

The Labour Party

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Lord Jonathan Evans of Weardale
Chair of Committee on Standards in Public Life
1 Horse Guards Road
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23rd June 2022

Send via email to:

Cc: public@public-standards.gov.uk

Dear Lord Evans,

I write to you today in the absence of an Independent Adviser of Ministers' Interests following the resignation of Lord Geidt last week, in the hope that you will be able to shed light on a serious conflict of interest issue which has arisen with the Prime Minister lobbying for a job for his partner, Carrie Johnson.

Firstly, I understand that this issue does not fall within your usual remit. But in the absence of an Independent Adviser, I am writing to you as the chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life in the hope that as an independent expert committee on the subject of propriety and ethics in public life, you will be able to provide advice about this issue. I have also written to Simon Case to raise this matter following the Cabinet Office Minister's recent response to a written question, in which he said: *"The process of managing ministerial interests continues in line with the Ministerial Code, which sets out that the Permanent Secretary in the department and the Cabinet Office can provide advice, and have a role in scrutinising interests."* However, given Simon Case is reportedly involved in this incident in requesting employment for Carrie Johnson, I am concerned about a potential conflict of interest if he is the only person left to investigate this incident and his own misconduct. It would be a case of marking his own homework. This is why I write to you today.

I would first like to place on record my concern at the glaring hole in the standards system which has been exposed with Lord Geidt's resignation – a concern I know your committee shares. There is currently no recourse for the reporting of potential ministerial misconduct, weakening the pillars of transparency and integrity in public life which underpin our democracy.

Following a series of reports in the *Mirror* and *Daily Telegraph* this week there are now serious questions for the Prime Minister to answer about potentially impropriety and conflict of interest in his lobbying for a high paying tax-funded job for his partner in 2018, Carrie Johnson. Reports suggest that while Foreign Secretary, Mr Johnson tried to get Ms Johnson appointed to a Foreign Office job in 2018, and to other roles including one with a royal charity. During Prime Ministers Questions, Boris Johnson has refused to deny whether he tried to secure Ms Johnson a senior Foreign Office job and other posts.

Reports also suggest that the Cabinet Secretary, approached the Royal Foundation to inquire about a possible job for Carrie Johnson. However, staff reportedly said it would be inappropriate for Ms Johnson to work there because she was engaged to the Prime Minister.

In the absence of an ethics adviser, and given it would be inappropriate for the Prime Minister to be the judge and jury in his own case, I ask that you instigate an independent investigation into this



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matter. The recently departed Independent Adviser has himself since indicated that these matters are “ripe for investigation.” I am also urging the Government not only to appoint a new adviser as a matter of urgency but to bestow on them sufficient powers to perform their role, as recommended by your committee.

As part of this investigation, I believe the following questions need to be answered:

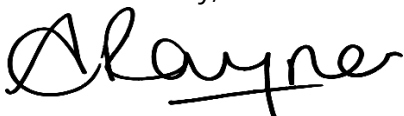
- What formal and informal discussions took place in Number 10 by officials and Ministers about the creation or potential occupancy of roles for Carrie Johnson?
- Did the Prime Minister instruct, request or ask the Cabinet Secretary, to discuss the employment of Carrie Johnson with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)?
- Did the Cabinet Secretary approach the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to discuss the creation or potential employment of Carrie Johnson?
- What formal correspondence or notes of official meetings exist to reflect discussions about the potential employment of Carrie Johnson?
- Did approach the Royal Foundation to discuss the creation or potential occupancy of an employment role for Carrie Johnson?
- Did the Prime Minister instruct, request or ask the Cabinet Secretary to discuss the employment of Carrie Johnson with the Royal Foundation? Was there any communication with Amanda Pickerill or Jean Christophe Gray?
- Did the Prime Minister raise the potential employment of Carrie Johnson with Her Majesty the Queen or any other member of the Royal Family?
- What conflict of interest assessment took place in respect of the Prime Minister and those accountable to him of any activity in procuring or creating employment opportunities for Carrie Johnson?

Any investigation should include calling on central individuals who were involved or likely to be there at the time, to give evidence in front of the committee. I would suggest while not an exhaustive list, that the Committee should call upon: Ben Gascoigne senior aide for Mr Johnson at the foreign office, Simon Case, the Prime Minister, Dominic Cummings, former Director General for Propriety and Ethics Helen MacNamara, Lee Cain and Martin Reynolds.

I know you would agree that the current lack of an Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests is of serious concern, not least because of the considerable workload the previous incumbent occupied. While it is welcome that the Paymaster General yesterday confirmed that an Independent Adviser will be appointed, a replacement needs to be put in place as soon as possible and given the necessary powers to investigate Ministerial misconduct. In the meantime, I hope your Committee on Standards will be able to investigate.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



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Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster