

Independent Review into Child Sexual Abuse in Football 1970-2005

Clive Sheldon QC

WARNING

This Report contains accounts of child sexual abuse. Those who have given accounts of child sexual abuse are not identified in the Report, save where explicit consent has been provided for this purpose. The identities of those who have given accounts are protected by law. It is a criminal offence pursuant to the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992 to publish the identity of those who have given accounts of sexual abuse.

Survivors can access information about the support that is available to them at:

www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/section-9-support-for-survivors

as well as directly from the PFA at:

www.thepfa.com/charity/survivor-support-advocate.

Helplines outside of football are: NAPAC on their support line: 0808 801 0331

or NSPCC on their helpline: 0800 023 2642.

(These details are correct at the time of publication. Anyone wishing to access support services in the future should refer to the safeguarding page of The FA's website to check for up-to-date details).

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Chapter 1.
Introduction

1.1. On November 16th 2016, Andy Woodward’s interview with the sports journalist Daniel Taylor was published in *The Guardian* newspaper under the headline: “The former professional footballer, who is now 43, is finally able to talk publicly about the horrific abuse he suffered from the age of 11 by one of his coaches, in the hope that others will come forward too.” Andy Woodward’s hope that others would follow his lead was realised. Within days, the news media was filled with stories from other former football players, informing the world of the horrific sexual abuse that they suffered during their involvement in our national game as teenagers and pre-teens. Greg Clarke, the former Chairman of the FA, described the unfolding story as one of the biggest crises in the history of the governing body.

1.2. The FA decided that it was necessary to investigate what had happened in football, and how sexual abuse of children was allowed to take place within the sport. I was privileged to carry out that task. This would not have been possible without the tremendous support and commitment from my team of barristers from 11KBW Chambers: David Bedenham, Zoe Gannon, Leo Davidson, Jen Coyne (and at an earlier stage in the process: Katherine Eddy and Natalie Connor); the sterling administrative support of Sport Resolutions who served as the Secretariat for the Review (with particular thanks to Kylie Brackenridge and Matt Berry); and the expert assistance of Professor Mike Hartill, Director of the Centre for Child Protection & Safeguarding in Sport (“CPSS”) at Edge Hill University; as well as the many other individuals who gave their time and assistance to the Review through their interviews with me and other members of the Review Team, or who provided the Review with relevant documents or possible lines of inquiry.

1.3. I would particularly like to thank the survivors¹ who met with me or members of my Review Team or who otherwise permitted me to hear or read their accounts. I know how hard it must have been to recount these awful events, but their accounts have formed the bedrock of this Report. Their bravery in coming forward and speaking out has finally shone a light on an issue that has, for too long, hidden in the shadows.

1.4. I also wish to give specific mention to the assistance provided to me at the outset of my Review by Professor Celia Brackenridge. From the late 1980s, Celia Brackenridge studied and then campaigned for greater child protection² in sport. In the early 2000s, she carried out a research project for the FA. In 2007, along with other authors, she published the book “*Child Welfare in Football*”³. Sadly, and after a long illness, Celia Brackenridge passed away on May 23rd 2018.

1.5. In addition, I would like to thank *Operation Hydrant*⁴ (and its National Co-Ordinator, Richard Fewkes), and various officers working for the different constabularies investigating allegations of non-recent football-related child sex abuse for their assistance in liaising with survivors and ensuring that the Review had access to their accounts. In particular, I am grateful to Sarah Oliver who has recently retired as a Detective Inspector from Cheshire Constabulary for the time that she spent answering the Review Team’s questions and serving as a conduit to many of the Barry Bennell survivors, as well as to Detective Inspector Gemma Hunter of Hampshire Constabulary who provided similar support with respect to Bob Higgins, and Andy Taylor of

1. I will generally refer to those who have suffered abuse in this Review as ‘survivors’, as that is a term that many of them have asked me to use and which reflects their experiences.

2. In this Report, I shall refer generally to the term ‘child protection’, rather than ‘safeguarding’. ‘Child protection’ – the protection of children from harm – was the term commonly used during most of the period considered by this Review. ‘Safeguarding’ encompasses both the protection of children from harm, but also action that is taken to promote the welfare of children. It was a term which started to be used towards the end of the Review period.

3. Brackenridge, C. et al (2007) “Child Welfare in Football”

4. Operation Hydrant is a coordination hub established in June 2014 to deliver the national policing response, oversight, and coordination of non-recent child sexual abuse investigations concerning persons of public prominence, or in relation to those offences which took place within institutional settings.

Greater Manchester Police who provided similar support with respect to Frank Roper.

1.6. It has taken me four years to complete this Review. I know that for many people, and some survivors in particular, the process has taken too long. They wanted me to provide answers and give them a greater understanding of what took place within the sport far sooner. I appreciate their disappointment at the delay and share their frustrations. The amount of work involved in carrying out the Review has been considerable. Many hundreds of thousands of pages of documents have been examined. More than two hundred witnesses have been interviewed; some more than once. Significant amounts of time have been spent ensuring that the club investigations into what took place were as thorough and comprehensive as possible.

1.7. The delay was a result of my desire for as many of the clubs as possible to conclude their investigations, and for me to speak to and read the accounts of as many survivors as possible, so that their evidence could be considered and investigated further, and their voices and experiences could be placed at the heart of my Report. It was not possible for me to consider some of their evidence, or hear some of their voices whilst criminal investigations and prosecutions of a number of perpetrators of abuse were ongoing.

1.8. Following the recent sentencing of Barry Bennell to a further four years of imprisonment, the team carrying out an independent review for Manchester City has now been able to complete its investigation into Bennell and his connection to the club, and I have therefore been able to include the findings in this Report. Southampton has not yet completed its investigation (carried out by *Barnardo's*) into Bob Higgins and his connection with the club. I decided that it would not be appropriate to await the outcome of that investigation before finalising this Report. The survivors have waited too long already, and I have told the FA that I am willing to update my report once Southampton has concluded its investigation.

1.9. The process of conducting this Review has not been straightforward. The passage of time, since many of the incidents of abuse took place, has meant that individuals who could have assisted in helping me understand what occurred have passed away, or for health reasons are unable to assist. Some of the documentary material which might have evidenced the knowledge and decision-making of clubs and the FA is no longer available. Even where witnesses are available, many of them have faded memories of the events in question, some have recollections which are no longer wholly reliable, and others have been reluctant to be involved for a variety of reasons. The effect of all this is that it has not been possible to produce an exhaustive account of sexual abuse in football and what was known and done about it in the period 1970 to 2005.

1.10. Nevertheless, I have had access to sufficient material to describe and analyse much of what occurred during that period. There are many individuals whose memories are still clear, especially some of the survivors of abuse. There are large numbers of documents still available: within the archives of the FA, within the archives (held at Brunel University) of Celia Brackenridge, as well as within the archives of the English Football League, Sport England, and of various football clubs.

1.11. During the course of the Review, I have received full co-operation from the FA, the Premier League, the English Football League, the National League, as well as the County FAs and professional clubs that I have engaged with. The FA has allowed the Review Team unimpeded access to its extensive archive of documents, as well as to current and former personnel. A large number of individuals have also made themselves available to speak to the Review Team, in their own time, to share their knowledge and experiences and to suggest lines of inquiry for me to investigate.

1.12. It is clear that a great deal of sexual abuse did occur within football from 1970 to 2005. Operation Hydrant informed me that as at August 7th 2020, the Holmes database (a live database) showed that – based on Operation Hydrant criteria – there were 240 suspects within football, with 692 survivors: the vast majority of allegations involved the period of the Review.

1.13. In carrying out the Review, I have used as my definition of child sexual abuse, the definition employed by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (“IICSA”):
“Sexual abuse of children involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact and noncontact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet. Child sexual abuse includes child sexual exploitation.”⁵

1.14. Given that disclosing child sexual abuse is so difficult for so many individuals – many have put the abuse away in a ‘box’ and have not wished to open it for fear of what that will do to them and their families – it is likely that the actual number of cases is far greater than the amount reported.

1.15. Each act of abuse is despicable. Not only was the conduct criminal, and deserving of opprobrium and sanction, but it was devastating for the victim. Football was supposed to be a safe environment for young people: a place where they could have fun, develop their talents, make friends and for some to pursue the dream of being a professional player. That was all sullied by the abuse by those who took advantage of their positions and power for personal gratification.

1.16. The impact and importance of hearing from survivors cannot be overstated. I also cannot overstate how difficult it must have been for survivors to come forward. Hearing directly from the survivors was harrowing for me and other members of the Review Team, and all members of the Review Team were offered counselling support to prevent ‘secondary’ or acquired trauma. We also directed the survivors that we heard from to various counselling services, if they were not already in receipt of such support.

1.17. So as to recognise the centrality of survivors of sexual abuse to this Review, I have included in the Report ‘voices’ of survivors. These are short extracts, approved by survivors themselves, of their experiences. There are 20 of them. They convey some of

5. IICSA Glossary: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/sites/default/files/glossary.pdf> (accessed 17 October 2020)

the pain and suffering experienced by the victims of abuse, whose dreams were shattered by the actions of their abusers.

1.18. I acknowledge that these summaries cannot do justice to what survivors experienced and how this has affected, and continues to affect, their lives. More detailed and very personal accounts are set out in the autobiographies recently written by survivors: Andy Woodward (“*Position of Trust*”), Paul Stewart (“*Damaged*”), David White (“*Shades of Blue*”), among others. I commend these books to the readers of this Report.

1.19. I have also provided for the FA in confidential annexes some detailed descriptions of the sexual abuse suffered by 159 survivors. I consider it to be important for the FA to read about the abuse that was suffered by those involved in football, so that the true extent of the harm done to individuals can more easily be understood by the FA, but do not wish to cause any further anguish to survivors by including that material in a document that might be made public. At the request of the survivors, the material in the confidential annexes has been anonymised.

1.20. The structure of the Report is as follows. First, there is an *Executive Summary*. This sets out in summary form the key findings of the Review. To understand the detail of what the Review investigated and the explanation for its findings, it is necessary to read the full text.

1.21. The Report then contains a section on the *Context* of the development of child protection within sport, and more generally, so that the FA’s approach to dealing with child protection can be understood and evaluated against the social and legislative structures at the time. This contains material derived from interviews with a number of individuals involved in the sporting world, as well as documents contained in the Celia Brackenridge and Sport England archives. It draws on research carried out for the Review by Mike Hartill.

1.22. There is then a section which provides an overview of *Child Sexual Abuse in Football*. This includes how abuse was perpetrated in football and the nature and extent of the sexual abuse. It records the effect of the abuse on the survivors and their loved ones; and how the abusers committed abuse and groomed the boys and their families. It also covers in broad terms how the abuse was allowed to happen.

1.23. This section also includes 20 *Survivor Voices*. These are anonymised accounts of the abuse that was experienced by survivors in football and the effect that the abuse had on those individuals’ lives. I am grateful to those survivors who agreed to have their account included in this Report.

1.24. This section also contains a description of some *Crown Court Case Records*. Many cases of child sex abuse during the period of the Review occurred outside of the professional game. A number of these resulted in convictions for child sex offences and were reported briefly in the media. With the assistance of the Ministry of Justice, the Review obtained the Crown Court files for some of these cases. In this section, I set out a sample of these cases to highlight the different ways in which abuse in the grass-

roots game took place. Football was an activity which enabled the abuser to gain the trust of the abused and provided opportunities for abuse. In some of these examples, it can be seen that football was only one of the arenas in which the abuse occurred, as the abusers also befriended young boys in other settings.

1.25. This section also includes a brief discussion of an allegation of assault at a professional club, which falls within the definition of child sex abuse, and was allegedly designed to intimidate, rather than for sexual motivation.

1.26. The section also covers *Sexual Abuse of Girls*. The most high-profile cases of child sex abuse in football, and the bulk of the material referred to in this Report, concern boys who played football. This does not mean, however, that there was no abuse of girls within the game. There was. In this section, I highlight a number of such cases and seek to place the abuse of girls within football into the broader context.

1.27. There is then a *Methodology* section. This describes how the Review Team went about its work, the nature and scale of the documents that were reviewed, and the interactions that the Review Team had with the FA, football clubs, sporting bodies and other organisations and individuals, including the many survivors that were spoken to or whose accounts we read. This also sets out the process that we carried out before finalising the Review.

1.28. *The FA.* There are several sections dealing with the approach of the FA to child protection and to allegations of abuse. The longest text is a chronological narrative, describing the FA's consideration of child protection issues, the FA's implementation of a child protection policy and the introduction by the FA of safeguarding measures during the period covered by the Review. So as to make the narrative easier to read, but also to emphasise some key points, I have included a number of sub-topics as insets or 'boxes' in the text: the FA Programme for Excellence; the FA's National School; the Martial Arts Development Commission Conference in 1993; the Home Office's *Safe from Harm* guidance in 1993; the Amateur Swimming Association; the National Coaching Foundation's publication in 1996: "*Protecting Children: a guide for sportspeople*"; the Sports Council Conference 1996; Channel 4's *Dispatches* documentary "*Soccer's Foul Play*" which was broadcast in January 1997; responses to the FA's letter of January 21st 1997 about child protection sent out to various stakeholders; the "*Charter for Quality*" approved by the FA in 1997; the Football Association Coaches Association established in 1997; implementing the *Charter for Quality* in the professional game; developing the *Charter Mark*; the NSPCC Helpline; the FA Child Protection Policy of 2000; the Case of EE; the Tours and Tournaments Policy; the Child Protection Working Group established in 2000; communications and conferences about child protection; the Celia Brackenridge Research Project; and the Independent Football Commission Report 2005.

1.29. In addition, there are further detailed sections describing the FA's approach to the introduction of a *Screening* or vetting regime; and the FA's approach to *Disciplinary and Referrals* throughout the Review period. The latter section addresses the various referrals that were made to the FA of allegations of sexual abuse, and the way

in which the FA's disciplinary and case management regime operated. The analysis of the case management regime was based on a sampling of cases dealt with at the time by the FA.

1.30. I then set out the FA's knowledge of, or dealings with, three of the key perpetrators of abuse: Barry Bennell, Bob Higgins and Chris Gieler.

1.31. There is also a short annexe dealing with one particular alleged perpetrator of child sexual abuse in football. This material is currently confidential to the FA only, as criminal proceedings involving this individual are still pending, and I do not wish in any way to prejudice those proceedings. I can say, however, that the material contained in that annexe does not change my conclusions about the FA's handling of child protection matters during the period covered by the Review.

1.32. *The County FAs.* There are 51 County Football Associations affiliated to the FA. These are the local governing bodies for football, with responsibility for administering club and player registration and promoting the development of clubs, players and referees. This section contains a summary of the material provided by the County FAs (or CFAs) as to the complaints or concerns that they had about child protection in the period covered by the Review. (The material provided by Guernsey CFA is included in a confidential annexe so as to maintain anonymity, given the size of the footballing community on the island).

1.33. There is then a section dealing with complaints or concerns that *Clubs* affiliated to the FA, and in particular professional clubs, had about child protection matters during the period covered by the Review.

1.34. The major part of this section contains detailed information concerning the most prolific of the sexual abusers that are known to the Review - Barry Bennell, Bob Higgins, Frank Roper, George Ormond, Ted Langford, Chris Gieler, Eddie Heath, and Kit Carson. There has been no criminal conviction against the latter three individuals, or any finding by a court in a civil action that they were responsible for any child sexual abuse. Nevertheless, the evidence that they did sexually abuse children is compelling, and I shall refer to them as perpetrators and abusers in this Report. It is not my role, however, to make findings that any particular allegation of abuse occurred.

1.35. I regard my descriptions of these individuals and the relevant clubs' knowledge and responses to the abuse as "case studies". It is likely that there were perpetrators involved with other clubs during the period of the Review, but detailed information about them has not been provided. The "case studies" should shed some light on what probably happened at those other clubs.

1.36. I preface this material with an overview of the abuse committed by the named perpetrators. This summarises the key points that I have found about how these abusers operated. For each of the perpetrators of abuse, I set out their backgrounds, their links with particular clubs, the abuse that they perpetrated, and the knowledge that clubs had to allegations of abuse or circumstances that may have caused them to sus-

pect that there could be a problem of abuse and how those clubs responded. I also describe the investigation that was carried out by the relevant clubs into the allegations of abuse, and explain whether or not I consider the club's investigation was adequate.

1.37. I then set out the evidence received by the Review as to whether the abusers, or some of them, were working in concert (i.e. whether or not there was a “ring”). I conclude this section with a summary of the responses provided by a number of clubs when asked by me to provide information about allegations of abuse during the Review period.

1.38. *Recommendations.* As part of my Review I have considered what additional measures could be introduced within football that would strengthen safeguarding within the sport. While the work I have done focused on the period 1970-2005, I believe that there are still important lessons that can be learned, and I make a number of recommendations that should help to make football a safer place for children now and for the future. Some of these recommendations were pressed on me by survivors of abuse when asked what would or might have made it easier for them to raise the alarm about their abuse at the time when it was taking place; others were suggested by participants in the game today, including those in safeguarding roles. I make thirteen recommendations for the FA. Most of these are grouped in one of three themes: (i) training at all levels, (ii) a child first culture, and (iii) transparency and accountability. I recommend one further measure to keep the issue of child protection/safeguarding in football high in the public consciousness: a National Day of Safeguarding in Football.

1.39. I very much hope that this Report will be read carefully by all persons involved in administering the game of football today, including the FA and the clubs who were associated with perpetrators of abuse. Understanding and acknowledging the appalling abuse suffered by young players in the period covered by the Review is important for its own sake. Survivors deserve to be listened to, and their suffering deserves to be properly recognised. As well as recognising and facing up to what happened in the past, it is also important that this terrible history is not repeated, and that everything possible is done now to safeguard the current and future generations of young players. I hope that this Report will make some contribution towards that.

March 10th 2021

Chapter 2.
Executive
Summary

INTRODUCTION

2.1. Following the publication of Andy Woodward’s disclosure of child sexual abuse to Daniel Taylor at *The Guardian* on November 16th 2016, and the immediate wave of disclosures by others who had played football as young boys, the FA asked me to carry out a review into what took place in football in the period from 1970 to 2005 (see: Terms of Reference).

2.2. The date of 2005 was selected as that was the year in which the Independent Football Commission (“the IFC”) published its report following a detailed review into the FA’s safeguarding regime, concluding that the FA’s achievement in this area was “impressive”, and that the “guidance, training, regulation, information have been very professional, comprehensive and manifold”. The period of 1970 to 2005 was also the time in which the majority of the incidents of abuse that were being disclosed to the media had taken place.

THE ABUSE

2.3. It is not possible to know how many children suffered sexual abuse in football from 1970 to 2005. Most incidents of abuse are not reported. But, it is clear to me that a considerable amount of sexual abuse of children took place during this period. This is reflected in the statistics produced by Operation Hydrant. As at August 7th 2020, the Holmes database (a live database) showed that – based on Operation Hydrant criteria – there were 240 suspects within football, with 692 survivors. Most of these cases occurred in the period covered by the Review.

2.4. The abuse shattered the trust that survivors had in the abuser, and in those with the responsibility in football to keep children safe. The abuse had a devastating impact on the lives of many of the survivors, as well as their families and loved ones. Survivors have described to me the suicide attempts, excessive alcohol or drug intake or dependency, periods of depression and other mental illness, failed relationships with partners and children, which they attribute to the sexual abuse they experienced as children. Some survivors have told me that the recent criminal trials involving a number of the perpetrators have helped them deal with the emotional impact of the abuse.

2.5. Most of the child sexual abuse that has been talked about in the national media took place in the context of professional clubs, or clubs that were (or were described by the perpetrators as) “feeder clubs” for professional teams.¹ The abusers used the cloak of respectability and credibility that came through their association with professional clubs to gain access to boys and lull the boys and their parents into a sense of security. However, there were also many cases of abuse that occurred in the grassroots game. This is reflected in a number of the Crown Court records that have been examined by the Review Team, as well as a number of criminal trials that have recently taken place. In the grassroots game, it seems that football was one of several settings used by abusers to befriend and abuse young people.

