

**An Independent Review  
Of Two Home Office  
Commissioned  
Independent Reviews  
Looking At Information  
Held In Connection  
With Child Abuse from  
1979-1999**

**Peter Wanless  
and  
Richard Whittam QC**

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# 1 Foreword

1. The Home Secretary appointed us to conduct an independent review of two previous pieces of work commissioned by her Permanent Secretary.

Review 1 had been invited to consider:

What, if any, material was provided to the Department [Home Office] in relation to alleged organised child abuse; and

What, if any, action was taken in relation to such allegations and whether relevant materials were passed to the police or law enforcement body to investigate; and

Whether any member of Home Office staff was alleged or found to be involved or implicated in organised child abuse and what action was taken.

2. Review 2 looked into whether the Home Office ever directly or indirectly funded the Paedophile Information Exchange [PIE].
3. The initial acceptance by the Home Office that 114 files were 'missing' without further information fuelled speculation that something untoward had occurred. Having considered and been permitted to make public much more detailed information about those files, it will be apparent why, in our consideration of Review 1, we did not confine our work to a straightforward repeat of the initial reviews but wanted to consider material beyond that held at the Home Office itself.
4. Although we have summarised our findings, it is important to consider the full extent of our work alongside the detail included in Review 1 and not consider any part of either review in isolation.

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## 2 Introduction and Context

1. Child abuse, whether organised or not, is an abhorrent crime that has a profound and lifelong impact on the victims. We accepted the invitation to conduct this review because of the importance the public attaches to the need for an independent examination of what the Home Office had or did relevant to our terms of reference. In particular, as the CEO of the NSPCC, Peter Wanless agreed to undertake this review because of the Society's enduring passion to fight for every childhood, part of which demands justice for the survivors of abuse. We have approached our task with that at the forefront of our minds.
2. We were asked to review two, separate, independent reviews previously commissioned by the Home Office's Permanent Secretary. One has examined what the Home Office knew and did about cases of organised child abuse over a 20-year period ending in 1999 [Review 1, which reported in two parts; Interim and Final]. The second looked specifically at whether the Home Office had ever given grant funding to the Paedophile Information Exchange [Review 2]. The Home Secretary, in announcing our work, indicated an intention to publish the first of these reviews alongside our own findings [with appropriate redactions]. The second review was placed in the House of Commons Library on 7 July. We have not sought to replicate the detail included in the first review, but to see whether further work of a different nature could throw any light onto the files that could not be located or whether any material held elsewhere revealed what information the Home Office had and what action, if any, it took.
3. There has been some public confusion about the scope of our task, given the much wider panel review [now to be chaired by Fiona Woolf] announced on the same day. Our terms of reference, which we were not involved in drafting, concentrate specifically on what the Home Office knew or did during a fixed period of time, drawing upon information held in registered files [Annex A].

4. We have undertaken this task at a time when the police are actively investigating past offences of child abuse. We have taken great care not to hamper any current or reasonably anticipated future prosecution. We do not want inadvertently to prejudice the prosecution of anyone who committed crimes against children during this period. In order to avoid that, we have liaised carefully with the national police lead on child protection, Simon Bailey, the Chief Constable of Norfolk, and a number of Senior or Deputy Senior Investigating Officers. We encourage others to exercise appropriate caution not so as to limit the open and fair reporting of this review or matters that should be investigated or aired publicly, but to avoid any additional impediment to those investigations. That said, we have sought to report our findings as transparently as possible. We have not redacted any part of our review.
  
5. Much has changed in the passage of over a third of a century since the start of the period with which we are concerned. Rightly there is an increased focus on the complainant in cases of alleged child abuse. Whilst such investigations should be conducted within lawful parameters and the rights of suspects recognised, the rights of the complainants are now more at the forefront of the minds of those who record and investigate such allegations. There is now a presumption that such offences will be investigated, whether historic or contemporary. Recent prosecutions reflect that those investigations are less deferential to the current or former status of the suspects and the importance of the complainants' interests means that the public interest clearly is best served by the thorough investigation of the allegations according to contemporary standards. Those standards include the possibility that one complaint may support another and there can be value in assessing an apparent course of conduct rather than considering individual allegations in isolation. It follows that if files are destroyed too early [even if within an established document retention policy] opportunities may be lost. We were reassured as to how the police procedures now require criminal intelligence to be recorded and retained, compared with the period under scrutiny in this review. [Annex B].

6. The law in relation to sexual offences has changed. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 now governs contemporary criminality. Homosexual acts between consenting males aged 21 and over was made legal by the Sexual Offences Act 1967. That age of consent was reduced to males aged 18 and over by Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, and parity with heterosexual consent was finally achieved in the Sexual Offences [Amendment] Act 2000. That is relevant to this extent only: first, some people wrongly confused homosexuality with paedophilia. Second, consenting male homosexuals under the age of 21 risked prosecution for having consensual sex for much of the period we have considered. Such confusion led to allegations of paedophilia being made in relation to what may have been a criminal offence simply by virtue that one of the males involved was under 21 [See Review 1, Final, Appendix C].
7. While our focus has been on registered files, we have considered all material made directly available to us to help inform our search. Websites and social media offer voluminous information as to concerns, issues, individuals and locations of heightened public interest and particular concern to survivors of abuse. We sought early meetings with MPs who have expressed particular interest in related matters, and are grateful to Tom Watson, Simon Danczuk, Tim Loughton and John Mann whose observations and insight we considered as to where and how we might concentrate our effort.
8. We were asked to complete the work in 8-10 weeks. This was not a statutory inquiry. We did not take evidence from witnesses in a formal sense but were open to receiving and reading information from anyone who sought to contact us. Through the Home Office we have made many requests of others across Government and wider public services where filing and record keeping methods are inconsistent. On occasion the replies we received required clarification or prompted further inquiry. Whilst that necessarily prolonged the process we sought to conduct our review expeditiously. In the time available we have had to rely on the efficiency and integrity of those who have sought material on our behalf.
9. We are acutely conscious of the huge range of information in the public domain. That information may or may not be accurate; it may have a sound

factual basis or some factual basis, or it may be nothing more than suspicion, speculation or innuendo. Whilst such information alerted us to possible lines of inquiry, it is the product of those inquiries that we have considered. We have not been constrained by legal formality nor were we obliged to apply a burden or standard of proof to our work. We have considered all the material made available to us as a result of the requests that we have made and the searches carried out on our behalf and formed our conclusions on that material.

