

Executive Summary

1.1. In February 2013 the Home Office Permanent Secretary commissioned an Independent Review of all Home Office files from 1979 to 1999 to identify any information received about organised child sex abuse. An experienced investigator from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is leading the Review with additional oversight provided by HMRC's Director of Criminal Investigation.

1.2. The Independent Investigator has produced an Interim Report based on the examination of over 400 Home Office files and a targeted search for material directly relevant to contacts on child abuse between the late Geoffrey Dickens MP and the Home Office. The findings will be updated if the Review identifies additional relevant material in the ongoing wider search of Home Office files which is expected to be completed by June 2013.

1.3. The Independent Review has confirmed that the Home Office did receive information from Mr Dickens in November 1983 and in January 1984 about alleged child abuse. Copies of the material have not been retained but a Home Office file contains a copy letter dated 20th March 1984 from the Home Secretary in response to Mr Dickens. The letter confirms that the information was considered at the time and that any matters requiring investigation were referred to the Police.

1.4. The letter is not suitable for publication as it contains details of one case of alleged child abuse from which it would be possible to identify the victim. However, the following extract explains how the information which Mr Dickens provided was handled at the time.

"Dear Geoff,

You drew my attention to a number of allegations concerning paedophilia when you called here on 23 November and in subsequent letters.

I am now able to tell you that, in general terms, the view of the Director of Public Prosecutions is that two of the letters you forwarded could form the basis for enquiries by the police and they are now being passed to the appropriate authorities. In other cases there either seems to be inadequate evidence to pursue prosecution, for example the lady who wrote about PIE¹ advertising but did not secure any example of the material complained of, or they have already been dealt with in some way by the courts or the police."

¹ Paedophile Information Exchange

1.5. Mr Dickens was a robust campaigner on child protection issues and used Parliamentary Privilege to name alleged offenders if he believed appropriate action was not being taken. He challenged his own Government on child protection issues in Parliament and in the media when he disagreed with policies or decisions. The Independent Review has found no evidence of Mr Dickens expressing dissatisfaction about the action taken in respect of the information he had passed on.

1.6. On 17th March 1986 in his response to a debate in Parliament about the use of Parliamentary Privilege, and referring to information he had received about alleged child abuse, Mr Dickens said:

“I always sent the files to the Home Office, which investigated the cases for me, and in many cases to the chief constables concerned.”

1.7. On 31st March 1987 during his speech in a Parliamentary debate on the admissibility of video evidence in court proceedings Mr Dickens said:

“I should like to place on record my thanks to the Home Office and the departments within the Home Office for following up the many cases that I keep sending to it. I should also like to thank the Attorney-General. They have been very helpful and a strength to me in my campaigns.”

1.8. Full details of these statements are publicly available via www.parliament.uk in Hansard reports of Parliamentary business.

1.9. The Independent Investigator’s Interim Report and a full copy of the relevant Home Office file have been passed to the Metropolitan Police Service for information in relation to their current investigations of allegations of historic child abuse.