1. I will describe this as the “pre-professional” game.

2.6. I do not wish to give the impression, however, that abuse in football (whether in the pre-professional or grassroots game) was commonplace. It was not. The overwhelming majority of young people who engaged in the sport, whether at the grassroots or pre-professional level of the game, during the period from 1970 to 2005, were able to do so safely. The vast majority of coaches, scouts, backroom staff and other adults involved in the game were not abusers, and carried out their work professionally and in the best interests of the young people in their care.

2.7. Where abuse did take place within football, the overwhelming evidence received by the Review is that it was not witnessed by others involved in the game. Abusers were manipulative. They used elaborate grooming tactics, and their abuse was mainly conducted in private – whether in the abuser’s homes, in their cars, in secluded rooms at training grounds, or in hotel rooms – not in the sight or presence of other adults. Abusers frequently worked without supervision or oversight: they had opportunities to spend time alone with young players and, as part of their roles as coaches or trainers, or even scouts, they were able to develop exclusive relationships with young players.

2.8. The evidence received by the Review was that contemporaneous disclosure by children of abuse to friends or family was rare. From what survivors have told me, they often felt ashamed of what had taken place, or felt that they would not be believed. For some, there was a real fear that disclosure would bring repercussions – of violence to them or their families – and for others there was concern that their footballing careers would be jeopardised. In the pre-professional game, abusers frequently had considerable leverage over the young players, many of whom were desperate to progress to professional football and were persuaded that the abuser held the key to that future.

2.9. For much of the period of the Review, there was no guidance provided to those working within football on child protection matters. As a result, for much of the period of the Review, club staff and officials were generally unaware of child protection issues; they were not trained in child protection; they did not pick up on the signs of potential abuse and, if they were aware of the signs, they did not examine them with curiosity or suspicion. Staff and officials at clubs were naïve about the possibility of abuse. Furthermore, football clubs did not facilitate, let alone encourage, young players to raise their concerns, which might have enabled them to make disclosures. (It was only for the 1998/99 football season that Premier League and Football League clubs were required to have a member of staff trained in child protection issues at their Academy or Centre of Excellence, and for the clubs to raise awareness of child protection issues (see: FA Child Protection Policy and Programme: 1998)).

THE FA

2.10. The FA, as the national governing body, started thinking about issues of child protection in the mid-1990s. Before then, when the acts of abuse disclosed by Andy Woodward and many others took place, the FA had not provided any guidance to clubs as to how to deal with issues of child protection. A number of abuse survivors have expressed the view to the Review that the absence of these mechanisms amounted to a failure by the FA. I have looked at this accusation carefully.

2.11. The evidence shows that Celia Brackenridge (the leading academic in the field of child protection and sport) had been campaigning for the issue of child protection to be taken seriously within sport from the late 1980s, but her message was not heeded by the sporting world until the mid-1990s. In the early 1990s, according to Anita White, a former Director of Development of the Sports Council (now Sport England), sport organisations “did not really want to admit a problem of child abuse in sport. They were reluctant to recognise it ... it was not a popular message to be taking out”.

2.12. This was reflected in the reaction to a television programme – *Secrets of the Coach* – broadcast by BBC2 in 1993, which featured stories of abuse in a number of sports: gymnastics, swimming and judo, both in the United Kingdom and in North America. This programme did not start a national debate about child protection within sport. Although it inspired one national governing body (the Martial Arts Development Commission) to organise a seminar on child protection, the programme did not galvanise any serious action by other sporting bodies (see box 3: The Martial Arts Development Commission Conference). Anita White told the Review that, even after this programme it took some time to convince people that child abuse in sport “really was an issue.” Anita White said that there was a feeling that acknowledging it could discourage parents from letting their children become involved in sport “if it was an unsafe place for them to be”.

2.13. It was only in March 1995 that the National Coaching Foundation (“the NCF”) produced a self-study pack entitled *Protecting Children: A Guide for Sportspeople* (“NCF Guide”), which was designed to be used by national governing bodies in their coach education, and aimed to “increase awareness of child abuse and help people to recognise the signs of abuse and deal sensitively and effectively with the issue should it arise.” The NCF Guide provided some of the tools that sporting bodies could use to address issues of child protection (see box 6: Protecting Children: a Guide for Sportspeople; and box 7: The Sports Council Conference 1996).

The Conviction of Swimming Coach Paul Hickson and Barry Bennell's Conviction in Florida

2.14. The situation changed in the summer of 1995. In September 1995, the Olympic swimming coach Paul Hickson was found guilty of raping two teenage swimmers and indecently assaulting several others over a 15-year period. Hickson's trial and conviction received considerable media interest and national attention, and from this point onwards all sports were, or should have been, aware of the awful reality of child sex abuse in sport (see box 5: Amateur Swimming Association).

2.15. In the summer of 1995, the FA also learned that football was not immune from child sexual abuse. The FA was aware that Barry Bennell had pleaded guilty in Florida to sexual abuse of a child whom he had taken to the United States on a football tour. The FA was also aware that the police in England were investigating additional charges against Bennell (see: FA and Barry Bennell).

2.16. From this point onwards, the FA was aware that child protection was something that needed to be taken most seriously, and it is appropriate to scrutinise carefully the approach that was taken thereafter.

The FA's Knowledge of Abuse Prior to the Summer of 1995

2.17. As for whether there was anything before the summer of 1995 that should have triggered a greater response by the FA, from the materials that I have read, and the accounts that I have heard, the answer is no. There is no evidence that the FA knew that there was a serious or systemic problem of child sexual abuse within the game in England, and no evidence that the FA ought to have known that there was any such problem.

2.18. The FA was aware in January 1990 that Bob Higgins, the coach at Southampton FC, had been charged with allegations of abuse against young players. However, Higgins was acquitted, when the criminal case against him collapsed in 1992, and there was no basis for the FA to know what we now know: that Higgins had been a prolific child sex abuser during his time at Southampton, and remained a risk to young football players (see: FA and Higgins).

2.19. The FA was aware in the summer of 1994 that Barry Bennell had been charged by the prosecuting authorities in Florida with sexually abusing a schoolboy player who he had taken to the United States on a football tour. At this point, however, Bennell had not admitted to the abuse, so the FA did not know that it had actually taken place.

2.20. On receiving the news about Bennell's arrest, those working centrally for the FA sought to find out what was known about Bennell and were told that Bennell "has been known to offer boys gifts and quite a number stayed at his house. He has been like a 'pied piper' to children, he seems to have an attraction for them". There is no evidence that this was previously known to those working centrally for the FA (see: FA and Bennell). There is evidence that rumours and innuendos about Bennell were heard by and discussed by some FA regional coaching staff. There is no evidence, however,

that these rumours or innuendo were known by those working centrally for the FA.

2.21. The Review was told by a former employee of the FA (not based centrally at the FA, and not a senior member of staff) that he recalled a very brief conversation about child sex abuse in football, probably in the 1980s, with the FA's Technical Director, and that the name Chris Gieler was mentioned. This account could not be corroborated, and there is no hint of this conversation in any of the FA archive materials. I have some doubts as to whether this conversation took place as described to the Review (see: FA and Gieler).

2.22. In all these circumstances, it is not appropriate to criticise the FA for not providing guidance to clubs as to how to deal with issues of child protection before the summer of 1995, when the FA was not aware that abuse had actually occurred in football, and the provision of child protection guidance was not something which was happening widely within sport, or within most voluntary organisations. I do not consider that it is right to hold the FA to a higher standard than the vast majority of organisations within the sporting world or the voluntary sector more generally. The absence of guidance to clubs before the summer of 1995 was, in my judgment, a failure of sport as a whole.

Delay between October 1995 and May 2000

2.23. I have concluded that, following the summer of 1995, and especially following a conference convened by the Sports Council and the NSPCC in July 1996 – where best practice in child protection was shared with the national governing bodies of a large number of sports – the FA should have engaged more deeply with the issue of child protection and should have acted more quickly to bring in comprehensive measures to safeguard children in the game.

2.24. The FA acted far too slowly to introduce appropriate and sufficient child protection measures, and to ensure that safeguarding was taken sufficiently seriously by those involved in the game. These are significant institutional failings for which there is no excuse. During this period (October 1995 to May 2000, when the FA launched its comprehensive child protection programme), the FA did not do enough to keep children safe.

Screening and Self Declaration

2.25. The initial focus of the FA's thinking about child protection was on the "screening" or "vetting" of those involved in the game (see: Screening and Self Declaration). This was initially discussed by the FA in 1995, but at that time and for several years afterwards, organisations such as the FA could not gain access to information held by the police about criminal records and other concerns about individuals. The FA lobbied government to have sight of these records, and ultimately gained access to them following the establishment of the Criminal Records Bureau in 2002. From that point onwards, the FA was able to introduce a comprehensive screening process for those involved in the game.

2.26. On its own, however, screening was not a sufficient mechanism to address concerns around child protection. Other processes and tools were needed. Some measures were introduced by the FA as part of the *Charter for Quality*, the blueprint for the future of football, which introduced (among other things) the Academy system. Nevertheless, the *Charter for Quality*, which was endorsed by the FA in 1997/98, was not a strategy for introducing a comprehensive child protection programme for the whole game, both at the professional and grassroots levels (see box 9: Charter for Quality).

2.27. The FA introduced a number of other child protection measures in the late 1990s, but its child protection strategy, and a comprehensive programme of measures for all of the game, was not introduced until May 2000.

Reasons for the Delay between October 1995 and May 2000

2.28. There is no evidence that the FA's delay from October 1995, or from the Sports Council/NSPCC conference in July 1996, was the result of hostility, opposition or particular resistance to child protection as a matter of principle. All of the individuals with responsibility for moving child protection forward at the FA seem to have shown sympathy and interest in the matter.

2.29. Instead, there are a number of interrelated reasons for the delay. Taken together they paint a picture of an institutional failure of the FA, rather than a failure of any particular individual or individuals (see: Comments on the Delay in Putting in Place Child Protection Measures).

2.30. The development of a comprehensive child protection programme required strategic thinking and a level of expertise. Until the middle of 1998, none of the people working on the FA's programme had any real expertise in the area, and although the FA had had dealings with, and had taken advice from, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children ("the NSPCC") from early 1997, it was only in late 1999 that the FA started to work intensively with the experts at the NSPCC to develop its child protection arrangements.

2.31. There was no champion at the highest levels of the FA pushing for child protection measures. There was also no one at the FA whose dedicated role was to work exclusively on child protection matters until 2000. Before then, the individuals working on the development of the child protection programme had other, often considerable, responsibilities as part of their roles.

2.32. Child protection was not regarded as an urgent priority for the FA. That does not mean that it was not viewed as important: rather that other matters took higher priority. I do not say that the FA should have ignored the other priorities during this period, and it is clear that there was a period of instability within the organisation as a result of personnel issues between late 1998 and late 1999. However, given the imperative to keep children safe in football, I consider that the FA should have ensured that child protection was given greater priority than was actually the case.

2.33. This is not to say that the FA's approach to child protection during this period did not compare favourably with many, if not most, other sports. To the contrary, the FA did more than many, if not most, other sports during this time. However, that does not excuse the FA's delays. It merely means that those other sports can also be criticised for their responses. The NCF's Guide was available from March 1995, and the Sports Council/NSPCC conference in the summer of 1996 made all sports aware of the essential tools and resources for developing a comprehensive child protection programme.

Child Protection between May 2000 and 2005

2.34. The arrangements that the FA put in place in May 2000 were admired. The FA continued to improve the child protection policy and programme during the remaining period with which the Review is concerned. By the end of 2005, the FA's child protection programme was widely lauded (see: FA Policy and Programme: 2000-2005).

2.35. In its report on the FA's safeguarding regime published in 2005, the IFC concluded that "Safeguarding children in football is . . . not a task to be under-estimated" (see box 20: The Independent Football Commission Report 2005). The IFC regarded as "astonishing" the work that had been done by the FA in the previous five years, and the progress that had been made by the FA. The IFC described the FA's achievement as "impressive". I agree.

The FA's Response to Referrals Relating to Child Sex Abuse

2.36. I have considered whether the FA failed to act appropriately to anything raised with it relating to child sexual abuse during the Review period. The short answer to this is: in most cases, the FA acted appropriately in response to referrals relating to child sex abuse, but there were some failings.

2.37. In the period from 1970 to 1995, the evidence that I have seen demonstrates that only a small number of allegations of child sex abuse came to the FA's attention (see: Referral Management: 1970-1995). Between 1996 and 1999, the number of allegations of child sex abuse brought to the FA's attention grew, but the numbers were still quite small. The number of allegations increased more significantly in the period between 2000 and 2005. This was largely a function of the fact that the raising of awareness of child protection issues by the FA had led to an increased level of referrals and expressions of concern.

2.38. An audit by the NSPCC of the case management system administered by the FA's case management team in 2002 revealed a number of issues, including that (i) some cases had been allowed to "drift" without proper resolution, (ii) in other cases key pieces of information had not, or had not been accurately, recorded, (iii) there was a need to develop appropriate processes for "following up" on cases, in particular following an individual's release from a long prison sentence, and (iv) there was a need to ensure consistent decision making based, as far as possible, on objective facts (see: Formalising Case Management Processes). I accept these conclusions.

2.39. The Review Team’s examination of a sample of the case files from the period 2000-2005 revealed that the FA’s case management system was generally working well, although there were some cases where it appears to me that errors were made (see: Case Management File Review). In a small number of cases, there was a delay between an issue being brought to the FA’s attention and the FA taking interim action, namely suspending the individual in question. In a very small number of cases there may have been a communication problem between the FA and the County FA about a referral. In a very small number of cases where an individual suspended by the FA had breached a suspension, the FA had not acted promptly in taking action. In one case involving a former professional player, I consider that the FA should have taken disciplinary action against the individual, rather than rely on an “agreement” with the club where he was a coach.

2.40. I also consider that the FA did not act appropriately following Barry Bennell’s release from prison in 2003. The FA should have taken steps to seek to prevent Bennell from involving himself further with football following his release. The failure to do so allowed children to be put at potential risk. I note, however, that there is no evidence that Bennell did seek to involve himself in football after his release. Furthermore, the risk that Bennell would do so was mitigated to some extent by the licence conditions imposed on him following his release; and had a criminal records check been made under the name Bennell, this would have revealed his convictions (see: The FA and Bennell).

2.41. I also consider that the FA should have reviewed Bob Higgins’ case following the amendment to its disciplinary rules in 2003 which lowered the standard of proof required by the FA to establish misconduct to the civil standard. In 2002, a County FA had raised concerns about Higgins’ continued involvement in football. Based on the revised standard of proof, it would have been possible for the FA to consider the earlier allegations of child sexual abuse that had been made against Higgins when he was employed by Southampton, and the later allegations that Higgins had been baptising young players in the bath when he was employed at Peterborough United. This was not done.

THE CLUBS

2.42. The Report examines in some detail the abuse committed by a number of perpetrators of abuse: Barry Bennell, Bob Higgins, Frank Roper, George Ormond, Ted Langford, Chris Gieler, Eddie Heath, and Kit Carson (see: Clubs). These perpetrators were identified by survivors and were discussed widely in the national media in the period following Andy Woodward’s disclosure in November 2016. Each of the professional football clubs associated with these abusers provided the Review with a report following their own investigation into their links with the abuser, and what if anything they knew about the allegations of abuse. The Review Team supplemented the information contained in the clubs’ reports with further materials obtained from survivors, the police and others.

2.43. The evidence received by the Review was that allegations of abuse were rarely made to people working at football clubs. In a number of cases where a disclosure of abuse was made, the Club acted too slowly, or inappropriately, in response.

2.44. In one case (Chelsea), the disclosure was not acted on properly (steps should have been taken to protect the young player who had made the disclosure and other boys from Eddie Heath’s sexual advances and misconduct); in another case (Aston Villa), the disclosures about Ted Langford should have been reported to the police; in another case (Newcastle), the disclosure about George Ormond should have been acted on more quickly and should have been reported to more senior staff within the organisation for consideration of further referral to the police. In some cases – in particular the clubs associated with Bennell, and Peterborough in its dealings with Higgins – although there was no specific disclosure of abuse, there were ‘warning signs’ (consistent rumours that an individual had a sexual interest in children, and/or that children were staying overnight at the individual’s home) that, if followed up, might have uncovered the perpetrator’s abuse.

2.45. Warning signs were, however, often missed or not acted upon. This was usually out of ignorance or naivety. There was often a feeling that without “concrete evidence” or a specific allegation from a child nothing could, or should, be done, and so there was a reluctance to investigate or monitor, let alone confront the perpetrator and interfere with his actions. Unlike today, where the best practice is to inquire further, or at least investigate, where there are “seeds of doubt”, this was not the general practice during the period 1970 to 2005. As a result, in many cases, perpetrators were able to hide within football, and use their positions, to ruin the lives of many children.

Barry Bennell

2.46. Barry Bennell is one of the most notorious of all the perpetrators of child sexual abuse. He was described by the judge at his criminal trial in February 2018 as the “devil incarnate”. Bennell sexually abused large numbers of boys throughout the 1970s and 1980s and into the early 1990s. During the time when he committed this abuse, Bennell was involved with a number of professional clubs: Manchester City, Crewe Alexandra and Stoke City (see: Barry Bennell).

2.47. At Manchester City, Bennell was associated with the club’s youth function between 1975 and late 1979, and mid 1981-1984. Bennell was not an employee of the Club during this period, but was a part-time youth scout for the Club and also coached and ran teams that were associated with and fed players to the Club. From late 1979 to mid-1981, Bennell continued to recommend players to the junior teams which were associated with and fed players to Manchester City.

2.48. During Bennell’s association with Manchester City, the Club was not aware of allegations of abuse by Bennell. However, senior management of the Club were made aware of rumours about Bennell and concerns about his conduct. Some members of staff appear to have referred to Bennell as a “kiddy fiddler”. Members of staff were also aware that boys were staying overnight at Bennell’s house – something that some

found suspicious. The Club did not investigate the rumours about Bennell: it should have done. The Club should also have examined the circumstances in which boys were staying overnight with Bennell. These were not usual arrangements, even at that time. The fact that parents allowed their children to stay with Bennell did not mean that the Club could not, or should not, have looked further into these arrangements.

2.49. At Crewe Alexandra, Bennell was employed as a youth coach and youth scout between January 1985 and September 1989, and from August 1990 to January 1992. Cheshire Constabulary carried out a detailed investigation of what might have been known by the Club about Bennell's abuse and concluded that "there is no evidence to corroborate Crewe Alexandra Football Club were aware of what Bennell was doing." I have seen no evidence that could properly lead me to a different conclusion.

2.50. Based on all of the evidence received by the Review, however, I consider it likely that three Directors of the Club discussed concerns about Bennell which hinted at his sexual interest in children. As a result of these concerns, the Club's then Chairman sought further information about Bennell from Manchester City, and was told by a senior police officer to keep a "watching brief" on the situation. There is no evidence that the Chairman did so.

2.51. There were also rumours circulating about Bennell and his sexual interest in children, and I am satisfied that these were heard by some of the Club's staff, in particular the coaching staff.

2.52. In circumstances where there were rumours circulating about Bennell and where there was no obvious reason why boys needed to stay with Bennell so regularly, I consider that the Club should, at the very least, have satisfied itself that there were appropriate arrangements in place for the boys, and the Club should have periodically spoken with boys who stayed over at Bennell's house to check that they were being properly cared for. Had such steps been taken, this might have led to boys making disclosures to the Club.

2.53. At Stoke City, Bennell was for a period (between 1992 and 1994) an *ad hoc* youth team coach and youth scout for the Club. Bennell was also a youth coach for a junior team called Stone Dominoes. Stone Dominoes was not part of Stoke City's youth function, although (probably encouraged by Bennell) some players at Stone Dominoes and their parents may have thought that it was (see: Links Between Bennell and Stoke City).

2.54. During Bennell's association with Stoke City, some members of the Club's staff were aware of rumours circulating about Bennell's sexual interest in children, although no allegation of sexual abuse by Bennell was made to the Club. Given the scale of the rumours, steps should have been taken to ensure that Bennell's activities were monitored. I have seen no evidence to suggest that this was done (see: Stoke City's State of Knowledge).

Bob Higgins

2.55. Another prolific abuser was Bob Higgins. At his trial in 2019, the judge commented that Higgins had committed “systematic abuse” of the boys he coached, and many of whom saw him as a “father figure”. In total, over 100 individuals reported allegations of sexual offending by Higgins to the police (see: Abuse Committed by Higgins).

