 2018. I had concluded that her complaint did not engage the Code of Conduct in place at that time, as the relevant part of the Code only covered conduct while a Member of the House was engaged in parliamentary duties. I did not consider that Lord Ahmed's offer to help Ms Zaman was a parliamentary duty.

After I had told her I could not investigate her complaint, Ms Zaman went to the police. She complained about Lord Ahmed, S, and X, and the police investigated. Their investigation included interviewing Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed. The police decided there was insufficient evidence to prosecute.

Ms Zaman also contacted the BBC and a Newsnight programme was broadcast in February 2019 setting out her allegations and Lord Ahmed's denial that he had done anything wrong.

In May 2019 amendments to the Code of Conduct were made, so that in certain circumstances behaviour while a member of the House was engaged in

parliamentary duties **or activities** (my emphasis) could be subject to the Code. Ms Zaman was aware of the changes to the Code, renewed her complaint, and I found it to be eligible for investigation.

We obtained evidence, by way of interview and/or documentation from Lord Ahmed, Ms Zaman and a number of other individuals and organisations, including the Metropolitan Police, the Sahara Grill (a restaurant where Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed had dinner), Newsnight, two friends of Ms Zaman, and from Ms Zaman's phone. We were not able to obtain any information from Lord Ahmed's phone as he had changed phones in late 2017/early 2018 and had deleted information from his old phone before passing it on.

This investigation took place throughout 2019 and into 2020 and covered events from February to December 2017.

Summary of relevant matters agreed between Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman

Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman agreed that:

- they met in February 2017 at the Darbar Restaurant;
- Lord Ahmed wrote on her behalf to Commissioner Cressida Dick of the Metropolitan Police on 2 March 2017;
- they subsequently had dinner at the Sahara Grill restaurant;
- their sexual relationship began when Ms Zaman first visited Lord Ahmed's London home;
- their sexual relationship was consensual; and
- the breakup of the relationship was instigated by Lord Ahmed.

Summary of relevant disputed matters and findings

My formal findings—and the evidence and analysis supporting each of them—are set out in greater detail in the body of the report. In each case, the standard of proof applied is as set out in the Code of Conduct: whether the allegation is proved on the balance of probabilities as being more likely than not to be the case.

We worked through the differing accounts of Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman in chronological order.

Whether Lord Ahmed was aware from the start that Ms Zaman was vulnerable

Lord Ahmed said that he had never been aware that Ms Zaman was psychologically and emotionally vulnerable. Ms Butt, the mutual friend who introduced them to each other said that she had informed Lord Ahmed of this before they first met. Ms Zaman and Ms Butt said that the issue had also been raised at their first meeting at the Darbar restaurant in February 2017.

I find that it is more likely than not that Lord Ahmed knew of Ms Zaman's emotional and psychological vulnerability from the time that he was contacted by Ms Butt.

Ms Zaman's alleged wish not to be identified to the police or to meet them

Lord Ahmed said that Ms Zaman wished not to be identified to the police and, therefore, once the police requested that they know her identity, there was no further action he could take and his parliamentary activity came to an end.

Lord Ahmed gave a number of different accounts of the circumstances that resulted in Ms Zaman allegedly saying that she did not wish to meet the police or let them know her name. Most of these accounts centred on the dinner at the Sahara Grill. In some of the accounts Lord Ahmed said that he had received a reply to his letter to Commissioner Dick before the dinner, and in others he said he had not. His final account was that he had not received the letter before the dinner.

Ms Zaman said that the dinner had taken place the same day that Lord Ahmed had sent the letter to Commissioner Dick. She also told us that she had always been willing to let the police know her identity, and had never suggested otherwise to Lord Ahmed. The Metropolitan Police confirmed that, before she met Lord Ahmed, she had complained to them directly, and in her own name.

Evidence provided by the Metropolitan Police demonstrates categorically that Ms Zaman would have been content for the police to know her identity.

I find that it is more likely than not that during the investigation Lord Ahmed deliberately gave a false account of the circumstances before and at the meeting at the Sahara Grill and was deliberately untruthful when he claimed that Ms Zaman had told him she did not wish to proceed with her complaint if it meant giving her name to the police. His probable motive in the course of the investigation was to create the appearance of clear blue water between the conclusion of his activities as a parliamentarian and the start of his sexual relationship with Ms Zaman.

Alleged sexual assault after the dinner at the Sahara Grill

Ms Zaman said that after the dinner at the Sahara Grill on 2 March 2017 Lord Ahmed put his hand on her upper thigh, which was unexpected and unwelcome. She told Ms Butt about this and Ms Butt had had a conversation about this with Lord Ahmed. Lord Ahmed denied that this incident had taken place, or that he had had a conversation with Ms Butt about it.

Taken together, the corroborative evidence of Ms Butt and the inconsistent explanations by Lord Ahmed lead me to find that it was more likely than not that Ms Zaman was telling the truth when she said that Lord Ahmed put his hand on the top of her leg, close to her "private parts", on 2 March 2017.

Lord Ahmed's communications with the police in 2017

The Metropolitan Police told us that in April 2017, after they responded to Lord Ahmed's letter of 2 March 2017, Lord Ahmed told them that Ms Zaman did not want to meet them or talk to them about her concerns over S.

In March 2020 Lord Ahmed told us that that Ms Zaman never expected him to do more than write to Commissioner Dick and had not expected or wanted any follow up.

I find it more likely than not that Lord Ahmed's communications with the police after sending his letter of 2 March 2017 (which effectively prevented Ms Zaman from accessing the help she sought and the police offered) are explained by Ms Zaman's rejection of his advances on 2 March 2017 and, possibly, Ms Butt's criticism of him for his behaviour.

Contact between Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed between 2 March and 14 July 2017 and Lord Ahmed's behaviour during this time

Ms Zaman told us that she blocked Lord Ahmed from her phone after the sexual assault on 2 March 2017, and unblocked him some months later so she could text him to ask if he had had a reply to his letter of 2 March 2017. Subsequently we found this text on her phone, dated 14 July 2017. She said that Lord Ahmed then sent her the letter from the police of 3 May 2017, in which she was offered an interview and reassured that her identity would not be revealed to S without her consent.

Lord Ahmed told us that he did not remember receiving this text and had not sent the letter to Ms Zaman, as his parliamentary work for her had ended in March 2017.

I find that it is more likely than not that, in response to Ms Zaman's text of 14 July 2017, Lord Ahmed sent her the reply from the police dated 3 May 2017 at some time after 14 July 2017 and before she visited his house in September 2017, and that he still did not inform her of his communications with the police in April 2017, and therefore actively deceived her in relation to his intentions to help.

Ms Zaman's visit to Lord Ahmed's house

Ms Zaman told us that Lord Ahmed suggested that she should meet him at his house in London to discuss the offer of a meeting with the Metropolitan Police.

Lord Ahmed told us that Ms Zaman asked to come to his house to discuss an offer of marriage she had received from a Pakistani national and he agreed.

I find it is more likely than not that Ms Zaman went to Lord Ahmed's house at his invitation to discuss the offer made by the police to meet her. However, he had no intention of forwarding her concerns to the police and his use of the letter to lure Ms Zaman to his house was dishonest.

The start of Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman's sexual relationship

Ms Zaman told us that Lord Ahmed initiated their sexual activity that evening.

Lord Ahmed told us that Ms Zaman initiated the sexual activity at his house.

After their relationship ended, Ms Zaman thought that Lord Ahmed might have spiked the cup of tea he gave her when she arrived at his house on the first occasion.

Lord Ahmed denied doing this.

I find it more likely than not that Lord Ahmed planned and initiated the sexual encounter at his home the first time they met there. He used the excuse of helping Ms Zaman with her complaint as a device to get her to his house.

However, it is not possible to conclude that Ms Zaman's belief that Lord Ahmed spiked her drink at his house is more likely to be true than Lord Ahmed's denial.

The basis of their relationship until it ended in November 2017

Ms Zaman told us that she continued to ask Lord Ahmed to arrange the meeting with the police, as offered in the letter of 3 May 2017, and he said he would do so when he had time.

Lord Ahmed told us that during their sexual relationship the topic of her complaint against S never arose, and there was no discussion of the letter from the police of 3 May 2017.

I find it more likely than not that Lord Ahmed continued to offer to arrange a meeting with the police between September and November 2017 and he was holding himself out to be engaged in parliamentary activities throughout their sexual relationship.

Whether Ms Zaman was passed to X

Ms Zaman said that during their sexual relationship Lord Ahmed insisted that she speak to an associate of his, X, on the phone and that subsequently X pursued a relationship with her. After the end of her relationships with Lord Ahmed and X, she came to believe that Lord Ahmed had tried to pass her to X for X's sexual gratification.

Lord Ahmed said that he did not introduce Ms Zaman to X and did not pass her to X for X's sexual gratification.

I find that it is not possible to conclude that Ms Zaman's belief that Lord Ahmed passed her to X for X's sexual gratification is more likely to be true than Lord Ahmed's denial.

Deleting messages from Ms Zaman's phone

Ms Zaman told us that after the end of her relationship with Lord Ahmed, and just before the end of her relationship with X, X either deleted or required her to delete from her phone all the messages between her and Lord Ahmed. She believed that Lord Ahmed instigated this.

Lord Ahmed denied playing any part in the deletion of the messages.

I find that X either deleted messages between Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed in December 2017, or required Ms Zaman to delete them but that there is no evidence that Lord Ahmed played any part in this.

Summary of findings

As a result of these findings, I uphold the following of Ms Zaman's allegations:

- Lord Ahmed put his hand on Ms Zaman's upper thigh, which was unexpected and unwelcome, and I consider that this constitutes sexual assault;
- Lord Ahmed failed to progress her complaint and lied to her about his actions and intentions;
- Lord Ahmed lied to her by inviting her to his home to discuss the offer of a meeting with the police, when in fact his aim was to have sex with her;

- Lord Ahmed lied to her by continuing to hold out the prospect of a meeting with the police during their sexual relationship, despite having no intention of making any such arrangement.

I do not uphold the following allegations:

- Lord Ahmed drugged Ms Zaman when she went to his house in September 2017;
- Lord Ahmed passed Ms Zaman to X for his sexual gratification;
- Lord Ahmed ordered X to delete the messages from Ms Zaman's phone.

Breaches of the Code

In relation to the sexual assault on 2 March 2017, this constitutes sexual misconduct. Though in the eighth edition of the Code of Conduct (under which this investigation was made) the specific provisions relating to sexual misconduct did not apply before 21 June 2017, I consider sexual misconduct to be inconsistent with personal honour.

I find that by sexually assaulting Ms Zaman on 2 March 2017, Lord Ahmed was therefore in breach of the Code by failing to act on his personal honour.

I find that by failing to progress Ms Zaman's case and lying about his intentions Lord Ahmed was acting without honesty or integrity. As such he was therefore failing to act on his personal honour and was in breach of the Code.

I find that Lord Ahmed exploited Ms Zaman emotionally and sexually even though he knew she was receiving treatment for anxiety and depression. I consider that this exacerbates the seriousness of his breaches of the Code.

The findings I have made based on the evidence in relation to Ms Zaman's complaints show that on important issues Lord Ahmed persistently gave deliberately inaccurate and misleading accounts to conceal his behaviour towards Ms Zaman. Rather than provide an honest account of his conduct, he attempted to undermine the evidence provided by Ms Zaman through denial and dishonesty.

Members are required to cooperate with my investigations. Co-operating with my investigation is therefore a parliamentary duty, and, as such, subject to the requirement of the Code of Conduct that members should observe the seven general principles of public life, including honesty and integrity.

I consider that in conducting himself in this manner he has failed genuinely to co-operate with my investigation. He has failed to act on his personal honour, as evidenced by his dishonesty and lack of integrity.

Recommended sanction

Having found that Lord Ahmed breached the Code of Conduct by failing to act on his personal honour, my role is to recommend an appropriate sanction for the Conduct Committee to consider.

In accordance with the guide to the Code of Conduct, I invited Lord Ahmed to provide me with any material he wished me to take into account when considering what sanction to recommend. I have considered this material.

My recommended sanction is that Lord Ahmed be expelled from the House of Lords.

CHAPTER 1: SUMMARY OF ALLEGATIONS AND INVESTIGATION

Ms Zaman's complaint

1. Tahira Zaman is a member of the public who, having allegedly experienced financial and sexual exploitation at the hands of a faith healer, S, was put into contact with Lord Ahmed in the hope that he would be able to help her make a complaint to the Metropolitan Police about S.
2. Her complaint was that, instead of helping her, Lord Ahmed used the possibility of arranging a meeting with the Metropolitan Police to lure her to his house where he had sex with her, possibly after drugging her. They then had a sexual relationship that lasted from September to November 2017, during which time he continued to say that he was going to arrange the meeting with the Metropolitan Police.
3. During their sexual relationship she said that Lord Ahmed tried to pass her to an associate, X, for X's sexual gratification.¹ This associate deleted or made her delete all messages and other data to and from Lord Ahmed from her phone, which she believed was at Lord Ahmed's instigation.
4. She also said that at their second meeting, in March 2017, Lord Ahmed had put his hand on her upper thigh, which had been unexpected and unwelcome.
5. The aspects of her complaint that could engage the Code of Conduct were that Lord Ahmed:
 - put his hand on her upper thigh, which was unexpected and unwelcome;
 - failed to progress her complaint and lied to her about his actions and intentions;
 - lied to her by inviting her to his home to discuss the offer of a meeting with the police, when in fact his aim was to have sex with her;
 - may have spiked her drink on her first visit to his house;
 - tried to pass her to X, an associate of Lord Ahmed's, for X's sexual gratification;
 - used X to delete compromising data about him from her phone; and
 - exploited her emotionally and sexually even though he knew she was receiving treatment for anxiety and depression.

Lord Ahmed's response

6. Lord Ahmed told us that he had indeed offered to help Ms Zaman and had written a letter to the Metropolitan Police about her concerns. He had not identified her when he wrote, as she had said she wanted to be anonymous. When he told her that he had written to the police she said that she did not want to pursue the matter if this would involve giving her name to the police or meeting them. His help as a parliamentarian ended at that point, he claimed, as there was nothing more he could do for her.

1 X is an associate of Lord Ahmed's. I am aware of his identity but as this investigation is into Lord Ahmed's conduct, not X's, he is entitled to remain anonymous.

7. Lord Ahmed said that some months later they formed a social relationship and Ms Zaman showed she was interested in having an intimate relationship with him, which he politely rebuffed, saying that he was married and not interested. She asked to come to his house to discuss a proposal of marriage she had received and he agreed to this. When she was at his house she instigated sexual contact and they ended up having intercourse, which he had not been expecting. He said variously that the sexual relationship lasted a few days, two or three weeks, and from September to November 2017. He said that he tried to end it throughout.
8. He did not accept that any of the potential breaches of the Code of Conduct had taken place.
9. He said that his brief efforts to use his parliamentary status to help Ms Zaman had come to an end before a much longer period of social contact and, as he did not know she was vulnerable, allowing a sexual relationship to take place was not a breach of the Code.

CHAPTER 2: INVESTIGATION AND EVIDENCE

10. This was a complicated investigation, partly because it had involved an initial complaint made in January 2018, which I found did not engage the Code of Conduct then in force, a subsequent police investigation and Newsnight programme about Ms Zaman's allegations, and a renewed complaint in 2019, which I found did engage the Code following its revision in April 2019.
11. In addition, both Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed provided evidence that was sometimes inconsistent. This is not unusual when people are reporting on events in the past and we had to evaluate all the inconsistencies that we found. We do not start from the assumption that inconsistencies were evidence that the person giving the inconsistent account was lying, as we accept that accounts may vary in telling and re-telling and that this is not, in itself, an indication of something untoward. However, we did evaluate all the inconsistencies that we found and that were drawn to our attention by Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman and where these matters were relevant we have set out how we carried out the evaluation.
12. In some cases we obtained reliable corroborative evidence that allowed us to evaluate the most likely accurate account. Where the inconsistencies were on matters of detail that were not at the heart of the complaint, and we had no reliable corroborative evidence, we acknowledged that certainty was not possible. The standard of proof required by the Code of Conduct is that allegations are proved on the balance of probabilities as being more likely than not to be the case.
13. Another complicating factor was that information from the police investigation in 2018 was not disclosed to us until close to the end of the investigation in 2019 and 2020.
14. There are some matters in the events investigated which are not contested:
 - Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman met in February, March and September 2017;
 - at the February meeting Lord Ahmed agreed to try and help Ms Zaman take forward her complaint against S;
 - Lord Ahmed subsequently wrote a letter to Commissioner Dick of the Metropolitan Police; and
 - the meeting in September was the beginning of a sexual relationship between them.
15. Although there are allegations and denials on particular matters where it would be difficult to say that on the balance of probabilities one account is more likely than the other to be accurate, there are others where supporting evidence tilts the balance. Some of these matters would not by themselves engage the Code of Conduct but were brought up in an attempt to support or undermine the reliability or accuracy of Ms Zaman's or Lord Ahmed's account. As they were elements of the conduct we were investigating, they were relevant.

Key events

16. This investigation took place throughout 2019 and into 2020 and covered events from February to December 2017. The key milestones in the complaint and leading to my investigation were:
 - 2015–2016: Ms Zaman allegedly experienced emotional and financial abuse at the hands of a faith healer, S;
 - 12 October 2016: Ms Zaman reported her experiences of S to the police;
 - Early February 2017: Ms Zaman was in contact with Southall Black Sisters² about S;
 - 21 February 2017: Ms Zaman was introduced to Lord Ahmed at the Darbar Restaurant. Ms Saima Butt made the introduction in the hope that Lord Ahmed would help Ms Zaman in her complaint against S;
 - 22 February 2017: Ms Zaman emailed Lord Ahmed with details of her involvement with S;
 - 2 March 2017: Lord Ahmed wrote on Ms Zaman's behalf to Commissioner Dick (see Box 1 below);
 - 2 March 2017: Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman met at the Sahara Grill restaurant;
 - April 2017 Lord Ahmed told the police that his informant would not meet them;
 - 3 May 2017: Detective Superintendent (DSupt) Jason Prins replied to Lord Ahmed on behalf of Commissioner Dick (see Box 2 below);
 - 14 July 2017: Ms Zaman sent Lord Ahmed a text message seeking an update on his contact with the police;
 - Ms Zaman was shown or sent the letter from the police to Lord Ahmed of 3 May 2017;
 - Early September 2017: Ms Zaman visited Lord Ahmed's house for the first time and their sexual relationship began;
 - 6 and 8 September 2017: Ms Zaman had telephone consultations with her GP;
 - 30 September 2017: Ms Zaman wrote to the Prime Minister, Theresa May, concerning S;
 - 5 November 2017: Ms Zaman and X began to send one another WhatsApp messages;
 - Mid to late November 2017: Lord Ahmed broke off his relationship with Ms Zaman, apparently after discovering some of her WhatsApp exchanges with X;

² Southall Black Sisters is an advice, advocacy and resource centre in West London, which provides support to women experiencing violence and abuse and other forms of gender inequality. <https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/>

- 24 December 2017: text messages, WhatsApp messages and images relating to Ms Zaman’s relationship with Lord Ahmed were deleted from her phone;
- 16 January 2018: Ms Zaman used a data retrieval app—Dr Fone—to attempt to retrieve the data deleted on 24 December 2017. She retrieved text messages between her and Lord Ahmed but not their WhatsApp messages, which was how he preferred to communicate with Ms Zaman. (Further details on the Dr Fone material and its reliability are at paragraphs 460–481);
- 20 January 2018: Ms Zaman discussed with her sisters making a complaint against Lord Ahmed under the Code of Conduct. On Ms Zaman’s behalf, one of her sisters produced a draft complaint intended for me, of which I only became aware later in 2019;
- 28 January 2018: Ms Zaman submitted her finalised complaint against Lord Ahmed to me;
- 2 February 2018: I wrote to Ms Zaman provisionally dismissing her complaint, as it did not fall within the scope of the Code as it then was;
- 7 March 2018: Ms Zaman took her complaint against Lord Ahmed to the police;
- 15 March 2018: Ms Zaman wrote to ask me to reconsider my provisional dismissal;
- 30 March 2018: I wrote again to Ms Zaman affirming my conclusion that her complaint did not fall within the scope of the Code as it then was;
- 12 April 2018: Having confirmed my preliminary assessment with Ms Zaman, I informed Lord Ahmed of Ms Zaman’s complaint;
- 26 April 2018: following email exchanges and discussions with the investigating officer, Ms Zaman was interviewed by the police regarding her complaint to them;
- 11 July 2018: Ms Zaman was interviewed again by the police;
- 26 July 2018: Lord Ahmed was interviewed by the police;
- 14 February 2019: Newsnight broadcast an investigation into Ms Zaman’s allegations;
- 30 April 2019: the House of Lords agreed changes to the Code of Conduct, which expanded its remit and applied the expanded remit with an element of retrospective effect;
- 5 June 2019: Ms Zaman wrote to me to re-submit her complaint against Lord Ahmed;
- 28 June 2019: I wrote to Lord Ahmed informing him of the re-submitted complaint and explaining that I had accepted it for investigation.

Key evidence

17. This investigation involved gathering substantial amounts of evidence, most of which is reproduced in the body of the report and in the appendices.
18. Four elements of the documentary evidence gathered during the investigation that it is useful to highlight are:
 - the letter Lord Ahmed sent to the incoming Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Cressida Dick, dated 2 March 2017;
 - the reply Lord Ahmed received from DSupt Prins on Commissioner Dick's behalf, dated 3 May 2017;
 - material Ms Zaman retrieved from her phone using a data retrieval app, Dr Fone; and
 - transcripts of police interviews with Ms Zaman in April and July 2018, and with Lord Ahmed in July 2018.

Letter to Commissioner Dick and the reply from DSupt Prins

19. As they are essential to the case, the letter from Lord Ahmed to Commissioner Dick and the reply on her behalf from DSupt Prins are reproduced here.

Box 1: Lord Ahmed's letter to Commissioner Dick, dated 2 March 2017

I am delighted to congratulate you on your new appointment as the Commissioner of the Police.

I have been asked to report the above gentleman [S] for serious misconduct, exploitation and possible criminal activities being pursued in Ilford. I understand that many venerable [*sic*] people with domestic, family, financial and health problems from across the UK are encouraged to meet with this fake Sheikh who is exploiting these innocent men and women.

My informant would like to remain anonymous for the fear of her safety and her children's safety as [S] told her that her problems were spiritual and he has the powers to resolve, damage and hurt any person. He also mentioned an orphanage in Gambia he had setup and asks for donations of £300 as well as [*sic*]. [S] is a typical con merchant exploiting venerable [*sic*] people on monthly, weekly and daily basis. I understand that he charges £1500 for his spiritual powers to avoid prison sentence and £5,000 for spiritual fertility for women who cannot conceive a child.

I understand that he has advised a young female student of being victim of an "evil eye" and arranged for her to sleep with other married man [*sic*]. She is now suffering from depression. He has given his clients the impression that he is a witchcraft doctor from Gambia.

I understand that he sets up secret and temporary marriages for wealthy, married men and convinces the women to keep quiet and not tell anyone, thus alienating them from the traditional sources of help. I believe he exploits vulnerable women and supplies them to wealthy men for the purpose of sex.

One of his most wealthy clients is [J] who lives in Kent and has a Warehouse in [location] called as [name].

He speaks to him over the phone on a daily basis. My informant would hear them discussing women several times and [J] would say things like “she does not go naked in front of me.” To which [S] would reply “don’t worry I have done the work.” [S] told her that people like [J] do not pay tax and when the Inland Revenue are after them, they come to him for help. [S] told her that [J] had confessed to him that he had employed illegal workers. [S] also told her that HMRC wanted to close [J’s] Warehouse down.

I understand that another of [S’s] wealthy client [T] had been observed passing over a lot of cash to [S].

It’s alleged that one of [S’s] another client is the landlady of this bed and breakfast, where he resides, also takes a share of his earnings.

I am told that Just *[sic]* before Ramadan he was no longer allowed to continue his practice at the bed and breakfast due to complaints from other residence *[sic]*. After council investigation, he moved to [address].

The owner of these premises, [F], also charges clients £5 per visit. She was made aware that there were doubts about the [S’s] authenticity and his way of working. [S] sees approximately 30 clients a day, 7 days a week. Therefore I request you to look into this matter.

Looking forward to hear from you soon.

Box 2: Reply from DSupt Prins, dated 3 May 2017

Thank you for your letter to the Commissioner dated 2nd March 2017 regarding [S]. The information provided in your letter was passed to the Modern Slavery and Kidnap Unit (MSKU) for assessment.

The information has been researched against the databases held by the Metropolitan Police Service but unfortunately there is nothing within these systems that provides any supporting or additional information. There are a number of allegations made against [S] within the letter and it would appear that the informant has detailed and first-hand knowledge of this individual and his activities.

I understand that an officer from the MSKU has made contact with you with a view to arranging a meeting with the source of the information. Whilst I understand that the informant wishes to remain anonymous it is important if an investigation is to be progressed that she is spoken to by police officers so that a full assessment can be made of her information.

The officers within the MSKU are very experienced in dealing with vulnerable victims and witnesses and I can assure you that her details would not be disclosed if that were her wish.

Mobile phone data retrieved by Ms Zaman

20. On 16 January 2018, Ms Zaman used a data retrieval app—Dr Fone—to attempt to retrieve data deleted from her phone on 24 December 2017. She provided this data to us on 12 September 2019. It also included information that had not been deleted from her phone by X, for instance all the WhatsApp messages between Ms Zaman and X.
21. The material Ms Zaman provided included:
 - text messages in CSV, HTML and XML format;

- WhatsApp data in CSV and XML format.
22. Among the messages there were:
- 182 text messages between Ms Zaman and X. These date from 24 November 2017 to 14 January 2018; and
 - 5,880 WhatsApp messages between Ms Zaman and X. Where the material is dated (some is undated), it runs from 17 October 2017 to 10 January 2018.
23. In their written submissions both Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed also provided screenshots of a selection of her WhatsApp messages with X. All of these were also present in the Dr Fone material.

Police interviews

24. After I had dismissed her initial complaint under the previous version of the Code of Conduct, Ms Zaman made a complaint to the police about Lord Ahmed's conduct. The police interviewed her on 26 April 2018 and 11 July 2018. They interviewed Lord Ahmed on 26 July 2018.
25. On 28 November 2019 the police provided us with video recordings of those interviews from which we had transcripts made. We could only obtain these recordings with the consent of Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed, and we thank them for giving their consent. We have quoted from the transcripts and provided accounts of their contents in the report and appendices. Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman were provided with transcripts of their own police interviews but not of each other's.

Interviews during this investigation

26. Lord Ahmed was interviewed by us on 13 August 2019, and Ms Zaman on 6 August and 12 September. Extracts from their interviews are included in the report, but the full transcripts are not included. However, Lord Ahmed has been provided with Ms Zaman's transcripts and all three transcripts have been provided to the Conduct Committee.

Structure of this report

27. The following four chapters deal chronologically with the issues and allegations that arose in the course of the interactions between Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed and I make findings of fact on those matters:
- Chapter 3 covers the period from their first meeting at the Darbar restaurant on 21 February 2017 to the end of dinner at their second meeting at the Sahara Grill restaurant on 2 March 2017;
 - Chapter 4 covers the period from immediately after the dinner at the Sahara Grill on 2 March 2017 to events leading to Ms Zaman's first visit to Lord Ahmed's house in September 2017;
 - Chapter 5 covers the period from Ms Zaman's first visit to Lord Ahmed's house to the end of their sexual relationship in November 2017;
 - Chapter 6 covers those parts of Ms Zaman's relationship with X from November–December 2017 that are referred to in her complaint; and

28. Chapter 7 deals with allegations made by Lord Ahmed throughout the investigation that Ms Zaman could not be relied on to tell the truth.
29. Chapter 8 sets out my findings in relation to the Code of Conduct. In Chapter 9 I provide an overview of the case and the material Lord Ahmed provided to be taken into account when considering an appropriate sanction, and recommend a sanction for consideration by the Conduct Committee.
30. Appendix 1 is a factual report, which provides a fuller narrative summary of the evidence. Other appendices include copies of any remaining evidence considered to be relevant during the investigation, and all these appendices are an integral part of the report.
31. I was assisted throughout the investigation by James Whittle, a Clerk at the House of Lords, and by Sam Evans, Associate Practitioner, CMP Solutions. Ms Evans has significant investigatory experience, which includes expertise in interviewing, and evaluating the evidence of, vulnerable people, including those who allege sexual abuse and exploitation.³
32. We worked as a team throughout the investigation, including analysing the evidence, making findings of fact, and reaching conclusions on breaches of the Code. However, the responsibility for the report, and the recommended sanction, rests with me alone.

3 In her earlier career she worked extensively with organisations supporting victims of sexual violence and abuse, helping to extend significantly the provision of Sexual Assault Referral Centres for victims of rape and provision for organisations supporting victims of current and historic sexual abuse. She also led work to establish the Government's first funded support programme for victims of Human Trafficking (primarily female victims trafficked into prostitution in the UK).

CHAPTER 3: 21 FEBRUARY–2 MARCH 2017

33. This chapter deals with the incidents that occurred between 21 February and 2 March 2017 and the issues and questions for the investigation that arose from them. The matters covered here are:
- Ms Zaman’s first meeting with Lord Ahmed at the Darbar restaurant on 21 February 2017;
 - whether Lord Ahmed was aware from the outset that Ms Zaman was in a vulnerable mental state;
 - the timing and purpose of the dinner at the Sahara Grill restaurant on 2 March 2017 and the chronology of the correspondence with the Metropolitan Police in relation to that dinner; and
 - Lord Ahmed’s claim that Ms Zaman’s was not willing to be identified to the police or to meet them.

Ms Zaman’s introduction to Lord Ahmed on 21 February 2017

Evidence

34. Ms Zaman met Lord Ahmed on 21 February 2017. She was seeking help in relation to her experiences with a faith healer in East London, S. Her friend, Saima Butt, had previously been helped by Lord Ahmed and he had become a family friend. She proposed that she put them in touch.
35. Ms Butt contacted Lord Ahmed. He invited them both to attend a dinner he was having with others at the Darbar restaurant on 21 February 2017.
36. Ms Zaman and Ms Butt went to the Darbar restaurant. Lord Ahmed spoke to Ms Zaman and asked her to send him further details by email.
37. On the morning of 22 February 2017, Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed exchanged text messages to ensure Ms Zaman had the correct email address for Lord Ahmed. Ms Zaman then emailed Lord Ahmed with details of her complaint against S.

Finding

38. This account of how Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed met is uncontested.

Whether Lord Ahmed was aware from the start that Ms Zaman was vulnerable

Evidence

39. In her initial complaint to me of 28 January 2018 Ms Zaman said that at the Darbar restaurant in February 2017:
- “I explained my concerns to him and mentioned that as a result of this I have suffered serious financial and mental health issues which require me to take medication and that I am currently undergoing counselling.”
40. As noted above, Saima Butt, a mutual friend, arranged the first meeting between Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman. Ms Zaman provided us with a statement from Ms Butt, which she had drafted based on conversations

between them and which Ms Butt had agreed and authorised. This statement, dated 4 August 2019, says:

“Before the meeting I briefed the Lord on my friend’s situation via a telephone conversation. In the meeting I described to Lord Ahmed the nature of my friend’s case and also informed him that she was very depressed and the whole situation with the faith healer had affected her very badly.”

41. We interviewed Ms Butt on 27 August 2019. She told us, in relation to this point, that when she phoned Lord Ahmed to ask him to help Ms Zaman:

“I did say to him that she is quite depressed and constantly crying and angry that no one is taking notice of what she is saying.”

42. She also described addressing this issue at the subsequent meeting at the Darbar restaurant:

“I said to him, “This is the friend”, and after they had been talking for a while, I said, “She’s been crying all the time on the phone to me, like ‘No one’s taking notice of what I’m saying’, so please help, so that she stops phoning me and crying all the time about all that”. So I said something like that—”

43. She explained that she told Lord Ahmed that Ms Zaman often contacted her late in the evening to talk about what had happened and Ms Butt found this difficult, as she had her own life to lead, so she hoped Lord Ahmed would be able to help.

44. This information from Ms Butt was provided to us after Ms Zaman had received Lord Ahmed’s written statement of 23 July 2019. Ms Zaman was aware by then that Lord Ahmed had denied knowing of her vulnerability during their relationship and she could have given this information to Ms Butt before Ms Butt gave her statement of 4 August 2019 and spoke to us on 27 August 2019. This sequencing could cast doubt on the authenticity of her statement.

45. However, Ms Butt was also interviewed by U for a Newsnight, programme broadcast on 14 February 2019, months before Ms Zaman’s second, and successful, attempt to have her complaint investigated:

“U: We spoke to the friend that introduced Tahira to Lord Ahmed and was at their first meeting. She says they specifically addressed Tahira’s anxiety and depression.

Did you make it clear to Lord Ahmed that Tahira was vulnerable?

Saima Butt: I did tell him that she is quite depressed.

U: Do you think there is any doubt that he understood how vulnerable she was?

Saima Butt: He knew. I could tell he knew because the way he was talking about the way she was talking and the way he could see she was talking and the way he was trying to reassure her, saying, “Oh, you’re

from my village. I will do my best to help a girl from my village, and I can tell you have suffered”, and things like that. So, he knew.”⁴

46. We also have confirmation from Ms Zaman’s GP that throughout 2017 Ms Zaman was receiving treatment, in the form of medication and counselling, for anxiety and depression.
47. Lord Ahmed told us that he had not known of her vulnerability until after the end of their relationship. In his written statement of 23 July 2019 he referred to text exchanges that he had with a colleague of Ms Zaman’s, K, on 5 December 2017. He provided us with the full exchange:

“K to Lord Ahmed

Hi I am a colleague of Tahira’s and I wanted to make contact to make you aware that she is extremely upset and her health and her work are being affected. She really wants to make contact with yourself and [X] to sort out all the misunderstandings between you all. I understand that you have been very helpful and supportive to her throughout all her problems and she values and misses your friendship. As a friend I am concerned about her. It would be very sad if she were to go back to how she was two years ago

Lord Ahmed to K

Dear K, thank you for your text. I have received text from another young lady and I do not want to get involved with any matter related to your friend or [X]. Thank you

K to Lord Ahmed

Thank you for your quick response I am disappointed because I don’t know who else has contacted you but Tahira is very distressed and upset and she still needs your support I am happy to speak to you but I feel that it would help if you could at least make contact with her and give her the chance to clear up this situation thankyou again and please feel free to contact me I am an older figure in her life and am trying to help her

Lord Ahmed to K

Please speak with her parents”

48. He also said, in his written statement of 23 July 2019:

“In relation to my knowledge of Ms Zaman’s vulnerability, it is clear from a text message that I received in December 2017 from a friend of hers, that it was only then that I became aware that she had had a troubled past.”

49. In his interview with us on 13 August 2019 Lord Ahmed denied that Ms Butt told him that Ms Zaman was being treated for depression. He also pointed out that he knew she had a responsible job, managing a Citizens Advice Bureau:

⁴ The only evidence from the Newsnight programme that I have used is the evidence of Ms Zaman and Ms Butt. I have not taken account of the allegations made by other women, as I have not interviewed them and cannot assess the reliability of their evidence.

“Sam Evans: Okay. The complainant also says that when Saima Butt introduced her, she explained to you that the complainant was depressed and had gone through a terrible experience with a spiritual healer about whom she had concerns. Saima went on to confirm that in the “Newsnight” piece. Do you remember being told that the complainant was being treated for depression?”

Lord Ahmed: Absolutely not.

Sam Evans: You don’t?

Lord Ahmed: No, I don’t. In fact, I was told that she was manager of citizens advice bureau. I do know that in that email that she sent me it says that she was emotionally and physically weak two years prior—so she wasn’t certainly not like that on the day or at that time.”

50. In his interview with the police on 26 July 2018, Lord Ahmed also said he was unaware of Ms Zaman’s vulnerability. He said:

“I knew that she was fit lady. She was managing—she was going to gym every night, and she was managing her two centres because she told me. She never told me about medication, she never told me about anything other than the fact that she runs two citizens advice bureaux and she trains, she is responsible for everyone.”

Analysis

51. I start from the point that Ms Zaman’s GP has confirmed that she was receiving medication and counselling throughout 2017 for anxiety and depression, and therefore was emotionally vulnerable. This is not in itself evidence that Lord Ahmed must have known of Ms Zaman’s vulnerability, but demonstrates that she was vulnerable during her relationship with Lord Ahmed.
52. Her police interviews, and contact with us, show that Ms Zaman is open in talking about her feelings and revealing her distress. Of course, by the time she was interviewed by the police and had contact with me and my colleagues, she had experienced not only her problems with S but also her contact with Lord Ahmed. It is therefore not possible to be certain that her distress about S would have been as obvious as her subsequent distress about Lord Ahmed. However, what is certain is that Ms Zaman does not hide her feelings, whatever they may be. Furthermore, in the context of wanting to make a complaint about S, she would have no reason to hide her experience of anxiety and depression, as it would reinforce her case that S had exploited her when she was at a low ebb.
53. Ms Butt’s account in her Newsnight interview, that she had told Lord Ahmed Ms Zaman was depressed, was made long before she knew that Lord Ahmed was denying having known of Ms Zaman’s vulnerability, so cannot be explained as an attempt to undermine Lord Ahmed’s evidence.
54. Ms Butt’s subsequent account of her conversations with Lord Ahmed, when interviewed by us on 27 August 2019, is plausible and her comment that she said to him “She’s been crying all the time on the phone to me, like ‘No one’s taking notice of what I’m saying’, so please help, so that she stops phoning me and crying all the time about all that” has the ring of truth, revealing,

as it does, the guilty exasperation that can accompany sympathy when great emotional demands are made.

55. When we interviewed Lord Ahmed on 13 August 2019, he conceded that his claim that K's text messages demonstrated he had not previously been aware of Ms Zaman's vulnerability was not an obvious conclusion to be drawn from the text messages. While at the start of the messages K says that she wishes to make Lord Ahmed "aware" that Ms Zaman was upset, the rest of her messages suggest that K assumed Lord Ahmed was already aware of Ms Zaman's problems. For example, she says "I understand you have been very helpful and supportive to her throughout all her problems" and "Tahira is very distressed and upset and she still needs your support".
56. His other justification for not having known that Ms Zaman was vulnerable was that Ms Zaman had a responsible job. However, many people with responsible jobs are able to carry on with their work while being treated for anxiety and depression.

Finding

57. The evidence that Lord Ahmed was told by Ms Zaman and Ms Butt of her vulnerability, and could almost certainly see it for himself, is stronger and more convincing than Lord Ahmed's evidence that he did not know of it.
58. **I find that it is more likely than not that Lord Ahmed knew of Ms Zaman's emotional and psychological vulnerability from the time that he was contacted by Ms Butt.**

Dinner at the Sahara Grill and the letters to and from the Metropolitan Police

Evidence

59. In her interview on 6 August 2019 Ms Zaman said that, after their meeting at the Darbar restaurant and her email setting out her case against S, Lord Ahmed agreed to help her. She also said that after the meeting at the Darbar restaurant Lord Ahmed began to message her, saying that he was fond of her and had feelings for her.
60. She told us that when Lord Ahmed sent her a message with a copy of his letter to the Metropolitan Police, she messaged back expressing her gratitude. Lord Ahmed then, not for the first time according to her account, asked her to have dinner with him. She felt obliged to accept, as she was now in his debt. They agreed to meet at the Sahara Grill, a restaurant suggested and booked by her.
61. She expected to discuss the letter at the dinner before it was sent off. She booked a table for dinner that evening, and asked for a table at the back of the restaurant, which would be quieter, and so more suitable for discussing something private. At the dinner she discovered that Lord Ahmed had already sent the letter to Commissioner Dick. She believed that he was acting on her behalf to help take forward her complaint against S.
62. Ms Zaman did not mention the meeting at the Sahara Grill at all in her initial email complaint of 28 January 2018 or her subsequent complaint email of 5 June 2019. However, she described the meeting, including that it had taken place on 2 March 2017, in an email to the police dated 17 April 2018; in her

undated response to Lord Ahmed's initial written statement of 23 July 2019; and in her interview with me and Sam Evans on 6 August 2019.

63. In the draft of her initial complaint to me prepared with her sisters—which only came to my attention in the course of this investigation—she referred to the meeting, though with a chronology that was inconsistent with later evidence:

“Following this meeting [at the Darbar restaurant on 21 February 2017], I received texts from Lord Ahmed asking to meet him on my own. I refuted these texts but then he messaged me informing me that he received a response but had not forwarded this ‘because [dot dot dot]’. He said I would need to meet with him for him to discuss this further. I went alone at this meeting as I felt he was an honourable person and given his position, status and previous encounter, had no reason to doubt his character. We went to a restaurant, on (insert date) [sic] which would be a public place and this would allow me gain some feedback on my case.”

64. When we asked her about the inaccurate chronology she explained:

“The draft was compiled as a joint effort—my sister [H] and I. [H] is in Manchester. I was confused, and was speaking to [H], crying on the phone explaining what I could remember. She then began to type all that I was saying, making notes while we were discussing, asking me questions to help breakdown the sequence of events. This is what led to first draft which [H] kindly emailed to me. I then wanted to ‘neaten’ it up before sending to you. I also sent a copy to my other sister, [R] to check over.”

65. In December 2019 we received the transcripts of the police interviews with Ms Zaman in April and July 2018. Her account of the meeting at the Sahara Grill is in the first interview, and is consistent with the subsequent accounts given during this investigation, although the focus of the discussion with the police was on the alleged sexual assault after the dinner, rather than the events leading to the dinner and at the dinner.
66. Lord Ahmed gave several accounts of the purpose of this meeting and what took place before and at the meeting.
67. In his written statement of 23 July 2019—which was the first of his accounts of events that we received—he said that he received a reply to his letter to Commissioner Dick from a Metropolitan Police Inspector, asking him for Ms Zaman's details. She had already told him that she wished to remain anonymous. “A few days later” she asked to meet him, and they agreed to meet at the Sahara Grill, which Ms Zaman booked. At the meeting Lord Ahmed provided Ms Zaman with a copy of his letter to Commissioner Dick and she confirmed that she did not wish to pursue the matter if it required her identity to be known, and therefore he could not pursue the matter for her.
68. We interviewed Lord Ahmed, who was accompanied by Imran Khan QC, on 13 August 2019:

“The Commissioner for Standards: In your response you say that after receiving the email from the complainant you wrote to the Commissioner of Police in a letter dated 2 March.

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: Which Commissioner of Police was that?

Lord Ahmed: The current one.

The Commissioner for Standards: Cressida Dick?

Lord Ahmed: Cressida Dick, yeah.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay. And you then received a written response by way of a letter from an inspector at the Met police. You went on to say that a few days later the complainant asked to meet you and you agreed.

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: Yeah. How did this contact happen? Phone, WhatsApp?

Lord Ahmed: She phoned. She phoned.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay. Had you contacted her to say, “I’ve had a reply from the police”?

Lord Ahmed: By that time, when I had the response from the police, I think we’d already met at the restaurant.

The Commissioner for Standards: At the Sahara Grill?

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay, so ...

Lord Ahmed: Does it say that? Where does it say?

Imran Khan: I think you ought to read.

Lord Ahmed: Let me just read. [20-second pause.] Yes, yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: Because the implication is that by your second meeting, when you met for a second time at the Sahara Grill, you had already received the response from the Met.

Lord Ahmed: Yes, I think so.

The Commissioner for Standards: Right, okay—because otherwise there wouldn’t have been much point to that meeting, would there?

Imran Khan: If you can read.

Lord Ahmed: Yeah. [Five-second pause.] Well, it was to give her the letter I had written to the police.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay.

Lord Ahmed: The meeting in Sahara Grill wasn't for the purpose of giving her the letter from the police—just the letter for the police—because she wanted to have food or invite me for food at Sahara Grill. But I took the letter which I wrote to the commissioner of the police, and gave her there.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay. So if we go back to the paragraph that says, "On 22 February 2017 I received an email from Ms Zaman".

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: "I wrote to the commissioner of police by letter dated 2 March".

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: "I then received a written response by way of a letter from an inspector of the Metropolitan Police asking that I provide details of the complainant".

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: So the next paragraph, "A few days later, Ms Zaman asked to meet me and I agreed". So you're saying that that was actually before you'd had the reply from the Met police?

Lord Ahmed: No—probably when I did have it received. It was after that when I'd received the reply from the police.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay, so when you met her at the Sahara Grill, did you have the reply from the police?

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: Right.

Lord Ahmed: And I gave her.

The Commissioner for Standards: Yes, okay. How did the contact happen? Was it that you contacted her to say, "I've had a reply from the Met", or did she contact you? What happened?

Lord Ahmed: I contacted her to say that, "I've had a reply from the Met. They would like your details". She said, "No, I don't want to give any details. I just want to leave the matter".

The Commissioner for Standards: Was that in conversation?

Lord Ahmed: Conversation.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay, so why then did you have the meeting at the Sahara Grill?

Lord Ahmed: She invited me for—she pursued for—she actually said, "This is a fantastic restaurant. Have you ever been? Let's have a dinner at this restaurant".

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay, so by the time you had that dinner and had that meeting, the whole thing with the Met police was dead?

Lord Ahmed: As far as I'm concerned, my parliamentary duty, my contact with the police, that had finished.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay. Because the way it reads is that it finished after the ... So that paragraph, "A few days later, Ms Zaman asked to meet me and I agreed. She'd booked a table at a restaurant called Sahara Grill, which I attended. At the meeting I provided her with a copy of my letter to the commissioner of police. She confirmed that she did not wish to pursue the matter if it required her identity to be known". So did you also show her the letter from the police?

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay, but she had already said she didn't want to—

Lord Ahmed: Yes, but I found it duty-bound, because this is end of the matter, here you are.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay, right. So did you give her hard copies of the two letters when you met her?

Lord Ahmed: I gave her hard copy of the police response, but I gave her a copy of my original letter to the police.

The Commissioner for Standards: Right, so a paper copy, not a WhatsApp?

Lord Ahmed: No, paper copy.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay. Can you remember when the meeting took place at the Sahara Grill?

Lord Ahmed: Early March.

The Commissioner for Standards: Early March, okay. And that was your second meeting. The first one had been at the Darbar restaurant.

Lord Ahmed: Darbar restaurant.

The Commissioner for Standards: And this one was at the Sahara Grill. I'm just going to read out her account that she gave to us. Her account of the events leading to this meeting was that on 2 March you sent her a copy of your letter to the Met police on WhatsApp and she replied, "That's really kind of you. You've written this letter. It's kind of you to help me", and then you sent another message straightaway saying, "Now you can be kind and say yes to dinner". This was because prior to this he'd been asking me to come out for dinner and I'd been putting him off".

Lord Ahmed: Absolute nonsense.

The Commissioner for Standards: No, okay.

Lord Ahmed: And if I can say that—

The Commissioner for Standards: You can say whatever you like.

Lord Ahmed: In her later complaint to the police—I don't know whether it's the right time to tell you this now, or you might come to it—you will see she made allegations that, God forbid, at the Sahara Grill after the meal that I touched her inappropriately, kissed her, sat on her leg. Complete lies, absolute—these are all things that came about afterwards when she complained to the police of—well, her complaint was more of like rape. And I think later on you will know that she said on TV cameras that it was consensual.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay, we will come to that. I have something to put to you about the Sahara Grill meeting. You're saying it's not correct that you had been asking her out for dinner before the Sahara Grill meeting?

Lord Ahmed: No.

The Commissioner for Standards: She went on to say, after she says that you invited her out and said, "Let's meet", "I felt bad because he'd just done the letter and he wanted to meet the same day. He said, 'You choose the venue'. I said, 'That's fine'. I chose a venue near my house—Sahara Grill—on the same day, 2 March, and I thought he was going to bring me a hard copy. I thought he was not going to send it off yet. I said, 'I'm at work. I've not read all of it, but we'll speak about it later', because I was at work when he sent me the message". She is referring to the hard copy of what she thought was the draft of the letter you were going to send to the Met. Her understanding was that you sent her a draft on WhatsApp and the purpose of the meeting was to finalise the draft. Then she says when you met at the Sahara Grill she said that you told that the letter had already been sent off.

Lord Ahmed: In her emails to Farid Qureshi from ARY news and many other people she says that Lord Ahmed—

The Commissioner for Standards: Hang on a sec. I know there are lots of different bits of evidence. I'm just trying to get an account of what actually happened. She said that when you met at the Sahara Grill the only thing that had been done at that point was the letter to the Met and that when you met she said that you said that the letter had already gone off. That is right?

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: But you are also saying that you had also had a reply and she knew that you had had a reply.

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: Right. Can you remember the date of your letter to the Met?

Lord Ahmed: My letter was 2 March. I wrote the letter 2 March and I think I got a reply within a week or something.

The Commissioner for Standards: Because she says that the meeting at the Sahara Grill was on 2 March.

Lord Ahmed: That is not true. I couldn't possibly have written a letter and said, "Now meet me".

The Commissioner for Standards: So you are very clear that the meeting at the Sahara Grill was later and that, by the time you met, there had been a reply from the Met. Do you have copies of the letter to the Met and the reply?

Lord Ahmed: I didn't keep the reply, but I do have a copy of the letter that I wrote to the Met.

The Commissioner for Standards: Why didn't you keep a copy of the reply?

Lord Ahmed: Because she didn't want to pursue it, so, as far as I was concerned—when I talked to her she said she didn't want to pursue this any further—there was no point in me keeping the letter of reply."

Comment

69. Lord Ahmed started by saying that he thought the meeting at the Sahara Grill was before he received the reply from the police; then became confused and was directed to look at his statement of 23 July 2019 by his solicitor; then said that the dinner at the Sahara Grill was after the reply had arrived. He said he had informed Ms Zaman that he had had a reply from the police and they wanted her details, and she replied that she did not want the police to have her details, and just wanted to leave the matter. He said the meeting at the Sahara Grill was her idea, and by the time they met his parliamentary duty was over. He gave her copies of his letter to the police and their reply, and denied that the meeting had been his idea. When we told him that Ms Zaman claimed that they met on 2 March 2017, the same day that he wrote and sent the letter to the police, he said this could not be right and the meeting must have been later, by which time he had received the reply.
70. We subsequently obtained written confirmation from the Sahara Grill that Ms Zaman had booked tables at the restaurant during 2017 on 2 March, on a date in December, and on no other dates in 2017.
71. The material Ms Zaman extracted from her phone using Dr Fone included a text message from Lord Ahmed to her, dated 2 March 2017 and timed at 18:53 saying "I am inside" and one from Ms Zaman to Lord Ahmed, dated 14 July 2017, enquiring if he had received a reply from the police to his letter.
72. The police provided copies of the letters from and to Lord Ahmed, showing that Lord Ahmed's letter was dated 2 March 2017 and their reply to his letter was dated 3 May 2017.

Comment

73. This evidence, taken together, proves beyond doubt that the meeting at the Sahara Grill restaurant was on 2 March 2017 and that Lord Ahmed could not have received the reply from the police to his letter before that dinner. This is reinforced, if reinforcement is necessary, by Ms Zaman's text of 14 July 2017, which shows that she was still waiting for a reply.

74. On 29 October 2019 I wrote to Lord Ahmed with this information. I asked him to comment on the apparent inconsistencies between his account and the evidence I sent him.

75. He replied on 18 November 2019:

"As you will be aware, like most members of the House, I see a lot of people and have many meetings and, therefore, without the assistance of documentary material it is difficult for me to recall events going back more than two years. When I wrote my first statement and in my interview with you I was relying on my memory and my recollection was that there was only one meeting which I attended at the Sahara Grill with Ms Zaman. In my first statement I said that that meeting was a 'few days' after the 2nd March 2017. Given that there was only one meeting booked by Ms Zaman at the Sahara Grill which was on the 2nd March that was the only time I met her at this venue. The meeting at the Sahara Grill was arranged by Ms Zaman and the venue booked by her. She invited me to the meeting; I did not invite her to it. It should be noted that in disclosure provided to me by the Metropolitan Police it was alleged that I invited Ms Zaman to dinner in March 2017. That was clearly a lie as it is now clear that Ms Zaman made the booking for the dinner. Had the invitation been made by me, the booking would have been made by me in my name.

At the meeting I provided her with a copy of my letter to the police; it was addressed to Cressida Dick [...]

In any event, this assists me in recalling the sequence of events which is that Ms Zaman sent me an email on the 22nd February 2017 having met her on or about the 21st February 2017 through Ms Saima Butt. Using the information Ms Zaman sent me by email, I wrote to the Commissioner on the 2nd March. Ms Zaman invited me to the meeting at the Sahara Grill and she made the booking for the table. At the meeting I gave her a copy of the letter I had written to the Commissioner and she remained adamant that she did not want her identity to be known and, therefore, the case could not be pursued if it required her identity to be known. [...] As a result I did nothing further on receipt of the letter of the 3rd May because my involvement with Ms Zaman as a member of the House had ended by then.

I note with some concern that, having stated that she had been 'forced' to delete all messages from me from her phone, Ms Zaman is now providing what she says are messages from me. I would invite you to obtain all messages from Ms Zaman, not just those that she considers appropriate as context is critical. In this instance I have a recollection that I texted her 'I am inside' because I could not see her as she was not sat in the main section of the restaurant.

[...]

I do not recall receiving a text message from Ms Zaman on the 14th July 2017. As noted above I am concerned that, having said that she was ‘forced’ to delete all message relating to me, she claims to be providing some to you. I would urge you to obtain all messages and, in particular, any response from me. As I do not recall receiving this message I do not believe that I ever responded. As I have said, my involvement with Ms Zaman as a member of the House ended in March.”

Comment

76. Lord Ahmed does not address the significance of the text of 14 July 2017 in undermining his account of Ms Zaman having said she did not want to proceed with her complaint.

77. He continued:

“Ms Zaman has said that she saw a letter from Cressida Dick. If this is a reference to seeing the letter of the 3rd May 2017, then it seems odd indeed if she is asking me if I had received a response to my letter on the 14th July 2017.”

Comment

78. When we interviewed Lord Ahmed in August 2019 we informed him of Ms Zaman’s claim that it was only after she texted him in July 2017 that he had sent her the reply from the police. It is therefore unclear why Lord Ahmed made this point in November 2019.

79. In December 2019 we received the transcript of Lord Ahmed’s police interview in July 2018. The interview focused on Ms Zaman’s allegations of sexual assault after the dinner at the Sahara Grill and her drink being spiked when she first went to his house in September 2017 (see Chapters 4 and 5). To the extent that Lord Ahmed spoke in the police interview about the events leading to the dinner, his account was not consistent with his written statement of 23 July 2019 or his interview of 13 August 2019, in that it makes no mention of him having received a reply from the police before the meeting at the Sahara Grill. He told the police that Ms Zaman had invited him to the meal to repay his hospitality on the first occasion that they met, and when he met her that evening he gave her a copy of his letter to the police. He also mentioned that he had paid for the meal. Later in the interview he was asked about the correspondence with the police and replied:

“At some stage, I—. Whenever I go—. I think you can get it from the Met Police, the email response, and that was very early on from the—. She was never interested in the police response. Absolute nonsense. She gives—. Honestly, I’m so upset that—. She was interested in trying to develop something. She was never interested in the police, even when I gave her the police—I think it was email printout. I’m not so sure whether it was a letter or email print. It was something from the Met Police. It was an inspector who said, “I really need to know her identity”. I said to her, “Would you be prepared to give your identity?” She said, “No”.

So—. And I gave her that and I said, “Please, whenever you want, you have to let me know and I will tell the police”. But she wasn’t—. She never discussed this, you know, to say that she was interested in what happened or to pursue, and something like that.”

80. Elsewhere in the interview he said that he had informed Ms Zaman and Saima Butt of the response from the Metropolitan Police, though the transcript does not indicate when he did so.
81. After receiving the transcript I asked the police to provide details of the information they had given to Lord Ahmed before his police interview in July 2018. This is shown at Appendix 8, and includes a disclosure document outlining Ms Zaman’s allegations against Lord Ahmed. The document focused on Ms Zaman’s allegations of sexual assault after the dinner in March 2017 and her allegation that Lord Ahmed spiked her drink at his home in September 2017. Although the police had been informed in April 2018 that the meeting at the Sahara Grill was on 2 March 2017, this information was not included in the disclosure document. However, the document did include Ms Zaman’s account that the meeting at the Sahara Grill was at Lord Ahmed’s invitation and was to discuss the letter to the police and for her to thank Lord Ahmed for his help.

Analysis

82. Ms Zaman’s accounts are somewhat inconsistent in that she does not mention the meeting at the Sahara Grill in her complaint emails to me of 28 January 2018 and 5 June 2019.
83. Her draft complaint to me produced with the help of her sister on 20 January 2018 did not mention the date or location of the dinner and appears to place it after Lord Ahmed had received a reply from the Metropolitan Police.
84. However, Ms Zaman did include a reference to the Sahara Grill in her email to the police on 17 April 2018. In that email she described arranging the meeting in a way that is consistent with other descriptions she provided and corroborative evidence we gathered:

“Lord Ahmed insisted that I go out to dinner and asked me to choose any venue. I agreed to go to the dinner and chose Sahara Grill [as it was convenient for me to get home from]. I booked a table for two and received a confirmation”.

85. Her subsequent accounts in oral and written evidence to us are consistent.
86. Ms Zaman’s explanation for why some aspects of her account were confused in the draft of 20 January 2018 is quoted above. Her sisters had helped her compose her letter of complaint, and had been confused in the sequence of events as described by Ms Zaman.
87. Lord Ahmed’s accounts are inconsistent one against the other, and also internally inconsistent. Neither the account to the police nor the accounts given during the investigation is fully consistent with the corroborative evidence that Ms Zaman was willing for the police to know her identity.
88. Lord Ahmed’s first account, in his police interview, is straightforward: he wrote to the police on Ms Zaman’s behalf; gave her a copy of the letter during a meal at the Sahara Grill; subsequently received a reply from the

police, which he showed to her and their mutual friend Ms Butt; and Ms Zaman then said that she did not want to proceed as she did not want to be identified to the police.

89. The accounts he gave in his written statement of 23 July 2019 and in his interview with me and Ms Evans on 13 August 2019 were initially coherent and not significantly inconsistent with each other. In his statement he said that he wrote a letter to Commissioner Dick on 2 March 2017 and received a reply asking for the complainant's details. A few days later he and Ms Zaman met at the Sahara Grill at her request, and she had booked the venue. At the meeting he gave her a copy of his letter, and she said she did not wish to pursue the matter if this required her identity to be known. In his interview he gave the same account, but added that he had had a conversation with Ms Zaman before they met at the restaurant in which he had told her the police wanted her details and she said that she did not wish to pursue the matter. His assertion was that by the time they met at the restaurant he was no longer helping her with her complaint.
90. The extract from his interview with me and Ms Evans above shows that at different times he said that the meeting at the Sahara Grill was both before and after he received the reply. His final position during his interview with me and Ms Evans was that he had received the reply from the police before the meeting.
91. When he was subsequently presented with evidence that the meeting had taken place on the same day as he sent the letter to Commissioner Dick, he said, in a written response on 18 November 2019, that he had been mistaken when he gave the first account, but that when he showed Ms Zaman the letter he had written to Commissioner Dick on 2 March 2017 "she remained adamant that she did not want her identity to be known and, therefore, the case could not be pursued if it required her identity to be known." He had therefore done "nothing further on receipt of the letter of the 3rd May [the reply from the Metropolitan Police] because my involvement with Ms Zaman as a member of the House had ended by then."
92. When he made this statement I had not yet received information from the police, discussed at paragraph 115–16 below, that before the letter from DSupt Prins had been written on 3 May 2017, Lord Ahmed had already told the police that his informant was not willing to be identified so would not meet them.
93. At the time of his police interview in July 2018, Lord Ahmed knew that I had decided that the original complaint made by Ms Zaman in her email of 28 January 2018 did not engage the House of Lords Code of Conduct, as Lord Ahmed's offer to help her was not part of his parliamentary duties and therefore not subject to the Code then in operation. The police interview was concerned with Ms Zaman's allegations of sexual assault, and the police were investigating possible criminal offences. They were not investigating breaches of the House of Lords Code of Conduct.
94. In his police interview Lord Ahmed was focused on showing that Ms Zaman's allegations were without merit and that in fact she had been pursuing him sexually since the day they first met. He had no reason to think that the dates or the sequence of events had any particular significance, and was quite

comfortable saying that the letter from the police arrived after the dinner at the Sahara Grill, as was shown to be the case.⁵

95. He gave a different account in his written statement of 23 July 2019, writing that he had received a reply from the police before the meeting at the Sahara Grill. However, at his interview with us on 13 August 2019, Lord Ahmed initially recalled that the reply from the police had arrived after the meeting at the Sahara Grill. He expressed confusion at this point, and his solicitor directed his attention to his written statement. He then brought himself back on course to give an account which matched his written statement in saying that the reply arrived before the meeting at the Sahara Grill and that Ms Zaman's response to the reply from the Metropolitan Police marked the end of his interaction with her in relation to helping her with her case against S:

“As Ms Zaman makes clear in her complaint this, and only this, was the reason that she had approached me as a parliamentarian and this activity terminated at the meeting at the Sahara Grill which was in March 2017. All contact thereafter was not work related.”

96. The evidence gathered shows that Lord Ahmed's immediately retracted comment during the interview on 13 August 2019, in which he said that the reply from the police arrived after the meeting was, in fact, accurate, and the account in his statement and interview with me and Ms Evans was not. It is also worth pointing out that Lord Ahmed's account in his police interview of this sequence of events accords with the documentary evidence.
97. Because there is independent documentary evidence on the date of the meeting and the dates of the letters, we can be certain that the meeting was on 2 March 2017 and the reply from the police had not been received before the meeting. As such certainty, provided by independent evidence, is not available on every disputed matter in this report, it is important to consider why, when the facts are incontrovertible and on a previous occasion he had given an account that accorded with those facts, Lord Ahmed sought to give an alternative account and, in his interview, dismissed aspects that were later supported by evidence.
98. It is possible that Lord Ahmed simply forgot the sequence of events when I interviewed him two years after the events themselves and one year after his interview with the police. In his email to me of 18 November 2019 he said, “As you will be aware, like most members of the House, I see a lot of people and have many meetings and, therefore, without the assistance of documentary material it is difficult for me to recall events going back more than two years.”
99. However, Ms Zaman was not just one of the many people he had met in 2017: they had had a sexual relationship, there had been a police investigation into aspects of their contact with each other, and she had been interviewed on Newsnight about the circumstances of their relationship.
100. Also, the elements of his incorrect account were at the heart of his defence against the complaint that he had been allegedly assisting her as a parliamentarian while having a sexual relationship with her.

⁵ We were not aware of the contents of this interview until December 2019, so could not point out this discrepancy during this interview in August 2019

101. Furthermore, he was accompanied by a solicitor when he was interviewed by the police in July 2018, at which time his responses showed that the meeting took place before he received the reply from the police. It seems likely that his solicitor would have made a note of the interview, which he could have obtained to refresh his memory before he produced his written statement of 23 July 2019 in response to Ms Zaman's complaint.
102. Finally, his account of events in his written response to the complaint and in his interview with us was detailed, comprehensive and, once advised to refer back to his notes, expressed without any indication that he might not remember clearly.
103. The understandably patchy memory of a busy public figure therefore seems an unlikely explanation for Lord Ahmed's inaccuracy.
104. However, when one looks to see what Lord Ahmed stood to gain by his inaccurate account, a plausible explanation emerges.
105. In her original complaint of 28 January 2018, Ms Zaman clearly associated the letter from the police with her visit to Lord Ahmed's house in early September 2017. She did not say that they started a sexual relationship on that day, but Lord Ahmed knew that this was the case, and, indeed, acknowledged it in his interviews with the police and with me and Ms Evans. He also recognised that the help he was offering Ms Zaman constituted him acting in his capacity as a parliamentarian. A link between the letter from the police and the sexual relationship could therefore engage the Code of Conduct, as revised in 2019. Lord Ahmed therefore had every reason to try to break the link by seeking to establish a timeline where there was a clear distinction between his interactions with Ms Zaman in the course of his parliamentary activities and their later sexual relationship.
106. When Lord Ahmed was interviewed by the police in 2018, wrote his statement in July 2019, and was interviewed in August 2019, neither he nor we were aware of the existence of Ms Zaman's text of 14 July 2017, enquiring if a reply had been received from the police. Using the letter from the police as the reason for Ms Zaman not wishing to continue with the complaint therefore made sense. Once it became clear that the letter could not have been received before the meeting on 2 March 2017, Lord Ahmed stuck to his story that Ms Zaman did not wish to proceed, but gave no plausible reason for her change of mind.
107. He was also not aware of the strong evidence we subsequently obtained that Ms Zaman had been perfectly willing to give her details to the police and to her MP when she was trying to get action against S (see paragraphs 111–144 below and Appendix 9).

Findings

108. **It is certain that the meeting at the Sahara Grill took place on 2 March 2017 and that Lord Ahmed had not received any reply to his letter from the police at this point.**
109. **I find that it is more likely than not that during the investigation Lord Ahmed deliberately gave a false account of the circumstances before and at the meeting at the Sahara Grill with the intention of creating the appearance of clear blue water between the conclusion of his**

activities as a parliamentarian and the start of his sexual relationship with Ms Zaman.

110. **Given the greater consistency of Ms Zaman’s account and the inconsistencies of Lord Ahmed’s, I consider that it is more likely than not that the meeting at the Sahara Grill was at his instigation.**

Ms Zaman’s alleged wish not to be identified to the police or to meet them

Evidence

111. In her email to Lord Ahmed of 22 February 2017 Ms Zaman said that she wished to be anonymous because she did not want S or J⁶ to be able to trace her as the source of any police investigation:

“Then will I still remain anonymous or can I be summoned to be witness.

If they, [S] and [J], have top lawyers can they get hold of my statement.

All these concerns I have because I don’t want them to be able to trace anything back to me. I am very concerned about my children’s safety from both [J] and [S].”

112. In the draft statement she attached to her email, which Lord Ahmed used as the basis for his letter to Commissioner Dick, she said:

“I do not want to give my name as I wish to remain anonymous, because I am very concerned about my children’s safety.”

113. In Ms Zaman’s email to me of 28 January 2018 she said that she had contacted her MP (Mike Gapes) and the police to raise her concerns:

“This has been reported anonymously to the Police over a year ago and also to Mike Gapes, without a positive result. The reason for my anonymous reporting is that I am sure you will be aware that as a Muslim woman, there would be specific repercussions for me from a cultural perspective if I spoke out against Muslim men. The community would ostracise me for bringing negative attention to Islam and often the woman always gets the blame and are treated as the perpetrator.”

114. When Ms Evans and I interviewed Ms Zaman on 6 August 2019, we asked her what she meant when she said she had reported her concerns anonymously, and how she could find out how any investigation was proceeding if the police or her MP did not have her name. It had occurred to us that she might have been using a go-between to communicate with the authorities. However, she explained that when she referred to making anonymous reports, she did not mean that she kept her identity secret from the authorities, but simply that she asked that she was not identified to the alleged perpetrators as a complainant in any investigation that might take place.

115. In a letter to me of 13 February 2020, Mark Davis of the Metropolitan Police Directorate of Legal Services confirmed that Ms Zaman had contacted the police in 2016 to complain about S and had disclosed her identity to the police.

6 J is allegedly one of S’s associates.

116. Mr Davis also wrote that when Lord Ahmed was in communication with the police in April 2017 he gave them to understand that “the complainant has refused to meet with anyone regarding this matter owing to concerns of reprisals and that she was less interested in prosecution of [S] and more about stopping him from abusing other vulnerable people.”

117. In his police interview in July 2018 Lord Ahmed said:

“She was never interested in the police response. Absolute nonsense. She gives—. Honestly, I’m so upset that—. She was interested in trying to develop something. She was never interested in the police, even when I gave her the police—I think it was email printout. I’m not so sure whether it was a letter or email print. It was something from the Met Police. It was an inspector who said, ‘I really need to know her identity’. I said to her, ‘Would you be prepared to give your identity?’ She said, ‘No’.”

118. In his written statement of 23 July 2019 Lord Ahmed said:

“I then received a written response by way of letter from an Inspector of the Metropolitan Police asking that I provide details of the complainant. Ms Zaman had already indicated in her email to me that she wished to remain anonymous.

A few days later Ms Zaman asked to meet and I agreed. She had booked a table at a restaurant called Sahara Grill which I attended. At this meeting I provided her with a copy of my letter to the Commissioner of Police. Ms Zaman confirmed that she did not wish to pursue the matter if it required her identity to be known. As the police required this to pursue the matter, it could not go any further.”

119. In his interview with me and Ms Evans in August 2019 he said:

“Lord Ahmed: I contacted her to say that, “I’ve had a reply from the Met. They would like your details”. She said, “No, I don’t want to give any details. I just want to leave the matter”.

The Commissioner for Standards: Was that in conversation?

Lord Ahmed: Conversation.”

120. When I wrote to Lord Ahmed on 28 October 2019 I said:

“Ms Zaman has told us that prior to her contact with you, she had reported her concerns to the police, and also to her MP, and had disclosed her identity in each case, while asking that it not be revealed to the people she was reporting.”

121. I asked him to explain the discrepancies between her assertion that she had made her identity known to others in seeking redress against S, and his claim that she did not wish the police to know her identity and therefore he could take the matter no further.

122. He replied on 18 November 2019:

“At the meeting I gave her a copy of the letter I had written to the Commissioner and she remained adamant that she did not want her

identity to be known and, therefore, the case could not be pursued if it required her identity to be known. I was not aware from Ms Zaman that she had reported her concerns to the police or her MP. It is notable that even when Ms Zaman reported the matter to the police they were unable or unwilling to take the case forward.”

123. Lord Ahmed went on to say:

“As Ms Zaman notes ‘I met with Sergeant Amjad from Stratford. He was the one who took the report. He never ever got back to me. When I stopped speaking to Lord Ahmed, I contacted him and said, “Is there any update”? He said, “There’s no update”. He said there was nothing. The police had looked into it but it was only me who had reported it. Because I did not want to reveal my identity to [S], they could not go to him and say who had made the allegations against him.’ This was consistent to what she had told me and confirmed to me at the meeting on the 2nd March at Sahara Grill. As far as I was concerned the matter could not go forward whilst she maintained this position”.

124. In the same statement, Lord Ahmed says that the contact he had with the MSKU after he had sent his letter of 2 March 2017 was not about arranging a meeting between them and Ms Zaman “because, of course, such a meeting could not take place as Ms Zaman wanted to maintain her anonymity”. This is in line with his frequently stated position that Ms Zaman did not want the police to know her identity.

Comment

125. Throughout the investigation Lord Ahmed’s position was that Ms Zaman had said that she did not want anyone to know her identity, including the police.

126. In his written statement of 18 November 2019 he quotes Ms Zaman in support of his account. However, this quote refers only to her expressed wish to the police that S should not know her identity. Therefore, the quote Lord Ahmed includes does not support what he had previously said was his understanding of her wish to remain anonymous. It is also not consistent with the characterisation of her wishes that he gives later in his email that Ms Zaman did not want even the police to know her identity and therefore a meeting with the MSKU was not possible.

127. During 2018, Ms Zaman produced a timeline of the events of 2017 to assist in her complaint to the police. In that timeline there was also a reference to her having written to the Prime Minister, Theresa May, in September 2017. We were provided with a copy of the response to that email, sent by the Home Office, which demonstrated that in her email to the Prime Minister on 30 September 2017, Ms Zaman had been willing to make her identity known to the authorities. Similarly, we were provided with copies of emails between Ms Zaman and the Southall Black Sisters in February 2017 in which she identified herself.

Comment

128. Ms Zaman's timeline suggests she wrote to Theresa May before she started her sexual relationship with Lord Ahmed, but the reply from the Home Office shows that she wrote on 30 September 2017, which was several weeks after the relationship started. In the interview with us on 6 August 2019 she explained that she had prepared the timeline in a hurry for her own use, and when the police asked for it she explained that it was inaccurate as she had prepared it very quickly when she had been under a lot of stress at work because a colleague had passed away.
129. In a letter to us on 8 September 2019 Ms Zaman explained that she had taken the timeline with her to a meeting with the police: "The reason for this is because I prepared it in a hurried manner from my own notes alone, for my own personal. When I attended my interview with [the investigating officer], she took the timeline from my notes. I brought some paperwork to her office for her to have a look at, and she took the paperwork which included my timeline without seeking consent, but at this point in time, I was under the impression that [the investigating officer] was investigating without bias thus did not question her. At some point later, she phoned me and asked me whether I had updated my timeline and if so, I should send to her."⁷

Analysis

130. Ms Zaman's request to the police that, though they would be aware of her identity, she should not be identified as a complainant in any investigation that might take place, does not seem an unrealistic request in itself. The police and other authorities are known to act on tip-offs provided by members of the public who do not wish to be identified as the provider of the tip-off. Presumably they will sometimes act on tip-offs from anonymous informants, but Ms Zaman was not such a one; she was very willing to be known to those to whom she was providing information.
131. Ms Zaman's evidence that she always identified herself to the authorities when raising her concerns is also supported by the documentary evidence of her contact with Southall Black Sisters in February 2017 before she made contact with Lord Ahmed, and her correspondence to the Prime Minister in September 2017. This documentary evidence is consistent with her own account of having identified herself to the police and her MP, and the police's confirmation that they knew her identity. This not only shows that Ms Zaman was raising concerns in her own name, but also that she was doing so before approaching Lord Ahmed and was still doing so on 30 September 2017, after her sexual relationship with Lord Ahmed began.
132. Lord Ahmed has been consistent since his exchange with the police in 2017 that Ms Zaman did not wish to be identified to the police. However his various accounts of how he claimed to know this are not consistent.
133. In April 2017 (but not revealed to us until February 2020) he told the police that Ms Zaman did not want the police to have her details as she was afraid of reprisals from S. Ms Zaman had said in her email to him on 21 February 2017: "I do not wish to give my name as I wish to remain anonymous". She

7 The timeline in Appendix 3 is the updated timeline sent to the police on 13 June 2017.

did not specify from whom she wished to withhold her name, and so it is possible that taken in isolation his interpretation of her words could have been a genuine misunderstanding on his part about her wishes.

134. However, in his evidence to our investigation in July, August, and November 2019, he insisted that Ms Zaman specifically told him on or before 2 March 2017 that she did not want her identity to be known to the police at all (irrespective of any assurances the police might give about protecting her identity from S or J).

135. The reply from the police on 3 May 2017 made it clear that the police would respect her wish not to be identified as the source of information against S, which was the root of her desire to be anonymous:

“The officers within the MSKU are very experienced in dealing with vulnerable victims and witnesses and I can assure you that her details would not be disclosed if that were her wish.”

136. Furthermore, if he had somehow misunderstood her position in March 2017, the text of July 2017 and subsequent events would have put him right, and he could have explained the misunderstanding when he was interviewed by the police in 2018. Rather than doing so, he repeated this claim in his police interview in July 2018, long after the end of the relationship. In light of the facts that Ms Zaman sent him the text in July 2017 and that he must have sent her the letter from the police, and in light of my findings that he used the offer of his help as a parliamentarian in order to lure her into a sexual relationship, it is unlikely that Lord Ahmed did not know of Ms Zaman’s wish to meet the police by the time he was interviewed by them in 2018. It follows that he was being untruthful when he told the police in July 2018 that when he showed her the letter of 3 May 2017 she said she did not want the police to know her identity.

137. Why would he have been untruthful in this way? One good reason for this untruthfulness was that he was trying to be consistent with what he had said to the police in April 2017. He was being interviewed in relation to an allegation that he had assaulted Ms Zaman in her car and may have spiked her drink when she first came to his house, and he had every reason to try and be consistent in what he said earlier.

138. He was also keen to make the case that he was the target of Ms Zaman’s determined sexual pursuit of him, such that she had invented a reason to come to his house. It would not have been helpful to this story if he also acknowledged that he was helping her make a complaint against S.

139. He has maintained this account of Ms Zaman not wanting the police to know her identity throughout this investigation, while at the same time giving different accounts of the circumstances in which Ms Zaman told him she did not want the police to know her identity. These ranged from:

- telling Lord Ahmed before the meeting at the Sahara Grill but after seeing the letter from the police;
- telling him at the dinner after seeing the letter from the police; and

- telling him at the dinner before the letter from the police had arrived.⁸
140. These accounts had one thing in common in that they all firmly placed the end of Lord Ahmed's active parliamentary activities at 2 March 2017. As discussed above, this was important to put as much distance as possible between his parliamentary activities on Ms Zaman's behalf and his acknowledged sexual relationship with her that began in September 2017.
141. The unlikelihood of his account is underlined by these events, which are either not contested or for which there is documentary evidence:
- she complained to the police in 2016 and gave her name;
 - she complained to her MP in 2016 and gave her name;
 - she asked a member of the House of Lords, with considerable influence, to help her to persuade the police to deal with her concerns;
 - he agreed to do so, and wrote a letter to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police;
 - months later she asked him if he had received a reply to the letter he sent to the police;
 - she raised her concerns in a letter to the Prime Minister, giving her own name; and, finally
 - after being told that her complaint about Lord Ahmed did not engage the Code of Conduct, she made a complaint to the police about him, but also about S, in which she identified herself.
142. While her email to Lord Ahmed taken on its own might support his contention that she wished for total anonymity, this sequence of events shows a consistent determination on Ms Zaman's part to raise her concerns about S with the authorities, and a consistent willingness to be identified to the authorities as the complainant, except for the one alleged occasion at the beginning of March 2017, when Lord Ahmed claims that she decided that she was not willing to be identified to the police as the complainant. This was at a point where she had taken her concerns about S forward very considerably by having a member of the House of Lords supporting her efforts. At this point she still did not want S to know she was the source of any information to the police about his alleged activities but at the point at which Lord Ahmed claims she insisted she did not wish to be identified to the police, nothing had changed from when she first met Lord Ahmed and asked for his help.

Finding

143. **The evidence provided by the Metropolitan Police demonstrates categorically that Ms Zaman would have been content for the police to know her identity providing her role in making a complaint was not made known to S.**

⁸ In his undated statement received on 13 March 2020 he also said that there had never been any suggestion that he would do more than write to the police with her concerns. This is dealt with in more detail at paragraph 198 below.

144. **I find it is more likely than not that Lord Ahmed was deliberately untruthful when he claimed that Ms Zaman had told him she did not wish to proceed with her complaint if it meant giving her name to the police. His probable motive in the course of this investigation was to create the appearance of clear blue water between the conclusion of his activities as a parliamentarian and the start of his sexual relationship with Ms Zaman.**

CHAPTER 4: 2 MARCH–SEPTEMBER 2017

145. This chapter deals with the incidents that occurred after the dinner at the Sahara Grill on 2 March 2017 through to the circumstances leading to Ms Zaman’s first visit to Lord Ahmed’s house in September 2017. The matters covered here are:

- Ms Zaman’s allegation of sexual assault by Lord Ahmed after the dinner at the Sahara Grill;
- Lord Ahmed’s communications with the police between late March 2017 and 3 May 2017;
- contact between Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed between 2 March and 14 July 2017;
- when Ms Zaman saw the reply from the police dated 3 May 2017; and
- the circumstances leading to Ms Zaman’s first visit to Lord Ahmed’s house in September 2017.

Alleged sexual assault after the dinner at the Sahara Grill

Evidence

146. Ms Zaman complained that Lord Ahmed sexually assaulted her by placing his hand on the top of her thigh, near her “private parts”, while they were both sitting in her car after the dinner on 2 March 2017. She said this was unexpected, unwelcome and unprovoked. She protested, he apologised and she said she would not report him.
147. Ms Zaman did not mention this allegation in her finalised complaint to me of 28 January 2018, or her subsequent email of 5 June 2019. The first we knew of the allegation was when she told us at her interview on 6 August 2019.

“After we finished having dinner, he said to me, “Why don’t you come to my house?” The reason I remember the date [2 March 2017] is because it was World Book Day and my daughter wanted to go out. She wanted to get some gifts for some children; she was doing voluntary work. That is how I remembered. He asked me to come back to his house after the dinner. I said, “No, I can’t, I have to take my daughter somewhere. I need to go”. I started walking to my car. He said, “Come on, don’t be like that. Why don’t you just come for a cup of tea?” We started walking and I said, “Not today, I can’t, I’m really sorry”. He said, “Let’s just quickly go for half an hour”. I opened my car and got in, so he got into the passenger side. He said, “Let’s go in your car”. I said, “I’m really sorry. I will maybe next time, but not today. I have to go”. I said, “Thank you for the dinner and thank you—you have done the letter. I really need to go now”. He said, “So you’re not going to come with me?” Then—he was sitting on the passenger side—he put his hand on my thigh, trying to get close to my private parts. I picked it off with my left hand and said, “What are you doing?” and I got really upset. He made me really uncomfortable. I said, “I need to go now—can you go?” He apologised; he said, “I am sorry”. He apologised and got out of the car. He said, “I’m really sorry. Are you going to forgive me? I’m sorry”.

I said, “Yes, that’s fine, I forgive you. Thank you”. So he got out of the car and he bowed down to me and said, “Okay, I’m going now”. Then I went and after that I stopped speaking to him.”

148. We asked her why she had not mentioned this previously, and she told us that Lord Ahmed had apologised and she had forgiven him. She also told us that she had informed the police about it when she contacted them in 2018 and had written about it to her sister and had spoken to Saima Butt, who had herself contacted Lord Ahmed to express her shock and disapproval.

149. At the interview, she provided us with the email her sister sent her on 20 January 2018, with the attached draft complaint to me, both of which she had sent to the police on 17 April 2018. In the draft complaint her sister had written:

“We went to a restaurant, on (insert date) [*sic*] which would be a public place and this would allow me gain some feedback on my case. After this meeting, we were in His? Car/my car? And he put his hand on my thigh. I pushed him away and he left the car and Lord Ahmed later apologised for his behaviour”.

150. When we interviewed Ms Zaman for the second time, on 12 September 2019, we asked her how it came about that this reference to the incident had not been included in the formal complaint of 28 January 2018. She said that one of her sisters had stayed with her for three weeks over Christmas and New Year 2017/18, and she had told her everything that had happened:

“Slowly, slowly, things came back to me. Even when I spoke to my sister, I did my draft and I put the incident in about the car, because there were so many events that happened I was trying to remember them. So when I tried to put it in chronological order and when I sent it to you, I kind of missed it. Also, in the back of my mind, it was like I had forgiven him.”

151. She sent another email to the police on 17 April 2018, giving a more detailed description than in the draft complaint:

“After we finished having dinner, Lord Ahmed paid the bill by cash. When we walked out of Sahara Grill restaurant, Lord Ahmed asked me to come to his house. I said NO and asked “why do you want me to come to your house?” He replied by saying “I have a perfume for you and I want to give it to you. I said it is ok, I have many perfumes. He walked me to my car. Lord Ahmed asked me again to come to his house. I got in my car as it was cold and Lord Ahmed got in the front passenger seat and stated again “why don’t we go in your car to my house and I will leave my car parked here.” I said to Lord Ahmed “I am really sorry but I can’t as I have made plans with my daughter”. Lord Ahmed then put his hand on my thigh and tried coming closer towards me. I lifted my left hand and pushed Lord Ahmed’s right hand away from my thigh with force. Lord Ahmed then said “SORRY” and I said “I need to go now” and thanked him for the dinner. Soon as he got out of my car, I drove off.”

152. In the email of 17 April 2018 she said that she had only remembered this incident after a telephone conversation with the police a week earlier. In her interview on 12 September 2019 we asked her about this:

“The Commissioner for Standards: When you said in your email to [the police officer in charge of the case] that her saying that you should stop going after married men reminded you of the incident in the car, is that really the case?

Tahira Zaman: That’s exactly what happened, Lucy, because I had forgotten—

The Commissioner for Standards: Hang on a second. Had you remembered and then forgotten?

Tahira Zaman: Yeah, I had remembered and then I had forgotten about it. When [the police officer in charge of the case] made that comment, it made me think. I sat down and I thought about it and I thought that I said no to him; I said no when he even tried touching me and I stopped him. How can she turn around and make comments like that? It’s not fair, you know. I had so many things, and I was forgetting some things. I did remember then I forgot about it and I was just concentrating on the points I had raised to you.”

153. She also mentioned the alleged assault in the timeline she gave to the police in 2018:

“Incident in the car. Lord Ahmed behaved inappropriately, by first asking me to come back to his place and thereafter by putting his hand on my thigh in my car, which left me in a shock. Lord Ahmed then apologised and left.”

154. Ms Zaman also discussed the allegation when she was interviewed by the police in the context of making her complaint to them about Lord Ahmed. The interview took place on 11 July 2018, but we did not receive the transcript until December 2019. The interview covered the complaints against S for which she had sought Lord Ahmed’s help, as well as her complaints against Lord Ahmed. Her complaints to the police against Lord Ahmed were limited to the allegations of sexual assault, and this was what the interview covered.
155. Her account in the police interview of the alleged assault in her car was similar to the account she gave in her email to the police on 17 April 2018. It was also the same on all relevant points as the account she gave in her interview with us on 6 August 2019 and in her undated statement in response to Lord Ahmed’s written statement of 23 July 2019.
156. Lord Ahmed first mentioned the alleged assault when we interviewed him on 13 August 2019 before Ms Evans and I had reached it in our prepared questions:

“In her later complaint to the police—I don’t know whether it’s the right time to tell you this now, or you might come to it—you will see she made allegations that, God forbid, at the Sahara Grill after the meal that I touched her inappropriately, kissed her, sat on her leg. Complete lies, absolute—these are all things that came about afterwards when she complained to the police of—well, her complaint was more of like rape. And I think later on you will know that she said on TV cameras that it was consensual.”

Comment

157. Ms Zaman did not say that Lord Ahmed had kissed her and sat on her leg on 2 March 2017, but did say that he had sat on her lap and tried to kiss her when she came to his house in September 2017.

158. The police interviewed Lord Ahmed on 26 July 2018 following the complaints of sexual assault made to them by Ms Zaman. Prior to his interview he was provided with a disclosure document by the police, which had this to say about the alleged assault:

“In March 2017, Mr Ahmed invited Miss Zaman to dinner. They met at the Sahara Grill restaurant in Ilford. During the meal, it is alleged that Mr Ahmed was inappropriate towards Miss Zaman and commented on her breasts. It is alleged by Miss Zaman that after the meal she was then sexually assaulted by Mr Ahmed in her car.

She states that Mr Ahmed got into her car uninvited and tried to encourage her to return to his home address, when she declined he persisted and then touched her with his hand on her upper thigh. Miss Zaman claims this was unwanted behaviour and the purpose of them meeting was purely in order to discuss the letter and for her to thank him for his help. She claims she did not give Mr Ahmed the impression she was happy to be touched in a sexual manner.”

159. In his police interview Lord Ahmed denied having got into Ms Zaman’s car, and denied having put his hand on her leg. His account to the police of the end of the meal was:

“I literally walked her to the car. I did not touch her. I did not make any filthy, stupid or any comment in relation to her body or allegations that she has—. It wouldn’t be possible for a man of my age with my experience to be first time I see somebody and say, you know, this, that and the other. She’s not—. I mean, let’s be honest, she’s not Miss World. I mean, she’s not the—. And in any case, I wouldn’t, you know. I’m a married man with grandchildren ... Now, I never got into her car. Never. What would I do in her car? I have my own car on the other side. It was just for her safety that I walked to the car, being polite. And she went into her car, and I came back to my own.”

160. Lord Ahmed also gave an example of Ms Zaman showing interest in him. He said to the police that after their initial meeting at the Darbar restaurant on 21 February 2017 he spoke to Ms Butt:

“Saima called me and said, “Did you like me friend?” I said that I wasn’t there to like her, it was to talk about her issue, problem. She said, “But she fancies you. She fancies you”. Now, for me, that was like a childish thing, that, you know, kids do at 13 or 14. I said, “Well, please tell her that I’m a married man and I don’t have that sort of feeling for her”.⁹

161. Similarly, after the meal at the Sahara Grill on 2 March 2017, Lord Ahmed said in his police interview that, as he escorted Ms Zaman to her car she “kept telling me, “You’re cute. Ah, you’re so nice”.

9 When commenting on the draft factual report in March 2020, Ms Zaman denied having ever discussed fancying Lord Ahmed with Ms Butt that evening.

162. Also in his police interview, Lord Ahmed discussed his contact with Ms Butt after the alleged assault 2 March 2017:

“Interviewing Officer: In regards to what she said happened in her car, did you ever get a phone call from Saima?

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

Interviewing Officer: Tell me about that.

Lord Ahmed: Yeah. Saima, I don’t know exactly, but Saima called me and said that, “You did something inappropriate”.

Interviewing Officer: Go on.

Lord Ahmed: And I said to Saima, “Absolute nonsense. I never touched her—nothing. I walked her to the, you know, to the car and then she said, “I’m very upset”—no, “My friend is very upset”. Okay? A day later, I called her and I said, “What was that you said to me?” She said, “Oh ignore it. She’s stupid. She does this type of thing”—okay?—and that was the end of that.

Interviewing Officer: When do you think you had the phone call from Saima in relation to the meal? Was it—

Lord Ahmed: After the meal, of course.

Interviewing Officer: Yeah. Was it, like, the next day, a week later maybe?

Lord Ahmed: I can’t remember the exact days. You know?

Interviewing Officer: But she rang you about something that happened at the meal that allegedly Tahira said?

Lord Ahmed: Yeah, but nothing inappropriate. Maybe it was something, you know. It only happened when I told—it happened, but, you know, Saima called. When I told her—I also constantly told Saima—she was upset because I told her, “I’m not interested, I’m a married man”. You know. This is what I was telling her, “I’m a married man”, and that upset her. And I told Saima, I said to Saima, “I’m a married man. I don’t want to get involved in anything”.

Interviewing Officer: But right from the beginning, this issue of you having touched her was an issue that came up, wasn’t it?

Lord Ahmed: No.

Interviewing Officer: You said just a moment ago, “I told her I never touched her, I never did it”. So what was the issue?

Lord Ahmed: No. The issue was that, “You upset my friend”. She said, “You upset my”—I can’t remember the exact words to be honest. I would have to go back to Saima to find out, but it was that, “You upset my friend, because you kept pushing her back”.

Interviewing Officer: Oh, okay. Because we’ve spoken to Saima—

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

Interviewing Officer:—and we’ve taken a statement from Saima.

Lord Ahmed: What did she say?

Interviewing Officer: And Saima says to us that she did have a conversation with Tahira where Tahira talked about your meal together—

Lord Ahmed: Yeah.

Interviewing Officer:—and had said that she was very upset on the phone and that you had been inappropriate and had touched her on the leg in the car.

Lord Ahmed: No. I didn’t go in the car.

Interviewing Officer: And that she was very, very upset about this, didn’t expect you to do that. That is what she told Saima, and Saima then contacted you—

Lord Ahmed: Yeah.

Interviewing Officer:—and told you about this, said she was really unhappy—

Lord Ahmed: Yeah.

Interviewing Officer:—with you, or had text you perhaps, where you had said, “None of this had happened, it was rubbish, don’t speak to me”.

Lord Ahmed: Yeah, true. I did.

Interviewing Officer: So this issue of the leg touching was something that was apparent right from the off?

Lord Ahmed: No, well, no, because the leg touching was never mentioned anywhere other than in this statement. Leg touching would only come if I’d actually gone into the car. I never went in the car.”

Comment

163. Lord Ahmed’s account to the police is confused and confusing.
164. He starts by confirming that he had had a conversation with Ms Butt in which she told him that Ms Zaman had said that he had done “something inappropriate”, which he denied—“Absolute nonsense. I never touched her”.
165. He then said the conversation had not been about anything inappropriate but about Ms Zaman being upset that he had rebuffed her advances.
166. When the police then described Ms Butt’s statement to them he appears to agree that the leg touching had been mentioned, and that he had denied it. However, he then denies again that leg touching had been part of that phone call and that the first he knew of the allegation was in the one of the documents shown to him by the police.

167. The police asked him why he thought Ms Zaman had made these allegedly false allegations against him, and he said he thought it was because she blamed him for the breakup of her relationship with X:

“I think she thinks—that it’s me who broke up between them, because I originally said that I will sack him, have nothing to do with him, he can’t come to my house, and she thinks it’s because of those type of threats that I may have been in between them two.”

168. In her statement to us of 4 August 2019, Ms Butt wrote:

“The next time I heard from Tahira regarding the case was after she contacted me because she was distraught; she told me that Lord Ahmed had touched her inappropriately. I have given a written statement to the police regarding this matter.”

169. When we interviewed Ms Butt on 27 August 2019 she told us that she had not been aware of the meeting at the Sahara Grill, but recalled Ms Zaman telling her, some time after she had seen the letter he had written to the Metropolitan Police (and so some time after 2 March 2017), that Lord Ahmed had touched her leg inappropriately:

“She was crying ... She said something like, “You said he was a nice guy, he was helpful. This is what he did”. I said, “What do you mean? Why are you crying?” She goes, “This is what he’s done”. I said, “To be honest with you, Tahira, from what I can remember, he was a nice guy because he did help my mum and I assumed he would help you. I don’t know him that well, you know, but I’m sorry it happened to you”. That is when I said something like, “I wish I never introduced him to you now, because it seems like it’s my fault”.”

170. She also confirmed that after Ms Zaman told her that Lord Ahmed had touched her leg, she had contacted Lord Ahmed to say that she no longer respected him because of what he had done.

Analysis

171. Ms Zaman’s first written evidence of the alleged assault in the car was in the draft complaint of 20 January 2018.

172. Her subsequent accounts in:

- her email to the police;
- her timeline to the police;
- her police interview;
- her interview with me and Ms Evans on 6 August 2019; and
- her written response to Lord Ahmed’s statement of 23 July 2019 (which was undated, but clearly written between receiving Lord Ahmed’s statement and attending for interview on 6 August 2019);

differed in the level of detail provided but were otherwise consistent.

173. When we asked her why she had not told us about the alleged assault in her email of 28 January 2018, she explained that it was because Lord Ahmed

had apologised and she had forgiven him. It is clear from her email to the police of 17 April 2018 that she had also not mentioned the matter to the police when she first spoke to them. In that email she said that she had forgotten the matter:

“Lord Ahmed did apologise at the time for his inappropriate behaviour, due to the most recent incidents I omitted to disclose information about this initial incident where it all started from. I only remembered after our phone conversation last week on Thursday. I did not include this in my original email and request that could you please record this incident on my report.”

174. We considered whether her explanation was plausible, and decided that it was. She told the police about it because she considered that the matter was a sexual assault for which Lord Ahmed should be prosecuted, but it was not central to her complaint to me that Lord Ahmed had misused his position as a parliamentarian to exploit her sexually.
175. I therefore accept that Ms Zaman’s explanation for her erratic recall and reporting is plausible.
176. We also considered whether I should be concerned that Ms Zaman’s complaint of 5 June 2019 did not mention the alleged incident, although by that time she had reported it to the police and discussed it in her police interview.
177. Given the consistency of her other accounts, I believe this omission came from a lack of clarity, for which I take full responsibility, in the way Ms Zaman’s complaint was re-presented in 2019. After the Code of Conduct had been updated Ms Zaman wrote to me asking if her complaint could be reconsidered. I advised that her complaint might now be in scope, and that she could make a formal complaint, or I could take her email of 14 April 2019 as the basis for a complaint. In her response on 5 June 2019, she said that she would like her complaint to be re-investigated. She then summarised her complaint focusing on showing that “Lord Ahmed was engaging in parliamentary activity after June 2017”, as 21 June 2017 was the date from which the specific provisions on bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct could be investigated.¹⁰ The alleged assault took place before that cut-off date and so would not have engaged the new provisions on bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.
178. I also bear in mind that the allegation was first made in draft in writing on 20 January 2018, and that Lord Ahmed was well aware of the allegation before he was informed of the renewed complaint, and, indeed, brought it up spontaneously in his interview on 13 August 2019.
179. I therefore do not consider that Ms Zaman’s failure to mention the assault to me before her interview on 6 August 2019 was evidence of fabrication, had any ulterior motive, or caused Lord Ahmed any disadvantage, nor did it benefit Ms Zaman not to mention the allegation to me until her interview.

¹⁰ The Code of Conduct was further revised while this investigation was underway removing the 21 June 2017 cut-off date.

180. The next question is whether the allegation is more likely than not to be true. Lord Ahmed has always denied assaulting her that evening, or even getting into her car. His denial has been consistent.
181. However, there is evidence that Ms Zaman told her friend Saima Butt about the alleged assault not long after the meeting at the Sahara Grill. There is also evidence that Ms Butt spoke to Lord Ahmed about it not long afterwards. Importantly, some of this evidence comes from Lord Ahmed.
182. Although we don't know exactly when the conversation between Lord Ahmed and Ms Butt took place, Lord Ahmed's evidence in his police interview suggests that it was not long after 2 March 2017:

“Interviewing Officer: When do you think you had the phone call from Saima in relation to the meal? Was it—

Lord Ahmed: After the meal, of course.

Interviewing Officer: Yeah. Was it, like, the next day, a week later maybe?

Lord Ahmed: I can't remember the exact days. You know?”
183. Lord Ahmed was aware of the allegation before he was interviewed by the police on 26 July 2018, as it had been included in the disclosure document prepared by the police. However, this document did not reveal that Ms Butt had given a statement to the police about the alleged assault.
184. The extract from the transcript of his police interview shows that Lord Ahmed both acknowledged—“I said to Saima, ‘Absolute nonsense. I never touched her’”—and denied—“the leg touching was never mentioned anywhere other than in this statement”—that he had had a conversation with Ms Butt about him touching Ms Zaman.
185. If Ms Butt had said to Lord Ahmed that Ms Zaman was upset at having her alleged advances rejected, it is very hard to see why Lord Ahmed's response would be, “Absolute nonsense. I never touched her—nothing”.
186. When he was asked, in his interview with us in August 2019, whether he had received the letter from the police before the meeting on 2 March 2017, Lord Ahmed initially said that the letter arrived after the dinner. He was then guided by his solicitor to look at his statement of 23 July 2019, and from the rest of the interview insisted that the letter had arrived before the dinner, which was not true (see paragraphs 69–69). These contradictory answers by Lord Ahmed in relation to his conversation with Ms Butt seem to have the same quality: Lord Ahmed initially agreed with Ms Butt's account, and then attempted to contradict it by producing a different account of what the conversation was about.
187. I have considered why Lord Ahmed would do this.
188. On the face of it, his claim that he had rejected Ms Zaman's advances would have provided a reason for her to make a false allegation about him. Later in his interview he said that Ms Zaman was bitter after the breakdown of her relationship with X, blamed him for this and the allegation of sexual assault on 2 March 2017 was a vindictive attempt to cause trouble. However, if there was evidence that she had made this allegation in March 2017, long before

she met X, this undermines any suggestion that the allegation made to the police in 2018 was made in revenge for the breakdown of her relationship with X.

189. We could not discuss his police interview with Lord Ahmed in his interview on 13 August 2019, as we were not aware of the contents of his police interview until mid-December 2019.

Finding

190. **I find that it is more likely than not that Ms Zaman complained to Ms Butt that Lord Ahmed had put his hand on her upper thigh and that Ms Butt had a conversation about this with Lord Ahmed, in which he denied wrongdoing and said to her “Absolute nonsense. I never touched her—nothing.”**
191. **That being the case, Lord Ahmed’s claim that the allegation of sexual assault was in response to the break-up of Ms Zaman’s relationship with X in December 2017, for which she held him responsible, is shown to be untenable and he must have known it was not true.**
192. **Taken together, the corroborative evidence of Ms Butt and the inconsistent explanations by Lord Ahmed lead me to conclude that it is more likely than not that Ms Zaman was telling the truth when she said that Lord Ahmed put his hand on the top of her leg, close to her “private parts”, on 2 March 2017.**

Lord Ahmed’s communications with the police in 2017

193. Very late in the investigation, on 13 February 2020, we received information from the police detailing their contact with Lord Ahmed from the sending of his letter to Commissioner Dick on 2 March 2017 to the police reply to him on 3 May 2017.

Evidence

194. The letter of 3 May 2017 makes reference to contact being made with Lord Ahmed by an officer, which Lord Ahmed in his statement of 18 November 2019 recalled was a phone conversation. We asked the police if there was any information about the contact referred to in the 3 May 2017 letter. In his letter of 13 February 2020, Mark Davis of the Metropolitan Police Directorate of Legal Affairs replied:

“The letter sent to Police [by Lord Ahmed] was dealt with jointly from a fraud/modern slavery angle. On 23rd March 2017, officers from the Modern Slavery and Kidnap Unit (MSKU) were tasked with a number of enquiries in particular the following:

- Arranging a fast time meeting with Lord Ahmed
- An interview with the anonymous informant if possible and any other witnesses/informants

Enquiries with the MSKU reveal:

On 3rd May 2017, a letter was sent out by Detective Superintendent (DSU) Prins to Lord Ahmed. (It is unknown whether this was sent via email or post). The letter indicates that an officer from the MSKU had

made contact with a view to arranging a meeting with the complainant. The information had been researched against the databases held by the MPS but there was nothing within these systems, which provided any supporting or additional information. For any investigation to be progressed, it was important that contact was made with her to enable a full assessment of the information provided.

On or around the 11th May 2017, DSU Prins sent an email to Commander Kate Wilson outlining what had been done by Police regarding Lord Ahmed's letter. Within this email, there is again an indication that Lord Ahmed was contacted by the MSKU. It details that Lord Ahmed was unwilling to meet with the MSKU or provide any further information as to the source of this matter.

A Crimint Intel report (dated 21.12.2016) was highlighted, which identified a letter given to DS Amjad Sharif detailing the allegation made by Ms Zaman. Again, she wished to remain anonymous and as a result, Commander Wilson was informed that no further enquiries were going to be made at that stage.

DS Dan Mitchell (MSKU) was tasked with contacting Lord Ahmed regarding the letter. He emailed Lord Ahmed on the 27th March 2017. Lord Ahmed replied to the email on the 3rd April stating that he would be happy to meet and cooperate on these serious allegations, however the complainant has refused to meet with anyone regarding this matter owing to concerns of reprisals and that she was less interested in prosecution of [S] and more about stopping him from abusing other vulnerable people.

DS Mitchell conducted Intel checks and could only find the CRIMINT from DS Sharif. There was no other corroboration and so without further assistance from the complainant, the case was closed."

Comment

195. In 2017 the police did not know that Lord Ahmed's informant was the same person who had spoken to DS Sharif.

196. As part of the investigation process I sent Lord Ahmed the draft factual report I had prepared on 20 December 2019, and a revised version on 3 March 2020, so that he could comment on them before I concluded my report. His responses to these drafts, and my replies to his responses are shown at Appendix 10. The version sent to him on 3 March 2020 included the information obtained from Mark Davis shown above. In his response to the draft factual report Lord Ahmed wrote:

"i. TZ's request was for me to write to the CoP to report S's (mis)conduct, nothing more. Her concern was to stop S from doing what she said he was allegedly doing. There was no indication at this stage that there was to be a meeting with the CoP or that I would be doing anything more than raising her concern about S;

ii. TZ says that did not want her identity revealed to the police for fear of the fact that the concerns she had raised could be traced back to her when, in actual fact, her main concern was that she did not want

anyone to see her messages to J (as shown in her email to me dated 22nd February 2017);

iii. I wrote the letter in my capacity as a parliamentarian and that was the extent of my duty to TZ;

iv. I can now see that Mr Mitchell emailed me on the 27th March in response to the letter. I cannot recall the content of that email and cannot now locate it;

v. On the 3rd April I stated what I understood the position to be, that TZ did not want to meet the police as she wished to maintain her anonymity;

vi. Given TZ's position I had no reason to act upon the contents of the letter of the 3rd May. I had already had a conversation with the MSKU and made plain the position. As far as I was concerned that was the end of the matter and I had done what I had been asked to do by TZ. She had not sought or requested a meeting with the police. Indeed her position was that she would not meet them as it would reveal her identity;"

Analysis

197. The information in this correspondence is not particularly significant in itself, as it merely confirms what is implicit in the letter of 3 May 2017: that Lord Ahmed had said that this informant did not want to be named. However, it confirms the date at which Lord Ahmed became unhelpful to Ms Zaman, unbeknownst to her.
198. In his response to the revised draft factual report, Lord Ahmed said that there was never any expectation that he would do anything other than write to the police with Ms Zaman's concerns, never any expectation of a meeting with the police, and never any discussion of the letter from the police of 3 May 2017. This assertion, made very late in the investigation, fails to deal with the following points:
 - if it was understood that Lord Ahmed was simply passing on information from Ms Zaman, why did he tell us that there was a discussion before and/or at the dinner on 2 March about her not agreeing to a meeting?
 - if the possibility of a meeting with the police had not been discussed before Lord Ahmed wrote the letter, why did he not contact Ms Zaman when he received the reply from the police to check her position on the offer?
 - if he genuinely thought that Ms Zaman was not expecting any follow-up to his letter to the police, why did he not realise his mistake when she texted him in July 2017 to ask if a reply had been received?
 - why did Lord Ahmed say in his police interview that he had shown the letter from the police to Ms Zaman and Ms Butt?
 - if he took no action when he received the letter, how did Ms Zaman obtain it?

199. As Lord Ahmed claimed that Ms Zaman told him on 2 March 2017 that she did not want to pursue her complaint, and as I have found that this was not accurate, we cannot discover from him the real reason for his disengagement. However, I have found that it is more likely than not that Lord Ahmed sexually assaulted Ms Zaman on 2 March 2017; she rebuffed him; and he had been criticised by Ms Butt for his behaviour. Lord Ahmed does not suggest any other contact between himself and Ms Zaman after this challenge from Ms Butt and before his contact with the police in April 2017.

Finding

200. **I find it more likely than not that Lord Ahmed was not telling the truth when he claimed, in March 2020, that that Ms Zaman never expected him to do more than write to Commissioner Dick.**
201. **I find it is more likely than not that Lord Ahmed’s communications with the police after sending his letter of 2 March 2017 are explained by Ms Zaman’s rejection of his advances on 2 March 2017 and, possibly, Ms Butt’s criticism of him for his behaviour.**

Contact between Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed between 2 March and 14 July 2017 and Lord Ahmed’s behaviour during this time

Evidence

202. Her initial complaint of 28 January 2018 says that after the meeting at the Sahara Grill Ms Zaman “continued to receive texts from Lord Ahmed stating that he had feelings for me”:

“At this point I stopped speaking to him and I was waiting to hear from him regarding a response from the Metropolitan police. I waited for over a months [*sic*], as I didn’t hear from him I then contacted him, to find out if he had received a response from police. He then messaged me informing me that he had received a response but sadly had not forwarded this because [dot dot dot]. I did not expect this from a Lord Ahmed [*sic*] that he didn’t forward the response as I had declined his advances.”

203. In her interview with us on 6 August 2019, Ms Zaman explained that after the sexual assault Lord Ahmed phoned her and asked if she was going to make a complaint and whether she had forgiven him. She explained:

“I said, “Yes, I’ve forgiven you. I’m not going to make any allegations”. But then I said, “I am really upset. How would you feel if your daughter went to get help from someone and somebody her father’s age did this to her? How would you feel?” He said, “Because I really like you; I can’t help it. When I was around you—I really like you. I would do anything for you. But that’s fine; it’s not going to happen”. I said, “That’s fine”. After that, I said, “I’m not going to say anything but are you still going to help me?” He said, “Yes, when the reply comes, I’ll give it to you”. I said, “You have my email”. Because he used to send me lots of messages on my WhatsApp in the morning, I blocked him from my WhatsApp and blocked him from my phone. I just did not want to speak to him for a while. Because of my previous experience, I was quite upset with this. For a good few months I did not speak to him, but I kept looking at my email and he never sent me anything.”

204. In her police interview on 26 April 2018 she said that after the meeting at the Sahara Grill and the incident in her car, she blocked Lord Ahmed on WhatsApp, aware that he had her email address and could communicate with her in that way in relation to his promise to help.

205. In her timeline provided to the police she gave quite a detailed account of this:

“With the incident which took place in the car, I felt uncomfortable and I did discuss this with Lord Ahmed over a telephone conversation and text messages, where I confronted Lord Ahmed about his actions which took place earlier. I also said to him “you are married and have a wife”. He said “I really like you and I apologise for my behaviour”. I said “why behave like that then? How would you like it if someone had done that to your daughter?” he said “I will help you with [S’s] case”. Before blocking him from my phone, I told him to contact me when he had received a reply from the Met Police Commissioner. He had my email address to contact me regarding [S’s] case.”

206. In her email to the police of 17 April 2018 she said that when she spoke to Ms Butt after the incident she “was crying and told her I was going to block him from my phone, which I did”.

207. She told the police in her interview in April 2018 that she waited for about three months after blocking him and heard nothing from him, so asked Saima Butt to contact him. Ms Butt suggested that Ms Zaman should simply unblock Lord Ahmed on WhatsApp and send him a message:

“She goes like, “he will help you. Now he knows, he knows, you know, he’s not going to do anything. He apologised to you”. She goes, “Just do it, you know. He is a Lord and, you know, he’s going to help you. He promised.””

208. Lord Ahmed’s evidence in his interview with us in August 2019 was that he had no contact with Ms Zaman after the events surrounding the dinner in 2 March 2017 until she contacted him socially sometime in the summer.

209. During this time Lord Ahmed had told the police that Ms Zaman would not meet them or talk to them, but had not informed Ms Zaman of this, and had received the letter from the police of 3 May 2017 but had not shown it to Ms Zaman, or told her about it.

Analysis

210. Lord Ahmed denies any contact with Ms Zaman after the dinner on 2 March 2017. Ms Zaman says that they spoke in relation to the sexual assault, but then she blocked him and they had no contact.

211. Only one of these accounts can be true. I have already found that it is more likely than not that Ms Zaman was telling the truth when she said Lord Ahmed had put his hand on her leg, and that Ms Butt had challenged Lord Ahmed about this. Ms Zaman says on several occasions that she had a conversation with Lord Ahmed about the incident before blocking him on her phone. I can see no benefit to her in saying this if it were not true as whether or not the conversation took place would not undermine her account of the assault and subsequent phone blocking.

212. Lord Ahmed, on the other hand, has every reason to deny that any such conversation took place, or that Ms Zaman told him she was going to block him on her phone, as he continues to deny the assault that led to the conversation.
213. No analysis is needed of the accounts given by Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman about their lack of contact subsequently, as their accounts match.
214. During this time Lord Ahmed did not inform Ms Zaman that he had told the police she would not meet them or talk to them, nor that he had received a reply to his letter to Commissioner Dick. It is understandable that he would not tell her that he had given untrue information to the police. His motive in not letting her know about the reply is less clear. However, leaving aside his motives, his failure to show her the letter in May was discreditable.

Finding

215. **I find it is more likely than not that Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed had a conversation about the assault, and Ms Zaman then blocked Lord Ahmed from her phone.**
216. **I accept their separate accounts that they had no contact from then until 14 July 2017.**
217. Lord Ahmed accepts that he told the police in April that Ms Zaman would not meet or speak to them; and that he received the letter from the police of 3 May 2017. I have already found that **it is more likely than not that Lord Ahmed was deliberately untruthful when he claimed that Ms Zaman had told him she did not wish to proceed with her complaint if it meant giving her name to the police.**
218. **I therefore find that in failing to inform Ms Zaman of these events Lord Ahmed dishonestly allowed Ms Zaman to believe that he was still helping her.**

When did Ms Zaman see the reply from the police dated 3 May 2017?

Evidence

219. Ms Zaman unblocked Lord Ahmed from her phone and sent him a text message on 14 July 2017:

“Salaam. Hope all is well with you and your family. I’m really sorry to bother you. I just wanted to know if you’ve had a response to your letter regarding [S]. You did promise me that you would help me in this matter. If you no longer wish to help me please let me know so I can take different route. Your honesty will be very much appreciated. Thank you. Kind regards”
220. In her complaint of 28 January 2018 Ms Zaman said Lord Ahmed messaged her back saying he had received a reply but “sadly had not forwarded this because [dot dot dot]”, which she understood to be a reference to her refusing his advances.
221. Her draft complaint of 20 January also referred to this alleged reply from Lord Ahmed.

Comment

222. This reply is not among the text messages that Ms Zaman retrieved from her phone. We know, because Lord Ahmed confirms it, that he and Ms Zaman were back in contact in the summer of 2017, and Lord Ahmed refers to WhatsApp messages between them. It is possible that this message was sent by WhatsApp, rather than by text, although Lord Ahmed denies that he ever sent such a message. There is no documentary evidence for it one way or the other, as all WhatsApp messages between Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman were deleted from her phone in December 2017 and could not be recovered by Dr Fone.

223. In her email to me on 15 March 2018 she said:

“Lord Ahmed showed me a letter on House of Lords headed paper that he claimed to have sent to the Met Police and a reply from the Met Police on Met Police headed stationery.”

224. In the timeline she gave to the police in 2018 she had the following entries:

June/ July 2017	Lord Ahmed forwarded me a copy of the reply from Met Police Commissioner on WhatsApp, which was on Met Police Commissioner letter headed stationery. The letter stated that the commissioner wanted a meeting with Lord Ahmed and my self. I then contacted Lord Ahmed asking if he could please follow this up and arrange the meeting with all parties, He happily agreed.
June/ July 2017	I received continuous messages from Lord Ahmed, making it clear he was interested in having a relationship with me. I responded to the messages as I wanted him to help me. As conversations started progressing, we started to get close intimately. At this stage I had still not received an update on [S's] case.
August 2017	Conversations continued through out this month on a daily basis, where flirtatious exchanges occurred.

225. In her police interview on 26 April 2018 she explained that she unblocked Lord Ahmed and messaged him and he messaged her back saying “yes, I did receive a reply but, sadly, I didn’t forward it–dot dot dot”. She asked him to send her a copy of the letter and he said that he was on holiday but would do so when he returned. Her recollection was that the letter said that Commissioner Dick wanted a meeting with her and Lord Ahmed, “and she said that should keep me anonymous and she said she’d like to meet me and she asked the Lord to arrange a meeting.”

226. She asked Lord Ahmed to arrange a meeting and he said that he would do so:

“then he just started talking to me generally ... He goes, “How have you been?” then he’s like, “I’m glad we’re okay”. He even said that in the message ... Then he was, he was flirting with me on texts and everything ... and I did flirt back, because I thought I have to because if I don’t then, you know, he might not help me, you know, because of what he said before”.

227. In a letter she wrote to the police on 28 April 2018 she referred to the reply from the police: she said it was from Commissioner Dick, dated end of March

2017, that she would keep Ms Zaman anonymous, that the offer was for a meeting that included Lord Ahmed, and that her friend Saima had seen it.

228. In the disclosure document given by the police to Lord Ahmed prior to his interview on 26 July 2018, there is a reference to Lord Ahmed responding to Ms Zaman's text by sending her the letter from the police.

229. In her Newsnight interview she also discussed this:

U: She was shocked by his behaviour [on 2 March 2017] and says she did not contact him for more than a month. But she still needed help and so she says she finally asked him if the police had replied to his letter.

Ms Zaman: He said to me that he had received a reply and the reason he did not forward it sadly, he did not forward it to me because of "dot dot dot".

U: What did you think he meant by that?

Ms Zaman: It was very clear, [U]: it meant that I refused his advances."

230. In her interview on 6 August 2019 she said that when she received the message saying he had the letter but had not forwarded it, she asked him for it and he said that he was abroad but would forward it, which he then did:

"As far as I remember—I was so happy; one sentence stayed with me. When I read the letter, she said that she would be happy to meet me and Lord Ahmed to get more information, to have a meeting to take this further, and she would keep me anonymous. That is what she said."

Comment

231. Although Ms Zaman's various accounts do not all contain information about whether or how she saw the letter from the police, where the accounts do contain these details, they are consistent with each other.

232. When interviewed by the police in July 2018 Lord Ahmed said:

"At some stage, I—. Whenever I go—. I think you can get it from the Met Police, the email response, and that was very early on from the—. She was never interested in the police response. Absolute nonsense. She gives—. Honestly, I'm so upset that—. She was interested in trying to develop something. She was never interested in the police, even when I gave her the police—I think it was email printout. I'm not so sure whether it was a letter or email print. It was something from the Met Police. It was an inspector who said, "I really need to know her identity". I said to her, "Would you be prepared to give your identity?" She said, "No"

So—. And I gave her that and I said, "Please, whenever you want, you have to let me know and I will tell the police". But she wasn't—. She never discussed this, you know, to say that she was interested in what happened or to pursue, and something like that."

233. He agreed that he had informed Ms Zaman and Saima Butt of the reply from the police.

Comment

234. If Ms Zaman's text of 14 July 2017 is authentic, which we consider it is, Lord Ahmed must be saying here that he showed the letter to Ms Zaman and Ms Butt after 14 July 2017.

235. In his written response to the complaint dated 23 July 2019 Lord Ahmed said that he had received the reply before the meeting at the Sahara Grill, which we now know to be incorrect.
236. In his interview on 13 August 2019 he first said that he received the letter after the meeting at the Sahara Grill on 2 March 2017 (which was correct) and then insisted that he had received it before the meeting.
237. When we provided him with evidence that he could not have received the letter before the dinner on 2 March 2017—not least because the letter from the police was dated 3 May 2017—he accepted that the letter had arrived after the dinner.
238. In his interview on 13 August 2019 he also told us that he had not kept the letter he had received from the police, but had given it to Ms Zaman at the Sahara Grill dinner.
239. He also said that there had been no contact between them for some months after the 2 March 2017. We asked him about the 'dot dot dot' message and he said that the only communications between them, which started again in June or July, were social: she would send him compliments on his WhatsApp status and was also texting him and calling him:

“Sam Evans: So the complainant told us that a few days after the meeting at the Sahara Grill she blocked you from her phone because of what had happened—the allegation that you had touched her inappropriately. But then she contacted you again in mid to late summer—she is not sure whether it was July or August. She said that she did this because she wanted to find out whether you had had a reply to your letter to the Met police. In her email to the Commissioner of 28 January 2018, she said that you then messaged her, informing her that you had received a response but sadly had not forwarded it to her, “Because [dot dot dot]”. She said, “I did not expect this from Lord Ahmed—that he didn’t forward the response”. Her interpretation was that it was because she had declined your advances. So what was the extent of any contact that you had with after the meeting at the Sahara Grill?

Lord Ahmed: There was no contact until—she is right—maybe in June or July she started to send me compliments on my status, which she checked. She apologised for her behaviour, and then on a regular basis she would either send me a text, and then later on I think she called as well.

Sam Evans: Had you tried to contact her in the intervening period between the meeting in March at the Sahara Grill?

Lord Ahmed: No.

Sam Evans: You hadn’t. So you wouldn’t have been aware if she had blocked you from her phone?

Lord Ahmed: No.

Sam Evans: So when she did contact you later in the summer, did you respond—and how did you respond?

Lord Ahmed: Well, if she complimented me or apologised for her behaviour, I said, “It’s okay”. And when she complimented me about my status, I’ve said, “Thank you”. To that extent, yes.

Sam Evans: When you said she was commenting on your status, what do you mean exactly?

Lord Ahmed: On the WhatsApp on the left-hand side there’s something with the status and I change my status with, you know, some Koranic verses or a photograph or something and people can send a message touching it.

Sam Evans: Okay, that’s great. And did you have any communication with her outside of her commenting on your status and you thanking her?

Lord Ahmed: No.

Sam Evans: You didn’t have any other messaging with her about anything else?

Lord Ahmed: No.”

240. He also denied saying that he would arrange a meeting with the Commissioner:

“[H]ow can I arrange a meeting with the Commissioner of the Police when I can’t meet with the Commissioner of Police? It is not like anyone in my office, that I could arrange. I never, never, offered anything.”

241. In his statement of 18 November 2019 he said that he did nothing with the letter when he received it:

“At the meeting [on 2 March 2017] I gave her a copy of the letter I had written to the Commissioner and she remained adamant that she did not want her identity to be known and, therefore, the case could not be pursued if it required her identity to be known. ... Given Ms Zaman’s clear position as to anonymity I did not take any further steps on receipt of the call which I do not believe went into the details of witness protection etc. ... As a result I did nothing further on receipt of the letter of the 3rd May because my involvement with Ms Zaman as a member of the House had ended by then.”

242. In February 2020, the police provided us with thumbnail images of pictures of both letters that they had retrieved from Ms Zaman’s phone during their investigation.

Analysis

243. Lord Ahmed’s accounts are contradictory and inconsistent:

- he told the police in July 2018 that he showed the letter to Ms Zaman and Ms Butt, but Ms Zaman was not interested in pursuing the complaint;

- in July 2019 he wrote to me to say that he received the letter before the meeting at the Sahara Grill, and at the meeting Ms Zaman said she did not want to continue with the complaint;
 - in August 2019, when interviewed as part of my investigation, he started by saying the letter arrived after the meeting—which was accurate—but then insisted that he received it before the meeting, and that Ms Zaman told him before the meeting that she did not wish to proceed with the complaint. He also said that he gave Ms Zaman the letter from the police at that meeting and did not keep a copy for himself;
 - in this interview he was emphatic that after the meeting at the Sahara Grill, which he later accepted was on 2 March 2017 the only communications between himself and Ms Zaman were social, and nothing was said or done as a follow up to his letter to the police of 2 March 2017;
 - in November 2019—once documentary evidence had demonstrated that he could not have shown Ms Zaman the letter from the police at the dinner on 2 March 2017—he said that he had shown Ms Zaman his letter to the police at the dinner, and she had said she did not want to go ahead if it meant being identified to the police “and, therefore, the case could not be pursued if it required her identity to be known” and because of this he did nothing with the letter when he received it.
244. The thumbnail images of the letters on 2 March and 3 May 2017 provided by the police were the same as the letters the police sent us in September 2019.¹¹
245. The thumbnail images would have been created by Ms Zaman’s mobile phone when she received them, presumably via WhatsApp. Given the way mobile phones work, it is not surprising that the thumbnails remained after the original images themselves had been deleted. Though the thumbnail images do not show who sent these images to Ms Zaman, or when the originals were created, they do demonstrate that Ms Zaman had pictures of the letters on her phone at some point.¹²
246. I consider that there is a coherent explanation for Lord Ahmed’s inconsistency as to whether and when he sent, gave or showed the letter from the police to Ms Zaman. Although as set out in Chapter 2, I do not assume that inconsistency is necessarily evidence of dishonesty, the inconsistencies here, which go to the heart of the complaint, lead to the unavoidable conclusion that Lord Ahmed either was not telling the truth when he said he had given/shown/sent the letter to Ms Zaman or he was not telling the truth when he said that he had not done so.
247. A reasonable explanation, that fits the known facts, is that from the time of his police interview in July 2018 to his final comments on the matter in November 2019, new factors came into play that required him to change his story.

11 These were sent to us by the police in February 2020 having been extracted from Ms Zaman’s phone during the police investigation in 2018 (see Appendix 9)

12 Once the police had provided the thumbnails to us we were able also to find them amongst the thousands of items of data we had had retrieved from Ms Zaman’s phone.

248. When he spoke to the police in July 2018 he knew that I had not accepted Ms Zaman's complaint of January 2018 for investigation. It was therefore safe for him to acknowledge that he had shown her the letter from the police.
249. As already discussed, his comments to the police about Ms Zaman's lack of interest in the letter probably arose from his wish to make his evidence consistent with what he had communicated to the police in April 2017 about Ms Zaman's unwillingness to proceed. Telling the police that he had shown her the letter did not contradict this earlier evidence.
250. When I accepted Ms Zaman's complaint in 2019, Lord Ahmed was provided with all the documentary evidence gathered at that point in the investigation, including Ms Zaman's original complaint of 28 January 2018. What this evidence did not contain was the date of the meeting at the Sahara Grill, or the date of the letter from the police.
251. Lord Ahmed had already told the police that Ms Zaman wasn't interested in pursuing the complaint even when he showed her the letter, so it is unsurprising that he gave the same account in his July 2019 written response to the complaint and in his interview with us in August 2019. However, he now identified the occasion when he claimed to have given her the letter: the dinner at the Sahara Grill. It is clear from his evidence that he had forgotten that the dinner had been on 2 March 2017, and when this was put to him he was startled, but stuck to his story that the letter had been given to her at the Sahara Grill; the dinner must have taken place after 2 March 2017; and he had not had any contact with Ms Zaman about it from that time onwards.
252. When we provided documentary proof of the date of the dinner and the fact of her text of 14 July 2017 asking if he had had a reply to his letter to the police, he changed his story completely, saying that he had never shown her the letter because she had made it clear at the dinner on 2 March 2017 that she did not want to meet the police, so he did nothing when it arrived.
253. This had the apparent advantage of keeping the date on which his parliamentary activities for Ms Zaman ended on a clear, identifiable occasion many months before their sexual relationship started in September.
254. However, it had the disadvantages of contradicting what he had said to the police in July 2018; not explaining why he did not (as he claimed) respond to her text in July 2017; and not explaining how Ms Zaman came to receive the letter from the police.

Finding

255. Ms Zaman's account is consistent. Lord Ahmed's accounts are so inconsistent with each other and with the reliable corroborative evidence as to be totally unconvincing.
256. The letter from the police dated 3 May 2017 could not have been given to Ms Zaman on 2 March 2017. Lord Ahmed is the only person who could have sent the letter to Ms Zaman.
257. **I find that it is more likely than not that, in response to Ms Zaman's text of 14 July 2017, Lord Ahmed sent her the reply from the police dated 3 May 2017 at some time after 14 July 2017 and before she visited his house in September 2017. He still did not inform her of his**

communications with the police in April 2017 and therefore actively deceived her in relation to his intentions to help.

When did Ms Zaman go to Lord Ahmed's house?

Evidence

258. Evidence from both Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed place Ms Zaman's first visit to Lord Ahmed's house in the autumn of 2017. At times in her evidence Ms Zaman gives different timings, varying in detail.
259. In the timeline she prepared for the police, she wrote:

September 2017	I did not want to meet up with Lord Nazir Ahmed as he kept on telling me how much he liked me. I then decided to write to Prime Minister T. May regarding [S] and [J]. Sadly I got a disappointing reply. Reference : T9406/17, Direct Communications Unit, Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, LONDON SW1P 4DF
September/ October 2017	I was still waiting for an update, then Lord Ahmed asked me to meet with him for dinner. I agreed as I wanted him to help me and I went to see him at his house one evening at [address]. Lord Ahmed came onto me first, by coming closer to kiss me and I pushed him away saying I am not ready. Then 15 to 20 minutes later we kissed and the relationship started from there and he had intercourse with me in his bedroom.

260. Ms Zaman provided us with a copy of the reply she received from the Home Office on the Prime Minister's behalf. This dated her email to the Prime Minister as 30 September 2017.
261. In her account of the evening in an email to the investigating police officer on 13 June 2018, Ms Zaman said:
- "I visited Lord Ahmed at his house ... I cannot recall the exact date but do remember it was a Thursday evening towards the end of September 2017 around 8:30 pm."
262. In her interview with me and Ms Evans in August 2019 she said "The times and the months I cannot remember exactly, but it was probably late summer—probably July, August and September when I went to his house."
263. However, also in that interview when describing the evidence she had given to the police in 2018 she said:

"I could not remember the date. I told the police whatever I could remember. Then [the investigating officer] wanted a medical report. I do remember that 24 hours after going to his house I was very sick. I vomited and vomited, and I was feeling strange within myself as well. I remember phoning the doctor, because I was thinking, "I do not understand; my stomach feels weird". I was feeling weird, and I did go to work the next day. After his house I went home, I went straight to sleep, and the next day I went to work. I was feeling a bit strange, so I phoned the doctor. Obviously, I did not want to speak at the reception; I wanted to speak to the doctor. When I got back home I was feeling really drained and went to sleep, so I missed his call. That night, after

24 hours, I vomited all night, so the next day I phoned the doctor again. I was taking Dioralyte and thinking, “I don’t know what’s wrong with me”.”

264. Subsequently she provided us with an extract from her GP’s records. They indicate that Ms Zaman had requested a telephone consultation on 6 September 2017 but missed the call. The GP phoned back on 8 September 2017 and discussed a four or five day history of diarrhoea and vomiting (see paragraph 341).

265. In her undated response to Lord Ahmed’s written response of 23 July 2019, Ms Zaman said:

“On 7 September 2017 I recall I was runnig [*sic*] late for the meeting, at Lord Ahmed’s house to discuss the case further and arrange a meeting with the Met Commissioner. ... The next day after going to his house I was feeling very unwell all day I had to call the doctor, I was then vomiting all night, I believe this was the result of the drugs he put in my tea.”

266. In both his written response of 23 July 2019 and in his interview with us, Lord Ahmed said the meeting at his house was in the autumn.

Analysis

267. The timings Ms Zaman gives for her first visit to Lord Ahmed’s house vary, though largely place it in September 2017. In her most specific descriptions of the evening she places it in early September, some time between 5 and 7 September 2017.

Finding

268. **It is not possible to conclude exactly when Ms Zaman’s first visit to Lord Ahmed’s house took place but I consider it more likely than not that it was in early September, shortly before 6 September.**

Why did Ms Zaman go to Lord Ahmed’s house in September 2017?

Evidence

269. In her original complaint email of 28 January 2018 Ms Zaman did not mention receiving the letter but said that, after Lord Ahmed told her he had received it “but sadly had not forwarded this because [dot dot dot]”, he said they should meet to discuss the matter further. She did not say where they met.

270. When we interviewed her on 6 August 2019 we pointed out that she had not mentioned going to Lord Ahmed’s house to discuss the reply from the Metropolitan Police in her original complaint of 28 January 2018, only that she met with him to discuss the reply and that later matters had developed into a sexual relationship. She explained:

“In the first complaint I sent you, when we spoke over the phone, what happened was that I was really, really upset at that time. To be honest with you, at that time I had not even realised what had happened to me. I was so upset that he had not made the appointment. I sat down. I was supposed to go and meet somebody, and she was going to do a draft for me—somebody you were going to refer me to. That was very kind of

you, but I was so stressed and so ill that I could not go, so I decided to do it myself. I just wanted to get the email out to you, because I was feeling comfortable and had spoken to you, so whatever came to my mind—. Slowly, I started realising what had happened to me.”

271. In her police interview in April 2018 she said that after she had seen the letter from the police she asked Lord Ahmed to arrange a meeting and he said that he would do that. He then started sending flirty texts, to which she responded because she was worried that he would not go on helping her if she did not.

272. Then one day he suggested they should meet up and she felt that this would be all right because they had been talking over WhatsApp and on the phone.

273. Ms Zaman must have told the Newsnight reporter that Lord Ahmed had asked her to go to his house to discuss her case, because he said:

“Lord Ahmed’s main home is in Rotherham but he owns property in the capital. He asked Tahira to discuss her case at his house on this street in east London.”

274. In her complaint letter of 5 June 2019 she wrote:

“He entered into a sexual relationship with me in September 2017 and used the promise of arranging a meeting with Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick as a way of persuading me to visit his house in East London for the first time.”

275. In her undated response to Lord Ahmed’s statement of 23 July 2019, which was written before her interview on 6 August 2019, she wrote:

“I first went to Lord Ahmed’s house in September 2017. The reason for going to his house was in the hope of him arranging a meeting between me and the Met Commissioner. I never took food to his house for this first meeting.”

276. In her interview on 6 August 2019, when asked about Lord Ahmed’s claim that his parliamentary activities for her had ended long before they started a relationship, Ms Zaman said:

“That is not correct. He always promised that the whole reason I met him at his house was to do with getting help in getting a meeting arranged with the Met Police Commissioner. It was always, always about helping me.”

277. Later she said that after she had seen the letter from the police:

“he texted me, saying, “I will take this on and follow up; I will arrange the meeting”. Then he got in touch with me and said, “Come round, we will have a chat”—to come to his house. I said, “Fine”. I was thinking, “If I don’t go this time”—because last time I did not go to his house. So, I thought, “I will go. We will have a chat, I will speak to him, and we will go through the letter”. But when I went to his house, we did not do this.”

278. We pointed out that in her email of 28 January 2018 she had written:

“I went alone at this meeting as I felt he was an honourable person and given his position, status and previous encounter, had no reason to doubt his character”.

279. This seemed inconsistent with her evidence that he had put his hand on her upper thigh in her car in March 2017, and her understanding that he had not subsequently sent her the reply from the Metropolitan Police because she had rejected his advances. She told us that she discussed the risks of going to Lord Ahmed’s house with her friend Saima:

“[S]he said, “He won’t do it again. He has got the message now: he likes you, you don’t like him. So, he’s not going to do it”. I never, ever thought that what happened in his house would have happened.”

Comment

280. Ms Zaman’s reference to Lord Ahmed being an honourable person was first made in the draft complaint attached to the email of 20 January 2018, and at that time was linked to their second meeting, at the Sahara Grill. In that context the comment makes more sense, as Lord Ahmed had not behaved dishonourably before the dinner.

281. It appears that when Ms Zaman corrected the draft, this comment became linked to her visit to his house. We concluded that, given Ms Zaman’s state of mind in January 2019, this was an error, rather than an attempt to deceive.

282. She also explained that she was willing to go to his house, “because I was desperate; I wanted his help.”

283. She was very clear that she went to his house to move forward with her complaint against S by having a meeting with Commissioner Dick:

“that was the whole reason for going to his house. If he had not sent me that, I would not have gone to his house. If he had said, “This is a long time ago; I can’t follow it up”, I would never have spoken to him again.

The Commissioner for Standards: So your purpose in going to see him at his place was to try and ensure that the meeting with Cressida Dick took place?

Tahira Zaman: Yes, that was always my purpose.”

284. In his police interview in July 2018 Lord Ahmed said that in September or October she asked to meet him, and he suggested that she come to the House of Lords, but she wanted somewhere private, and said she was sorry for everything. He said he agreed that she could come to his house, and she did so, bringing food.

285. Earlier in the interview he had said that Ms Zaman had been showing an interest in him since they first met, and that Ms Butt had contacted him to say that Ms Zaman fancied him, which he had brushed off. She had then made advances to him at the Sahara Grill, which he had also brushed off, saying he was a married man and not interested. The police therefore asked him why he had allowed her to come to his house, where he would be alone with her.

[Interviewing officer]: Okay. All right. And this incident where she came to your house, where the first time that you said that you were weak and it all started from then, she was coming round your house, and you were uncomfortable about that in the first place and you wanted to meet at the House of Lords?

Lord Ahmed: No, no.

[Interviewing officer]: That's what you said.

Lord Ahmed: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Interviewing officer]: But she pushed and wanted to meet you.

Lord Ahmed: Yeah.

[Interviewing officer]: So you invited her round to your address.

Lord Ahmed: Yeah.

[Interviewing officer]: What I don't understand is why you invited her round, when she'd—

Lord Ahmed: No, she insisted.

[Interviewing officer]: She had been very forward with you right from the outset. She fancied you.

Lord Ahmed: She insisted she wanted to come to my house and wanted to talk to me. She apologised and she insisted, "Please can I come to your house? I need to explain something. You misunderstood me", and, "I just want to clear things". And I said, "Meet with me in a restaurant"—"Oh, I can't meet with you in a restaurant. No, no, please, I want to meet with you at your house". She wanted to meet—. I wanted her to meet in a public place, and she said, "No, I want to meet with you at your house".

[Interviewing officer]: Okay.

Lord Ahmed: Because even at the first instance they wanted to come to my house, but I invited them to that restaurant.

[Interviewing officer]: So why do you always want to meet at the Houses of Parliament? What's the purpose of that for you?

Lord Ahmed: Because it's a public place, and so there's no issue.

[Interviewing officer]: So in this meeting that she pushed and pushed for, when she came to your house on your invitation, who else was there?

Lord Ahmed: Nobody else.

[Interviewing officer]: So why do that if you always wanted to insist on a public place to protect yourself, especially knowing this woman fancies you and has made it very direct she fancies you and wants a relationship with you? Why make arrangement for a meeting with someone on your own behind locked doors?

Lord Ahmed: By this time, for at least a few weeks she had been complimenting me. She had been saying nice things about me, and she wanted to have a dinner, some food together, and she didn't want it in restaurant, and so she said, "I want it somewhere else, at your house". So I gave in."

286. In his written statement of 23 July 2019 Lord Ahmed explained why Ms Zaman had come to his house:

"So, in autumn 2017 Ms Zaman asked me about possible marriage to a Pakistani national and asked if she could bring some food to my house to discuss this. Throughout this period she considered me and described me as a 'friend' and sometimes as her 'dear friend' and all such contact between us was in that capacity. This is evidenced by numerous WhatsApp messages sent by Ms Zaman to [X]. A selection of these messages are attached, including one dated 18th November 2017 which states that 'My dear friend also wants to see me happily married', which is the reference to her seeking my personal opinion on the possible marriage to a Pakistani national."

Comment

287. It is unclear in what way the WhatsApp message from Ms Zaman to X sent on 18 November 2017 demonstrates that she had come to Lord Ahmed's house some two months previously in order to seek advice on a proposal.

288. When we put this account to Ms Zaman on 6 August 2019, she said:

"At no point in the entire time I knew Lord Ahmed I ever mentioned anything like that to him or asked him anything like that. That's not true."

289. She also explained that in November 2017, when Lord Ahmed said that the relationship could not continue, he had said to her:

"I want to see you happy. I can't marry you, but I want you to get married. I want to see you happy.' That is what he said to me. He said 'But we'll always be friends, I'll stay in touch. I really, really like you, but I can't marry you'. I thought to myself that it was fine and I was going to move on, but I was still talking to him because I wanted him to arrange the appointment."

290. This is corroborated by Lord Ahmed in his police interview, although it is not clear when he said this to Ms Zaman:

"I said to her, "Why don't you get married? Find a younger man". And she said, "I don't want anybody from Pakistan, because they use you and they run away. I want somebody from UK—a British Pakistani, British Muslim", because by this time I knew all her background. And I said, "Well it's difficult to find somebody with two grown-up children, but if I ever come across I'll let you know"."

291. In her undated statement given to us on 6 August 2019 Ms Zaman also told us that she referred to Lord Ahmed as "her dear friend" as he had specifically told her not to use his name in correspondence and that he did not want others to find out about their relationship.

292. In his interview on 13 August 2019 Lord Ahmed said that Ms Zaman had come to his house in September, but not to discuss having a meeting with Commissioner Dick:

“Lord Ahmed: She brought some food. She was pursuing me.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay. But you already knew she was pursuing you, so what—

Lord Ahmed: It wasn’t in that capacity. She said she wanted to discuss as a friend some personal matters which—she had a proposal somewhere and she wanted to discuss it with me and because she classed me as a friend.

The Commissioner for Standards: Was this the Pakistani national?

Lord Ahmed: Yeah.

The Commissioner for Standards: Right, okay. I thought that was a bit later.

Lord Ahmed: That was in autumn.

The Commissioner for Standards: Yes, so you’re saying the first time that she came to your house it was to discuss the Pakistani national?

Lord Ahmed: Yes.”

293. We were also given evidence on the reason for Ms Zaman going to Lord Ahmed’s house by Ms Butt and another friend of Ms Zaman, B.¹³

294. In her statement of 4 August 2019, Saima Butt said:

“A few months [after Ms Zaman told her that Lord Ahmed had touched her inappropriately] around mid to late Summer, Tahira contacted me again and asked to find out if he Lord Ahmed had received a reply from Met Police Commissioner but I advised Tahira to unblock Lord Ahmed and contact him herself. Tahira did contact Lord Ahmed and he had received a reply. Upon Tahira’s request, Lord Ahmed Whatsapp messaged a picture of the letter to her and Tahira forwarded this message to me. The letter appeared to be on Met Police headed paper. The first thing I noticed was the date on the letter, it was a few months old and I was concerned whether Lord Ahmed could still arrange a meeting with the Commissioner as I clearly remember the letter stated that the Met Police Commissioner wanted to meet with and had agreed to keep her anonymous. Tahira then told me that she had spoken to Lord Ahmed and Lord Ahmed was willing to help her further with her case by agreeing to still arrange this meeting with the Met police Commissioner despite the fact that the Commissioner had replied several months ago.

I would like to confirm that Tahira only got back in touch with Lord Ahmed because he hadn’t forwarded the reply from Met Commissioner and she wanted his help.”

295. We interviewed Ms Butt on 27 August 2019, and she confirmed that three or four months after she had been shown the letter that Lord Ahmed had

13 I am aware of B’s identity but she wished to remain anonymous.

written to Commissioner Dick, Ms Zaman had told her that she had not received any reply, and asked Ms Butt to make contact with Lord Ahmed to ask what was happening.

296. Ms Butt said that as it was Ms Zaman who wanted to pursue the matter, the contact should come from her. Ms Zaman then contacted Lord Ahmed and subsequently forwarded to Ms Butt the reply from the Metropolitan Police that she said Lord Ahmed had sent her.

“Saima Butt: I think it said something like, “Could you arrange a meeting between Ms Zaman and myself, and I will try and keep her anonymous and try and help her with this [S] or healer or whatever”—something like that. I cannot remember the exact words, but I remember certain things like they were trying to keep her anonymous and that they are willing to meet her to get to the bottom of the problem that she is having.

The Commissioner for Standards: Can you remember who it was signed by?

Saima Butt: I think it was the Commissioner—her or him. When I say “her or him”, I am not even sure. It was the Commissioner, basically.”

297. We referred to Ms Zaman’s evidence that, after Lord Ahmed asked her to visit him at home, she was worried because of what had happened before, so discussed this with Ms Butt who, according to Ms Zaman’s evidence, had said, “He won’t do it again. He’s got the message now. He likes you. You don’t like him, so he’s not going to do it.”
298. We asked Ms Butt if she remembered saying this and she said that may have done but was not sure.
299. Ms Butt was very clear that over the summer Ms Zaman was expecting something to come of the letter Lord Ahmed had written:

“We both were. We were both thinking that he might set up a meeting or arrange a meeting with somebody—anyone—who could take this case further.”

300. Ms Zaman also provided us with a statement, dated 4 August 2019, from another friend, B:

“I, [B], confirm that Tahira Zaman showed me several messages dated after June 2017 between herself and Lord Ahmed regarding a letter Lord Ahmed received from Met Police Commissioner. The letter itself stated the commissioner wanted to meet with Tahira and agreed to keep her anonymous. In the texts, Tahira was asking for help from Lord Ahmed to arrange this meeting with Met Commissioner. Lord Ahmed agreed to help Tahira and stated that he will follow this up.

I recall Lord Ahmed’s text messages were flirtatious despite the fact that these communications were work related. Tahira however tried to maintain a professional tone throughout.

As far as I can remember these messages were in end of at the end of [sic] August/beginning of September. Tahira met him in September 2017 at his house. I can’t remember the exact date.”

301. We interviewed B on 23 August 2019. She was frank about the limits of what she could remember and said that she did not think she had known about the sexual relationship until it was over. However, she was clear that, whatever else was going on, during this time Ms Zaman was still seeking Lord Ahmed's help:

"Yeah, it was always about the help. One thing I can hand on my heart honestly say is she never stopped seeking help. It was always about the help. Whatever happened in between is almost like, what do you call it, collateral damage on her part, if you like. But I can honestly 100% say that throughout the whole thing for her she did have that goal of, "I want help, and I want it to be taken". She wanted to bring about change. She did, she did. She is actually a good person. I know, with everything else, but I can honestly say that her intention was actually that—. Right until the end and everything else that happened."

302. When I wrote to Lord Ahmed on 28 October 2019 about evidence I had obtained that undermined his accounts of earlier events, I also referred to the evidence of Ms Butt and B, as given above.

303. In his response of 18 November 2019 Lord Ahmed said:

"In relation to 'witnesses who have told [you] that Ms Zaman informed them that [I] had received a reply from the Met, and suggested she go to your house to discuss it', before I respond to this false allegation, I would like to know who these so-called 'witnesses' are and see their testimony as I have received credible information that Ms Zaman has approached at least one person offering them money to make a false statement against me."¹⁴

Analysis

304. Ms Zaman's first account of the visit to Lord Ahmed's house, contained in the draft complaint of 20 January 2018, is inconsistent with later accounts. When we interviewed Ms Zaman on 12 September 2019 she explained that the document had been produced on the basis of conversations with her sister, and was not in chronological order. She sorted it out for the formal complaint on 28 January 2019.
305. Ms Zaman's other accounts of the events leading to her going to Lord Ahmed's house for the first time are consistent: at some point after the events at the Sahara Grill she blocked Lord Ahmed on her phone; having not heard anything about a reply to Lord Ahmed's letter to Commissioner Dick she unblocked him and sent a message; he replied to say he had received a response but had not sent it to her; he asked to meet and, believing the meeting to be concerned with the response from the Metropolitan Police, she agreed. This sequence of events also accords with corroborative evidence that she was still looking for help: the testimony of Ms Butt and B, as well as her letter to the Prime Minister of 30 September 2017.
306. Lord Ahmed's accounts to the police and during the investigation are inconsistent: he did not mention the Pakistani national in his account to

¹⁴ Lord Ahmed told me that this person would only speak to me if her anonymity could be assured. I explained that, as she was apparently making allegations against Ms Zaman, I would need to name her to Ms Zaman when discussing the allegations. I have not been provided with the allegations from this person.

the police, merely saying that she had told him that she wanted to explain something to him (unspecified).

307. His account to the police is also internally implausible. In his interview he makes much of his custom of meeting people in public places to protect his reputation and gives no plausible explanation for agreeing to meet Ms Zaman at his home, on his own, other than to say, “She insisted [...] so I gave in”.
308. His account during our investigation is also somewhat inconsistent: he pointed to a message that Ms Zaman sent to X on 18 November 2017—“My dear friend also wants to see me happily married”—in support of his assertion that she sought a meeting with him in September 2017 to discuss marriage to a Pakistani national. However, this explanation does not make much sense. By the time it was sent, Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed had been in a sexual relationship for over two months.
309. If he is suggesting that she deceived him into meeting by saying that she wanted to discuss marrying this Pakistani national, when actually she wanted a sexual relationship with him, it is very difficult to see what possible reason there could be for her sending this text to X two months into the relationship with Lord Ahmed.
310. Ms Zaman’s explanation for the text, that it was in the context of Lord Ahmed saying they had no future together but that he wished her well and hoped she would marry, seems more plausible, particularly as Lord Ahmed confirmed to the police that he had had such a conversation with her during their relationship.
311. Lord Ahmed also does not deal satisfactorily with the issue of the text Ms Zaman sent him on 14 July 2017, enquiring whether he had received a reply to his letter to the police. In his written response of 18 November 2019, he said that he does not remember receiving it or replying to it, and queried how it came to be found on Ms Zaman’s phone.
312. He then said:

“Ms Zaman has said that she saw a letter from Cressida Dick. If that is a reference to seeing the letter of the 3rd May 2017, then it seems odd indeed if she is asking me if I have received a response to my letter on the 14th July 2017.”
313. Given that Ms Zaman’s allegation was that he did not provide her with a copy of the response from the police before she asked for it in July 2017, and elsewhere in the same statement Lord Ahmed noted that he “did nothing further on receipt of the letter of the 3rd May” due to his alleged belief that Ms Zaman would not allow the police to know her identity, it is unclear what aspect of the text Lord Ahmed found odd.
314. Lord Ahmed gives no other explanation for the text.

Finding

315. **In the light of my findings that Ms Zaman had not discontinued her complaint against S, and had received the letter from the police at some point after 14 July 2017, and in light of Lord Ahmed’s inconsistent and implausible reasons for having the meeting at his house, I find that it is more likely than not that Ms Zaman went to Lord Ahmed’s**

house at his invitation to discuss the offer made by the police to meet her. However, he had no intention of forwarding her concerns to the police and his use of the offer of a meeting made in the letter from the police to lure Ms Zaman to his house was dishonest.

CHAPTER 5: SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER 2017

316. This chapter deals with Ms Zaman’s first visit to Lord Ahmed’s house in September 2017, when their sexual relationship began, until it ended in November 2017. The matters covered here are:

- how the sexual relationship began;
- Ms Zaman’s allegation that Lord Ahmed spiked her tea; and
- the basis of the ongoing relationship.

How the sexual relationship began

Evidence

317. In her police interview of 26 April 2018, Ms Zaman said that when she went to Lord Ahmed’s house, after they had had tea and something to eat, he made advances to her, sitting on her lap and telling her he was sexually aroused. She pushed him off, saying ‘What are you doing? I’m not ready,’ but he kept on saying how much he liked her and she thought perhaps he really did. He suggested they went upstairs, so they did and they then went into his bedroom and had sexual intercourse. She said that she was laughing while they took their clothes off:

“we had intercourse and I was supposed to ask about, you know, the follow-up with the Commissioner and if he had written back. I totally, you know, forgot, and I was like, ‘Wow, what happened then?’”

318. She thought that what had happened meant that he really did love her.

319. She said that he had not forced her to have sex with him, but nor had she been expecting that they were going to have sex the first time that she went to his house, “but it happened”.

320. Ms Zaman set out her account of the evening in an email to the investigating police officer on 13 June 2018:

“I never thought about my first visit to Lord Ahmed’s house until my sister ... started asking me, “how did you end up having sex with Lord Ahmed? How did it lead to that?” Given that this incident was out of character for me.

My sister ... started questioning me in detail as to what had happened at Lord Ahmed’s house. It was through this I recalled that I was running late and Lord Ahmed was not happy and kept ringing and texting me to ask how long I would be. He wanted to know the exact time I was going to arrive his house. When I arrived, Lord Ahmed had the tea ready for me and after taking a sip I noticed the tea tasted slightly odd. I remember asking Lord Ahmed if the milk in the tea was ‘off’, to which he replied “no it’s not off, my tea tastes fine”. I didn’t think much of this at that time.

After having half cup I didn’t want anymore and I stopped drinking the tea, then all of a sudden Lord came on to me and tried sitting on my lap and wanting to kiss me. I pushed him away and stated that you

are hurting me and that we haven't known each other for that long. He apologised and moved back and asked me to finish my tea.

After I had finished drinking the tea, Lord Ahmed was very adamant to show me around his house. We went upstairs and Lord Ahmed showed the first room, which was his ironing room and did not have a bed in there. He then took me to next room which he stated was a guest bedroom which had an en-suite. Lastly he took me to his bedroom and was showing off how his house was well maintained for example his clothes were washed, ironed and dry cleaned. All his towels were washed ironed and folded ready for use.

Lord Ahmed started coming closer towards me at the same time he was removing his clothing. I started giggling and as he was coming close to me and I was moving backwards trying to get away from him and all of a sudden I fell on my back on the bed. Whilst still laughing loudly then Lord Ahmed told me not to make any noise as he has tenants next door.

We ended up having intercourse and when we finished I was really tired and sleepy. I couldn't understand why I'm falling asleep. I did say to Lord Ahmed that I'm feeling tired and sleepy and he stated that "why don't you stay the night". I was worried about my children and wanted to go home as I also had work the next day. I got out off the bed and went to the bathroom which was attached to his bedroom and put my clothes on. When I got out of the bathroom, Lord Ahmed had left the bedroom and was down stairs but not in the living room. I waited for him in the living room and was very confused to what had happened. When Lord Ahmed came in to living room I said to him I must leave now and said good bye to him.

When I got home Lord Ahmed messaged me saying it was really nice to see me and good night.

The next day I received texts messages from Lord Ahmed telling me that I needed to go on the pill and we both need to be careful, otherwise you will end up getting pregnant."

321. She gave a similar account in her police interviews on 11 July 2018 and in her undated response to Lord Ahmed's statement of 26 July 2019. These were also consistent with the account reported by Newsnight:

"U: Lord Ahmed's main home is in Rotherham but he owns property in the capital. He asked Tahira to discuss her case at his house on this street in east London. When she arrived, he offered her a cup of tea.

Ms Zaman: He was saying, you know just saying I am beautiful and he really likes me and then, all of a sudden, he came and sat on top of me.

U: How did that happen? Was this downstairs still?

Ms Zaman: Yes, on the sofa and I'm saying, "What are you doing? You're hurting me", and he said, "Okay, okay, I'm sorry", and I'm thinking what am I getting myself into? And I was just like really, you know, it's just so difficult, [U], when you are in a situation and you try to come out of that situation, it is difficult, and when you need somebody's help.

U: She says she felt pressure to go further and felt uncomfortable, but later that evening she did have sex with him. He continued to pursue her and Tahira did feel they were entering into a relationship. They messaged each other frequently. She says that they continued to meet at Lord Ahmed's house, where they had sex. But Tahira says that after two months he made it clear he wasn't going to leave his wife and the affair ended.

U: It was, I suppose, a consensual sexual relationship.

Ms Zaman: I thought that it has happened now, and after that because I believed that he I genuinely did believe that he had feelings for me. Just, I'm so stupid and I believed he had feelings for me and I believed that he was going to help me."

322. In her timeline she put:

"September/October 2017: I was still waiting for an update, then Lord Ahmed asked me to meet with him for dinner. I agreed as I wanted him to help me and I went to see him at his house one evening at [address]. Lord Ahmed came onto me first, by coming closer to kiss me and I pushed him away saying I am not ready. Then 15 to 20 minutes later we kissed and the relationship started from there and he had intercourse with me in his bedroom."

323. In her interview with us on 6 August 2019 she confirmed that the sexual relationship began the first time she went to his house.

324. On 19 December 2019 I emailed Ms Zaman to ask her what she had meant when she said, in her police interview, that, when Lord Ahmed sat on her legs she had said 'I'm not ready'. She replied the same day, saying she couldn't remember saying this, but what she had meant was that she was not ready for a new relationship as she was still recovering from her relationship with J.

325. During his police interview in July 2018 Lord Ahmed said that Ms Zaman came to his house and brought food. After they had eaten, she held his hand and said she liked him, and asked him why he was not interested in her, and they ended up in the bedroom, having sex:

"She then started talking—"I like you"—and sort of giving the impression, held my hand, and then started saying, "Why—. Is there something wrong? Is there something wrong? Why are you not interested?" And then, from one thing or another, we agreed, which I admit is my weakness, and I, you know, displayed weakness and I'm, you know, that I agreed, and I said, "Okay. We can't do it here. We'll go upstairs, in my bedroom"."

326. In his police interview he spontaneously mentioned that he took Levitra, a treatment for erectile dysfunction. I wrote to him on 12 December 2019 with various queries about his police interview, and asked him to clarify why he mentioned this to the police in the context of his involvement with Ms Zaman. He replied, "Levitra is for my stimulation and I was making the point that I could not cope with her demands".

327. In his written response of 23 July 2019 to Ms Zaman's complaint he did not mention having started a sexual relationship when they met at his house.

328. In his interview on 13 August 2019 he said that when they met “one thing or another led to this [the start of their sexual relationship]” and:

“She came to my house, she brought some food and I went to make tea. We put the food on the table, I brought some plates. I don’t think she had much food. I had some food. We had tea and from one thing to another led to the whatever.

The Commissioner for Standards: Okay. So there was nothing about you coming on to her?

Lord Ahmed: No, no, absolutely I wouldn’t.

The Commissioner for Standards: So who made the first move?

Lord Ahmed: She not only made the first move, she was complimenting and—yeah.”

329. Lord Ahmed also sent me a letter from the BBC, dated 6 February 2019 ahead of their Newsnight broadcast, which included:

“Tahira says you asked her to meet at your house in [address] for dinner to discuss the Met’s reply and her case. She agreed to this. She says that when you were in the house with her you said she was beautiful and then suddenly sat on top of her on the sofa downstairs. She says she felt-pressured and extremely uncomfortable. Later that evening, you had sexual Intercourse with her upstairs. We accept this was consensual, but what is your comment about the appropriateness of this, given that you knew Tahira was a vulnerable member of the public who had come to you for help?”

Analysis

330. I have already found that it is more likely than not that Ms Zaman went to Lord Ahmed’s house at his invitation to discuss the offer made by the police to meet her. Lord Ahmed denied that this was the purpose of the meeting, but his evidence was inconsistent, implausible and unconvincing.
331. On three occasions in 2018: when Ms Zaman was interviewed by the police in April; when she produced her timeline; and when she emailed the police on 13 June 2017; she said that she had protested when Lord Ahmed sat on her legs. In June 2018 she said that she had told Lord Ahmed they had not known each other for long. On the other two occasions she said she had said to him that she was not ready, and when we asked her what she meant, she told us that she was saying she was not ready for another relationship. These accounts were consistent and convincing.
332. It is clear that Ms Zaman did not get the help she had been led to believe would be given at the meeting, and it seems likely that the actual outcome of the evening was something that Lord Ahmed had hoped for and tried to organise.
333. Ms Zaman pointed out that she knew from her relationship with Lord Ahmed that he took Levitra, and indeed Lord Ahmed confirmed this. It is not possible to know if Lord Ahmed used Levitra on this occasion, but her description of his impatience for her to arrive and his sexual arousal when he

sat on her lap, suggests that he may have done, and that the encounter was pre-planned.

Finding

334. **I find it is more likely than not that Lord Ahmed planned and initiated the sexual encounter at his home the first time they met there. He used the excuse of helping Ms Zaman with her complaint as a device to get her to his house.**

Ms Zaman's allegation that Lord Ahmed spiked her tea

Evidence

335. Ms Zaman says that she believes Lord Ahmed may have spiked the cup of tea he gave her with a date rape drug, as she felt peculiar that evening, behaved in a way that was out of character (having sex with someone who she had only met twice before, who was much older than her, who she was not sexually attracted to, and who was meant to be helping her professionally), and felt ill in the following days.
336. The first mention of her belief that she had been drugged appears to have been in a phone call she had with the investigating officer on 30 May 2018, referred to in her subsequent email of 13 June 2018, in which she described the meeting at Lord Ahmed's house:
- “When I arrived, Lord Ahmed had the tea ready for me and after taking a sip I noticed the tea tasted slightly odd. I remember asking Lord Ahmed if the milk in the tea was ‘off’, to which he replied “no it’s not off, my tea tastes fine”. I didn’t think much of this at that time.”
337. She described feeling unusually tired at the time and, later, unable to adequately explain why she had had sex with Lord Ahmed. She went on to say:
- “I don’t have any proof that Lord Ahmed had put something in my tea but, I do feel there is a possibility that he may have done this. I never had a reason to doubt Lord Ahmed’s character and never imagined that something like this could happen to me. ... As the tea was pre-made I have no idea of the contents of the tea and do doubt what was in the tea, given how I felt when I fell on the bed and after the encounter.”
338. In her police interview on 11 July 2018 she explained that she thought she might have been drugged because she felt strange that evening and was subsequently ill. She also felt that her behaviour was completely out of character that evening.
339. Ms Zaman did not mention the possibility of having been drugged in the draft complaint of 20 January 2018 or her formal complaint of 28 January 2018, nor did she mention it in the letter she circulated to parliamentarians at the end of March 2018, nor in the timeline she sent to the police in April 2018. However she made the allegation in her response to Lord Ahmed’s statement of 23 July 2019, and in her interview on 6 August 2019.
340. During her police interview on 11 July 2018, the interviewing officer asked her if the sexual intercourse was consensual. Ms Zaman said that he hadn’t

forced her to have sexual intercourse, but he had been demanding and she found herself complying:

“I don’t know how it happened. I was in bed. It was not that he was beating me up or forcing me. He was in control. He was telling me what to do and I was just—I didn’t know what to do. I just—I don’t know, I didn’t know what to do to be honest with you. I didn’t know what to do.”

341. After her interview with us on 6 August 2019 Ms Zaman provided an extract from her GP’s notes from that time:

08 Sep 2017	Telephone consultation [practice details]
History	4–5 day history of D+V. Nil blood in stool. Feels very lethargic and drained. Nil fever and today sotpped vomitting [sic] - prior to this struggled with tolerating food/fluids. Using diorolyte [sic] which is helping
Procedure	Discussed likely viral related - adv re fluids/hydration. RV sos
06 Sept	Telephone consultation [practice details]
History	Requesting phone call to discuss symptoms - nil answer at 18:56 left VM

342. Lord Ahmed has always denied spiking Ms Zaman’s drink. He was told about the allegation in the disclosure document given to him by the police before his interview on 26 July 2018. In that interview he addressed the allegation saying, “[a]nd all this nonsense that I put something in the tea. I wouldn’t even know where to begin.”

343. Lord Ahmed also addressed this allegation in his written response to me on 23 July 2019:

“One further point is that in the disclosure given to me by the police Ms Zaman gave the distinct impression that she had been drugged by me (by her consuming a ‘pre-made drink and alleges something may have been put in this drink as it made her incredibly sleepy’) and subsequently forced to have sex with me in this condition, which clearly amounts to rape. In stark contrast to this very serious allegation to law enforcement officers, she told the BBC Newsnight programme in February 2019 that the sex with me was consensual.”

344. In our interview on 13 August 2019, Lord Ahmed also provided a clear denial of the allegation:

“it is completely false and nonsense. I wouldn’t even know what to do. I don’t drink alcohol, I’ve never had alcohol. I did offer her a cup of tea.

She had a cup of tea. Because she brought the food, I made the tea and there was absolutely nothing in there.”

Analysis

345. Ms Zaman did not suspect having been drugged until after the end of her involvement with X, which was nearly four months after the suspected drugging. This in itself is not particularly strange: when things go wrong between people a process of re-evaluation of earlier events will often take place, which can lead to a different understanding of those earlier events. However, a subsequent belief to explain earlier events is almost impossible to prove without other evidence, and the only other evidence here—the GP record—is not conclusive. Being drugged is one explanation for her subsequent illness, but it is also possible that her unusual feelings and behaviour at Lord Ahmed’s house arose from the early symptoms of the episode of illness that subsequently manifested itself.
346. Ms Zaman herself, when talking to us and to the police, made it clear that she did not know if her beliefs were correct.
347. Lord Ahmed’s denials have been consistent each time the allegation has been raised with him.

Finding

348. The balance of probability requires evidence that a particular event was more likely than not to have occurred. In the light of Lord Ahmed’s consistent denials, Ms Zaman’s own uncertainty, and the lack of any contemporaneous and corroborative evidence, it is not possible to conclude that one account is more likely to be accurate than the other.
349. **I therefore do not uphold the complaint that Lord Ahmed drugged Ms Zaman when she went to his house in September 2017.**

The basis of their relationship until it ended in November 2017

Evidence

350. Ms Zaman acknowledges that she believed Lord Ahmed loved her, and that she developed feelings for him, and this is borne out in some of her WhatsApp messages to X. However, she also says that during their relationship she continued to press for a meeting with the police to be arranged, as offered in the police letter of 3 May 2017, and that Lord Ahmed continued to say that he would arrange this. She made this point in her email to the police on 28 April 2018; her email to me of 5 June 2019; her response to Lord Ahmed’s statement of 23 July 2019; and in her interview on 6 August 2019.
351. The thousands of WhatsApp messages between Ms Zaman and X make no mention of Ms Zaman’s complaint against S or her claim that Lord Ahmed had promised to arrange for Ms Zaman to see the police about her complaint. In December 2019 I asked her why this was.
352. On 12 December 2019 she wrote and explained that she did not consider X a friend to begin with and was only communicating with him because Lord Ahmed wanted her to, and she feared “a backlash” if she did not do so. After Lord Ahmed forced her to talk to X on video phone, X started immediately pursuing her for a romantic relationship. She had no reason to talk to X

about the help Lord Ahmed had offered, as there was nothing X could do to help and he was insistent that Lord Ahmed should not know how frequently they were messaging.

353. As set out in his statements and interview on 13 August 2019 Lord Ahmed says that the work he had done as a parliamentarian was over in March 2017, and was never an issue during their sexual relationship.
354. In his undated statement received in my office on 13 March 2020 Lord Ahmed asked why, if she had received the letter of 3 May 2017 from the police, she did not contact the author of the letter to follow up the offer of a meeting. He pointed out that she had no difficulty in writing to the Prime Minister in September 2017, and suggested that the fact that she didn't respond to the author of the letter of 3 May 2017 showed that the offer of a meeting with the police was not a factor in their relationship from September to November 2017.

Analysis

355. If Ms Zaman was still pursuing her complaint against S, and if she believed Lord Ahmed was trying to help her with this, it seems likely that she would continue to raise the matter with Lord Ahmed during their sexual relationship.
356. We know that Ms Zaman was pursuing the complaint more widely, as she wrote to Theresa May on 30 September 2017, after her relationship with Lord Ahmed had started. We wrote to Ms Zaman in December 2019 asking why she had done this. She replied:

“I was reaching out to everyone else because I felt the police was not responding to my complaint of [S], and how he targets and exploits vulnerable women. I was seeking help and aid in the investigation of [S] ... I simply wanted help from anyone willing to offer it to me—whether it was the Prime Minister or Commissioner Cressida Dick. I did feel uncomfortable with Lord Ahmed’s ‘romantic attention’.”
357. The fact that she found the reply disappointing, as shown in her timeline, suggests that she would still be keen to take forward Lord Ahmed's offer to help arrange a meeting with the police, as her own efforts had not led to success. The letter from the police to Lord Ahmed was far more promising than the reply to her letter to the Prime Minister. It is clear from her evidence that she interpreted the letter of 3 May 2017 as an offer for her and Lord Ahmed to meet Commissioner Dick or someone from her office, which would have been a significant improvement on what she had so far achieved for herself.
358. I consider her explanation for not discussing with X her complaint against S or Lord Ahmed's promise to arrange a meeting with the police to be reasonable. I have read all the WhatsApp exchanges between X and Ms Zaman, retrieved from her phone, and consider that she was remarkably discreet about Lord Ahmed, only rarely using his name, otherwise referring to him as “her friend” and only mentioning her sexual relationship with him briefly, infrequently, obliquely, and when X had made it a matter of trust that she should answer his questions.

359. The WhatsApp messages between Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman could have put the matter beyond doubt: if there had been no mention of the possible meeting or of the letter from the police, this would be strong evidence that such a meeting was not a factor in their relationship. However, as explained below, all the messages between Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman were deleted by X or at X's behest in December 2017 and could not be recovered by Ms Zaman using Dr Fone and were not available from Lord Ahmed.
360. In the absence of any direct corroborative evidence on this point, it is relevant to look at Lord Ahmed's conduct during the investigation. This has been to do everything possible to distance himself from any suggestion that the letter from the police was a factor in his relationship with Ms Zaman over the autumn of 2017, to the extent that in November 2019 he said to us that he had not contacted her about the letter, despite having previously said the opposite to the police in 2018 and to us in July and August 2019. However, we know that she received the letter, which can only have come from him, and we know that this must have been after her text to him of 14 July 2017. We also know that she wrote to the Prime Minister at the end of September, and that she complained to the police about S in 2016. I have also found it more likely than not that Lord Ahmed persuaded her to come to his house in September by saying that he wanted to discuss the possible meeting with the police.
361. In these circumstances, it seems highly unlikely that Ms Zaman would have given up her quest as soon as she started her sexual relationship with Lord Ahmed, and it seems very likely that, if she continued to raise the matter, he would have told her that the matter was still in hand. The fact that he lived both in London and Rotherham, was a busy public figure and also travelled abroad during this time, would explain the delay in making the arrangements, and, indeed Ms Zaman confirmed that this is what he told her.
362. With regard to Lord Ahmed's question of why Ms Zaman did not follow up the reply from the police herself this has to be considered in context. While they were in a relationship Ms Zaman had placed her trust in Lord Ahmed, a member of the House of Lords who had agreed to help her and who had shown her copies of correspondence between himself and the Metropolitan Police demonstrating the actions he had taken. She believed the reply from the police offered a meeting, to which Lord Ahmed would accompany her, at which her complaint against S would be discussed. As Lord Ahmed had not advised her that he had ceased to act on her behalf in the matter it was natural for her to continue to believe he was helping her and that his intervention as an authority figure would result in action. She had written to the Prime Minister in the hope of a positive response, in the early stages of her relationship with Lord Ahmed and at a time when Lord Ahmed had not yet arranged the meeting as promised, but had been disappointed in the reply, and it was reasonable that she would feel that Lord Ahmed's continued involvement was necessary to the success of her attempts to get justice.

Finding

363. **I therefore find that it is more likely than not that Lord Ahmed continued to offer to arrange a meeting with the police between September and November 2017, and was holding himself out to be engaged in parliamentary activities during their sexual relationship.**

CHAPTER 6: NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2017

364. This chapter deals with Ms Zaman’s allegation that during his relationship with her, Lord Ahmed “tried to pass me onto a younger man for their sexual gratification” and that information was deleted from her phone by this man at Lord Ahmed’s behest. The younger man, X, was not the subject of Ms Zaman’s complaint to me so my investigations in this matter have focussed only on the actions of Lord Ahmed.

Whether Ms Zaman was passed to X

Evidence

365. Ms Zaman said that Lord Ahmed forced her to talk to X on his phone in November 2017. Immediately after this X started messaging her and they subsequently developed a relationship that was never consummated.
366. I wanted to discuss this with X, but he refused to meet me.
367. Another potential source of information is the WhatsApp messages between X and Ms Zaman, which Ms Zaman downloaded from her phone using the mobile phone data recovery app, Dr Fone. These provide support for Ms Zaman’s account of her relationship with X, but do not provide any evidence that Lord Ahmed set up the relationship or encouraged it.
368. WhatsApp messages between Lord Ahmed and X might have helped clarify his involvement or otherwise in putting Ms Zaman in touch with X but Lord Ahmed told us that he had replaced his phone since 2017, and his old phone, which he had given to family, had been wiped.

Finding

369. There is no independent evidence that Lord Ahmed passed Ms Zaman to X for his sexual gratification.
370. It is not possible to conclude that Ms Zaman’s belief that this is what occurred is more likely to be true than Lord Ahmed’s denial.
371. **I therefore do not uphold the complaint that Lord Ahmed passed Ms Zaman to X for his sexual gratification.**

Deleting messages from Ms Zaman’s phone

Evidence

372. Ms Zaman complained that X had made her delete all the text and WhatsApp messages between her and Lord Ahmed from her phone, at Lord Ahmed’s behest. This took place after Lord Ahmed ended his relationship with Ms Zaman. At different times she said that X made her delete the messages when he was with her and that he took her phone from her and did it himself.
373. The WhatsApp messages between X and Ms Zaman include a message from Ms Zaman on 26 December 2017 at 7:53pm:

“You only came to delete the messages didn’t you? 😂😂😂😂 do you think I’m a fool. 😂😂😂😂😂”

374. None of the WhatsApp messages between X and Ms Zaman suggest that Lord Ahmed told X to delete the messages between Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman.
375. In his written response to us on 23 July 2019, Lord Ahmed said the allegation that X “deleted all messages relating to me against her will is, quite frankly, preposterous.”
376. When we interviewed Lord Ahmed on 13 August 2019 he said he didn’t believe X would delete messages from someone else’s phone but he also seemed to suggest that X did require Ms Zaman to delete some messages:

“To the best of my knowledge, I don’t think he would go and delete somebody’s messages. I now know that it was a matter between them. I think—I am told—that she wanted an affair with him and there were on her phone other messages of other men and X said, “Unless you delete all these”—he didn’t—“other men from your phone, I don’t have ...” This is what I’m told.”

Analysis

377. Ms Zaman’s accounts are inconsistent, to the extent that sometimes she said she had deleted the messages when told to do so by X and sometimes that he had taken her phone and done it himself. In his undated statement received on 13 March 2020 Lord Ahmed said that this inconsistency shows that Ms Zaman is a liar.
378. Ms Zaman’s description of the occasion suggests that it was emotionally fraught. In such circumstances detailed recollections may not be reliable, but this need not undermine the underlying claim. In this case the underlying claim that messages were deleted at X’s behest is corroborated by the WhatsApp message of 26 December, and by Lord Ahmed’s account described above.
379. X refused to be interviewed, so has missed the opportunity to say whether or not he deleted the messages from Ms Zaman’s phone and, if so, whether he did this at Lord Ahmed’s behest.
380. Ms Zaman’s message on the deletion is contemporaneous, and provides the best quality evidence on this point.
381. It is also the case that there were no WhatsApp messages between Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman included in the material retrieved by Ms Zaman from her phone using Dr Fone, though both agreed that they had typically communicated using WhatsApp. There were WhatsApp messages between Ms Zaman and X and Ms Zaman and various other contacts.

Finding

382. **Having considered the evidence, I find it to be more likely than not that X either deleted messages between Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed in December 2017, or required Ms Zaman to delete them.**
383. **There is no evidence that Lord Ahmed played any part in this.**
384. **I therefore do not uphold the complaint that Lord Ahmed ordered X to ensure that the messages from Ms Zaman’s phone were deleted.**

CHAPTER 7: LORD AHMED'S ALLEGATIONS THAT MS ZAMAN'S ACCOUNT CANNOT BE TRUSTED

385. Throughout the investigation Lord Ahmed has sought to show that Ms Zaman's evidence cannot be relied upon, as she is untruthful. He raised further allegations in his two statements commenting on the drafts of the factual report, which were shared as part of the investigation process (the final version of the factual report is included as Appendix 1). Most of these allegations are dealt with in the preceding analysis. I deal here with the remaining allegations, which are not central to the investigation in themselves but are important to the extent that Lord Ahmed claims that they show that Ms Zaman has been untruthful.

Allegations made in Lord Ahmed's written statement of 23 July 2019

Ms Zaman's doubts about whether Lord Ahmed had written to Commissioner Dick

386. In his response of 23 July 2019 to the complaint Lord Ahmed wrote:

"Ms Zaman has fabricated [the assertion that Lord Ahmed persuaded her to visit his house by promising to arrange a meeting with Commissioner Dick] as can be evidenced by the fact that she has given two contradictory accounts about this. Ms Zaman contacted the police in February 2018 and as a result I was interviewed under caution. Prior to the interview I was provided some disclosure which set out the allegation made by Ms Zaman and gave a chronology of events undoubtedly provided by her to the police. In this disclosure it stated that 'In June/July 2017, Ms Zaman resumed contact with Mr Ahmed to enquire about any responses he had received regarding the letter to Cressida Dick concerning her allegation. Mr Ahmed responded and informed Ms Zaman of the response he had received from the Police. Mr Ahmed sent Miss Zaman a copy of the response.'

However, in stark contrast to this assertion, in an email sent by Ms Zaman to a [Q]¹⁵ (as well as many other journalists and parliamentarians) dated 31st March 2018 ie after her contact with the police, in which she was seeking his assistance 'to get redress for sexual and financial exploitation at the hands of two senior members of the Muslim community' (the spiritual healer and me), she stated that 'Lord Ahmed showed me a letter on House of Lords headed stationary that he claimed to have sent to the Metropolitan police but it is unclear whether this letter was actually sent'. To make the obvious point, this was a lie because she told the police the previous month that 'Mr Ahmed sent Miss Zaman a copy of the response'. A response could not have been provided to a letter that was never sent."

387. This uncertainty was expressed by Ms Zaman in 2018. In her written response to Lord Ahmed's statement of 23 July 2019 she explained:

"Lord Ahmed argues that my evidence is inconsistent because of comments I made to [Q] in an email dated 31/3/18. This is not the case. My comment to [Q] that 'it is unclear whether this letter was actually sent' was made in the context of my complete distrust in Lord

15 Q is a journalist Ms Zaman contacted after I had told her I could not investigate her complaint in 2018.

Ahmed. Consider the facts; he had promised to provide hard copies of all correspondence with the Metropolitan Police and had failed to do so. He simply showed me an image of a letter he said he had received from the police as an attachment to a Whatsapp message in the summer of 2017. When I wrote to [Q], I had genuine doubts about the nature of this correspondence and my comment reflected that. Furthermore, it was clear he was using the prospect of arranging a meeting with the police as an incentive for me to agree to sex. I found it inappropriate, confusing and disturbing.”

Analysis

388. Lord Ahmed’s account that he provided her with the letter from the police before the meeting at the Sahara Grill on 2 March 2017 has been shown to be inaccurate.
389. Ms Zaman wrote to me on 15 March 2018, and included in her letter was the following:

“Lord Ahmed showed me a letter on House of Lords headed stationary that he claimed to have sent to the Met Police and a reply from Met Police on Met Police headed stationary, but it is unclear whether this letter was actually sent and whether he did receive a reply from Commissioner Cressida Dick.”
390. The extract from her letter to parliamentarians, quoted by Lord Ahmed above, contains the same doubt about whether Lord Ahmed had sent the letter, but also doubts about whether a reply had been sent by the police.
391. We asked Ms Zaman about this when we interviewed her on 6 August 2019 and she explained that her comment that she was not sure if his letter had ever been sent referred to the doubts she had much later in the process. At the time Lord Ahmed showed her his letter to Commissioner Dick she believed he had sent it.
392. Lord Ahmed asserts that it is “obvious” that Ms Zaman’s expressed doubts about whether he had actually sent the letter were “a lie” because the police disclosure document shows that in February she had expressed no such doubts. In making this allegation Lord Ahmed has apparently misunderstood the disclosure document. Although it starts by dating Ms Zaman’s first contact with the police to February 2018, it contained information provided by her much later in 2018, including material from her email to the police on 17 April 2018 and her police interviews of 26 April and 11 July 2018.
393. Ms Zaman’s timeline shows that in February 2018 she asked my office to forward her statement to the police. This statement—the email of 28 January 2018—contains the same doubts already expressed.
394. This sequence of events undermines Lord Ahmed’s assertion that Ms Zaman must have been lying when she expressed doubts in March 2018 whether the letter to Commissioner Dick had actually been sent, as the doubts expressed were the same as those she had expressed to me in January 2018.
395. That Ms Zaman at some point after her relationship with Lord Ahmed had ended doubted whether he had sent any letter to the police is not implausible. She had placed her trust in Lord Ahmed as a prominent public figure

(recommended to her by a friend, whom she trusted) and someone who, as a member of the House of Lords, she expected to act with integrity. Despite the sexual assault in her car on 2 March 2017 and despite his delay in showing her the reply he had received from the police, she continued to trust him. Once their sexual relationship began, she started to develop feelings for Lord Ahmed and believed that he loved her. When that relationship ended and her trust in him was shown to have been misplaced she came to the conclusion, belatedly, that he had let her down and treated her badly (as S had allegedly done before). At that point she appears to have begun re-evaluating her interactions with Lord Ahmed, including whether the letter and its reply—both of which she had only seen via WhatsApp—were authentic.

Finding

396. **Lord Ahmed’s case for saying that Ms Zaman was lying on this point is not made out.**

WhatsApp messages confirming Lord Ahmed was taking up Ms Zaman’s case

397. Lord Ahmed also wrote:

“The allegation that there were WhatsApp messages confirming that I ‘was taking up [her] case and helping [her]’ is a blatant fabrication. There were no such WhatsApp messages. Her assertion [X] later deleted all messages relating to me against her will is, quite frankly, preposterous. There are some 4000 messages sent from Ms Zaman to [X] in which she describes being completely infatuated by him and seeking a sexual relationship with him. As noted above some of these WhatsApp messages make the clear reference to me bring her ‘friend’ which is in stark contrast to her assertion now that I was engaged throughout 2017 assisting her in my parliamentary capacity.

As I have said there were no such messages and any evidence that [B] gives in relation to having seen such messages is false.”

Analysis

398. In his interview with us on 13 August 2019 Lord Ahmed said he had communicated with Ms Zaman through text and WhatsApp messages. Though some text messages were retrieved by Ms Zaman using Dr Fone, no WhatsApp messages between Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed were. This suggests that any such messages would have been deleted. However, although there is no direct evidence that Lord Ahmed sent flirtatious messages, there is equally no direct evidence of Ms Zaman providing a “blatant fabrication”.
399. The claim that X deleted the messages between Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman is dealt with at paragraphs 372–384.
400. Lord Ahmed’s assertion that Ms Zaman referred to him as “her dear friend” in WhatsApp exchanges with X does not inevitably or obviously lead to the conclusion, or prove, that Lord Ahmed was not still claiming to help her.
401. The reference to the nature of the relationship between X and Ms Zaman appears to be irrelevant to Lord Ahmed’s assertions about Ms Zaman’s honesty.

402. Furthermore, on 18 December 2019, in response to a query from me, Lord Ahmed wrote:

“In relation to the text messages provided to you, only those text messages relevant to me and the investigation were provided by [X] to my lawyer to prove the conversation.”

403. This shows that Lord Ahmed was relying almost entirely on X’s account of the messages that passed between X and Ms Zaman and was in no position to speak of them from his own knowledge, save for the few that X sent to him.

Finding

404. **Lord Ahmed acknowledged that he often communicated with Ms Zaman by WhatsApp messages and there is good evidence that all the WhatsApp messages between them were deleted in December 2017. It is therefore not possible to say that Ms Zaman’s assertion on this point is “a blatant fabrication”.**

Ms Zaman’s alleged claim that Lord Ahmed forced her to have sex with him when she first visited his house.

405. Lord Ahmed also wrote:

“I should state that Ms Zaman has made false allegations against me. She is lying about what happened as I have set out above. One further point is that in the disclosure given to me by the police Ms Zaman gave the distinct impression that she had been drugged by me (by her consuming a ‘pre-made drink and alleges something may have been put in this drink as it made her incredibly sleepy’) and subsequently forced to have sex with me in this condition, which clearly amounts to rape. In stark contrast to this very serious allegation to law enforcement officers, she told the BBC Newsnight programme in February 2019 that the sex with me was consensual.”

Analysis

406. The report deals with Ms Zaman’s claim that she had been drugged at paragraphs 335–349 above. Here we are simply looking at Lord Ahmed’s claim that she had lied about what happened.
407. In her first police interview on 26 April 2018 Ms Zaman said that she had not been forced to have sex with Lord Ahmed. In her second police interview, where she suggested that Lord Ahmed might have drugged her, she was asked if she had been forced to have sex. She said that Lord Ahmed had not forced her to have sex but he had been demanding and she had found herself complying.
408. Neither of these accounts is inconsistent with the information from Newsnight that Ms Zaman had said the sex was consensual.

Finding

409. **Lord Ahmed’s case that Ms Zaman lied about the events surrounding their sexual activity that evening is not made out.**

Allegations made in Lord Ahmed's written statement of 18 November 2019

Invitation to dinner at the Sahara Grill

410. In his statement to me of 18 November 2019, Lord Ahmed said:

“It should be noted that in disclosure provided to me by the Metropolitan Police it was alleged that I invited Ms Zaman to dinner in March 2017. That was clearly a lie as it is now clear that Ms Zaman made the booking for the dinner. Had the invitation been made by me, the booking would have been made by me in my name.”

Analysis

411. Ms Zaman gives a plausible account of how she came to book the restaurant: she said that Lord Ahmed suggested that she should book somewhere she liked, and she did so. In her police interview she said that she agreed to his suggestion that they meet, because she owed him something for having written the letter to Commissioner Dick. She offered to treat him but he said he would pay. Lord Ahmed acknowledged that he paid for the meal, which seems an equally likely marker of who initiated the meeting.
412. Lord Ahmed produced no evidence to support his allegations, other than this bare assertion that someone who proposes a meal in a restaurant is always the person who books it. The fact that Lord Ahmed paid for the meal—in spite of Ms Zaman allegedly offering it as a thank you for him writing the letter—seems significant and he offers no explanation for that.

Finding

413. **The fact that Ms Zaman booked the restaurant does not undermine her account of how the meeting came about, or its purpose. Lord Ahmed's case that Ms Zaman lied about who suggested dinner is not made out.**

When Lord Ahmed was out of the country

414. In my email to Lord Ahmed of 28 October 2019 I had written:

“Ms Zaman has told us that you told her that you were out of the country in July/August 2017, and again in early November. Please can you confirm the dates you were away.”

415. In his statement of 18 November 2019 Lord Ahmed replied:

“Finally, in further support of the fact that Ms Zaman cannot be relied upon as a witness of truth, I was not out of the country in July/August 2017. I was out of the country in September 2017 and for 5 days in November 2017.”

Analysis

416. Ms Zaman was reporting what she recalled Lord Ahmed having communicated to her after her text of 14 July 2017. Of course it is possible that she just made this up, although it is difficult to see what the point would be. Other possibilities are that she misremembered what he had said, or that he had chosen to say that he was out of the country when she had contacted him in July, even though this was not the case.

Finding

417. **Lord Ahmed's case that Ms Zaman was not being truthful is not made out.**

Ms Zaman's recollection of the contents of the reply from the police

418. In his 18 November 2019 statement, Lord Ahmed also said:

“At the meeting I provided her with a copy of my letter to the police; it was addressed to Cressida Dick. As there was no response directly from Cressida Dick, I cannot see how Ms Zaman can say that she recalled a message from Cressida Dick which made her happy on the basis that it stated that ‘she would be happy to meet me and Lord Ahmed to get more information to have a meeting to take this further and she would keep me anonymous’. There was no such letter from Cressida Dick. I would remind you that in her email to [Q] dated 31st March 2018, she stated that I showed her a ‘letter on House of Lords headed stationary that he claimed to have sent to the Metropolitan Police but it is unclear whether this letter was actually sent’. If Ms Zaman says she saw a letter from Cressida Dick, she is lying about the fact that there was uncertainty over whether the letter I sent to the Metropolitan Police was actually sent.”

Analysis

419. The allegation that Ms Zaman was lying when she said she had been uncertain in March 2018 whether Lord Ahmed's letter to the Police had been sent has been dealt with at paragraphs 386–396 above.
420. That Ms Zaman's recollection of the contents of the reply from the police is inaccurate does not mean that Ms Zaman was being untruthful. It is not unreasonable for her to believe that as the letter was sent to Commissioner Dick the reply was also from her, even if written by someone on her behalf.

Finding

421. **If Lord Ahmed was inferring that Ms Zaman was being untruthful here, in saying the reply was from Commissioner Dick, his case is not made out.**

Ms Zaman having offered money for false statements

422. In his statement of 18 November 2019, Lord Ahmed said:

“In relation to ‘witnesses who have told [you] that Ms Zaman informed them that [I] had received a reply from the Met, and suggested she go to your house to discuss it’, before I respond to this false allegation, I would like to know who these so-called ‘witnesses’ are and see their testimony as I have received credible information that Ms Zaman has approached at least one person offering them money to make a false statement against me.”

Analysis

423. Lord Ahmed's allegation on this point could amount to an allegation of criminal behaviour. I asked him to provide details. He replied with the name of the person he referred to and offered to give me copies of text messages

on the condition I give him “the assurance that [the person’s] messages will not be provided to Ms Zaman or any other party”. I replied to say that I could not give him that assurance as I would need to speak to the person he referred to and put that person’s evidence to Ms Zaman.

Finding

424. **Lord Ahmed declined to provide any evidence to support his allegation without a guarantee I would not disclose that evidence to Ms Zaman or others. His allegation is therefore not substantiated.**

Allegations made in correspondence

Ms Zaman’s disagreement with the outcome of the police’s review of her case

425. Lord Ahmed wrote on 5 December 2019:

“Ms Zaman is not a witness of truth which is clearly shown by the enclosed letter from the MPS which was in the [material relating to proceedings separate to this investigation]. The letter dated 9th May 2019 from an Acting Detective Chief Inspector states that in relation to each of her allegations either there was no evidence to support her allegations or, more significantly, that there was material which was unhelpful and undermined her allegations. You will see that there are annotations on the document which appear to be Ms Zaman’s stating that she disagrees with every finding, including the assertion that the A/ Detective Chief Inspector is ‘independent’ of the investigating team.”

426. He came back to this letter in his response to the draft factual report, which we received on 20 January 2020. He wrote, referring to the letter sent to Ms Zaman by the police after their review of her case:

“The rationale for closing the investigation into the [S] included:

1. To date [Ms Zaman has] been unable to supply evidence or support for the allegation that she provided large sums of money in payment for his service.
2. Witness evidence suggests that [S] is an honest person who does not charge people for his services.
3. Witness evidence indicates that [Ms Zaman has] voluntarily provided gifts to [S].
4. There is no evidence of fraudulent behavior [*sic*] by [S].

In relation to the allegation of sexual assault against Lord Ahmed, the rationale for closing the investigation included:

Around the time of the alleged tea spiking incident, your medical records indicate that you had not been sleeping well, you were lethargic, tired, and suffering the side effects of your medication for depression/anxiety.

Telephone evidence provided to police is unhelpful and undermines the police investigation.

In relation to the allegation of witness intimidation by X, the rationale for closing the investigation included:

X denied that he sent the emails with any intention to intimidate or cause fear to [Ms Zaman]

There is no other supporting evidence, known or available, which assists [Ms Zaman's] case currently.

[...]

[The letter from the police following their review of Ms Zaman's case] is relevant to this investigation because it goes to the heart of whether Ms Zaman is a witness who is capable of being believed. In particular I draw your attention to the responses as follows

In relation to why Lord Ahmed was not arrested, it is stated "police were [in] possession of evidence in the form of statements and text messages that undermines your account. You had not disclosed these in the course of the police investigation. Also by your own admissions, you admit to engaging in consensual sex on 5 - 6 occasions after the initial assault allegation. Therefore this significantly undermines the prosecution's case."

In relation to whether a search warrant was not conducted of Lord Ahmed's address, it is stated that "prior to Lord Ahmed's interview, police were in possession of statements that undermine your account."

In relation to why a search warrant was not conducted on [S's] address, it is stated that "prior to interview, the police were in possession of statements that undermine your account.""

Analysis

427. This letter is dated 5 May 2019 and sets out why the police had decided that, following investigation, it did not intend to take any further action against Lord Ahmed, X or S.
428. The author of the letter explained that the police had been investigating very serious charges of sexual assault and fraud; that for the case to proceed there had to be a reasonable prospect of conviction; in order to convict, any prosecution must be in a position to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a criminal offence has taken place; and that "in conducting this review I can only look at the evidence. My decision does not relate to whether the incident happened or not".
429. I am not in a position to analyse the police approach to its investigation, nor do I think it would be right to do so. However, I note that the letter acknowledges that Ms Zaman had agreed that she had had a consensual sexual relationship with Lord Ahmed after their first sexual encounter and that there were text messages that undermined her account, which she had not disclosed. The police have subsequently confirmed that these messages were from Ms Zaman's phone, which she provided to them and which are discussed above.
430. In light of what the letter itself said, I do not consider that it amounts to an allegation that Ms Zaman had not been truthful in her account to the police.

Finding

431. **Lord Ahmed's case that this letter shows Ms Zaman to be untruthful is not made out.**

Ms Zaman's text to X

432. On 12 December 2019 I wrote to Lord Ahmed in relation to the transcript of his police interview, recently received from the police. I wrote:

"On page 8 you say that you had seen a text from Ms Zaman to [X] that reads 'When I love someone, I would do anything for them. But when someone fucks with me, I make sure they don't do the same thing to anyone else. I am not denying that it was my choice to go with Lord, but what I did not know is that he was a user and pushed me to find someone. Even then anything of it until, Allah knows best'.

Please let me know how you accessed this message. What was its particular significance such that you shared it with the police?"

433. Lord Ahmed replied on 18 December to say that he could not recall how he accessed the message:

"I am not sure whether it was actually a text that I saw or was told it was in a text or that it was something that Ms Zaman said. Its significance to the police investigation was that it showed that Ms Zaman was capable of making false allegations for any perceived injustice that she saw."

434. The text message was from Ms Zaman to X, sent on 10 January 2018. The text quoted by Lord Ahmed was part of a longer message which read:

"[X] I blocked and unblocked you because I didn't want to let go. I tried my best to put things right but you didn't forgive me. Why would you only forgive those you love. You have no love no feelings for me never did

I will heal with time insha'Allah.

I have proof I don't just point finger at anyone without proof because I know when you point 1 finger at someone the rest of fingers are pointing at yourself.

I did NOT give [S] CONCENT [*sic*] to do what he did and do you know how I ended it with [J] who is millionaire, everyone looks up to him. I had proof and I give it to him good and proper. He is taller than you broader than you and strong than you. He got a slap which he will remember for the rest of his life. He deserved it and he was not able to go home that night and he couldn't face his 1000 workers the next day.

When i love someone I would do anything for them but when someone fucks with me I make sure they don't do the same to anyone else.

I'm not denying that it was my choice to go with Lord but what I didn't know he was a user and he pushed me to find someone. Even then anything of it. Until ...

Allah knows best."

Analysis

435. It is possible to interpret Ms Zaman's claim that "when someone fucks with me, I make sure they don't do the same thing to anyone else" as a declaration that she will make false allegations for revenge. However, a more obvious reading is that when someone takes advantage of her she will respond and attempt to expose their behaviour publicly, to limit their ability to take advantage of others.
436. This reading would fit with Ms Zaman's attempts to seek to prevent S and J from taking advantage of others.