10. Whilst there may be nothing more than suspicion, speculation or innuendo in some of the matters openly raised and recorded on the Internet condition public opinion as to what might have been going on through this period. Perhaps the starkest example is that raised by a politician about fellow politicians. Michael Cockrell's 'Westminster's Secret Service' featured an interview with Tim Fortescue who was a senior Whip, in the Heath administration 1971-1973 – and so almost a decade before the period of greatest relevance to our review. He was prepared to say in an interview broadcast on national television:

*“For anyone with any sense, who was in trouble, would come to the whips and tell them the truth, and say now, I’m in a jam, can you help? It might be debt, it might be... a scandal involving small boys, or any kind of scandal in which, erm er, a member seemed likely to be mixed up in, they’d come and ask if we could help and if we could, we did. And we would do everything we can because we would store up brownie points... and if I mean, that sounds a pretty, pretty nasty reason, but it’s one of the reasons because if we could get a chap out of trouble then, he will do as we ask forever more.” [Emphasis added]*

11. Unsurprisingly there is considerable public disquiet about Home Office files that could not be located and concern as to whether there was a campaign of subterfuge in relation to allegations of child abuse against high ranking politicians and Home Office officials.
12. Whilst we have remained true to our terms of reference we have not been unnecessarily constrained by them, as evidenced by our decision to look beyond what is recorded at the Home Office to see whether we could



uncover any material that could throw some light on the apparent discrepancies between what it is publicly thought did exist [or may have existed] and what is recorded as having existed. We have sought to discover whether material was not recorded and what may have been removed or destroyed without legitimate justification [See Chapter 9 paragraph 9].

13. Although we have examined material that covers the entire period 1979-1999, we have been careful to scrutinise with particular care material available that might throw any light on the period in the early 1980s when there was public discussion about what has been described as the 'Dickens' Dossiers'. The apparent absence from any public record of a copy of this collection of papers, frequently referred to by Mr Dickens and commented on regularly in the media at the time, has caused particular concern.

### 3 Executive Summary

1. Review 1 was a comprehensive analysis of material available at the Home Office. Although it was an extensive and painstaking exercise, in adherence to its terms of reference it was introspective. It relied in the main on manual scrutiny of paper files based on the interrogation of file titles which one might reasonably expect to contain papers associated with organised child abuse. Although other inquiries were made, we looked far more widely; seeking to test the conclusions drawn by seeing what other interested parties might hold in their filing systems as to what the Home Office might have known or done about child abuse.
2. We made inquiries widely across the Government estate and other public services. Those inquiries included making requests of the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, Security Services, HM Revenue and Customs and the Cabinet Office [an enquiry which specifically included the Whips' office] [Annex C and Annex D]. No one declined any of our requests.
3. It is evident from file structures we have seen and papers contained within files most obviously referencing child abuse, that the Home Office machine was not typically at the forefront of individual child protection cases [and see Review 1, Final, Chapter 4]. We note that although some allegations are documented as having been referred to the Home Office, individual cases were and remain the responsibility of police and/or social services. On the rare occasions we found of specific allegations being made in correspondence that survives, papers are shown to have been passed to the relevant police force for investigation [Examples are in Review 1, Final Chapter 8]. However, it is not possible at this remove of time on the information that has been made available to us to say precisely what was given to the Home Office throughout this period, or what action the Home Office took in relation to each allegation that was referred to it. No system of routinely recording such referrals existed then, or now. In those circumstances, on the material at the Home Office it is not possible to consider or comment with any confidence on how the police and prosecution authorities handled any material that was handed to them at the time [See Recommendation 3]. This problem is compounded by the records

management convention in place across police forces at the time that all papers relating to allegations not leading to a charge were destroyed after two years.

4. Inside the Home Office, filing conventions and record keeping methods used during the period place significant limitations on our ability to re-establish a perfect record of what was known to the Home Office at the time that must necessarily condition any observations we make.
5. It is, therefore, not possible to say whether files were ever removed or destroyed to cover up or hide allegations of organised or systematic child abuse by particular individuals because of the systems then in place. It follows that we cannot say that no file was removed or destroyed for that reason. By making those observations they should not be misinterpreted. We do not conclude that there is any basis for thinking that anything happened to files that should not have happened to them, but identify that limitation in our review. Further, and with the same caveat, our review cannot be taken to have concluded one way or the other whether there was organised child abuse that has yet to be fully uncovered - indeed it is public knowledge that active police investigations examining allegations of historic child abuse are underway.
6. All that said, based on registered papers we have seen, and our wider enquiries, we found nothing to support a concern that files had been deliberately or systematically removed or destroyed to cover up organised child abuse. We found nothing specific to support a concern that the Home Office had failed in any organised or deliberate way to identify and refer individual allegations of child abuse to the police.
7. Review 2 had concluded that on the balance of probabilities and in the absence of supporting evidence or a corroborative account, the alleged funding of PIE by the Home Office's Voluntary Services Unit [VSU] did not take place. We have explored further the suggestion made by the whistleblower, and not covered explicitly in the original review, that funding of PIE might have taken place with the knowledge of the police or security services as part of an effort to infiltrate PIE. On the information we have seen during the period of our review, we have found nothing in registered

files or in testimony offered by contemporaries in and around the VSU to support what the whistleblower remembers being told. Nor, however, have we been able to dismiss the suggestion entirely.