2.56. Higgins was employed by two professional clubs; Southampton and Peterborough United. At Southampton, Higgins was from 1974 a scout and local representative for the Club. From 1980 until 1989, Southampton employed Higgins as its Youth Development Officer. Southampton has commissioned the children’s charity *Barnardo’s* to carry out an investigation into what was known about Higgins. This investigation is still ongoing, and so it is not possible at this stage to express any final conclusions.

2.57. What can be said at this stage, however, is that there is evidence that as early as the 1970s, Southampton was contacted by a headteacher who raised concerns about Higgins. Further, during Higgins’ association with the Club, there were rumours circulating about his sexual interest in children. These rumours were heard by at least one member of the Club’s staff. Members of staff were also aware that boys were staying overnight at Higgins’ house and that Higgins was giving “soap water massages” to the boys. My provisional conclusion is that, as a result of these matters, the Club should have taken steps to monitor Higgins’ activities. This might have prevented his abuse of young players (see: Southampton’s State of Knowledge).

2.58. In February 1989, a disclosure was made to Southampton by one its junior players that he had been sexually abused by Higgins. Shortly afterwards, Higgins left the Club. The Club did not decide to report the allegation of abuse to the police until June 1989. My provisional conclusion is that the Club’s decision to report to the police should have been made more quickly.

2.59. At Peterborough, Higgins was the under-16 youth manager from August 1994 until May 1995. From May 1995 until April 1996, the Club employed Higgins as Youth Team Manager. Higgins was recruited to the Club by the coach, Kit Carson.

2.60. Whilst Higgins was working for Peterborough United, no allegation of child sexual abuse was brought to the Club’s attention. There were, however, a number of inappropriate behaviours by Higgins that were likely to have been witnessed by Club staff. There was also knowledge that boys would travel to Southampton to stay at Higgins’ home. These behaviours ought to have led to monitoring of Higgins, and that does not appear to have been done. Had Higgins been properly monitored this might have prevented some of his abuse of young players (see: Peterborough United’s State of Knowledge).

Ted Langford

2.61. Ted Langford was a scout for Aston Villa and Leicester City. He scouted for Aston Villa between 1976 (possibly earlier) and 1980/81, and between 1987 and 1989. Langford also ran youth teams which, during this period, had significant links with Aston Villa. He scouted for Leicester City between 1980/81 and 1987. Langford also ran youth teams which, during this period, had significant links with Leicester City. Langford pleaded guilty in 2007 to charges of indecent assault and gross indecency against four young boys whom he had met through his role in football.

2.62. The Review has not received any evidence to suggest that any complaint or concern about Langford came to Leicester City’s attention during his association with the Club (see: Leicester City’s State of Knowledge).

2.63. In May 1989, a complaint was made to Aston Villa about Langford’s inappropriate sexual behaviour on a trip to Sweden. As a result, Langford was dismissed by Aston Villa in July 1989. The Club did not report the matter to the police, but should have done. The allegations were of a serious nature, they involved children, and Langford obviously presented as a potential risk to other children with whom he may come into contact (see: Aston Villa’s State of Knowledge).

Chris Gieler

2.64. Chris Gieler was associated with Queens Park Rangers (“QPR”), from 1971 until 2002. Initially he was a schoolboy scout, but from 1979 he was employed as the Club’s Head of Youth Development, and later its Academy Director. Gieler was never investigated or prosecuted for any offences relating to sexual abuse during his lifetime, but many former youth players have alleged that they were sexually abused by him (see: QPR’s State of Knowledge).

2.65. In 1987/1988, a specific allegation of sexual assault by Gieler was made to QPR by a youth player. The Club investigated the allegation. From the available documentary evidence it appears that the Club concluded that there was no merit to the allegation. There is no evidence to suggest that the Club took any steps after the investigation to monitor Gieler’s behaviour and conduct towards young players. In the late 1980s, this was not the practice and would not have been expected. Nowadays, the Club would probably “keep an eye” on the situation and subject the accused to more scrutiny, even if the investigation had not found that abuse had taken place.

Frank Roper

2.66. Between the late 1960s and the late 1980s (possibly the early 1990s), Roper was a scout for Blackpool FC. Although not an employee of the Club, Roper clearly had a close association with the Club and would regularly be seen at youth training sessions, at games and generally around the Club. Roper also ran a team that played under the name “Nova” which was associated with and fed players to Blackpool. The Club knew that Roper gave gifts and money to some young players, and took young players

on trips abroad that he funded (see: Blackpool's State of Knowledge).

2.67. Roper had been convicted of indecent assault on a minor on a number of occasions: 1960, 1961, 1965 and 1984. There is no evidence that these convictions were known by the Club and, at the time, there was no formal mechanism by which the Club could have obtained information about these convictions. Roper is alleged to have abused many boys whilst he was connected to Blackpool. It is possible that allegations of abuse were made to the Club's Youth Team Coach, but this could not be verified.

Eddie Heath

2.68. Eddie Heath was involved in youth football with a number of professional clubs. Heath is alleged to have abused young players throughout his time in youth football. Heath was never investigated or prosecuted for the offences he is alleged to have committed.

2.69. At Leyton Orient (between 1960 and 1967), Heath was a scout and a coach. Heath's time at Leyton Orient falls outside the period of the Review, but the Club has provided some evidence about him. There is evidence that some Club employees were aware that boys spent time at Heath's flat, but this was not considered to be suspicious (see: Leyton Orient's State of Knowledge).

2.70. Heath's time at Tottenham Hotspur (March 1967 to June 1968) also falls outside the period of the Review, but the Club has provided some evidence about him. Although several players had some concerns about Heath, they did not suspect that he was engaged in child sexual abuse (see: Tottenham Hotspur's State of Knowledge).

2.71. At Chelsea (June 1st 1968 to November 30th 1979), Heath was the Chief Scout and was involved in training youth players. An allegation of abuse by Heath was made to a former Assistant Coach. The Assistant Coach has stated that he mentioned the disclosure to the Club's Acting Manager. The external report commissioned by the Club concluded, however, that this onward disclosure had not taken place (see: Chelsea's State of Knowledge).

2.72. More could and should have been done by Chelsea to confront Heath with respect to his abuse of the young player who had made the disclosure of abuse. Steps should have been taken to protect the young player and other boys from Heath's sexual advances and misconduct. If the Assistant Coach did not forward the allegation about Heath to others within the Club, then this was a failing by him. If the Assistant Coach did forward the information about Heath to the Acting Manager, and this was not acted upon, then this was a failing by the Acting Manager.

2.73. After his time at Chelsea, Heath worked as a youth scout at Millwall for a short period (four months in 1980 or early 1981). It is not possible to say that Millwall was aware of, or had suspicions about, Heath's alleged abuse at the time when he was involved with the Club (see: Millwall's State of Knowledge). Heath subsequently became the Youth Development Officer at Charlton Athletic (September 1981 to De-

ember 27th 1983). There is no evidence that anyone at the Club was aware of, or suspected, abuse by Heath (see: Charlton Athletic's State of Knowledge).

George Ormond

2.74. George Ormond was another prolific child sex abuser. When sentencing Ormond in July 2018, the trial judge described Ormond as someone who was “a predatory abuser of young boys”, who used his position as a football coach “to target vulnerable young children”. Ormond had links with Newcastle United in the 1980s and 1990s. He performed a variety of roles for the Club, and was described as a “gopher”: helping out at coaching sessions and transporting young players to and from their accommodation (see: Links Between Ormond and Newcastle).

2.75. Ormond abused young players whilst involved with a local youth team known as “Monty’s” (Montagu and Fenham Boys Football Club), and subsequently at Newcastle United. Newcastle United was made aware of allegations that Ormond had abused a young player when he was involved with Monty’s. This was brought to the attention of the Club’s Director of the Centre of Excellence and the Club’s Youth Development Officer, and several months later Ormond was dismissed by the Club. This delay between learning of the allegation and dismissing Ormond was a material failing, as Ormond’s continued presence at the Club posed a great risk to the safety of the young players. The disclosure of abuse should also have been reported to more senior officials at the Club, who could then have considered whether to inform the police or social services about the allegations against Ormond.

Kit Carson

2.76. Kit Carson was employed by a number of professional clubs in youth development roles. On January 7th 2019, Carson was due to stand trial at Cambridge Crown Court, where he faced allegations of child sexual abuse against boys aged between 11 and 15 years old, taking place between 1978 and 2009. Carson died in a car crash on the first day of the trial.

2.77. Carson was employed by Norwich City from 1983 to 1993. He worked as Youth Coach, as a Youth Manager, and as a Junior Football Promotions Manager (see: Links Between Carson and Norwich City). Carson worked at Peterborough United between 1993 and 2001. He was employed by the Club as its Director of Youth Football Activities (see: Links Between Carson and Peterborough United). Carson joined Cambridge United in 2001. He initially served as the Club’s Head of Talent Development. From 2004 to October 2005, he was the Club’s Director of Youth (see: Links Between Carson and Cambridge United).

2.78. There were rumours that Carson left Norwich City because he had been “messaging around” with kids. There is no evidence to corroborate these rumours (see: Norwich City’s State of Knowledge). Whilst working at Peterborough United, allegations of abuse by Carson were drawn to the attention of Bob Higgins, who had been recruited by Carson to work at the Club. Higgins did not share this information with

others at the Club (see: Peterborough United's State of Knowledge). The mother of a boy who trained under Carson at Cambridge United has said that she informed a coach at the Club that her son and other boys were required by Carson to train naked. It was not possible to verify this account (see: Cambridge United's State of Knowledge).

THE CLUBS' INVESTIGATIONS

2.79. As part of the Terms of Reference, the FA asked me to consider the steps that the different clubs were taking "to investigate what that club did or did not know and/or did or did not do in relation to child sexual abuse which has been brought to light in the press relating to the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and up until around 2005".

2.80. The Clubs who were associated with these perpetrators in the period 1970 to 2005 have investigated these matters. They identified and examined whatever documentary evidence is still available about the perpetrator, and spoke to former Board members, staff (including coaching staff), and players (including junior players) who may have had dealings with the perpetrator, and in some cases Clubs spoke to parents of former players. The Clubs asked these individuals relevant questions about the abuse: including what knowledge they had of the abuse or allegations about abuse, as well as about rumours or innuendo or other matters that may have raised suspicions of abuse.

2.81. Chelsea instructed external lawyers to carry out a large-scale review into what was known about Heath. Manchester City instructed external lawyers to carry out a large-scale review into what was known about Bennell. Southampton has instructed the children's charity *Barnardo's* to carry out an investigation into what was known about Higgins, and this is still ongoing. Most of the other Clubs worked with lawyers (some with external lawyers, and others with internal lawyers) to carry out their investigations.

2.82. I am satisfied that each of the Clubs has sought to find the truth as to what took place, and all of the investigations that concerned abuse in the period of the Review were adequate within the meaning of my Terms of Reference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.83. Most people that I have met as part of the Review acknowledge that the safeguarding arrangements that are currently in place within football should make it far harder for abuse to take place. The system of safeguarding within football is good, and the resources devoted to it are substantial. However, at the end of the day, determined abusers can only be stopped with the vigilance of those working with them, and by the confidence of young players to speak out when they see or experience something wrong. Those working in the game need to be alert to the warning signs – acting on any “seeds of doubt”. Young players need to know where to turn and to whom they should speak if improper conduct occurs or is threatened. Children who play football not only need to be listened to, but they must be encouraged to speak out.

2.84. Having heard from a variety of sources, and in particular from survivors themselves, I consider that there are some further measures that can be taken even now to improve safeguarding for young people involved in football. To this end, I make a series of Recommendations, which I hope the FA will carefully consider.

Chapter 3.
Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

3.1. As part of my Review I have considered what additional measures could be introduced within football that would strengthen safeguarding within the sport. In making these recommendations I am conscious that my terms of reference covered the period from 1970 up to 2005. The focus of my work has been to look at what was known and done about child sexual abuse during that period. Since 2005, the practice of child protection and safeguarding within football has moved on substantially. This is reflected in the many conversations I have had with those currently involved in the sport, and in my consideration of the recent case management files held by the FA into the non-recent allegations.

3.2. I am also aware that the FA has established an advisory group to identify the best ways to support survivors and use their difficult experiences to improve safeguarding today: The Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group. I consider this to be an important initiative.

3.3. That said, I believe that there are still important lessons that can be learned from the work that I have done, and I make a number of recommendations that, if implemented, should help to make football a safer place for children now and for the future. Some of these recommendations were pressed on me by survivors of abuse when asked what would or might have made it easier for them to raise the alarm about their abuse at the time when it was taking place; others were suggested by participants in the game today, including those in safeguarding roles.

3.4. I consider that there are three themes and within each of those themes a number of recommendations which if taken forward by the FA and football more generally would improve safeguarding across the game. The three themes which I set out below are (i) training at all levels, (ii) a child-first culture, and (iii) transparency and accountability. As I explain, together they represent a strengthening of child protection and safeguarding within football and a move towards an environment where children who are victims of abuse or attempted abuse are able to speak out and be listened to.

3.5. In addition, I recommend one further measure to keep the issue of child protection and safeguarding in football high in the public consciousness: a national day of safeguarding in football.

3.6. One matter that has been raised with me is whether there should be mandatory reporting of allegations of abuse: that is, should there be a legal requirement to report knowledge or suspicions of a crime to a designated authority. This is not a matter which properly falls within my remit, as it is a matter of general application, and I can only make recommendations that are specific to the FA. I am aware, however, that the proposal is one of the matters being considered by IICSA¹.

1. IICSA, Seminar Reports 1 and 2, Mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/research-seminars/mandatory-reporting-child-sexual-abuse>.

TRAINING AT ALL LEVELS

Training about safeguarding issues is recognised by all experts on child protection consistently as an essential feature of any child protection policy. The FA recognised this when it first rolled out its child protection policy in 2000. That policy included a three-hour child protection workshop which was provided to child protection officers, coaches and later referees. The FA still offers a three-hour workshop, and now offers a welfare officer's workshop as well, which includes more information and advice on safeguarding. These sources of training are essential. But child protection and safeguarding are not just the responsibility of a club's child protection officer or the welfare officer. For training to be effective it must be the responsibility of everyone involved with football: starting at the very top. By training those in leadership positions in the game, this not only equips the leaders with the tools and language of safeguarding, but it also sends a clear message that the game as a whole takes safeguarding seriously.

Recommendation 1

I recommend that the FA should make arrangements to encourage all parents/carers to receive safeguarding training.

It has been a key feature of my interviews with survivors that, in the majority of cases, they did not feel that they could tell their parents about the abuse they experienced. Their parents in many cases only found out about the abuse many years later, and did not suspect that abuse had been taking place. If parents or carers, particularly parents or carers of children playing football intensively and at a high level, received tailored training on identifying signs of abuse and grooming behaviour, this might allow concerns to be caught earlier. Parents and carers would also have the confidence to talk to the children about safeguarding issues, and children would feel comfortable that their parents or carers would understand their concerns.

At present, the FA's Safeguarding Children Workshop is made available to, and expressly said to be suitable for, parents. The FA also provides information through its website and had made resources available to clubs in an effort to ensure that parents and carers are provided with relevant information. The FA also participates in the NSPCC's Parents in Sport Week. Professional clubs are also active in supporting and advising parents and carers, and making resources available to them.

To ensure greater take-up by parents and carers of safeguarding training, I recommend that the FA, working in partnership with the Premier League and the English Football League, develops an online safeguarding course, which is specifically designed for parents and carers, and which includes material on recognising abuse and listening to children's concerns. Parents and carers of young players at both the professional and grassroots levels should be encouraged to take the course.

Recommendation 2

I recommend that the FA should make arrangements for all players and young people to receive safeguarding training.

Another feature of many of my interviews with survivors was that teammates were suspicious or knew what was happening, but did not have the knowledge to take appropriate steps and tell someone in authority about their concerns.

In order to address this, the FA should take steps to ensure that adult and junior players are appropriately educated on safeguarding matters.

The FA should require all registered adult players at affiliated clubs to complete one of its Safeguarding Children courses, and should make arrangements with the Premier League and English Football League to ensure that this is done in the professional game.

With respect to junior players, from September 2020 schools are required to provide relationships education for primary pupils, and relationships/sex education for secondary pupils.² The FA should work with clubs (at both the professional and grassroots levels) to amplify and reinforce that education by making further, and football-specific, resources on safeguarding available to junior players.

Recommendation 3

I recommend that FA Board and Senior Management Team (“SMT”) members should receive safeguarding training on a regular basis: every three years.

I believe that the current FA Board is committed to improving child protection and safeguarding within the sport. In April 2019, the FA Board received safeguarding training, and it is a requirement for all new staff at the FA (including the SMT) to complete an online safeguarding course as part of their induction process.

I consider that all of those who make decisions about these matters and who make decisions on budgets and priorities, right up to the very top of the organisation, should receive appropriate and comprehensive safeguarding training. So as to ensure that the knowledge of the FA Board and the SMT members is kept up to date, I recommend that safeguarding training should be provided to all current Board members, and SMT members, on a regular, three yearly, basis.

By committing to the regular and frequent training of the FA Board and SMT, the FA will be sending a powerful message to all of those involved in the sport that safeguarding is taken seriously. The training will equip the FA Board and SMT with the tools and language to understand and speak up about safeguarding. The training will embed the significance of child protection and safeguarding within the organisation, and will

2. See Department for Education: “Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers”.

provide confidence to those who work directly in safeguarding at the FA that their work is valued, encouraging them to continue their efforts to implement best practice throughout the game.

At the County FA level, this message is already being sent. County FA board and council members are required to complete a comprehensive range of training as part of the Safeguarding Operating Standard, which was introduced in the 2017/18 season. In addition, County FAs must have a nominated Board Safeguarding Champion who is required to attend a “*Managing Safeguarding in Your County*” workshop delivered by the FA’s Safeguarding Team. In my view it is not necessary, therefore, to make a recommendation for the senior leadership in the grassroots game.

Recommendation 4

I recommend that the FA should require the Board of Directors of professional clubs to receive safeguarding training on a regular basis: every three years, and should encourage professional club boards to engage in safeguarding strategy and implementation.

Similarly, in professional football clubs the Board of Directors sets the priorities and agenda as well as the culture of the organisation. The Board of Directors of each professional club should be provided with appropriate and comprehensive training on child protection and safeguarding. This should be designed and provided in association with the Premier League and English Football League and updated every three years.

The Premier League and English Football League Standards already require clubs to provide “a demonstrable top-level commitment to safeguarding that creates and reinforces attitudes and behaviours that value children and adults at risk, creates a culture of accountability and drives continuous improvement” (Standard 1.1). The FA should work with the Premier League and English Football League to see what further steps can be taken to ensure that professional club boards engage in their club’s safeguarding strategy and implementation. This could include regulatory changes by the Premier League and English Football League, allowing them to enforce appropriate safeguarding requirements by professional clubs, and requiring clubs to appoint an independent safeguarding champion to promote and support safeguarding initiatives at board level.

Recommendation 5

I recommend that the FA should require all those engaging in a regulated activity, including managers and coaches of junior teams (under 18s) and open-age teams (teams comprised of adults and 16-17 year olds) at grassroots clubs to receive safeguarding training as part of their clubs’ affiliation to their County FA.

Since 2001, the FA's Safeguarding Children Workshop ("the Workshop") has been mandatory for all coaches taking an FA coach qualification course. At present, 88% of youth football teams play in the *Charter Standard* environment, where at least one coach has the FA Level 1 coaching award and have therefore completed the Workshop. 5% of non-Charter Standard youth teams also have at least one FA-qualified coach.

All core committee members of affiliated clubs are required to take the FA's Safeguarding for Committee Members course.

In August 2020, the FA launched an online course: Safeguarding for All. This course is encouraged for anyone with a role in a club who is over 14 years old, and is designed to build a greater level of safeguarding awareness in clubs.

So as to ensure that everyone who has direct contact with young players is trained in safeguarding matters, I recommend that all those engaging in a regulated activity, including managers and coaches of junior teams at grassroots clubs, should be required to complete the Safeguarding for All course, if they have not completed any of the FA's other safeguarding courses (as part of their FA coaching qualification or other course, such as the recently introduced Playmaker course). This could be made a condition of affiliation to the CFA which in my view would encourage compliance.