Finding

437. **Lord Ahmed's case that this message is evidence of Ms Zaman's willingness to make false allegations is not made out.**

Allegations made in Lord Ahmed's response to the revised draft factual report, sent to me on 13 March 2020

Ms Zaman lied to and deliberately concealed important information from Lord Ahmed

438. In his response to the revised draft factual report sent to Lord Ahmed in March 2020, he wrote:

"TZ's conduct throughout has been to blatantly lie or deliberately conceal information and this can be seen here as she did not tell me, and it would have been very helpful if she had, that she had already revealed her identity to the police by meeting with DS Amjad Sharif in December 2016".

Analysis

439. I have already found that Ms Zaman had always been ready to be identified to the police, and that Lord Ahmed was being deliberately untruthful when he asserted otherwise. Lord Ahmed has not previously said that Ms Zaman deliberately concealed from him that she had not identified herself to the police, so I do not accept Lord Ahmed's claim here that she did so, if that is what he is claiming.
440. It may be that Lord Ahmed is actually complaining that Ms Zaman did not explain to him that when she mentioned making anonymous complaints she meant that her identity as a complainant should be concealed from those she was complaining about. He says it would have been 'helpful' for him to have known this.
441. I have considered in what way this would have been helpful for Lord Ahmed.
442. He claims that Ms Zaman told him in March 2017 that she did not want her identity known to the police, and that his parliamentary work for her ended at that point. If that had been what had occurred, I cannot see how it would have been helpful to Lord Ahmed to have known that previously she had given her identity to the police.
443. However, if, as I have found, Ms Zaman did not tell him that she did not wish the police to know her identity, then the fact that there is incontrovertible

evidence that she has previously been happy for the police to know her identity seriously undermines Lord Ahmed's account of her wishes.

Finding

444. **I can see that it would have been helpful to Lord Ahmed to have known Ms Zaman's position from the beginning, as he would then have had the opportunity to construct an account that fitted the facts when he corresponded with the police in April 2017, was interviewed by the police in July 2018 and during my investigation in 2019.**
445. **However I do not think it reflects well on Lord Ahmed that he blames Ms Zaman for the ambiguity in her original email to him that led him to give his dishonest account of her wishes, nor does it reflect well on his judgement that he thinks this is a legitimate complaint to make to me.**
446. **Lord Ahmed's allegation that Ms Zaman lied to him or deliberately concealed information is not made out.**

Ms Zaman's allegations against Lord Ahmed are malicious

447. In his response to the revised draft factual report sent to Lord Ahmed in March 2020, he wrote:

"TZ freely embarked on a personal relationship with me in September 2017 and when I ended it, she was upset and maliciously sought to exact revenge by making false allegations against me".

Analysis

448. In his police interview he said the reason for her allegedly false accusations against him was because she blamed him for the breakup of her relationship with X.
449. I have found a number of the allegations made by Ms Zaman to be, on the balance of probabilities, true.
450. Where I have not upheld her complaints I have not found any evidence of dishonesty. For instance she never attempted to bolster her complaints by saying that Lord Ahmed had sent her compromising WhatsApp messages encouraging her relationship with X, which would have been a safe thing to do as she knew all the messages had been deleted.

Finding

451. **Lord Ahmed's assertion that Ms Zaman has made malicious false allegations against him is not made out.**

Ms Zaman lied when she said she had discussed the assault on 2 March 2017 with Lord Ahmed

452. In his response, Lord Ahmed also wrote:

"her written statement dated 23rd July 2019, TZ stated that after the incident in the car on the 2nd March 2017, I apologised to her and asked her not to make a formal police complaint. She further stated that I only continued to assist with her case if she assured me that she would not make an allegation against me. Not only is this a lie, but it is also at

odds with all of her other accounts in which she says she blocked me immediately following the alleged car incident and only got in touch with me by sending a text in July. If she had blocked me immediately after this car incident, I ask rhetorically, when would this conversation have even taken place?”

Analysis

453. I have looked at all the accounts that Ms Zaman has given of the events prior to her blocking Lord Ahmed on the phone, and none of them say she did so immediately after he put his hand on her leg on 2 March 2017.

Finding

454. **Lord Ahmed’s allegation that Ms Zaman lied about this matter is not made out.**

Ms Zaman set up a fake Facebook account

455. In his response to the revised draft factual report Lord Ahmed referred to a comment Ms Zaman made in her interview with us on 12 September 2019 that “the police had told her that X had complained to them that she had set up a fake Facebook account ...”. He said that “this shows that TZ is quite capable of producing fake evidence”.
456. In her 12 September interview Ms Zaman said that she had not created a fake Facebook account.
457. There is nothing in the police material to suggest that it had any other evidence to support this allegation by X.

Analysis

458. An unsubstantiated claim by X to the police that Ms Zaman had set up a fake Facebook account, for which the police seemed not to have found any corroborating evidence, does not show that Ms Zaman is capable of creating false evidence.

Finding

459. **Lord Ahmed’s allegation is not made out.**

Ms Zaman’s mobile phone evidence

Lord Ahmed’s allegation

460. At different stages in the investigation Lord Ahmed expressed some doubt about the evidence made available by Ms Zaman from her phone. We therefore carefully examined the extent to which the material she provided purporting to be data retrieved using Dr Fone can be relied upon.
461. This material Ms Zaman provided included:
- text messages in CSV, HTML and XML format;
 - WhatsApp data in CSV and XML format.
462. Among the messages there were:

- 182 text messages between Ms Zaman and X. These date from 24 November 2017 to 14 January 2018.
 - 5,880 WhatsApp messages between Ms Zaman and X. Where the material is dated (some is undated), it runs from 17 October 2017 to 10 January 2018.
463. The WhatsApp messages provided as evidence by Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman in their written evidence all appeared in the material retrieved using Dr Fone. Lord Ahmed got the messages from X, and Ms Zaman from her own phone.
464. There were also 57 text messages between Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed dated from 22 February 2017 to 28 December 2017. These consisted of:
- five text messages between them arranging for Ms Zaman to send her statement to Lord Ahmed;
 - one text message from Lord Ahmed to Ms Zaman, dated 2 March at 6:53pm saying ‘I am inside.’; and
 - one text message from Ms Zaman to Lord Ahmed at 5:45pm on 14 July 2017 asking whether he had received a reply from the Metropolitan Police.
465. There is then a gap until 3 October 2017, when there are exchanges between the two that suggest they are on good and affectionate terms.
466. Then, on 28 and 29 November 2017 messages show Ms Zaman expostulating with Lord Ahmed about his treatment of X; saying that he has blocked her from WhatsApp; and saying she was sorry for everything, which produced responses from Lord Ahmed that he was also sorry, but it was too late—“You both did it behind my back and then you both refused to accept it. He is apologised now ... otherwise it’s damaged my trust”.
467. Ms Zaman replied to say she had done nothing wrong; she had been thinking of having a relationship with X but wanted to tell Lord Ahmed about the situation before making a decision. She said she had been honest with Lord Ahmed and had done nothing wrong.
468. On 28 November 2017, Lord Ahmed messaged her saying, “You told me that you saw him on FaceTime. Then I find out that you met at my house. How dare you use my house without my permission ... you discussed positions for sex—I saw the text .. touched or not”.
469. A few seconds later he sent a final text “No more text please Bye”.
470. Ms Zaman then sent 19 messages between 28 November and 4 December 2017, expressing anger at being blamed for something she hadn’t done, expressing sadness and bewilderment at what had gone wrong; saying on 1 December 2017 that X was not speaking to her, asking for help, and expressing resignation.
471. On 15 December she asked Lord Ahmed to call her, and repeated this on 26 December 2017.
472. On 27 December 2017 she sent three messages:

- “Did you plan it with [X]?”
- “Do you share your girlfriends?”
- “[X] is loyal to you he wouldn’t dare ask your partner out without your permission”

473. Her last message, on 28 December 2017, was:

“You would be pleased to know that its OVER between me and [X]. I didn’t know it got to you sooo bad that you were actually jealous of us? And there was nothing you could do about it”

474. X refused us access to his phone, so we were not able to compare any phone records he might have with those of Ms Zaman. However, in an email to Ms Zaman of 4 April 2018 he said, “I have over 3000 whatsapp messages from you”.
475. Lord Ahmed told us that all the data had been wiped from his phone before he gave it to his grandchildren in late 2017 or early 2018. However, he also said that he had been able to retrieve the text exchanges between himself and K on 5 December 2017 to give to the police.
476. In his written response of 23 July 2019, Lord Ahmed referred to there being “some 4000 messages sent from Ms Zaman to [X].”

Analysis

477. Dr Fone is a genuine provider of mobile phone apps to manage mobile phone data, including data recovery. It is consistent with the nature of data retrieval apps that only some data was retrievable. What can be retrieved will depend on a number of factors including how soon after data is deleted an attempt to retrieve it is made and how the phone saves and overwrites its internal memory.
478. Lord Ahmed accepted the authenticity of the text message on 2 March 2017. The WhatsApp messages between Ms Zaman and X produced by Lord Ahmed—which had been provided by X—were also found on Ms Zaman’s phone.
479. Both Lord Ahmed and X refer to there being 3–4,000 WhatsApp messages sent by Ms Zaman to X. There were 5,881 WhatsApp messages between them, so their estimates seem reasonable and this adds to the likelihood that these messages are genuine.
480. No evidence has been produced that any of these messages are fake.

Finding

481. **I consider that material provided to us by Ms Zaman, having used Dr Fone to retrieve messages, is authentic and Lord Ahmed’s doubts to be unfounded.**

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

Application of the Code

Parliamentary duties and activities

482. The Code of Conduct establishes the conduct expected of members “in the course of their parliamentary duties”. Until 30 April 2019 this was the remit of all aspects of the Code.
483. On 30 April 2019, the House agreed changes to the Code, including:
- incorporating the parliamentary Behaviour Code such that behaviour amounting to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct would constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct; and
 - extending the remit of the Code where bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is concerned to both parliamentary duties and activities.
484. This investigation took place under the edition of the Code of Conduct that incorporated those changes: the eighth edition. The Code has been again updated since the evidence gathering phase of this was completed.¹⁶
485. The extension to duties and activities applies under the revised Code whether the specific Behaviour Code provisions and definitions—which under the eighth edition of the Code were retrospective only to 21 June 2017—are engaged or whether such conduct might be considered to constitute a failure to act on personal honour.
486. I dismissed Ms Zaman’s original complaint as it was made before the revisions to the Code and Lord Ahmed’s conduct was not in relation to a parliamentary duty—broadly speaking, it was not related to any sort of parliamentary proceeding. I accepted Ms Zaman’s re-submitted complaint after the revisions to the Code as, on the basis of Ms Zaman’s complaint, Lord Ahmed’s letter to the police and his alleged subsequent promises to provide further help appeared to constitute a parliamentary activity—his letter was written on House of Lords headed paper and could only have been received by Commissioner Dick as a letter from a parliamentarian carrying out parliamentary activities.

Behaviour Code provisions and personal honour

487. The House of Lords Code of Conduct incorporates Parliament’s Behaviour Code, including detailed definitions of what constitutes bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.
488. Paragraph 3.3 Appendix B of the Guide to the Code of Conduct sets out the definition of sexual misconduct:

“Sexual misconduct incorporates a range of behaviours including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, voyeurism and any other conduct of a sexual nature that is non-consensual or has the purpose or effect of threatening, intimidating, undermining, humiliating or coercing a person.”

¹⁶ Though the Code was updated during my investigation, my work has been conducted under the provisions of the eighth edition.

489. Paragraph 5.2 sets out some of the behaviours constituting verbal sexual misconduct, including, “Treating someone less favourably because they have rejected or submitted to unwanted sexual conduct.”
490. Paragraph 5.4 sets out some of the behaviours in the category of physical sexual misconduct, including:
- uncalled-for physical contact, deliberate brushing past. Unwelcome and inappropriate touching, hugging or kissing.
 - groping, grabbing, kissing or fondling without consent. Indecent exposure (masturbation, nudity) and acts of voyeurism or exhibitionism.
 - attempting to or engaging in sexual intercourse or a sexual act without consent.
491. When the revisions to the Code of Conduct were agreed on 30 April 2019, the specific provisions about bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct were made retrospective to 21 June 2017.¹⁷
492. However, the Code of Conduct has a long standing requirement that Members must act on their personal honour when carrying out their parliamentary duties and activities, and complaints of breach of personal honour could be made up to four years after the alleged behaviour complained of.¹⁸
493. Personal honour is not defined in the Code because it is based on the culture and conventions of the House as a whole and therefore “any definition of ‘personal honour’, while it might achieve temporary ‘legal certainty’, would quickly become out-moded.”¹⁹
494. If a complaint alleges dishonourable conduct, I have to consider what the “sense of the House as a whole as to the standards of conduct expected of individual members” is, and decide if the alleged behaviour would be “in accordance with the standards expected by the House as a whole”.²⁰
495. In my view, the very fact that the House of Lords has introduced a Behaviour Code which provides that bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are breaches of the Code of Conduct, is an indication that such behaviour is contrary to the standards expected by the House as a whole and therefore may constitute a breach of personal honour.

Principles of conduct in public life

496. Paragraph 9 of the Code of Conduct sets out that:

“Members of the House should observe the seven general principles of conduct identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. These principles will be taken into consideration when any allegation of breaches of the provisions in other sections of the Code is under investigation and should act as a guide to members in considering the requirement to act always on their personal honour”.

¹⁷ This cut-off has since been removed.

¹⁸ This period has since been extended to six years. In limited circumstances this period may be extended even further.

¹⁹ Paragraph 7, Guide to the Code of Conduct, eighth edition

²⁰ *Ibid.*

497. These principles include:

- Integrity—“holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.”
- Honesty—“holders of public office should be truthful.”

Application to this case

498. Ms Zaman complained that Lord Ahmed:

- put his hand on her upper thigh, which was unexpected, uninvited and unwelcome;
- failed to progress her complaint and lied to her about his actions and intentions;
- lied to her by inviting her to his home to discuss the offer of a meeting with the police, when in fact his aim was to have sex with her;
- spiked her drink on her first visit to his house;
- tried to pass her to X, an associate of Lord Ahmed’s, for X’s sexual gratification;
- used X to get Ms Zaman to delete compromising data about him from her phone; and
- exploited her emotionally and sexually even though he knew she was receiving treatment for anxiety and depression.

499. I have not upheld the allegations that Lord Ahmed:

- spiked Ms Zaman’s drink when she first went to his house;
- tried to pass her to X for his sexual gratification;
- used X to get Ms Zaman to delete all the messages between her and Lord Ahmed from her phone.

500. Therefore I do not find any breach of the Code on these matters.

501. However, I have found that Lord Ahmed:

- put his hand on Ms Zaman’s upper thigh, which was unexpected, uninvited and unwelcome;
- failed to progress Ms Zaman’s complaint and lied to her about his actions and intentions;
- lied to Ms Zaman by inviting her to his home to discuss the offer of a meeting with the police, when in fact his aim was to have sex with her; and

- exploited Ms Zaman emotionally and sexually even though he knew she was receiving treatment for anxiety and depression.

502. These are all matters that could be breaches of the Code of Conduct.

Was Lord Ahmed carrying out a parliamentary activity in relation to Ms Zaman from February to November 2017?

503. Before considering each of these findings individually, there is a preliminary matter that has to be addressed: whether Lord Ahmed's behaviour towards Ms Zaman after sending the letter on 2 March 2017 was covered by the Code of Conduct at all. On the basis of Ms Zaman's complaint I concluded that there was sufficient evidence that at least some of his behaviour constituted parliamentary activity to warrant an investigation. It is necessary to reconsider this question in the light of all the evidence now gathered in the course of our investigation.
504. Lord Ahmed has said from the outset of the investigation that his parliamentary activity on Ms Zaman's behalf ended on or before 2 March 2017, when he claimed that she had said that she did not want to pursue the matter if this would mean revealing her identity to the police. He asserted that he was therefore not engaged in any parliamentary activity on Ms Zaman's behalf for some months before their sexual relationship began.
505. While I found Lord Ahmed's initial evidence that his parliamentary activity had ended on 2 March 2017 not to be correct, there remains good evidence that he had stopped trying to help Ms Zaman some months before their sexual relationship began.

Ms Zaman's expectation of help from Lord Ahmed

506. While I accept that Lord Ahmed had stopped actively helping Ms Zaman by the beginning of May 2017, the evidence indicates that this was not made clear to Ms Zaman and that she continued to anticipate help from Lord Ahmed (hence her text message of 14 July 2017).
507. Rather, I have found that from 2 March 2017 to the end of their relationship in November 2017, Lord Ahmed either claimed to Ms Zaman that he was continuing to help her, or, when they were not in communication because she had blocked him from her phone, did nothing to let her know that he was no longer helping her, even though he had the means to do so via email.
508. Lord Ahmed allowed Ms Zaman to believe that he was helping her by failing to inform her that:
- he had been contacted by the MSKU in March 2017;
 - he had told the MSKU in April 2017 that she would not speak to the police as she did not want to reveal her identity to them;
 - he had subsequently told the police that he was unwilling to meet the MSKU or provide any further information as to the source of the matter;
 - he had received a written reply from the police to his letter, which offered to meet her and respected her wish not to be identified to S.

509. His active deception began when he sent Ms Zaman the letter from the police of 3 May 2017, after her text in July 2017, and told her he would try to arrange a meeting with the police. From then until the end of their relationship he held himself out as seeking to help her.
510. **I therefore find that, while Lord Ahmed was taking no steps to help Ms Zaman for the majority of their interactions, he allowed and encouraged her to believe that he was.**

Whether dishonestly offering to engage in a parliamentary activity constitutes a parliamentary activity

511. In the light of that finding, the question to be determined is whether a member who holds himself out to be undertaking a parliamentary activity on behalf of an individual, and who the individual reasonably believes is undertaking such a parliamentary activity, is subject to the Code of Conduct, even though he is lying about the fact that he is carrying out the activity.
512. The Code does not deal directly with this point, nor is parliamentary activity defined in the Code or Guide to the Code. However, paragraph 8 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct says:
- “A member who expresses a clear willingness to breach the Code (for example, by attempting to negotiate an agreement to provide parliamentary services in return for payment) demonstrates a failure to act on his or her personal honour, and is thus in breach of paragraph 8(b) of the Code.”
513. This provision is unequivocal: offering to do something in breach of the Code, whether or not you actually do it, is a breach of the requirement to act on personal honour and a breach of the Code. It is implicit in this paragraph that this would cover an insincere intention to undertake a parliamentary duty or activity as well as a genuine offer to do so.
514. A failure to act on personal honour only engages the Code if the failure relates to the Member’s parliamentary duties or activities. Therefore as paragraph 8 of the Guide states that an offer to do something in breach of the Code in itself amounts to a breach of the Code, whether or not anything is actually done or was ever intended to be done, it must follow that the offer must be a parliamentary activity.
515. There is no doubt that Lord Ahmed was carrying out a parliamentary activity when he wrote to Commissioner Dick on 2 March 2017. Regardless of his subsequent email exchange with the MSKU in March 2017, his parliamentary activity continued at least until 3 May 2017, when he received the reply from the police, as that letter had the potential to take Ms Zaman’s matter forward, even if Lord Ahmed chose to do nothing with it. Indeed, I consider Lord Ahmed still to have been acting as a parliamentarian (whether he wished to or not) when he finally forwarded Ms Zaman the reply from police after her text message of 14 July 2017.
516. Had Lord Ahmed made it clear to Ms Zaman, either on receipt of the reply from the police in May 2017 or after he had forwarded it to her after 14 July 2017, that he could not act any further, that might have ended his parliamentary activity, even if she then followed up the offer of a meeting with the police.

517. However, he did not do so, and Ms Zaman continued to believe, with good reason, that Lord Ahmed was continuing to carry out a parliamentary activity on her behalf.
518. **Therefore, I conclude that from February to November 2017 Lord Ahmed was either providing Ms Zaman with help as a parliamentarian or holding himself out as doing so. Therefore, throughout this time, his behaviour in relation to Ms Zaman was subject to the Code of Conduct.**

Allegation: Lord Ahmed put his hand on Ms Zaman's upper thigh, which was unexpected, uninvited and unwelcome

519. Ms Zaman complained that on 2 March 2017 Lord Ahmed put his hand on her upper thigh, which was unexpected, uninvited and unwelcome.
520. **I found it was more likely than not that Ms Zaman complained to Ms Butt that Lord Ahmed had put his hand on her upper thigh, and that Ms Butt had a conversation about this with Lord Ahmed, in which he denied wrongdoing and said to her "Absolute nonsense. I never touched her—nothing."**
521. **That being the case, Lord Ahmed's claim that the allegation of sexual assault was in response to the break-up of Ms Zaman's relationship with X in December 2017, for which she held him responsible, is shown to be untenable, and he must have known it was not true.**
522. **I found it was more likely than not that Ms Zaman was telling the truth when she said that Lord Ahmed did put his hand on the top of her leg, close to her "private parts", on 2 March 2017.**
523. Lord Ahmed's conduct amounts to sexual misconduct, under the definitions in the Behaviour Code. Although the Behaviour Code provisions did not at the time of the complaint apply to conduct before 21 June 2017 I consider behaviour that constitutes sexual misconduct to be contrary to the requirement to act on personal honour.
524. **I therefore conclude that when he put his hand on Ms Zaman's upper thigh on 2 March 2017, Lord Ahmed breached the requirement of the Code of Conduct that he should act on his personal honour when engaged in a parliamentary activity.**

Allegation: Lord Ahmed failed to progress Ms Zaman's complaint and lied to her about his actions and intentions

525. This complaint covers a number of the findings in the report.
526. In April 2017 Lord Ahmed told the police, who had contacted him in response to his letter to Commissioner Dick, that Ms Zaman was not willing to meet them or speak to them. In March 2020 he told me that Ms Zaman had never expected him to do more than write a letter to the police.
527. **I found it more likely than not that Lord Ahmed was not telling the truth when he told the police that Ms Zaman was not willing to meet them, and when he told us that she had never expected him to do more than pass her concerns to the police.**

528. **I found it is more likely than not that Lord Ahmed's communications with the police after sending his letter of 2 March 2017 are explained by Ms Zaman's rejection of his advances on 2 March 2017 and, possibly, Ms Butt's criticism of him for his behaviour on that occasion.**
529. Subsequently, Lord Ahmed did not inform Ms Zaman about what he had told the police about her alleged wishes, nor did he contact her when he received the reply of 3 May 2017.
530. **I found that in failing to inform Ms Zaman of these events Lord Ahmed dishonestly allowed Ms Zaman to believe that he was still helping her.**
531. Ms Zaman texted Lord Ahmed on 14 July 2017, asking if a reply had been received to Lord Ahmed's letter to the police of 2 March 2017. Ms Zaman said that Lord Ahmed subsequently sent her the letter. Lord Ahmed said that he had no communication with Ms Zaman regarding the letter or her complaint.
532. **I found that it is more likely than not that, in response to Ms Zaman's text of 14 July 2017, Lord Ahmed sent her the reply from the police dated 3 May 2017 at some point after 14 July 2017 and before she visited his house in September 2017. He still did not inform her of his communications with the police in April 2017, and therefore actively deceived her in relation to his intentions to help.**
533. Ms Zaman said that Lord Ahmed suggested that she should come to his house in East London to discuss the offer of a meeting made in the letter of 3 May 2017. Lord Ahmed says that Ms Zaman, with whom he had become friendly over the summer, said that she wanted to ask his advice on a proposal of marriage, and insisted on meeting at his house rather than in a more public place.
534. **I found that it is more likely than not that Ms Zaman went to Lord Ahmed's house at his invitation to discuss the offer made by the police to meet her. However, he had no intention of forwarding her concerns to the police and his use of the letter to lure Ms Zaman to his house was dishonest.**
535. Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed had a sexual relationship from the first meeting at his house in September 2017 until late November 2017. Ms Zaman said that throughout this time she continued to press for a meeting with the police and Lord Ahmed continued to say that he would arrange it when he had time to do so. Lord Ahmed said that the issue to do with her complaint had ended in March 2017, and was never raised subsequently, including during their sexual relationship.
536. **I found that it is more likely than not that Lord Ahmed continued to offer to arrange a meeting with the police between September and November 2017, and therefore he was holding himself out to be engaged in parliamentary activities during their sexual relationship.**
537. Throughout this period Lord Ahmed was engaged in parliamentary activity and was therefore required to act on his personal honour. Acting in accordance with the principles of public life detailed in the Code, including the requirements to act honestly and with integrity, is part of acting on

personal honour. My findings above demonstrate that at several points in their relationship Lord Ahmed did not act honestly or with integrity.

538. **I conclude that by acting dishonestly and without integrity, in each of the listed points Lord Ahmed breached the requirement of the Code of Conduct to act on his personal honour.**
539. **Much of this behaviour, occurring after 21 June 2017, could also breach the Behaviour Code. For instance Lord Ahmed's deception in relation to his communication with the police in April 2017 was ongoing, and would probably meet the definition of sexual misconduct, as it amounted to treating Ms Zaman less favourably because she had rejected his advances. However, as Lord Ahmed's behaviour was a single course of conduct, I do not think it appropriate or necessary to separately look at possible breaches of the behaviour Code in relation to behaviour that has been found in breach of the personal honour requirements.**

Allegation: Lord Ahmed exploited Ms Zaman even though he knew she was receiving treatment for anxiety and depression

540. The question of exploitation—lying about his intentions in order to pursue a sexual relationship with Ms Zaman—is dealt with under the preceding allegations.
541. I have found that Lord Ahmed knew of Ms Zaman's emotional and psychological vulnerability from the time that he was contacted by Ms Butt in February 2017.
542. **The fact that Lord Ahmed knew, even before he first met her, that Ms Zaman was suffering from anxiety and depression exacerbates the seriousness of his breach of the requirement to act on his personal honour.**

Co-operation with my investigation

543. Paragraph 24 of the Code of Conduct requires a member subject to investigation to co-operate with it. Cooperating with my investigation is therefore a parliamentary duty, and, as such, subject to the requirement of the Code of Conduct that members should observe the seven general principles of public life, including honesty and integrity.
544. The findings I have made based on the evidence in relation to Ms Zaman's complaints show that it is more likely than not that on important issues Lord Ahmed persistently gave deliberately inaccurate and misleading accounts to conceal his behaviour towards Ms Zaman. Rather than provide an honest account of his conduct, he attempted to undermine the evidence provided by Ms Zaman through denial and dishonesty.
545. Most of the examples of his mendacity are contained in the findings set out above. However, in addition to these, there are the following findings arising from the investigation.
546. **I find that it is more likely than not that during the investigation Lord Ahmed deliberately gave a false account of the circumstances before and at the meeting at the Sahara Grill with the intention of creating the appearance of clear blue water between the conclusion of his**

activities as a parliamentarian and the start of his sexual relationship with Ms Zaman.

547. Some of his attempts have been egregious; I am particularly thinking of his comment that he was not given all the evidence obtained during the investigation before having to respond to the allegations. He also complained that Ms Zaman had behaved improperly by not informing him what she meant when she referred in her email and statement sent to him on 22 February 2017 to having made anonymous complaints before contacting him.
548. In the context of the robust findings of dishonesty made on the basis of Lord Ahmed's evidence to us, the only basis for such complaints that I can make out is that Lord Ahmed feels he would have told a more convincing story if he had had all the facts from the start. This approach shows an astonishing willingness to reveal his disregard for the principles of honesty and integrity embedded in the Code and in the concept of personal honour.
549. **I consider that in conducting himself in this manner he has failed genuinely to co-operate with my investigation. He has failed to act on his personal honour, as evidenced by his dishonesty and lack of integrity.**

CHAPTER 9: OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDED SANCTION

Overview

550. Lord Ahmed denied from the start that he had breached the Code of Conduct but I have found against him on a number of matters. As Lord Ahmed denied wrongdoing, it is not possible to be sure of his motives and thinking during this period. However, the findings in Chapters 3-5 suggest a coherence in what happened that accounts for all the findings and seems worth setting down. I consider this account to be more likely than not to explain the events that led to my findings, but as I accept that there could be other explanations, I do not put this forward as a finding in itself.
551. Before and at the meeting on 21 February 2017 Lord Ahmed was willing to help Ms Zaman and subsequently wrote to Commissioner Dick on 2 March 2017. When he received Ms Zaman's account of her experiences he would have known that she had been taken advantage of sexually and that she was psychologically vulnerable. Lord Ahmed sent the letter on 2 March, then asked Ms Zaman to dinner the same evening and she agreed.
552. At the dinner he flirted with her and after the dinner he made an unwelcome sexual advance, amounting to a sexual assault. The assumption must be that he was sexually attracted to her and hoped for a sexual encounter. Ms Zaman rejected him and in a subsequent conversation was highly critical of his behaviour, as was Ms Butt, the mutual friend who had introduced them, and who had been told of the assault by Ms Zaman. This must have been unpleasant for Lord Ahmed.
553. Later in March 2017 the police contacted Lord Ahmed in response to his letter to Commissioner Dick. At this point he closed down any possibility of an investigation of Ms Zaman's concerns by saying that Ms Zaman would not speak to them. He told us that this was because Ms Zaman had told him she was not willing to be identified to the police as the complainant, but I found that this was not true. As the only relevant events between him sending the letter and receiving the reply were the dinner, the assault and the condemnation of his behaviour from Ms Zaman and Ms Butt, it seems more likely than not that Lord Ahmed was motivated by the sexual rejection and criticisms that he had received.
554. After her conversation with him about the sexual assault Ms Zaman blocked him from her phone, and both of them said that they had no contact until after Ms Zaman texted him on 14 July 2017, asking if he had had a reply to his letter of 2 March.
555. He never informed her that he had told the police she would not meet them, and he did not contact her when he received the reply from the police of 3 May 2017, offering a meeting to Ms Zaman and assuring her that she would not be identified to S if she spoke to them.
556. However, he responded to her July text, and then sent her the letter from the police. He then used the prospect of arranging a meeting with the police to lure her to his house, where he finally managed to have sex with her. He continued the sexual relationship for a couple of months but then ended it in disputed circumstances, which we did not investigate as ending a sexual relationship does not engage the Code of Conduct.

557. During the course of the sexual relationship Lord Ahmed continued to say to Ms Zaman that he would arrange the meeting suggested in the letter from the police of 3 May 2017, although he actually made no attempt to do so.
558. After the end of their relationship Ms Zaman stayed in contact with an associate of his, X, and when they met on 24 December 2017 X either deleted, or made Ms Zaman delete, all the text and WhatsApp messages between her and Lord Ahmed. Immediately after this X broke off his relationship with Ms Zaman.
559. Ms Zaman made a complaint to me in January 2018. I did not accept her complaint for investigation under the Code of Conduct, as it did not meet the eligibility criteria then in force. I suggested she could contact the police, and, at her request, made a referral to the unit that deals with allegations against parliamentarians. Ms Zaman made her complaint to the police in March and also circulated a letter to parliamentarians about the conduct of S and Lord Ahmed.
560. The police interviewed Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed, and decided the evidence against him did not meet the threshold for prosecution.
561. Ms Zaman also contacted the BBC, which broadcast a programme on 14 February 2019, making the allegation that Lord Ahmed had used the offer of help with her complaint as a way to have sex with her.
562. On 30 April 2019 the Code of Conduct was revised, and the eligibility criteria for making a complaint were revised.
563. Ms Zaman re-presented her complaint, and the investigation took place.
564. During the investigation it became apparent, because of the availability of robust corroborative evidence, that Lord Ahmed had lied to Ms Zaman in offering to help her after he had told the police she would not speak to them, and using the prospect of arranging a meeting with the police to lure her to his house with an intention of having sex with her; lied to the police in 2017 and when he was interviewed by them in 2018; and lied to me during the investigation. He also used every opportunity to try, unsuccessfully, to show that Ms Zaman was a liar.
565. We examined all the allegations of dishonesty or unreliability that Lord Ahmed made and tested her evidence when it was inconsistent. Although we looked at a number of inconsistencies, most of these were on matters of detail, and there were explanations for them other than lying. On all the important elements of her account she was consistent.

Lord Ahmed's submission in mitigation

566. In March 2020, the Conduct Committee recommended to the House that the following paragraph be added to the Guide to the Code of Conduct:

“After preparing her own account of the facts of a case, the Commissioner will consider whether the Code has been breached. If she finds that the Code has been breached and that remedial action is inappropriate, she will inform the member of the breaches she has found with a summary of the relevant parts of her report. The member will then be invited to

present any material they would wish the Commissioner to take into account when considering her recommended sanction.”²¹

567. The House agreed.

568. I wrote to Lord Ahmed asking for material he wished me to take into account when considering the sanction to recommend to the Conduct Committee. Lord Ahmed replied on 7 May. My letter and his response are included in Appendix 11.

569. Lord Ahmed’s submission was presented under five headings of matters that he considered should be taken into account in determining the sanction:

- Background and character;
- Any previous breaches of the Code;
- The effect of these findings;
- The length of time that has passed since the incident; and
- The appropriateness of the sanction to the breach.

570. As I have set out in previous reports, the principles I take into account when considering an appropriate sanction are, briefly:

- Proportionality;
- Openness and transparency; and
- Fairness and natural justice.

571. Though I would not wish to set a precedent by accepting that all factors set out by Lord Ahmed should be considered relevant, each deserves a response.

Background and character

572. In his submission, Lord Ahmed described his early working life and his political career and interests. He provided five letters from friends and associates to attest to his good character.

573. All appointed members have backgrounds that reflect their efforts and achievements. As all members specifically sign up to abide by the Code of Conduct, that is the baseline against which their behaviour is judged. It would be invidious to treat members differently in setting a sanction by reason of their character or background.

Any previous breaches of the Code

574. In his submission, Lord Ahmed said:

“In my long and distinguished career I have not been subject to any complaint whatsoever, let alone a complaint of the nature made by the complainant, or any investigation or any finding. The present complaint must, therefore, be seen to be out of character and not in my nature. I would suggest that this, of itself, is indicative of there being no risk of

²¹ Conduct Committee, Progress report and amendments to the rules of conduct (1st Report, session 2019–21, HL Paper 34). At time of writing, this change has not been incorporated into a ninth edition of the Code.

repetition and, therefore, should be viewed as an isolated incident and one which should place it in the lower category of any sanction that might be recommended.”

575. Previous breaches of the Code are relevant in considering whether a sanction for a relatively minor breach is adequate, or whether a more significant sanction should be imposed to reflect a repeated breach. However, the fact of no previous findings of a breach cannot be used to reduce the appropriate sanction for a first breach.
576. Further, Lord Ahmed says that the breach is out of character and unlikely to be repeated. However, he has denied the allegations made against him; his deception of Ms Zaman lasted from March until November 2017, and he has continued to deny any wrongdoing throughout the investigation. I therefore do not accept that there is no risk of repetition.

The effect of these findings

577. In his submission, Lord Ahmed said that my report would “undoubtedly have devastating consequences for my personal and matrimonial life”. He noted the ill-health of his wife and the impact on his grandchildren and others.
578. In earlier reports I have said that:

“Publication is not a sanction, but the effect of publication is, in my view, a matter that I can take into account when considering the proportionality of any sanction I may impose, as publicity may itself be a very effective catalyst for change in the respondent’s behaviour”.²²

579. In cases where the breach is minor, acknowledged and remedial action may be considered an appropriate outcome, the impact of publication is a relevant factor to take into account. However, throughout this investigation Lord Ahmed has denied any wrongdoing and my findings are of serious breaches.
580. I accept that the report will have a devastating effect on Lord Ahmed’s personal and family life, and that innocent third parties will be adversely affected. I am very sorry that Lord Ahmed’s family will suffer through his behaviour, but I cannot allow that to affect my judgement on what is a proportionate sanction. To do so would be to set up a hierarchy in which members with close families are given advantages that more solitary members are denied.

The length of time that has passed since the incident

581. In his submission, Lord Ahmed says “The events giving rise to the complaint took place in 2017”, and notes that the Guide to the Code requires that “the longer ago the conduct occurred, the more certain the Commissioner should be of the need for such a sanction before recommending it.”
582. Paragraph 152 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct says:

“In deciding upon the sanction to recommend and in particular whether in respect of conduct occurring before 26 June 2015 to recommend suspension for a particular period longer than the remainder of the current Parliament or, more severe still, expulsion, the Commissioner should bear in mind the retrospective effect of the House of Lords

²² The conduct of Lord Stone of Blackheath (published on 23 October 2019)

(Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015 and that, the longer ago the conduct occurred, the more certain the Commissioner should be of the need for such a sanction before recommending it.”

583. The Guide to the Code refers to 26 June 2015 as this is the date from which the House of Lords (Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015 was in force. The Act provides statutory power for a member of the House of Lords to be suspended or expelled from the House for conduct that “occurred after the coming into force of this Act” or “occurred before the coming into force of this Act and was not public knowledge before that time”.
584. It is clear that the provisions of the Guide are to be read in the context of the House of Lords (Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015. The conduct considered in this report took place around two years after the Act came into force. The provisions of paragraph 152 therefore do not apply.
585. Lord Ahmed also noted that the sexual assault on 2 March 2017 took place before the specific provisions in the eighth edition of the Code of Conduct applied and that “It is wrong, therefore, to make findings and recommend sanction to an event which is outside the ambit of the Code.”
586. However, the Code of Conduct makes clear that “Behaviour that took place before this date [21 June 2017] may still constitute a breach of the personal honour provision if undertaken in the performance of the member’s parliamentary duties and activities.” I have found that Lord Ahmed’s action on 2 March 2017 amounted to sexual misconduct, constituted a failure to act on his personal honour and therefore was a breach of the Code.

The appropriateness of the sanction to the breach

587. In his submission, Lord Ahmed argued that none of the allegations on which I have found him to have breached the Code were sufficiently serious to warrant a severe sanction. He said that:
- the sexual misconduct on 2 March 2017 was “a fleeting, spontaneous and momentary incident” which led to no criminal charges;
 - his failure to progress Ms Zaman’s complaint did not ultimately prevent Ms Zaman from taking her complaint to the police;
 - his sexual relationship with Ms Zaman was a consensual one; and
 - I did not uphold some of Ms Zaman’s allegations.
588. I accept that:
- the sexual misconduct did not lead to any criminal charges and that, taken on its own, might be considered a relatively minor breach of the Code;
 - ultimately Ms Zaman was able to take her complaint to the police despite Lord Ahmed’s failure to progress the case on her behalf; and
 - their sexual relationship was consensual.
589. However, Lord Ahmed does not address the finding that he deliberately deceived Ms Zaman over a period of months by purporting to help her in his position as a member of the House of Lords, with the object of having

a sexual relationship with her. His deliberate deception from March to November 2017 damages the reputation of the House of Lords, as does his subsequent denial of his actions.

590. Finally, Lord Ahmed argued:

“that my account and my memory of the events under scrutiny did not accord with the complainant’s should not—and cannot in this case—be assumed to be the result of dishonesty. There are many reasons why two individuals may not experience a particular moment in time in the same manner. At each stage of the investigation, I have sought to provide my version of events as best as I could remember them.”

591. He also said that:

“it would be wholly improper to characterise any challenges I have made to the complainant’s evidence and/or the way in which you have conducted the investigation in a negative way. I have made such challenges and comments as I considered appropriate (almost invariably with the assistance of legal advice) in order to ensure that the investigation is conducted in a thorough and fair manner and in accordance with the Code.”

592. I accept, and have always accepted, that memories can be faulty and people’s accounts can vary without dishonesty. Any findings of dishonesty are based on solid evidence, including documents and accounts of the police and other reputable people. Where I have found aspects of Lord Ahmed’s accounts to be due to dishonesty, I have set this out in the report.

593. I accept that evidence should be challenged if it is not accepted, and I do not complain of this. However, the requirements of paragraph 9 of the Code²³ are not suspended during an investigation into alleged breaches of the Code. If Lord Ahmed chose to lie during the investigation, and to make unsubstantiated allegations to undermine the evidence of the complainant, he has to accept the consequences of this approach.

594. Lord Ahmed is correct to say that it would be improper for me to characterise his challenges to the way I have conducted the investigation in an unfairly negative way. There is nothing in the report to suggest I have done so, and my recommended sanction has not been influenced by such challenges.

Recommended sanction

595. As well as making findings on the allegations, my role is to recommend a sanction to the Conduct Committee where the circumstances of an investigation make any remedial action unsuitable.

596. The breaches of the Code of Conduct are too severe for me to attempt to agree remedial action with Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman, and, in any event, such an outcome is not possible because Lord Ahmed denies wrongdoing.

597. The range of penalties that I can recommend to the Conduct Committee includes suspension, denial of access to the system of financial support or

23 To observe the seven general principles of conduct identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

facilities of the House of Lords and expulsion. In reaching a decision on what sanction to recommend, I am guided by the principle of proportionality.

598. Lord Ahmed sexually assaulted Ms Zaman in March 2017 and then engaged in a sustained period of deception and manipulation of Ms Zaman between July and November 2017 in order to gain sexual favours from her. He promised to help her and failed to do so. During this investigation he has given misleading and inaccurate accounts on important matters to try and show he has not breached the Code of Conduct.
599. Inevitably, because he denies any wrongdoing, he has shown no remorse. I therefore have to assume that he is unrepentant about his behaviour towards Ms Zaman and during the investigation.
600. His use of his parliamentary status to offer illusory help to a vulnerable Ms Zaman undermines the reputation of the House of Lords as a whole, as it undermines trust in the honesty and trustworthiness of its members.
601. His dishonesty during the investigation shows that he has no respect for the standards of the House of Lords or its processes.
602. There is no evidence that he will change his behaviour or beliefs.
603. **The proportionate sanction is therefore expulsion from the House of Lords, and this is my recommendation.**

Annex B: Lord Ahmed's main appeal document

References in bolded square brackets are first to page numbers and subsequently to paragraph numbers where available:

Introduction

1. On 27 May 2020, 'the Commissioner for Standards of the House of Lords ("the Commissioner")' completed her investigation into Lord Nazir Ahmed ("Lord Ahmed"), who has been a member of the House of Lords for the past 22 years.
2. The investigation was launched as a result of the second complaint of Tahira Zaman ("the Complainant"). In January 2018, the Commissioner rejected the Complainant's first complaint on the basis that the alleged behaviour did not engage the Code of Conduct. In April 2019, the Code was changed to cover parliamentary activities as well as duties. The Complainant submitted another complaint based on the same facts.
3. The Complainant levelled a number of accusations. Some of the more serious allegations, which suggested that Lord Ahmed plied the Complainant with an intoxicating substance and sought to destroy evidence, were found not to be proved. The Commissioner found others to be proved. She recommended that Lord Ahmed be expelled from the House of Lords.
4. Lord Ahmed appeals both the findings of the Commissioner as well as the proposed sanction.

Summary of grounds of appeal

5. Lord Ahmed appeals on the following grounds:
 - (a) Ground 1 - there were procedural irregularities during the investigation;
 - (b) Ground 2 -the Commissioner's findings are flawed and not based on evidence;
 - (c) Ground 3 - fresh evidence casts doubt on the credibility of the Complainant; and
 - (d) Ground 4- the recommended sanction is disproportionate.
6. First, Lord Ahmed challenges the integrity of the investigation. The Commissioner is bound to respect the principles of natural justice. In Lord Ahmed's case these have been breached in the following manner:
 - (a) He was not provided with all the material necessary to respond to the allegation;
 - (b) The Commissioner did not act fairly throughout the investigation; and
 - (c) The Code of Conduct should not have applied retrospectively to Lord Ahmed

7. Second, Lord Ahmed challenges the findings themselves. The Commissioner's findings are the result of unsustainable leaps of logic. They are not based on the evidence that was before her. They are based on an incorrect assessment of the evidence and the credibility of the Complainant. The Commissioner ascribes deliberate malice to Lord Ahmed without supporting evidence. The Commissioner ignored the evidence which cast doubt on the credibility of the Complainant.
8. Third, evidence suggests the Complainant fabricated her complaint. The evidence comes from witnesses who are independent of Lord Ahmed. Lord Ahmed did not approach them to seek evidence from them. They approached him. This evidence suggests that the Complainant fabricated the evidence in an effort to retaliate against Lord Ahmed.
9. Fourth, and in the event Lord Ahmed's appeal on substance is refused, the proposed sanction is disproportionate. It fails to take account of the mitigating circumstances and the impact of expulsion on Lord Ahmed's family.

Ground 1: Procedural Irregularities

Principles of natural justice

10. Paragraph 23 of the Code of Conduct provides that the Commissioner's investigations will be carried out in accordance with the principles of natural justice and fairness.
11. Although not binding, case-law of the courts of England & Wales provides helpful examples of what constitutes natural justice.
12. In *Lee v The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain* [1952] 2 QB 329 the Court of Appeal held at 342 that the requirements of natural justice dictate at the very least that a person subject to disciplinary processes:

“must give the man notice of the charge and a reasonable opportunity of meeting it. Any stipulation to the contrary would be invalid. They cannot stipulate for a power to condemn a man unheard.”

13. It also entails a duty to act fairly in all the circumstances. In *R v Board of Visitors of Hull Prison, ex p St Germain and others* [1979] Q.B. 425 at 450-451, the Court of Appeal held it would interfere with disciplinary proceedings

“if there were some failure to act fairly-fairly, having regard to all relevant circumstances - and such unfairness could reasonably be regarded as having caused a substantial, as distinct from a trivial or merely technical, injustice, which was capable of remedy.”

14. It is not suggested that courts have the power to interfere with internal proceedings of the House of Lords. Rather, the requirement of fairness is a central tenet of natural justice.
15. In *Porter v Magill* [2001] UKHL 67, the House of Lords held that an investigation by an independent auditor had to be devoid of bias. At paragraph 103 it set out the test as

“whether the fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts, would conclude that there was a real possibility that the tribunal was biased.”

16. Natural justice also dictates that those who are subject to disciplinary proceedings be judged by the rules and standards existing at the time that the alleged occurred.
17. In *Abbott v Sullivan* [1952] 1 K.B. 189 the claimant was disciplined by the Cornporters' Committee because he failed to pay his co-workers the sums they were owed, as per the rules of their society. Immediately after the disciplinary hearing, he physically attacked one of the members of the Committee. The victim of the assault asked the Committee to convene in emergency. They did so and decided to commence disciplinary proceedings against the claimant for the assault. The claimant disputed their jurisdiction. He alleged that since it was a criminal matter it was beyond the scope of the Committee's jurisdiction. He was expelled from the union and issued a claim for breach of contract.
18. In the High Court, Croom-Johnson J held that it was never open to the Cornporters' Committee to discipline him for the assault. They did not have any written rules which demonstrated they had jurisdiction over these sorts of matters. In addition, it was clear from evidence given in relation to their custom that they did not deal with criminal matters. The Cornporters' Committee. appealed this ruling, the claimant appealing on other unrelated matters. The Committee's appeal is referred to in the judgment as the cross-appeal.
19. In the Court of Appeal, Evershed MR, Denning LJ and Morris LJ all held that Croom-Johnson J was right. Evershed MR held that

“jurisdiction must be founded upon a contract express or implied mutually entered into and binding on all those who enjoy the privileges of being accepted. into the ranks of the cornporters.”
20. In the absence of evidence of an accepted custom or practice of dealing with criminal issues; the Court of Appeal held the Cornporters' Committee exceeded their jurisdiction. It held that, by reference to what their members agreed to at the time the decision was made to discipline the claimant, it had no authority to adjudicate on the assault.
21. In *Spring v National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Society* [1956] 1 W.L.R.585 the claimant was a dock worker in Liverpool who was part of a union. By an agreement the claimant was unaware of, the Transport and General Workers' Union had a monopoly on union membership in the dock where the claimant was working. The claimant was not part of the Transport and General Workers' Union. The Transport and General Workers' Union took issue with his membership and raised it with his union. His union admitted the breach of the old agreement and expelled him. The claimant brought a claim against his union, for breach of contract. The claimant gave evidence to the effect that he did not know about the existence of the prior agreement between the trade unions. He argued that as a result of his ignorance it would be unfair to imply that term into his agreement with the union. The High Court agreed and as a result his expulsion was deemed invalid.
22. In *McVittae v UNISON* [1996] I.R.L.R. 33 several unions amalgamated to form UNISON. Once UNISON was formed it sought to take disciplinary

action against members for activities that took place before the creation of UNISON, while those individuals were members of their own unions.

23. It was alleged the members breached three rules of UNISON:
 - (a) Disobeying any rule or regulation of the union;
 - (a) Acting in a manner prejudicial to the union; and
 - (b) Committing deliberate racist and sexist acts.
24. A disciplinary committee was formed but a hearing was adjourned to allow the aggrieved members to seek a High Court injunction to halt the proceedings. The injunction was granted only in relation to the third allegation (committing deliberate racist and sexist acts). This was because while UNISON's rules contained a prohibition on this sort of conduct, the rules of the previous union did not.
25. The High Court held that as a matter of principle

“The existence of an implied power to discipline for pre inception conduct must depend on the presumed intention of the parties. It would have been the expectation of the members that the union should be able to take disciplinary action against a member who had before amalgamation done something which contravened both the rules of his former union and the rules of Unison. To refuse to imply such a power would be contrary both to the expectations of the members and to common sense”
26. These cases demonstrate that natural justice requires that any retrospective application of rules be carried out only with the consent of the potentially aggrieved party and only after careful scrutiny of the terms of the disciplinary code.

The irregularities

Failure to provide notice of the allegations and a reasonable opportunity to respond

27. During the course of the investigation the Commissioner repeatedly failed to provide Lord Ahmed with notice of the charge and a reasonable opportunity to meet it.
28. On 18 July 2019, the Commissioner sent Lord Ahmed information pertaining to the Complainant's allegation [130; 35]. The most detailed account provided by the Commissioner at the time was the original complaint from 28 January 2018 [119; 3]. This account does not contain any dates. As the Commissioner's subsequent investigation later revealed, this initial complaint conflated a number of meetings. Other documents sent by the Commissioner contained only vague dates such as “September 2017.”
29. On 23 July 2019, in response to delivery of this information Lord Ahmed provided a first statement in which he sought to be precise about the dates and events. This statement in its entirety was put directly to the Complainant. It was only after Lord Ahmed produced his statement that the Commissioner sought to establish a timeline with the Complainant [135; 39].

30. At the outset, the information provided to Lord Ahmed was incomplete in material respects. Precise dates were crucial in this case considering the potential for retrospective application of the Code of Conduct and Behaviour Code: It was incumbent on the Commissioner to ensure that the renewed complaint fell squarely within her jurisdiction.
31. Her approach resulted in significant unfairness to Lord Ahmed and the creation of potential confusion in the provision of his evidence. The Commissioner has accused Lord Ahmed of deliberately attempting to show that his parliamentary involvement with the Complainant ended in March 2017. However, that position was based on incomplete information provided by the Commissioner and the Complainant. Given the centrality of exact dates, the Commissioner had a duty to ascertain a precise timeline before requiring Lord Ahmed to provide a response:

Failure to pursue lines of enquiry pointing away from culpability

32. Fairness is at the heart of the investigative process. The duty of the Commissioner is not to corroborate the allegations made by a complainant. It is to investigate the matter fairly and dispassionately. This includes a duty to consider and pursue lines of inquiry that point away from the accused's guilt.
33. In Lord Ahmed's case, the Commissioner did not consider any evidence that pointed away from his guilt. The Commissioner went to great lengths to secure evidence to corroborate the Complainant's narrative. For example, she sought and obtained booking details for the Sahara Grill.
34. However, the Commissioner did not pursue lines of inquiry that pointed away from Lord Ahmed's guilt. The Commissioner was given a letter sent by the police to the Complainant as part of the Victim's Right to Review. The letter is a scathing indictment of the Complainant's credibility.
35. Referring to the Complainant's allegations against S, it states [244] :

 “To date you have been unable to supply evidence or support the allegation that you provided[S] large sums of money in payment for his service.

 Witness evidence suggests that [S] is an honest person who does not charge people for his services.

 Witness evidence indicates that you have voluntarily provided gifts to [S].”
36. While this does not refer to the allegations against Lord Ahmed, it is an indication of the general creditworthiness of the Complainant. The Complainant would have been able to easily evidence providing large sums of money, either by pointing to bank transfers or pointing to withdrawals of large sums of cash. The Commissioner placed no weight on this. Nor did the Commissioner make any comment on the impact of these undisputed facts on the Complainant's credibility.
37. The letter goes on to address specific questions the Complainant asked of the police including why Lord Ahmed was not arrested and why no search warrant was sought or obtained. Repeatedly the police state they were “in

possession of statements that undermine [the Complainant's] account" [246].

38. The letter concludes by stating that the Complainant contacted the reviewing officer referring to several more victims who wished to speak to the police. However, the Complainant subsequently refused to provide the details of these victims [247].
39. Despite the clear existence of statements which undermined the account of the Complainant in relation to allegations against Lord Ahmed, the Commissioner failed to seek such statements from the police. She only obtained the interview transcripts for Lord Ahmed and the Complainant. In addition, the Commissioner refused to consider the considerable volume of evidence produced in the context of failed judicial review proceedings attempted by the Complainant.

The involvement of Sam Evans

40. Lord Ahmed submits the investigation was improper and biased due to the involvement of Sam Evans.
41. At paragraphs 31 and 32 of the report, the Commissioner states:

“Ms Evans has significant investigatory experience, which includes expertise in interviewing, and evaluating the evidence of, vulnerable people, including those who allege sexual abuse and exploitation.

We’ve worked as a team throughout the investigation, including analysing the evidence, making findings of fact, and reaching conclusions on breaches of the Code.”
42. A footnote to paragraph 31 reads:

“In her earlier career she worked extensively with organisations supporting victims of sexual violence and abuse, helping to extend significantly the provision of Sexual Assault Referral Centres for victims of rape and provision for organisations supporting victims of current and historic sexual abuse. She also led work to establish the Government’s first funded support programme for victims of Human Trafficking (primarily female victims trafficked into prostitution in the UK)”
43. The involvement of Ms Evans in the investigative process is not challenged. However, Ms Evans had no place in assisting the Commissioner in “analysing the evidence, making findings of fact, and reaching conclusions on breaches of the Code.”
44. The involvement of Ms Evans in these aspects of the investigation is contrary to the Guide to the Code of Conduct. Paragraphs 129 to 150 provide for the process by which the Commissioner carries out her investigation and comes to her findings. At para 131, the guide states that the Commissioner “may delegate to the investigator to the extent she considers appropriate any of her **investigatory** functions under paragraph 130” (emphasis added).
45. The Code of Conduct at paragraph 23 (repeated at paragraph 129 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct) explicitly distinguishes between investigative and adjudicative functions. The Guide to the Code of Conduct allows

only delegation of investigatory powers. It does not permit delegation of adjudicative functions.

46. Ms Evans, on the Commissioner's own admission, was involved in more than just the investigative process. She took part in the decision-making process as well. By involving Ms Evans in the decision-making process, the Commissioner has overstepped the clear limits set by the Guide to the Code of Conduct.
47. In addition, a fair-minded observer and informed observer would come to the conclusion there was a real possibility Ms Evans was biased. Ms Evans is undoubtedly an expert in gathering evidence from alleged victims of sexual abuse. However, her past background shows a dedication to the perspective of female victims of sexual abuse.
48. This represents a real possibility that she will not have been able to assess the Complainant's case dispassionately or divorce her past experiences from the issue at hand. Her involvement in the decision-making process is akin to an experienced sexual offences police officer sitting on a jury deciding an allegation of sexual assault. Their potential influence would be unfair to the person facing the allegations.
49. Lord Ahmed was not informed of Ms Evans' past and not given an opportunity to object to her involvement either in the investigative process or the decision-making process.
50. In light of the above, the investigation and subsequent findings failed to follow the requirements of natural justice in that they were not impartial.

Retrospective application of the rules

51. The Complainant previously brought a complaint against Lord Ahmed on exactly the same basis. That complaint was rejected because it did not relate to Parliamentary duties. By 30 April 2019, the Code of Conduct was changed to relate to parliamentary activities. The Complainant renewed her complaint and the Commissioner agreed to investigate it.
52. The retrospective application of the Code of Conduct is in direct contradiction with the Commissioner's duty to act in accordance with the principles of natural justice and the time. Retrospective application is anathema to natural justice.
53. Lord Ahmed did not take part in the debate which took place on 30 April 2019 where changes to the Code of Conduct were approved. He cannot therefore be considered to have consented to the changes.
54. The debate on 30 April 2019 does not assist in determining the true scope of retrospective applicability of the Code of Conduct. Presenting the Report from the Select Committee on Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme: Changes to the Code of Conduct, Lord McFall of Alcluith stated:

“The requirement to comply with the behaviour code will be retrospective to 21 June 2017—the start of the current Parliament. Complaints of bullying or harassment can be made to independent helplines, as well as to the commissioner, and complainants and Members can be signposted to sources of advice and support. This requirement will apply to

Members who are on leave of absence or disqualified if they are on the Parliamentary Estate or using the facilities of Parliament.

The existing requirement that a Member should act always on their personal honour should be widened to cover a Member's performance of their parliamentary activities, as well as their parliamentary duties. This wider scope will apply retrospectively."²⁴

55. The statement on retrospective application of the Code of Conduct to "*parliamentary activities*" does not have a date. It immediately follows an announcement that the requirement to comply with the behaviour code will be retrospective only to 21 June 2017. At no other stage in the debate is the question of retrospectivity raised.
56. The juxtaposition of the two statements creates significant doubt as to whether the retrospective application of the Code of Conduct is indefinite or limited to 21 June 2017. The Code of Conduct itself would suggest that the extension cannot be indefinite.
57. Paragraph 122 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct provides for a six years time limit for complaints to be made. Any complaint after six years may only be investigated if the Conduct Committee agrees and is satisfied there is a strong public interest in the matter being investigated. The imposition of a six-year limitation period suggests retrospectivity is not unlimited. However, the statement voted on was ambiguous and left open the possibility of unlimited retrospectivity.
58. Unfortunately, the Code of Conduct and the Guide to the Code of Conduct do not provide for any mechanism to resolve interpretation of the provisions of the Code of Conduct. The Commissioner is left to carry out her investigation, to the detriment of a member. An aggrieved member can only appeal, after the Commissioner's report is complete.
59. Where the scope of retrospective application is ambiguous; as above, the Commissioner should not have proceeded in the absence of clarity from the Conduct Committee. In the alternative, the Commissioner should have excluded from her assessment events which took place before 21 June 2017.

Ground 2: The Commissioner's findings are flawed and not based on evidence

The complaints which were not upheld .

60. The Complainant made a large number of allegations. Not all the allegations were upheld.
61. The Commissioner did not uphold the following allegations:
 - (a) That Lord Ahmed "spiked" the Complainant's tea while she was at his property in September 2017;
 - (b) That Lord Ahmed passed the Complainant to X for X's sexual gratification; and
 - (c) That X deleted messages on the Complainant's phone at Lord Ahmed's behest.

24 <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2019-04-30c.862.4>

62. These allegations are serious. They impute malice and premeditation to Lord Ahmed's actions. They are the sort of accusations regularly levelled at members of notorious grooming gangs.
63. The findings adverse to the Complainant are significant for two reasons. First, they suggest that the Complainant deliberately exaggerated the underlying claims she made against Lord Ahmed.
64. The allegation that Lord Ahmed drugged her did not arise in her draft complaint of 20 January 2018, her formal complaint. of 28 January 2018, her letter to parliamentarians in March 2018 nor the timeline sent to the police in April 2018. She has mentioned it only sporadically to the police in May and June 2018 and in the course of the Commissioner's investigation.
65. The Commissioner found specifically that the WhatsApp messages between the Complainant and X "do not provide any evidence that Lord Ahmed set up the relationship or encouraged it" [86; 367].
66. The Commissioner found that the Complainant's account of how messages on her phone were deleted was "inconsistent" [88; 377]. The Complainant was adamant that the messages were deleted at Lord Ahmed's behest [87; 372]. The Commissioner found that there "is no evidence that Lord Ahmed played any part in this" [88; 383].
67. If proven, the above allegations could have worsened Lord Ahmed's culpability. The logical conclusion that flows from finding them not proven is that the Complainant exaggerated her overall claims. Her insistence that these events took place precludes a finding that she was mistaken.
68. Second, they demonstrate the Commissioner's flawed approach in evaluating the evidence. Despite finding against the Complainant on these serious allegations, the Commissioner does not ascribe malice to the Complainant as a reason for making the claims. Nor does she assess the impact of these disproved allegations on the overall credibility of the Complainant.
69. In relation to the allegation that Lord Ahmed spiked her tea the Commissioner found:

"Ms Zaman did not suspect having been drugged until after the end of her involvement with X, which was nearly four months after the suspected drugging. This in itself is not particularly strange: when things go wrong between people a process of re-evaluation of earlier events will often take place, which can lead to a different understanding of those earlier events. However, a subsequent belief to explain earlier events is almost impossible to prove without other evidence, and the only other evidence here- the GP record- is not conclusive. Being drugged is one explanation for her subsequent illness, but it is also possible that her unusual feelings and behaviour at Lord Ahmed's house arose from the early symptoms of the episode of illness that subsequently manifested itself" [84; 345]
70. In relation to the allegation that Lord Ahmed passed the Complainant to X for X's sexual gratification, the Commissioner makes no finding as to why the Complainant may have made such an allegation. She simply states "It is not possible to conclude that [the Complainant's] belief that this is what occurred is more likely to be true than Lord Ahmed's denial" [87; 370].

Similarly, she has not found any motive for the Complainant saying that messages were deleted from her phone at Lord Ahmed's behest [88; 383].

71. The Commissioner does not countenance the possibility that the Complainant is exaggerating her claims. It is possible the Complainant is exaggerating her claims because she bears a grudge against Lord Ahmed or in an effort to distance herself from her admission that she had consensual sex with Lord Ahmed. This stands in stark contrast to her detailed efforts to find that Lord Ahmed was deliberately untruthful in the course of her investigation.
72. For example she found that Lord Ahmed was "deliberately untruthful" about:
 - (a) The Complainant 's desire not to proceed with the complaint against S if it meant she would be identified [45; 144]; and
 - (b) The fact the Complainant did not wish to be identified to the police [60; 217].

She also ascribes a motive to Lord Ahmed's alleged deliberate untruths [45; 144].

73. While the Commissioner goes out of her way to ascribe a reason-however fanciful to the actions of Lord Ahmed, she persistently exonerates the Complainant of any malicious motive. Her allegations are not analysed as a whole but in silo, isolated from one another such that disproved allegations have—in the eyes of the Commissioner—bearing on overall credibility. This is the wrong approach, particularly in light of other evidence available to the Commissioner demonstrating the clear animus of the Complainant.
74. This includes:
 - (a) Her renewed complaint in which she states that the Commissioner "will be aware" that her decision not to investigate the original complaint "has been widely criticised, and I am now informed the Code has been changed as a result" [126; 28]. Her renewed complaint came a month after she levelled the same accusations against Lord Ahmed in a *Newsnight* piece, strongly suggesting the piece was a deliberate attempt to exert media pressure on the Commissioner;
 - (b) Evidence that, following the police refusing to charge Lord Ahmed, she initiated abortive judicial review proceedings. The Commissioner refused to look at the detailed bundle that the Complainant prepared for this judicial review;
 - (c) Her notes on the letter from the police where she disagrees with everything the police has stated without any basis or justification [245];
 - (d) Her clear desire to have Lord Ahmed arrested, his house searched, his phones seized despite the police being in possession of evidence undermining her claim [248]; and
 - (e) Messages on her phone a month prior to her first complaint where she states she only has "bad'dua" in her heart for Lord Ahmed and X [290]. The term "bad'dua" is an Urdu term for "ill-will."

The flawed findings

75. The findings the Commissioner has upheld should be read in light of the above findings. The Commissioner claims that she “did evaluate all the inconsistencies that [they] found [...] and where these matters were relevant” [15; 11]. If this is correct, the Commissioner has not demonstrated the impact of the baseless allegations on the Complainant’s credibility.
76. The allegations she has upheld were inconsistent with a fair reading of the evidence.