## 4 Consideration Of Review 1

1. It is unnecessary for us to set out the contents of Review 1, Interim and Review 1, as they are now available at Annex E and Annex F.
2. We have considered all the redactions to Review 1. We have agreed only to those redactions we were advised are essential for the protection of individuals or where we have been told that more explicit reference might prejudice any current or reasonably anticipated future prosecution. [Annex G].
3. We met the investigator who conducted Review 1, but only after we had read the files that he identified as being of significance and after we had instigated our initial requests of others.
4. As is clear from the following chapter, through no fault of that investigator, he was unable to consider one file of particular interest to us; the 'Brighton Assaults' file which was found after his work had been completed [see Chapter 5]. The investigator had, however, already seen some of the material it contained because some papers were duplicates of material in other files and some papers in this file had been duplicated elsewhere. That is relevant to the concern that there had been a deliberate unauthorised destruction of files as there is no certainty that material in one file does not appear in another file.

### REVIEW 1, INTERIM REPORT

5. The Interim Report assessed the concerns apparently raised by Mr Dickens and recent developments [Chapters 3 &4]. Further, it analysed in some detail the material found at the Home Office that was provided by Mr Dickens to the Home Office and his contact with the Home Office [Chapters 8, 9, 10 &11]. Although there is reference to 'Dossiers' the Interim Reports is clear that the so-called 'Dickens Dossiers' had not been found [Paragraph 9.1].

6. Reference is made to the search methodology used [Chapter 6] and other inquiries [Chapter 7]. Although the extant Home Office filing system was considered [Chapter 5] that is addressed in greater detail in the Final Report.

#### REVIEW 1, FINAL REPORT

7. The Final Report expanded on the Interim Report and included an assessment of the role of the Home Office [Chapter 4]. Attention was drawn to the fact that although the Home Office was responsible for policy relating to the criminal law, procedure and sentencing and for the support for victims of such offences, the conduct of individual investigations was a matter for the police. Despite that, it is clear that, on occasion, material did come to the Home Office, often in the form of correspondence that did relate to specific allegations.
8. Perhaps the clearest example of such correspondence is set out in the Final Report at paragraph 8.20. A letter was sent to Buckingham Palace that related to an allegation made by the mother of two young children about what had happened to them near her own home. At a loss as to who to turn to, she wrote to Buckingham Palace. That letter was passed to the Home Office. It was passed to the police, who acted upon it and replied to the Home Office. It was but one piece of correspondence in a large file that dealt with matters of policy, including the extent to which corporal punishment of children by their parents was lawful.
9. Whilst it is clear that the Home Office acted appropriately in this instance, the Reviewer was not able to find any written policies or operating procedures setting out how this material should be handled. We make observations about Home Office Policies on Record Management and the protocol dated 28 August 2014 between the Home Office and the police about the handling of information and correspondence received [Annex H] below [Chapter 6] and we make recommendations [Recommendations 2 & 3].

10. The analysis of the Home Office records and retention and destruction policies [Chapter 5], methodology used [Chapter 6] the summary of the results [Chapter 7] and the information or allegations about child sexual abuse [Chapter 8] is detailed.
11. We considered whether we should have any specialist help to assist us in assessing whether the approach used was appropriate. We considered the approach taken with care. After we had gained a better understanding of the records that remained, the filing system in place and the file titles of the files that could no longer be located, we decided to concentrate our efforts in testing those findings by looking elsewhere. In those circumstances, in the time available to us, we did not think that it was necessary or proportionate for us to seek external help in that regard.
12. The work carried on in relation to the Paedophile Information Exchange [PIE] [Chapter 9] and the alleged involvement of Home Office employees in organised child abuse [Chapter 10] is equally detailed.
13. We found nothing to undermine the specific conclusion that although Steven Smith may have worked for another Government Department, he does not appear to have been employed by the Home Office. Indeed the 'Brighton Assaults' file contains briefings from 1984 stating that Mr Smith was employed by a contractor working on the Home Office building and that his security clearance was cancelled and his contract terminated by the contractor as a consequence, when his PIE membership became known to the Department.
14. We concluded that the Reviewer adopted an approach that was reasonably available to them in carrying out their work.

## 5 Further Home Office Searches And The Brighton Assaults File

1. On 29 July, the Home Office Permanent Secretary directed that a physical search targeted on specific areas of the Department be undertaken in an effort to see if any of the 114 missing files could be located. The exercise also sought to determine if papers were being held outside the registered filing system that might be of relevance to our review.
2. Throughout August, a search was conducted of all physical holdings in Crime and Policing Group, the Office of Security Crime and Terrorism, the Corporate Security Unit, Judicial Cooperation Unit, Legal Advisers Branch, Private Office and the Press Office. Some 777 storage units were checked and no files that should not have been there were found. One new registered file was created from a previously unregistered store of papers. A broader "file amnesty" exercise continues across the department under which staff have been encouraged to declare papers that ought previously to have been registered or declare files which ought to have been returned to the central registry, but for whatever reason might not have been. None of this work has uncovered any of the 114 missing files, though one was found prior to this exercise. No papers have been brought to our attention as a consequence of this exercise as being material to the task we were set.
3. At the same time, however, the work of the original investigator had already prompted a heightened awareness in the Home Office Central Records Management function, of files that could be relevant to organised child abuse and, in particular, the Dickens dossier, irrespective of their file title. As a consequence, a routine review of files identified one from 1983 titled "*Crime Particular Offences. Common Assault and Violence Against the Person: The Brighton Assaults*" which had not been thrown up by any previous title-based search. Despite lacking a title of immediate relevance to organised child abuse, the file contained correspondence between Home Office officials and Ministers material to helping with an understanding of meetings between Geoffrey Dickens MP and the Home Secretary Leon Brittan between August 1983 and the summer of 1984.