CHILDREN-CENTRED CULTURE

It is clear to me from the meetings that I have had, and the materials that I have read, that there are many within the footballing community who recognise the importance of safeguarding. However, through discussions with those still involved in the game I have formed the view that there is still more that can be done to ensure that safeguarding is not just something that a small number of people within football worry about, but rather that the culture of football as a whole is child-centred.

Recommendation 6

I recommend that one member of the FA's Board should be assigned the role of Children's Safeguarding Champion.

Ensuring that one member of the FA's Board is tasked with being the Children's Safeguarding Champion will demonstrate the FA's ongoing commitment to safeguarding. This person could be specifically appointed to the Board to perform this role among their other responsibilities as a Board member, or one of the Board members could be assigned the role. The fact that one of the FA's Board members takes on this role does not mean that safeguarding of children is not the collective responsibility of the Board as a whole. That should continue to be the case. The role of Children's Safeguarding Champion will be to ensure that safeguarding children who play football is put at the forefront of the work of the FA.

Recommendation 7

I recommend that the FA should develop a five year strategy with specific intervention to support the voices of children. The strategy should be monitored during the course of and at the end of the five year period to assess its success. If issues are identified during the course of the five year period, they should be acted on speedily.

Contributors to the Review reported that it was often difficult to challenge the organisations that they trained or played with, and it was hard to know where to go if they wanted to make a complaint about inappropriate behaviour. It was also clear that people did not want to be seen to be causing trouble or jeopardise their sporting career, and felt they had little power to bring about change.

The FA, and other stakeholders in the game (the Premier League, English Football League, and the County FAs), have recently taken a number of steps to create an environment in which children are, and feel like they are, being listened to. For example, listening to children is a core element of the FA's Safeguarding Children training; promoting a culture of listening to children is a fundamental part of the role of Designated Safeguarding Officers; it also forms part of the Premier League and English Football League's Standards.

This work can be built upon. A strategy would enable the FA to, among other things, join up the various initiatives that are being run within the game to support the voices of children, and to make the best use of the data that has been obtained from these initiatives.

Furthermore, by communicating the importance of the views of young players and that they will be listened to, those suffering sexual abuse or concerned that this may be happening to one of their peers will be encouraged to report that abuse.

Recommendation 8

I recommend that the FA should require all grassroots clubs to make their safeguarding policy and the contact details of the Welfare Officer readily available to parents and carers of all junior players (under 18). The policy document should clearly lay out the steps to raise a safeguarding concern or complaint. Junior players (under 18) at all clubs (professional and grassroots) should be signposted to the club's policy when they join their club, and reminded of the policy at least on an annual basis.

The easy availability of every club's safeguarding policy, and frequent reminders to junior players, should help to ensure that junior players know what protection they are entitled to and how to raise a safeguarding concern or make a complaint.

The FA's policies and procedures are readily accessible on its website; County FAs are

already required by the FA to make their policies and procedures similarly accessible. The Standards for professional clubs (Premier League and English Football League) call for the wide promotion and easy accessibility of safeguarding policies and procedures and the ways to report concerns.

To complete the picture, within the game as a whole, the FA should ensure that grassroots clubs make similar arrangements. Where grassroots clubs use websites or social media to support the running of their clubs, the safeguarding policy and contact details for the Welfare Officer should be prominent and easily accessible on those platforms. Some grassroots clubs do not have websites or use websites in this way. They should be required to send their safeguarding policy and the contact details of their Welfare Officers, by email or hard copy, to all parents and carers of junior players when they join the club and at the start of every season. All parents/carers should be encouraged to save the contact details for the Welfare Officer on their mobile phones where possible.

Recommendation 9

I recommend that the FA should, on an annual basis, widen the system of spot-checks for grassroots clubs to review the clubs' safeguarding policies and practices, including overnight stays, away travel and trips, use of social media, and coaching in a digital environment, as well as to obtain the views of children and young people, and to sanction those clubs that fail to comply.

Since the 2017/18 season, the FA has conducted spot checks at grassroots clubs: 13% of clubs received unannounced spot checks by County FAs each season. These spot checks cover whether the person coaching is the person recorded on the FA's system, so that they can be monitored via Disclosure and Barring System ("DBS") checks and safeguarding training requirements; as well as to ascertain whether adults (coaches and parents) know who the club's Welfare Officer is, have their contact details, know how to report a concern, and know how to blow the whistle if they felt that a concern was not being dealt with appropriately.

There is more that can be achieved by these spot checks. I recommend that they should also include a review of the clubs' safeguarding policies and practices, including overnight stays, away travel and trips (which have been a particular source of abuse as described elsewhere in this report), use of social media, and coaching in a digital environment (so as to address modern vehicles for abuse and grooming for abuse), as well as to obtain the views of children and young people. The inspector carrying out the spot check should arrange to obtain the views of junior players.

A report should be made by the FA's Safeguarding Team to the FA's Board on an annual basis setting out the finding of these spot checks and explaining what lessons can be learnt from the best practice and what can be improved in relation to poor practice. A summary of this report should be published by the FA.

Recommendation 10

I recommend that the FA should ensure that the Safeguarding Officer in professional clubs should report on a regular basis to their club’s Board on safeguarding matters. The Safeguarding Officer at each of the Premier League and English Football League (“EFL”) Championship clubs should be a dedicated, full-time, salaried post, with suitable qualifications and experience. In EFL Leagues 1 & 2, the Safeguarding Officer should, as a minimum, be a part-time salaried post, with suitable qualifications and experience, and 50% of their time should be dedicated to safeguarding.

Many clubs within the Premier League and English Football League already have salaried Safeguarding Officers. If all such clubs have a salaried Safeguarding Officer, with the ability to report on safeguarding matters to their club’s Board, this should assist in furthering the commitment to safeguarding within those Leagues.

Recommendation 11

I recommend that, following receipt of this report, the FA should launch a social media and online campaign to direct all those involved in football, including parents and families towards information and advice on safeguarding and minimising risk.

My investigation has focused on what some describe as “historic” or “non-recent” allegations of abuse and how football dealt with them, in some cases decades ago. Many of the survivors I have spoken to have expressed a concern that in focusing on these allegations, it may wrongly give the impression that this is something that happened in the past, and is not something that we need to concern ourselves with now. This impression can be dispelled if a high-level social media and online campaign explains that that is not the case.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

I believe that the FA should be proud of the work that its Safeguarding Team does year in and year out to investigate and deal with concerns and reports of child sex abuse within football, and should also be proud of the educational initiatives that the Safeguarding Team have developed. I consider that it is important that this work is publicised, so that key trends and key developments can be better understood by those involved with the game, or whose children are involved with the game.

Recommendation 12

I recommend that the FA should publish a safeguarding report on an annual basis, which should include a statement from the FA’s Chairman.

This safeguarding report should cover a number of areas: (1) key trends as to the abuse/grooming that has been identified by the FA's Safeguarding Team in the footballing context; (2) key developments carried out by the FA's Safeguarding Team: education initiatives and campaigns, with an assessment (where possible) of their reach and effectiveness; (3) work done in the safeguarding field within football as a whole during the year (in the professional and grassroots game); (4) confirmation as to who within the FA has received safeguarding training and the nature of that training; and (5) the structure of the FA's Safeguarding Team, how it operates and the qualifications of its staff.

NATIONAL DAY OF SAFEGUARDING IN FOOTBALL

The more that safeguarding is talked about, the more likely that individuals involved in the game will be vigilant about abuse. The more that safeguarding is talked about, the more likely that children will feel emboldened to speak up if they are the victims of abuse or grooming, or believe that their peers may be at risk.

Recommendation 13

I recommend that the FA, along with the professional leagues and the County FAs, devotes one day of the year to a National Day of Safeguarding in Football.

One way of ensuring the ongoing discussion about safeguarding in the sport is by having a football-wide day of safeguarding. This can be used to promote the latest good practice, to celebrate the achievements in the field of safeguarding by different clubs and different levels of the game, and also to acknowledge the incredible bravery of those who came forward to disclose abuse and kick-start the national conversation that has been taking place these past few years.

I would also recommend that survivors and victims of abuse in football (including the survivor members of the Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group) form a central part of this day to contribute their knowledge, understanding and insights to improving safeguarding and child protection in football and raising awareness.

FURTHER MATTERS

3.7. During the course of carrying out the Review, it has been drawn to my attention that there are a number of gaps within the safeguarding arrangements for football due to the limits of the FA's powers and jurisdiction. The FA's powers are contractual, and are limited to those who are "Participants" as defined in the FA's Rules.

3.8. In particular, I am aware that:

- 8.1. The FA is limited in its ability to take effective enforcement action if an individual breaches a suspension order, as its powers are purely contractual;
- 8.2. the FA has no power to manage individuals who are suspended from footballing activity but attend, as spectators, matches that are played under the auspices of the FA or County FAs on publicly owned pitches;
- 8.3. the FA has no jurisdiction over individuals who have completed an FA coaching qualification, but set up a private coaching business (not affiliated to the FA or any of the County FAs) and market themselves as "FA-qualified coaches". Parents and carers may assume that these individuals are coaching under the auspices of the FA, and may feel confident that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place due to the association with the FA, when that is not in fact the case.

3.9. It would be useful for there to be dialogue between the FA and relevant governmental authorities to see how these gaps in safeguarding arrangements could be filled in, so that children can be provided with further protection from harm when playing football.

Chapter 4.

Child Protection in Context

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4.1 Introduction

4.1.1. In considering the context against which the FA's response to child protection/safeguarding should be judged, I had the privilege of speaking with Professor Celia Brackenridge, the leading academic in the field of child protection in sport, who worked for many years to bring the matter to the attention of the sporting authorities. I note with no small amount of sadness that it was not possible to complete the Review before Celia Brackenridge passed away.

4.1.2. The Review also had access to the Celia Brackenridge archives at Brunel University, which were researched by the Review's expert advisor, Professor Mike Hartill, Director of the CPSS at Edge Hill University. I have relied on Mike Hartill's research, supplemented by further reading by the Review Team, as well as interviews conducted with various persons involved in the governance of sport during the relevant time period, and access to the archives of Sport England (formerly the Sports Council), the government-funded national governing body of sport.¹

4.1.3. As Dame Janet Smith (the former Court of Appeal judge who produced *The Jimmy Savile Investigation Report* for the BBC) has noted, "Since Victorian times, British society has recognised the need to protect children from sexual abuse, although it is only fairly recently that it has appreciated how much protection is needed."² Public awareness of child sexual abuse and its prevalence was heightened by the publication of the *Report into the Inquiry into Child Abuse in Cleveland* by Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss in 1987. Until the late 1980s, the main focus was on child sexual abuse within the family setting. Awareness of abuse in other settings, such as in sport, was slow to emerge.

4.1.4. Several people involved at senior levels in sport during the period covered by the Review informed me that the problem of child sex abuse in sport was not taken sufficiently seriously until well into the 1990s. Dr Anita White, the former Director of Development of the Sports Council (now Sport England) told me that, in the early 1990s, sports organisations "did not really want to admit a problem of child abuse in sport. They were reluctant to recognise it ... it was not a popular message to be taking out." Anita White told me that even after the broadcast in 1993 of a television programme about the problem of child sex abuse by coaches, "*Secrets of the Coach*" (see below), it "took some time ... to convince people that it really was an issue". Anita White suggested that "there was a lingering reluctance to admit that this [abuse] probably existed in sport." There was a feeling that acknowledging it could discourage parents from letting their children become involved in sport "if it was an unsafe place for them to be", and could discourage coaches and other volunteers on whom sports rely who might fear being "accused of abusing children".

4.1.5. Anita White's recollection was echoed by Baroness Sue Campbell, who served as Chief Executive of the National Coaching Foundation ("NCF") (subsequently Sports Coach UK, now Coaching UK) from 1985 to 1995, and subsequently held a number of very senior roles in sports administration. Sue Campbell emphasised to me the reluctance of sport to see the issue of child sex abuse as more than a few isolated

1. See also the detailed account on the development of child protection and safeguarding in the report produced by Charles Geekie QC for Chelsea FC, and published on August 6th 2019: <https://www.chelseafc.com/en/about-chelsea/safeguarding-review>.

2. Smith, J. (2016). *The Jimmy Savile Investigation Report*. p.219.

cases. She admitted that people in the sporting world were “not sure how to react and still not believing this was a widespread issue. There was a sense that we should not over-react. I don’t think people had really grasped the issue.”

4.1.6. The same view was expressed to me by Steve Boocock, the first Director of the Child Protection in Sport Unit (“CPSU”) at the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“NSPCC”), who commented that early efforts to address child protection “lacked co-ordination and political support”. He accused the Sports Council of having shared “the attitudes of denial, blame and minimisation”.³ When I spoke to him, Steve Boocock explained that there was:

“something of a mythology that [child sex abuse] wouldn’t happen in football, in rugby, where you have predominantly boys and young men involved in the sports, because they were not recognised as being potential [survivors]. It was very much, this is something that happens to girls and young women. It isn’t something that happens to males.”

4.1.7. Sue Campbell told me that: “I don’t think any of us realised it was as prevalent as it was. But I do think Steve [Boocock] is right, there was a period of denial, and then a sort of period of acceptance, but a kind of unwilling acceptance that this was a few cases not a systemic issue.” This echoes what Celia Brackenridge wrote in 2001: “Collective denial effectively blinded administrators to the possibilities that they might actually be harbouring or facilitating sexual exploitation in their own organisations.”⁴

4.1.8. There is little doubt that the key event that focused minds of many of those running sport in this country on the need to take child sex abuse seriously was the conviction of Paul Hickson on September 26th 1995. Hickson was a former coach of the British Olympic women’s swimming team. He was found guilty of raping two teenage swimmers and indecently assaulting several others over a 15-year period. Hickson was sentenced to a prison term of 17 years. Anita White told me that she remembered the Hickson case “hitting the front pages of national newspapers ... it was so people could no longer not be aware of the issue”.⁵

4.1.9. On September 28th 1995, *The Times* carried an editorial which criticised the governing body of swimming, the Amateur Swimming Association (“the ASA”):

“The authorities appear to have been culpably lax in their failure to respond to persistent rumours of Hickson’s conduct. ... Colleagues and the swimming authorities, who were well placed to know through the grapevine that his reputation was increasingly unwholesome, failed to ask any awkward questions.”⁶

4.1.10. On October 1st 1995, the *Sunday Times* carried a story under the headline “The Great Betrayal: Paul Hickson”. The same day, the *Sunday Mirror* contained an article with the headline “Evil Olympic coach victim’s horrifying story that every parent in Britain must read”. The story was also covered in the *Daily Mirror*⁷, the *Independent*⁸ and other newspapers.

3. Boocock, S. (2002). The Child Protection in Sport Unit. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 8(2), p.100.

4. Brackenridge, C. (2001). *Spoilsports: Understanding and Preventing Sexual Exploitation in Sport*. Routledge, p.237

5. When Hickson was arrested in 1992, only one national newspaper appears to have covered the story: *The People*, which ran a one hundred-word article on page 4 under the headline “Ban on Olympic coach in sex probe.”

6. *The Times* (September 28th 1995). Code for Coaches.

7. *The Daily Mirror* (September 28th 1995). Blunders that let rapist swimming coach remain free.

8. *The Independent* (September 28th 1995). Former Olympic coach gets 17 years for sex attacks.

4.1.11. Hickson’s conviction set in motion a swift and substantial response in the world of swimming. The ASA came under “huge pressure to act swiftly to restore the confidence of its membership, parents/carers, and the public at large.”⁹

4.1.12. The Hickson conviction also triggered a response from the Sports Council, leading to its first national conference on child protection in June 1996, and ultimately to the creation of the CPSU in 2000. At the Sports Council conference in June 1996, national governing bodies of sports were provided with considerable information about child protection and what measures would be best practice for their sports.

4.1.13. I have separated my analysis of the context into four time periods. The first period runs from 1970 (the beginning of the Review period) until 1991, when many of the provisions in the Children Act 1989 were brought into force. The Children Act 1989 introduced the legal principle that “the child’s welfare shall be the court’s paramount consideration” when a court decides a question relating to the upbringing of a child. It also introduced specific obligations in relation to child protection in the context of residential schools. This was of particular importance to the FA, which ran the National School. As explained elsewhere, the National School was the first place where the FA encountered the emerging child protection legislation (see: The National School).

4.1.14. The second period runs from 1992 to 1994. During this period, the Home Office issued guidance as to the appropriate approach to child protection for voluntary organisations. A television documentary about child sex abuse in sport was broadcast in the summer of 1993, and led one sporting organisation, the Martial Arts Development Commission (“MADEC”), to organise a conference on child protection in sport.

4.1.15. The third period runs from 1995 to 1999. The period starts with the publication by the NCF of its distance learning pack *Protecting Children – A Guide for Sportspeople*. This was followed by the conviction of Hickson, which was the trigger for the Sports Council to start taking child protection seriously and for a number of sports to introduce child protection initiatives. At the forefront of this activity was the ASA.

4.1.16. Finally, I look at the period 2000 to 2005 when there was further consolidation of the approach of the sports world to child protection. By the end of the period covered by the Review, most, but not all, sports had in place a child protection policy and were taking their obligations seriously.

9. ‘In at the deep end’, Myers and Barrett, p.4.

4.2 *Child Protection from 1970 to 1991*

SUMMARY OF THE PERIOD

4.2.1. During this period, the ill-treatment of children was a specific criminal offence. The focus of child protection activity was for much of this period concerned with the residential setting. From the 1980s, there was increasing recognition – by charities and some academics (in particular, Celia Brackenridge) – that abuse could take place outside of the home, including in sport.

LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT POLICY

4.2.2. Child protection legislation has been on the statute book for over a hundred years. The first specific piece of legislation to criminalise ill-treatment of children – the Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children Act – was enacted in 1889. Local authorities have had responsibilities for children within their jurisdiction since at least the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act 1904, which empowered them to remove children from their parents where necessary.

4.2.3. Following the Second World War, the welfare of children was increasingly understood to be part of the State’s function. This culminated in the formation of local authority Social Services Departments, with the Local Authority and Social Services Act 1970. The Children Act 1989, many of whose provisions came into force in 1991, imposed a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area. Local authorities also became subject to a duty to investigate where they had reasonable cause to suspect that a child in their area was suffering, or was likely to suffer, significant harm.

4.2.4. The Children Act 1989 made specific provision to regulate “children’s homes”, defined as a home which provides care and accommodation wholly or mainly for more than three children at any one time.¹⁰ In particular, children’s homes were required to be registered; the children’s home operator was under a duty to safeguard and promote the child’s welfare; and restrictions were imposed on management, ownership and employment at a children’s home.

4.2.5. In 1991, the Department for Education issued guidance to accompany the Act: *The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations*. Volume four, *Residential Care*, included advice on vetting staff and others in regular contact with children, encompassing the Department of Health Consultancy Index, police checks and ‘List 99’.

4.2.6. The Department of Health’s Consultancy Index was initially derived from a Home Office list of individuals deemed unsuitable for working with children in a

10. Section 63, Children Act 1989 (as enacted).

residential or social care setting. Access to the list was regulated by governmental guidance: *Protection of Children: Disclosure of Criminal Background of those with Access to Children*. This list would later become the Protection of Children Act List, or ‘POCAL’, on a formalised statutory basis.

4.2.7. ‘List 99’ was a list of individuals deemed unsuitable to work in the education sector and was maintained by the Department for Education. In 1982,¹¹ it was broadened to cover all school staff.

4.2.8. Criminal records were held by the police, albeit on a fragmented basis between national and local records. Criminal record checks could be made by voluntary organisations who were members of the Voluntary Organisations Consultancy Service (“the VOCS”), where people were applying to work with children who were in highly vulnerable or isolated positions. This did not apply to sporting organisations, such as the FA, who could not access criminal records via the VOCS. The FA was able to obtain access to List 99 and the Department of Health’s Consultancy List in the late 1990s (see: Screening and Self Declaration).

THE CLEVELAND INQUIRY

4.2.9. Child sex abuse was brought to widespread public attention in this country in 1987 through media coverage of events in Cleveland. 121 children had been removed from their families based on the recommendations of two paediatricians, who had claimed that the children had suffered anal penetration. The subsequent inquiry, headed by Baroness Butler-Sloss, was prompted by public concern and press coverage that professionals had been overly zealous in removing children from their families. The final report of the Cleveland Inquiry in 1988 confirmed that child sexual abuse was a more widespread phenomenon than had previously been thought to be the case.