The Complainant’s vulnerability

77. The Commissioner found that Lord Ahmed knew about the Complainant’s vulnerability from the moment her friend contacted Lord Ahmed [26; 58]. However there are significant flaws with the Commissioner’s reasoning.
78. The Commissioner takes the view that the Complainant’s friend, Ms Butt, told *Newsnight* that she had informed Lord Ahmed of the Complainant’s vulnerability [25;53]. She adds that this statement cannot be explained by “as an attempt to undermine Lord Ahmed’s evidence” [25; 53]. This ignores the fact that Ms Butt and the Complainant are known to each other. Ms Butt agreed to participate in a news programme which the Complainant tacitly admitted was a method of pressuring the Commissioner. The Commissioner did not consider the possibility of collusion in order to present an account more detrimental to Lord Ahmed.
79. The Commissioner found that Ms Butt’s subsequent account of the Complainant’s vulnerability “has the ring of truth, revealing, as it does, the guilty exasperation that can accompany sympathy when great emotional demands are made” [25–26; 54]. There . is no explanation for why these comments by Ms Butt have “the ring of truth”.
80. Lord Ahmed did not dispute that the Complainant was vulnerable. His position was that he was not aware of the Complainant’s vulnerability until much later. One of his reasons was that the Complainant held down a responsible job. The Commissioner dismissed this reasoning by claiming that “many people with responsible jobs are able to carry on with their work while being treated for anxiety and depression” [26; 56]. This misunderstands Lord Ahmed’s position.
81. His reference to the Complainant’s employment demonstrates she did not exhibit obvious external signs of distress and vulnerability. It is notable that nowhere does the Commissioner state that the Complainant did in fact exhibit such signs.

The Complainant’s desire not to be identified

82. The Commissioner admits that in her initial contact with Lord Ahmed, the Complainant emphasised her intense desire to remain anonymous. The Complainant said she “did not want to give her name” and she was “very concerned” about her children’s safety [39; 111–112].
83. The Commissioner does not identify any evidence from the Complainant or independent of her that suggests she would consent to her name being revealed to the police. The Commissioner comes to the conclusion that Lord Ahmed was “deliberately untruthful” about her desire to be identified

[45; 144]. She rejects the possibility that he misinterpreted the wishes of the Complainant.

84. The Commissioner claims that the text from July 2017 and subsequent events would have cleared up any confusion [43; 136]. However the text from July 2017 only asked Lord Ahmed for an update. It did not indicate that she was willing to have her name disclosed to the police.
85. The Commissioner adds that Lord Ahmed's account is unlikely because of the Complainant's earlier desires to disclose her name to the police, MPs and the Prime Minister [44; 141]. But her reasoning does not account for the possibility that people can change their minds. The Complainant was most concerned about the potential impact on her children. It was natural for Lord Ahmed to assume that meant she did not want to be identified at all. She may have held a different view at the time she disclosed her name to the police, MPs and the Prime Minister.
86. Most importantly, Lord Ahmed could only approach the situation as he saw and knew it. There is no evidence to indicate Lord Ahmed was aware that the Complainant had provided her name to others. Therefore the fact the Complainant has done so is of no probative value.

Alleged sexual assault outside the Sahara Grill

87. The Commissioner found that the allegation of sexual assault outside the Sahara Grill was only mentioned late in the proceedings [52; 171-173]. The Complainant explained that she did not mention it in her complaint of 28 January 2018 because Lord Ahmed allegedly apologised and she was focussing on the most recent incidents rather than the incident where—in the Complainant's words—"it all started from" [52-53; 173-174]. The Commissioner found this explanation plausible because "it was not central to her complaint to [the Commissioner] that Lord Ahmed had misused his position as a parliamentarian to exploit her sexually" [53; 174]
88. This is illogical. The Complainant admitted this alleged incident was where it all started. This alleged incident is the first time, in the Complainant's narrative, that Lord Ahmed showed a sexual interest in her. It contextualises the rest of the complaint. Without the alleged sexual assault in March 2017, the subsequent contact with Lord Ahmed in July 2017 makes no sense.
89. If we assume that the Complainant had never raised the March 2017 alleged assault, the first time Lord Ahmed would have displayed a sexual interest in her is when he responded to her message in July 2017. This is the alleged message where he refused to send the police response because the Complainant refused his advances. If the latter message were the first time Lord Ahmed had allegedly behaved inappropriately with the Complainant it would be sudden, out of character and out of step with previous interactions. It would make her complaint far less credible.
90. As such, the alleged sexual assault in March 2017 was essential to the internal consistency, coherence and credibility of the Complainant's narrative. Without it the rest of the narrative crumbles.

Receiving the response from the police

91. The Complainant alleged that on 14 July 2017 she texted Lord Ahmed and asked him for an update on his letter from the police [60; 219]. This text

has been provided to the Commissioner. The Complainant also alleges that Lord Ahmed responded by saying “sadly had not forwarded this because [dot dot dot]” [20; 220]. The implication is that Lord Ahmed withheld the response because the Complainant refused his advances.

92. The Commissioner acknowledges that the response is not among the text messages the Complainant received from her phone. The Commissioner posits that it may be among WhatsApp messages [61; 222]. However, the Commissioner has failed to consider two points.
93. First, that the message was never sent, consistent with what Lord Ahmed claimed and contrary to what the Complainant stated. If the Complainant’s narrative is pursued to its logical end, Lord Ahmed would have held onto the letter until the Complainant held an in-person meeting with Lord Ahmed. The Complainant and the Commissioner viewed the response as the bait Lord Ahmed dangled in front of the Complainant. This fails to explain why Lord Ahmed did in fact forward the response at some point before the Complainant visited Lord Ahmed’s home.
94. Second, the Commissioner failed to assess the oddity of Lord Ahmed receiving a text message and potentially responding on a different messaging application. Once Lord Ahmed received a text the most natural response-if indeed a response took place would have been to respond by text. Instead, the Commissioner takes the view that the response could have been sent via WhatsApp.

Evidence undermining the Complainant’s credibility

95. In addition to the above, the Commissioner was in possession of evidence that seriously undermined the credibility of the Complainant.
96. On 12 December 2019, the Complainant stated that she “did not consider X a friend to begin with and was only communicating with him because Lord Ahmed wanted her to”[84; 352]. This is not borne out by the following messages.

Type of message	Date and time	Sender	Message	Page
WhatsApp	14/11/2017 05:27	Complainant to X	I’m really looking forward to meeting you	257
WhatsApp	14/11/2017 05:28	Complainant to X	Do you promise to be friends with me for life I want a promise no matter what happens	258
WhatsApp	03/12/2017 12:04	Complainant to X	X if you have changed your mind or if you’re interested someone else. There’s nothing I can do apart from wishing you very best	275

Type of message	Date and time	Sender	Message	Page
WhatsApp	03/12/2017 12:08	Complainant to X	No one will feel for you the way I feel and no will as much as I love you X. Whatever I say it doesn't mean anything to you take care	276
WhatsApp	03/12/2017 12:09	Complainant to X	I love you and I want to see you happy	276
WhatsApp	03/12/2017 12:09	Complainant to X	Heart emojis	277
WhatsApp	03/12/2017 12:13	Complainant to X	I don't know why but I love you. My feelings are real for you. You have touched my heart	277
WhatsApp	03/12/2017 12:15	Complainant to X	You will always be in my heart my thoughts and my prayers	277
WhatsApp	08/01/2018 07:20	Complainant to X	I love you. I don't want anything apart from your love	284
WhatsApp	08/01/2018 07:23	Complainant to X	I don't know why but I love you. I love everything about you	285

97. It is clear from these messages that the Complainant was in love with X. The penultimate message extracted from the Complainant's phone is dated 10 January 2018 at 08:06. It is a WhatsApp message from the Complainant to X in which she says

“Now my heart bleeds whenever I think of you 2 [Lord Ahmed and X] and automatically bad ‘dua comes out of my heart for you both” [286]

As explained above, “bad’dua” means “ill will”.

98. This last message came 18 days before the Complainant filed her first complaint with the Commissioner. The sequence of messages and the proximity to the first complaint demonstrates what Lord Ahmed has consistently claimed: the Complainant has fabricated these allegations in an effort to smear Lord Ahmed's name because she bears a grudge.
99. The Commissioner failed to account for the fact that the very first step the Complainant took was to make a complaint to the Commissioner. She did not initially complain to the police. In doing so, the Complainant demonstrated that she is not in pursuit of justice but wanted to destroy the reputation of Lord Ahmed.

Ground 3: New evidence casts doubt on the credibility of the complainant

100. In addition to the above, Lord Ahmed relies on the written statements of [D] and [L]. These are appended to the Grounds of Appeal.
101. Both men are independent of Lord Ahmed. They are experienced Pakistani journalists. They have met Lord Ahmed at social events organised in London. They know him through his charitable work and support for the Pakistani media. However they do not know him personally.
102. [D] was asked to provide a character reference in support of Lord Ahmed. Once he realised the subject matter, he volunteered information. In brief, he was asked to publish a news piece about the allegations the Complainant levelled against Lord Ahmed. He spoke to the Complainant. After gaining her trust, the Complainant confided in him that she had fabricated the allegations.
103. [L] another prominent Pakistani journalist, corroborates [D]’s evidence. He says that after speaking to several sources he had serious doubts about the credibility of the Complainant. As [D]’s senior he strongly advised him not to publish anything.
104. These two witnesses were not available to Lord Ahmed in the course of the investigation. It was only after [D] was approached to provide a character reference that this evidence was made available to Lord Ahmed. As such, it was not possible to present this evidence to the Commissioner.
105. This evidence casts serious doubt on the credibility of the Complainant and should cause the Commissioner to rethink her conclusions.

Ground 4: The recommended sanction

106. The Commissioner has recommended Lord Ahmed’s expulsion as a sanction for violating the Code of Conduct. This is disproportionate for the following reasons.
107. First, expulsion is reserved for the most extreme circumstances. When the Bill to allow for expulsion of members of the House of Lords was introduced into the House of Lords, Baroness Hayman stated:

“Expulsion is obviously a hugely weighty and serious step. I profoundly hope that with this Bill on the statute book and the Standing Orders in place this provision would simply lie unused and there would never be conduct that would provoke the possibility of the House being asked to agree to expel a Member. However, it would be irresponsible not to have such a provision in place when all of us can envisage circumstances—it might be repeat offences against the Code of Conduct or sentences for criminal offences that were less than nine months or were suspended—where the House would wish at least to have the opportunity to consider expulsion and to decide whether it would be the right course of action.”²⁵
108. Baroness Hayman considered that the power of expulsion was exceptional and reserved for repeated breaches and/or criminal behaviour. This case does not fall in either category. In fact, the police has expressly not pursued criminal charges against Lord Ahmed.

25 Hansard HL debates 24-October 2014 col. 926

109. Second, the investigation was carried out retrospectively. At the time that the alleged offending behaviour occurred, it was not subject to the Code. It would be wholly disproportionate to subject Lord Ahmed to the most extreme punishment for behaviour which was not covered by the Code of Conduct at the time.
110. Third, the sexual relationship between the Complainant and Lord Ahmed was indisputably consensual. There is no Suggest that Lord Ahmed coerced the Complainant into a sexual relationship. The Complainant admits-and the phone records demonstrate-she had feelings for him. It is not a clear-cut case of persistent abuse of power. In this context the alleged sexual assault which allegedly took place at the Sahara Grill was minor.
111. Fourth, the Commissioner has placed insufficient weight on the mitigating features in Lord Ahmed's case. She alleges that the absence of previous findings can not reduce the appropriate sanction for a breach [115;575]. This is inconsistent with the principles of natural justice. Fairness requires that a first time offence be treated more leniently. It was what criminal defendants expect and receive. It is illogical to subject Lord Ahmed to a standard more stringent than those who could face prison, particularly where the standard of proof is not beyond reasonable doubt.
112. The Commissioner does not accept there is a risk of repetition [115;576]. However her reasoning is based solely on her findings with regard to the Complainant. There is no suggestion from her that Lord Ahmed has committed similar breaches in of other similar findings or even complaints suggests a lower risk of repetition.
113. The Commissioner's view of the impact of publication is inconsistent. She quotes from a previous report where she states that publication is "a matter that I can take into account when considering the proportionality of **any** sanction I may impose, as publicity may itself be a very effective catalyst for change in the respondent's behaviour" [117;578] (emphasis added)
114. She then states that publication matters where sanctions are minor, acknowledged and where remedial action is appropriate [117;579]. This is inconsistent with her previous statement that publication is relevant to "any" sanction. It is plainly relevant. The question becomes how much weight to place on it.
115. The Commissioner refuses to take account of the impact of publication of her findings and the sanction on Lord Ahmed's family [117;580]. She claims it will create a hierarchy of treatment between those who have family and those who do not. This is inconsistent with the principles of fairness and proportionality. The Commissioner rightly recognises that the impact on a member's private life is a relevant consideration. If a member has children and a family, they are an essential part of his private life. To take into account the impact on them is to be fair to that member because it recognises his personal circumstances. How much weight is given to that factor will depend on the circumstances but to state that it should be affect her judgement is contrary to principles of fairness and proportionality.
116. The combination of these mitigating features is such that the ultimate sanction can be avoided.

Conclusion

117. For the reasons set out above, this appeal should be allowed.
118. In addition, paragraph 155 of the Code of Conduct provides that the Committee may agree to hear from the appellant. This is a complex case both in terms of facts and the principles of natural justice which apply. The recommended sanction is severe and has never before been applied to a member of the House of Lords. In these circumstances the Committee must hear from Lord Ahmed and his witnesses before making its decision.

Statement of D

I D (date of birth) of (address), President of the Pakistan Press Club North, wish to say as follows:

1. I am a journalist by profession and have been a journalist for over 12 years. I have worked for a number of publications for 12 years, and I am now the President of the Press Club North. The Press Club UK is an organization, which provides social support to all of its members who may be from different press organisations and as such is an umbrella group. I have been part of the Press Club for 11 years, have been Chief Editor of Slick Asians Magazine for 7 years, and am the Editor of Kashmir Eye.
2. I am married and have 3 children.
3. I have been asked to make this statement in relation to Lord Nazir Ahmed (hereafter referred to as 'Lord Ahmed') and my dealings with a woman named Tahira Zaman (hereafter referred to as 'TZ'). I was aware of who Lord Nazir Ahmed was as he has a high profile within the Asian community as well as within the U.K's political establishment. Additionally, he has made rare appearances at the Pakistan Press Club UK's events as a special guest/speaker where my colleagues and I have had a chance to interact with him, as he is a well-known public figure.
4. I am not aware of the precise reason as to the purpose of this statement except that when I was recently approached to give a character reference for Lord Ahmed I realised that it was likely to be in relation to a complaint TZ made against Lord Ahmed in the House of Lords because of what TZ said to me in 2018. I then told Lord Ahmed that I had some information in relation to this and as a result I have been asked to make this statement.
5. I have specifically been asked about any contact I had with TZ and what, if anything, she said about Lord Ahmed to me. In about April 2018, a man called [W]; who was the editor of a newspaper called Asian Lite, approached me. He said that he wanted my assistance as the President of Press Club North to run a story in the Pakistani press. He told me that the story involved Lord Ahmed and he asked for my assistance, given my extensive contacts, to disseminate this story through the Pakistani media. I was interested in what he had to say because I am a journalist and running stories is my job. I, therefore, met up with him at his house in Altrincham in April 2018.
6. At this meeting, he told me the gist of the story, which involved a woman (TZ), who said that Lord Ahmed had sexually assaulted her. I agreed to assist [W] in disseminating the story because it involved a high profile public figure and was, therefore, extremely newsworthy. Whilst I was with him, [W] called the woman in question on the telephone (who was TZ) and passed the

phone for me to speak to her. This was simply an introductory telephone call where TZ introduced herself to me and I then told TZ that I was interested in what she had to say, and reassured her that if anyone had done anything wrong to her that I would be on her side. After completing this short call, I spoke to [W], who said that he would draft the article that would contain the allegations. He further told me that The Sun newspaper had already been lined up to break the story. He also mentioned that he would pass on my contact details to TZ should she wish to speak to me further. TZ did contact me via telephone calls, which was about 2 to 3 times after the first conversation. I had not made any calls to speak to her. I would like to make known the fact that prior to April 2018 I had known of TZ but did not have any form of contact or communications with her. [W] had brought her involvement to my attention when he approached me regarding the article in question.

7. On 10th April 2018, at 11.55 a.m., I received an email from [W], (attached) which contained the draft of the article as it was intended to be published, and which referred to the 'MeToo' movement. He sought my approval of the article in which there was a quote from me as Editor of a newspaper called Kashmir Eye, but before I could do so, as a journalist, I needed to ensure its accuracy and took steps to check it. I made contact with the President of the Pakistan Press Club UK, [L], as well as my local contacts to investigate the matter as well as the owner of the second largest newspaper in Pakistan, The Daily Ausaf.
8. As far as I was concerned, this was responsible journalism and was in preparation to run the story as told to me. However, when I spoke to my sources, all of them quite separately stated that the woman in question, who was making the complaint was a habitual liar and that I should not trust what she says in relation to Lord Ahmed. I was informed by [L] (President of Pakistan Press Club UK at the time) that she had made similar allegations of sexual impropriety against others (including a man called [J]) which had turned out to be false. This was enough to alert me to the fact that what she was saying was not true and that the article as intended to be published would not be accurate.
9. Indeed, [W] told me a couple of days later that 'The Sun newspaper had pulled out of running the story because, as he understood it, they considered the allegations to be false.
10. The President of the Pakistan Press Club UK, [L], advised me that when I next spoke to TZ I should create a friendly atmosphere and come across to her as a friend who was on her side. This would help me in verifying the truth of these allegations and would clarify what steps I should then take in relation to the article. Luckily enough, TZ contacted me via a telephone call at this point and had become comfortable in speaking and sharing information with me. She then admitted in a frank conversation that the allegations she had made which were in the article to be published, namely that she was sexually assaulted and exploited by Lord Ahmed were false. She told me that she had been in a relationship with Lord Ahmed and that as a result, she had another relationship with a young man in Lord Ahmed's house. Lord Ahmed had found out about this relationship and consequently broke off the relationship with her and told her that she was to stop seeing the young man whom she had a relationship with. This infuriated her as she had loved Lord Ahmed and thought he loved her too. She also said that she had seen

Lord Ahmed on Facebook with other women and that this had made her extremely jealous and further infuriated her to the extent that she wanted to get back at Lord Ahmed and destroy his career because of what he had done to her. She said that she was aware that Lord Ahmed was subject to a Code of Conduct and that she had made an allegation of sexual impropriety against him which would effectively destroy him given his apparent standing in the community, particularly the Asian community which would be even more angered by a married man having an extra-marital relationship. She said she was going to use the 'MeToo' movement to get Lord Ahmed because as a result of . that campaign, it was now easier to make these allegations against men and she hoped to gain publicity by calling what she was doing as 'MeTooMyLord'. She said that a number of her friends had, and would be, supporting her in the allegations she had made and would be prepared to make statements against Lord Ahmed. It was very clear to me after what TZ had told me in April 2018 that she had made false allegations against Lord Ahmed of sexual assault and exploitation and that her friends intended to support her in these false allegations so that she could succeed in damaging Lord Ahmed's reputation. She had made these false allegations because she wanted to get her own back against Lord Ahmed for the way in which he had broken off his relationship with her. She thought that she could achieve her motive of destroying Lord Ahmed by making these allegations because of the 'MeToo' movement in which allegations of sexual assault would be more likely believed by women against high profile men.

11. I should make it clear that the reason she confided in me as she did and trusted me with this information was that she and I come from the same area (Azad Kashmir) in Pakistan and I knew her father, who was a family friend and public figure in Rochdale. She completely trusted me and had assumed because of our family connection that I would assist her in her intention to destroy Lord Ahmed's reputation by making what she clearly told me were false allegations of sexual assault against him. I have been asked if I had any contact with TZ in January 2018 either directly or indirectly and, in particular, whether I am aware . of any text messages in January 2018 which might refer to me as '[first name]'. I can confirm that the first time I had any direct form of communication with TZ was in April 2018 in relation to the article that [W] had asked for my assistance on. Any reference to a '[first name]' in January 2018 would not be a reference to me.
12. Whilst I was keen to run a story about a high profile public figure and a man that I had no relationship with or loyalty to, I was not prepared to assist in the promotion of a false story. Having heard what TZ said to me, I again spoke to [L], who was a very experienced crime investigation reporter. When he heard what I said to him and the fact that The Sun had backed off from running the story, he said that he would conduct his own investigations. Once he had done so, he told me not to assist in running the story as it would be libelous and defamatory. When I told [W] he asked me whether I was scared in any way to run the story and I said that I was not. I had no fear of Lord Ahmed and as a professional journalist of many years, I took my job seriously, and had I not discovered that the story was not true I would have run it. It would have been a 'scoop' and naturally, every journalist wants a scoop.
13. I should say that the reason Lord Ahmed asked me for a character reference is not because I have known him in any personal capacity but because I am

aware of the various public and charitable events he has been involved in. At this point, I would also like to clarify a tweet that was brought to my attention dated 24th February 2019 posted by the Pakistan Press Club UK. This tweet was posted by the current President of the Pakistan Press Club UK, Mobeen Chaudhry via his twitter account and is not in any form associated with my twitter account and is not related to me in any way. Following from this, I have no reason whatsoever to say anything in Lord Ahmed's favour or support him in any way. Indeed, I have a greater connection to TZ than I do Lord Ahmed. I was not aware that TZ had actually followed up on what she said to me about the allegations against Lord Ahmed in April 2018. If there has been an investigation arising from those allegations I am not aware of this. If such an investigation relates to allegations of sexual impropriety against Lord Ahmed which occurred in 2017 then I can confirm that TZ said to me that they were false and a means to destroy his reputation.

Statement of Truth

I wish to confirm that the facts and matters contained in this Witness Statement are true.

Dated: 25th June 2020

Signed . . . [D]

Statement of L

I, [L] ([date of birth]) of [address] wish to say as follows:

1. I am a journalist by profession and have worked in journalism for over 26 years. I have previously worked and reported for renowned Pakistani news channels, such as ARY News (4 years) and Dunya TV (3 years). I was the president Of the Pakistan Press Club UK from 2017–2018 and I am currently the elected General Secretary of the Pakistan Press Club UK.
2. I am married and have three children.
3. I have been asked to make this statement in relation to my involvement regarding an unpublished article by a fellow journalist [D] (hereafter referred to as '[D]') and his dealings with a woman named Tahira Zaman (hereafter referred to as 'TZ'). Since I work in a profession where meeting individuals with a high profile is common, I was aware of who Lord Nazir Ahmed was and that he was a prominent figure in the Pakistani Kashmiri Community as well as a political figure. Other than this, as a result of his occasional appearances as a special guest at events hosted by the Pakistan Press Club UK I had the odd chance of interacting with him as he was a well-known public figure.
4. I am not entirely certain as to the exact reason for giving this statement, except that I am providing information I am aware of regarding TZ.
5. I shall begin by saying that I have not had any direct contact with TZ.
6. From 2017 to 2018, I was the President of the Press Club UK. Sometime in April 2018 [D] contacted me by telephone, when he informed me that he had a story and that this story involved Lord Ahmed, a high profile political figure and a woman, TZ. When I heard this story, I thought this was an exclusive item and would sell like 'hot cakes' once it circulated through the

Pakistani media. However, [D] contacted me, as a senior colleague to ask me to verify the authenticity of this story and to do a background check on TZ. I informed him that I would do this and get back to him. .

7. Before I proceed, I would like to give voice to the fact that as a journalist, I am not in a position to disclose my sources as this is privileged information for any journalist and that I have not done so in this statement. I would also like to say that in order for a story to be published in the news, in summary there are nine steps to be followed before a story is considered worthy of being published. One of the key steps is to verify the authenticity of the individual concerned, i.e. how true the story is and the character of the individual bringing it forward.
8. I then proceeded to call my sources and asked them to verify who TZ was, what kind of relationship she had with her relatives, family and what people thought about her etc. Normally, this sort of information is gathered by approaching individuals in their social circle and asking questions about that person. My sources came back to me and informed me that she was estranged from her family, and had made similar false allegations of sexual assault against a man called '[J]' and some others. Upon hearing of this, I became alert to the fact that this story was suspicious. As journalists, we cannot publish a story until we have unquestionable proof as to the validity of the story. Otherwise, our newspaper could be closed down and lawsuits filed subsequently.
9. After hearing what my sources had to say, I contacted [D] and told him what I had discovered and that this story is not as great as it seems and is inaccurate. I told him to verify this further and should TZ contact him, make her come under the impression that he is on her side, develop a friendly atmosphere and confirm the truth about the allegations she is making against Lord Ahmed. This would help him ascertain the truth before proceeding to publish any news. [D] then contacted me again and said that the allegations of sexual impropriety were indeed false and that TZ had said in a frank conversation with him that she was out to take revenge on Lord Ahmed and wanted to damage his reputation. TZ's disclosure of the truth benefited [D]'s position, more so because both [D] and TZ were from the same village in Kashmir and her father had been the Mayor of Rochdale, a public figure himself. When TZ became aware of this, she began to trust [D] and as a result she revealed to him that allegations of sexual impropriety against Lord Ahmed were indeed false. This as a result, assisted [D] to dig out the truth before publishing information that was incorrect and would cause damage to a high profile individual's reputation and would have had repercussions on him as a journalist.
10. [W] also informed me that prior to the revelatory conversation he had with TZ as outlined above, The Sun newspaper, which had been lined up to publish this story had backed away from doing this as well. When I was made aware of this, and how [W] was not pushing to publish this story either, I advised [D] that he should not publish an inaccurate story nor assist in doing so. We did not have authentic proof as to the truth of the allegations. Alongside this, the fact that TZ revealed to [D] the truth of her intentions in a frank conversation and which was backed up by the information provided by my sources proved to us that TZ's allegations were false. Although I did not have a relationship with Lord Ahmed in a personal capacity, however to assist a fellow journalist in good faith the information set out above was

enough for me to ask [D] not to act further, as this would not be responsible journalism.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts and matters stated in this witness statement are true to the best of my knowledge.

Dated: 29/6/2020

Signed: [L]

RE: COMPLAINT AGAINST LORD NAZIR AHMED

Exhibit

This is the exhibit referred to in the statement of D DATED 25 JUNE 2020

From: [W] <email address>

Date: Tue, Apr 10, 2018 at 11:55 AM

Subject: Please see the Story 1

To: [D] <email address>

Dear

Congrats. I saw the images of the protest

Excellent and quite impressive.

So you are on a rebel mood.

This will be the first story to alert the public.

Ideal to be released on Friday

The rest will follow. Sunday Times will carry it on a big way

Then, you will be busy

I will update

Please call when you are free

Is it possible to meet you in the evening?

[W]

Pakistani women in London plan action against sexual exploitation

A group of Kashmiri women in London launched a Hollywood style #MeToo protest campaign against politicians and faith healers who are exploiting vulnerable women in the Pakistani community.

In the latest scandal, a Kashmiri-origin woman accused a senior member of Britain's House of Lords of exploiting her sexually by promising to find solution

for grievance against a faith healer. She already filed a complaint against the faith-healer and the powerful Lord with the police and authorities.

The victim already received a threatening mail from a close aide of the Lord for approaching the Police, Media and Lords Standards Committee seeking justice. She forwarded that letter to the police for taking action.

The latest campaign is called #MeTooMyLord and will be promoted in association with other women's organisations like Southall Sisters.

[Z], former Chief Prosecutor of Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the most respected legal professional from the British-Asian community, is providing legal advice to the latest victim of the sex scandal which will rock the British Parliament in the coming days.

[Z] lauded the decision of the young victim to shed inhibitions to come in public to expose a powerful person in the community.

"I have seen an email sent to the complaint which whilst full of legal threats doesn't expressly deny her allegations," said [Z]. "I can see how it could be perceived as intimidating her into silence. Bravely she refuses to be silenced."

The victim in a statement said she won't be cowed by threats and pressures. The victim, a Kashmiri-origin single mother, was also accusing the Lord of sharing the personal details of women to a staff member and a close friend in Pakistan.

"The community would ostracise me for bringing negative attention and often the woman always gets the blame in the sexual cases and are treated as the perpetrator," the victim said in her statement. "But I am not afraid. I don't want any more young women falling preys to the honey pots of faith healers and fraud Lords. I am not afraid and I want justice."

[D], former president of Pakistani Press Council UK (PPCUK) and the editor of London-based Kashmir Eye, said his newspaper will support the victims to get justice.

[D] also congratulated the victim for come in public to expose a powerful politician.

"Some people in our community are using women as used tissues: That era is over. The victim in this case is seeking justice and I will support, She is a beacon of hope for many people in the community.

"Politicians and community leaders are exploiting vulnerable sections in the Pakistani society to fulfil their personal agenda," [D] said in a statement. "They are preaching high and practicing very low. They are tarnishing the rich heritage of our culture. By associating themselves with sex rackets, power lobbies and forums of dubious characters, our politicians and community leaders are undermining the credibility of the community.

"Instead of addressing the basic issues of education, jobs, housing, British Asian politicians are diverting attention to age-old subcontinental politics. The new generation is suffering because of the lack of attention to their needs."

[D] said the latest scandal will be a big blow to the community's image in Britain.

"This is the first time a highly popular public figure was accused of exploiting a vulnerable girl for sex," said [D]. "The country was rocked sex scams in which

unskilled night economy workers like taxi drivers and take away staff were accused of exploiting women and under aged girls for sex. The latest allegation literally shocked me.”

“Sexual exploitation is more about the abuse of power and control than anything else,” [Z], one of the senior most legal professionals from the community, told Kashmir Eye.

“I have prosecuted both high profile figures with significant power; and people who have no profile outside their community. They come in all shapes, sizes, ethnicity, race and religion. The only thing they have in common is that they are invariably men. “It takes great courage for a victim to speak up and I would hope that the relevant authorities including in Parliament would sit up and listen. Nobody is above the law.

“As far as alleged perpetrators from within the South Asian communities, they have often offended under the radar but in plain sight of others. It’s a duty for all of us to share what we know. We need to protect the most vulnerable in society and not be bystanders to abuse.”

[P] ,[Job title], Sleek Asian Ltd [phone number]

Email: [email address], Web: www.sleekasian.com

APPENDIX 1: COMPLAINANT'S RESPONSE TO LORD AHMED'S APPEAL

To begin, based on what I have read which was quite difficult and was a struggle: Lord Ahmed is simply repeating himself, and his appeal is not based on anything new.

I am in pain, and cannot respond to every single point. However please do let me know if there is a specific point or points that you would like for me to address, and I will do so.

Lord Ahmed is stating I am being 'malicious', but also that Commissioner Lucy is also acting with "malice". What does Commissioner Lucy stand to gain by going against her fellow peer, unless she is standing for the truth? Lord Ahmed is not capable of being dishonourable purely because he said so? I have only spoken the truth, even where the evidence would be to my detriment. I have not attempted to sugar coat anything.

I do not understand why I should be considering the impact of his family if they discover the truth – what about my family, and my life. What makes his life more valuable than mine? Everyone should know the truth about him. If he has done this to me, without remorse then he has done this before, and he will do it again. Mitigating circumstances and family does not excuse how Lord Ahmed conducted himself and how he should have been. He did not think of his family when taking advantage of me and abusing his power. It is not good enough reason to say, his family will be upset if he is expelled. In that case, all criminal activities should be ignored because of the impact on the criminal's family.

The impact Lord Ahmed has had on me, is much worse than what he claims would be on him, should this come out. My life has never been the same and I will never be the same again. I have had death threats. My son was forced to drop out of university due to the mental trauma he had, knowing what happened to his mother. To this day, he blames himself for not protecting me from a predator. He deserves to be ostracised and exposed for what he is, a predator.

Lord Ahmed still has not responded to questions raised by Commissioner Lucy during her investigation which led to her strong sanction.

Lord Ahmed was given all relevant evidence—he admits there is evidence in his appeal but claims there was no logic to her decision. This is contradictory. His appeal is all over the place, as are the statement of truths provided by his friends. On the one hand, they claim not to know him and yet feel they are able to provide some kind of character reference. Why would you approach an acquaintance or stranger who does not know you as referee? Also it seems a bit odd to state they do not know one another, when they openly plaster their social gathering events.

It appears they have forgotten that Lord Ahmed has had two years to respond.... he has had ample opportunity and time, given to respond by Commissioner Lucy. This argument is not applicable. It is an example of how **Lord Ahmed manipulates facts and information.**

Commissioner Lucy has acted fairly—I have not made an issue on the fact it took a second complaint to be heard. Nor did I complain on the time it took for this investigation to conclude, nor did I complain on Commissioner Lucy not upholding all my complaints. Any malice on her part against Lord Ahmed, would

have led to all the complaints being upheld, which I would have preferred but I recognise the difficulty she faced in being able to do so. I feel she has done a brilliant job, and as said earlier, has been fair.

Lord Ahmed is making a strong allegation on Commissioner Lucy, and places her at disrepute in everything she has ever done. Lord Ahmed is simply attempting to divert everyone's attention with case laws that do not apply to the House of Lords. Ultimately, he is still refusing to respond to any of Commissioner Lucy's questions and response to the discrepancies in what he stated during the investigation, and acknowledge his refusal to cooperate with an investigation. **This appeal was yet another opportunity to respond....and yet he still refuses, and continues to dance around the issue.**

The evidence speaks for itself. He failed to provide any information requested by Commissioner Lucy, and a timeline of his events, mobile phone, letters etc. Those would have been enough to demonstrate his 'innocence'.

Using his own example of Sahara Grill booking—this evidence could easily have vindicated Lord Ahmed. He was expecting that because he is a lord, he is not answerable and should not be questioned. Here is another example of where he is smearing Commissioner Lucy. She did not succumb to his charms so he is making false allegations against her. This could have helped his case but it worked in my favour because I was being honest.

I am shocked that Lord Ahmed is trying to divert attention away from his behaviour and failures to respond. He is accountable for his own actions. The DPS is currently investigating the way Met Police carried out their investigation. You are welcome to read the contents of the JR. **The JR taught me that this is separate to a Police complaint, and the judge did state I needed to seek other means to get my complaints heard, as he stated I had merits to my case, and I could seek compensation (which led to me contacting DPS). Thus the way Lord Ahmed attempts to state my JR was a 'failure' is incorrect.** Lord Ahmed seems to have ignored this part of the JR ruling.

Any reference to the police made by Lord Ahmed should be ignored because I can provide evidence for how the statement made by the investigating officer in charge of the case was incorrect or false. You are welcome to have a read of the JR paperwork I submitted to Commissioner Lucy, and additional evidences I sent to DPS. I feel I should state that **this is not related to Lord Ahmed's conduct for this investigation. He needs to focus on his own responses and this investigation and nothing else.**

As mentioned above, this investigation is not about credibility but about how he conducted himself, and failing to respond to this. I did not want to make this about the Police, as that is separate to the House of Lords and you have your own procedures. He seems to have forgotten, that I do not work for the House of Lords and he does, so you are not investigating my behaviour, under the code of conduct.

Lord Ahmed appears to have issues with Sam Evans too, who would have been an appropriate person to be involved due to her expertise. It seems shocking that he has an issue with this. He is now stating that Commissioner Lucy and Sam Evans are biased and unfair. You would seek an expert who is experienced to be part of the investigation, who acts independently. You would not have someone who has little experience to be involved. He is stating someone random such as a 'benefit specialist' should have been appointed instead of Sam Evans?

Some other points that I feel need addressing:

- Has Lord Ahmed made clear that he opposed the changes to code of conduct in the two years of this investigation? I do not believe an innocent man would have issues with a positive change to the code of conduct. A person with nothing to hide would not care what code of conduct is being applied if he knows he has done nothing wrong.
- **“Baddua” means ‘curse you’ or ‘damn you’ depending on context said, and definitely does not mean ill will. Here is example of clear cut lying, and an attempt to mislead others.**
- Ms Butt was known to Lord Ahmed for years, and the two were family friends. It was her that introduced me to him. She simply spoke the truth over lying for Lord Ahmed. **He appears to have omitted this.** Her loyalties would have lied with him. Lord Ahmed knew I was vulnerable from the onset and was targeted for this reason.
- Lord Ahmed continues to claim I wanted to remain anonymous – nothing about me is seeking anonymity, this is self evident. **Commissioner Lucy has addressed this in her investigation.** If I had changed my mind, I would have stated this, and makes no sense why I would suddenly seek anonymity when I am writing to several people for help....including media. He knew I reported to the police, MP, Southall Black Sisters and to friends such as Ms Butt. **Similarly I was sharing all this to my therapist, and GP, and about the events taking place in my life such as meeting with Lord Ahmed and later on, the spiking of the tea, and how this memory unravelled. If Lord Ahmed wants to seek confirmation of the conversations which took place in relation to the ongoing events in my life, I can get this for you.**
- Also for point 89: We have the evidence from text messages retrieved by Dr Fone app that we agreed to meet. We also have the evidences from credible witnesses who saw the inappropriate messages, which appears to be ignored by him. Unlike Lord Ahmed, who has changed his story according to evidence presented to him, to cover his tracks, I have been consistent in what I have said, and this has not changed. I want to remain as truthful as possible as I feel this will shine through. Anything I have said to you, I have said to several people and do not change.
- **Lord Ahmed is an experienced predator and knows that text messages can be retrieved but whatsapp messages once deleted cannot – I did not know this and learned this through this experience. Lord Ahmed’s preferred message was to reply on whatsapp. (The judge in JR knew this too, as it came out in discussion).**
- Also this is not a question of whether I was in love or not with Lord Ahmed, but on Lord Ahmed’s conduct and mistreatment, abusing a victim. He abuses his power, and that is what is important to recognise. I was vulnerable and whether I fell into the trap of being coerced or induced into believing he loved me, is separate but explains why I allowed the mistreatment, and this is what is questionable: If I had

been in the right state of mind, I would not have allowed myself to be used... sexually abused. He targeted me and used me because he knew I was not well, and would not realise what is going on – he was correct, as I did not know what was happening or taking place. For arguments sake, I am in “love”...does that mean it is not possible he sexually abused me or took advantage of me? **This argument is quite concerning for a Lord or QC to make.** It does not matter what I did or my ‘supposed ill intentions’ were... he was in the wrong. But to clarify—I **had no bad intentions**, and when I began to realise what he did through therapy i.e. sexually took advantage of a vulnerable woman. It was then I began to curse him and stated that I cursed him in Urdu that is “badua”. This way of speaking, is something I have inherited from my cultural background. Feel free to ask any one from Asian background who speaks Urdu, Hindi or Punjabi etc. Both Lord Ahmed and QC Imran Khan are being naughty to knowingly mislead this word, given the context it was said. No one in our heritage says I have ill-will for you. It just is not said and is weird for us to say it in our culture, whereas cursing someone is said when a person is mistreated is quite common.

- Why does Commissioner Lucy want to destroy Lord Ahmed? Why did she seek to destroy him afterwards, and not the first time I made the complaint – surely Commissioner Lucy would have jumped at the opportunity then. His arguments are all over the place. And she has not upheld every complaint I made. I should be the one claiming that she has been biased against me, and supported her fellow colleague, and only upholding what she could not get away with ignoring. However, she gained my utmost respect for being fair, and honest. That is all I ever wanted. She has been fair, thorough and balanced. **I now feel she is remarkable woman, and deserving of being recognised by the Honours list.**
- I do not doubt that Lord Ahmed has turned to his friends who ‘scratch each others’ back’ for references, and I am keen to see the evidence they bring where I supposedly fabricated the evidence.
- **It is illogical that I would turn to media and supposedly confess to them that I am fabricating to get back at them. Why would I do this to strangers, no less Lord Ahmed’s friends?? How bizarre!**
- Why would I confess this to a Pakistani person when I have stated how women are mistreated and blamed by my community? Where is the evidence other than the word of disgruntled journalist who is not only a friend to Lord Ahmed, by his own admission but also someone offended that I chose to go to a reputable media organisation such as BBC Newsnight instead of them. I contacted and emailed several media outlets, and chose someone highly regarded. It seems odd that I would confess this to Lord’s friend....! The journalist, [D] has omitted that as soon as BBC Newsnight wrote to Lord Ahmed for his side of the story, that he was ordered or sent by Lord Ahmed, to visit my father at his home in Rochdale. He then asked my father to sit in the car with him, and informed him that BBC are going to release documentary about what happened to me, and that he should be forcing his daughter to stop. He tried to intimidate my father by stating, his daughter is bringing shame to his family and to the local community. [D] also reminded my

father that he is a public figure and it would have grave consequences on his position. My father had no idea I had contacted media before [D] unexpectedly and suddenly visited and spoke to him. My father did call me up, and reprimanded me, and appeared scared by [D] and Lord Ahmed. My father told me not to go ahead with the documentary. While I recognise [D] for this reason, I have no idea who this other journalist, [L] is – he clearly is lying when he says I have always been estranged from my family before this documentary. My family have always come back and forth, as we were not estranged. I have helped organised my siblings' weddings before (we are four brothers and four sisters). My sisters would not have helped me breakdown the events in the early stages before the documentary and its airing.

- Also given the media attention that arose following the Newsnight coverage, would it not have been in the Pakistani journalists' interests to then do their own piece based on their "evidence".
- Furthermore, they felt they knew one another well enough, so that they could provide a written character reference for Lord Ahmed...but did not feel it was pertinent to let their esteemed friend know of a woman 'seeking retribution' by "fabricating a story".
- Even with this said, I have mentioned above that [D] did know the truth but was supporting Lord Ahmed as they know each other well, and he tried to scare my father to make Lord Ahmed happy.
- This new "evidence" is quite questionable at best, and quite concerning, and demonstrates what Lord Ahmed is willing to do, to cover his tracks.
- No one asked for a character reference. He simply needed to answer questions; cooperate in an investigation; and be honest. Would Lord Ahmed, like for me to provide character references too? This is possible. Please let me know, and I will provide promptly. Again, this is not a credibility competition.
- Lord Ahmed knows many people in high positions, including these journalists, and as evident by the statement, they support each other by attending events they organise. Given how Asian – Pakistani women are blamed, it would be odd for me to make something up, and go to BBC Newsnight, and place my life at risk. I have received death threats simply by speaking up. You have my impact statement.
- There is NO media quote or statement to be found ANYWHERE that can be linked to me stating: "METOOMYLORD". BBC Newsnight along with other more well known papers would have picked up on this. He is definitely not "MYLORD". I believe in God, he is My Lord. Also he needs to elaborate on what he means by "number of my friends". I only mentioned two people; one was the mutual friend, Ms Butt. Another, B was my friend's younger sister. My actual friend has not even made a statement! B was an acquaintance at the time, who only knew bits of my life at the time.
- There are many holes in these new statements given – and the fact of the matter is that both journalists are lying for their friend. I would like to repeat, why would I go to men I do not even know to make a supposed confession. My opinion of Pakistani men is low, after Lord

Ahmed's treatment of me. I do not trust Pakistani men due to his treatment. It seems ridiculous to go to a media outlet and state I am making it up. **Lord Ahmed and his goons, need to come up with something logical and plausible, if they are to lie!**

- I was in tears with anyone I spoke to, and this can be verified by Commissioner Lucy, and can be seen in Police transcript interviews. I have been in therapy for years. The likes of these journalists and Lord Ahmed are why sexually abused victims cannot speak up. We are vilified and condemned, as though we are to blame, and lied against. **I write emails everywhere, so where is the written evidence from my email.** Anyone that knows me, including my work colleagues can confirm my character, and would do so honestly.
- These witnesses could have spoken up during the investigation and it is implausible they did not know and could not be contacted before.
- They write and report on Pakistani news, and they know Lord Ahmed well. They all made references to BBC Newsnight report, and he is a high profile person. Either they are very bad at their jobs, and do not know when it is a high profile case, that sells like "hot cakes", nor have they heard about BBC Newsnight or they are lying because that's what they do for one another. Why did they not come forward sooner - their reasoning is illogical and contradictory.
- Both [D] and [L] have written lies— false statements. There is no other way of stating this. They are lying, openly and knowingly.

The 27 pages of the appeal document is simply Lord Ahmed repeating the same arguments which could have been done in a couple of pages. Yet again he is seeking to cause confusion and delay, and to further exaggerate the grounds for his appeal, which can be summarised as below, and I have my thoughts underneath each ground:

Lord Ahmed appeals on the following grounds:

- (a) Ground 1 – there were procedural irregularities during the investigation;

He is saying Commissioner Lucy has not followed the correct procedure which I disagree with. Committee would be the best judge of this.

- (b) Ground 2 – the Commissioner's findings are flawed and not based on evidence;

The report is quite detailed and full of evidence. This statement is untrue and baseless.

- (c) Ground 3 – fresh evidence casts doubt on the credibility of the Complainant; and

Commissioner Lucy's decision was based on evidence because being a Lord does not mean one cannot be abusive. He is not above the Code of Conduct nor the law. Furthermore, there is no "fresh evidence". He has simply rehashed his arguments again.

As it is, while Lord Ahmed is from the House of Lords, I work for Citizen Advice and have been for ten years. I am known for my integrity

and have made a real difference to people's lives, and have not needed to be flamboyant in sharing this. Similar to Lord Ahmed, I could have references provided from people that know me too.

Also, if looking at the investigation, and how Lord Ahmed has responded, he has proven that he lacks credibility. This investigation is about his conduct and behaviour, not a battle of credibility. Furthermore, length of anyone's employment has no bearing on this, and being a lord for 22 years has no meaning.

(d) Ground 4 – the recommended sanction is disproportionate.

If he claims he has done wrong, then there is no need for sanction. He knows he has done wrong, and wants a light slap on his wrist; however what he has done, and done so without remorse is criminal and unforgivable. He is an open embarrassment to the House of Lords. Commissioner Lucy has looked at the code of conduct and used this and his conduct as a basis to decide the sanction. Given how he has lied, and failed to abide by the code of conduct, and refuses to accept his reprehensible behaviour throughout the investigation, the sanction is proportionate.

He has not acted in an honourable manner from the onset, nor with how he treated me. He represents what the House of Lords stands for, and based on this, he should be expelled. The sanction cannot be anything less than expulsion.

As you can imagine, my feelings are raw, and I am quite distressed by this. I have had to contact crisis helpline, my work, my health and everything has been impacted a great deal. My life is not the same anymore. I need this to be resolved to help me move on. I am at breaking point.

Yours Sincerely

Tahira

APPENDIX 2: LORD AHMED'S RESPONSE TO COMPLAINANT'S RESPONSE

1. The complainant—TZ—has provided a response to my Grounds of Appeal. This is a response to that document.
2. The document further exposes and lays bare the fact that the complainant is-not a credible witness and not capable of belief. Her response is telling in a number of key respects.
3. TZ asserts that [D] and [L] are 'lying, openly and knowingly'. Despite this TZ has not specifically denied the evidence presented by them and, in fact, has presented material which supports what [D] has said.
4. Whilst questioning why she would have confessed to a 'Pakistani person' TZ goes on to state that he ([D]) was a 'disgruntled journalist someone offended that I chose to go to a reputable media organisation such as BBC Newsnight instead of them. I contacted and emailed several media outlets, and chose someone highly regarded'.
5. This is extremely telling in a number of respects. Firstly, it shows that, by her own admission, TZ did approach a number of media outlets in order to disseminate her story about me, in essence seeking to 'sell her story' to the media.
6. Secondly, the fact that she 'chose' to go elsewhere and which led to [D] being 'disgruntled' means that she did, in fact, approach him. Whilst she now says that it was she that chose to go elsewhere, [D] states that it was her false account of what I did that led to him not pursuing the story. Strikingly, TZ does not deny that an email was sent by [W] and that [D] was approached with the aim of publishing the article. She does not deny that The Sun newspaper was approached and decided not to run with the article. Critically, she does not deny that there were conversations between her and [D]. By stating that [D] visited her father at his home in Rochdale after BBC Newsnight contacted me she has provided confirmation of what [D] has said in his statement that he knew her father because the families came from the same village.
7. She does not deny that [D] did not pursue the publication of the article. As TZ accepts in her response that the article that she wanted to have published would have sold like 'hot cakes', she clearly approached [D] for this purpose. Given the above, the Committee can now accept that TZ did approach [D] with a story about me and wanted it published as [D] and [L] state in their witness statements. There is, therefore, support for what they say and that they are, therefore, credible witnesses of truth.
8. As I have always maintained TZ is not a credible witness of truth and her statement that 'it would be odd for me to make something up' is odd in itself. Why riot say, as might be expected of a witness of truth, that she did not approach [D] to publish a story about me; that the article that [W] sent to [D] was a fabrication; that she did not have a conversation with [D] as he asserts in his statement. Indeed; her statement that 'there is NO media quote or statement to be found ANYWHERE that can be linked to me stating: "METOOMYLORD"' is again an odd statement to make. It is not a denial in that she says that she never expressed such a phrase but an assertion that

nothing would be found with this phrase which could be **linked to her**. This shows TZ's true character and ability and willingness to distort the truth to her advantage. TZ needs to be asked whether she was involved in any manner at all with the email that was sent to [D] by [W]. She needs to provide all her emails that she says that she sent to media outlets. It is highly unsatisfactory, indeed unfair, that I cannot question TZ as to her assertions in this process. I ask that she is called to the Committee hearing and that I and/or my legal representatives are permitted to question her and, in the meantime, she is asked to provide the emails as stated above.

9. TZ confirms what I have said all along that she was in love with me because she states 'Also this is not a question of whether I was in love or not with Lord Ahmed . . .'. Had the Commissioner permitted me to question TZ during the investigation, or investigated the matter properly, this would have been clearly established. It would have supported my assertion that her false allegations against me arose from my breaking off the relationship with her and causing her to act as she did. Her admission now that she was in love with me is critical to the case and completely explains how she behaved and why. The Committee now has this admission and must weigh it in favour of my appeal.
10. TZ asserts that [L] 'is lying when he says I have always been estranged from my family before this documentary. My family have always come back and forth, as we were not estranged. I have helped organised [sic] my siblings' weddings before (we are four brothers and four sisters).' Either TZ is lying now or she has lied previously when in a letter to the police dated 22 September 2019 she said: *I would like to make you aware of the impact all this has had on me. My physical and mental health has suffered. **My family have turned against me.** They feel their reputation has been destroyed. **I can no longer attend family gatherings as I am not welcomed. I can't even attend my own brother's wedding** and it was made clear to me that I was not allowed to show my face.*" (Emphasis added). TZ appears to be able to lie at will and with ease and, as with all those who lie, cannot keep up with what lies they have told and when.
11. TZ states that she has received 'death threats simply by speaking up'. I would ask that TZ produce evidence of those death threats and all reports she made to the police in this regard.
12. TZ asks that you consider the Judicial Review Bundle and states that my assertion that her JR was a failure is incorrect. As is crystal clear TZ was refused permission to judicially review. It was clearly and self-evidently a 'failure'. Had this material/information not been placed before the Commissioner by me, the investigation could have been misled, as could this Committee. TZ's application for judicial review_ was refused_ on the_ merits. TZ's assertion that it had merits is, therefore, patently false. The Committee will be aware that I repeatedly requested that the Commissioner consider this material carefully. She failed to do so. Given that TZ refers to it in her response I would urge the Committe to consider the material especially the approach of the police to TZ' s complaints of rape and sexual assault. [The officer who dealt with Ms Zamman's allegations] on 9th November 2018 stated that there were "No witness or CCTV to corroborate what happened. I asked her if I could go through the details of the letter with her and she declined". [The officer who dealt with Ms Zamman's allegations] in November 2018 in a summary of the complainant stated: "Ms Zaman has

made several allegations to police either written or on video about a number of men who she believes have abused and exploited her either financially or sexually”. Each of her separate allegations contribute to one another and become relevant when considering her consistency and integrity. There are number of evidential difficulties in all of the allegations she has made. An evidential point which would cause any jury significant difficulty will centre around the timing of her reports being made and a pattern of reporting to various organisations, which appear to display an escalation of gravity in her allegations when she is disappointed with the outcome of her complaints”.

13. TZ’s attitude above is reflected in her approach to the Commissioner whom she criticised for not taking up her original complaint but now, having determined the complaint in her favour, the Commissioner can do no wrong. If TZ does not get her way, she resorts to criticism and allegations. She wanted to pursue her relationship with me because she loved me but when I broke off the relationship, she resorted to the tactic described above: criticism and allegations against me. It is clear that no-one is immune to this tactic as TZ makes unfounded allegations and assertions on a regular basis and continues that in her response by alleging serious misconduct, if not criminal activity, on the part of a police officer. TZ states that ‘I can provide evidence for how the statement made by the investigating officer in charge of the case was incorrect or false’. This is a highly serious allegation without any foundation whatsoever. This is clear indication that TZ is prepared to make, and has made against me and others, false allegations without any basis in fact. She simply cannot be accepted as a credible witness of truth. Indeed, TZ’s family have been themselves involved in dishonest activity. The Mail Online reported that TZ’s brother was involved in a massive fraud. Please see attached article. TZ states that her son was forced to drop out of University due to the mental trauma he had knowing what happened to his mother. One might speculate whether, in fact, it was due to this case.
14. TZ’s response provides even more material to show that she is incapable of belief and that she cannot be relied upon as a witness of truth and, therefore, my appeal should be allowed.
15. I ask that the Committee, on the basis of fairness and natural justice, call TZ and that I or my legal representative be permitted to ask her questions about her complaint and that, in the meantime, she is asked to provide the material set out above.

Lord Ahmed

14th July 2020

Labour mayor's son ordered to pay £240,000 after bootlegging website and diverting t... Page 1 of 33

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Like 15.0M](#)

Tuesday, Jul 14th 2020 12PM 20°C 3PM 21°C 5-Day Forecast

MailOnline

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [U.S.](#) | [Sport](#) | [TV&Showbiz](#) | [Australia](#) | [Femail](#) | [Health](#) | [Science](#) | [Money](#) | [Video](#) | [Travel](#) | [DailyMailTV](#) | [Discounts](#)

[Latest Headlines](#) | [Coronavirus](#) | [Royal Family](#) | [George Floyd](#) | [Boris Johnson](#) | [World News](#) | [Arts](#) | [Headlines](#) | [France](#) | [Motors](#) | [Wires](#)

[Login](#)

Ad

Educate the kids at home with WWF Amazing Planet
 Enjoy animated augmented reality cards and explore the world in 3D with our AR map
[SUBSCRIBE NOW](#)

Labour mayor's son who set up rogue websites mimicking a multi-million pound global translation firm to siphon off its customers is ordered to pay £240,000 in damages

- EXCLUSIVE: Rogue company set up to mimic government's translator provider
- Language Empire Ltd siphoned off business by diverting web traffic to bogus site
- Translator and interpreter firms provide crucial service for NHS and police force
- Judge agreed rogue site Language Empire had raked in thousands of pounds
- Disgruntled former employees also took to Facebook demanding to be paid
- Judge ruled brothers Yasar Zaman was to pay a landmark £240,000 damages

By ROB ARDEHALI FOR MAILONLINE
 PUBLISHED: 09:58, 25 October 2018 | UPDATED: 15:24, 26 October 2018

930 shares 5 View comments

The son of a Labour mayor who won lucrative NHS and police contracts by mimicking a global translator firm's website with his own rogue versions to siphon off its customers has been ordered to pay £240,000 in a landmark case.

Language Empire Ltd, run by Yasar Zaman, son of Labour councillor Mohammed Zaman, was ordered to pay damages after a judge ruled his websites were 'specifically designed' to divert traffic away from top translator firm The Big Word.

The Big Word, which has a global turnover of around £80 million, sends accredited interpreters and translators to court cases, hospitals and interviews, providing a crucial frontline service.

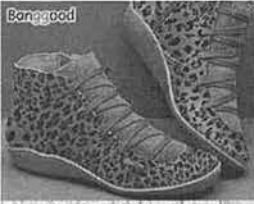


Yasar Zaman
 CEO at Empire Group UK
 Wford, United Kingdom | Translation and Localization

Current: Empire Group UK Ltd, Translation Empire Ltd, Language Empire Ltd
 Education: Balgobran Technology College

500+ connections

Language Empire Ltd, run by Yasar Zaman (pictured), son of Labour councillor Mohammed Zaman, was ordered to pay damages after a judge ruled his websites were 'specifically designed' to divert traffic away from leading translator firm The Big Word




Like Daily Mail Follow Daily Mail
 Follow @DailyMail Follow Daily Mail
 Follow @dailymailuk Follow Daily Mail

DON'T MISS

► 'Heartbroken' Gemma Collins posts break-up text she sent beau Arg after he branded her a 'hippo', 'pig' and 'fat fuck' in an row over another woman

► Kerry Katona leaves her hotel with her family and Katie Price's daughter Princess after revealing she's looking after her while Harvey remains in hospital

► 'I want another baby with my ex': Katie Waissel shows off her 2nd weight loss in workout gear as she reveals family plans

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6310933/Businessman-ordered-pay-240-00... 14/07/2020

Labour mayor's son ordered to pay £240,000 after bootlegging website and diverting t... Page 2 of 33

BIG WORD TRANSLATION

Get a Free no obligation quote

HOME ABOUT US SERVICES QUICK ENQUIRY

QUICK ENQUIRY
Solutions to Keep you One Step Ahead

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
Email: _____ Phone Number: _____
Message: _____

© 2014 Big Word Translation. All rights reserved. Designed by Logikaza

Bogus: Language Empire used the bogus site including the copyrighted 'big word' in their homepage as well as offering free, no obligation quotes and a enquiry page that was funnelled to Zaman and converted into sales - with a rough 75% conversion rate based on The Big Word

But for 34 months, Language Empire, worth £450,000 according to Companies House documents, was able to pass itself off as the larger firm and win contracts with civil service departments and blue-chip companies, raking in thousands.

In a landmark ruling at London's Intellectual Property Enterprise Court, the Rochdale-based business was ordered to pay £142,000 in damages plus £98,000 costs.

The court heard Zaman, 34, was able to pull off the scam by purchasing similar domain names to that of the established company - bigwordtranslation.co.uk and thebigwordtranslation.co.uk - using his debit card.

From there they were developed into two bootleg websites intended to capture potential customers searching The Big Word into a search engine.

Judge Clarke agreed Zaman had made 'significant sales' by converting enquiries to their website into contracts.

The court heard once the rogue websites were taken down, after being live for two years and ten months, The Big Word saw an instant 50% rise in its traffic.

Meanwhile, a Facebook group set up by disgruntled Language Empire Ltd translators was set up called: 'Language Empire Does Not Pay Us'.

The group, which is still active, contains 106 people many of whom claimed to



Yasar Zaman is the son of Labour councillor and mayor for Milkstone and Deepdish

Love Island's Lucie Donlan flashes her abs in a lemon sports bra as she leaves Luke Mabbott's home after going public with their romance

EXCLUSIVE Katie Price's son Harvey, 18, 'had a comfortable night' in ICU and remains stable after undergoing tests amid hospitalisation

From love in Ibiza to cheeky antics in Mumbai, here's how to make this summer one you'll never forget - WITHOUT leaving the house! AD FEATURE

Amanda Holden commands attention as she puts on an eye-popping display in a stylish cream short suit while leaving Heart FM

Jessica Alves poses nearly NAKED in racy Instagram photo after ditching her Human Ken Doll moniker and detailing plans to become a mother

She is SO F---ING AMBITIOUS! Johnny Depp claims Amber Heard 'acquired him for fame' but 'hammered him' for 'being a sad old man' in explosive texts

Nicole Appleton is every inch the devoted mother as she steps out with baby daughter Skipper and boyfriend Stephen Haines

Itching to get away? So are we - and we've found the perfect place for some post-lockdown fun in the sun... AD FEATURE

If your poor posture is causing you back pain, try this simple fix.

Kate Garraway reveals she's FINALLY going to visit her husband Derek Draper for the first time in four months as he recovers from COVID-19

Katie Price's ex Kieran Hayler shares sweet tribute to his former step-son Harvey with an emoji of his favourite animal... as he remains 'stable' in ICU

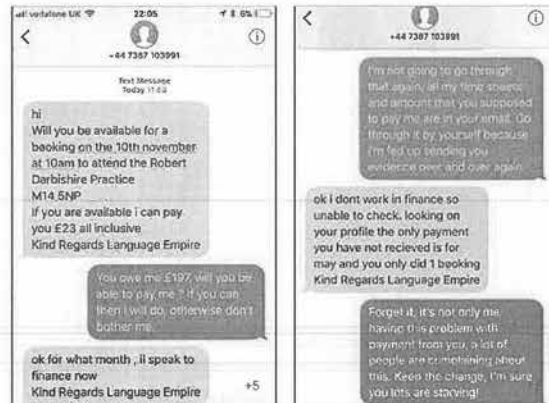
Love Island's Francesca Allen displays her incredible physique in a tiny black bikini as she hits the shores in Ibiza

Labour mayor's son ordered to pay £240,000 after bootlegging website and diverting t... Page 3 of 33

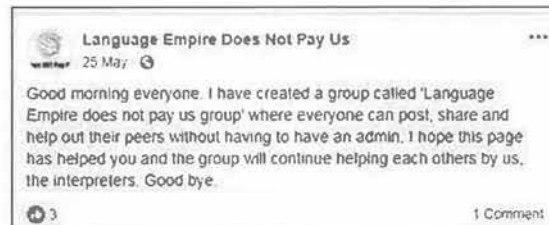
have provided interpreter and translator services and were not paid for their work.

Screengrabs from conversations appear to show Language Empire arranging for translator work only to be rebuffed by an employee owed money.

The Big Word, the operation name for firm Linkup Mitaka, have stringent testing for translators including a thorough written, verbal and comprehension test, as well as being CRB vetted.



Screengrabs from conversations appear to show Language Empire arranging for translator work only to be rebuffed by an employee owed money



Meanwhile, a Facebook group set up by disgruntled Language Empire Ltd translators was set up called: 'Language Empire Does Not Pay Us'. The group, which is still active, contains 106 people many of whom claimed to have provided interpreter and translator services and were not paid for their work.

The Facebook page for Language Empire, however, suggests some of the translators were students who did not undergo rigorous testing.

The Big Word - which lists on its website several top 100 global brands, government departments, UK police forces and NHS trusts as clients - was awarded double the damages demanded after judge ruled Yasir to be an 'extremely poor witnesses'.

The impostor site, which had a logo reading 'The Big Word Translation', went live in 2014 and had content reading: 'Welcome to The Big Word Translation, the right place for professional translation services of the highest standard.'

'Delivering translations in over 400 different languages and offering a 24 hour service has made us one of the UK's most popular providers of translation services'.

The Love Island star, 24, flaunted her physique as she slipped into a skimpy black bikini which boasted gold chain detailing

Lena Dunham puts on a sultry display as she poses topless in gold trousers while spending time at home. Hot stuff

'Our priorities have changed': Emma Bunton reflects on her experience of juggling motherhood and Spice Girls tours. Moved on

'Just worried there won't be enough for the others!' Piers Morgan poses with a huge plate of paella as he unwinds in St Tropez after jetting out of the UK

Billie Faiers flaunts her sensational frame in a black bikini as she offers sneak peek at new in TheStyle range

Geordie Shore's Holly Hagan wows in purple thong bikini as she reveals she has finalised wedding plans with fiancé Jacob Blyth in Ibiza

'We're BAD parents': Danielle Armstrong says she 'feels sick' after fiancé Tom Edney clips baby Orla's nails for the first time and accidentally cuts her

Hollyoaks RESUMES filming after a four month break sparked by COVID-19 as bosses confirm the soap WILL go off the air for two months



AstonUni Student Accommodation

Homes For Students

OPEN

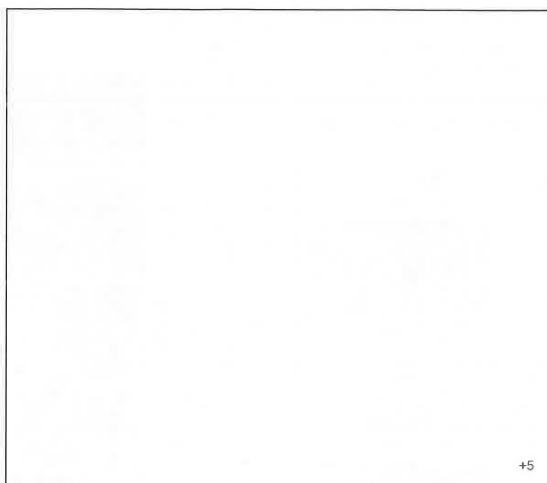
Love Island's Maura Higgins is put through her paces as she takes part in an extreme obstacle course challenge for new show You're Joking Me

Mylene Klass cuts a casual figure in a denim shirt and cargo trousers as she strolls into Global Radio studios

Jenna Coleman is seen for the first time since handing over her keys to Tom Hughes following shock split as she goes shopping in pretty floral dress

Olivia Palermo cuts a stylish figure in a satin brown skirt with clashing bright top and

Labour mayor's son ordered to pay £240,000 after bootlegging website and diverting t... Page 4 of 33



The impostor site, which had a logo reading 'The Big Word Translation', went live in 2014 and had content reading: 'Welcome to The Big Word Translation, the right place for professional translation services of the highest standard'

The website also offered a 'Free no obligation quote', a copyright notice for 2014 and a contact form that sent enquiries to the websites' developer Rajeev Singh.