4. The contents of this file covered a variety of topics but, from mid-August 1983, seemed to become a record of Departmental meetings and discussions about how the Government should best respond to an appalling attack on a child in Brighton. This incident was front-page news provoking widespread public outrage at sexual crimes against children. The file captures media coverage from the time and an immediate request from the Home Secretary, who was on holiday in Scotland, for an update on progress with the investigation by Sussex police.
5. Public outrage at the crime gave fresh impetus to Geoffrey Dickens and others who had been campaigning to have membership of PIE made illegal for some time.
6. The Department prepared a response for the Home Secretary to consider and issue publicly on his return from a holiday in Scotland. A paper arguing the case for and against outlawing PIE is on file as being presented to a meeting with the Home Secretary on 31 August. He is recorded in discussion as accepting advice that, with an ongoing police investigation into PIE activities, it was not the right time to be commenting further on banning the organisation.
7. The file also contains briefing for a subsequent meeting between the Home Secretary and Mr Dickens and a note of that encounter on 24 November 1983. Mr Dickens is recorded as having handed over two letters containing specific allegations.
8. The file later contains [without attachments] a second letter dated 17 January 1984 from Mr Dickens with further enclosed cases for investigation. He thanks the Home Secretary for offering splendid support.
9. Advice described as offering a full response to all these cases [handed over by Mr Dickens in November 1983 and January 1984] is filed alongside a formal reply from the Home Secretary to Mr Dickens dated 20 March. There is no mention of prominent politicians or celebrities in the cases under discussion [in marked contrast to media commentary about these meetings at the time]. A subsequent note refers to the attachments to Mr Dickens' January letter as a dossier of letters, all of which were examined by the

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP]. The 20 March reply tells Mr Dickens that of all the cases considered, in the view of the DPP, two could form the basis for enquiries by the police and have been passed to the appropriate authorities.

## 6 Our Approach In Detail

1. We were given free access to the Home Office filing system. We were told that no files were kept from us. Whilst there are some obvious weaknesses in the system, any search we commissioned was carried out. In particular the system was demonstrated to us and we were encouraged to make further requests so that we could see how changing the search parameters affected the results.
  
2. Files during the period 1979-1999 were paper based. They included original and copied documents. Some of the documents have been annotated with manuscript notes and other documents are manuscript. We specifically explored whether there were any digital or electronic files for us to consider. The Home Office Records Management policy up until 2006 was 'Print to Paper'. That means that the paper files constituted the Corporate Record and any information created or received in digital format that need to be retained for business or historical purposes should have been printed off and retained in physical form. We were told that in accordance with that policy there are no formal digital records from the period 1979-1999.
  
3. That said, a high level internal look at the various Home Office digital repositories revealed the existence of several thousand individual documents that appear to be from this period although it is clear that the metadata on some of them has been corrupted as they seem to predate Government's ability to create documents electronically. We were told that the bulk of those documents were identified as belonging to the former UK Border Agency and, given the policy at that time, in any event the documents should fall into the following categories:
  - 3.1. Duplicates of documents printed out and saved as Records in the physical files.
  - 3.2. Earlier drafts of documents printed out and saved in the physical files.
  - 3.3. System documentation belonging to the Department's IT providers.
  - 3.4. Ephemera.

4. In those circumstances, absent any direct evidence that there were any relevant electronic files, we did not have any basis for commissioning any electronic review within our terms of reference.
5. In exploring how the Home Office Record Management Service work we considered the development of the Home Office Policy on Record Management.
6. The transition between paper and electronic records has necessarily altered the way in which material is recorded. For example, in the March 2003 policy, the following information should appear on the file cover of a paper based record:
  - 6.1. The high-level subject matter that will be used to associate groups of related files together;
  - 6.2. File title describing the contents of the individual file corresponding to the agree file plan or scheme;
  - 6.3. A disposal category indicating how long the file should be kept for;
  - 6.4. A unique reference number linked to the subject and disposal categories.
7. Although the policy has changed since then, had a policy like that been in place and adhered to during the period with which we are concerned perhaps there would be a clearer record of what was destroyed and when, and the 'Brighton Assaults' file would have been identified as relevant to Review 1. We recommend that whatever the overall policy in place at the Home Office there should be a system that identifies a file as significant if it contains an allegation of child abuse and that should necessarily engage the appropriate retention and or reporting policy for such material  
[Recommendation 2]
8. The size of Home Office record management system, the heavy reliance on human input to a paper based filing system, the change of location from Queen Anne's Gate to Marsham Street and the change of archiving arrangements are potential reasons why some files could not be located.

9. We asked very senior officials at the Home Office in the early 1980s if they could recall whether there were files about particularly sensitive matters, perhaps relating to prominent people that would have been held outside the registered filing system. We were told that a very small number of honours issues and internal staff promotion papers might be kept in files without a registration number but registered files were used for nearly everything. Some National Security matters were kept separately from the main filing system but were registered and, we were assured, do form part of the central Home Office registry across which targeted searches are made.

#### A SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF OUR REQUESTS

The Crown Prosecution Service [CPS]

10. The CPS responded by letter dated 26 August 2014 and 30 September. No files relating to allegations of sexual offences against suspects, including politicians or high ranking public officials between 1970 and 1999 have been identified. Common with many Government Departments there was no file retention policy in place in the early part of the period with which we are concerned. The CPS did not have any formal file retention policy before 2 October 1995. There may well have been ad hoc arrangements before then, informed by the 1958 Public Records Act.
11. In addition to searching their file records, microfiche records were also examined. Save for two on going investigations and one which was brought to a close in 2012 [with the knowledge of the then DPP] there were no records relevant to our Review, although some records may be relevant to the wider Panel Review.
12. In particular there was no reference to a dossier allegedly passed to Sir Thomas Hetherington QC, the DPP by Geoffrey Dickens MP or one provided by the Obscene Publications Squad on or around 25 August 1983, or indeed the enclosures of the January Dickens letter which the 'Brighton Assaults' file indicates were shared with the DPP for his view, recorded in the Home Secretary's response of 20 March 1984.