CHARITIES INVOLVED IN CHILD PROTECTION

4.2.10. A number of charities working in the field of child protection operated during this early period. The NSPCC was founded in 1889, and incorporated by royal charter in 1895. For most of this period, the NSPCC’s focus was primarily on the abuse of children within the family setting.

4.2.11. In 1985, Kidscape was established by Michele Elliott, a child psychologist, to raise awareness and engage with potential survivors of abuse. Michele Elliott considered that the greatest threat came from people known to the survivor – friends and family.

4.2.12. In 1986, ChildLine, a free telephone service for survivors of abuse, was established.¹² It was reported that 50,000 calls were received within 24 hours after its launch on the BBC on October 30th 1986.¹³

11. Thomas, T. (2007). *Criminal Records: A Database for the Criminal Justice System and Beyond*. Palgrave Macmillan.

12. The Times (October 24th 1986). Link for child sex victims – ‘Childline’ telephone service.

CELIA BRACKENRIDGE'S RESEARCH AND WORK

4.2.13. One of the earliest and most dedicated advocates for child protection in sport was Celia Brackenridge. Celia Brackenridge first raised the issue of child sex abuse in sport in a 1986 paper: *Problems - What Problems? Some thoughts on Sexuality and Professional Standards*. She referred to research from the sport of swimming in the United States, where it was reported that many coaches had reported incidents of “female athletes being harassed”. Noting that abusive situations were invariably characterised by a “distorted power relationship”, she called for a Code of Practice for sports coaches, which would include a rule that coaches should “respect the rights, dignity and individual sensibilities of their athletes”.

4.2.14. Celia Brackenridge explained that professional misconduct would arise where, for instance, a sports coach abused his or her special privileges or skills:

“The sports coach is privileged, on occasion, to have physical contact with the athlete and to travel and reside with the athlete in the course of professional practice. Abuse of these privileges for personal reward or satisfaction amounts to a serious breach... Any attempt to exercise undue influence over the athlete in order to obtain personal benefit would be liable to give grounds for a complaint.”

4.2.15. In the summer of 1987, the NCF printed an article by Celia Brackenridge in its publication *Coaching Focus*, entitled “Ethical Concerns in Women’s Sport”. (At this time Celia Brackenridge’s research was primarily, although not exclusively, focused on female athletes.) Celia Brackenridge again referred to the “power relationship” between coaches and athletes, and the potential for coaches to exploit “the sexuality of their charges”. Celia Brackenridge argued that:

“of particular concern ... are those [abuses] stemming from domination over the body, since the sexuality of sport gives a particular ethos to the coaching process which has effectively been ignored or even suppressed in most of the standard sporting literature. The sexual politics of sport must be recognised if coaches and athletes are to work together successfully.”

Celia Brackenridge contended that “The move to professionalise coaching must include the setting up of a code of practice for coaches against which standards of conduct can be assessed.” A *Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct* was introduced by the British Institute of Sports Coaches (“BISC”) in 1989. (BISC was renamed the National Coaching Association, and was later incorporated into the NCF.)

4.2.16. For the remainder of the 1980s and into the early 1990s, Celia Brackenridge continued to write and talk about the issue of abuse in sport, and sought to attract the interest of those regulating sport at a national level. When I spoke to her, Sue Campbell described Celia Brackenridge as “a constant provocateur. She was the one that wouldn’t let the issue rest. Everybody should have responded to her much sooner.” Instead, Sue Campbell explained, “People started shutting the doors... People believed it

13. The Times (November 1st 1986). 50,000 calls to child abuse help-line in first 24 hours.

was not happening in their sport and people were still coming to terms with what this was.” In September 1995, Celia Brackenridge was quoted as being “profoundly disappointed with the attitude of Britain’s sports authorities not to have taken this problem more seriously than they have done”.¹⁴ From what I have seen, this was not due to any lack of effort on Celia Brackenridge’s part.

SPORTS AND SPORTING BODIES

4.2.17. During this early period, there was very limited engagement with the issue of child protection by those responsible for running most sports. The NCF, which had been set up by the Sports Council in 1983, published a pamphlet in 1986 entitled *Play the Game: For Children in Sport*. This emphasised the risks of “inappropriate expectations and attitudes” of adults, and the “dangers in forcing children beyond their capabilities and differing levels of interest.”¹⁵ It made no mention of sexual abuse, or indeed child protection, beyond issues of over-training.

14. The Times (28 September 1995). *Intimate bonds can be exploited.*

15. Playboard/NCF. (1986). *Play the Game: For Children in Sport*. p.1.

4.3 Child Protection from 1992 to 1994

SUMMARY OF THE PERIOD

4.3.1. During this period, there was an increased focus from Government on ensuring that children were kept safe in all environments. In 1993, the Home Office published *Safe from Harm? Code of Practice for Safeguarding the Welfare of Children in Voluntary Organisations in England and Wales* (“*Safe from Harm*”). This gave clear guidance to voluntary organisations (including football clubs) on how to improve child protection. It does not appear, however, that this guidance was widely publicised (see: Government Guidance: *Safe from Harm*).

4.3.2. Some voluntary organisations, including the Scouting Association, were already introducing child protection initiatives, and others (such as the Church of England) started to do so.

4.3.3. In the sporting world, this period saw an increasing level of awareness of the need for child protection measures. The NCF introduced child protection elements in coaching courses from the early 1990s. In November 1993, following the television documentary, *Secrets of the Coach*, which shone a light on the problem of sexual abuse in a number of sports, MADEC organised a conference on child protection, featuring Celia Brackenridge as one of the speakers (see: The Martial Arts Development Commission Conference). In the summer of 1994, Barry Bennell was arrested in Florida and charged with sexually abusing a child whom he had taken to the United States on a football tour. There was some media publicity of his arrest.

LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT POLICY

4.3.4. In 1993, the Home Office introduced the *Safe from Harm* guidance. The *Safe from Harm* guidance noted that:

“voluntary organisations share ... a duty of care for the children and young people under 16 years old with whom they come into contact. Sadly, even in the best run organisations, it has been known for children to be physically, emotionally or sexually abused.”

4.3.5. The *Safe from Harm* guidance stated that it was not imposing any new statutory duty on voluntary organisations, but supported and reinforced existing legislation, and was setting out “some key principles which are designed to help voluntary organisations to consider how best to fulfil their duty to care for the children and young people with whom they come into contact.” It recognised that there were:

“many types of voluntary organisation which work with children and young people up to 16 years old, and this code of practice aims to be relevant to them all. For the larger, professionally managed childcare or youth organisations,

the code may only reflect practices which they have already introduced to meet the requirements of legislation and/or registration, or have adopted in the light of experience. For these organisations the code may prove a useful check-list against which to compare their current practice. Some smaller organisations may have no current policy on safe-guarding the welfare of children. For them the code will provide a framework for action, helping them to introduce practices which are appropriate to them in a systematic way.”

4.3.6. The document recognised, therefore, that sexual abuse could take place outside of the family, and outside of the residential context. It made clear that voluntary organisations working with children had a responsibility – albeit not a statutory obligation – to look after those children, and protect them from abuse.

4.3.7. This guidance applied to sporting organisations which directly worked with children, but it does not appear to have been widely publicised. I have received no evidence that national sports governing bodies took any notice of the guidance. Indeed by 1999, Sport England reported that “an estimated half of all major governing bodies of sport in receipt of grant aid from Sport England had neither a policy for child protection nor a welfare officer”.¹⁶

4.3.8. It has been suggested, however, that the guidance “may well have provided extra pressure upon the Church leadership, as a responsible organisation, to address this issue [of child protection]”.¹⁷

CHARITIES INVOLVED IN CHILD PROTECTION

4.3.9. During this period, Kidscape, and Michele Elliott, published a number of guides for parents and young people about safety. In the 1994 edition of *Keeping Safe: A Practical Guide to Talking with Children*, Michele Elliott focused on risks from strangers and family members. One of the case studies was of a “gym instructor who tried to fondle [a ten-year-old boy]. He said no and told his parents. Two other cases were uncovered and the police were called in.”¹⁸ In her discussion of “Who are the offenders?” Michele Elliott explained that one particularly disturbing factor was that:

“child molesters such as paedophiles tend to gravitate towards places, professions and activities that put them into direct contact with children. They usually look and act normally and often hold responsible jobs. They sometimes attach themselves to families, offering to babysit and take the children out.”¹⁹

16. Brackenridge, C. (2001). *Spoilsports: Understanding and Preventing Sexual Exploitation in Sport*. Routledge, p.17.

17. Summers, D. (2000). *Child Protection in Voluntary Sector Sport Organisations* (PhD thesis).

18. Elliott, M. (1994). *Keeping Safe: A Practical Guide to Talking with Children*. Coronet Books, p.143

19. *Ibid.*, p.65.

CELIA BRACKENRIDGE'S RESEARCH AND WORK

4.3.10. Celia Brackenridge explained to me that, in the 1990s, “all [sports] were in chaos on the subject of abuse at that time and those that did anything acted independently (there was no national guidance, policy or prescription)”. One of the key insights of Celia Brackenridge and her fellow researchers was that sport – rather than being a domain in which abuse was unlikely to happen, or no more likely to happen than in any other setting – was “a heterosexual, masculine preserve and, because of that, a prime site for sexual exploitation.”²⁰ By extension, the structure and incentives of competitive sport engendered a “high tolerance for sexual exploitation”.²¹ She therefore identified the appropriate research question as being: “What is it about sport that promotes and condones sexually exploitative behaviour by men?”²²

4.3.11. Celia Brackenridge (along with a doctoral student, Diana Summers) made a submission to the National Commission of Inquiry into Prevention of Child Abuse in 1994. The Commission of Inquiry was established and funded by the NSPCC “to consider the different ways in which children are harmed, how this can best be prevented, and to make recommendations for developing a national strategy for reducing the incidence of child abuse”.²³

4.3.12. Celia Brackenridge and Diana Summers’ submission to the National Commission of Inquiry explained that “There is growing evidence that child sexual abuse occurs in sport just as it does in every other sphere of society, yet there has been denial or evasion of this by some major sports authorities,” and that “The strong historical association of sport with fair play and moral virtue has given it a kind of diplomatic immunity from investigation about sexual abuse.” At that point, Celia Brackenridge wrote that her research had produced evidence of sexual abuse in “archery, athletics, diving, gymnastics, judo, physical education, rowing, sailing, **soccer**, swimming, tennis, trampolining and volleyball” (emphasis added).²⁴

SECRETS OF THE COACH

4.3.13. In 1993, Celia Brackenridge was interviewed for, and appeared on, an instalment of the BBC’s sports documentary series *On the Line*, entitled *Secrets of the Coach*. The programme was broadcast at the end of August. The programme featured stories of abuse in a number of sports: gymnastics, swimming and judo, both in the United Kingdom and in North America. Abuse in football was not discussed.

4.3.14. The programme elicited little media interest and almost none of the people that I have spoken to who were involved in sports administration at the time seem to have any recollection of seeing the programme. References to the programme in the media were confined to the television listing sections of newspapers, rather than the news, comment or sports pages. *The Independent* described the programme as being “an investigation into how trainers can abuse their position of power over athletes.

20. Brackenridge, C. (2001). *Spoilsports: Understanding and Preventing Sexual Exploitation in Sport*. Routledge, p.243.

21. *Ibid.*, p.238.

22. *Ibid.*, p.239.

23. Williams, Chair of the National Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Child Abuse. (1996). *Childhood Matters: Report of the National Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Child Abuse*.

24. Brackenridge, C. (2017). *Abuse in Sport – A Selection of Writings by Celia Brackenridge*. p.16.

One former national swimming coach is alleged over a period of 16 years to have sexually abused the boys in his care.”²⁵ *The Observer* described the programme as portraying how the “trust that a young athlete places in his or her coach can be abused. Allegations of child abuse and sexual harassment are made in [Wednesday night’s] documentary, though sports authorities tend to play down the problem.”²⁶ On the day of the broadcast, *The Guardian* listings gave this summary: “Uncovering widespread sexual harassment and child sexual abuse by sports coaches whose power can make or break a budding athlete.”²⁷ *The Times* highlighted the programme in its *Choice* section, writing:

“Coaches have always had immense power with which to bully and cajole their athletes into fulfilling their sporting potential, but this shocking programme about sexual abuse shows that such power can be misused. One female interviewee confesses that she was pressurised into having sex with a coach when she was 14. She believes she was taken advantage of because she was innocent and virginal, ‘the ultimate in what society says men should want.’ Sickeningly, a former national swimming coach convicted of indecent assault tells us: ‘Coaching legitimates access. You can do it because you are doing it with the permission of the parents. It is too easy.’”²⁸

4.3.15. *Secrets of the Coach* did not evoke a substantial public response. A helpline set up after the programme received a total of 89 calls, of which 54% were from women and 46% from men. The report produced by Broadcasting Support Services noted: “This differs from statistics from previous helplines on sexual violence, where women callers predominate.” Just over half (51%) of the callers were survivors of sexual abuse in sport. “For some, the programme triggered memories from many years ago. The most common sports mentioned were swimming, gymnastics, athletics, P.E. at school and football.”²⁹

4.3.16. The programme resulted in Celia Brackenridge receiving over 100 enquiries and leads about sexual abuse in sport.³⁰ It also led to the MADEC conference (see: The Martial Arts Development Commission Conference).

NATIONAL COACHING FEDERATION

4.3.17. In 1993, Celia Brackenridge corresponded with the Sports Council about the *Secrets of the Coach* documentary and about the issue of abuse in sport more generally. The Sports Council’s Chief Executive responded to Celia Brackenridge’s letter by recognising that this was “a serious issue which needs to be addressed by a number of agencies and individuals”. The Chief Executive said that it would be more appropriate for the NCF to take the lead, and said that Sue Campbell of the NCF would be asked to follow up with Celia Brackenridge.

4.3.18. The first mention by the NCF of child protection had been in the early 1990s. Robin Russell from the FA recalls attending a two-week training course in the early 1990s put on by the NCF at which he learned something about child protection.

25. *The Independent* (August 21st 1993). Next Week’s Television Highlights.

26. *The Observer* (August 22nd 1993).

27. *The Guardian* (August 25th 1993). Television Listings.

28. *The Times* (August 25th 1993). TV Choice.

29. The Celia Brackenridge Archive at Brunel University London Archives (“the Brackenridge Archive”).

30. *Ibid.*

OTHER VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

4.3.19. Some voluntary organisations were also beginning to take child protection more seriously during this period. One example of that is the Scouts, which had maintained a “blacklist” for many years, and in 1993 reviewed its policies following the imprisonment of a scoutmaster for molesting boys.

4.3.20. In 1994, The Scout Association produced a document called *Young People First: A Code of good practice for Adults in Scouting* – also referred to as the “Yellow Card” (as it was printed in the form of a yellow card). It listed several “do’s and do not’s”, and gave guidance as to what action to take if you suspect that a child has been abused, a child discloses abuse by someone else, or an allegation of abuse is made: “**You must refer; you must not investigate**” (bold and underline emphasis in original).

MEDIA COVERAGE OF ABUSE IN FOOTBALL

4.3.21. When Bennell was arrested and charged in the United States in 1994 with sexually abusing a young football player whom he had taken on tour, there was some coverage in the national press: on August 4th 1994, there were articles in the *Daily Telegraph* (“Football scout on sex charges”) and the *Daily Mirror* (“Soccer scout on teen sex charges”). The story did not gain traction, however.

4.4 Child Protection from 1995 to 1999

SUMMARY OF THE PERIOD

4.4.1. The period from 1995, the year in which Hickson was convicted, to the end of the 1990s was a significant period for the development of child protection in sport. The Sports Council began taking the issue seriously, and held a conference in 1996 which was aimed at spreading best practice. By 1999, 39% of voluntary sports clubs sampled by Celia Brackenridge had a child protection policy,³¹ and many sports were beginning to take their responsibilities seriously. There can be no doubt that the ASA led the way on this. Other tragedies, including the shootings at Dunblane Primary School, also increased awareness of child protection more generally.

LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT POLICY

4.4.2. The Police Act 1997 introduced a comprehensive statutory framework for criminal history checks in England and Wales for anyone working with vulnerable groups, including children. The regulations allowing this, and setting up the Criminal Records Bureau, however, were not introduced until March 2002.

DUNBLANE TRAGEDY

4.4.3. After the massacre of school children in Dunblane in March 1996, the Secretary of State for Scotland appointed Lord William Cullen to chair a public inquiry. The *Cullen Report*³² was submitted on September 30th 1996. Lord Cullen recommended “that a system should be instituted to ensure that clubs and groups which are voluntarily attended by children and young people for their recreation, education or development use adequate checks on the suitability of the leaders and workers who have substantial unsupervised access to them.”

WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN 1999

4.4.4. In 1999, the Government introduced guidance entitled *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. This set out the responsibility of the wider community, and in particular private organisations who had supervision of and/or contact with children, to protect children from harm. The guidance recommended that culture and leisure services, including organisations involved in sport, should have local child protection procedures in place. It recommended that these procedures should make clear the referral process for dealing with concerns. It also recommended that training, working

31. Brackenridge, C. (2002), “...so what?” Attitudes of the voluntary sector towards child protection in sports clubs. *Managing Leisure*, 7, pp.103-123.

32. Cullen, W. (1996). *The Public Inquiry into the Shootings at Dunblane Primary School on 13 March 1996*. Cm 3386.

practices and codes of conduct should be adopted to minimise the situations where the abuse of children could occur.

CHARITIES INVOLVED IN CHILD PROTECTION

4.4.5. In 1996, ChildLine published a study on its first ten years of operation, entitled *Talking with children about child abuse*. In those ten years, ChildLine had “counselled over 600,000 children – this represents around 2.86 per cent of the nation’s children over the ten-year period... and nearly 4.58 per cent of 11 to 18-year-olds”. It had counselled 77,425 children whose main concern was sexual abuse.³³ The peak year for calls about sexual abuse was 1993-94: 9,048 girls and 1,899 boys were counselled. Most of the abuse reported to ChildLine was perpetrated by family members. Abuse outside of the home usually involved an adult taking steps to ensure private time with the child, for example, teachers detaining a child after class, or assaulting them during a private lesson.

CELIA BRACKENRIDGE’S RESEARCH AND WORK

4.4.6. In 1995, Celia Brackenridge co-authored with Diana Summers and Diana Woodward a paper entitled *Educating for Child Protection in Sport*. The authors stressed “first, that sexual contact with a child is always wrong and secondly, that the coach is always responsible for his actions”.³⁴ They concluded that child sexual abuse occurs in sport “because of a general systems failure in which ‘collective blindness’ ... is compounded by lack of knowledge and lack of political will”.³⁵ The authors recommended a number of measures:

- “the introduction of **codes of ethics and codes of conduct** for sports leaders and coaches;
- the adoption and regular updating of comprehensive **registers of coaches** to monitor who moves where between clubs, sports or regions;
- the introduction of **criminal record checks** for all those placed in a leadership role, whether it is paid or not;
- the introduction of **compulsory child protection modules** in all coach education syllabi and governing body awards;
- the development and dissemination of **training materials for parents, athletes and coaches**, including simple codes of practice, checklists or contracts for all concerned to guide them to follow simple, basic rules of conduct; [and]
- the development and dissemination of **examples of good practice** in child protection in the voluntary sector of sport.” (Emphasis in the original.)³⁶

4.4.7. In her inaugural professorial lecture at the Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education in March 1997, entitled *Dangerous Relations – Men, Women*

33. McLeod, M. (1996). *Talking with children about child abuse*.

34. The Celia Brackenridge archives.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

and *Sexual Abuse in Sport*, Celia Brackenridge argued that sexual abuse in sport was: “one of the last taboos since people are so reluctant to acknowledge that something so dreadful can happen in an activity done for fun. However, high profile cases in recent years have thrown the issue into sharp relief and there is now substantial evidence of widespread abuse in many different sports.”

4.4.8. During this period Celia Brackenridge increased her lobbying activities, and met with the newly appointed Sports Minister, Tony Banks MP, to discuss child protection. She informed the Minister that there was a “particular urgency at present to address the issue of sexual abuse and child protection”. She said that he should ask his officials “why roughly £1m is spent by the Sports Council each year on running a Doping Control Unit when there is no co-ordinated provision for preventing sexual exploitation of young athletes?”³⁷

4.4.9. A civil servant replied to Celia Brackenridge in August 1997:

“Without doubt there is a need to address the issue of sexual abuse and child protection. The United Kingdom Sports Council (UKSC) are aware of the important work already progressed by you to raise the issue which has been successfully followed through by the Amateur Swimming Association.

The UKSC believes it is essential that governing bodies themselves take ownership of appropriate values and attitudes so that they may ensure consistency of words and actions. This raises the whole question of sporting ethics, an area which the UKSC is mandated to lead the co-ordination of developments in the UK and to ensure best practice is shared among the relevant parties.”³⁸

4.4.10. On July 3rd 1997, Tony Banks MP wrote to a Member of Parliament who had received a letter from a constituent entitled *Sexual Abuse of Children in Sport*. The Minister wrote:

“Everyone involved in the provision of sports opportunities has a duty to ensure that young people are encouraged and coached in a safe environment. The English Sports Council (the Government’s principal agency for developing opportunities in sport) and the National Coaching Foundation take a very close interest in the issue of child protection in sport, and encourage governing bodies of sport to develop formal procedures for dealing with child protection issues in sport. This stance is supported through the Code of Ethics... and in the booklet *Protecting Children from Abuse: A guide to everyone involved in children’s sport*, published by the NCF... In addition, the Football Association is committed to a programme of screening all those involved in youth football through its 43,000 affiliated clubs. The FA Coaching Certificate includes a section on child protection.”

4.4.11. In January 1998, Celia Brackenridge circulated a position statement, *Child Protection in British Sport*, to some 50 voluntary sector organisations, as well as the Government. She later explained that the document “arose from twelve years of personal research and advocacy work in the field of child abuse in sport and was born of

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

frustration with the voluntary sector for its lack of action on this problem”.³⁹ On March 30th 1998, Celia Brackenridge wrote to an employee of the Regional Training Unit for Sport at the University of Brighton, enclosing the position statement and remarking that “the silence has been almost deafening”. Celia Brackenridge claimed that:

“Tony Banks [sees] this as a Home Office issue, the ESC still have to respond officially and many others, including the other Sports Councils, never even acknowledged receiving it! Anything that you can do to elevate this issue up the agenda at Woburn Place or Whitehall would be most appreciated.”

4.4.12. Around the same time, Celia Brackenridge made a similar complaint to a colleague:

“We are making headway with policy but not fast enough. My biggest problem is to get the Government to tackle it... I wrote a state-of-the-art review and national action plan on child abuse/protection in sport in January and sent it to around 50 organisations including the minister – and got only a paltry response!”⁴⁰

CHILD PROTECTION IN SPORTS

The Amateur Swimming Association: Paul Hickson

4.4.13. The ASA led the way in relation to child protection in sport during this period. This was triggered by the Hickson conviction. In collaboration with the NCF, NSPCC, ChildLine and the Sports Council, the ASA published a document entitled *Child Protection Procedures in Swimming* (“Procedures in Swimming”) (see: Amateur Swimming Association).

Sports Council and the NCF

4.4.14. As explained above, the Hickson case was a trigger for movement on child protection matters in sport. Shortly after Hickson’s conviction, David Sparkes, the Chief Executive of the ASA, wrote to the Sports Council on October 10th 1995, calling for a widespread sports-based Code of Ethics and procedure. Of particular concern to David Sparkes was that the Code of Ethics developed by the NCF did not articulate clearly how a youngster should make a complaint. David Sparkes said that: “I believe that we do need help in finding a simple way of youngsters complaining about coaches and their actions which not only protects the youngster but protects the coach from scurrilous accusations.” David Sparkes thought that the Sports Council was best placed to formulate a Code of Ethics. He concluded: “Sport needs to put its house in order now.” The NCF revised the Code of Ethics in 1996.

4.4.15. After Hickson’s conviction, Celia Brackenridge also pressed the case for action to the Sports Council, and at the NCF. She complained that it was time for some ownership of the issue at the highest level of sport and urged consideration of a co-operative approach to the problem of child sex abuse in sport. She called for a joint commission of enquiry or similar body. She was quoted in a *Sunday Times* article as saying

^{39.} Ibid.

^{40.} Ibid.

that “even national agencies like the NCF find it easier to align with the coach... to safeguard the possibility of medal success” in situations where it might be “widely known that a coach is abusing a child”.

4.4.16. A small group of sports national governing bodies met in November 1995 to discuss what was being done to safeguard children, and to consider what the governing bodies needed. On January 23rd 1996, the Sports Council held a meeting, chaired by Anita White, and attended by Celia Brackenridge who gave a presentation. Other attendees were from the NCF, the NSPCC, British Athletic Federation, British Olympic Association, British Amateur Gymnastics Association, Great Britain Diving Federation (“GBDF”), the ASA, and the National Association of Sports Coaches (“NASC”).

4.4.17. The FA was not invited. Anita White did not recall this meeting when I spoke with her, but she thought that the reason why the FA was not invited was probably because the Sports Council was focussing on the sports where they knew there was a problem; and the organisations which they thought would have a direct interest in the issue. This would be sports where athletes were very young and where young people were getting intense coaching, and were travelling away from home and in cars with sports coaches. These children were probably seen as more vulnerable than others, and more vulnerable than team sports. It seems likely, therefore, that the Sports Council was unaware of how some football coaches and scouts operated. The abuse committed by Bennell when he took young football players to Florida was presumably not something which resonated with the Sports Council when putting together this meeting.

4.4.18. At the meeting on January 23rd 1996, the NCF explained the work that it had been doing, noting that “There had recently been an acknowledgment within sport that problems existed and a willingness to ensure that action was taken.” The NCF explained that it had recently updated the *Code of Ethics and Conduct for Sports Coaches*, which had first been published in 1989 by BISC. The “Principles” of the *Code* included the following:

“Sports coaches are expected to conform to ethical standards in a number of areas: humanity, relationships, commitment, co-operation, integrity ... abuse of privilege and personal standards;

Coaches must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being...;

Coaches are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with their performers. This particularly important when the performer is a young person. The coach must realise that certain situations or friendly words and actions could be misinterpreted, not only by the performer, but also by outsiders ... and could lead to allegations of misconduct or impropriety;

Where physical contact between coach and performer is a necessary part of the coaching process, coaches must ensure that no action on their part could be misconstrued and that any NGB guidelines on this matter are followed;

The sports coach is privileged to have regular contact with performers and occasionally to travel and reside with performers in the course of coaching and competitive practice. A coach must not attempt to exert undue influence over the performer in order to obtain personal benefit or reward; [and]

Coaches have a duty to protect children from harm and abuse.”

4.4.19. For those who were members of the NASC, breaches of the principles expounded in the *Code of Ethics and Conduct* could lead to disciplinary action by the NCF; this included “sexual harassment or abuse, indecency, any form of child abuse.” The key principles of the *Code* included the following:

“1. Coaches must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every performer...

...

3. Coaches must develop an appropriate working relationship with performers (especially children), based on mutual trust and respect. Coaches must not exert undue influence to obtain personal benefit or reward.”

4.4.20. The NCF explained that it had held a governing body workshop with a limited number of interested governing bodies from which the need for leaflets on helping parents, children and coaches was identified. Drafts had been produced, with the costs being met by the NCF and the ASA. A need for general guidelines for governing bodies which could go in all governing body handbooks had been identified, and those were being written. Training workshops for governing bodies were available. Its programme of ‘Champion Coaching’ included training for coaches on ethics and conduct. Work was also being carried out in conjunction with the Sports Council on establishing registers of coaches. The NCF said that work with governing bodies on National Vocational Qualifications (“NVQs”) had highlighted the difficulty of including child protection as an integral part of all levels of vocational study.

4.4.21. By 1995, child protection vocational standards had been built into a number of S/NVQs (Scottish and National Vocational Qualifications), as a result of work involving the Royal Yachting Association (“the RYA”)⁴¹ and the NSPCC, and subsequently the NCF.⁴²

4.4.22. In 1993, an approach had been made by the RYA to the NSPCC to raise awareness of child protection issues within the sport. It appears that “At the last minute sailing’s governing body deemed the likely level of interest within the sport to be insufficient to justify the expense of this education programme.”⁴³ Later, the RYA approached the NCF to assist. This led to the production in March 1995 of the self-study pack *Protecting Children – A Guide for Sportspeople*. This document was designed to be used by national governing bodies in their coach education. While explicitly not a comprehensive manual, the document aimed to “increase awareness of child abuse and help people to recognise the signs of abuse and deal sensitively and effectively with the issue should it arise”. The pack did not provide guidance to national governing bodies in establishing their own child protection procedures, although it assumed that those governing bodies would have such procedures.

41. In the late 1980s, the RYA had dealt with an allegation of abuse against a yachtsman, XH. XH had in fact been convicted in 1979 of indecently assaulting two boys on board his yacht, when XH “took the children on cruises.” When a further allegation arose in the late 1980s, John Driscoll, the Principal National Coach of the RYA at the time, explained to me that the RYA – which he described as “a really well-structured, well-run organisation” – stripped XH of his recognition as a registered yachtsman. Concerns about child protection, resulting from the experience of the RYA with XH, led to the RYA working with the NSPCC, and later the NCF, to develop a study pack on safeguarding.

42. Brackenridge, C., Summers, D. and Woodward, D. (1995). Educating for Child Protection in Sport. In: Lawrence, L., Murdoch, E. and Parker, S. (eds), *Professional and Development Issues in Leisure, Sport and Education*. Leisure Studies Association, p.185.

43. Summers, D. (2000). *Child Protection in Voluntary Sector Sport Organisations* (PhD thesis), p.155.

4.4.23. In 1996, the NCF produced a handbook entitled *The Successful Coach: Guidelines for Coaching Practice*. This was expressly stated to be “for sports coaches wishing to develop their practical coaching skills and builds on the information contained in the NCF’s introductory study packs”. It examined the coach’s “ethical and legal responsibilities”. It covered the material for the NVQ level three. Chapter five of the handbook dealt with “Your Responsibilities and Liabilities”. It dealt with “Protection from Abuse,” including sexual abuse. It explained that “Children can be abused within and outside their families and even within a sports setting. Consequently coaches are strongly recommended to be informed and able to recognise indicators which may signify abuse and take appropriate action if concerned.” The study pack, *Protecting Children: A Guide for Sportspeople*, was recommended. It went on to say that “All organisations (eg sports governing bodies, local authorities) should have a policy statement and guidelines regarding child abuse.”

4.4.24. At the meeting on January 23rd 1996, a number of sports governing bodies talked about the work that they had been doing. The British Amateur Gymnastics Association explained that clear procedures had been established and promoted throughout club structures. David Sparkes explained how the ASA had been seriously affected by the Hickson case. He said that “£1.5 million of sponsorship had been lost, high media attention had been thrust upon the ASA, and eight other cases of child abuse in swimming were currently under investigation.” (When interviewed, David Sparkes told me that he thinks that he was referring to sponsorship from St Ivel/Unigate. They had been discussing a big promotion of their new brand, “Utterly Butterly”, through the sport of swimming. David Sparkes told me that a factor in the company not proceeding with the sponsorship was “without doubt the adverse publicity at the time”.)

4.4.25. At the meeting of January 23rd 1996, the GBDF explained that issues concerning child abuse had been recently recognised and that they had worked closely with Celia Brackenridge to address these issues. The GBDF had produced a Code of Ethics; an independent disciplinary procedure was being established; a helpline was available for survivors; and guidelines for parents and children would be available by the summer. (I have seen in the Celia Brackenridge archives a copy of the GBDF’s *Code of Conduct* as at June 1996. A section on “Relationships” provided: “Except during the normal course of a regular and lawful union, a coach should not make any sexual advance to a diver under the age of 18 or accept any sexual favour, or promise of such a favour, from a diver under that age.”) The British Athletic Federation told the meeting that the issue had not been recognised until recently. The organisation had introduced a code of practice; ChildLine’s number was being publicised in Athletics Clubs; and child protection was included on its forthcoming conference agenda.

44. In an article in *The Observer* (January 28th 1996) entitled “Watchdogs guard against betrayers of trust”, it was stated that: “Swimming is not the only culprit in this tale of missed signals and sordid secrets. Who knows how many other scandals are out there waiting to be exposed. That is why representatives from swimming, athletics, gymnastics and diving met at the offices of the Sports Council in London ... together with the National Coaching Foundation and the [NSPCC], they discussed what steps can be taken to protect young children from coaches. ‘Hickson has focused people’s attention’ said ... [the] assistant chief executive of the NCF. ‘They believed it couldn’t happen in their sport. Hickson showed them it could.’”

4.4.26. One of the action points from this meeting was to hold a conference for sports governing bodies. This was organised by the Sports Council in June 1996 (see below). Another action point was to develop two leaflets: one for adults, and one for children. In the Summer 1996 issue of the NCF publication *Supercoach*, it was explained that “There was a strong desire . . . for [National Governing Bodies] to adopt a corporate approach to any developments and the Sports Council and the NCF agreed to coordinate joint ventures wherever possible.” Governing bodies were encouraged to share

their ideas with the NCF.⁴⁴

4.4.27. The Spring 1996 issue of *Supercoach* had contained an article under the heading *Protecting Young People* which made reference to the booklet *Protecting Children – A Guide for Sportspeople*, as well as *A Code of Ethics for Coaches* and the Home Office publication *Safe from Harm*. The article explained: “Everyone involved in the provision of sports opportunities has a duty to ensure that young people are encouraged and coached in a safe environment.” The Hickson case was mentioned, and a question raised as to whether this may only be “the tip of the iceberg,” with many other instances of improper behaviour by sports coaches going unnoticed. What was “really important” was for all coaching situations to be monitored by some responsible organisation. The “controlling agency” should “arrange for periodic monitoring of coaching sessions by an experienced observer who should assess the welfare of the participant within the context of the activity and the coaching relationship”. It was noted that “Recognising signs of possible abuse is not easy ... but everyone involved in providing sports opportunities for young people has a duty to be alert for possible symptoms.” It was suggested that “If there is any reasonable suspicion of possible abuse, the monitoring authority must have the courage to investigate the matter. All organisations must have clear procedures for people to follow in such circumstances.”

June 1996: Sports Council Conference

4.4.28. The Sports Council conference was held on June 28th 1996. It was attended by over 150 delegates from 50 sports. Tony Pickerin attended on behalf of the FA. The conference heard presentations from Celia Brackenridge and a senior representative of the NSPCC (see: The Sports Council Conference 1996).

4.4.29. At the conference, a poster for young people with the wording “Sport should be fun”, was distributed to delegates. This poster was produced by the NCF and publicised the telephone number of ChildLine and the NSPCC helpline. This was picked up by the national press, which reported that the poster was designed to alert “children to the dangers of abuse and [advise] them what to do if they are already victims”.⁴⁵

4.4.30. *The Times Educational Supplement* also reported on the conference, saying that it was “likely to result in new guidelines to improve child protection in sport, and a national register of coaches may be set up to prevent abusers working in different specialist areas where their past is not known and cannot easily be checked”. It reported that, while concerns about child abuse in sport had been growing for some time, “for many the alarm bells did not start to ring until last autumn when former Olympic swimmer and Millfield independent school coach Paul Hickson was jailed for 17 years for abusing girls”. The article noted Celia Brackenridge’s belief that “the nature of juvenile sport can make it easy for determined abusers,” and quoted her as saying that “It has taken me a long time to cajole the authorities into responding. Denial is the most common response to this sort of accusation. Sport is one of those things people see through rose-coloured spectacles.”⁴⁶

4.4.31. Anita White described the conference, emerging out of the Hickson affair, as

45. *The Times* (June 26th 1996). Code aims to protect child swimmers from abuse.

46. (June 28th 1996). Bid to stem sex abuse by sports coaches. *Times Educational Supplement*.

a “bit of a watershed”. She told me that she remembered “being pleased that governing bodies did send representatives to the conference and thinking, yes, we’re really getting this on the agenda now”.

4.4.32. The conference was plainly a significant moment for national governing bodies in understanding the importance of child protection in sport, and of the steps that needed to be taken to safeguard children in their particular sports.

After the Sports Council Conference

4.4.33. Following the June 1996 conference, a number of national governing bodies started to develop child protection policies for their sports. Many of these enlisted the assistance of Celia Brackenridge. For example, the National Association of Karate and Martial Art Schools (“NAKMAS”) wrote to Celia Brackenridge on July 1st 1996 to thank her for her talks at the conference and for the documents provided. The organisation asked Celia Brackenridge if she was able “to give NAKMAS some suggestions and guidance? We would certainly wish to move as quickly as possible.” The organisation concluded by noting that “the NAKMAS Governing Body Executive Committee would like to work as closely [alongside] you as possible... if you agree!” Celia Brackenridge wrote back expressing interest in working together but explaining that she would have to charge for her time and suggesting that, to start with, they “frame a code of ethics/conduct along the lines of the NCF/NASC one and get your executive and coaching committees to put this out for consultation amongst your members”. She recommended the NCF Code of Ethics as a temporary measure, and suggested that the organisation could “pal up with a governing body which is further along the road and to share their experiences. Swimming have obviously done a lot, diving are moving forward well and gymnastics have very good grievance and disciplinary procedures.”⁴⁷

4.4.34. The British Sub-Aqua Club also sent draft guidelines for Celia Brackenridge to review, which she did, replying in January 1997. Commending the organisation for “moving forward so positively after the June seminar,” she suggested that, “if you do not have your own already, you adopt the NCF/[NASC] codes which cover a much wider domain than just abuse,” and noting that to ensure efficacy, there would need to be “full grievance procedures to offer coaches right of reply/defence if they are accused.” Celia Brackenridge recommended the British Amateur Gymnastics Association’s “exemplary set” which it had “offered publicly to share...with other NGBs [National Governing Bodies]”.⁴⁸

4.4.35. Following the June 1996 conference, the Sports Council held a workshop with Celia Brackenridge at its Governing Bodies Conference in November 1996.⁴⁹ Subsequently, the Sports Council funded child protection awareness training courses delivered by the NCF. In particular, from 1997 the Sports Council offered 23 priority sports one subsidised or free child protection awareness training workshop delivered through the NCF. As at February 25th 1998, only seven priority sports had taken part in the child protection workshop: this included the FA (whose training took place on February 2nd 1998 (see: FA Child Protection Policy and Programme: 1998). Ten more sports were due to take part before the end of March 1998.

47. The Celia Brackenridge Archive.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

4.4.36. A survey was conducted of participants at these workshops. The results suggested that less than half of the attendees were policy makers, despite that being the target role for the workshop. The researchers said that this could suggest “that many of them either did not know of the course or chose not to attend it. It may also suggest that policy makers delegate others to attend in their place” – this latter possibility being borne out by several responses to the “Explain why you are here” question, as well as the age profile of attendees. The researchers took this as indication that “when [child protection] policy development is required, those in the best position to promote change are least likely to have sufficient expertise to do so, and therefore that change might not take place.” The survey also revealed that 40% of attendees had had no previous child protection training at all, which the researchers described as “a very worrying statistic”.⁵⁰

4.4.37. On March 6th 1998, a Child Protection Meeting was held by the Sports Council. The Child Protection lead for the Sports Council told the meeting that there had been a “loss of momentum” since the June 1996 conference. An official from the NCF informed the meeting that “while there had been quite a lot of progress with regard to raising awareness of the issues surrounding child protection, there was still a lot of work to be done in terms of translating this awareness into NGB policies, procedures and programmes”. The minutes record a suggestion that:

“both a ‘carrot and stick’ approach could be adopted in the future but there had to be a balance between putting conditions on grant aid and providing positive action which would help develop NGB programmes (i.e parents awareness programme, coach licensing scheme etc).”

4.4.38. A note in the Sport England archives, headed “Child Protection” from 1998, explains that “There is a need to find out where NGBs have got to in their child protection policy. Nearly all priority sports were present at the workshop on June 28th 1996... A few like the ASA now have a policy in place but many are a long way from this.”