Singh, who had been hired by Zaman for his knowledge of SEO - a webterm denoting Search Engine Optimisation, which helps sites perform better in Google searches - then funnelled enquiries back where they were converted into sales.

Judge Clarke asserted the impostor company likely had the same 75% enquiry to sale conversion rate that The Big Word enjoyed.

In reviewing the case Judge Clarke described Zaman as 'an extremely poor witness' and his evidence 'a tangled mass of contradictions, inconsistencies, unlikelihoods, implausibilities and untruths which obscure any truthful evidence he may have given, such that I cannot identify it'.

Intellectual property lawyers, Virtuoso Legal of Leeds, acted on behalf of The Big Word securing the unprecedented damages.

Legal's Liz Ward explained: 'We were suspicious about the whole operation from the start. Proceedings were served at Language Empire's offices in Rochdale but there appeared to be no operational office at that address. Zaman's home was nearby. He wasn't there either when papers were served.'

'Although online Language Empire looked quite big, it was apparent their physical presence hardly existed. It became clear that Language Empire was servicing some important police and NHS clients, but not paying their self-employed interpreters or anyone else. We later found a whole Facebook page dedicated to disgruntled outsourced staff who hadn't been paid.'

Chairman of The Big Word, Larry Gould said: 'We are trusted around the world and the integrity of our brand remains intact.'

'We are, of course, deeply disappointed and concerned at the impact that this potentially had on our business and the reputation of our industry.'

Share or comment on this article: Labour mayor's son ordered to pay £240,000 after bootlegging website and diverting traffic

930

shares

MOST WATCHED NEWS VIDEOS

Embed this

trainers as she steps out for a solo stroll in New York

► Lauren Silverman is forced to deny she had a bust-up with Alesha Dixon over fears she got too close to boyfriend Simon Cowell leaving her 'shaken'

► Jacqueline Jossa exudes glamour in ab-flashing floral co-ord for glitzy fashion party with Billie Faiers and Charlotte Crosby in Ibiza

► Amelia Lily wastes no time 'getting mortal' in first look at her Geordie Shore debut ahead of new series... which promises 'love triangles, toe-sucking and cross-dressing'

► Hollywood remembers Naya Rivers: *Glee* cast least tributes to their 'sweet and stupidly talented' co-star after actress' body was found at Lake Piru six days on from her disappearance

► Zara McDermott ignores the 'skinny shamen' as she posts a series of bikini snaps from Marbella love-fest with 'The One' Sam Thompson

► 'My world is complete': Missé Bagri is reunited with her five-year-old son Julian after four months apart amid the coronavirus crisis



► Ex-girlfriend of Elvis Presley's grandson Benjamin Keough, 27, pays tribute to her 'favorite person' after he shot himself in the chest at mom Lisa Marie Presley's \$1.8m home

► Rod Stewart, 75, sports a nautical striped top and bright yellow pants as he and Penny Lancaster, 48, disembark their luxury yacht in Croatia

► 'I'm passionate about being anti-celebrity': Jameela Jamil admits she will not behave like the 'perfect woman' and refuses to be 'cast away' for mistakes

► Zac Efron leaves viewers swooning over his rugged appearance and toned physique in new Netflix travel show - and joke he's been 'consistently beautiful' their entire lives

Labour mayor's son ordered to pay £240,000 after bootlegging website and diverting t... Page 5 of 33

Dairy Queen's Karen goes off on customer

Day Six: Johnny Depp and Amber Heard

Thugs stab driver with a pitchfork in horrifying attack

Beary cute: Moment family of bears play in woods in California

January Jones puts on a busty display in a sparkling rainbow bikini and gilty shades as she poses poolside

Ashley Roberts looks radiant as she struts her stuff in a red blazer and matching shorts ahead of work at Heart FM

Naya Rivera's dad dashes into lake in

Nicola Sturgeon would not 'shy away' from

Adorable moment toddler curls up next to

Female BLM protester gets punched in face by

Hooves that? Lorraine viewers are delighted as a shepherdess mother-of-nine has her interview galecrashed by her daughter, 4, and their live-in PONY

Ed Westwick's model girlfriend Tamara Francesconi flaunts her svelte physique as she dons black lingerie for a sizzling snap

Lady Amelia Windsor steps out in a vibrant tie-dye dress as she grabs a coffee in Notting Hill after spending lockdown at her parents' Cambridge home

Ireland Baldwin shows off her curves and tattoos in skimpy yellow bikini top and contrasting bottoms at Malibu beach with boyfriend Corey Harper

Lea Michele pays tribute to her Glee costars Naya Rivera and Cory Monteith... as actress' body is found on seventh anniversary of actor's death

Gareth Gates 'confirms' he's dating DJ Chloe McLeeman as he shares a snap on his 36th birthday... one year after split from fiancée Faye Brooks

Comedian Dane Cook reveals his fury after 'lazy' TV company sends him press shots of Richard Blackwood to approve - and says it proves there's still 'a lot of work to do'

Olivia Culpo showcases her toned legs in skintight faux leather cycling shorts as she steps out with her new pet pup

Alicia Vikander looks stylish in a blue fringed top as she enjoys lunch with pal Jon Kortajarena before stocking up on groceries during Ibiza getaway

Amanda Holden and Ashley Roberts transform into 'posie girls' as they sport sexy shorts suits to deliver the mail at Heart FM

Kate's been to the salon! Duchess of Cambridge sports lighter 'bronde' locks and £1,500 frock during launch of digital platform

Comments 5

Share what you think

Add your comment

Newest Oldest Best rated Worst rated

The comments below have been moderated in advance.

Loading...

The views expressed in the contents above are those of our users and do not necessarily reflect the views of MailOnline.

We are no longer accepting comments on this article.

MORE TOP STORIES

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6310933/Businessman-ordered-pay-240-00...> 14/07/2020

APPENDIX 3: COMMISSIONER STATEMENT ON ROLE OF SAM EVANS

Basis for the use of an independent investigator

1. Paragraph 131 sets out:

“In cases involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, the Commissioner is supported by independent investigators. The Commissioner may delegate to the investigator to the extent she considers appropriate any of her investigatory functions under paragraph 130.”²⁶
2. Paragraph 130 describes my investigatory functions and encompasses the whole process from the beginning of an investigation to my report to the Committee:

“Proceedings are not adversarial, but inquisitorial in character. The Commissioner is an independent and impartial investigator, appointed by the House, whose task is to establish the facts of a case. She produces a report on each case, which includes her conclusions as to whether or not there has been a breach of the Code. In fulfilling that task, the Commissioner will question the complainant, the member and any other witnesses to whatever extent and in whatever way she thinks necessary and appropriate to elicit and test the evidence in the case (see also in this regard paragraphs 133 and 144). If the complaint is upheld and no remedial action has been agreed with the member concerned her report, including a recommended sanction, is submitted to the Conduct Committee. If the complaint is not upheld or if remedial action has been agreed the Commissioner’s report is normally published only on her webpages on the parliamentary website. However, she has discretion to submit such a report to the Conduct Committee. This may be because of the particular seriousness of the allegation or because the case gives rise to matters of wider interest or relevance. In such instances the Conduct Committee reports the case to the House.”
3. For the avoidance of doubt, paragraph 139 allows for the use of an independent investigator in cases involving questions of personal honour by clarifying that the provisions on bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct (which include the use of an independent investigator) are also engaged when such behaviour is being considered under personal honour provisions:

“If a complaint alleging a breach of the personal honour provisions involves bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, the process of investigation, reporting and appeal is the same as that followed for a case of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct that occurred after 21 June 2017.”
4. The report of the Committee for Privileges and Conduct that proposed the incorporation of the provisions relating to bullying, harassment and sexual

²⁶ My investigation into the conduct of Lord Ahmed was launched in June 2019 when the seventh edition of the Code of Conduct was in operation. This was the edition of the Code that introduced provisions relating to bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.

An eighth edition of the Code was published in July 2019 and this was the edition of the Code in operation for the majority of the period when my investigation was underway. References to the Code in this paper are to the eighth edition.

misconduct (including the use of independent investigators) described the role of the independent investigators and my responsibilities as follows:

“As with any complaint investigated under the Code of Conduct, the Commissioner for Standards has overall responsibility for the investigation. **We recommend that for complaints involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, the Commissioner should be able to call upon the support of the team of independent investigators appointed by Parliament and that she may delegate to the extent she considers appropriate any of her investigatory functions.** The Commissioner will retain sole responsibility for determining the outcome of complaints and, where a breach has been established, either agreeing remedial action or reporting the case with a recommended sanction to the Conduct Committee.”

5. When he presented that report to the House on 30 April 2019, the Senior Deputy Speaker summarised the purpose of the independent investigator as:

“The independent House of Lords Commissioner for Standards should continue to investigate complaints to establish whether there has been a breach of the codes of conduct. In cases of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, she will have the option of being assisted by independent investigators appointed by Parliament for this purpose.”

Use of investigators during this and other investigations

6. This case was the first investigation started after the Code introduced provisions relating to bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. In each investigation of this type I have worked with an independent investigator. In several of them that investigator has been Sam Evans: for instance, in the investigations into complaints about the conduct of Lord Stone of Blackheath and Lord Lea of Crondall.
7. Whenever I have started working with an investigator with whom I have not previously worked I have explained that it is important that the investigator gives me his or her independent view on any matter under discussion, and that s/he can raise any issues about the investigation with me, but that the responsibility for making decisions about the investigation rests with me. I had this conversation with Ms Evans at the start of this investigation.
8. I am working, or have worked, with four investigators apart from Ms Evans. As it happens, the investigations involving these investigators are either not yet concluded or did not result in a report being published. In each case I worked, or am working, in the same way with them as I did with Ms Evans in this case.
9. In my reports into the conduct of Lord Stone of Blackheath and Lord Lea of Crondall I summarised Ms Evans’ involvement in these terms:

“In considering these complaints I have been supported by Sam Evans, Associate Practitioner, CMP Solutions, and James Whittle and Moriyó Aiyéola, the Clerks who assist me in my work. I wish to place on record my thanks to them for all their help, while also acknowledging that I am solely responsible for the conclusions reached and the decisions made in this investigation.”

10. In this case, I wrote:

“We worked as a team throughout the investigation, including analysing the evidence, making findings of fact, and reaching conclusions on breaches of the Code. However, the responsibility for the report, and the recommended sanction, rests with me alone.”

11. I changed the wording from the earlier reports because I thought it was more informative. However, Ms Evans’ involvement in the investigation was exactly the same in this case as in the others where she has supported me, and exactly the same as the support given to me by the other investigators with whom I have worked. We worked together, with Ms Evans providing me valuable support, but the responsibility for the report, and the recommended sanction in particular, rests with me.

Ms Evans’ involvement during this investigation

12. I led the investigation throughout. I did not delegate any of my investigatory functions to Ms Evans. Her role was to provide support to me. We worked together on that basis.

13. The distinction between our shared investigatory role and my sole decision-making role is reflected in the report which refers repeatedly to “**our** investigation” but also to “**my** findings” and “**my** recommended sanction” (emphasis added).

During the evidence-taking phase

14. Ms Evans supported me in the following ways:

- (1) I invited her to comment on drafts of letters prepared during the investigation, either by me or by my office under my direction, and considered her comments before finalising any drafts. I did not feel bound to accept any suggested amendments.
- (2) In preparation for interviews, I drafted questions for the interviewees, and invited Ms Evans to suggest any further questions or comment on my proposed questions. I considered all her suggestions, and where I thought that they would improve the quality of the evidence obtained from the interview, I included them..
- (3) I suggested which of us should ask which questions at interview, and, to the best of my recollection, Ms Evans agreed with my suggestions.
- (4) We both interviewed the complainant and the respondent in August 2019, in accordance with scripts that I had produced and shared with Ms Evans.
- (5) I carried out subsequent interviews, both face-to-face and on the phone with the complainant on my own (supported by my office).
- (6) Ms Evans was not able to attend the formal interviews I had with other witnesses, but supported me by looking at my proposed questions and making suggestions, as had happened with the initial interview with the complainant, and the only interview with the respondent.
- (7) I also spoke to people on the phone in pursuit of evidence, with my office in attendance and taking a note.

15. Ms Evans did not make any phone calls on my behalf.
16. Ms Evans did not conduct any formal interviews on her own.
17. Ms Evans did not draft any correspondence.

During the report writing phase and findings of fact

18. Ms Evans' role during the report writing phase of the investigation was to provide support to me in my work. I led the report writing and analysis of evidence. I did not delegate any part of this work to her.
19. I drafted the factual report which was sent to the respondent in December 2019. Before finalising the draft, I invited Ms Evans to comment on it. I accepted her suggestions where appropriate, after discussion if necessary.
20. I drafted replies to the respondent's responses to the factual report, and asked Ms Evans to comment on my drafts. I accepted her suggestions where appropriate, after discussion if necessary.
21. I undertook the analysis of the evidence, and invited Ms Evans to comment on my drafts. I accepted her suggestions where appropriate, after discussion if necessary.
22. I made findings of fact based on the evidence and analysis, and discussed these with Ms Evans. I accepted her suggestions where appropriate, after discussion if necessary.
23. Although I carefully considered Ms Evans' views, the contents of the report, the analysis of the evidence and the findings of fact were entirely my responsibility.

In my findings of breaches and my recommended sanction

24. Ms Evans' expertise includes the interpretation of definitions of the bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. Her support and advice was therefore valuable in assisting me in establishing whether the findings of fact supported conclusions that some of Lord Ahmed's conduct constituted sexual misconduct.
25. Although Ms Evans provided advice when considering whether some aspects of Lord Ahmed's conduct constituted sexual misconduct, she played no role in considering whether this should be considered a failure by Lord Ahmed to act on his personal honour. Similarly, where other elements of the complaint did not relate to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, Ms Evans played no role in considering whether a finding of a failure by Lord Ahmed to act on his personal honour was supported. Questions of what ought to be considered consistent with personal honour do not fall within her expertise.
26. Ms Evans played no role in my decision on my recommended sanction.

Lucy Scott-Moncrieff CBE

Commissioner for Standards

20 July 2020

APPENDIX 4: LORD AHMED'S RESPONSE TO COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT ON ROLE OF SAM EVANS

1. The Conduct Committee sought clarification from the Commissioner as to the involvement of Sam Evans. Such clarification was presumably sought as a result of the following ground in my Grounds of Appeal in which it was asserted (at paragraphs 40 -50) that the principles of natural justice and fairness, as required by the Code, were not followed. because the investigation and subsequent findings were not impartial:

Lord Ahmed submits the investigation was improper and biased due to the involvement of Sam Evans.

At paragraphs 31 and 32 of the report, the Commissioner states:

“Ms Evans has significant investigatory experience, which includes expertise in interviewing, and evaluating the evidence of, vulnerable people, including those who allege sexual abuse and exploitation.

We worked as a team throughout the investigation, including analysing the evidence, making findings of fact, and reaching conclusions on breaches of the Code.”

A footnote to paragraph 31 reads:

“In her earlier career she worked extensively with organisations supporting victims of sexual violence and abuse, helping to extend significantly the provision of Sexual Assault Referral Centres for victims of rape and provision for organisations supporting victims of current and historic sexual abuse. She also led work to establish the Government's first funded support programme for victims of Human Trafficking (primarily female victims trafficked into prostitution in the UK)”

The involvement of Ms Evans in the investigative process is not challenged. However, Ms Evans had no place in assisting the Commissioner in “analysing the evidence, making findings of fact, and reaching conclusions on breaches of the Code.”

The involvement of Ms Evans in these aspects of the investigation is contrary to the Guide to the Code of Conduct. Paragraphs 129 to 150 provide for the process by which the Commissioner carries out her investigation and comes to her findings. At para 131, the guide states that the Commissioner “may delegate to the investigator to the extent she considers appropriate any of her **investigatory** functions under paragraph 130” (emphasis added).

The Code of Conduct at paragraph 23 (repeated at paragraph 129 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct) explicitly distinguishes between investigative and adjudicative functions. The Guide to the Code of Conduct allows only delegation of investigatory powers. It does not permit delegation of adjudicative functions.

Ms Evans, on the Commissioner's own admission, was involved in more than just the investigative process. She took part in the decision-making process as well. By involving Ms Evans in the decision-making process, the Commissioner has overstepped the clear limits set by the Guide to the Code of Conduct.

In addition, a fair-minded observer and informed observer would come to the conclusion there was a real possibility Ms Evans was biased. Ms Evans is undoubtedly an expert in gathering evidence from alleged victims of sexual abuse. However, her past background shows a dedication to the perspective of female victims of sexual abuse. This represents a real possibility that she will not have been able to assess the Complainant's case dispassionately or divorce her past experiences from the issue at hand. Her involvement in the decision-making process is akin to an experienced sexual offences police officer sitting on a jury deciding an allegation of sexual assault. Their potential influence would be unfair to the person facing the allegations.

Lord Ahmed was not informed of Ms Evans' past and not given an opportunity to object to her involvement either in the investigative process or the decision-making process.

In light of the above, the investigation and subsequent findings failed to follow the requirements of natural justice in that they were not impartial.

2. In the light of the Commissioners response dated 20th July 2020 the following representations are made for the consideration of the Committee.
3. It is to be noted that my claim in the Grounds of Appeal that the involvement of Ms Sam Evans carries the risk of bias has not been challenged by the Commissioner. This must be right given that the legal test (the *Porter* test), which should be known to the Commissioner, is whether a fair minded observer would conclude that bias was more than a real possibility. They would conclude that it was more likely than not that the investigation was biased.
4. I would submit that a fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts, would conclude that there was a real possibility that the Commissioner's investigation and findings were biased. The fact that the Committee has identified this issue and sought the Commissioner's response indicates that the Committee had itself recognised that there was an immediate perception, if not actual, bias in the investigation. What matters would this fair-minded and informed observer be considering? S/he would be aware:
 - (1) That Sam Evans 'earlier career involved working extensively with organisations **supporting** victims of sexual violence and abuse '. The fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that it was more likely than not that her perspective on the investigation would be influenced and affected by this, particularly when having to consider issues of fact and credibility;
 - (2) That the report of the Committee for Privileges and Conduct required that 'for complaints involving sexual misconduct, the Commissioner should be able to call upon the support or the team of **independent** investigator .. '. The fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that the requirement that the investigator be independent was self-evident and that anyone with a career 'supporting victims of sexual violence and abuse' and seemingly dedicated to the perspective of female victims of sexual abuse could not be, and certainly could not be seen to be, independent in the sense that they would be capable of

acting as such in a case which involved a victim of sexual abuse, as was in this case;

- (3) That the report of the Committee for Privileges and Conduct required that the Commissioner could 'delegate to the extent she considers appropriate any of her **investigatory** functions' to the independent investigator. The fairminded and informed observer would conclude that it was self-evident that the investigator's role was, quite rightly, limited to the investigation process and that, accordingly, they should have no involvement whatsoever in any aspect of the decision making process, let alone be assisting the Commissioner in "analysing the evidence, making findings of fact, and reaching conclusions on breaches of the Code."
 - (4) That the Commissioner completed the investigation and produced a draft factual report in December 2019 which contained findings of fact and invited Ms Evans 'to comment on it.' Further that Ms Evans made suggestions and the Commissioner 'accepted her suggestions where appropriate, after discussion if necessary.' The fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that given Ms Evans was invited to, and made comments, on a document which contained findings of fact and which the Commissioner accepted (where appropriate) means that Ms Evans was involved in the findings of fact in this case;
 - (5) That the Commissioner 'undertook the analysis of the evidence, and invited Ms Evans to comment on my drafts' and 'accepted her suggestions where appropriate, after discussion if necessary'. The fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that analysing evidence necessarily requires an assessment of the material obtained during the course of the investigation and adjudicating upon it. The Commissioner accepts that she accepted Ms Evans suggestions, where appropriate, in this process. The fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that Ms Evans was involved in the adjudication process in this case;
 - (6) That the Commissioner 'made findings of fact based on the analysis, and discussed these with Ms Evans' and 'accepted her suggestions where appropriate, after discussion if necessary'. The fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that, given this, Ms Evans was involved in the making of findings against me. Given the above, the fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that it was more likely than not that the findings against me were influenced and affected by Ms Evans background as set out above such that in the determination of any contentious or conflicting issues, of which there were many in my case, those findings would favour the complainant rather than me;
 - (7) That Ms Evans' involvement in my case was 'exactly the same in this case as in others where she has supported me' raises the issue that Ms Evans was trusted by the Commissioner reflected in the fact that they worked on other cases before mine. Given this, the fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that it was more likely than not that the Commissioner would more readily accept her suggestions when drafting the Report and making findings of fact.
5. It is clear, beyond peradventure, that based on the Commissioner's acceptance of the involvement of Ms Evans in the Report of the Investigation

into the allegations against me, and the legal test for bias rehearsed above, the principles of natural justice and fairness were not followed as set out in my Grounds of Appeal. Indeed, the fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that, given the above, the Commissioner's assertion at paragraph 26 of her response that 'Ms Evans played no role in my decision' is palpably wrong.

6. It is clear that the Code does not, either explicitly or implicitly, provide for the independent investigator to be involved in the decision making process. The Commissioner seeks to erroneously suggest otherwise. Her approach in this regard raises issues of grave concern.
7. The Commissioner has not provided the Committee with any provision of the Code which permits the use of Ms Evans in the way she has. The Commissioner refers to paragraphs 130 and 131 to suggest that the Code gives her unfettered discretionary power to delegate her investigatory functions in whatever way she considers appropriate and that this includes 'the whole process from the beginning of an investigation to my report to the Committee'. This is patently, absurdly and demonstrably wrong because, of course, if her assertion were taken to its logical conclusion, the Commissioner could delegate **all** of her functions to the independent investigator, including the ultimate findings of fact in her Final Report to the Committee. This is not what the Code states. The Code provides for a clear distinction between the independent investigator's role as assisting and supporting the Commissioner in the investigation of complaints and the Commissioner's 'sole responsibility for determining the outcome of complaints' (see paragraph 4 of the Commissioner's Response). This clearly means that the independent investigator cannot have any involvement whatsoever in 'determining the outcome of complaints' by being invited to, and making comments upon, findings of fact. This is in breach of the Code and a breach of the principles of natural justice and fairness.
8. The fact that the Commissioner has sought to justify, in her Response, what is clearly improper conduct, raises serious concerns about her judgment. Firstly, the Commissioner has not followed the Code. Beyond the obvious ramification of this for my appeal, this is a grave issue which the House will need to consider in due course. What confidence can the House have in the Commissioner when she does not follow the Code?
9. Secondly, she has, in her Response, sought to explain her conduct in a manner which is unjustifiable. She has sought to explain her (improper) actions away by an interpretation of the Code that does not survive even superficial scrutiny. This calls into serious question how she evaluated, interpreted and assessed the evidence in my case. In short, the Commissioner has shown that she is capable of basing her conclusions on a misapprehension or misunderstanding of material. Her judgments and conclusions in my case must, therefore, be called into question.
10. Thirdly, her conduct in this case as to the use of the independent investigator, is not an isolated incident. The Commissioner has told us that she has worked in this way in previous investigations. The fact that she has done so does not, of course, make it right and raises questions over the validity of any of the findings of those investigations. It also raises the issue of supervision of the Commissioner's role and her application and interpretation of the Code, which the House may wish to consider. It is troubling to note that had the

Commissioner not changed the way she described Ms Evans role in this case from her previous iteration, this issue would not have been revealed. Such improper application of the Code would have gone unnoticed and undetected. The Commissioner had a responsibility to ensure that those investigated were made aware of the part played by Ms Evans in their case(s). There is a further obligation to ensure that those Members that are now being investigated are made aware of this so that appropriate representations can, if necessary, be made by them. It goes without saying that I was given no such opportunity during the course of my investigation and the drafting of the Final Report in which Ms Evans played such a significant part.

11. I would submit that the Commissioners Response raises concerns of the most serious nature and calls into question the validity of the findings against me, such that my appeal should be allowed. This was a grave error of judgment on the part of the Commissioner in which she improperly invited and accepted suggestions in relation to the decision making process which was her sole responsibility. Regardless of what the Commissioner now says_ as to the extent and nature of those suggestions and whether she accepted them or not, there can be no doubt that it should not have happened.
12. It is imperative that the investigation process and the Commissioner's conduct is beyond reproach, is transparent and commands the confidence of the House and the general public. That is not the case now. In any event, there can be no confidence in any of the findings in any report in which the Commissioner has (wrongly) involved Ms Evans in the decision making process, including mine. The appeal should, therefore, be allowed and consideration may need to be given by the House as to this Commissioner's continued ability to conduct investigations in accordance with the Code.

Lord Ahmed

22nd July 2020

Annex C: Commissioner's supplementary report

SUMMARY

On 23 July 2020 the Conduct Committee, having received new material from Lord Ahmed as part of his appeal against the findings and recommended sanction in my earlier investigation into his conduct, made the following decision:

“In the light of the new evidence put before the Conduct Committee from [D] and [L], and having considered Lord Ahmed's representations (including his representation that this should cause the Commissioner to rethink her conclusions) as well as the complainant's contrary representations, the Conduct Committee has reached the conclusion that the matter must be remitted to the Commissioner for her to reconsider any aspects of her findings and recommendations in the light of her investigation and evaluation of the fresh evidence and for her to make thereafter a new or revised report as she may think fit.”

The new material consisted of two written statements from D and L. Their accounts alleged that in April 2018, the complainant, Ms Zaman, had volunteered to D that her allegations against Lord Ahmed were fabricated as she wanted revenge for his breaking off their relationship.

Lord Ahmed argued that this new material cast “serious doubt on the credibility of the Complainant”. Ms Zaman refuted their accounts as “false statements”, saying D and L were “lying, openly and knowingly”.

In August and September, I took evidence from several witnesses, including Lord Ahmed, D, L, Ms Zaman, members of Ms Zaman's family, and others who were engaged with Ms Zaman before my original investigation began in 2019.

Following my supplementary investigation and evaluation of the evidence, I considered whether any of my earlier findings needed to be changed.

The accounts provided by D and L could not be corroborated by any independent evidence. In contrast, the evidence of other witnesses supported Ms Zaman's challenge to their accounts. Because of this lack of independent corroborative evidence, inconsistencies in their evidence and the unlikely nature of aspects of their accounts, I do not consider that the new material provides any basis for amending any of the conclusions or findings set out in my earlier report, nor for altering my recommended sanction.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. On 23 July 2020 the Conduct Committee, having received new material from Lord Ahmed as part of his appeal against the findings and recommended sanction in my earlier investigation into his conduct, made the following decision:

“In the light of the new evidence put before the Conduct Committee from Mr [D] and [L], and having considered Lord Ahmed’s representations (including his representation that this should cause the Commissioner to rethink her conclusions) as well as the complainant’s contrary representations, the Conduct Committee has reached the conclusion that the matter must be remitted to the Commissioner for her to reconsider any aspects of her findings and recommendations in the light of her investigation and evaluation of the fresh evidence and for her to make thereafter a new or revised report as she may think fit.”

2. This was sent to me on 24 July. I was also provided with extracts from Lord Ahmed’s appeal and Ms Zaman’s response to it (these extracts are included in Appendix 1).
3. The Committee’s decision offered the choice of amending my existing report or providing a supplementary report. I chose the latter to emphasise the two stage nature of my task: first to investigate and evaluate the new material, and then in the light of my evaluation of the new evidence to reconsider the findings and recommendation in the report of my first investigation.
4. This report is, therefore, supplementary to my first report into the conduct of Lord Ahmed.

Matters for consideration

5. The evidence I was asked to investigate consisted of new information provided to Lord Ahmed by D, described as a journalist whom he knew professionally but not personally. Lord Ahmed had asked him to provide a character reference as part of the process of providing me with material to take into account when considering the sanction I proposed to the Committee.
6. Following this request, D told Lord Ahmed that he had some information that was relevant to his case. Lord Ahmed therefore asked him to contact his solicitors, Imran Khan & Partners.
7. D informed them that in the first half of 2018, probably April, Ms Zaman had told him in a telephone call that she had lied in her allegations against Lord Ahmed.
8. D explained that in 2018 he had been approached by another journalist—W, Associate Editor, Asian Lite—to help with a story W was working on based on Ms Zaman’s allegations against Lord Ahmed.
9. During the course of his interview with the solicitors, D mentioned that he had told another journalist colleague, L, about W’s story. In his written statement, he said that he and L then made enquiries in the local community in Rochdale. He was told that that Ms Zaman was well known to be an habitual liar, particularly in making allegations against men, and that D should not trust what she said in relation to Lord Ahmed. L told him that

he had been told that Ms Zaman had made similar allegations of sexual impropriety against other men, including a man called J, which had turned out to be false. L proposed that D speak again to Ms Zaman and, having created a friendly atmosphere, persuade her to tell him the truth.

10. “Luckily enough”, as D put it, Ms Zaman then called him on the phone and, volunteered that she had fabricated her allegations which she described in some detail together with her motivation, and said she intended to create a #MeTooMyLord campaign to increase the impact of her allegations.
11. L also gave a statement to Imran Khan & Partners. In his statement he also explained that he knew Lord Ahmed only professionally, not personally. He said that his sources had told him that Ms Zaman was estranged from her family and had made similar false allegations of sexual assault against a man called J and some others.
12. In her written response to this part of Lord Ahmed’s appeal, Ms Zaman agreed that she had spoken to W and, through him, to D. However, she rejected the account of her having telephoned D and telling him she had fabricated her allegations. She provided reasons why such an action was implausible.
13. She also said that she had not been estranged from her family in 2018, and that in February 2019 D had had a meeting with her father with a view to persuading him to convince his daughter, Ms Zaman, not to go ahead with a Newsnight investigation into allegations made by her and others about Lord Ahmed. She said that this undermined the claims of Lord Ahmed and D that they did not have a personal relationship. She also said she had had nothing to do with a #MeTooMyLord campaign.
14. At a late stage in this investigation a further witness emerged supporting D’s account of the phone call with Ms Zaman. D told us by email on 26 August that his secretary, P, had become aware of this investigation when he asked her to read to him the transcript of his interview with us. She then reminded D that she had been in his car when Ms Zaman phoned. As D had put the call on speaker phone in the car, P had heard her volunteer that she had lied.
15. Although my remit from the Conduct Committee posed a straightforward broad question—whether the new evidence would lead me to reconsider the findings of my first report—the details of D’s and L’s accounts, and subsequently that of P, together with Ms Zaman’s challenges and claims about the meeting between D and her father, raised a number of discrete issues on which I would need to evaluate the evidence:
 - D’s statement and that he had been told in April 2018 that Ms Zaman had a reputation as an habitual liar, and he should not believe anything she said about Lord Ahmed;
 - L’s statement that he was told in April 2018 that Ms Zaman had made false allegations against J and others;
 - L’s statement that he had been told in April 2018 that Ms Zaman was estranged from her family;
 - D’s statement that Ms Zaman had volunteered to him in April 2018 that she had lied in her allegations against Lord Ahmed;

- P's evidence in her interview as to how she came to be aware of D's involvement in this investigation;
 - P's evidence in her interview that she had overheard Ms Zaman volunteer to D that she had fabricated her allegations against Lord Ahmed;
 - Lord Ahmed's appeal evidence that he had asked D to provide a character reference for him in April 2020;
 - Lord Ahmed's appeal evidence, and the statements of D and L, that the relationships between journalists and peer were purely professional;
 - the statement of D that Ms Zaman told him in April 2018 that she was seeking to create or use a #MeTooMyLord campaign to publicise her case against Lord Ahmed;
 - Ms Zaman's claim that D had spoken to Ms Zaman's father before the Newsnight broadcast, and that this was at Lord Ahmed's instruction.
16. The telephone call from Ms Zaman to D was said to have probably been made in April 2018.²⁷ This was after Ms Zaman had first made a complaint to my office, which I had dismissed as Lord Ahmed's alleged behaviour was not covered by the House of Lords Code of Conduct then in force.
17. I did not become involved in Ms Zaman's complaint again until 2019, when the Code of Conduct was altered and the behaviour she had complained of came within my remit to investigate.
18. However, between these two times I was aware that she had:
- complained to the police;
 - circulated some details of her complaint to parliamentarians;
 - been informally advised by [Z], a former Chief Crown Prosecutor with expertise in dealing with cases of sexual abuse and exploitation;
 - spoken to G of The Sunday Times; and
 - contributed to a Newsnight investigation that was broadcast in February 2019.
19. As this new investigation was into allegations, made first by D and subsequently by P, that Ms Zaman had said she had lied about Lord Ahmed's behaviour, I considered it was important to speak not only to those providing the evidence that Ms Zaman had said she had lied, but also to the various individuals who had engaged with Ms Zaman and her complaint in 2018 and 2019, before I started my investigation in June 2019, so as to get their views on Ms Zaman's reliability as a witness. I also needed to talk to members of Ms Zaman's family to get their views on the likelihood of people in Rochdale providing the information described in D's and L's accounts.

27 At interview D said he thought the call was at the end of April.

Process

20. I was assisted throughout by Sam Evans (CMP Solutions) and James Whittle, Donna Davidson and Moriyó Aiyeola (the clerks who assist me in my work). I wish to place on record my thanks to them for all their help, while also acknowledging that I am solely responsible for the conclusions reached and the decisions made in this investigation.
21. Ms Evans and one of the clerks was present at each interview, except for one where I conducted the interview alone, with the assistance only of Ms Aiyeola.
22. The interviews were all by audio video link, except that R joined her interview by phone.
23. All interviews took place in August, except that with P, which was on 1 September.
24. Our interview with L was conducted in English and Urdu through a translator. For clarity, his words at interview are given in English, he having been supplied with transcripts of his interview in English and Urdu to check for accuracy.
25. We produced a draft factual report, which was provided to Lord Ahmed and Ms Zaman on 7 September, and I required any response to be received by close of business on 18 September. The final version of the factual report is included as Appendix 2 to this report.
26. Lord Ahmed's response to the draft factual report, received on 18 September, included comments on the factual basis of the evidence gathered but also included criticisms of process and allegations of bias on my part as well as others. I have sought to reflect in this report the points raised about the evidence gathered. Given the limited remit of this supplementary investigation as part of an appeal process, other points raised seemed more properly addressed to the Conduct Committee. A full copy of Lord Ahmed's response has therefore been provided to the Committee.

Chronology of events and alleged events described in the evidence

27. This is a chronology of events and alleged events described in the evidence provided or gathered for this report. Where the event is not disputed by another witness, or there is documentary evidence in support, no qualifier is given. Where the factual information is disputed, I indicate this.
28. At some points dates and the precise sequence are unclear from the evidence. Generally, this lack of clarity does not seem significant and can be attributed to the passage of time and lack of corroborative evidence which could pin down dates. Where there may be some significance, I refer to it in the report.
 - February 2018: Ms Zaman contacts W seeking media attention for her allegations against Lord Ahmed;
 - W contacts D to work on the story with him;
 - At around this time W also contacts The Sunday Times to spread the risk of pursuing such a story but also to achieve national coverage;

- W arranges an introductory phone conversation between D and Ms Zaman;
- 10 April 2018: W emails D with a draft article on Ms Zaman's allegations about Lord Ahmed's behaviour towards her;
- April 2018: D contacts L to help verify Ms Zaman's story (*disputed*);
- April 2018: both D and L contact their sources about Ms Zaman (*disputed*);
- April 2018: D is told by his sources that Ms Zaman is an habitual liar and he should not trust what she says in relation to Lord Ahmed (*disputed*);
- April 2018: L informs D that his sources have suggested Ms Zaman was estranged from her family and has made false allegations about J and others. L suggests D persuade Ms Zaman to tell him the truth (*disputed*);
- April 2018: The Sunday Times (or The Sun by D's account) informs W that it cannot continue with the story because it does not believe Ms Zaman (*disputed*);
- End of April: Ms Zaman telephones D, with his assistant P listening on speakerphone in the car. Ms Zaman volunteers that her allegations are false and offers to add further lies in order to achieve revenge against Lord Ahmed (*disputed*);
- April 2018: D recounts his conversation with Ms Zaman to L who advises D to take no further steps (*disputed*);
- 30 April 2018: U of Newsnight first meets Ms Zaman having been put in touch with her by W via a BBC researcher;
- August 2018: D and Lord Ahmed both attend an event in New Jersey to celebrate Pakistan Independence Day and are pictured together in a number of social media posts;
- September 2018: Lord Ahmed attends the prayers in Azad Kashmir following the death of D's sister;
- 21 November 2018: U records his interview with Ms Zaman;
- 1 December 2018: Lord Ahmed is photographed with D and others at the House of Lords;
- 8 & 9 December 2018: Lord Ahmed is the main featured guest at an event in Manchester organised by D;
- January 2019: D and L attend the funeral and prayers in Azad Kashmir of Lord Ahmed's sister;
- Early February 2019: D speaks to Ms Zaman's father, Mohammed Zaman, to encourage him to persuade Ms Zaman to withdraw from the Newsnight broadcast (*disputed*);

- 14 February 2019: Newsnight broadcasts its story about Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed, including an on the record interview with Ms Zaman and anonymous allegations by others;
- 15 February 2019: W publishes a story in his paper, Asian Lite, summarising the Newsnight broadcast and adding information he received from Ms Zaman in 2018 about the sexual assault in her car;
- 24 February 2019: the official Twitter account of the Pakistan Press Club UK posts a picture of Lord Ahmed with members of the club under the heading “#PPCUK shows full support and #solidarity with Lord Nazir Ahmed”;
- 28 June 2019: I inform Lord Ahmed that I am investigating Ms Zaman’s renewed complaint against him;
- 27 September 2019: Lord Ahmed posts a picture on Facebook of himself and L on a ferry.
- 30 October 2019: Lord Ahmed posts a picture on Facebook of himself and D in a car;
- 1 February 2020: Lord Ahmed comments on D’s Facebook profile picture (which is a picture of D during his visit to the Houses of Parliament on 1 December 2018). D replies, and a comment conversation ensues;
- April 2020: Lord Ahmed contacts D for a character reference. D, realising the case must involve Ms Zaman informs Lord Ahmed that he cannot provide a character reference as he has relevant information (*disputed*).
- 30 April 2020: as a result of contact from Lord Ahmed, Imran Khan & Partners become aware of D as a potential witness;
- June 2020: Lord Ahmed comments “MashaAllah great to see you both” on photos of D and L posted to Facebook by D;
- 18 June 2020: Imran Khan & Partners contact D;
- 22 June 2020: Imran Khan & Partners contact L;
- 25 June 2020: D signs and returns the finalised statement;
- 29 June 2020: L signs and returns the finalised statement;
- End of August 2020: P reminds D that she heard the phone conversation in which Ms Zaman volunteered she had lied (*disputed*).

CHAPTER 2: CLAIMS AND ALLEGATIONS IN D'S AND L'S ACCOUNTS

The statements of D and L that they had been told in April 2018 that Ms Zaman had a reputation as a liar and had made false allegations against J

29. In their written statements, both D and L explained that, as responsible journalists, they took steps to verify Ms Zaman's account by contacting their sources. L did so at the request of D. D did so in order to satisfy himself before agreeing to publish W's draft story about Ms Zaman and Lord Ahmed.
30. D wrote in his statement that when he spoke to his sources "all of them quite separately stated that the woman in question who was making the complaint was a habitual liar and that I should not trust what she says in relation to Lord Ahmed."
31. L also contacted his sources to discuss Ms Zaman, her relationship with her family and "what people thought about her". His sources reported that she "had made similar false allegations of sexual assault against a man called "J" and some others." He told us at interview that he did not mention Lord Ahmed to his sources.
32. We discussed this process with L at interview.²⁸ In his statement he said, "Normally, this sort of information is gathered by approaching individuals in their social circle and asking questions about that person." In our interview he explained that his sources were people still living in Rochdale who, he said, were "people who knew her and knew about her life". His sources did not include Ms Zaman's family, her social circle or people living near to where Ms Zaman has lived in London for many years.
33. He said that one of his sources had told him that Ms Zaman had made false allegations against J. We asked him what his source had said about how the allegations had been shown to be false. He replied, "I can't, like, answer that question but these were the views of the people." I suggested that his information might be considered only to be "gossip and rumour", which he agreed was "[a]bsolutely right."
34. He also described the information he received from his sources about Ms Zaman being a liar:

"I asked some people. They must have asked some other people and they said that she lies all the time [...] They did not, like, outrightly tell me that she's a liar, but like when you have a conversation with somebody and you make a picture of somebody and randomly you talk to people. So this is what I understood."
35. In his statement, D wrote that L had told him about his sources' information that Ms Zaman had made similar allegations about J previously. He also said that one of his own sources had mentioned J but that "proper information was came through by L".

28 See paragraphs 142–166 of the factual report in Appendix 2

36. D said he thought he made notes of his conversation with L on his phone at the time but that these may have been lost when his phone was damaged—no copies of notes were provided to us.
37. L was not the only journalist who sought to verify Ms Zaman’s story by speaking to sources and contacts. In the course of his Newsnight investigation and mindful of the standards required for national broadcast, U spoke to Ms Zaman’s friends and family. U uncovered no suggestion that Ms Zaman had a history of making false allegations.²⁹
38. Ms Zaman’s father, Mohammed Zaman, rejected the allegation that she was a habitual liar, saying “She had very good circle of friends in Rochdale and as a family we have very good reputation and there’s no question about that. I haven’t heard. Nobody has ever said to me.” He was sure that if there had been these allegations, he would have heard:

“we’ve got a really good neighbourhood, good community; everybody knows me; I know everybody. So, normally, if this happen, people will come and make some comments or, you know, “I feel sorry for you” ...or say that, “I’ve heard this. Can you confirm this has happened?” Nobody has been in touch with me. There’s nobody made any comments or anything.”
39. Ms Zaman’s sister, R, similarly said that if Ms Zaman had had a reputation as a liar, it would have got back to the family because where they lived was “a very small sort of knit community, everybody knows everybody and stuff” and that if it had done “the family would not speak to her, they would disown her; they wouldn’t want anything to do with her”.
40. As set out in my first report on the conduct of Lord Ahmed, Ms Zaman told others about her experiences with J, including the police in October 2016, Southall Black Sisters in early February 2017 and Lord Ahmed in February 2017. These were all contacts made in or near London, where both Ms Zaman and J were based. Ms Zaman told us that she had spoken to members of her family about J but that they would not have spoken about it to anyone outside the family. There is no evidence that the police took any action on her complaints in 2016.
41. In her correspondence with W, Ms Zaman did not mention J. He is not mentioned in the draft article sent to D on 10 April, and nor is there any suggestion from D that he knew of J through W.
42. Ms Zaman continued to include allegations against J in her dealings with the Metropolitan Police in 2018. She did not mention him in the letter she circulated to parliamentarians and others in 2018.
43. The information from the police provided to us by Ms Zaman and by the Metropolitan Police contain no suggestion that Ms Zaman’s complaints against J had been found to be false, only that there was insufficient evidence for the police to proceed any further.

Analysis

44. We know that Ms Zaman did make allegations to the police in London against J. We have received no evidence to suggest that the police concluded

²⁹ See paragraph 211 of the factual report in Appendix 2

these allegations were false. J was not referred to in the letter the police sent to Ms Zaman in November 2018, explaining why they were not proceeding with their investigation into Lord Ahmed or S.

45. There is no evidence that Ms Zaman discussed her experiences with J with anyone she might know in Rochdale other than her family members. By his own account, L did not speak to Ms Zaman's family or "social circle". In his response to the draft factual report, Lord Ahmed referred to other material which indicated Ms Zaman had spoken to S's landlady about her experiences with J. However, I note that S and J were both based in South East England; this therefore does not indicate that others in Rochdale would have been aware.
46. There is no evidence that J was discussed between D and W.
47. In his interview L said that he had been told that Ms Zaman was a liar, but then retreated from this position to say that this was an assumption based on what people said to him. He made it clear that he did not probe the allegation that his sources had been told that the complaint Ms Zaman made against J had been shown to be false.
48. We only have their word for it that D and L made any enquiries of their sources in Rochdale in April 2018. However, we have good evidence that W, G³⁰ and U were investigating her story at this time. Though they were also not able to provide contemporaneous notes of any enquiries of those they spoke to, they all gave much more detailed accounts of the checks they made to satisfy themselves of Ms Zaman's reliability as a witness, including talking to friends and family, which D and L did not.
49. Absence of evidence does not necessarily denote evidence of absence, but in circumstances when it would be natural for evidence to be forthcoming, the lack of such evidence tends to suggest it did not exist.

Summary of evidence and analysis

50. The only evidence that local sources told L in April 2018 that Ms Zaman had made allegations against J that had been shown to be false comes from L, who says he told D in 2018 and said the same in his statement of June 2020. W was not informed.
51. The only evidence that D and L made enquiries of sources in Rochdale in April 2018 or at any other time is their unsupported statements to this effect.
52. Lord Ahmed knew of Ms Zaman's complaints about J, because Ms Zaman had put them in her letter to him in February 2017. There is no suggestion that he told anyone in Rochdale about them.
53. There is no evidence that the police investigated J before April 2018 or subsequently and found the allegations made by Ms Zaman to be false.
54. The Newsnight broadcast, publicising Ms Zaman's allegations about Lord Ahmed, did not result in any of the sources coming forward with their evidence that Ms Zaman had made false allegations against J and that they had told D and L.

30 G contacted my office and the House of Lords press office a number of times following my dismissal of Ms Zaman's first complaint.

L's statement that he had been told in April 2018 that Ms Zaman was estranged from her family

55. In his statement, L wrote, "My sources came back to me and informed me that she was estranged from her family". This information was presented to him as part of his seeking to verify Ms Zaman's story on behalf of D in around April 2018.
56. Ms Zaman addressed this in her written response to the additional material presented by Lord Ahmed saying, "he clearly is lying when he says I have always been estranged from my family before this documentary".
57. Lord Ahmed's reply to her response picked up on this issue. He presented Ms Zaman's response as showing that she was "lying now or she has lied previously" as in a letter to the police in September 2019 she had told the police that her family had turned against her, including preventing her from attending her brother's wedding.
58. We discussed this with Ms Zaman, who told us that there was a period of estrangement following the Newsnight broadcast in February 2019.³¹
59. Mr Zaman agreed that there had been a period following the broadcast where Ms Zaman had "isolated herself", he thought due to the pressure she was under following the broadcast.³²
60. Ms Zaman's sister, H, agreed that the Newsnight broadcast had caused difficulties within the family but insisted that before that they "had a strong bond". She also said that matters had now been reconciled. Her sister, R, gave a similar account.³³
61. We know from the first investigation that Ms Zaman's sisters helped her with her complaint in January 2018, and U told us that he spoke to family members in 2018 when verifying Ms Zaman's story.
62. The beginning of the rift can be fairly closely identified from the evidence that the family attended the wedding of Ms Zaman's daughter in December 2018, but she did not attend that of her brother in June 2019.

Analysis

63. L's account that he was told in or around April 2018 that Ms Zaman was estranged from her family is inconsistent with Ms Zaman's account and those of her father and sisters, and of U.
64. Ms Zaman's account, which is corroborated by her father and sisters, was that there was a period of estrangement following the Newsnight broadcast.
65. The accounts of family members and Ms Zaman differ on detail, which I attribute to different members of the family having different conversations with Ms Zaman; to family members feeling uncomfortable talking about this sensitive family issue, which has resonated in the wider family in England and in other countries; and to a wish to reduce the risk of harm to prospects of reconciliation. I consider the only important point, which they all agree

31 See paragraph 62 of the factual report in Appendix 2

32 See paragraph 232 of the factual report in Appendix 2

33 See paragraphs 248–249 of the factual report in Appendix 2

on, is that it was the broadcast, and Ms Zaman speaking to camera without concealment, that triggered the rift.

66. **There is evidence in the report of the first investigation, (shown to Lord Ahmed during that investigation) and in the evidence of W, G and U in this investigation, that two of Ms Zaman’s sisters helped her with her complaint in 2018.**
67. L offered no further evidence to corroborate his account.
68. Lord Ahmed’s claim that Ms Zaman was clearly lying in her written response is not borne out by the evidence he himself produced, which shows that when she referred to the rift in her family, this was many months after the Newsnight broadcast.

Summary of evidence and analysis

69. **The evidence that L was told in April 2018 that Ms Zaman was estranged from her family and that he reported it to D consists only of their accounts.**
70. **There is no evidence that they informed W or anyone else.**
71. **There is no other evidence that they made these enquiries of local sources.**
72. **There is good evidence, provided in 2019 as well as during this supplementary investigation, that Ms Zaman was not estranged from her family in 2018.**
73. **Lord Ahmed’s assertion that Ms Zaman is clearly lying is not supported by the evidence he puts forward or any other evidence.**

D’s statement that Ms Zaman had volunteered to him in April 2018 she had lied in her allegations against Lord Ahmed

D’s account

74. In his written statement, D said that, having received information from his own sources and those of L that cast doubt on Ms Zaman’s story, he intended to speak to her and to “create a friendly atmosphere and come across to her as a friend who was on her side”. According to his account, Ms Zaman then contacted him herself and volunteered that “the allegation she had made which were in the article to be published, namely that she was sexually assaulted and exploited by Lord Ahmed were false”, invented as Lord Ahmed had broken off their relationship and she was “infuriated ... to the extent that she wanted to get back at Lord Ahmed and destroy his career”. He also said she intended to use a #MeTooMyLord to increase the impact of her complaints.
75. He said that one reason why Ms Zaman had confided in him was because he and she came from the same area of Pakistan, and another was that he knew her father (who was friends with D’s uncle).
76. We discussed this allegation with D.³⁴ We asked whether he had any contemporaneous notes to corroborate his account. He said he made notes

34 See paragraphs 114–115 of the factual report in Appendix 2

on his mobile phone, but his phone had since been damaged—no copies of notes were provided to us.

77. We asked D what Ms Zaman had said to him. He said she had told him “I need to get back at Mr Ahmed because he broke my relationship ... I’m willing to go to any extent to do him over, to get my revenge”.
78. We asked for further details of the nature of the lies she had said she had told. He replied:

““Nature”? She’s explained that she’s got a - she’s having a relationship with someone called [X] and then Mr -- Lord Ahmed found out about the relationship and made false --broke a friendship with her and therefore she needs to get back to Mr -- get him back and destroy his career, Mr Ahmed’s career. ... Ms Tahira Zaman in the initial stage she’s told me that she’s had -- she’s been sexually assaulted by Lord Ahmed, which later on was never discussed in that phone conversation. So all that I could assume she’s just going for the revenge.”
79. In interview, D did not mention the proposed #MeTooMyLord campaign.
80. We asked whether he had passed this information to Lord Ahmed at the time. He said he had not, as this would have involved revealing he had been working on a damaging story.
81. He also did not discuss Ms Zaman’s revelations with W, the journalist who had initially contacted him to work on the story. D explained that this was because “he was not my direct source, so I had to report everything to my seniors” and because his conversation with Ms Zaman took place after W had told him that the national newspaper he was hoping to work with (The Sun, according to D’s account) had pulled out because, as he understood it, it did not believe the allegations were true.
82. We asked whether he mentioned his conversation with Ms Zaman to Lord Ahmed after the Newsnight broadcast. He said he had not.
83. We asked if he had discussed the conversation with any of his journalist colleagues after the broadcast. He said he had not.
84. After the Newsnight broadcast, W published a story summarising the allegations made in that broadcast. We asked if D had spoken to W at that point to inform him of his conversation with Ms Zaman. He said he had not. He explained, “when it broke I wasn’t aware, so I became aware after that and then I did not feel appropriate that I could do anything in order to pursue this because I don’t have any solid proofs.”

L’s account

85. L stated that he did not speak to Ms Zaman directly at any point but he confirmed that he had proposed to D that he create a friendly atmosphere with Ms Zaman after his sources had reported she could not be trusted. D had subsequently reported to him his conversation with Ms Zaman. He said that, as the situation was a junior colleague consulting a senior one, there were no written notes of their conversations.³⁵

35 See paragraph 156 of the factual report in Appendix 2

86. We asked him if he and D had discussed telling Lord Ahmed about Ms Zaman's phone call. He said they had not because "this was quite personal and this was, you know, confidential".
87. We asked whether he and D had discussed matters after the Newsnight broadcast. He said that they had done, though not in detail:
- "So this was not like a story on which we will talk, like, every day. So it wasn't very important to us."
88. They had been surprised that Newsnight had gathered sufficient evidence to be confident running the story and thought it must have worded the story very carefully to avoid legal action. They continued to believe that Ms Zaman had fabricated her allegations but as they had no records of Ms Zaman's conversation or their subsequent discussions, they took no further action.

Ps account

89. P works for D.³⁶ She told us that she was his secretary, keeping his diary, replying to his emails, organising his business appointments, and accompanying him to business meetings and events. D suggested we speak to her. He had asked her to read through the transcript of his meeting with me and she had reminded him that she had overheard his conversation with Ms Zaman.
90. P said that D had asked her to look through the transcript of our meeting "so he could make sure everything was okay". She said she:
- had not been aware that D had been making enquiries about Ms Zaman in April 2018;
 - had not seen or heard of the Newsnight broadcast;
 - had not mentioned the alleged phone call to anyone else;
 - had not known that Lord Ahmed had asked D for a character reference;
 - was not aware of the statement he had given to Lord Ahmed's lawyers;
 - was not aware that D had been asked by Lord Ahmed's lawyers to look for supporting evidence for his account and had not been asked to help look for any such material;
 - had not seen any diary entry about D needing to contact the solicitors; and
 - did not know why D asked her to read out the transcript.
91. I asked P what she had heard Ms Zaman say on the phone. She said:
- "so somebody called, but I didn't know who was that woman who called [D] because I was in the car and his Bluetooth was connected to the car. So I was on the passenger side. So somebody called him and then she said, "Brother [D], you know I've told you to publish this story for me, so can you help me with this?", and [D] said, you know, "There are other publishers involved. They were involved but they backed off

36 See paragraphs 330–348 of the factual report in Appendix 2

because there are so many weak points". And then she said, "Brother [D], can you please help me with this because of Mr Lord Nazir?" -- this is how when she mentioned his name-- because of Mr Lord Nazir her relationship is finished so she wants to take revenge and destroy his career. And what D's reply was, "All right; okay, I'll see what I can do. We'll talk further on this; that's all". Then I ask [D], "Who is this woman, and why is she asking you to do something wrong about, you know, Mr Nazir"? Because I have met Mr Nazir a few times on a professional levels on the events. He said, "Just leave it with me and I'll sort this out". That's all I know about this."

92. Subsequently she said that D had mentioned Ms Zaman's name in the phone call.
93. She said that during the phone call Ms Zaman was not specific about what aspects of the story were fabricated. She had simply said "she wants to take her revenge and destroy his career. And she can go to any extent and she can add up more into the story if you want her to do that. That's all I know about it, nothing else, you know, what was going on or, you know, what he said, what kind of relationship she had with Mr Nazir or anything. I don't know anything about."

Ms Zaman's account

94. Ms Zaman categorically denied any conversation with D in which she said she had fabricated or had being willing to fabricate allegations against Lord Ahmed. In the course of her denials she noted that:
 - it would have made little sense for her to seek help from the media and then volunteer to one of the journalists involved that her allegations were false;
 - the experiences she was taking to the media with S, J and Lord Ahmed had led her to distrust Pakistani men;
 - it was odd that neither D or L had sought to publish any story about her following the Newsnight broadcast (as W had done); and
 - it was odd that neither L nor D had alerted Lord Ahmed to what she was alleged to have said in the phone call to D after the Newsnight broadcast.
95. In her comments on the factual report she pointed out that she never referred to Lord Ahmed as Mr Lord Nazir.

Analysis

The likelihood of Ms Zaman making such a disclosure

96. In April 2018 Ms Zaman was in contact with a number of journalists, at least two of whom, W and U, were pursuing the possibility of publication. In addition, the police were investigating her complaints against Lord Ahmed.
97. D was someone she had never met, who had been introduced to her by W, and who she had only spoken to on the phone. The risks of recruiting this man to help her deceive her other contacts would have been very significant,

and the fact that D knew her father and their ancestral homes were close to each other would hardly justify such a risk.

Inconsistent accounts

98. The accounts of this alleged conversation given in D's oral and written evidence are inconsistent. The written account, given in June 2020, is detailed and specific. His oral account, given in August 2020, is much less so, and differs markedly. In his written account he wrote she was very specific in setting out what was not true, and in mentioning the #MeTooMyLord campaign. In his oral account he said that she never mentioned the detail in the phone call and therefore "I could only assume she was going for revenge".
99. P's account is similar to D's oral account in that it is non-specific. However, she says she knew it was about Lord Ahmed as Ms Zaman mentioned his name 'Mr Lord Nazir'. P also said that during this conversation Ms Zaman offered to make up more lies if it would help destroy Lord Ahmed. However, D's written and oral evidence did not include this serious allegation.
100. P did not refer to Ms Zaman mentioning the #MeTooMyLord campaign.
101. Of course, I accept that accounts given at different times, and relying on memory, can quite innocently vary somewhat. After D's email informing me of P's recognition of overhearing the phone call, I wanted to re-interview him and my office made several attempts to contact him to make arrangements. However, he did not respond to these requests. If I had interviewed him, I would have asked him about the various differences in these accounts. I would also have asked:
 - why he had not mentioned to L, when discussing the alleged phone call in 2018, that P had been in the car—they both said that the information could not be used because it had only been made to D; the presence of P as a witness would, to some extent, have mitigated this. However, D did not mention it;
 - why, in view of Ms Zaman's apparent willingness to volunteer that she was lying, he had not attempted to get her to repeat herself in circumstances where he could have recorded her. Having once succeeded in creating a suitably friendly atmosphere with Ms Zaman such that she volunteered she had lied, I would have been keen to know why he had not repeated this tactic in order to get usable material from her;
 - why he had not spoken to P about Lord Ahmed's request that he speak to his lawyers—there appears to have been a gap of about two months between Lord Ahmed requesting a character reference and D speaking to Imran Khan & Partners. P helps to manage his diary so one might expect her to have been involved in making those arrangements, or, at least, reminding him of them, particularly as all this happened during lockdown, when D was under great pressure because of his increased caring responsibilities;
 - why he had breached the confidentiality of this investigation by asking P to read his statement;

- why, if confidentiality was not the reason, he had not spoken to P about his involvement in this investigation before asking her to check his transcript and, having done so, what the purpose was of asking P (who was not present at our interview) to read the transcript.

102. Clarification of what D actually said when interviewed by Imran Khan & Partners would have been helpful in establishing why D's statement gave so much more detail about what Ms Zaman had said than either he or P recounted at interview with us. D authorised Imran Khan & Partners to release the notes of interview to us, and we contacted them to inform them of this, but the notes have not been provided to us.

Failure to act on Ms Zaman's voluntary account of lying

103. D confirmed that he:

- did not inform W of what Ms Zaman had said—neither immediately following his call with Ms Zaman, nor after the Newsnight broadcast—and gave no satisfactory explanation for this, though it might have been considered, at the very least, a professional courtesy to W, with whom he had worked over many years and who he must have known could have been at serious financial and reputational risk if he published an untrue story;
- did not discuss the matter with other colleagues, either at the time or after the broadcast—though the Newsnight broadcast appears to have been of interest to his colleagues within the Pakistan Press Club who posted a message of support to Lord Ahmed some days after the broadcast (see image 26 in Appendix 2);
- did not inform Lord Ahmed of the phone call, neither at the time nor after the Newsnight broadcast. The social media posts show that D and Lord Ahmed were together in August 2018 in New Jersey, that Lord Ahmed had done D and his family the honour of attending prayers following D's sister's death in September 2018, and that D invited Lord Ahmed to attend as a special guest another event he organised in Manchester in December 2018. In January 2019, D attended the funeral and prayers in Pakistan for Lord Ahmed's sister, and later in the year he and Lord Ahmed were again together at a friend's granddaughter's wedding. D says that he did not say anything to Lord Ahmed because it would have meant revealing he had been planning to write a criticism of Lord Ahmed. However, it would have been easy enough for him to frame his actions as a successful effort to protect Lord Ahmed. It is not at all clear why the Newsnight broadcast did not trigger a response from D but a subsequent request by Lord Ahmed to provide a character reference immediately resulted in him offering to provide the information to Lord Ahmed's lawyers.

104. Each of these would appear to have been logical steps for someone keen to pursue a story (as he initially was), keen to help a professional friend, (as W was), or willing to provide support to Lord Ahmed (as he has been in this investigation). D offers no plausible explanation for his inaction following Ms Zaman's alleged phone call.

105. Later in this report we discuss the evidence that D had a conversation about the Newsnight programme with Mr Zaman, before the programme was

broadcast. As explained below, we consider the evidence to be strong that the meeting took place and that it had been instigated by Lord Ahmed. If this were so, we would have expected D to have told Lord Ahmed about the phone call, as it would have been useful ammunition in his response to the letter sent to him by the BBC before the broadcast.

Lack of supporting evidence

106. Neither D nor L had any note or record of the alleged phone call, nor of their discussions about it. Given that it was D's intention to get Ms Zaman to tell him the truth, it is relevant to the plausibility of his story that he appears not to have attempted to obtain any usable record of her account of having lied.
107. In his response to the draft factual report, Lord Ahmed suggested that I was not being even handed when I pressed D for contemporaneous evidence to support his account that Ms Zaman volunteered that she had lied to him, when I make no issue about other witnesses not having their contemporaneous notes of contact with Ms Zaman. However, in the interviews with D, L and P my role was to test their evidence, which was disputed. I was therefore seeking any independent evidence that the conversation had taken place. With other witnesses, that they had spoken to Ms Zaman during the same period was not contested. My purpose in interviewing them was to ask their views on Ms Zaman's reliability and to assess the evidence on which they based their views.
108. D, L and P could not produce any independent contemporaneous evidence, for instance a note of the conversation, a third party to whom any of them had spoken about the call, or a text between them referencing it. Not only was there nothing, but D had not even mentioned P as a witness when he discussed the alleged phone conversation with L.

P's account of how she became aware of the current investigation

109. P's account of how she became aware that she had information relevant to our investigation shows a strong resemblance to the account of how D came to make a statement to Lord Ahmed's solicitors.
110. In both cases, the possessor of a significant piece of information—which had not been mentioned for over two years—became aware of its significance when asked to carry out an unrelated task: in D's case to provide a character reference; in P's, to read out the transcript of an interview at which she had not been present. The intervention, twice, of a *deus ex machina* allowed Lord Ahmed to introduce new evidence in his appeal. The fact that it allegedly happened twice, to my mind somewhat undermines the likelihood of it having happened at all.
111. As noted above, we sought a further interview with D. Had he been forthcoming in responding to those requests, we would have asked him follow-up questions as set out at paragraph 106 above, including questions about P's involvement.
112. As we could not ask him these questions, and as P was unable to suggest why she had been asked to read out the transcript, I consider it likely that either no such reading took place, or that any such reading was intended to give an air of verisimilitude to P's account.

Summary of evidence and analysis

113. At the time of the alleged phone call Ms Zaman was in contact with journalists interested in promoting her story, and the police were investigating her complaints against Lord Ahmed.
114. She hardly knew D and had never met him.
115. The only evidence that this call took place is in the evidence of D and P, and in the evidence of L that he was told about it (but not told that P had heard the conversation).
116. D did not to warn W about the content of Ms Zaman's phone call.
117. D did not mention the phone call to Lord Ahmed at times when it would have been natural to do so, and gave no real explanation for his subsequent willingness to do so this year.
118. D and L did not to discuss the phone call with trusted colleagues in the PPCUK after the broadcast.