13. The CPS continued to make their inquiries, and received a reply from the Metropolitan Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Command on 6 October 2014. The police cross refer newspaper reports to files retained as follows:
  - 13.1. SCOTLAND YARD FILE #1, 23rd August 1983 [delivered to Leon Brittan the same week as Dickens Dossier #1 was delivered to DPP] Two separate reports on the Paedophile Information Exchange...have been prepared for ministers after Scotland Yard's third investigation into the organisation. The first report, prepared by the Yard and sent to Mr Leon Brittan, will be used by the Home Secretary when he returns from holiday next week and has to decide whether the organisation needs to be banned.  
Source: The Guardian, 25th August 1983, The Telegraph, 25th August 1983
  - 13.2. SCOTLAND YARD FILE #2, 25th August 1983 [delivered to DPP same week as Dickens Dossier #1]  
The Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Thomas Hetherington, – today takes delivery of a file on paedophilia – the distasteful fruit of two years' work by Scotland Yard's Obscene Publications Squad. The squad's thick file, containing the names of the famous, the wealthy, and hundreds of anonymous citizens, was sent from the Yard yesterday.  
Source: Daily Express, 25th August 1983, Daily Mail, 25th August 1983
14. These seem to relate [to three files], all of which refer into investigations by the Obscene Publications Unit of the MPS into allegations of criminality by members of the Paedophile Information Exchange.
15. The first file related a complaint from a member of the public about PIE, PAL [Paedophile Action for Liberation] and linkage to the Albany Trust which the author alleged received funding from the Home Office and Department of Education. This resulted in a number of warrants being executed in 1978.

16. The second file relates to correspondence from the PIE chairperson Thomas O'Carroll, he was subject to one of the warrants in 1978, convicted in 1981 and sentenced to two years imprisonment. This file also refers to an interim report about PIE and an intention to disseminate the information on those identified as being part of the PIE membership to other Constabularies for appropriate action.
17. The final file is linked and is a more detailed investigation of PIE and is based to some extent upon an investigation carried out by the News of the World. There is a closing report which runs to 159 pages.
18. The police confirmed to us that there was no mention of the Home Office nor, despite press reports to the contrary, any mention of prominent individuals in that report save for Sir Peter Hayman whose connection to PIE was publicly known.

#### Security Service

19. The Security Service responded to the request to search their records. In their reply they set out the methodology they had used and provided a schedule of the results of that search. That schedule indicates that the Security Service does not hold any file that is relevant to our review.

#### Police

20. We met the senior police officer with who is responsible for the national lead on investigations of historic child sex abuse, Simon Bailey, the Chief Constable of Norfolk and the senior officer with similar responsibilities in the Metropolitan Police Service, Commander McNulty. We were made aware of current and potential future investigations. We were given access to the Senior and/or Deputy Senior Investigating Officers or a number of operations. We consulted them about our search terms and made enquiries as to whether they had any records of material that had come from the Home Office during the period with which we are concerned. There was nothing that assisted us with regard to the 'Dickens dossiers' or the deliberate destruction of Home Office files.

The Department of Health

21. The Department of Health provided a helpful analysis of some 242 files that appeared to warrant further examination. The initial schedule of those files made no reference to whether material was referred to the Home Office. After further enquiry from us on 3 September we were provided with a further schedule which set out whether the Home Office were mentioned in the file. Only 57 of the original 242 files even mentioned the Home Office, but nothing in the detailed summaries of those files suggested that they contained anything of relevance.

Department of Education

22. The Department of Education initial enquiry identified some 1181 files to be examined and were scheduled. Some were identified as having potential relevance to us, some to the wider Panel Review. It was an extensive exercise. Although no file was identified to us as being an obvious cause for concern, we went to the Department of Education and examined the files that might have been relevant to us. None contained any material that was.

Attorney General's Office [AGO]

23. The AGO has an electronic database which contains titles, reference numbers and outline details of all the official records. AGO staff searched against all fields in the database on the terms supplied to the AGO and recorded the outcome in the spreadsheet sent to us on 15 August 2014. In addition to this the AGO carried out a physical check on the papers held in a strong room.
24. It was not possible to identify the file destruction/retention policies in force at AGO during the period with which we are concerned. The AGO contacted the National Archives and asked them what guidance they were giving to departments at that time but they have not been able to help. A number of files were presumed destroyed without there being an actual record of the destruction.



25. With specific regard to any correspondence from Mr Dickens, from the records held by the AGO, it appears that all of these files relate to letters from Geoffrey Dickens to this office in his role as a constituency MP. Under the AGO's current retention schedule, MP's correspondence files would be held for three years before being destroyed.
26. The detail that we were provided with allowed us to make some more detailed and specific requests including one which related to a file bearing a date in 2012 but with reference to historical matters. On further enquiry the file contained a letter from the Crime Commissioner for Greater Manchester about the decision not to prosecute Cyril Smith in 1970 and a review of that decision by the CPS in the 1990s. The letter was also sent to the CPS and the response was from the DPP at the time, Keir Starmer QC. There was nothing of direct relevance to the operation of the Home Office in relation to allegations of child abuse.
27. Another file related to the historic allegations of sexual offences. That file was examined. It related to a complaint about the length of time between the allegation being made and the eventual decision not to proceed with a prosecution. The Attorney General also sought the advice of the CPS, the DPP and ACPO and their letters are on the file. The file does not have any content that suggests any complaint was drawn to the attention of the Home Office between 1979-99.
- Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs [HMRC]
28. HMRC provided a schedule that set out all the results from the search on the relevant databases against the original search criteria. Initially they were not cross referenced against the Home Office. When that was done there were no positive results. The databases are of summary entries and do not replicate original files. It remains possible therefore that there might have been reference in the original files, to the HO, but HMRC would have expected to have destroyed those files in accordance with their document retention policies. There is no reason to believe that any further information exists.

29. HMRC had made a specific search in relation to a border stop because Tom Bateman from the Today programme asked HMRC questions about information relating to a specific case relating to the importation of a video tape seized at Dover in 1982 which it was said contained images of child abuse.
30. HM Customs and Excise was taken over by the Inland Revenue to form a new department, HMRC, with effect from 18 April 2005. HMRC understand that it was HM Customs and Excise's policy to dispose of forfeited material but that material retained as evidence for criminal or other legal proceedings would be held at the Queen's Warehouse. HMRC further understand that on 5 July the Dover Queen's Warehouse was searched by Border Force and no record of the 1982 seizure or the seized goods themselves could be found.

Department for Communities and Local Government [DCLG]

31. The DCLG similarly conducted a search of their files and provided us with a schedule of their findings. There was nothing of relevance to our review.

The Cabinet Office

32. The Cabinet Office reminded us that all papers and electronic information relating to a minister's personal, party or constituency affairs remain the minister's personal responsibility during their time in office and once they have left office or moved to another ministerial appointment. Private Office staff and special advisers should manage and maintain personal, party and constituency papers and information separately from departmental material and Cabinet and Cabinet committee documents. Data security of constituency material is the responsibility of the minister in their capacity as an MP. Responsibility for party information is a matter for the relevant political party to determine.
33. The Cabinet Office informed us that the off site holdings with TNT were all searched electronically along with the corporate file plan (Meridio) and hard copy holdings of the Cabinet Secretary files, Prime Minister Office files and any files in TNT that met the search terms we had provided. The Cabinet Office confirmed that it holds records from the Whips' Office (mostly stored in TNT). The Cabinet Office informed us that the searches covered all records and files held.

34. A number of files were identified as containing material relevant to our search terms. They were Prime Minister's Files and Cabinet Secretaries' files. Those files were made available for us to inspect. None contained any material relevant to our terms of reference.

National Crime Agency [NCA] and Child Exploitation and Online Protection [CEOP]

35. As with the DCLG, enquiries were made of the NCA and CEOP. Neither reported anything of relevance to our review.

The 114 Files

36. It follows that we found no further material that was directly relevant to the 114 'missing files' as a consequence of material received from sources beyond the Home Office. We have looked carefully at what is known about these files though and believe there is considerable value in publishing our analysis in full at annex J. We interrogated what is known about these files from a number of perspectives: file number; file title; last holder recorded on RMSys (a Home Office paper file tracking database); record type; Home Office Assessment of the file status and last known status. We had made available to us the screen prints of what was recorded about each file.
37. Files last recorded as being at the 'QAG Record Centre' on a particular date were not necessarily destroyed or missing from that date, it is simply the last record relating to them. If, for example, they were in the possession of individuals in units whose work had been transferred to another department it is likely that they took those files with them. Files relating to the Criminal Justice System [CRI] and Sentencing [SEN] should have gone to the Ministry of Justice.
38. Of the files, one has been found [37] and one the Ministry of Justice has confirmed as having been transferred to them in March 2011 and being destroyed in June 2012 [58]. Two further files do not fall within the period with which we are concerned [55 and 56]. They are files dated in 1974 and were policy files.

39. Based on titles alone, 18 are files started specifically in relation to an individual Parliamentary Question [2 year retention], and 67 are files about a specific piece of correspondence, almost always written by an MP on behalf of a constituent [2 year retention].
40. We can offer no assurance as to what was in the specific pieces of correspondence [1 was from Geoffrey Dickens on behalf of a constituent in 1986, 5 cases all from 1985 mention PIE, on the other hand others would seem to be about legal or operational matters rather than specific cases – eg video links in courts.] But destruction after 2 years for all such files was the practice so, in that sense, they are not missing.
41. Of the 27 other files: 15 might be described as policy files concerning general child abuse-related issues rather than suggesting in any sense they relate to specific cases or allegations and one is about a research proposal, again general in nature.
42. That leaves 11 remaining files, in order of date creation as follows:
  - 42.1. A briefing file about fugitive paedophilia prepared for a Home Secretary visit to the Netherlands [68]
  - 42.2. A file about points raised by Scarborough Health District regarding evidence of children in cases of sexual abuse [4]
  - 42.3. A file of briefing for the PM on “child abuse evidence problems” [43]
  - 42.4. A child sex abuse general briefing file, part of a series [53]
  - 42.5. A file called police checks – sexual abuse [14]
  - 42.6. A research audit of police training in sexual abuse [22]
  - 42.7. A research file on police operations against child sexual abuse [23]
  - 42.8. A policy file about an EC communication on combatting child sex tourism [26]
  - 42.9. A research file on policing paedophile networks [27]
  - 42.10. A policy file on proactive operations against child sex abusers [28]
  - 42.11. A file on the News of the World Paedophile campaign [40]
43. On the face of this kind of analysis, we do not detect a pattern of destruction or set of particular files going missing, as opposed to those which have been retained in the official records, that support a suspicion that registered

files were deliberately destroyed to cover up child abuse in the period with which we are concerned.

## 7 Consideration of Review 2

1. Our terms of reference also asked us to consider the findings of a second investigation into an allegation that Home Office grant funding may have historically been provided to PIE. In response to a letter dated 21 November from Tom Watson MP, the Permanent Secretary, Mark Sedwill, commissioned an independent investigation of the matter which began on 8 January 2014 and concluded on 13 March 2014. The subsequent report was placed in the House of Commons library and shared with Mr Watson on 7 July 2014.
2. The investigation centred on information shared with Mr Watson by a whistleblower who had memories of the Voluntary Services Unit [VSU] sometime after the 1979 General Election, renewing a grant of, perhaps, £30,000 to PIE. The whistleblower made a statement to the police in November 2013 and had some initial discussion with the original reviewer about whether they should meet face to face. This never happened. The whistleblower became concerned that some of the information which he was sharing was appearing, inaccurately, in politically motivated media coverage early in March. Suspicious as to how anything he said might be used, the whistleblower chose instead to submit a written, supplementary statement to the police. He then shared both his statement and the original one, with the reviewer on 12 March. The methodology adopted for review 2 was sound but given the centrality of the whistleblower's testimony to public concern about the possibility of PIE funding by the Home Office, more could have been done to demonstrate more explicitly that every element of what was being suggested had been thoroughly pursued
3. There was no further Home Office contact with the whistleblower ahead of the review being published.