4.4.39. On May 12th 1999, an employee at the Sports Council carried out an audit of current activity by sports. A number of sports were described as having produced booklets and policies on child protection, or were working towards this. The Sports Council employee commented that:

“It is clear from the response received to the audit that Child Protection issues are now more widely discussed and are increasingly high priority for National Governing Bodies of Sport. Most have now published, or are in the process of producing, a policy statement and guidance. These documents draw heavily on work undertaken by the NCF and NSPCC and most of the guidance documents follow closely the generic guidance notes produced at the time of the Cheltenham conference [in 1996]. While this is understandable, given the common nature of the issues across different sports, it leaves open to question how much work and consultation has been undertaken by the governing body in preparing the materials and how much ‘ownership’ has been established across the sport.”

50. Malkin, K., Johnston, L. and Brackenridge, C. (2000). A critical evaluation of training needs for child protection in UK sport. *Managing Leisure*, 5:151-160

Child Sexual Abuse in Scottish Football

4.4.40. In 1996, Scottish news media reported on allegations of child sex abuse involving the Celtic Boys' Club. In an editorial on August 24th 1996, the *Daily Record* argued that "Scotland must not delay any longer in facing up to the problem of child abuse. The Celtic Boys' Club scandal is just the latest in a series of horrifying cases in which the lives of young people have been blighted by the attentions of perverts." It recommended a "register of convicted perverts should be set up and its contents made available to any public body such as Scouts, BB or youth organisations," to make it ten "times harder for these evil men to get anywhere near our children".⁵¹ In 1998, Jim Torbett, a former football club manager, was found guilty of sexually abusing three former young players.

Other Sports

4.4.41. I spoke to Anne Pankhurst, who represented the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) at the Sports Council conference in June 1996. Anne Pankhurst did not recall attending the conference, but did recall that the LTA had been informed of an allegation of abuse perpetrated by a tennis coach earlier in 1996. The disclosure appears to have been made directly to her by a parent; she approached the police, who investigated.

4.4.42. The LTA started running its child protection programme in January 1997.⁵² This was referred to in a letter from Anne Pankhurst to Celia Brackenridge in October 1997, where she wrote "We are as you know heavily involved in the whole issue [of child protection]... The LTA is therefore working towards a comprehensive and detailed policy on child protection."⁵³ The Chief Medical Adviser to the LTA wrote to Celia Brackenridge in July 1997, informing her that "Further to our recent conversation I have obtained agreement for a [half] day seminar, here at the LTA. We would obviously like to include all senior management and suitable dates are now under discussion."⁵⁴

4.4.43. Lloyd Readhead, Assistant Technical Director of the British Amateur Gymnastics Association ("BGA"), informed me that gymnastics worked in parallel with swimming in putting together child protection policies and arrangements. He thought that this took place in about 1996 or 1997. He referred me to a leaflet that the organisation put out called *Feeling Safe*, describing what children should do to keep safe, and what to do if anyone over-stepped the mark. In September 1996, Lloyd Readhead wrote to Celia Brackenridge, "As the person designated by the BGA to be responsible for all matters related to Coaching Qualifications, Coach Education and Protecting the Children in Sport [sic]," to confirm "the interest and support of the BGA in future research in these areas."⁵⁵

4.4.44. In 1998, Celia Brackenridge was involved in developing child protection measures for the sport of cricket. An employee of the English and Wales Cricket Board ("ECB") had attended one of her seminars in November 1997,⁵⁶ prompting him to draft an internal report which noted that "Clearly, it is in the best interests of the sport as a whole to have a comprehensive policy which protects both children, parents and coaches. Presently, the situation is being dealt with at county level in a very ad

51. The Daily Record (August 24th 1996). Kids need to be protected.

52. M Turner and P McCrory. (2004). Child Protection in Sport. British Journal of Sports Medicine, 23 March 2004.

53. The Celia Brackenridge Archives.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

hoc manner and a policy statement by the ECB is much needed.”⁵⁷ In January 1998, the ECB employee sent Celia Brackenridge a copy of the ECB’s draft proposals, noting that he had seen the ASA’s publication. He and Celia Brackenridge met on February 18th 1998 to discuss the policy, including: the need for a section of grievance and disciplinary issues and a reporting system; the limitations of vetting; and promotion and marketing of the policy.⁵⁸ The ECB retained Celia Brackenridge as an adviser in 1998: she explained in November 1998 that she had worked with the ECB “right from the start on drafting the policy, correcting and testing it and on an implementation strategy”.⁵⁹

4.4.45. Celia Brackenridge also provided paid consultation to the Rugby Football Union (“RFU”) and the Rugby Football Union for Women (“RFUW”), reviewing a draft of their child protection policy in August 1998. Her report was positive, describing the various parts as “very good,” “excellent,” “very helpful,” “good” and “very useful”.⁶⁰ She suggested some amendments and gave advice on next steps, including marketing, collaboration with other organisations and monitoring procedures. She also advised the RFU and RFUW to “put the document through a consultation process in order to satisfy itself that the specific needs of rugby union have been addressed”.⁶¹

4.4.46. In 1999, the RFU launched a campaign to promote child protection in the sport. According to news coverage, the RFU was “encouraging clubs to appoint a child protection officer to ensure that young players are safe from paedophiles,” and “want[ed] every club with a youth section to appoint a child protection officer who will be responsible for vetting any adult wanting to work with children and checking that they do not have a police record for child abuse”. The child protection officers would be tasked with “enforcing the new RFU regulations to ensure that rugby clubs are seen to offer a safe environment for children”.⁶²

4.4.47. In 1995, Fatima Whitbread (world javelin champion in the 1980s) supported a campaign to raise awareness of child abuse. In 1999, the NSPCC and police were involved in a major investigation into an athletics coach, who had been grooming and abusing young athletes for many years.⁶³ By the end of 1999, UK Athletics (“UKA”) announced that it was concerned that it had “fallen behind football, swimming and gymnastics” in setting up a child protection policy. Although “relatively unaffected, certainly in comparison to swimming, by cases of alleged child abuse” – it estimated “two or three cases in the last four or five years”. UKA announced that it planned to launch a new “charter” in March 2000, mandating clubs to adhere to its child protection policy.⁶⁴ The Amateur Athletics Association, with around 1,400 member clubs, launched welfare procedures for child protection between 2002 and 2004.⁶⁵

4.4.48. In November 1999, English Hockey consulted with a number of experts including the NSPCC, the NCF, Celia Brackenridge, solicitors and “other specialists that we know of within hockey,” to obtain advice on the organisation’s proposed Child Protection Guidelines.⁶⁶ Celia Brackenridge congratulated English Hockey “for developing these guidelines against a background of relative inactivity in child protection within sport,” noting the Sport England estimate that only half of NGBs had a child protection policy. She commended the initiative as “very positive and timely,” albeit that

57. *Ibid.*58. *Ibid.*59. *Ibid.*60. *Ibid.*61. *Ibid.*62. (September 28th 1999). Campaign aims to stop child abuse. *The Birmingham Evening Mail*.63. *The Birmingham Evening Mail* (March 16th 1999). *The Midland Detectives Who Have Uncovered Secret Webs Of Child Abuse Stretching Across The Country Betrayal Of The Innocent: Mail Campaign*.64. *The Times* (November 29th 1999). Child abuse policy given high priority – Athletics.

65. IFC report, p.8

66. *The Celia Brackenridge Archive*.

“these guidelines represent a **minimum approach to the issue of child protection in hockey**” (emphasis added).⁶⁷

4.4.49. In February 1998, an employee of the All England Netball Association attended a seminar by Celia Brackenridge, and subsequently sent her a copy of the English Basketball Association Child Protection Procedures in Basketball and mini-Basketball. She told Celia Brackenridge that she was “extremely keen to assist in the development [of] Child Protection guidelines... I know that it should be a priority to devise and implement safeguards”.⁶⁸ In November 1998, Celia Brackenridge wrote that netball had been a case study sport in a recent study, which revealed that “the permeation of ideas about child protection in the organisation was poor. There was a view that a predominantly women’s sport had no need to take action. As you are well aware, this is a dangerous and misguided assumption.”⁶⁹

4.4.50. In 1999, a Rugby League coach was convicted of eight counts of indecency against children between nine and 15. He was recently jailed for a further 14 years for historical sexual offences against young boys. Rugby League started developing its child protection policy in 2001, publishing its first *Child Protection Policy and Guidelines* in 2003.

OTHER VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

4.4.51. In November 1995, it was reported that The Scout Association was “currently drawing up guidelines for its 500,000 members, aged from six to 20, with the help of ChildLine and other experts on abuse. It is expected to be ready by next year and will advise youngsters on the action they should take if they experience or suspect wrongdoing.” The article also referred to the organisation’s code of behaviour issued in October 1994, noting the requirements that “Cases of suspected abuse must be reported immediately” and “leaders and their charges should always have separate sleeping accommodation”.⁷⁰

4.4.52. In 1998, The Scout Association partnered with the NSPCC to provide training to volunteers “in detecting when a child is being abused. The [NSPCC] said the move was in response to requests from youth organisations which recognised that infiltration by paedophiles had become a serious problem.” The Head of Child Protection at the NSPCC National Training Centre was quoted as saying: “Our ultimate aim is to extend as much protection as we can to the millions of children belonging to these groups. We know that many are well-run but we have to be aware that paedophiles will always home in on places where children congregate.” It was reported that the Scout Association was recruiting

“70 child protection co-ordinators who will be trained by the NSPCC at Leicester. They will then instruct leaders of the 10,000 Scouting groups in a policy that demands at least two adults are present in any Scouting activity; bans adults from sharing sleeping accommodation with children; and warns leaders not to have inappropriate physical contact, or make suggestive gestures.”⁷¹

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. The Daily Mail (November 10th 1995). £4,000 for Scouts abused by leader at camp.

71. The Independent (October 3rd 1998). Scouts train to root out paedophiles.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF ABUSE IN FOOTBALL

4.4.53. In January 1997, Channel 4 broadcast a *Dispatches* programme entitled *Soccer's Foul Play*. I consider this programme in detail elsewhere in my report. There was some, albeit limited, follow up coverage by other media outlets (see: *Dispatches: Soccer's Foul Play*).

4.4.54. Bennell's conviction at Chester Crown Court in 1998 was covered in the national press, but does not seem to have led to any further analysis by those in the media who were covering the game. There were no calls from the media to find out how it had happened, and what might be done to prevent abuse from happening in football in the future. There was no scrutiny of the FA's, or any of the clubs', safeguarding arrangements. Lord Carlile of Berriew, who prosecuted Bennell, told the Review that he was "astonished by the lack of interest of the media" at the conviction of Bennell. The media did not, in his opinion, "follow up the case in any significant way". As prosecuting counsel, "it was clear to me that the power and influence of coaches of young players with the ambition to play professionally was extreme".

4.4.55. There was occasional reporting of abuse allegations connected to the game of football during the late 1990s. The media took particular interest in the trial of the Chelsea coach, and former English International, Graham Rix, who in March 1999 was convicted and imprisoned for unlawful sex with and indecent assault on a female minor⁷² (see: the Graham Rix Case).

⁷². See e.g. *The Guardian* (27 March 1999). Top soccer coach jailed in sex case.

4.5 Child protection from 2000 to 2005

SUMMARY OF THE PERIOD

4.5.1. The period 2000 to 2005 saw the rolling out of the government's screening programme, with the establishment of the Criminal Records Bureau and the introduction of the POCAL list. Significantly, in 2000 and 2001, Sports UK (a government funded body) and the Department of Culture, Media and Sports ("the DCMS") respectively made it a specific requirement of funding that sports have in place child protection policies. The Sports Council also increased its activity, in particular with the creation of the Child Protection in Sport Task Force. During this period most sports governing bodies introduced policies and procedures to protect children in sport.

LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT POLICY

4.5.2. The Protection of Children Act 1999 ("the 1999 Act") came into force, for the most part, on October 2nd 2000. It required the Secretary of State to keep a list of individuals "considered unsuitable to work with children".⁷⁵ Child care organisations – i.e. residential, social care and health care – were required to check 'POCAL', along with 'List 99', and were required not to employ a listed individual in a child care position.⁷⁶ It also amended the Police Act 1997 to allow access to POCAL and List 99 for any organisation seeking to fill a child care position.⁷⁷

4.5.3. The 1999 Act also permitted organisations (such as sports clubs) to refer for inclusion on the list an individual employed in a child care position – which included a position concerned with the supervision of children – if that individual had been removed from, or left, his or her post due to misconduct which harmed a child or placed a child at risk of harm, or if such information later came to light.⁷⁸

4.5.4. In May 2000, the Government's sports agency, UK Sport (established in 1997 as a conduit for National Lottery funds to sporting bodies), made clear that it would require all "Governing Bodies to have appropriate policies on ethical issues including... protection of the individual (in particular children)".

4.5.5. From April 2001, the DCMS made it a mandatory condition for the provision of funding to NGBs that an active child protection programme be in place. Celia Brackenridge attributed the "dramatic effect on policy activity at the national level in voluntary sport" (namely the increase in Exchequer-funded NGBs with a written child protection policy from about half to almost all between 1999 and the end of 2000) to this funding criterion, as well as to "a growing awareness and concern about the welfare of young people in sport".⁷⁹

4.5.6. In March 2002, the Criminal Records Bureau was established. After consider-

75. Section 1, the Protection of Children Act 1999.

76. *Ibid.*, section 7.

77. *Ibid.*, Section 8 (inserting sections 3A and 3B into the Police Act 1997, and which came into force on March 12th 2002, by virtue of the Protection of Children Act 1999 (Commencement No.3) Order 2002 (SI 2002/1436)).

78. *Ibid.*, section 2.

79. Brackenridge, C. (2002). "...so what?" Attitudes of the voluntary sector towards child protection in sports clubs. *Managing Leisure*, 7, pp.103-123.

able lobbying by volunteer groups, including the FA, volunteer groups were exempted from the charges for Standard and Enhanced Disclosures.⁸⁰

4.5.7. In 2003, the Department for Education and Skills launched the *Every Child Matters* agenda. This highlighted that safeguarding children was “everyone’s responsibility”. This principle was enacted into legislation by the Children Act 2004.

THE SPORTS COUNCIL

4.5.8. At a meeting of the English Sports Council on July 5th 1999, the members agreed that, by March 2000 - 75%, and by March 2001 - 100%, of funded governing bodies would be required to have in place equity policy statements, equity action plans and policies towards protection for children and vulnerable adults. This was the implementation of the “carrot and stick” approach advocated at the meeting in March 1998 (see above). Around the same time, a recommendation was made to the Sports Council that, by March 2001 at the latest, all governing bodies should have policies in place on protection for children and vulnerable adults, and be able clearly to demonstrate how these policies were being put into practice at national through to local level.

4.5.9. By early 2000, it was reported that only a quarter of sports’ governing bodies had child protection policies.⁸¹ By the end of December 2000, only 35 NGBs had a child protection policy in place.⁸²

4.5.10. In December 2000, 58 Exchequer-funded NGBs were sent questionnaires requesting information regarding their child protection policies and practices. 47 questionnaires were returned. Their responses were as follows:

1. 41% did not have, or were not sure if their policy had been ratified by their Management Committee;
2. 38% had nobody with lead responsibility for child protection within their NGB;
3. Of the 62% who did have a child protection lead officer, 66% felt that this person was not appropriately qualified or trained for that role;
4. 67% requested additional support and advice;
5. 53% did not provide an induction programme for new staff & 45% did not provide ongoing training and support for staff, which covers child protection;
6. 9% completed police checks on coaches and staff & 3% completed police checks on volunteers and officials;
7. 43% did not have a complaints procedure covering child protection;
8. 57% of coaches adhered to a code of ethics and conduct;
9. 47% covered issues of poor practice and child protection in their staff induction/training;
10. 29% (17 NGB’s) had had allegations/suspicions of child abuse, and a further 24% were not sure if they had had any allegations/suspicions reported;
11. 45% were not sure or could not suspend a member who had been accused

80. Department for Education and Skills. (2002). *Child Protection: Preventing Unsuitable People from Working with Children and Young Persons in the Education Service.*

81. According to Steve Boocock in Conn, D. (July 6th 2005). *This sporting strife.* The Guardian.

82. The Sport England Archive.

- of child abuse;
12. 47% did not have a reporting system for allegations;
 13. 55% did not provide or promote support services available e.g. ChildLine;
 14. 81% had not sent their child protection policy to parents and 40% had not formally launched their child protection policy;
 15. 62% had no Child Protection Management Group;
 16. 50% provided good practice guides for coaches, 24% for officials and 32% for volunteers on child protection issues and safeguards; and
 17. 50% advised members to attend training courses on child protection.

4.5.11. It can be seen, therefore, that by the end of December 2000, a large number of NGBs in sport had still not introduced child protection measures. (The FA had introduced comprehensive child protection measures by this point.)

TASK FORCE / ACTION PLAN

4.5.12. A Sports Seminar was held at the NSPCC National Training Centre on June 14th 1999. Following this, Sport England (the new name for the Sports Council) established the Child Protection in Sport Task Force to explore and take forward the recommendations made at that seminar. An Action Plan was approved by the Task Force on April 5th 2000. Three principles were identified: (1) sport has a duty of care to safeguard all children from harm; (2) the implementation of a national sports-wide action plan should be afforded the status, commitment and financial support commensurate with public concern in this area; and (3) all organisations which provide sport for children should be able to demonstrate the existence, implementation and effectiveness of child protection policies. It was also recommended that public funding organisations should make these principles a condition of granting aid.

4.5.13. In order for the Task Force's Action Plan to be delivered effectively it was considered that a small central unit should be established to co-ordinate and support the necessary work. This led to the establishment in January 2001 of the CPSU, hosted and managed by the NSPCC, with some funding provided by the Sports Council. In 2002, the CPSU published a set of standards for child protection for NGBs to work towards in order to continue to receive government funding. These standards were designed to provide a framework to help create a safe sporting environment for children and young people and protect them from harm. The standards required national governing bodies to have a designated person, with the appropriate level of seniority within an organisation, to have overall responsibility for the implementation of child protection policies, both at club or facility (local) level and at national governing body level.⁸³

83. Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse. (2020). *Truth Project Thematic Report: Child sexual abuse in sports.* p.21.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF CHILD SEX ABUSE IN FOOTBALL

4.5.14. In September 2000, there was media reporting of the conviction of RW, a football coach at a grassroots club. RW had sexually assaulted boys in his team, and had secretly videoed the boys showering through a peephole in his office door.⁸⁴

4.5.15. The publication of the Independent Football Commission (“IFC”) report in September 2005 elicited some further media response, most focussing on a comment that 250 suspected cases of child abuse at soccer clubs were being investigated by the FA, but noting that the vast bulk of those cases concerned non-sexual abuse⁸⁵ (see: Independent Football Commission Report 2005).

4.5.16. There was media speculation following the death of Gary Speed (former Welsh international player and Wales national team manager) that Gary Speed had been one of the survivors of Bennell’s abuse. This was explored in an article in the *Sunday Times* on May 13th 2012 (“The world at his feet”), which set out the thoughts of an unidentified police detective who had “once been a promising junior with teams affiliated with Manchester City and Crewe Alexandra”, who discussed his abuse by Bennell. The detective explained:

“He did not, of course, abuse all the boys in his charge, but the detective I spoke to said he had been told by police at the time that there might have been ‘hundreds’. Many were too shy or afraid to speak out. The detective could not bring himself to tell me what Bennell had done to him, but said it was everything you could think of. How often had it happened? ‘More or less every weekend for three or four years.’”

4.5.17. The journalist explained that:

“The detective told me he wanted to talk to me so that people could know the truth about Bennell’s crimes, and the lasting impact of such offences on the lives of the [survivors]. Times have changed, of course, and nowadays anyone working with children is subjected to Criminal Records Bureau checks. But the detective hoped parents would still be alert to the dangers, especially when the ‘grooming’ behaviour can be so subtle.”

4.5.18. That detective was Andy Woodward. The *Sunday Times* article did not lead to a wave of disclosures from other former players who had been survivors of abuse. Four years later – when Andy Woodward’s story was published by Daniel Taylor in the *Guardian* – numerous former players made their disclosures and the football abuse story gripped the nation.

84. The Daily Mirror (September 6th 2000). Soccer sex fiend jailed.

85. The Daily Mirror (September 19th 2005). 250 kids in soccer abused.

Chapter 5.