Ms Zaman's allegation, in her written response to the new material, that D had spoken to her father before the Newsnight broadcast, asking him to discourage her from involvement in it, and that this was probably at Lord Ahmed's request

119. In her response to Lord Ahmed's appeal, Ms Zaman wrote:

“The journalist, [D] has omitted that as soon as BBC Newsnight wrote to Lord Ahmed for his side of the story, that he was ordered or sent by Lord Ahmed, to visit my father at his home in Rochdale. He then asked my father to sit in the car with him, and informed him that BBC are going to release documentary about what happened to me, and that he should be forcing his daughter to stop. He tried to intimidate my father by stating, his daughter is bringing shame to his family and to the local community. [D] also reminded my father that he is a public figure and it would have grave consequences on his position. My father had no idea I had contacted media before [D] unexpectedly and suddenly visited and spoke to him. My father did call me up, and reprimanded me, and appeared scared by [D] and Lord Ahmed. My father told me not to go ahead with the documentary.”
120. During the first investigation we were provided with part of the letter the BBC sent to Lord Ahmed on 6 February 2019, informing him of their investigation, referring to Ms Zaman by name, and inviting his response to her allegations.
121. Lord Ahmed responded to this allegation in a submission to the Committee:

“By stating that [D] visited her father at his home in Rochdale after BBC Newsnight contacted me she has provided confirmation of what [D] has said in his statement that he knew her father because the families came from the same village.”
122. He did not deal with Ms Zaman's allegation that he had asked [D] to meet Mr Zaman.

123. We spoke to Mr Zaman.³⁷ He confirmed that he knew D. He described being contacted by D before the Newsnight broadcast:

“he said that, “I would like to see you. It’s very urgent matter”, and then I went to Town Hall. He was parked outside the Town Hall and I sat in his car ... And he said that there is going to be a documentary which is going to be out and it’s going to bring so many problems and all of that. He actually asked me to stop Tahira from doing that ... He was saying, “The community is going to be so much, you know, everybody is going to get to know about it and it’s going to be no good for our community, no good for you because you’re Mayor and it’s going to be really something really bad for our community”. So around it he said sort of things.”

124. We asked whether he had the impression D had approached him out of concern for Ms Zaman, Lord Ahmed or both:

“Well, he wasn’t concerned about -- well, Tahira, I think it more it was like because he’s very close to Lord Nazir Ahmed.”

125. Mr Zaman said that the meeting had happened shortly before the broadcast and that he had not known about the broadcast before being told of it by D.

126. H Zaman was Lady Mayoress while her father was Lord Mayor of Rochdale.³⁸ She recalled her father mentioning “at the time someone advising him to tell her not to go ahead with it.”

127. R Zaman also recalled her father telling her about the incident:³⁹

“He had come over and he said that a man called [D] -- I mean, my dad knows this particular [D]; I don’t know who he is. He said that he had come over and my dad was in a bit of a shock and I’m like, “What’s happened? Just tell me”.

He goes, “I can’t, I can’t understand, I’m a bit confused”. And he goes that, “[D] said that, you know, ‘You need to stop your daughter from going ahead with this documentary being aired. If you don’t --’” Now I would take it as a threat what I’m about to repeat now. He said to my dad that, “If she goes ahead with this documentary, she will get killed”, in his exact words, and this is exactly how my dad told me.”

128. Ms Zaman told us that the conversation with D led her father to speak to her grandfather in Pakistan.⁴⁰ Her grandfather then phoned her to attempt to persuade her to withdraw from the broadcast. R Zaman also recalled her grandfather becoming involved following the conversation with her father.

129. In his response to the draft factual report, Lord Ahmed suggested, without any evidence, that I decided not to contact Ms Zaman’s grandfather to protect his privacy. That was not the reason. We considered trying to speak to Ms Zaman’s grandfather, but upon being told that he lives in Azad Kashmir, that he is in his late 90s and losing his memory somewhat and that any interview would have to take place through an interpreter, I decided that, in

37 See paragraphs 219–237 of the factual report in Appendix 2

38 See paragraph 93 of the factual report in Appendix 2

39 See paragraphs 244 and 245 of the factual report in Appendix 2

40 See paragraphs 52 and 53 of the factual report in Appendix 2

light of the accounts of family members in England, it was not necessary to interview him, and would likely cause him anxiety disproportionate to the value of anything he might say.

130. W recalled Ms Zaman telling him that D had approached her father before the Newsnight broadcast, and told him that her father was upset by the meeting.⁴¹
131. D denied Ms Zaman's allegation. He said he had never spoken to Mr Zaman on the topic.⁴²
132. Lord Ahmed criticises me for not interviewing D on this again, once Mr Zaman had given his account. There was no need for me to do so: the allegation had been put to him, and he had given a clear and categorical answer.

Analysis

133. D denies that this meeting took place.
134. The accounts of Mr Zaman, and his daughters Tahira, R and H Zaman, confirm that Mr Zaman told each of them of the meeting. There are some differences in their accounts: Ms Zaman places the conversation in a car at Mr Zaman's home; Mr Zaman, in his car outside Rochdale Town Hall; and R, in Mr Zaman's house. As I previously explained in dealing with the variations in the accounts of D and P, I accept that accounts given at different times, and relying on memory, can quite innocently vary somewhat. As the accounts of the daughters are second hand, this is another factor that makes discrepancies more likely.
135. Ms Zaman told W about the meeting and her father's reaction to it before this investigation began, which supports the veracity of the account by the family.
136. The family's accounts of the fact of the meeting and its aftermath, including the detail that Ms Zaman's grandfather was brought in to try and persuade her not to co-operate with the programme, are consistent on the central points of the meeting, its timing and the effect of it on Mr Zaman.
137. Some of the detail of the conversation varies, but as Mr Zaman was the only person present whose account we have, I consider his version is likely to be the most reliable.
138. Lord Ahmed was aware of the Newsnight broadcast ahead of transmission on 14 February 2019 as the BBC had written to him on 6 February to ask for his response to the allegations. Our research shows no publicity ahead of the broadcast, as is usual for Newsnight investigations. If D did speak to Mr Zaman ahead of the broadcast, his only likely source of knowledge about the broadcast would have been Lord Ahmed.

Summary of evidence and analysis

139. D denies that this meeting took place.

41 See paragraph 203 of the factual report in Appendix 2

42 See paragraph 120 of the factual report in Appendix 2

140. Mr Zaman described the meeting to us, and told us he had discussed it with his daughters. He thought that D wanted to protect Lord Ahmed, rather than his daughter Tahira, and he thought, although he had no proof, that Lord Ahmed was behind the meeting.
141. He said the meeting was shortly before the broadcast. The broadcast was on 14 February 2019 and the BBC wrote to Lord Ahmed about it on 6 February, so the timing of the meeting would fit into this period.

D's account that W told him that The Sun was pulling out as it believed the allegations to be false

142. In his written statement, D said, "[W] told me a couple of days later that The Sun newspaper had pulled out of running the story because, as he understood it, they considered the allegations to be false".
143. W and Ms Zaman both confirm that The Sun was never approached, so it seems likely that D mistook references to The Sunday Times as references to The Sun.
144. The more serious allegation is that W told D that the newspaper did not want to use the story because it believed Ms Zaman's claims were false. W and G (The Sunday Times journalist W had involved) both confirmed that the reason for The Sunday Times not taking the story was because of the lack of corroborative evidence, not doubts about Ms Zaman's veracity.⁴³

Analysis

145. Confusing The Sun with The Sunday Times is an odd mistake for a journalist to make.
146. The evidence of W and G as to the reason The Sunday Times did not run with the story is supported by their continued engagement with Ms Zaman.
147. There is no reason for W, who remained committed to publishing Ms Zaman's claim of sexual exploitation, to have given a false account to D about the reason The Sunday Times did not take the story.

The statement of D that Ms Zaman told him in 2018 that she was seeking to create or use a #MeTooMyLord campaign to increase the impact of her allegations against Lord Ahmed

148. In his statement, D said that during the telephone call in which Ms Zaman volunteered having fabricated her allegations, Ms Zaman had also said "she was going to use the 'MeToo' movement to get Lord Ahmed because as a result of that campaign, it was now easier to make these allegations against men and she hoped to gain publicity by calling what she was doing as '#MeTooMyLord'."
149. In interview, D made no mention of the campaign in his description of his phone call with Ms Zaman.
150. In his interview, W referred to the concept of a #MeTooMyLord campaign several times:⁴⁴

⁴³ See paragraphs 180 and 181, and 301 of the factual report in Appendix 2

⁴⁴ See paragraphs 171, 177 and 187 of the factual report in Appendix 2

- when Ms Zaman first approached him, he thought “I am getting a scoop. If I can muster two-three other victims, the story will be like Me Too Movement arrives in Westminster: #MeTooMyLord.”;
 - he described writing the draft article he sent to D as “I cobbled the story in the #MeToo angle”;
 - when Ms Zaman withdrew from the story as he was proposing publishing without names, he thought “My Weinstein angle #MeTooMyLord was also on hold”.
151. W told us he had shown the draft article containing a reference to #MeTooMyLord to Ms Zaman, but she told us she never saw it. She said that when she spoke to W, he had suggested she go online and look at the campaign. She thought he was suggesting this to give her strength, to see that other women were going through the same thing. She said she did look up the campaign “once or twice, but was not interested in doing anything about it, and had never wanted to get involved in the MeToo campaign.”
152. Our own searches online for the campaign uncovered a handful of posts on Twitter by W and Asian Lite⁴⁵ and an online petition on which W is one of two people to have commented.

Analysis

153. There is no evidence to link Ms Zaman to a #MeTooMyLord campaign, other than the suggestion made in W’s draft article, which was sent to D. W’s evidence gives the overwhelming impression that any campaign was his idea of a way of maximising the newsworthiness. This is corroborated by the instances of the use of #MeTooMyLord we were able to find online.

Lord Ahmed, D and L

The relationships between Lord Ahmed, D and L

154. In his written statement, D described his association with Lord Ahmed:
- “I should say that the reason Lord Ahmed asked me for a character reference is not because I have known him in any personal capacity but because I am aware of the various public and charitable events he has been involved in ... I have no reason whatsoever to say anything in Lord Ahmed’s favour or support him in any way.”
155. Later in his statement he added, “Whilst I was keen to run a story about a high profile public figure and a man that I had no relationship with or loyalty to, I was not prepared to assist in the promotion of a false story.”
156. During our interview he reaffirmed that he knew Lord Ahmed only as a high-profile figure with whom he had interacted as a journalist.
157. L described his relationship with Lord Ahmed in his written statement:
- “Since I work in a profession where meeting individuals with a high profile is common, I was aware of who Lord Nazir Ahmed was and that he was a prominent figure in the Pakistani Kashmiri Community as

⁴⁵ Some of these posts link to articles published by Asian Lite: one following the Newsnight broadcast and one following my first report in the conduct of Lord Stone of Blackheath.

well as a political figure. Other than this, as a result of his occasional appearances as a special guest at events hosted by the Pakistan Press Club UK I had the odd chance of interacting with him as he was a well-known public figure.”

158. During our interview he reaffirmed this description.
159. During our first interview, we asked Lord Ahmed about his relationship with D and why he had contacted him for a character reference. He confirmed that he knew D (and L) only in a professional sense. He had contacted D due to his position with the Pakistan Press Club North. He said he chose his character reference largely on the basis of geography—D was based in the north, as was Lord Ahmed.

Facebook pictures

160. During our investigation we found several photographs on Facebook of Lord Ahmed, D and L together at various functions and in various combinations.⁴⁶ These included:
- D and Lord Ahmed in New York/New Jersey;
 - D at the funeral of Lord Ahmed’s sister;
 - L at the funeral of Lord Ahmed’s sister;
 - Lord Ahmed at prayers following the death of D’s sister;
 - D and Lord Ahmed together both inside and outside of Parliament; and
 - D and Lord Ahmed together in a car.
161. In several instances there were exchanges of comments on the photographs between Lord Ahmed and D. At various points in those comments they described each other in apparently close terms.
162. We asked D to comment on these photographs. He said that they were all of either community or business events and that there was “no personal connection in them pictures”.

Images 6 & 27: Lord Ahmed and D in a car

163. For example, the photo of Lord Ahmed and D in a car was posted to Facebook by Lord Ahmed and appears to show Lord Ahmed and D sitting in a car with their seatbelts on (see images 6 & 27 in Appendix 2). D explained that this was taken at the wedding of a mutual friend’s granddaughter to which they had both arrived early and had decided to wait in one of their cars in the carpark. D had simply taken a selfie with Lord Ahmed. He had a habit of taking selfies.
164. Lord Ahmed gave a similar account. We asked why he had posted the photo to Facebook. He said that D had probably sent it to him and he posted it. Though he doesn’t post all the photographs that people sent to him, he said this one looked like a nice photograph of him: “I’m smiling. People like to see me smiling.”

46 See images in Appendix 2

Image 7 & 20: D, Lord Ahmed and others in Parliament

165. With regard to the picture of him in Parliament with Lord Ahmed, D explained that with him in the picture were his secretary, Lord Ahmed, Afzal Khan (MP for Manchester, Gorton) and three other women who were journalists from abroad (see images 7 and 20 in Appendix 2). A passer-by had taken the photo. His visit had been arranged by a friend, though he could not recall who that friend was. The friend was not in the photograph. He explained how Lord Ahmed came to be in the picture: “all the mutual friends we met Lord Nazir and we met Mr Afzal Khan.”
166. Lord Ahmed said he could not recollect who had organised the visit to Parliament for D. He said that hundreds, if not thousands, of people who come through the House of Lords have photographs with him.
167. Afzal Khan MP explained that three of the ladies in the photograph were his guests (a parliamentarian from Turkey and two others with her). While he was showing his guests around, they had come across Lord Ahmed, D and P. It was his impression that Lord Ahmed was giving D and P a tour. His recollection was that a passer-by took the photo as he could not recall anyone else being in the group who could have taken the picture.

Images 4, 18 and 24: the funeral of Lord Ahmed's sister and prayers after the death of D's sister

168. Lord Ahmed explained that it was customary in Pakistani culture for people to attend funerals of family members of people they know where there was not a personal relationship but as a mark of respect. As he suggested, we spoke to an Imam on this issue. I spoke to Imam [T] who, whilst noting that Islam encompassed a range of customs and practices, broadly confirmed Lord Ahmed's characterisation of cultural norms.⁴⁷

Other evidence

169. We spoke to W about D's connections with Lord Ahmed. He explained that one of the reasons he had contacted D was because he believed him to be a “close contact” of Lord Ahmed's. He recalled an occasion where “[D] mentioned a similar case. Lord Nazir misbehaved with a Pakistani TV journalist in front of a team of journalists. [D] later teased Lord for the incident”. He said that D had told him that he and Lord Ahmed socialised:

“W: Eh, I think they are closely involved in lots of activities, community activities and they have got their own personal life, I understand, so ----

SAM EVANS: Sorry, just so as I am clear. You have said “they have got their own personal life”. Do you mean that they see each other outside of their professional lives or ----

W: Yeah, that's right.

SAM EVANS: They do?

W: Yeah.

SAM EVANS: Okay. So they do see other outside of their professional contact.

47 See paragraphs 310–323 of the factual report in Appendix 2

W: That's right; that's correct."

170. While W was in contact with Ms Zaman in 2018, she sent him pictures she had found of Lord Ahmed and D together. She had been angry that someone she considered to be a contact of Lord Ahmed's had been involved. W continued to trust D despite these pictures and despite believing that D and Lord Ahmed had more than a professional relationship. He recognised that D might "be passing information" to Lord Ahmed but expected D not to do anything that would harm Ms Zaman. He said, "He may shared some info. He may be forced to do that, but he won't let Tahira down if there is an issue." He said [D] had explained he needed to keep on good terms with Lord Ahmed in order to support his business ventures: "[D] said he's in need of support from Lord Nazir and that's why he's posing with Lord Nazir ... It's like a patronage."
171. Ms Zaman's father, Mohammed Zaman, also understood D and Lord Ahmed to be close. He said that D came to see him before the Newsnight broadcast to encourage him to persuade Ms Zaman to pull out of the broadcast, his impression was that he had come on Lord Ahmed's behalf:

"when he came out the way to come and ask me to stop Tahira so I felt that maybe, you know, sometime if you can't go directly, you try to ask other people to go and do the job for you. So maybe [D] actually he came to ask me to see if I can speak to Tahira and stop it."

Analysis

172. Some of the photographs—such as those of Lord Ahmed and D attending the funerals or prayers of each other's sisters—do not necessarily imply a relationship that is more than strictly professional.
173. However, the picture in the car where both are wearing seatbelts, for example, is clearly not of one person having joined another in a parked car, while waiting for an event to begin.
174. The accounts D and Lord Ahmed offer for being photographed together in Parliament are undermined by D's incorrect statement that the women in the photo, apart from his secretary, P, were three foreign journalists, whereas Afzal Khan MP told us that the three women were his guests, one of them being a Turkish parliamentarian and that his impression was that Lord Ahmed was giving D and P a tour.
175. It is also odd that D says that he cannot remember who organised this visit, and that the photo that included Lord Ahmed and Mr Khan had been taken by a passer-by.
176. Mr Khan also thought that a passer-by took the photo, and if that is the case, the person who organised the visit should be in the photo. There is no reason to suppose that Mr Khan organised the visit, which only leaves Lord Ahmed. Of course, it is possible for a parliamentarian to organise a visit for a professional contact, but if that was the case, why did D not simply say so? An obvious reason would be that he was trying to avoid any suggestion that he and Lord Ahmed were close enough, whether professionally or personally, for Lord Ahmed to do him favours.

177. As noted above, Lord Ahmed's description of the custom and practice in his culture of attending the funerals of family members of people with whom they do not necessarily have a personal relationship was broadly confirmed by Imam [T]. In his response to my draft factual report, Lord Ahmed criticises the evidence we took from Imam [T] on the basis that he is not an expert in Kashmiri or Mirpuri culture and therefore not an appropriate witness. I accept that cultural and religious practices vary within Islam, and this was a point Imam [T] also made in his evidence. However, as his evidence broadly supported Lord Ahmed's description of matters, I did not feel that this was a line of investigation that required more specific attention. Had Imam [T]'s evidence cast doubt on Lord Ahmed's account it would have been necessary to gather more culturally-specific expert evidence.
178. Both W and Mr Zaman believed that D and Lord Ahmed had a personal as well as professional connection.
179. Lord Ahmed's reason for contacting D for a character reference is also notable, apparently based not on his knowledge of Lord Ahmed's character, but only on his being based in the North. L was not approached though he was also based in the North and, according to both L and D, would be considered a more senior figure. One explanation for his choice of D would be that he and Lord Ahmed knew one another better, but this would be inconsistent with D's written and oral evidence as well as Lord Ahmed's. If the relationship between D and Lord Ahmed was closer than they had presented, it would be necessary to consider why they should have presented it as being purely professional. The only explanation that would make sense in the current context would be to attempt to add a false impression of neutrality to D's evidence.

Summary of evidence and analysis

180. With regard to the social media posts, other than those relating to the funerals and prayers for Lord Ahmed's and D's sisters, the explanations given by Lord Ahmed and D are either implausible or inconsistent with other evidence. They appear to show a relationship closer than the neutral, professional contact described in the new material.
181. This impression is strengthened by the evidence of W who is unequivocal that D and Lord Ahmed have a close personal relationship as well as a professional one. Furthermore, Mr Zaman's clear impression following his conversation with D before the Newsnight broadcast was that D approached him on the behalf of Lord Ahmed.
182. Given that Lord Ahmed and D must know the nature of their relationship, that it has been misrepresented to the Committee cannot be inadvertent. The only likely reason for such misrepresentation is to attempt to add a false impression of neutrality to D's evidence.

D's initial refusal to be interviewed

183. When we first wrote to D to arrange a video interview he replied:

“Thank you for the email due to Covid 19 I will not be able to give interview via Microsoft as I'm a full time carer to both my sons with special needs they both need my full attention and supervision as well as

this trying to priorities my work too, it will be extremely difficult but i am happy to do it threw email.”

184. We explained that written evidence in this case would not meet our needs. He then agreed to a video interview.
185. In the course of investigating certain witnesses’ social media posts, including those of D, we became aware of a video posted to YouTube by the account “Travel with [L]”. The video features D and his sons in the park. They were in wheelchairs but apparently able to control their wheelchairs, feed themselves and speak to the camera recording their conversations. We also came across a posting from Sleek Asian (D’s publication) which listed them in marketing and management roles.
186. We asked for further evidence to assess whether D’s initial refusal to meet due to caring responsibilities was genuine. He gave us permission to speak to one of his sons’ healthcare team. She told us that his sons’ care needs, which she understood he shared with his wife, were intense and frequent but not constant.

Analysis

187. The information from the member of D’s sons’ healthcare team does not support D’s initial assertion that their care needs prevented him from meeting with us. From the description given, it seems likely that a video meeting of 60-90 minutes, with any breaks necessary, would have been possible. Indeed, the fact that when we persisted in asking for a meeting, D was able to attend one of the first dates and times we proposed suggests that his caring responsibilities were not a genuine barrier to a meeting.
188. Given that D’s was the key evidence being relied upon by Lord Ahmed in his appeal, his initial refusal to meet on grounds which do not appear to have been genuine is significant when considering his credibility as a witness.
189. In his response to my draft factual report, Lord Ahmed was critical of the attention I paid to this issue, saying I appear not to accept the evidence of the disabilities of D’s sons. This is not the case. My focus was on the extent of D’s caring responsibilities, a topic introduced by him when we first contacted him as the key witness introduced by Lord Ahmed’s appeal.

The circumstances leading to D and L giving statements to Imran Khan & Partners in June 2020

190. In his appeal Lord Ahmed wrote that D had been asked to provide a character reference in his support, and this led to him telling Lord Ahmed he had further information. D gave a similar account in his written statement.
191. When we interviewed Lord Ahmed on 11 August, we asked why he had not mentioned that he had a further witness with potential information when he had put in his character references and other representations in May 2020. He said he had not known what the information was. He said he asked D to contact his solicitors, and he had then had no further contact with him, made no attempt to contact him, and did not discuss the situation with his solicitors.
192. We interviewed D on 14 August and asked him about the phone call from Lord Ahmed. He said that once he had told him that he had further

information, Lord Ahmed had given him his lawyer's number and said he would give his lawyer D's details.

193. We asked why it had taken so long for D to get in contact with Imran Khan & Partners after his phone conversation with Lord Ahmed in April. He explained that he had forgotten about it at a time of high pressure when he was having to manage his increased caring responsibilities and his work during lockdown:

"So it just went so chaos; it just went so busy. So I totally forgot about it. I think his lawyer tried contacting me, but I must have missed their call. Then I was reminded to check the email. I think that was sometime in June - mid-June ... I think 16 or 18 June when I become aware that they want to speak to me."

194. We asked him to have a look for the email he referred to, and he said he would, but we have not received anything.

195. In order to clarify precisely the sequence of events that led to the written statements being produced, I wrote to Mr Khan on 14 August. There then followed a series of emails between me and Mr Khan's office. During that time, I also interviewed Lord Ahmed again. In his second interview he said that he had given his solicitors D's details, rather than the other way around as per his interview. I sought to clarify this detail in my emails with Mr Khan's office too.⁴⁸

196. On this specific point—whether D was given details to contact Imran Khan & Partners or the other way around—Mr Khan's office replied:

"The only information I can provide to you without breaching privilege is that as a consequence of contact with Lord Ahmed on the 30th April, we became aware of [D] being a potential witness. As you are aware the process of taking a statement from him commenced on the 18th June."

197. As his office had kindly ended the previous email by saying that I should not hesitate to contact them if I had any further queries, I emailed again:

"Thank you for your prompt reply, which is helpful. However, it does raise a further point, which I hope you can answer.

You say that as a consequence of contact with Lord Ahmed on the 30th April, you became aware of [D] being a potential witness. Did Lord Ahmed tell you that [D] was a possible character witness, or did he explain that [D] had said he had information relevant to Lord Ahmed's appeal?

Also, can you say when you first tried to make contact with [D], and why?

Finally, in relation to the other people who provided character references, did your firm play any part in obtaining these, or did they simply send them to you? If your firm did play a part, can you clarify when you made contact with these witnesses?

48 See paragraphs 85–90 of the factual report in Appendix 2

I realise, of course, that you are under no obligation to provide this information, but if Lord Ahmed's accounts on this are correct, legal professional privilege does not prevent you from confirming the details, so long as Lord Ahmed agrees.' I received a reply from [your office] the same day, saying that she regretted not being in a position to assist any further."

198. Mr Khan's office replied on 25 September saying, "I regret that I am not in a position to assist any further."

Analysis

199. D did not provide the email by which he told us he was reminded to contact Lord Ahmed's solicitors. Lord Ahmed says he had no contact with D during this process, and P told us she knew nothing about D's offer to provide information to Lord Ahmed's lawyers, so she could not have reminded him.
200. Imran Khan & Partners did not answer our questions as to when D contacted the firm, nor when they first tried to make contact with him.
201. The sender of the email reminding D to contact Lord Ahmed's solicitors there remains unknown, nor have I been provided with any evidence that the email was sent.
202. I also have no independent evidence to explain the gap between Lord Ahmed's alleged conversation with D in April and the contact between D and the firm in the second half of June. I note here that D said that there was chaos because of the lockdown, and I am sure he is right that lockdown would have brought multiple problems for his family to deal with. However, lockdown began on 23 March, and although things may have still been very difficult a month later, presumably some sort of new normal would have emerged for this family as for all others. By his own account, D understood the importance of his information, which is why he was willing to break his silence at this point. It seems odd that, despite this, he then forgot about it.
203. Legal professional privilege is a principle that in certain circumstances, which I consider to include my investigation, protects all communications between a qualified lawyer and his or her client from being disclosed without the client's consent. Its rationale is to support the administration of justice.
204. The principle does not prevent the lawyer disclosing information covered by privilege if the client consents.
205. In this case, I have tried to get confirmation of Lord Ahmed's claim that he spoke to D in April 2020 at the same time as he was asking others to be a character witness for him; that D said he had relevant information about the matter, that Lord Ahmed gave D his solicitors contact details and also gave D's contact details to his solicitors, and that he took no further part in the evidence gathering process.
206. However, as set out above, I have not been able to obtain this confirmation from Imran Khan & Partners, and have been told that this is because of privilege. The obvious inference is that the firm cannot confirm Lord Ahmed's account, either because he has not allowed them to do so, or because providing the information I have requested would damage Lord Ahmed's interests.

207. Imran Khan & Partners is acting in accordance with its professional duties in the refusal to answer some of my questions, and I do not criticise it.
208. Nor do I speculate on the information that the firm feels unable to disclose.
209. However, I do invite the Conduct Committee to take into account, in any decision that it makes, the fact that I have been unable to clarify what ought to have been a simple question of the sequence of events leading up to the written statements being taken by Imran Khan & Partners. The information that would have clarified at least some of the uncertainty has been withheld from me.

Summary of evidence and analysis

210. D did not provide the email reminding him of the need to contact Lord Ahmed's solicitors.
211. I have not been able to confirm Lord Ahmed's account that he spoke to D in April 2020 at the same time as he was asking others to be a character witness for him; that D said he had relevant information about the matter; that Lord Ahmed gave D his solicitors contact details; and also gave D's contact details to his solicitors, and that he took no further part in the evidence gathering process. I have also not been able to establish who sent the email to D in June that he said triggered him contacting Imran Khan & Partners.

CHAPTER 3: EVIDENCE OF OTHER WITNESSES WHO DEALT WITH MS ZAMAN IN 2018 AND 2019

212. In this chapter I consider the evidence of people who engaged with Ms Zaman and her allegations in 2018/19, to establish their views as to her credibility and my view as to the reliability of those views.
213. In his comments Lord Ahmed says I should have asked the police for their views on Ms Zaman's reliability as a witness. This was dealt with in the report of the first investigation, where the police did not suggest that Ms Zaman had invented the allegations she made against Lord Ahmed.

Z

214. Z is a former chief crown prosecutor for North West England, with particular experience of prosecuting cases of child sexual exploitation and violence against women. He had advised Ms Zaman informally in 2018 and 2019. When we interviewed him, he told us that his account of his contact with Ms Zaman was drawn from memory as he had lost a lot of the emails between them about a year before the interview. All of his contact with Ms Zaman had been by phone or email.⁴⁹
215. I asked him in general terms how he assessed the credibility of vulnerable people alleging sexual abuse and exploitation, many of whom had not previously been believed by the police or other authorities. He explained how he did this, and also explained the need to be alert to the possibility that somebody was making false allegations with a view to perverting the course of justice.
216. He said that Ms Zaman's engagement with him was exactly what he would have expected of a victim of sexual abuse and exploitation, and that she showed none of the signs of having a hidden agenda:
- “I am not telling you that she is not lying. What I am saying is that there was nothing in what she told me, and the way that she told me, that would give me the impression or allow me to conclude that she was perjuring herself or lying at all.”
217. In his response to the draft factual report, Lord Ahmed criticised this line of questioning, arguing it was a “[c]ompletely unacceptable delegation of her [my] task”:
- “[Z] is a witness supporting the Complainant—not an objective party. He cannot be asked to give evidence on how he assessed her credibility. That is for the Commissioner to determine.”

Analysis

218. Z has spent much of his working life considering whether evidence has been provided to a level that justifies prosecution. He has specialised in dealing with allegations made by people alleging sexual assault and exploitation. He did not claim to know the truth—as a prosecutor, he knows this is a matter for a court to determine—but he considered Ms Zaman behaved as a sexually abused and exploited complainant would. He was particularly convincing

49 We also spoke to Z during my initial investigation. In that report he was referred to as [Z]

explaining the somewhat haphazard ways such complainants may disclose their evidence.⁵⁰

219. I disagree with Lord Ahmed's characterisation of Z as a witness supporting Ms Zaman if, by that, he intends to imply that Z was interviewed for that purpose, or at Ms Zaman's request. While Z provided advice to Ms Zaman in 2018, this does not mean that his evidence to us was partial in her favour. I would also note that by asking Z for his account of how he would assess the credibility of Ms Zaman I was gathering evidence rather than delegating a task.

W

220. When W was approached by Ms Zaman, his first reaction was to worry that he might be being led into a trap: Lord Ahmed is influential in his community and the allegations Ms Zaman was making were things that were not usually discussed in the community.
221. He told us he was aware that Lord Ahmed had a reputation as a womaniser, had seen a story by D that Lord Ahmed had behaved improperly with a female journalist, and had seen a YouTube video in which a woman made similar allegations against Lord Ahmed.⁵¹
222. It was his caution in pursuing a story that risked repercussions that led him to contact D and G. The only reason he did not publish the story was that he didn't have the backing of other media outlets with deeper pockets. As soon as the Newsnight broadcast was made he published the story.
223. W explained that once The Sunday Times had decided not to pursue the story, he considered that something powerful could still be published, though without either Lord Ahmed or Ms Zaman being named. However, Ms Zaman did not agree.
224. He was adamant that he could recognise when somebody was telling the truth and he recognised this in Ms Zaman.
225. We asked W how he would have reacted had D told him of the alleged phone call with Ms Zaman. He said:
- “I would stop my relationship with [D] at the next moment because Tahira - if Tahira is lying, then I won't pursue that case.”
226. In his response to the draft factual report, Lord Ahmed noted this response, saying:
- “[W] indicates he would have ceased contact with the Complainant had [D] told him she was lying. This demonstrates that he would prefer [D]'s word over hers. In turn this suggests that even witnesses on her behalf have doubts about her credibility.”
227. In her response to Lord Ahmed's appeal submission, Ms Zaman, in denying the alleged conversation with D, had said, “Why would I confess this to a

⁵⁰ See paragraph 26 of the factual report in Appendix 2

⁵¹ In his response to the draft factual report, Lord Ahmed provided a witness statement from V, the woman in the YouTube video referred to by W. My remit in this investigation was only to evaluate the evidence he had submitted in his appeal to the Conduct Committee. I therefore did not consider it within my power to accept further new evidence.

Pakistani person when I have stated how women are mistreated and blamed by my community”. We had asked whether the same objection would have applied to W. Ms Zaman explained that he was Indian, not Pakistani.

228. In his response to my draft factual report, Lord Ahmed suggested that this distinction was important, noting:

“I am aware that because of my views on Kashmir I am not liked by the Indian Government and many Indians would want to do me harm. The Complainant was obviously seeking to recruit somebody who would assist her in her plans to do me harm ie go along with her campaign to seek revenge.”

Analysis

229. W provided evidence that he had contacted other journalists and provided us with a link to the YouTube video referred to. He was acutely aware of the financial risks of making a false allegation, or one without sufficient corroborative or supportive evidence, and did his best to get this. He relied on his own judgement as well as the evidence of others and seemed to have taken relevant matters into consideration in reaching his decisions.
230. W’s views on Kashmir were not part of this investigation. There is no evidence to suggest his involvement was motivated by that issue and there is no evidence to suggest that in speaking to W, Ms Zaman was influenced by that issue. The fact that other journalists, including G and U, also engaged with Ms Zaman about her complaints suggests that Lord Ahmed’s views on Kashmir were not a relevant factor.
231. Lord Ahmed argues that W’s comment that he would not have pursued Ms Zaman’s story had D spoken to him about the alleged phone call demonstrates that W had doubts about Ms Zaman’s credibility. While his response suggests that, had he believed Ms Zaman was not truthful, he would not have pursued the story, the rest of his evidence does not indicate any doubt about Ms Zaman. Rather a little later in his testimony he clearly indicated he believed Ms Zaman’s account, saying “she knew what she is saying is true and truth will prevail. Nothing can stop Tahira to get justice. She is a new age, professional woman. She will fight till the end”.

G

232. G is an investigative reporter with The Sunday Times, and its Northern Correspondent.
233. When we interviewed him on 25 August, he told us that he had been put in touch with Ms Zaman through W, who wanted to involve The Sunday Times because he wasn’t experienced in handling reports and investigations of this sort. He interviewed Ms Zaman a number of times and was convinced that she had had a relationship with Lord Ahmed. She told him that she had been groomed, taken advantage of and that Lord Ahmed had tried to pass on to someone else. He understood that Ms Zaman’s contact with Lord Ahmed had arisen entirely out of her hope that Lord Ahmed, through his Parliamentary position, would help her to get the police to investigate S, and that Lord Ahmed had agreed to help.
234. He explained that the problem with running the story was that it was not backed by an official investigation of some sort, and he didn’t feel there was

enough evidence to run the article without such backing. He said that these were the reasons The Sunday Times did not pursue the story. He did not say that The Sunday Times did not believe her account.

235. He made the point that initially he had been appropriately sceptical of Ms Zaman's account—he was aware that Lord Ahmed ended the relationship and he had to allow for the possibility that Ms Zaman was trying to get her own back for the ending of the relationship. However, he concluded that she was telling the truth. His impression was that Ms Zaman just wanted to be taken seriously.
236. In his response to the draft factual report, Lord Ahmed considered that the G' account of The Sunday Times deciding not to pursue the story contrasted with statements from Ms Zaman that she had decided she did not want the story to run.

Analysis

237. G is an experienced investigative journalist, working for a heavyweight national newspaper with a track record of serious investigative journalism. Neither he nor the newspaper would want to publish a story that could not be substantiated in court if a legal challenge to its accuracy was made.
238. There is no evidence that G or the newspaper disbelieved Ms Zaman, and the fact that he was still involved with the story months later (as evidenced by Ms Zaman's email to W in September 2018) supports G' assertion that he believed her.
239. His position moved during his contact with Ms Zaman from properly professional scepticism to a belief that she was telling the truth.
240. Lord Ahmed's comments about contrasting accounts misunderstand the chronology of events. Following The Sunday Times' decision not to run with the story, W was keen to publish something without naming either party. It was this story that Ms Zaman did not agree to.

U

241. U is a correspondent for BBC Newsnight, with which he has worked for over 20 years on various investigative projects. He was responsible for the broadcast on 14 February 2019 about Lord Ahmed, where Ms Zaman's allegations of sexual exploitation were made.
242. He told us that during his investigation he had spoken to a number of individuals making allegations against Lord Ahmed, two of whom had been included in the final broadcast, in addition to Ms Zaman.
243. We asked what process he followed to satisfy himself that the complaints were genuine. He explained that, in relation to Ms Zaman, he had spoken to members of her family and friends, and had had the contents of her phone, and those of her friend Saima Butt, analysed.
244. When confronted by us with the allegation that Ms Zaman had a reputation as an habitual liar and asked if anyone he had interviewed had suggested this, he said that he had not heard any allegation of this nature, rather "completely opposite of that".

245. He also explained that an investigation of the sort that he undertook would have to be signed off by both the BBC's lawyers and by the editorial policy team "to ensure that we have acted fairly throughout and that, legally, we are as watertight as we can be. And it was signed off by both".
246. In his response to my draft factual report, Lord Ahmed argued that other witnesses we spoke to were "individuals who have a vested interest in suggesting the veracity of the Complainant's account as to do otherwise would completely invalidate and undermine their initial support of her. By way of example, U of the BBC is hardly going to now accept that he was involved in broadcasting a news story on national television based on the account of a witness who was lying".
247. In his response to the draft factual report, Lord Ahmed also describes U's attempts to verify Ms Zaman's allegations as being similar to those of L.

Analysis

248. Newsnight is a flagship BBC programme, and U had been working for Newsnight for 20 years when he started investigating Ms Zaman's story. In his interview, U explained the meticulous attention that was paid to accuracy and verification, not only by him as the investigator, but also by legal and policy teams at the BBC. He set out his processes for verification, which shows that his judgement was based on evidence as well as his own experience.
249. I spoke to U, and others, in order to discover what corroborative evidence they could provide in order to make a determination on the balance of probabilities about D and L's accounts and Ms Zaman's denial. While I accept that each witness will speak from a particular position, this does not necessarily invalidate their evidence, it is simply a matter to be borne in mind when making an overall evaluation. In these instances, there is no evidence that would suggest Z, W, G and U were protecting their interests such that their evidence ought to be considered invalid.
250. Lord Ahmed's suggestion that U's attempts to verify Ms Zaman's story were similar to L's is not accurate. As described above, L told us that his sources were people still living in Rochdale who, he said, were "people who knew her and knew about her life". His sources did not include Ms Zaman's family, her social circle or people living near to where Ms Zaman has lived in London for many years. U's process included speaking to her friends and family, and analysing the contents of her mobile phone.

CHAPTER 4: EVALUATION AND CONSIDERATION OF PREVIOUS FINDINGS

251. The evidence that we investigated and I now evaluate started with one unlikely event and ended with another.
252. The first unlikely event was that in April 2018 Ms Zaman allegedly phoned a journalist, D—who she had never met but had been put in contact with by a journalist who was taking her seriously—and volunteered that she had made up her allegations about Lord Ahmed. This was at a time when:

- she had reported her complaints about Lord Ahmed and S to the Metropolitan Police, and they were investigating those complaints, and
- she was seeking publicity in the national and local media by working with W and The Sunday Times.

Further, this call was made by Ms Zaman just at the time D, suspecting her not to be truthful, had been planning to persuade her to tell him the truth. By having proactively done what he had hoped to do, Ms Zaman left D without any corroborative evidence of her call, meaning, as he told us, he could not act on the information.

253. The second unlikely event was that D asked his secretary, P, to read out his transcript his interview with us, despite:

- not having said anything to her about his offer to give information to Lord Ahmed’s solicitors; and
- having forgotten that she had been in the car when the phone call with Ms Zaman took place.

254. The reasons for this request were not apparent to her, and are not to us, but resulted in P being reminded that she had heard the phone call between Ms Zaman and D.

255. Of course, unlikely events happen all the time. We therefore sought evidence to support the accounts presented by D, L and P. However, despite our efforts, and the opportunities offered to D and L, their accounts were not corroborated by any independent evidence.

256. In contrast, several aspects of the accounts provided by D, L and P suggest the unlikelihood of their accounts:

- D did not tell W, with whom he had worked for years and who had brought him into this story, that Ms Zaman had told him she had made up her allegations. The obvious times to do this were at the time, and, if not then, after W published his article in February 2019. The natural reason for doing so, even if D was no longer involved in promoting the story, was to protect a fellow journalist and colleague from making a bad mistake with serious reputational and financial consequences;
- D did not tell L that P had overheard the conversation, when it must have been very fresh in his mind;

- D and L did not mention the phone call from Ms Zaman to other journalist colleagues in the PPCUK, even after they expressed support for Lord Ahmed in February 2019;
 - although, as described by P, Ms Zaman offered to make up more evidence against Lord Ahmed, D did not mention this to L, Lord Ahmed's solicitors, or to us at interview; and
 - when D and L discussed the Newsnight broadcast they did not mention Ms Zaman's alleged phone call because L thought it was not important.
257. D and L have produced no independent evidence to support their accounts that local sources in Rochdale told them in 2018 that Ms Zaman was a habitual liar, was estranged from her family and had made false accusations against J and others.
258. On the other hand, members of Ms Zaman's family—from whom she is still somewhat estranged—have provided evidence consistent with the challenges Ms Zaman put in her written response to the new material, which undermine the accounts by D and L. Our own information from the first investigation provides further evidence to support Ms Zaman's challenge.
259. The accounts of others who were engaged with Ms Zaman in 2018—Z, W, G and U—are also consistent with Ms Zaman's challenges to the new material.
260. An important element of the evidence of Lord Ahmed, D and L in the new material provided to me by the Conduct Committee is that the relationship between Lord Ahmed on the one hand and D and L on the other is purely professional.
261. We have set out the evidence, mainly through social media posts, but also in the evidence of W, that I consider shows that the relationship between Lord Ahmed and D is closer than either acknowledged. I particularly note the 'car' post, and the House of Lords posts of 1 December 2018.
262. I accept Lord Ahmed's point that we have not looked at all of Lord Ahmed's and D's posts with other people, and so cannot assess the significance of the posts we have discussed with them in the context of their total social media posts. However, the other posts that we have seen, including those provided by Lord Ahmed, appear largely to show more formality between Lord Ahmed and others in the pictures, including with their body language.
263. More importantly, we consider that the strong evidence of Mr Zaman, that D visited him shortly before the Newsnight broadcast, and tried to get him to persuade Ms Zaman not to take part in the programme, suggests a close link between D and Lord Ahmed.

Conclusion

264. As requested by the Conduct Committee, I have reconsidered all the findings in the report of the first investigation to see whether this supplementary investigation and my evaluation of the new material requires any change to any of them.
265. Chapters 3–7 of the first report dealt with the analysis of the information provided to that investigation. These chapters include 33 findings and conclusions. I have looked at all of these from the point of view of my

analyses and evaluations in this second investigation. In each case, I have considered whether these findings—either that Ms Zaman’s account was more likely than not to be true, or that it was not possible to conclude that her account was more likely than not to be true—needed alteration in the light of my evaluation of the new material provided by D, L and P, and the other evidence provided during the second investigation.

266. I can see no basis on which any of them should be altered.

267. **It follows that I do not consider that my findings of breaches of the Code or my recommendation that Lord Ahmed be expelled from the House of Lords should change.**

APPENDIX 1: LORD AHMED'S RESPONSE TO COMMISSIONER'S DRAFT FACTUAL SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

Preliminary points

1. The second draft report of the Commissioner emphasises the bias that was apparent in her first report. There is a sharp contrast between the treatment of witnesses who give evidence in my support and those who give evidence in support of the Complainant.
2. Witnesses on my behalf have been subjected to questioning with a clearly sceptical tone. They are subjected to detailed cross-examination about ancillary matters that have little to no bearing on their credibility or the veracity of the evidence they give.
3. [D] was asked a number of deeply personal questions about his sons, their disabilities, their ability to participate in his business and day-to-day activities and their care. None of these issues are relevant to whether [D] was telling the truth about the phone call he had with the Complainant. The Commissioner should be reminded that these are characteristics protected by the Equality Act.
4. The witnesses on behalf of the Complainant—and indeed the Complainant—were not challenged on inconsistencies. Matters which affected their credibility, particularly of the Complainant, were not explored.
5. [Z] had little personal knowledge of this case. He was asked for broad opinions on the victims of allegations of sexual assault. Even on his account, his experience was not relevant. It related to allegations of systematic abuse and coercion. There were no such allegations here. [Z] has criticised the Metropolitan Police investigation without seeing the detail.
6. By contrast the Commissioner has yet again failed to speak to the police, who interviewed the Complainant several times and did not pursue charges. Although the standards of proof and relevant behaviour are different, it is relevant to her determination of the credibility of the Complainant. As part of their assessment of the allegations, the police will have taken into account the credibility of the Complainant. Yet their views have not been canvassed.
7. It has now transpired that the Complainant asked to be paid when she first contacted a journalist. This is the first time this information has come to light. It was revealed by a witness on behalf of the Complainant.
8. This was never explored with the Complainant. She was not challenged on this. The Commissioner did not seek further documentary evidence from the [W]—who revealed this information—or the Complainant. The Commissioner took [W]'s word for it when he claimed the Complainant had not raised the matter further. The fact she sought compensation for her story—at a time when she was employed—further damages her credibility.
9. In compiling the second factual report the Commissioner has failed to:
 - (a) Ask questions of the police who interviewed the Complainant;
 - (b) Seek any corroborative evidence for alleged death threats against the Complainant in anticipation or as a result of the Newsnight piece;

- (c) Interview [J], despite the fact he features prominently throughout the evidence of the witnesses on behalf of the Complainant and in the evidence contained in the judicial review bundle which the Commissioner has;
- (d) Probe the depth of contact between [D] and the Complainant's father. As part of his professional obligations [D] mingles with many politicians;
- (e) Recognise that I did not attend the funeral prayers at the home of [D]'s sister. I only payed respects as I did at four other houses. I have provided the Commissioner with evidence thereof;
- (f) Interviewed with witnesses, without challenging their accounts or, more significantly, putting to them my account, from individuals who have a vested interest in suggesting the veracity of the Complainant's account as to do otherwise would completely invalidate and undermine their initial support of her. By way of example, [U] of the BBC is hardly going to now accept that he was involved in broadcasting a news story on national television based on the account of a witness who was lying;
- (g) Take an impartial approach to the investigation and has deliberately set out to seek to undermine the fresh evidence. This is most clearly and obviously demonstrated by the fact that, without even having completed the investigation and spoken to all the witnesses or even having a sound basis for doing so, Sam Evans says this to [D] at page 78, paragraph 131, line 4: 'Okay. So do you wish to reconsider your claim that Ms Zaman told you she had made up the allegations about Lord Ahmed?' (Emphasis added). [D]'s account was not a 'claim', it was evidence of what he had seen and heard. To characterise it as such and to make this assertion is a clear demonstration of the completely biased approach of the Commissioner and those assisting her. If it is to be suggested that this was the 'healthy scepticism' necessary of an investigator then I ask, rhetorically, why is it that none of the other witnesses, particularly the complainant and those supportive of her, were treated in this way;
- (h) Understand that her approach to Muslim men is racist and has infected and affected her view as to the fresh evidence in this case such that her judgment and decision making is thoroughly undermined. A new investigation by an unbiased investigator who does not hold such views must now take place.

Detailed Response

Note: references are to the printed version of the Commissioner's Report, not the electronic version

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
5	4	15	Hostility towards me. I was only seeking to establish the full parameters of the remitted investigation, as was evident from the former email.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
5	4	18	Threat of referring to absence of cooperation simply as a result of one email asking questions. There was no suggestion of setting parameters.
11	17	11	[Z] said he lost ‘a lot’ of emails between himself and the Complainant, not ‘all’ of them. He has not been asked to produce those that he had not lost and he has not been pressed as to the circumstances in which they were ‘lost’. Even I am aware that material on an electronic device can never be lost and can be retrieved. The Commissioner herself knows this from the interrogation of mobile phones and WhatsApp messages. The Commissioner should have explored this with [Z] given the nature of his relationship with the Complainant and what she said to him. The emails will contain the contemporaneous detail of what the Complainant said about me and [Z]’s advice to her and, critically, would not have left [Z] relying on his memory of events which took place many years ago.
14	23	3	[Z]’s views on the police investigation are irrelevant. He was not the prosecutor assigned to oversee it. He has not seen the documentation in the investigation. He is being invited to comment on matters he knows little about.
14	26	1	Completely unacceptable delegation of her task. [Z] is a witness supporting the Complainant – not an objective party. He cannot be asked to give evidence on how he assessed her credibility. That is for the Commissioner to determine.
14	26	20 and 21	He makes comments about the danger from families if complainants make a report. This is contrary to the evidence of the Complainant’s family who on their own account were supportive. His account is not credible
15	26	3	[Z] states “she would have been” burdened with secrets. His choice of words reveal she never told him that. He is making an assumption.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
15	26	10	[Z] says “you made the very apt phrase “There is no such thing as a model victim”” (emphasis added). This is worrying. It suggests that the Commissioner and her staff suggested this term to [Z]. In turn it indicates the Commissioner and her staff are seeking high-level corroboration for their views rather than independently investigating the matter. An investigator should not be suggesting evidence to a witness.
15	26	15 to 24	On his own account, [Z] has only had a few conversations with the Complainant. Records of email conversations have been lost. He cannot have formed such a firm view simply by speaking to her on a few phone calls. He has missed at least two obvious reasons why the Complainant would make these allegations: Revenge – the Complainant and I were engaged in a consensual sexual relationship and when I broke it off she reacted out of spite. Monetary reward – as is evidenced by her request for payment to [W]. Neither of these matters were put to [Z] for his comment. He says that she ‘did not have any motive to lie....not that I could see one or hear one’. At this point the Commissioner should have put my case to [Z] and the reason I say she has lied. Had she done so, there is no doubt in my mind that [Z]’s response would have been very different.
16	26	3	[Z] again criticises the work of the Metropolitan Police again without seeing any of the underlying documents or being told what they said, particularly in the Judicial Review bundle. Had he been shown the material I am confident that [Z]’s view of the complainant would have been very different. [Z] would have seen the lengths to which the police investigated the allegations made by the police and the basis upon which they concluded she was not a witness of truth. [Z]’s criticism of the police performance comes not from an informed position but simply by accepting what the Complainant told him.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
18	30	14	[Z] had earlier said that victims usually face pressure from their families. Here he is saying that the Complainant reported her family as supportive. This statement must dent the credibility of the Complainant in his eyes, as it does not fit the mould he described.
19	32	6	The Complainant states in her email that she was the one that had decided that she did not want to have the story published. This is in complete contrast to what [G] said that it was The Sunday Times 'decided not to run the story, as it was not backed by an official investigation of some sort, and he didn't feel that there was enough evidence to run the article without such backing' – see page 189, paragraph 297, line 19. This was not explored nor the Complainant challenged about this
20	34	12	The Complainant's claim she contacted [W] two days after her complaint was initially refused does not survive scrutiny. She would have had to find him and then obtain his contact details in those two days. The Commissioner has not investigated this matter at all. [W] does not work for a large media body. It is not as simple to contact him as it would be to contact a journalist at the Sunday Times. There has been no exploration of how they came into contact and how she came to choose him as the person to speak to. There is a real possibility they had been in touch be-fore either directly or indirectly. There is also a real possibility he was chosen because she knew he was likely to have an axe to grind against me because, for example, he is Indian and I have been vocal about the issues facing Kashmiris in Indian Occupied Kashmir. This would suggest that the Complainant had prepared a plan to contact the media prior to the Commissioner's initial decision. In turn this would suggest that the main motive of her complaint was to smear me.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
20	36	17	She has not answered the question. She would have had to know that [W] would act in the manner she described before she contacted him. The Commissioner failed to probe: How the Complainant learned about [W]; Whether it was suggested to her that she contact [W] and if so, by whom; Whether she had conducted any research on [W]; Why she contacted [W] over others; or Why [W] being ‘Indian, not Pakistani’ was important. I am aware that because of my views on Kashmir I am not liked by the Indian Government and many Indians would want to do me harm. The Complainant was obviously seeking to recruit somebody who would assist her in her plans to do me harm ie go along with her campaign to seek revenge. If her story was credible and she had concerns about South Asian men, why did she not contact an Anglo-Saxon journalist at a large media body? In addition, her views of [W] do not survive scrutiny. On her own account, [W] put her on the spot by adding [D] to a call. This must have dented her trust in him and yet she does not say so.
21	40	21	The Complainant has no reason to be “shocked” by the invitation of her father to an event I attended. We are both prominent members of the local community. The fact she is shocked demonstrates her inability to have perspective. In turn this creates concerns that her complaints are motivated by revenge.
22	41	6–9	The Complainant indicated she does not trust [D] but is nevertheless willing to give him what she believes are intimate details. Her behaviour with him is not consistent and not credible. As far as the Commissioner is concerned it is not explored or challenged in any way whatsoever.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
23	45	8–12	The Complainant claims it was difficult to tell her story to different people yet she told her story to: The Commissioner – twice; Newsnight; A Sunday Times journalist; Her father; Both her sisters; Her brother; [D]; [Z]; [W]; and The police. In addition to these people I am aware that she contacted: Afzal Khan MP – he told me Lord Dholakia – he told me Journalists, including [Q] – he told me The Commissioner knows this and simply refused to challenge the Complainant on this issue. What is clear is that, in light of the above, the more credible explanation is that she was looking for a sympathetic forum where she could recruit those who would participate, either blindly or because of their own motives, in her campaign against me. Indeed this is supported by the number of witnesses supporting her who have said she simply wanted to be heard.
23	49	20	The claim that she “forgot” is not credible. She was given the time to respond in writing. Even if she was upset, she had the time to recover and give full details of her contact with [D]. The fact she failed to do so demonstrates a concern on her part to corroborate what [D] has said. Again, this was not challenged or explored by the Commissioner.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
24	51	5 to 8	Even if the Commissioner accepts that [D] spoke to the Complainant's father and suggested she not appear on the documentary, the tone of their conversation is materially different from what the Complainant alleges her father told her. The Complainant's father does not suggest there were any direct threats or any threats of violence. The focus of the conversation on his account was on alleged shame to the community. This contradiction has not been explored by the Commissioner with the Complainant. Given the number of inconsistencies in her account as compared with others the Commissioner should explore and challenge them with the Complainant. If the conversation between [D] and the Complainant's father happened, it stands to reason she would have been contacted. However, it is not credible that such hyperbolic assertions were made during the conversation between father and daughter. Perhaps, most significantly, no steps have been taken to contact and speak to the grandfather by the Commissioner. The Commissioner should do so. The Commissioner cannot hide behind a desire to protect the family's privacy. She did not consider it inappropriate to ask for detailed medical information relating to [D]'s children, knowing full well this information is highly sensitive and protected by several laws.
27	63	9–10	The Commissioner knew about [J], whose name is in the JR bundle and she mentions him here. Why has she not contacted him and interviewed him? She must do so.
28	65	8–11	Her views of [W] are not in line with the rest of his evidence. She had concerns about the introduction he made to [D]. She has said she was "suspicious" of him. This has not been explored or challenged by the Commissioner.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
39	90	1–3	The form of questioning is leading. She is being asked about matters that may be outside of her knowledge. In asking the question in that manner the Commissioner has indicated to the witness that this has happened. The witness makes no mention of the assertion by the Complainant that she was told her by her father that she might be killed. Such a threat would have been startling and shocking to the sister and father and would have been at the heart of the talks they had ‘in the car as they travelled from one engagement to the next’. Why wasn’t the sister asked specifically about this because had she said that no such threat was made, this would undermine the Complainant’s credibility. The Commissioner should do so.
40	92	15–17	The Complainant’s sister corroborates what [D] had said. The South Asian community is close-knit such that it is not accurate to describe the information that is passed on within the community as “gossip”.
41	94	10	The Complainant’s sister first states that the Complainant shunned her family and later states “it was felt”, suggesting her family believed it was not appropriate for her to come. This evidence is internally inconsistent.
41	94	11–13	The Complainant’s sister indicates the family felt that the Complainant should not attend a wedding after the Newsnight broadcast. The Complainant’s father indicated that it was the Complainant who decided not to attend (see page 136, paragraph 228, lines 19 and onwards). This is contradictory evidence. This was not explored or challenged by the Commissioner with the Complainant and should be.
41	96	19	Again a mention of [J] and the Commissioner has not interviewed him. She must do so.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
44	103	1	This line refers to an email the Commissioner asked [D] to send. The email relates to the time when [D] spoke to my lawyers. The footnote reads: “We have not received this”. The footnote appears to suggest that [D] is not telling the truth. The Commissioner knows, from my lawyers’ records, that [D] spoke to my lawyers around 18 June 2020. The footnote serves no other purpose but to cast a negative aspersion on [D] and should be removed
45	109	17–18	The Commissioner is dubious about [D]’s claim of investigation through contacts. However, the Complainant has indicated that the South Asian community is close. The Complainant has made a similar claim. Other non-Asian journalists also spoke of attempting to speak to family and friends. Therefore it is a credible statement. The Commissioner’s approach indicates bias and potential racism towards South Asian males.
48	109	3–11	Again, there is a reference to [J] as a source of [D] and the Commissioner has not interviewed him. She must do so. The Commissioner asks questions which appear to doubt the journalistic credentials of [D]. The Commissioner should recall that [Z], a senior Crown Prosecutor and respected lawyer, lost nearly all his records relating to this matter. There was no criticism of [Z], by contrast to the treatment of [D].
49	110	14–17	There is once more, veiled criticism of [D] while there was none of [Z] of having ‘lost’ his email communication with the Complainant.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
51	112	3 to 8	This line of questioning makes little sense for three reasons and is clearly intended to try to undermine the account: 1. There is no reason why [D] would tell me once the Complainant had lied. It would be contrary to journalistic practice. He may contact me for comment on the story, but he has no reason to inform me. The questioning starts with asking why he did not tell me and continues in a completely different direction, namely why no story was published. Those are two separate issues. The Commissioner is completely wrong to suggest that the fact that a woman wants to destroy my career is a ‘much bigger story’ than an allegation against me. Politicians of all hues everywhere constantly have individuals attacking them. This is hardly a story, let alone a ‘huge’ story. Neither [UD] of the BBC nor [G] of the Sunday Times were asked this. Had they been asked by the Commissioner would have agreed with me that this was not a huge story.
52	112	8 to 11 and subsequent	The Commissioner repeatedly questions [D] about why he did not publish any story based on the Complainant’s confession to him. This line of questioning is irrelevant to the credibility of what [D] says. The Sunday Times refused to publish the Complainant’s allegations against me, yet those journalists were not questioned in a manner which cast doubt on the allegations of the Complainant.
53	112	20 and onwards	The Commissioner has questioned [D] at length about the Sun and asked others whether they were in contact with the Sun. [W] has accepted being in contact with [D]. The Complainant has accepted being in contact with [D]. The Sun and the Sunday Times are part of the same news corporation. On this basis it appears more likely that [D]’s mention of the Sun was a genuine mistake and allowance should be made for this minor mistake. It would appear the Commissioner has latched on to this mistake to undermine his credibility.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
59	115	9–16	The Commissioner again asks [D] about a decision not to publicise a story. What she is suggesting is contrary to journalistic ethics and would amount to gossip.
61	116	16–21	[D] is asked about the meeting with the Complainant's father and states that no such conversation took place. The Commissioner has interviewed the father but has failed to put what he says to [D] i.e. where and when the meeting took place. The Commissioner appears to be calling witnesses back to put matters that have been elicited during the course of the investigation. The report makes no mention of any subsequent interview with [D] to ascertain if what the father has said is correct. Indeed, there is no investigation as to whether the meeting is said to have taken place at the father's house as stated by or in a car outside town hall in Rochdale as stated by the father.
62	117	13–15	The question is a loaded one where the Commissioner has already made up her mind that the social media material shows that the relationship between me and [D] is closer than [D] states. Such an approach has not been taken with other witnesses and shows bias. The Commissioner has also taken a selective approach to the posts. I have a large social media presence and my approach to [D] is similar to my approach with others that I meet. As a politician on social media I seek to garner support for causes I believe in and for which I campaign. That necessarily means being friendly to 'followers' and 'friends'. The reference to [D] as a friend and my photos with him are no different to many hundreds, if not thousands, of others that I have met during my career. The Commissioner needs to ensure that this is properly reflected in this report. It is not

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
69	125	5	Yet another example of the Commissioner being selective in her use of photographs on social media and her inaccurate assertion that it shows a personal rather than professional relationship. As he has indicated, [D] is a model and has a social media presence with that in mind he likes to display photos, particularly with prominent people. As with so many social media posters, he does this to get 'likes' or the equivalent. The sentence below this photo reads as if we were both invited 'together' to the wedding. The Commissioner knows that this is not the case. We were invited separately and whilst waiting we sat in a car and [D] took a selfie. This needs to be corrected.
71	126	17–19	The Commissioner is assuming there was a "discussion" between [D] and me. A Facebook post does not amount to a discussion. Anyone can make a post and tag other people in it. This needs to be corrected.
77	131	12 and 13	The Commissioner has sought the advice of an Imam to rebut certain claims made by [D]. It is not clear whether the Imam is an expert on Kashmiri culture. In any event, cultural quirks are not religious. They are cultural. She has clearly not sought expertise on Kashmiri culture. If she had, she would know that it is common for many guests to attend weddings, even where they are only loosely related to the bride and groom or their families.
78	131	4– 6	This is an outrageous and clearly biased approach to [D] by Sam Evans. The question clearly shows that Sam Evans has made up her mind about [D]'s testimony. She characterises the evidence as his claim as if it is something which is made up. And on what basis is she asking whether he wishes to reconsider it? Nothing prior to this question or nothing said by [D] appears to warrant this question. And no other witness has been asked whether they are making any claims and/or whether they want to reconsider them.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
82	136	17 to 21	The Commissioner has asked [D] many questions about his sons. This aspect does not even relate to credibility. It relates to [D]’s request as to the logistics of the interview. It is outrageous to be asking such significant details relating to his sons—characteristics which are protected by the Equality Act. While the Commissioner may question witnesses, it is not appropriate for her to call into doubt the disabilities of their children and ask intrusive questions that have no bearing on the evidence the witnesses give. This approach from the Commissioner demonstrates disregard and disrespect for this witness. The Commissioner’s approach to witnesses who give evidence in my favour is in stark contrast to the approach to witnesses on behalf of the Complainant. The Commissioner has lost sense of objectivity. She is acting not as an impartial body who is asked to determine an issue but as an inquisitor on behalf of the Complainant.
83	138	7	The Commissioner has not disclosed either to [L] or me whether she has assured herself that [the interpreter used for L’s interviews] has no connection to the Complainant. She has no connection to me.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
87	145	4–11	The contrast between the approach to [L] and others is telling. Here the Commissioner seeks to undermine [L] by questioning the process of researching a story and asks who he spoke to about the Complainant. At page 90 paragraph 146 this conversation ends with the Commissioner stating: ...I don't want to be rude about your sources...but it's gossip, isn't it? Its gossip and rumour." Compare this to the same line of questioning with [U] at page 127 paragraph 206 when he was asked what process he had followed to ascertain if the complaints were genuine. In a relatively long response in which he states that the BBC has 'extremely high standards', he said this: 'One of the first things I did was to try and corroborate aspects of her story with her family members, for example, and friends. And we actually interviewed one of her friends who is on the record, Saima, to corroborate parts of her story'. The Commissioner failed to explore the obvious point which is that he had actually only been able to interview one of her friends and had not spoken to any members of her family except one sister who was her chief protagonist as the Commissioner knows from what she has been told. And he was only able to corroborate parts of her claim. [U]'s approach was similar to [L]'s but the treatment afforded of them by the Commissioner has been very different. One—the Asian man—was challenged and belittled, the other—the Anglo-Saxon man—was not. This shows clear bias on the part of the Commissioner.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
94	150	17	The Commissioner here makes a particularly egregious and inexcusable statement which is racist. She sates that she has been told that ‘in Muslim society, traditional Muslim societies, men are inclined to stick together when allegations made about their behaviour towards women’. She then goes on to explain why she is asking that question stating that ‘It seems improbable to me but maybe I am missing something’ in that the Complainant would think [D] would be willing to lie for her. This is at the heart of the fresh evidence in my case namely that the Complainant told [D] that she was lying about what I allegedly did to her and wanting him to go along with it. The Commissioner’s view is that this is improbable because she understands that Muslim men stick together and, therefore, [D] would have stuck with me. The Commissioner can hardly have missed all the news reports about the MeToo movement which is largely based in the film industry in which countless women were raped and sexually assaulted by mainly white, non-Muslim men who were protected by their male friends and colleagues for years whilst the lives and careers of the women were destroyed. The Commissioner has shown her complete ignorance of the Muslim community and shown herself to have highly prejudicial views about Muslim men such that it has now affected her view about this case and the fresh evidence. The investigation must now take place afresh with a new investigator who does not hold such racist views and who can come to a decision without preconceived ideas and has true impartiality.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
102	158 and onwards	1	It is inevitable that the individuals who have given evidence on my behalf have some connection to me. I asked them for a character reference. The Commissioner should expect that they should know me well enough to give evidence of such character. The suggestions that both of the witnesses are, in fact, much closer to me than suggested does not survive scrutiny. In particular, as far as [L] is concerned, there is little evidence to suggest that we are anything more than professional contacts who interact on various media, including social media. [L]'s invitation that the Commissioner go to his Facebook page so that she can see 'many other pictures of him with political figures' should be heeded. She did not do so. If she has done so, the results of her search should be added to her report.
105	167	1–3	Here there is reference to a YouTube video and [V]. The Commissioner has failed to interview and had she done so she would have heard from her that she was experiencing paranoid schizophrenia at the time and could hear voices to which she was responding. She did not know what she had said until she saw the recording. She said that she had asked Lord Ahmed to have the video removed and had given him her consent to do this. She said she did not know why the video was uploaded and felt that the people involved held a personal grudge against Lord Ahmed and wanted to get back at him for reasons she was not aware of. However, she did not feel this way. My lawyers have taken a statement from her which is attached.
109	187	16	[W] is a witness for the Complainant. His view is that the relationship between [D] and me is strictly professional.
110	187	10	This form of questioning is leading. [W] should have been asked to explain in his own words what was meant. In any event, it is unlikely that [W] knows much about the personal relations of [D]. All of this should be excised.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
112	188	16 to 18	[W] is not an objective journalist. He describes me as a “dirty man”. He himself had an axe to grind and therefore his views about the credibility of the Complainant are irrelevant. As such, the Commissioner cannot disregard the possibility that the he is colluding with the Complainant.
113	188	13 to 15	[W] indicates he would have ceased contact with the Complainant had [D] told him she was lying. This demonstrates that he would prefer [D]’s word over hers. In turn this suggests that even witnesses on her behalf have doubts about her credibility.
114	188	6–10	Ms Evans repeats only the part that is to the benefit of the Complainant. There is no attempt to have [W] confirm the detrimental parts. This is evidence of bias.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
119	190	5 to 7	These comment from [W] demonstrate two points: 1. It reinforces the fact he holds a grudge against me and was colluding with the Complainant to get at me. He was the one that made contact with [Z]. It is absurd to think that it was for ‘legal support’ as there was no litigation going on at that stage, unless, of course, [W] had suggested that the money the Complainant was asking for her story could be obtained through a civil claim against me on the basis of the allegations made. In any event, [Z] is a criminal lawyer with little to no experience of other areas of law. He would not have been able to assist [W] with any legal support outside the criminal law. The Commissioner has just accepted [W]’s statement at face value without probing what “legal support” he would be seeking. Such a civil claim would only be successful if proven to the requisite standard and would require the Complainant to be telling the truth and her supporters saying as much. This was not explored with this witness and should have been. This shows bias. 2. He too works off the back of rumours and other published material – this demonstrates that it does not have an inherently discreditable value. Yet the Commissioner holds it against [D] and [L] but not against witnesses in support of the Complainant. Further, the reference to lots of other women is rumour and gossip. They are not identified and they have not made any allegations known to me. Any reference by this individual or any other reference in this report to other women and other allegations must be excised. This investigation is about TZ’s complaint and nothing else.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
122	198	18–20	The Complainant has failed to mention previously that she had asked for payment in exchange for her story. This has only come to light because [W] has provided the first email she had sent him. The Complainant failed to provide this email. Two significant facts arise: The fact she sought money completely damages her credibility. She was employed which means there can be no suggestion she was in need of money. As such, it is clear she is motivated by financial gain (in addition to the other motives I have set out). In any investigate process the fact that a witness is prepared to ‘sell their story’ is indicative of their unreliability as a credible witness. That is the case here and the Commissioner has failed to explore it or challenge the Complainant over it. She failed to be honest with the Commissioner and tell her this had happened. The obvious point to make is that the Complainant chooses to tell what she wants and conceal matters which she considers might be adverse to her interests. A selective witness who conceals matters is not, by definition, a credible witness. In addition, the Commissioner has not probed this issue. She simply asked [W] if this request was repeated. He indicated it was not. [W] is clearly a biased witness and his word on it cannot be trusted.
128	207	10 and onwards	The Commissioner has not asked [U] how many sources he has spoken to, in order to confirm that the Complainant is not a habitual liar. This is in stark contrast to the questioning of [D].
128	208	19–20	This is a leading question. This goes to the heart of the issues the Commissioner must determine. It should not have been asked in a leading manner.
130	212	19 and 20	The Commissioner has dismissed this complaint yet is asking about it. In addition, the manner of questioning is inappropriate. It is a leading question which gives the answer to the witness. It must be excised.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
131	214	5	The Commissioner has not stated (in a footnote or anywhere else) whether [U] has provided the record of interview.
132	221	16–17	The meeting is said by the father to have taken place in [D]’s car outside the Town Hall. [R] Zaman says that it was her understanding that [D] ‘came round to the house and spoke to her father. This important inconsistency is not explored nor investigated by the Commissioner. Given that [D] states that such a conversation did not take place the Commissioner was duty bound to properly investigate this aspect of the assertion. The draft Report contains no further interview of [D] in which this matter is put to him. It is absolutely essential that [D] is asked about this matter and the matter resolved with certainty. If it is not, then the entirety of this interview should be excised as it has no relevance to the fresh evidence and has nothing to do with me.
133	224	12 onwards	This entire line of questioning of the Complainant’s father is leading. The Commissioner is putting words in his mouth in order to bolster her allegation that [D] and I are much closer than is the case.
134	224	19 onwards	The Commissioner is leading the witness into telling her that his feeling was that [D] visited him at my behest. There is no evidence to support this. It was never put to [D] that he had visited at my behest— if he had visited at all. This should not form any part of the Commissioner’s decisions or report.
137	229	15–20	The Complainant’s father suggests she has never been estranged. This is in contradiction with his other daughter’s evidence at paragraphs 92 and 94
142	236	14	The Complainant’s sister “realised” that her sister’s drink had been allegedly spiked. The Commissioner has already found this accusation to be baseless. It should be a matter of concern that the Complainant’s sister has admitted that she is the one who suggested this complaint. This fact infects the rest of the Complainant’s complaint.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
142	237	16	This witness—who has previously suggested something to the Complainant— helped draft the complaint. This casts doubt on the credibility of the complaint as a whole as it is not clear whether it is the Complainant’s complaint or allegations invented and advanced by her sister
146	240	3	There is a footnote, number 12, which indicates that only the Complainant’s siblings and not her father were aware that the Complainant had approached the “media to get justice”. This footnote does not appear to be a quote from what the Complainant’s sister says. It appears to be the Commissioner’s view of what the Complainant attempted. If so, it is couched in biased language as it presupposes that the complaints are genuine.
149	247	16–18	Again a reference to [J] whom the Commissioner has failed to interview. The Commissioner knows that the name [J] was known to many people outside of the family. It is in the JR bundle and is referred to by many witnesses. This is what is recorded in the JR bundle by the police: ‘Whilst visiting [S] she started talking to a man who approached her at Balfour road called [J]. TZ started to visit Balfour road everyday and began a relationship with [J]. She claims to police she fell in love with [J] and wanted to marry him...[J] told TZ he only wanted a sexual relationship. He did not want to marry her. She slapped him. Since then he has been avoiding her calls. TZ spoke to [S] and suggested he was exploiting woman for [J]. TZ claims [S] told her to just sleep with [J] and apologise to Allah afterwards.... The Complainant reported this to [the landlady] and her sons and asked for her money back....This incident first came to the attention of the police in December 2016’. The Commissioner has not challenged [R] with this and not made any reference to this material or spoken to the police or to [J]. Given the close-knit community it is clear that people knew about [J] long before April 2018. [R]’s answer on this issue throws doubt on her honesty.

Page	Paragraph	Line	Comment
189	296	12 to 15	The allegations of [G] are hyperbolic. What happened in Rochdale and Rotherham was organised criminality, involving a number of people. By contrast, my relationship with the Complainant was consensual. We were both adults. She was not a child who was groomed. This accusation is steeped in racism and casts doubt on the credibility of the journalist. As such, his views about the Complainant's credibility should be disregarded.
191	304	3 - 6	[G] states that he allowed for the possibility that the Complainant was trying to get her own back for the ending of the relationship. This was the opportune moment for the Commissioner to set out my case to him and ask whether had he known this at the time, his view as to her credibility might have been different. I am sure his answer would have been very different.
191	306	13 onwards	Imam [T] is not an expert in Kashmiri or Mirpuri culture. The Commissioner has fallen into the racist trope of assuming and treating all Muslims as one. We are not. Middle Eastern Muslims are very different from Asian Muslims and so on. Within Pakistan, Mirpuri Muslims are different from Punjabi Muslims. This man is not an expert in my culture. His interview is completely irrelevant and is, in too many respects to list, wrong.
224	344	4 and 5	The Commissioner has again asked inappropriate questions relating to [D]'s sons

Recommendations

10. In light of the above deficiencies, I request that the Commissioner:

- (a) Institute a new investigation into the fresh evidence;
- (a) Excise the entirety of [Z]'s evidence from her report and her consideration – it is poorly formed opinion evidence and [Z] has given answers without knowledge of the full facts;
- (b) Excise the entirety of the interview with the Complainant's father as [D] has not been interviewed about the matters he is asked about and, in any event, it has nothing to do with me. Further, the father is not a reliable source given that he is the father of the Complainant and will say anything to support her;

- (c) Excise any suggestion that I have a deep personal connection with [D] and [L] – there is insufficient evidence to make such serious an allegation;
- (d) Excise any comparison to grooming gangs in Rochdale and Rotherham;
- (e) Interview [the officer] from the Metropolitan Police who led the investigation into the claims levelled by the Complainant as well as any other police officers involved in questioning the Complainant and assessing her credibility;
- (f) Interview the Complainant's grandfather;
- (g) Interview [J];
- (h) Explore and seek to challenge the Complainant with the inconsistencies in her account as compared with others;
- (i) Reflect the evidence of [V] in her report;
- (j) Properly reflect my social media footprint;
- (k) Produce pictures from [L]'s Facebook page showing him with many other political figures other than me;
- (l) Excise the noted parts of [W]'s statement;
- (m) Excise [U]'s interview. It is not relevant to the investigation of the fresh evidence and his opinion on the witnesses' credibility is not for him but a matter for the Commissioner;
- (n) Excise the entirety of the interview of [R] Zaman as it is not relevant to the fresh evidence and comes from a completely biased, and therefore unreliable source being the Complainant's sister and the author of the original complaint;
- (o) Excise the interview of [G]. It is irrelevant save that he confirms that the newspaper was approached to publish the Complainant's story but did not do so;
- (p) Excise the interview of Imam [T];
- (q) Excise any reference to other women and other allegations by them;
- (r) Include these Submission/Comments in full in the Final Report.

18th September 2020

APPENDIX 2: FURTHER SUBMISSIONS FROM LORD AHMED ON COMMISSIONER'S SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

Introduction

1. These submission should be read in conjunction with:
 - the Grounds of Appeal that are already with the Committee; and
 - the Commissioner's draft factual report; and
 - my response to the Commissioner's draft factual report
2. These submissions are made in response to the Commissioner's Supplementary Report, which arose as a consequence of Ground 3 of my Grounds of Appeal and relate to that Ground only.
3. I have carefully considered the Report and submit that:
 - (a) It has been affected and infected by racist views;
 - (b) It is the product of an investigator who has not acted as such and contains material which is misleading.
4. Accordingly, the Report is fundamentally flawed as it has failed to follow the mandatory requirement of adherence to the principles of fairness and natural justice, which have already been set out in my Grounds of Appeal.

Racism

5. It is universally accepted that racism is abhorrent and it should have no place in our society. Anyone who holds racist views or expresses them in any way should face immediate sanction and cannot be relied upon as being impartial or fair. In this investigation it is clear that racism has affected the Report in two ways:
 - (a) The Commissioner has made a racist assumption about Muslim men; and
 - (b) The Commissioner has used racial and religious profiling.
6. I will deal with both these issues
 - (a) The Commissioner has made a racist assumption about Muslim men;
7. In her interview with [L] the Commissioner makes a particularly egregious and inexcusable statement which is racist. She sates that she has been told that 'in Muslim society, traditional Muslim societies, men are inclined to stick together when allegations are made about their behaviour towards women. Is this true? Is this a cultural thing?'
8. She then goes on to explain why she is asking the question stating that it informs her assessment of the matter under investigation: 'It seems improbable to me but maybe I am missing something' in that the Complainant would think [D] would be willing to lie for her. What the Commissioner is saying is that because she has been told that Muslim men stick together when allegations are made about their behaviour towards women, [D]'s account is not true. This is at the heart of the fresh evidence in my case namely that the Complainant told [D] that she was lying about what I allegedly did to her

and wanting him to go along with it. The Commissioner's view is that this is improbable based upon unfounded, racist stereotyping.

9. Whilst it may be suggested that the Commissioner is simply posing a question the mere fact of her asking it is abhorrent in that it gives purchase and succour to racism through stereotyping and exposes the Commissioner's thought processes. Such racist stereotyping of Muslim men was widely employed in Rotherham and other towns and cities in relation to sexual offences and exploitation of young women and girls. Though these views were widely disseminated they were rightly condemned because, of course, such criminal behaviour was not based upon the ethnic or racial origin of the individual or as a result of it. The Committee will be aware of all the news reports about the MeToo movement which is largely based in the film industry in which countless women were raped and sexually assaulted by mainly white, non-Muslim men who were protected by their male friends and colleagues for years whilst the lives and careers of the women were destroyed.
10. Racist stereotyping is inexcusable, abhorrent and should not be tolerated. It has been used often by racists in society and to illustrate the egregious nature of her conduct, the Committee may wish to consider how such a question may be viewed when applied to other religious or ethnic groups who have been the subject of stereotyping by virtue of alleged racially ascribed, and completely unfounded and absurd, traits:
 - 'I have been told...that in Jewish society, men are miserly and, therefore...'
 - 'I have been told....that in African/Caribbean society; men are more likely to commit criminal offences, therefore....'
11. Not only did the Commissioner express a racist stereotype but, even more egregiously, used it in order to draw a conclusion in my case to my detriment. In short, based on a racist stereotype she concluded that [D] was not telling the truth.
 - (a) The Commissioner has used racial and religious profiling.
12. In seeking to obtain information about my attendance and [D]'s attendance at funerals in Pakistan, the Commissioner sought the assistance of an Imam, in doing so exhibited, and employed racial and religious profiling. In her Report, the Commissioner states that I suggested she speak to an Imam and she spoke to Imam [T]. In doing so, the Commissioner fell into the racist trope of assuming and treating all Muslims as one. We are not. Middle Eastern Muslims are very different from Asian Muslims; North African Muslims are different to Sub Saharan Muslims and so on. Within Pakistan, Mirpuri Muslims are different from Punjabi Muslims.
13. The Committee will be aware that not all Christians, all Jews, or all Hindus act alike. There are innumerable differences amongst these religious communities based on geography, culture and tradition. Engaging a 'Christian' religious scholar to advise in relation to a particular issue will depend on the denomination of the individual in many respects: Roman Catholic or Protestant; Greek Orthodox or Russian Orthodox. To simply engage a Muslim Imam because I am Muslim is to treat all Muslims as one homogenous group and is, without a doubt, racial and religious profiling at

its worst. The fact that Imam [T] ‘broadly confirmed’ my characterisation of cultural norms does not, in any way, excuse her conduct.

14. This Committee is duty bound to ensure that there is no place for racism and I expect the Committee to condemn and sanction the conduct of the Commissioner in the strongest terms. As the heart of the democratic process, Parliament has an obligation to set the standards by which society operates which makes it even more important to ensure that there is no suggestion that racism infects its conduct and processes. A failure to condemn or sanction the Commissioner for her conduct in relation to this investigation will severely undermine the confidence that society has in the this institution and lend credence to the fact that institutional racism – racism which infects and affects practices and procedures – exists in the House. That must not happen and I urge the Committee to take the appropriate action.
15. The Supplementary Report is not the product of an impartial investigation and contains material which is misleading
16. An impartial and competent investigator is duty bound to investigate a matter by pursuing all lines of inquiry that is those which tend to point one way and those that point the other. The Commissioner failed in her duty to act in this way. At paragraph 107 of the Report the Commissioner seeks to provide some explanation of her approach as follows:

‘...In the interviews with [D] and [L] and [P] my role was to test their evidence which was disputed. I was therefore seeking any independent evidence that the conversation had taken place. With other witnesses, that they had spoken to Ms Zaman during the same period was not contested.’
17. Her stated approach was plainly wrong. She was an independent investigator whose role was to test all of the evidence and she did not do so. The Report emphasises the bias that was apparent in her first report. There is a sharp contrast between the treatment of witnesses who give evidence in my support and those who gave evidence in support of the Complainant.
18. Witnesses on my behalf have been subjected to questioning with a clearly sceptical tone. They are subjected to detailed cross-examination about ancillary matters that have little to no bearing on their credibility or the veracity of the evidence they gave.
19. [D] was asked a number of deeply personal questions about his sons, their disabilities, their ability to participate in his business and day-to-day activities and their care. None of these issues were relevant to whether [D] was telling the truth about the phone call he had with the Complainant. The Committee will be aware that these are characteristics protected by the Equality Act.
20. The witnesses on behalf of the Complainant—and indeed the Complainant—were not challenged on inconsistencies. Matters which affected their credibility, particularly of the Complainant, were not explored.
21. [Z] had little personal knowledge of this case. He was asked for broad opinions on the victims of allegations of sexual assault. Even on his account, his experience was not relevant. It related to allegations of systematic abuse and coercion. There were no such allegations here. [Z] has criticised the Metropolitan Police investigation without seeing the detail contained in the

JR bundle. Furthermore as a CPS lawyer he would not have had the direct contact that the police had. [Z] said he lost ‘a lot’ of emails between himself and the Complainant, not ‘all’ of them. He has not been asked to produce those that he had not lost and he has not been pressed as to the circumstances in which they were ‘lost’. Even I am aware that material on an electronic device can never be lost and can be retrieved. The Commissioner herself knows this from the interrogation of mobile phones and WhatsApp messages. The Commissioner should have explored this with [Z] given the nature of his relationship with the Complainant and what she said to him. The emails will contain the contemporaneous detail of what the Complainant said about me and [Z]’s advice to her and, critically, would not have left [Z] relying on his memory of events which took place many years ago.

22. By contrast the Commissioner has yet again failed to speak to the police, who interviewed the Complainant several times and did not pursue charges. Although the standards of proof and relevant behaviour are different, it is relevant to her determination of the credibility of the Complainant. As part of their assessment of the allegations, the police will have taken into account the credibility of the Complainant. Yet their views have not been canvassed.
23. It has now transpired that the Complainant asked to be paid when she first contacted a journalist. This is the first time this information has come to light. It was revealed by a witness on behalf of the Complainant. This was never explored with the Complainant. She was not challenged on this. The Commissioner did not seek further documentary evidence from [W]—who revealed this information—or the Complainant. The Commissioner took [W]’s word for it when he claimed the Complainant had not raised the matter further. The fact she sought compensation for her story—at a time when she was employed—completely damages her credibility.
24. In compiling the Supplementary Report the Commissioner has failed to:
 - (a) Ask questions of the police who interviewed the Complainant;
 - (b) Seek any corroborative evidence for alleged death threats against the Complainant in anticipation or as a result of the Newsnight piece;
 - (c) Interview [J], despite the fact he features prominently throughout the evidence of the witnesses on behalf of the Complainant and in the evidence contained in the judicial review bundle which the Commissioner has;
 - (d) Probe the depth of contact between [D] and the Complainant’s father. As part of his professional obligations [D] mingles with many politicians;
 - (e) Recognise that I did not attend the funeral prayers at the home of [D]’s sister. I only payed respects as I did at four other houses. I have provided the Commissioner with evidence thereof;
 - (f) Interviewed with witnesses, without challenging their accounts or, more significantly, putting to them my account, from individuals who have a vested interest in suggesting the veracity of the Complainant’s account as to do otherwise would completely invalidate and undermine their initial support of her. By way of example, [U] of the BBC is hardly

going to now accept that he was involved in broadcasting a news story on national television based on the account of a witness who was lying;

- (g) Take an impartial approach to the investigation and has deliberately set out to seek to undermine the fresh evidence. This is most clearly and obviously demonstrated by the fact that, without even having completed the investigation and spoken to all the witnesses or even having a sound basis for doing so, Sam Evans says this to [D] at page 78, paragraph 131, line 4: ‘Okay. So do you wish to reconsider *your claim* that Ms Zaman told you she had made up the allegations about Lord Ahmed?’ (Emphasis added). [D]’s account was not a ‘claim’, it was evidence of what he had seen and heard. To characterise it as such and to make this assertion is a clear demonstration of the completely biased approach of the Commissioner and those assisting her. If it is to be suggested that this was the ‘healthy scepticism’ necessary of an investigator then I ask, rhetorically, why is it that none of the other witnesses, particularly the complainant and those supportive of her, were treated in this way.

Differential treatment of witnesses

- 25. The witnesses who the Commissioner has relied on in coming to her conclusion are as follows:

- (a) Close family members

- (i) [Mr] Zaman – the Complainant’s father
- (ii) [R] Zaman – the Complainant’s sister who also assists TZ in making her complaint
- (iii) [H] Zaman – the Complainant’s sister who assisted TZ in pursuing her complaint

- 26. In relation to each of these family members it is inevitable that each of them individually and, as a close knit family, who have admitted to providing emotional and family support as well as direct support for her complaint, will say anything to support and corroborate TZ’s account and will not say anything to her detriment. They are obliged as family members to do so.

- (a) Journalists wanting to run the Complainants story

- (i) [W]
- (ii) [U]
- (iii) [G]

- 27. In relation to each of these journalists, they each pursued a story against me. They could hardly be expected to undermine their own professionalism by admitting that they were party or in support of an individual who was not telling the truth. They had an agenda and a motive. [W] in particular was chosen by TZ because he was Indian and was likely to have a pre-existing animus towards me.

B. Others

- i. [Z]

28. [Z] was TZ's legal adviser. The Committee will immediately recognise that he would have had a legal obligation to advance his client's case. He is hardly independent as his professional duties require him to be an advocate on TZ's behalf.
29. None of these witnesses are independent. They all have a motive or obligation to support TZ and/or her account.
30. In relation to the witnesses who assist me they are [D] and [L] who are professional journalists, who are not related to me and who have never published any articles in support of me. They have no motive to say anything in my support unlike those set out above in relation to TZ. More significantly [P] has no relationship of any sort with me. These are independent witnesses who can be and should be relied upon to tell the truth about me.

Differential treatment of journalists

31. At paragraph 48 the Commissioner compares the conduct of [D] and [L] with those of [W], [U] and [G]. She states that 'we have good evidence that [W], [G] and [U] were investigating [TZ's] story at this time.' This is despite the fact that none of the journalists, bar [D], had any contemporaneous notes/records of their investigations. It was [D] who provided a copy of the email that [W] had sent him with a draft of the story he – [W] – wanted to run on TZ's behalf. If anyone was able to provide 'good evidence' it was [D]. [U] and [G] have been given greater credence than [D] and [L] for no apparent reason. Whilst they may work for the BBC and The Sunday Times, both these publications have been criticised in the past for their conduct and there is no reason why they should be given such preferential treatment.
32. The contrast between the approach to [L] and the other journalists is telling. The Commissioner seeks to undermine [L] by questioning the process of researching a story and asks who he spoke to about the Complainant. At page 90 paragraph 146 of the draft Report this conversation ends with the Commissioner stating: '...I don't want to be rude about your sources...but it's gossip, isn't it? Its gossip and rumour.' Compare this to the same line of questioning with [U] at page 127 paragraph 206 of the draft factual Report when he was asked what process he had followed to ascertain if the complaints were genuine. In a relatively long response in which he states that the BBC has 'extremely high standards', he said this: 'One of the first things I did was to try and corroborate aspects of her story with her family members, for example, and friends. And we actually interviewed one of her friends who is on the record, Saima, to corroborate parts of her story'. The Commissioner failed to explore the obvious point which is that he had actually only been able to interview one of her friends and had not spoken to any members of her family except one sister who was her chief protagonist as the Commissioner knows from what she has been told. And he was only able to corroborate parts of her claim. [U]'s approach was similar to [L]'s but the treatment afforded of them by the Commissioner has been very different. One—the Asian man—was challenged and belittled, the other—the Anglo-Saxon man—was not. This shows clear bias on the part of the Commissioner.

Specific Comments on Report (following the numbered paragraphs in the Report)

33. Paragraph 37: the Commissioner asserts that [U] 'uncovered no suggestion that TZ had a history of making false allegations'. This is a bold, sweeping

assertion by the Commissioner which, read in isolation, might give the reader the impression that [U] had carried out a thorough investigation of his own in order to arrive at this conclusion. This assertion might have some merit if it were not for the fact that [U] stated that he spoke only to TZ's family members and one of TZ's friends. In relation to the specific issue of whether TZ was a 'habitual liar', [U] assesses that she is not because 'when I spoke to one of her sisters not once did she say to me that she was a liar...' It is patently obvious that family members, particularly a sister who supported TZ in her complaint, would be highly unlikely to say that TZ was a liar, let alone a habitual liar.

34. By way of contrast, senior police officers, who thoroughly investigated TZ's allegations and whom the Commissioner has failed to interview despite repeated requests by me, concluded that TZ had made allegations which were, to put it at its most generous, not borne out by evidence and, at its worst, fabricated. I repeat the findings here. A/Detective Chief Inspector Mark Rogers of the MPS Sexual Exploitation Team—a specialist team dedicated to dealing directly with victims of sexual abuse and assault—was asked to review a decision not to take action in relation to TZ's various allegations. In his 4 page letter (included with these Submissions for ease of reference), he stated:

'Lord Ahmed was not arrested as this matter was historic, police were is [sic] possession of evidence in the form of statements and text messages that undermines your account. You had not disclosed these during the course of the police investigation.

Prior to Lord Ahmed's interview police were in possession of statements that undermine your account. Therefore a search warrant application was not justified and not proportionate.

[in relation to why a search warrant was not conducted on an address unrelated to me] Prior to interview police were in possession of statements that undermine your account. Therefore a search warrant application was not justified and not proportionate.'

35. The Metropolitan Police had carried out an extensive, thorough investigation into the various allegations made by TZ. This was not a case of them simply speaking to TZ and making an assessment of whether she was likely to be telling the truth. They were in possession of tangible material, which undermined what she had told them. This was not a case of relying on the say so of family members or friends, which all the individuals on whom the Commissioner seeks to rely on, have done in order to assert that she is not a liar. The fact that the police were in possession of material which undermined her accounts on a number of different matters fully supports the assertion that TZ has not told the truth on a number of occasions, that is habitually, as stated by [D].
36. Paragraph 38: As already indicated above it is highly improbable that TZ's father would agree that TZ was a 'habitual liar'. What father would ever say that about their daughter, particularly one who was being supported and in need of support? Insofar as the suggestion that such news of TZ's lying would have got back to the family, the Commissioner failed to explore the real likelihood that TZ would have made every effort to ensure that word did not get back to her family, particularly given Mr Zama's position as

Mayor. In Urdu it is called ‘Izzat’ (honour), the desire to protect the family’s reputation especially the father. The reality is that TZ did have a reputation as a habitual liar, most notably shown by the police investigation as set out above.

37. Paragraph 39: TZ’s sister, [R] was in a similar position to her father and would undoubtedly seek to protect her sister and would avoid any suggestion that TZ was a liar. In her interview with the Commissioner [R] stated that ‘if anything [TZ being a liar] comes out about anything like of such sort, it’s very embarrassing to the family and its a big deal, to be honest’. The Commissioner failed to explore and consider that the family and TZ might have wanted to ensure that nothing embarrassing came out about the family which might damage their reputation, including accepting that TZ was a liar.
38. Paragraph 43: The Commissioner’s assertion that ‘Ms Zaman’s complaints against [J] had been found to be false, only that there was insufficient evidence for the police to proceed’ is false and misleading. The Commissioner has the Judicial Review Bundle. There were no ‘complaints against [J]’. The complaints led to investigations into [S] and others. And in relation to the investigation into [S], the police did find that what TZ told them was false in the sense that they concluded, inter alia, that:
 - Witness evidence suggests that [S] was an honest person who does not charge people for his services contrary to the allegation TZ made;
 - Witness evidence indicates that TZ voluntarily provided gifts to [SU] contrary to what TZ alleged.
39. Paragraph 44: As stated above there were no allegations made to the police about [J] although he was mentioned in an allegation made against [S]. The Commissioner’s statement is misleading.
40. Paragraph 45: The Commissioner’s assertion is misleading. The Commissioner knows that the name [J] was known to many people outside of the family. It is in the JR bundle and is referred to by many witnesses. This is what is recorded in the JR bundle by the police: ‘Whilst visiting [S] she started talking to a man who approached her at Balfour road called [J].TZ started to visit Balfour road everyday and began a relationship with [J]. She claims to police she fell in love with [J] and wanted to marry him... [J] told TZ he only wanted a sexual relationship. He did not want to marry her. She slapped him. Since then he has been avoiding her calls. TZ spoke to [S] and suggested he was exploiting woman for [J]. TZ claims [S] told her to just sleep with [J] and apologise to Allah afterwards....The Complainant reported this to [the landlady] and her sons and asked for her money back.... This incident first came to the attention of the police in December 2016’. [L] was conducting his enquires in April 2018 almost 2 years after the name [J] was known. The Commissioner appears to suggest that geography played some part in the transmission of information. As the Committee will be fully social media and the telephone are exceptionally good at the transmission of information. Furthermore, communities are not static and people move around all the time. There is no basis to conclude that information about [J] was restricted to a particular part of the UK.

41. Paragraph 48: The Commissioner's assertion that [W], [G] and [U] were able to give more detailed accounts of the checks they made is misleading. In his interview [U] stated that 'he tried to corroborate aspects of her story with her family members...and we actually interviewed one of her friends'. In his interview [G] stated that he only spoke to TZ and that he didn't have many records to try and identify times and date because he tends to get rid of sensitive information. His main contact was TZ in April 2018. There is no evidence that he did any other checks. [W] spoke to TZ and a friend of hers. He provided no other detail. This can hardly be said to be 'detailed accounts of checks they made'.
42. Paragraph 50: please see comments above regarding the fact that [J]'s name was in the public arena and that [L] would have known about it in April 2018. There is no evidence to undermine [L]'s evidence that local sources told him about [J].
43. Paragraph 51: There is no evidence to undermine the evidence that [D] and [L] knew about [J] in April 2018. In the absence of any such undermining evidence it is to be accepted.
44. Paragraph 52: I was never asked whether I had told anyone in Rochdale about [J]. The Commissioner should have asked me. She did not.
45. Paragraph 53: Please see comments above about the police investigation into [S] and the reference to [J]. The Commissioner's statement is misleading.
46. Paragraphs 55–62: The only evidence that TZ was not estranged from her family comes from her family. I have already set out that TZ's family would feel obliged to say whatever they needed to, to support TZ and support her account. The Commissioner has failed to consider this and taken what they have said at face value even in light of the fact that she knew 'from the first investigation that Ms Zaman's sisters helped her with her complaint in January 2018'. These are not independent witnesses and their account was not challenged. They have provided no corroboration for their account which has been accepted whereas—at paragraph 67—the Commissioner does not accept [L]'s account because he 'offered no further evidence to corroborate' it. This is not impartial and is unfair.
47. In relation to the assertion that [U] somehow was able to corroborate the assertion made by TZ's sisters that there was no rift at the time of the Newsnight programme is wrong. [U] states nothing of the kind and the fact that he spoke to *one* of the sisters does not provide any support for the fact that there was a rift with the rest of the family.
48. Paragraph 64: As has already been stated the Commissioner has relied on the evidence of TZ's family members to provide corroboration. I have already made my comments clear on this aspect of the Report. No reliance can be placed on family members being able to give impartial and independent evidence.
49. Paragraph 69: There is no *independent* evidence which undermines the evidence that [L] was told in April 2018 that Ms Zaman was estranged from her family and that he reported it to [D]. In the absence of such evidence their accounts should be accepted.
50. Paragraph 70: See above

51. Paragraph 71: See above.
52. Paragraph 72: There is no such 'good evidence'. It is not independent or impartial evidence and cannot be relied on.
53. Paragraph 73: TZ is clearly lying which is supported by evidence which has not been undermined.
54. Paragraph 97: The Commissioner's analysis is flawed. [W] stated that he trusted [D] despite the fact that he knew that [D] knew me. He believed that despite this connection [D] would 'follow the story' and do right by TZ. [W] recruited [D] to run the story. TZ did not do this. Once he had been recruited [W] was confident that he could be trusted. He did not envisage any risk. That was the basis of the approach and TZ, at [W]'s instigation and introduction, must have bought into this as they were acting in concert. TZ trusted [D] as is clear from her own account when she contacted [D] on two occasions. TZ states that she felt okay telling [D] why she was so upset when she rang him to give him 'a piece of her mind' for inviting her father to an event because she did not trust [D] to keep what had happened a secret. This is consistent with a relationship of trust between TZ and [D] and is completely in line with TZ speaking openly with him and 'confessing' how she really felt and what she was doing in relation to me. As far as she and [W] were concerned [D] was a friend and would not risk telling me what was going on. Indeed their assessment of the situation was entirely accurate because, in fact, [D] did not tell me until I approached him for a character reference in 2020. The Commissioner criticised [D] for failing to inform me of the conversation with TZ but his actions fit perfectly the position as stated above.
55. Paragraph 98: The Commissioner criticises and hold against [D] the inconsistencies in his accounts. However, by way of complete contrast at paragraph 65 the Commissioner makes no such criticism of the differences in detail of the accounts of the family members of TZ. [D] is not accorded a similar approach which is indicative of unfairness and partiality.
56. Paragraph 101: The Commissioner is misleading the Committee on [D]'s lack of response regarding a re-interview. I am aware that [D] was in contact with the Commissioner about being re-interviewed but she did nothing to follow this up. It was not a refusal at all. Please see email dated 28th August attached obtained by my lawyers showing this.
57. Paragraph 103: There was no obligation as far as I can tell for [D] to:
 - Inform [W] that TZ was lying;
 - Discuss the matter with any other colleague. This was not a big story. The Commissioner seemed to suggest so. The Commissioner is completely wrong to suggest that the fact that a woman wants to destroy my career is a 'much bigger story' than an allegation against me. Politicians of all hues everywhere constantly have individuals attacking them. This is hardly a story, let alone a 'huge' story. Neither [U] of the BBC nor [G] of the Sunday Times were asked this. Had they been asked by the Commissioner they would have agreed with me that this was not a huge story.

- There is no reason why [D] would tell me once the Complainant had lied. It would be contrary to journalistic practice. He may contact me for comment on the story, but he has no reason to inform me. In fact, it supports the assertion that [D] was trusted by [W] and TZ when they approached him to assist with the dissemination of the story against me.
58. Paragraph 105: The Commissioner asserts that there is strong evidence in support of a meeting between [D] and Mr Zaman. I will deal with this later. However, what is of note is that this evidence is being used to support the Commissioner's contention that TZ did not 'confess' to [D] because [D] would have been expected to inform me which he did not. On the other hand, if this meeting did not take place as suggested, it undermines the rational being advanced by the Commissioner. The reality is that, if this meeting took place, there were only two people at the meeting: [D] and Mr Zaman. There is no evidence whatsoever to corroborate that it did take place. Indeed the difference in detail as to where it took place suggests that this evidence cannot be relied upon.
 59. Paragraph 106: It is, with respect, utter nonsense to suggest that the plausibility of an account is dependent on a tangible record. If that were the case many cases in court would collapse. This shows in stark terms the standard by which the Commissioner is judging the evidence in support of me. No such standard is being applied by the Commissioner in relation to the family of TZ. By way of example, the nature of the meeting between Mr Zaman and [D] was, by Mr Zaman's account, and incredibly important one. Mr Zaman made no note of it, did not go to the police about it, did not – if he considered that it was at my instigation – ever raise it with me. He had plenty of opportunities to do so as met me on numerous occasions but never did so. Applying the Commissioner's test to this, the lack of any note or action arising out of the meeting undermines its plausibility. Indeed, if [D] is being criticised for not raising the conversation with TZ with me, which the Commissioner has used to undermine it, by the same token, the fact that Mr Zaman did not raise the question of the meeting with me raises doubts as to its plausibility. Fairness and justice requires that the approach taken is the same across the board. The Commissioner has not done so.
 60. Paragraph 107: Please see my comments above.
 61. 60: Paragraph 108: I have already dealt with this above.
 62. Paragraph 109: [P] is the most independent witness of all those who have been interviewed by the Commissioner. She has no motive and no connection to me. Despite this, the Commissioner has, without any sound basis rejected its veracity. [P]'s evidence is simple: she happened to read the transcript of [D]'s interview with the Commissioner which reminded her of a telephone conversation she overheard. There is no evidence to undermine her account or attack her independence. Her evidence is unimpeachable and should be fully accepted. The Commissioner's attempt at discrediting it is bizarre, without foundation and completely partial.
 63. Paragraph 115: As will be seen later the Commissioner asserts that there is evidence supporting that a meeting took place between Mr Zaman and [D] because Mr Zaman told others that it did. The fact that Mr Zaman told others that a meeting took place does not mean that this is evidence that

it did take place. In relation to the telephone call made by TZ to [D], two people confirm that such a call took place – [D] and [P]. Furthermore, [L] was told about the call at around the time that it happened. This is strong evidence that the call took place. It is to be accepted.

64. Paragraphs 119–144: The *only* evidence that a meeting took place between [D] and Mr Zaman comes from Mr Zaman himself. There is no evidence to corroborate it at all. The fact that Mr Zaman told his daughters does not provide corroboration; the fact that TZ told [W] does not provide corroboration. The Commissioner has wrongly relied on each of these to assert that this meeting took place. Rather than seek to undermine the fact of the meeting taking place based on the difference in detail given as to where the meeting happened, the Commissioner, characterises this as an ‘innocent’ matter because of reliance on memory. I will not repeat all I have said above about the fact that the family of TZ will say anything to support her but the reaction of Mr Zaman to this meeting is extraordinary. If this meeting took place why didn’t he, amongst other things:

- Call TZ immediately warning her of the threat and intimidation particularly as [R] says that her father told her that [D] told her that ‘she will get killed’. TZ said that she called him;
- In the light of the serious threat to TZ—that she would get killed—why did he not report the matter to the police?
- Why did he not tell anyone outside the family? It seems extraordinary that the only people he told were those who supported and continue to support TZ;
- If [W] was told that I had used [D] to threaten and/or intimidate Mr Zaman about his daughter why he didn’t he take steps to report this. Why didn’t he take any action?

65. Paragraph 129: It is extraordinary that, rather than speak to his daughter directly, Mr Zaman’s first reaction was not to contact the police, speak to TZ’s mother or hold an urgent family conference but to call an elderly and infirm relative suffering from memory problems to speak to his daughter. Is this because, contrary to what the family members are saying that there was, in fact, a family rift at that point or is this being advanced as a means to add to their false account. It is simply not credible.

66. Paragraph 138: The Commissioner seems to suggest that the only way anyone would have known about the Newsnight programme in advance of broadcast was through me. This is, of course, utter nonsense. TZ had a large circle of friends and was a regular on social media. Indeed, as [U] has said he spoke to her friend. This again illustrates the partiality and biased approach of the Commissioner in this Report.

67. Paragraph 139: [D] denies that the meeting between him and Mr. Zaman ever took place. The Commissioner’s interview of [D] on this point was limited and relatively superficial. The Commissioner stated that ‘we’ve been told that before the “Newsnight” programme went out you went round to talk to Ms Zama’s father....’. [D] stated that he had never spoken to the father or ever gone to Mr Zaman’s house stating “I don’t know where he lives”. The meeting is said by the father to have taken place in [D]’s car outside the Town Hall. [R] Zaman says that it was her understanding that [D] ‘came

round to the house and spoke to her father'. This important inconsistency is not explored nor investigated by the Commissioner. Given that [D] stated that such a conversation did not take place the Commissioner was duty bound to properly investigate this aspect of the assertion. The draft Report contained no further interview of [D] in which this matter is put to him. In my response to it I said that was absolutely essential that [D] is asked about this matter and the matter resolved with certainty. [D] was never given the opportunity by the Commissioner of dealing with the detail of the meeting despite him offering to be interviewed again. Had he been interviewed again he would have told the Commissioner what he has told my lawyers namely that on between the 6th and 14th February 2019 he was in Kashmir, Pakistan and in Dubai. Please see social media images attached. If the true position is that [D] was not even in the country at the time this meeting so said to have taken place, there has been wholesale fabrication by Mr Zaman and members of his family and fatally and fundamentally undermines the Commissioner's conclusions in the Report. The Commissioner failed to explore this at all and did not interview [D] about this critical issue. Furthermore, if this meeting did take place and Mr Zaman's daughter was threatened to be killed why is it that on the 16th May 2019 Mr Zaman presented a certificate of appreciation to [D]? It shows that this account by Mr Zaman is untrue.

68. Paragraph 144–147: The Commissioner's assertion as to the reason why *The Sunday Times* did not run the story is misleading as [G] stated that the reason it was not published was because 'neither [the Commissioner's] office nor the police were really engaged with taking the complaint forward. The Sunday Times therefore decided not to run the story, as it was not backed by an official investigation of some sort and he didn't feel that there was enough evidence to run the article without such backing.' In short, the Sunday Times was concerned about running a story that was not backed by an official investigation. They were worried about publishing a story which, on its own, could be attacked as being without foundation. In other words they would have been worried about running a story with question marks over its veracity. Basically, they needed an official investigation to avoid any action if the story did not turn out to be true. Furthermore [G] stated that he allowed for the possibility that the Complainant was trying to get her own back for the ending of the relationship. This was the opportune moment for the Commissioner to set out my case to him and ask whether had he known this at the time, his view as to her credibility might have been different. I am sure his answer would have been very different.
69. Paragraph 148–153: It is clear from [W]'s conduct in suggesting the use of the MeToo movement and the Twitter posts (at paragraph 152) including the online petition that he was far from an independent journalist. He was actively campaigning on TZ's behalf. These matters were not explored with [W] and the Commissioner fails to identify this as indicating his lack of independence and impartiality. He now would hardly say anything to the detriment of TZ. As far as [D] was concerned he was shown an article by [W] and he could not have known that it was [W] who used the link to the MeToo movement. He would have assumed that it was TZ.
70. Paragraph 154–167: It is clear that the Commissioner had already made up her mind that the social media material which refers to shows that the relationship between me and [D] is closer than [D] stated. Such an approach has not been taken with other witnesses and shows bias. The Commissioner

has also taken a selective approach to the social media posts. I have a large social media presence and my approach to [D] was similar to my approach with others that I meet. As a politician on social media I seek to garner support for causes I believe in and for which I campaign. That necessarily means being friendly to ‘followers’ and ‘friends’. The reference to [D] as a friend and my photos with him are no different to many hundreds, if not thousands, of others that I have met during my career. I asked the Commissioner to ensure that this is properly reflected in this Report. It is not. The Commissioner has been very selective in her use of photographs on social media and her inaccurate assertion that it shows a personal rather than professional relationship. [D] is a model and has a social media presence with that in mind he liked to display photos, particularly with prominent people. As with so many social media posters, he does this to get ‘like’ or the equivalent. The Committee will be aware from their own social media experience that individuals who have a personal relationship would be more than happy to post events in which this is clear. Such postings would inevitably include images showing members of each family mixing, celebrating, at each other’s homes and making comments about their respective family members eg how is your son/daughter/wife etc. Despite the obvious thorough trawl of social media in relation to me and [D] no such personal posting has been discovered because there is none. It is wrong to suggest otherwise.

71. Paragraph 167–174: The Commissioner asserts that the accounts offered by [D] and me for being photographed together is undermined by [D]’s incorrect statement. This is completely incorrect. [D] identified the three women accompanying Mr. Afzal as foreign journalists. He would not have known who the women accompanying Mr. Afzal Khan were. Similarly, it is an assumption that Mr. Afzal Khan thought that I was giving a tour to [D] and [P], this cannot be relied upon.
72. Paragraph 169–181: The Commissioner’s assertion that a false impression of neutrality is based on three things:
 - Social media posts which I have already dealt with above;
 - [W]’s assertion that [D] and I see each other ‘outside of their professional contact’ without any support for this. Using her own approach to the investigation, there is no material other than what [W] says to support this assertion. [W] is, in any event, a partial and biased witness who has clear animus against me. Furthermore, why did the Commissioner not ask him to provide the evidence to support his assertion? It shows her biased investigation;
 - Mr Zaman stating that [D] and I have a close personal relationship. Mr Zaman is not an independent witness; he has not provided any material supporting this assertion and has not explained he is aware of this. That is because there is no such material because it is not true.
73. Paragraph 182: It is self-evident that social media is ‘social’ in the sense that it is publicly available. All of my posts and [D]’s posts were in the public domain. It is utter nonsense to suggest that either [D] or I would seek to make a misrepresentation when there might be available to all and sundry material which could undermine it with the click of a button. The Commissioner’s analysis and conclusion is fatally and fundamentally flawed.

74. Paragraph 183–189: The Commissioner is misleading the Committee by asserting that [D] refused to be interviewed and that his caring responsibilities were not genuine. I have already attached material obtained by my lawyers which show:
- That on 28th August 2020 [D] received an email from the Commissioner’s office inviting him to be interviewed in relation to [P]. He did not see that email as he was out of the country and only saw it when he came back to the UK on the 9th September and responded. The Commissioner did not follow it up. It was not a refusal.
 - That both of [D]’s sons have such disabilities that [D]’s ‘caring responsibilities have increased significantly’. It is wholly abhorrent for the Commissioner to characterise the care [D] provides to his son’s as not being genuine.
75. Paragraph 221 and footnote 26: Please find attached statement of [V] which is self-explanatory.
76. In conclusion:
- (1) The Commissioner has conducted an investigation which has not been in line with the principles of natural justice and fairness as required by the Code of Conduct;
 - (2) The Commissioner has expressed racist views and those have led her to the wrong conclusions. This Committee should take immediate action to condemn such views and impose such sanction as necessary in these circumstances;
 - (3) The Commissioner has taken a different approach to the witnesses who are in support of the fresh evidence as against those who are not;
 - (4) All of the witnesses interviewed by the Commissioner responding to the fresh evidence are not independent and have motive to support and cannot be relied upon;
 - (5) The witnesses in support of the fresh evidence are independent and have no motive to say what they have said;
 - (6) [P] is, by far, the most independent of witnesses and has confirmed that the fresh evidence is true;
 - (7) The Commissioner has failed to speak to the police who are, by any stretch of the imagination, the most independent of parties who could easily have provided the information/evidence the Commissioner needed to assess the veracity and credibility of the Complainant. The Committee may wish to seek to rectify this before coming to its own conclusion;
 - (8) The Commissioner has repeatedly sought to mislead particularly in relation to [D]’s alleged refusal to be re-interviewed;
 - (9) [D] has evidence which shows that he was out of the country at the time that the meeting with Mr Zaman was said to have taken place which fundamentally and fatally undermines the evidence of Mr Zaman, his family and [W].

77. The Committee will be aware of my criticisms of the Commissioner and asked that someone other than the Commissioner and Ms Evans conduct the investigation into the fresh evidence. My concerns as to their conduct of the investigation has been borne out by the Report. The investigation is flawed and incomplete. I invite the Committee to reject the Commissioners Report and seek the further evidence set out above, including speaking to the police, which will show that the fresh evidence is sound and supports the contention that TZ's allegations against me are false.

APPENDIX 3: COMPLAINANT'S RESPONSE TO COMMISSIONER'S SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

I have received the supplementary report written by Commissioner Lucy.

I agree with Commissioner Lucy's recommendation to have Lord Ahmed expelled.

Also I have read the 'Extract from Lord Ahmed's further response'. I would like to make clear my position on what he wrote which is: He is a manipulator and a liar. He has twisted anything and everything I have said. He is unapologetic and arrogant. He remains unremorseful and he continues to pervert the course of justice.

In addition to this, if allowed to give my own suggestion, I would like to put to the committee and Lord Mance that given the position Lord Ahmed has been in, the way he has lied, and convinced his friends to malign against me, and how he abused his position – and I do not doubt he has done this before...he should also be fined.

I feel there needs to be additional strong consequences against Lord Ahmed and his friends who have been lying. Personally I feel there should be fining for all of them and this will act as a deterrent for anyone else seeking to abuse their position in future too. They all gave false witness statements of truth which is a criminal offence.

Lord Ahmed along with his friends, that essentially have acted as 'accomplices' by lying and trying to protect his wrongdoings, have wasted everyone's time.

This should be part of the code of conduct, as I feel that the false witnesses who lied against me would have thought twice or withheld, out of fear of the consequences. This will help protect innocent parties. I feel that false witnesses should also be warned that they will be fined as well as any Lord or Lady doing so.

I hope that is okay....?

I feel like there has been so much going back and forward, and Lord Ahmed will continue to lie and fabricate, coming up with further false witnesses. When do we draw the line...?

I need closure...I am so tired of this.

Kind regards,

Tahira

Annex D: Transcript of Lord Ahmed's appeal hearing

Members present:

Lord Mance (The Chair)
 Baroness Anelay of St Johns
 Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood
 Cindy Butts (Lay Member)
 Mark Castle (Lay Member)
 Andrea Coomber (Lay Member)
 Vanessa Davies (Lay Member)
 Baroness Donaghy; Baroness Hussein-Ece.

Examination of witness

Lord Ahmed.

Q1. The Chair: Good afternoon, Lord Ahmed. I am the Chair of the Conduct Committee, Jonathan Mance. I am going to ask everyone to introduce themselves in a moment. There is, I am afraid, one apology, but I hope only for a short time, and that is from Cindy Butts. Her interviewing schedule has overrun, but she is going to join us as soon as she can. There will be a transcript taken and a sound recording so that she will be able to see what has been said. I hope that does not raise a problem for you.

Lord Ahmed: That is fine.

The Chair: Thank you. I gather that you are accompanied by Mr Khan. He cannot speak but he can advise you. I would remind you that all the members of the Committee have read the appeal papers. You do not need to repeat points in the papers except those that you wish to stress briefly.

Your statement, of course, can be divided between the report, the supplementary report and the issue of sanction, if it arises, as you wish, but I am sure you are aware that the test in relation to the substantive part of the report is a high one and we have to be plainly satisfied, or it has to be plainly wrong, on a key finding. The test in relation to sanctions is a different one. It is for us to decide what the appropriate sanction is, and we are not restricted in the same way.

I will ask the members of the Committee to introduce themselves in turn. Then I will ask you to give your statement. You will have half an hour from the time that begins. I will take them in random order.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Good afternoon. I am Joyce Anelay, a member of this Committee since its formation last year.

Baroness Hussein-Ece: I am Meral Hussein-Ece, a member of this Committee.

Vanessa Davies: Good afternoon. I am Vanessa Davies, a lay member of the Committee.

Andrea Coomber: I am Andrea Coomber, a lay member of the Committee.

Baroness Donaghy: I am Rita Donaghy, a member of the Committee.

Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood: I am Simon Brown, Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood. I am a Cross-Bencher. I was a Law Lord before that, and I was the Chair of the Conduct Sub-Committee, as it was, before this new Committee was formed, when I joined that.

Mark Castle: Good afternoon. I am Mark Castle. I am a lay member of the Committee.

The Chair: Cindy, I am glad that you have arrived. I mentioned that you were going to be a little late. I cannot see you, but would you just like to introduce yourself to Lord Ahmed, who is here?

Cindy Butts: Thank you, and good afternoon. My name is Cindy Butts. I am a lay member of the Committee.

Q2. The Chair: Thank you. Unless anyone has any further point to remind me of at this stage, I am going to invite Lord Ahmed to give his statement. We will try to give you as free a run, Lord Ahmed, as we can. We will obviously be taking notes. Any questions will probably be put, not by interruption but at the end of your statement, if there are any questions.

Lord Ahmed: Thank you very much, Lord Chairman. My Lords, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for this opportunity to say a few words. I would like to read a few notes and then I will speak from my heart, which I really want to do.

I completely deny the allegation that I have exploited my position to pursue an inappropriate relationship with any member of the public or that I have breached the Code of Conduct that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct.

The complainant has previously attempted to damage my reputation by reporting her serious allegations to the police, alleging rape, which was investigated. She pursued the matter for further investigations under the Victims' Right to Review Scheme. Those investigations were conducted and dismissed.

The complainant took this matter to the High Court for judicial review. It was done in writing and then orally, and it was dismissed.

She reported this matter to the Commissioner for Standards in early 2018. On 12 April 2018, the Commissioner wrote to me and said that the House of Lords Code of Conduct covers Members' parliamentary activities. It does not extend to their behaviour that is unrelated to parliamentary proceedings. The circumstances put to me by the complainant did not, in my view, engage parliamentary activities.

The complainant then reported this matter to many outlets of the media. Only the BBC "Newsnight" programme decided to report the matter. It should be noted that [U]—the reporter from "Newsnight"—is an investigative reporter of Islamic terrorism. In my view, he pursued confirmation bias and came to some conclusions.

I take my duties as a parliamentarian extremely seriously and would not act so as to undermine my personal or professional reputation.

On 27 May 2020, the Commissioner completed her investigation and found a possible breach of the Code of Conduct, which I refute in its entirety.

On 2 October 2020, the Commissioner provided her supplementary report in relation to the fresh evidence. As you know, I am challenging the integrity of the investigation as the Commissioner is duty-bound to respect the principles of natural justice. You should note that I raised the issue of integrity and impartiality in early December 2019. I do not know, my Lord, whether you remember, or Ms Mawson can confirm, that last year in December 2019 I copied my complaint, which I sent to the Commissioner—her email—to you and the Committee, that I had objections to the procedure on the basic principle of fairness and natural justice.

I could go on and read 10 pages that I have written, but I really want to concentrate, first of all, on what my lawyers have told me. The way this investigation has been conducted is a breach of human rights and some articles of the European convention.

I understand that when the Commissioner first dismissed this complaint, and then it went to the BBC, there was a lot of pressure on the Commissioner. I can understand that. After the BBC's 19 or 20 minutes of documentary, she approached the complainant, because the complainant had already contacted the Commissioner, and asked her about it. I now understand that the Commissioner may have visited the complainant on a number of occasions at her workplace to discuss her complaint. Throughout that investigation—I am not talking about the subsequent investigation but the original one—I was only invited for one meeting. I do not know whether it was one hour or one and a half hours, but it was for one meeting.

Here I think it is important to say that the principle of natural justice and fairness was overlooked. I was not given any statement or any allegations, apart from general allegations. I was not told what the complainant had said. I did not know the details. Later on, I was told that it is customary for the Commissioner to pass on the information.

I only got to know that when my statement was tagged to the judicial review papers by the complainant. I received those documents. I know that other people received those documents. Incidentally, it is very important, because this has had a devastating effect on my personal life and my family life. The community and everyone else got to know about it because there were journalists present, and because the complainant has written to many Urdu and Pakistani TV and newspaper journalists and told them these stories.

I simply wrote in December 2019, and, Lord Chairman, that is why I copied the full complaint to you. It is quite detailed, and I do not want to repeat it word for word. I am sure you will have a reference to 5 December 2019, when I emailed the Commissioner and I also copied you in.

As I said, I honestly think that the Commissioner was put under pressure. Of course, Lord Carlile was the one who made a lot of comments in the BBC documentary and criticised the Commissioner. Maybe she was trying to show her fairness, or rather impartiality, in investigating this matter. Therefore, I believe that the Commissioner treated my witnesses—those who supported me—differently from the complainant's.

I will give you an example. For instance, in her recent report—and I have said this in my response as well—she said, “I know all Asian men get together and they

support each other”. This was when she was investigating [D], the reporter or the president of Pakistan Press Club in Manchester in the north.

My Lords, ladies and gentlemen, if you look at how the Asian journalists were questioned—I mean those whom the Commissioner first interviewed: Farid Qureshi and the other gentleman, and then [L] and [D]—it is almost as if they have been led into a certain way of answering in the way they have been questioned. The Commissioner has not even mentioned the missing evidence: for instance, the Mayor of Rochdale’s, Mr Zaman’s, and [D]’s allegations that he went to see her. The complainant’s sister said that it was at their house. He said it was outside the town hall. [D] was never questioned on that. The Commissioner did not invite him back to ask these very important questions.

Similarly, if you look at all those four Asian journalists and every bit of the questioning, and you look at the way she questioned the reporter from the Sunday Times and [U], it is very different. It is almost, “Yes, you are telling the truth”. If the story was so good, why did the Sunday Times not actually report this matter in its own newspaper? It was the BBC only and nobody else. Everybody else, of course, reported it on the back of the BBC, but the Sunday Times had this story before. They were not questioned in the same way as [D] and [L] were. In my view, it was treating Asian men differently.

Lord Chairman, honestly, the Committee can go and see [D]’s two sons. One is about 22 or 23, and the other one is about 20 or 21. They are both in a wheelchair. Yes, of course they have made videos to put on Facebook to give them good morale, but these boys cannot eat by themselves—they are fed. I have seen them at events with [D], because he is a journalist. Sometimes he brings them in a wheelchair. They are carried into the car and into the wheelchair.

The Commissioner asked for evidence. The National Health Service doctor and the nurses’ letters are there to say that they have been dealing with these boys since birth, they have these problems and need 24/7 care, but she said she did not believe it. There are many other things from funeral photographs, where the Commissioner questions me and [D] in relation to why I was at his house or he was at my house.

I have said this before, my Lords, ladies and gentlemen: Asian culture is very different. Yes, I am a Member of the British House of Lords, but when I am in Pakistan, and when I go to Kashmir, I adhere to those cultures. I have given a video recording to the Commissioner, with photographs, to show that in one day I visited at least four people in their homes to do al-Fatiha—to do prayer—and this has not been because there was some sort of funeral going on a week before or even a month before. It is just a tradition that, whenever you go to see them, you go and sympathise. The Commissioner questioned all that and brought in an imam for advice. Lo and behold, this imam is from Bangladesh. The Muslim culture from Turkey to Pakistan to Bangladesh is very different in relation to these customs.

Sometimes I feel this is why I have to say this, moving away from my notes. I have to express it. This investigation has devastated my family life and almost even my public life. Since the BBC “Newsnight” programme, my Lord, I have not been to the House of Lords. Yes, my wife is not well; she has cancer. Yes, I have been looking after her, but I did not attend a single session.

I have not been to Pakistan or Kashmir since then, because it was reported widely, and until I clear my name I cannot appear in public. I have attended a few events in Europe. I have not attended many events in this country, but just to show my face. I have kept away from all these normal events because of this.

My Lords, I believe that the victims of sexual misconduct deserve sympathy and support. When they are making false allegations, however, it undermines the system and the process, and it affects the credibility of genuine witnesses. I genuinely believe that.

As I have said, this complainant has been everywhere, just to destroy me. She made no secret of it. She went to every newspaper. She was more interested in Pakistani TV channels and Pakistani newspapers, because she knows that that is where I appear quite a lot, but she also contacted many Members of this House of Lords, for instance. I can tell you that Lord Dholakia once stopped me in the corridors and said, "You know, somebody has made a serious allegation". Members of Parliament in the House of Commons have told me very similar things. There was a deliberate attempt to affect my personal reputation and affect my family life.

Of course, this comes from the fact that this lady was caught having an affair with my [X] in my house. There are about 4,500 or 5,000 text messages. I was told first that they were not available. Originally, the police looked at them. The police had all the information, and that is why they did not take any further action. I understand that the Commissioner had them, but I do not know whether they have been passed on or not.

I think I have spoken enough now. If there are any questions, I would be happy to answer my Lords. I am sorry I have gone on for too long.

Q3. The Chair: I do not think that you have gone on too long. I would just ask you one question on the last point you made. You say, do you, that the 4,000 or 5,000 texts are different from the texts which the Commissioner produced in her report and are further texts that she got hold of or was not able to get hold of?

Lord Ahmed: My Lord, I understand that some were downloaded with some special app. I think in these common days they call them "sexting" or something, because they are of that nature.

Q4. The Chair: Pause a moment. I am simply trying to clarify the point. There are a lot of texts included in the Commissioner's report. As I understand, she sought to get further information from the gentleman [X], which he said at one point that he had but which he has not disclosed.

Lord Ahmed: There are text messages. The whole issue in relation to this process is that the Commissioner has forbidden me from contacting that gentleman, these journalists or anyone in relation to the inquiry. She questions me and she questions other people separately, but I am told not to contact those people and ask them for anything or even discuss this matter. That is the issue, really.

Q5. The Chair: Is there anything you want to say if we uphold all or any of the core findings, which one might summarise as relating to: first, the incident at or after the dinner at the Sahara Grill, which you say is an incident that would not have been remembered but for subsequent events; and, secondly, when she deals with sanctions she refers at the end of that passage to the critical period of July to November, which is when she finds that you induced the complainant into a

sexual relationship under a promise to help in your capacity as a Member of the House of Lords?

Is there anything you want to say specifically on either the substance of that or the sanction that is appropriate following it? If we upheld those allegations, we would have to consider sanction and consider it against the background that the Commissioner has held that you do not have, effectively, the mitigation that might come from accepting what happened or apologising, and indeed you do not have the mitigation that might come from truthful answers there, because she has found that your answers were not truthful.

Lord Ahmed: My Lord, as to the allegations the complainant has made, in the BBC documentary it is accepted that this was consensual. There is absolutely no evidence that I persuaded her in any way for these sexual favours. Her original complaint was that I allegedly promised her that I would get her a meeting with the Commissioner of Police. I allegedly showed her a letter from the Commissioner of Police. The police have confirmed that there was no letter. There was one letter from an inspector of police, in which he said that he wanted to know the identity of this lady. Categorically, in writing, which I have given to the Commissioner, she said that she did not want to be named. She did not want to disclose her identity.

Q6. The Chair: Just pause there. I do not think I have in mind the material you are referring to when you say that she categorically said she did not wish to be identified. The letter you drafted for her of 2 March 2017 said that she was an informant and wished to remain anonymous. Is that the letter you are referring to?

Lord Ahmed: She wrote to me first. There is her letter in the report that said that she did not want to be named or for her name to be disclosed. Yes, in my letter too, I said the same thing, because she did not want to be named. In any case, when she said—she has been going on about this—that I promised her, I never did, because there was not a letter from the Commissioner of Police. There has never been a letter from the Commissioner of Police. It was an inspector who wrote and wanted her ID.

Q7. The Chair: When you say that she wrote, I think you are referring to her email. Is that right?

Lord Ahmed: Email, sir, yes.

Q8. The Chair: That is clear. Thank you. It was on 22 February.

Lord Ahmed: Yes.

Q9. The Chair: We have that in the report. Do you want to say anything more on the subject I invited you to address, which was: on the hypothesis that we were to uphold all or any part of the complaint, what should we do? The Commissioner has made a recommendation that we would have to consider at that point.

Lord Ahmed: My Lord, obviously, so far, for two years, I have suffered a lot. All my charitable work and all my community work throughout the United Kingdom has benefited from various activities, whether it is fundraising, charitable causes or even social cohesion in European communities. I have lots of organisations which I support throughout Europe. This will all stop if there are any sanctions as such.

I believe that I have suffered a lot already from what has happened. Of course, it is a matter for your Lordships and ladies and gentlemen on this Committee to recommend, but this would have a devastating effect. It would completely destroy my public life and it will also have a lot of effect on my personal life, too. As I have said, I have suffered for the last two years. If you were to uphold some of it, then that is a penalty I have already suffered as a result of anything that you may find.

The Chair: Thank you. I am going to ask if there are questions from any other members of the Committee, other than myself.

Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood: Speaking for myself, not at the present time. Might it be a good idea to ask Lord Ahmed to withdraw, and we can perhaps discuss whether any of us would like to ask questions at that point?

The Chair: Lord Ahmed, we were going to do that. We are going to ask you to stay, if you can. You will have to be taken out of this link, but would you please stay at the end of an email? I imagine that you receive emails on a mobile, do you?

Lord Ahmed: Yes, I do.

The Chair: If you could stay there, if we would like you to re-enter this conference call, the email will tell you. So would you please wait for at least the next half an hour or so?

Lord Ahmed: Yes. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Would you and the lawyer accompanying you withdraw?

The Committee continued in private. Lord Ahmed was not called back to the conference call.