### THE WHISTLEBLOWER

4. Once the review was publicly available, the whistleblower declared that he was Tim Hulbert, a former consultant adviser to the VSU and gave some media interviews in which he expressed concern as to the conclusion the review had reached, based on the work apparently evident in the published record. At our request, he indicated that he would be willing to speak to us

about the original independent investigation and where he thought further investigation was warranted. At our meeting, Mr Hulbert, emphasised two points in particular, which he felt had not been thoroughly examined. Both are referenced in his police statements but neither was explored explicitly in the original review.

5. First, Mr Hulbert said that on raising the matter of Home Office funding for PIE with his boss, Clifford Hindley, Mr Hindley had given him the impression that this was being done at the request of the security services in order to give them some sort of access to PIE. Second, Mr Hulbert said he had indicated that the payment to PIE could have been part of a much larger grant award to an unrelated charity. The suggestion being made was that this payment was being channeled covertly through a much larger budget line, without any suggestion that the larger charity itself would in any sense need to be aware of what was happening.
6. We pondered why the State might choose to fund PIE in this way. One possible explanation would be so that PIE thought they were being supported, as other unpopular causes were. Given how PIE sought to justify their existence, might the organisation have made their receipt of funds known? And there is certainly no evidenced connection between the large established charity and PIE to suggest any coincidence of objective. On the face of it, this might be judged an odd and unnecessarily complex way to pursue a desire to infiltrate PIE. Neither the Metropolitan Police [note in 2006 the Metropolitan Police Special Branch and the Anti-Terrorist Branch merged to form the Counter Terrorism Command within the Metropolitan Police] nor the National Crime Agency could offer us any evidence from the time or explanation for such a course of action. They reached this judgement following a search by the Met of relevant terms across Counter Terrorism Command's inherited databases which uncovered no mention of PIE, P.I.E. or the Paedophile Information Exchange of direct relevance to this matter. In the time available, the search excluded manual scrutiny of historical paper files where operational titles and references contained therein give no information as to the contents.
7. Just as it is inappropriate to name individuals in association with allegations of child abuse when there is no evidence at all as to their involvement with

such crimes, we have judged it similarly inappropriate to name the charity who Mr Hulbert recalls might have been a channel for the payment to PIE he has memory of. Not only are we unable to say with any certainty they were a channel through which Home Office funds went to PIE, even if they were, they need not necessarily have had any knowledge of the arrangement. Moreover, if they were consciously complicit in such an arrangement, the suggestion is that this was in order to assist law enforcement agencies in their investigation of PIE and not because they were supporters of PIE.

8. The original reviewer had spoken to two contemporaneous Home Office staff members in management positions about such an arrangement. Neither said they had any knowledge of such an approach. Neither of them said they could not see how it would or could have been organised.
9. We also questioned if money might have been passed through to PIE without Government sanction, but instead by an individual exceeding their authority knowing that there was no real audit. From what we have heard and read from Mr Hulbert and others, such financial arrangements would need to have been understood and administered by more than one member of staff.
10. As a consequence, we sought out views from named members of staff who Mr Hulbert thought would have had a working knowledge of such a financing arrangement had it been in place as described. Of the three people he mentioned, one has proved impossible to contact [personal details were destroyed when that person reached 75 in line with retention policy at the time]. A second has not responded to us. A third offered a good deal of information corroborating Mr Hulbert's memory of personnel and ways of working within the VSU. But they had no recollection of PIE being mentioned at all during the years in question and said they had no knowledge of how PIE might have been funded without there being records being kept at the Home Office or elsewhere.
11. We also looked at all the VSU files in existence with a title including the name of the larger charity. We found no papers in those files containing any assessment of what payments for what specific purposes were being made



to or through the charity at this time. That was not unusual in itself. No grant approval and grant management files, including approval submissions to Ministers have been retained in relation to the detail underpinning any such individual awards through the period. We were told that such files were subject to a six-year destruction deadline. However, there was a significant financial relationship with the charity named by Mr Hulbert throughout the life of the VSU. A memorandum dated April 1976 lists, without any underpinning detail, significant annual payments to the charity in question for each of the three years 1974/75 to 1976/77 which are not picked up in the Hansard schedule of VSU grants for the first two of these years [records for the third year are missing]. This led us to conclude that the picture of VSU funding laid out in the annex to the original review is not complete. We have not been able to substantiate what further VSU funding during the years up to the early 1980s existed beyond the Hansard records, making it impossible to dismiss completely the suggestion being made that a payment to PIE was facilitated within/concealed within a wider grant award. Nor, we are told, does the larger charity itself have detailed published records of financial accounts for the years in question against which we could compare the grant sums leaving the VSU [even if these could be found].

12. The only material that directly supports the existence of such a payment currently comes from Mr Hulbert who recollects that may only have been done on behalf of those investigating PIE, not as a way of the HO, or someone within the HO exceeding their authority, providing financial assistance for PIE because either supported it aims.

## 8 The Questions Posed In The Terms Of Reference

1. Whether the Terms of Reference of the original reviews were appropriate and sufficient to allow a full assessment of the Home Office's handling of allegations received in relation to historic child abuse; and the findings as to whether the Home Office ever funded PIE:

Although, for the reasons we have set out, we inquired beyond the Home Office files records and other papers from the period of 1979-1999 we did not find anything of significance or anything that undermines the conclusions drawn in Review 1.

As the records that remain are incomplete we remain of the opinion that it was appropriate to look beyond the Home Office and not confine the review to material retained there.

2. Whether the methodology was appropriate and sufficient to fulfil these Terms of Reference:

With regard to Review 1, we are of the opinion that the methodology used in Review 1 was reasonable and proportionate to the Terms of Reference. We accept that others may have gone about the task differently. Such a concession does not mean that the methodology used was not appropriate or sufficient. We heard from some sources about the value of digital searches but in the circumstances of the paper based files for the period, the time available and our terms of reference we did not pursue this further.

The methodology adopted for review 2 was sound but given the centrality of the whistleblower's testimony to public concern about the possibility of PIE funding by the Home Office, more could have been done to pursue more explicitly, every element of what was being suggested.

3. Whether Home Office support for and co-operation was appropriate and sufficient – in particular whether the Independent Investigator was afforded sufficient access to documentation and individuals in the Home Office:

We met with Reviewer 1 and Reviewer 2. Neither had any complaint about the support or co-operation they received from the Home Office. We were afforded access to whosoever and whatsoever we requested and there is nothing to suggest that anything was withheld from either Review 1 or Review 2.

4. Whether further information is available in relation to the 114 files identified as destroyed/missing or lost and whether the original review's assessment of their significance was reasonable:

Some limited further information is available in relation to the 114 files – one has been found and one has been confirmed as having been destroyed.

Had the information that is set out in the schedule of the 114 files [Annex J] been made known there would have been less speculation that something untoward had occurred so we are pleased to be able to make this public.

Consideration of that schedule does not suggest that there was anything untoward about their destruction or loss.

5. Whether there is any further information identified through this Review which should be referred to the Police so they can consider whether further investigation is required:

We have not found any material that should be referred to the police so that they can consider whether further investigation is required.

We have had a direct contact with the ACPO and the investigation teams. They were co-operative throughout.

There is a protocol in place should any material come to light as a result of our review and the wider Panel Review [Annex I].

6. Whether the conclusions of the reviews were and remain appropriate:

With regard to Review 1 we made inquiries elsewhere to test the findings and the conclusions drawn. We are of the opinion that the conclusions were reasonably available to the Reviewer on the information then available.

We agree with the recommendations made in Review 1. We understand the Home Office has accepted them and they have been implemented.

We have added to those recommendations.

Review 2 concluded that on the balance of probabilities, the alleged funding of PIE did not take place. While this represents the judgement of the original reviewer it is not a fully satisfactory answer to whether the Home Office ever directly or indirectly funded PIE. We cannot offer categorical assurance one way or the other. It is possible that a Special Branch inspired payment might have taken place - the official records offer no direct evidence to suggest it did, and no other civil servant we have had contact with has corroborated Mr Hulbert's memory, but the records are insufficiently complete to rule it out entirely.

7. Also re how police handled material that was handed to them:

Review 1 considered how the police handled some specific material that was handed to them [Chapter 7]. We saw no information to contradict those conclusions.

As there was no system for recording what information the Home Office sent to the police it is not possible for us to opine further, however we have recommended that there should be a system of recording what was sent to the police and what the result of that reference was [Recommendation 3].

## 9 Conclusions

1. It is very difficult to prove anything definitive based on imperfectly operated paper records system at 30 years remove.
2. Whilst a sophisticated cover up would be unlikely to leave papers in the general registry system of a major Government Department, extensive searches of paper records for the period, well beyond the Home Office itself, have not uncovered any evidence of organised attempts by the Home Office to conceal child abuse, either in specific documents retained by them or others, or through an obvious pattern of destroyed files. We have seen that some document appeared in more than one file. It would be difficult to identify which file to remove and there is no evidence of entire blocks of files being destroyed during the period with which we are concerned. Further, it should be noted that the latest dates upon which the vast majority of the 'missing' files were seen was in this century and so it does not appear that they were destroyed by anyone who directly could be affected.
3. We have seen no evidence to suggest PIE was ever funded by the Home Office because of sympathy for its aims.
4. We are unable to determine for sure whether or not Special Branch funded PIE via a Home Office budget to somehow keep track on its members and their activity – it would be odd but not impossible.
5. We have concern about child abuse allegation record keeping. Destroying correspondence [whatever its subject matter] after 2 years is risky, especially if crimes against children are being alleged, unless a Department has absolute confidence that the authority to which the matter is being referred will themselves, record, understand and act appropriately. During much of this period, police forces only kept papers for 2 years unless a charge were brought, yet we know children may take much longer to substantiate allegations and individual allegations may only take on a significance when a pattern of offending emerges over time.

## 10 Recommendations

1. We endorse the recommendations made in Review 1
2. If an allegation of child abuse is made it must be recorded and the file marked as significant. That significance should then inform the Home Office as to how to handle that file, its retention and the need to document when [if at all] it is destroyed. This approach is relevant, not only to the Home Office, but could usefully be adopted across Government as well.
3. There should be a system within the Home Office of recording what information is sent to the police and then a formal procedure of confirming what the result of that reference is.

### POSTSCRIPT

If you are worried about a child or unsure who to turn to for help you can contact the NSPCC's free helpline service and speak to a counsellor 24 hours a day 365 days a year. They will listen to and assess your concerns, offer advice and support and take action on your behalf if a child is at risk. Call 0808 800 5000 text 88858 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

If you an adult who has suffered any type of abuse and need help or support, you can contact NAPAC - the National Association for People Abused in Childhood 0808 801 0331 or email [info@napac.org.uk](mailto:info@napac.org.uk)

Children and Young People can always contact ChildLine for help with any worry or concern including child abuse. Call 0800 1111  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

If you have evidence of crimes committed against children please contact your local police force or CrimeStoppers 0800 555 111 or email [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)