Sexual Abuse in Football

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5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 In this section, I provide detail about the non-recent child sexual abuse that occurred in football. I set out an overview of abuse, which includes a description of how abusers operated, and my conclusion as to how abuse was able to happen in the game. I then set out some “Survivor voices”: which provide illustrations of the abuse experienced by some of the survivors that I have met and the impact that the abuse has had on them. I provide some detail from Crown Court case files of football-related abuse, and then discuss a number of recent (post-2016) football-related convictions. There is then a short section on hazing allegations, and I conclude with some material about sexual abuse of girls in football.

5.2 Overview of Abuse

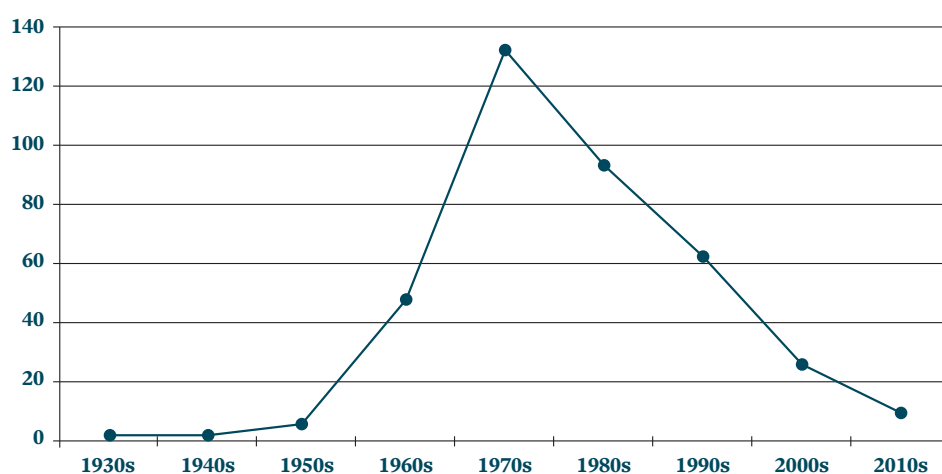
5.2.1. It is not possible to know the precise amount of child sexual abuse that took place in football during the period of the Review, as most incidents of abuse are not reported. It is clear, however, that there was a considerable amount of abuse. This is reflected in the statistics produced by Operation Hydrant.

5.2.2. As at March 28th 2018, Operation Hydrant reported that the indicative number of survivors of non-recent child sexual abuse in football (at any period) was 849, with 300 suspects having been identified and 340 football clubs identified (spanning all tiers of football).¹

FOOTBALL SUSPECTS DECADES OF OFFENDING

5.2.3. Operation Hydrant informed me that as at August 7th 2020, its Holmes database (a live database) showed that – based on Operation Hydrant criteria – there were 240 suspects within football, with 692 survivors.

5.2.4. The Holmes database shows that the majority of cases of which Operation Hydrant are aware (and where there is a viable year/decade of when alleged offences were committed) occurred in the period covered by the Review. This is illustrated by the following graph:



5.2.5. Football is not the only sporting environment in which child sexual abuse occurred during the Review period. Indeed, Operation Hydrant informed the Review that, as at August 3rd 2020, the Holmes database was showing 136 suspects and 201 survivors in various sports (other than football). The sports with the highest number of suspects were Martial Arts (23), Swimming (22), Athletics (11), and Gymnastics (11). The sports with the highest number of survivors were Swimming (31), Martial Arts (28), Gymnastics (26), and Athletics (21). However, abuse in football (whether in the pre-professional or grassroots game) was not commonplace. The overwhelming majority of young people who engaged in football during the period from 1970 to 2005 were not abused. The vast majority of coaches, scouts, backroom staff and other adults involved in the game were not abusers, and carried out their work professionally and in the best interests of the young people in their care.

1. Operation Hydrant. (Undated). Football Abuse Statistics Up To and Including 29 March 2018 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.npcc.police.uk/NPCCBusinessAreas/OtherWorkAreas/OpHydrant/FootballAbuseStats.aspx> (accessed 9 November 2020).

5.2.6. During my Review, I heard and read many accounts from survivors of sexual abuse perpetrated against them in a football context. Some of these accounts are referred to in the body of this Report, as part of the perpetrator case studies or as part of the collection of survivor voices. Other accounts are included in the confidential annexe that is being provided to the FA so that the FA can understand what the survivors experienced and the impact that the abuse had on them.

5.2.7. There were, of course, differences across those survivor accounts. There were different perpetrators, different clubs, different decades, differing forms and severity of the abuse suffered and different impacts on the survivors and their loved ones. However, there were also many similarities. In this section, I will seek to describe some of the recurring themes. I shall also set out my conclusions about how the abuse was able to take place.

THE SURVIVORS

5.2.8. Each survivor has his or her own story to tell. These are stories that the FA needs to hear. I have therefore set out a significant number of survivor accounts in the confidential annexe that accompanies this Report. Without in any way seeking to detract from the importance of the individual accounts, there are a number of points that are common to many survivors.

The Nature and Extent of the Sexual Abuse

5.2.9. The sexual abuse that I was told about ranged from momentary touching (or “brushing”) of the genitals and voyeurism through to digital penetration, masturbation and rape (both oral and anal). Some survivors were abused on a single occasion, others were subjected to months or even years of torment.

5.2.10. In many instances there was clear “progression”, that is the severity of the abuse perpetrated against a given survivor increased over time. To some extent this appears to have been as a result of the abuser initially “testing the water” with a given boy – seeing what his reaction would be to fleeting sexual touching that could, if the boy was to report the incident to someone else, be more readily explained away. I also heard and read evidence of abusers growing in confidence and brazenness – likely as a result of their abuse not being reported and their other questionable behaviour (such as spending significant time alone with boys including overnight stays, and their unusually close relationships with the boys) not being called out or subjected to scrutiny by other adults.

The Effect of the Abuse on the Survivors and their Loved Ones

5.2.11. Some of the survivors told me that they had “locked away” the abuse and did not think it had negatively affected them. Whether or not that is actually the case is impossible for me to assess. It may be that, for some at least, the negative effects have

simply not yet manifested and may not for a number of years.

5.2.12. Many other survivors told me that the abuse had negatively affected their lives – in different ways and to varying degrees. I heard many heart-breaking accounts of struggles with alcoholism and drug dependency, of failed personal relationships, of frustrated careers. Some have told me of failed suicide attempts. A number of individuals who were coached by the abusers have tragically committed suicide. There is clearly a suspicion that in some instances their suicide was a result of abuse, but I am unable to reach any conclusion on this matter.

5.2.13. The most common theme was that the abuse has led to an emotional barrier that prevented many survivors from being able to demonstrate their love fully for those closest to them. As well as struggles with intimacy with partners, some reported being unable to hug or kiss their own children.

5.2.14. Some survivors described how reluctant they were to let their own children play football. Others described the opposite: they wanted them to play football, but kept a close eye on the safeguarding arrangements.

5.2.15. Some survivors have told the Review that the recent criminal trials involving a number of the perpetrators have helped them deal with the emotional impact of the abuse. One survivor, DP, told the Review that the abuse he suffered had made him turn to drink and drugs and destroyed relationships and a career. However, once he disclosed what he had been subjected to and confronted Barry Bennell’s conduct head-on he was able, with the support of family and friends and counselling, to move forward and lead a positive life. DP said that his abuser no longer defines him and there is no longer a “monkey on his shoulder”.

Why Certain Boys Were Targeted

5.2.16. A number of survivors explained to the Review that they felt that they were targeted because they were from less privileged families. There is some evidence of this. Some abusers would exploit the fact that some parents could not take boys to training or games (often due to work commitments or not having transport). Some abusers gave children (and in some instances their parents) gifts or “treats” (including meals out and takeaway food, football kit, days out, and holidays in the United Kingdom and overseas) that would otherwise be beyond their financial reach.

5.2.17. A number of survivors felt that they were targeted because they were from a single parent family (typically with no father present), or because their parents (for a variety of reasons) were seen not to be as attentive as other parents. There is some evidence of this.

CONTEMPORANEOUS DISCLOSURE

5.2.18. A number of survivors reported that at the time they were being abused they had no suspicion that others were also being sexually abused, leading to a feeling of isolation.

5.2.19. The vast majority of survivors made no contemporaneous disclosure of the abuse they endured. They did not disclose to family members, friends, teachers, or others at the clubs where they played or trained. The psychological reasons behind this are beyond the scope of my Review, but I note that the survivors who I spoke with variously described:

- 19.1. feelings of shame;
- 19.2. fear of not being believed;
- 19.3. fear of “rocking the boat” and ending the dream of playing professional football; and
- 19.4. concern that their parents would take the law into their own hands and thereby get into trouble.

5.2.20. I also note what was recently observed by the *Truth Project Thematic Report: Child sexual abuse in sports*:²

“[S]ports institutions can foster a culture of silence, feelings of shame and embarrassment which are linked to gendered norms. This is not surprising when strength and aggression are viewed as essential qualities of the male athlete. Thus, disclosure of abuse and especially abuse of a sexual nature may be associated with weakness and lack of masculinity”.

5.2.21. Of the survivors who did speak out, a number made negative comments about the abuser without disclosing actual abuse. Others tended to seek to minimise what had occurred.

5.2.22. Where a disclosure was made to parents, or parents otherwise came to know of allegations of abuse, some parents confronted the abuser directly but did not contact the professional club with which the abuser was associated. On a few occasions, parents did alert the club.

5.2.23. Deborah Davies, a reporter for the 1997 *Dispatches* programme “Soccer’s Foul Play” (see: *Dispatches: Soccer’s Foul Play*), told me about her experience of survivors. She said that:

“[I]t became very clear from talking to more than two dozen survivors as well as lawyers and counsellors, that many if not most men abused as young boys don’t feel able to disclose for 25 years or more. With hindsight I now understand why so few spoke out in 1997 and why the full scale of the issue didn’t emerge until so many men reached their 40’s”.

These comments accord with my own observations, having listened to the accounts of numerous survivors.

2. IICSA Research Team (2020). Page 20. Truth Project Thematic Report: Child sexual abuse in sports. [Online] p.20. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/19513/view/truth-project-thematic-report-child-sexual-abuse-sports.pdf> [Accessed 9 November 2020].

5.2.24. This was echoed by Mr Justice Griffiths in a recent civil trial involving Blackpool FC. The judge said the following about the claimant who had been abused by Frank Roper:³

“[I]t was for practical purposes impossible for the Claimant to disclose the abuse before he did, or to raise a legal claim before he did, particularly having regard to the effect of the abuse on him, the shame he felt, the steps taken by Roper to keep him quiet, his concern about what his mother might feel (such as, whether she would blame herself for allowing him to travel alone with a stranger) before she died in 2010, his coping strategy of ignoring what had happened, the change in the climate of opinion about the credibility of allegations of sexual abuse against vulnerable children which is relatively recent, and the increased difficulty of acting caused by the severe distress and mental health deterioration he suffered after bringing the memory back to the surface upon disclosure to his wife [in 2012, in the context of the reporting of abuse by Jimmy Savile].”

5.2.25. One Bennell survivor told me that he was unable to disclose to the police even when he was a young adult:

“I was approached by the Police regarding an investigation Bennell was subject to. I remember a police officer came to see me at my parents’ house. At the time I was [in my early 20s] and playing [football] professionally . . . I was put in a very difficult position as I was asked specifically about whether I had ever been abused by Bennell. I had spent all of my adult life blocking these memories out. Although I had been abused, I felt as though I was unable to admit this was the case. . . . As a result I was therefore forced to say I hadn’t been abused and I provided a statement to confirm this”

5.2.26. These sentiments were echoed by a number of other survivors who were spoken with in connection with Bennell’s prosecution in Florida or as part of the investigation into Bennell in this country. A number of survivors and their families even provided Bennell with a positive character reference for his criminal trial in the United States (see: Barry Bennell).

3. *DSN v Blackpool Football Club Ltd.* [2020] EWHC 595 (QB) at [42].

THE ABUSERS AND THEIR MODUS OPERANDI

5.2.27. The abusers I have considered as part of my Review were of varied physical appearance, of varied personality types and had different domestic arrangements. For example, many people referred to Barry Bennell as having the “look” of a footballer, whereas Chris Gieler was often described to me as “weird”, an “odd ball” and “not a football person”. Eddie Heath was described as loud and sometimes “in your face”; whereas, at least around other adults, Ted Langford was quieter and seemingly more reserved. Some, such as Heath and Gieler, were unmarried leading to questions by some as to their sexuality. Others, such as Bob Higgins, had families and, to some extent this acted as a shield for them: it was unthinkable for many, including parents of many of the boys, that a married man could have a sexual interest in children.

5.2.28. However, whilst there was no common “look”, personality type or domestic set-up, certain commonalities did become apparent to me about how they operated.

5.2.29. The abusers had opportunities for abuse as they had unsupervised access to children, and could also legitimately (as part of their role as coaches or trainers, and even scouts) develop exclusive relationships with young players⁴, and could exercise power over them.

5.2.30. The misuse of this power was identified by the NSPCC in the context of its analysis in 2002 of child sex abuse within swimming. In a document entitled, *In at the Deep End: A New Insight for All Sports from Analysis of Child Abuse within Swimming*, the NSPCC stated that there were:

“[M]any similarities between the nature of abuse in sport and the abuse exposed by recent inquiries into children’s residential care... Of particular interest is the resemblance and *modus operandi* of the abusive manager at the children’s homes, to what we have learned about sports coaches who abuse. The combination of a large amount of legitimate power with an abusing charismatic personality creates a perfect opportunity for abuse.”

The same can be said to apply to many of the football abusers.

5.2.31. The abusers were able to spend protracted periods of time with boys alone (or at least without any other adult being present) including overnight stays in guest houses arranged by the clubs, trips away both in this country and abroad, and driving boys to and from training sessions or matches.

5.2.32. The abusers engaged in what would now be termed “grooming”. This took many forms but most commonly included:

- 32.1. paying for meals out and takeaways;
- 32.2. arranging and often paying for trips and holidays;
- 32.3. making gifts to the boys (often clothes or football kit);
- 32.4. allowing boys to do things that their parents might not allow them to

4. This is corroborated by the IICSA Research Team (2020). Page 19. Truth Project Thematic Report: Child sexual abuse in sports. [Online] p.20. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/19513/view/truth-project-thematic-report-child-sexual-abuse-sports.pdf> [Accessed 9 November 2020].

do, such as staying up late, watching horror movies and playing on machines in an amusement arcade; and

32.5. “showing off”, most often by reference to their football connections (including by referring to the footballing success of other boys that they had coached), but also in other ways such as “flashing” money or demonstrating tricks with a football.

5.2.33. There was also “grooming” of the boys’ families. Many of the abusers sought to ingratiate themselves with the families of survivors by striking up friendships or relationships with family members (including by offering them employment), bringing “treats” for the family, or otherwise “charming” parents so as to be seen as a positive influence on the boys and someone who held the keys to their child’s success. Whilst the methods of ingratiation may have differed, I have no doubt that the purposes were the same; to disarm families, and to make the boys less likely to confront or make disclosures about their abuser.

5.2.34. The very fact that the abusers had roles within football gave them a respectability and standing that made the boys and their families believe that they could be trusted. This was explained by one survivor who told the Review that after he had won “Boy of the Week” at a tournament at Butlin’s, he went to Manchester United Football Club’s training ground where he saw Bennell who was watching young players train. This survivor has said that he and his family thought that if Bennell was allowed into the training ground, he must be someone who could be trusted.

5.2.35. In some cases, the abusers sought to alienate the boys from their families by a variety of means, and made the boys feel an emotional attachment to the abuser. This was particularly the case with Higgins who encouraged, indeed, almost demanded that boys viewed him as a “second father” or “big brother”, telling boys that they were “special” and professing love to them; and for Bennell who pressured boys to spend considerable periods of time away from their families. It is likely that the underlying purpose was to make the boys think that they had nowhere to turn and that any reporting of what was happening would be a “betrayal”.

5.2.36. Some of the abusers used threats and fear to build up their attachment with the boys, or to deter them from reporting their abuse. Their conduct included:

- 36.1. the threat (which was sometimes implemented) of being dropped from the team or excluded from team events;
- 36.2. scaring boys with ghost stories, horror movies and visits to “haunted” buildings;
- 36.3. threatening boys either directly (including by making threats towards their families) or implicitly (for example by taking them on visits to areas where they did not feel safe, telling them about connections with violent individuals or demonstrating the use of weapons); and
- 36.4. using physical violence towards the boys.

5.2.37. Some abusers ostracised from the rest of the team those boys who challenged their behaviour or who they considered might speak out – this was typically done by making allegations of dishonesty against these boys, or saying that they were not com-

mitted to the team or were disgruntled.

5.2.38. Some abusers used deception or pretexts to perpetrate abuse. This ranged from Langford's quasi-medical tests, to the development inspections that Gieler and Carson purported to carry out, through to the "massages" given by Higgins.

5.2.39. Some abusers sought to "normalise" the abuse by making sexualised comments, referring to other individuals they had abused or were abusing, and by abusing two boys simultaneously.

5.2.40. Some abusers sought to close down any rumours or concerns raised by explaining them away as being the product of "jealousy" or as emanating from "disappointed" players who had not made the footballing grade, and, in the case of Gieler, threatening legal action against a boy and his parent if they persisted with their complaint against him.

5.2.41. The conduct of the abusers in the professional football context was very similar to that of abusers in the grassroots game (see below: Crown Court Cases). The main differences were that in the grassroots game examples, football was often only one of the arenas in which the abuse occurred: the abusers also befriended young boys in other settings. For these abusers, football was an activity which enabled them to gain the trust of the abused, and provided opportunities for abuse. In the professional game examples, abuse was often linked to the 'promise' of a professional career. That was not a feature of most of the abuse in the grassroots context.

HOW WAS THE ABUSE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN?

5.2.42. For much of the period of the Review, there was no guidance provided to those working within the sport on child protection matters. As a result, for much of the period of the Review, club staff and officials were generally unaware of child protection issues; they were not trained in child protection; they did not pick up on the signs of potential abuse and, if they were aware of the signs, they did not examine them with curiosity or suspicion. Staff and officials at clubs were naïve about the possibility of abuse. Furthermore, clubs did not facilitate, let alone encourage, young players to raise their concerns, which might have enabled them to make disclosures. (It was only for the 1998/99 football season that Premier League and Football League clubs were required to have a member of staff trained in child protection issues at their Academy or Centre of Excellence, and for the clubs to raise awareness of child protection issues (see: FA Child Protection Policy and Programme: 1998)).

5.2.43. In many instances, abuse took place in circumstances where individuals ran youth teams almost as fiefdoms, or as clubs within clubs. This meant that there was no meaningful supervision of the behaviour of those running the youth set-up.

5.2.44. In relation to a number of the abusers, I heard time and again that people

thought at the time that their behaviour was “odd”, “weird” or “not right” or that they were “too close” to the boys or had “favourites”. In relation to some of those abusers there were consistent rumours about their sexual interest in children. Very few people took any sort of action, however, unless and until a firm allegation was made. I was repeatedly told that in the absence of “hard evidence” people felt that there was nothing that could be done on the basis of rumour alone.

5.2.45. Several people involved in safeguarding today told me about the “seeds of doubt” concept – that their “antennae” are alerted to certain behaviours, which lead them to monitor or investigate to see if there is something more serious going on. This concept was not practised by, and was probably unknown to, the people associated with the main perpetrators that I discuss in this Review.

5.2.46. Abuse was also able to take place because clubs did not facilitate, let alone encourage, young players to raise their concerns. There were no routes for young players to blow the whistle on their abusers. This was a common feature of most sports, and most voluntary organisations, until the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2000s.

5.2.47. Very few clubs conducted background checks on the abusers. Even if they had done, they would only have been put on notice of any concerns if the previous clubs or employers were themselves aware of abuse, or had concerns themselves about individuals. Very few clubs were aware or had such concerns.

5.2.48. For much of the period when the most prominent perpetrators were abusing children, there were no formal structures in place for clubs to make checks from the police or other authorities. Thus, Blackpool FC was unable to discover that Roper had previous convictions for abuse. Apart from Roper, however, there is no evidence that other perpetrators had convictions for abuse, and so criminal records checks would not have identified them as a risk to children in any event.

RESPONSE TO DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

5.2.49. The Review has found that in some cases clubs acted too slowly, or inappropriately, in response to allegations of abuse.

5.2.50. There were a variety of responses when allegations were made:

50.1. in one instance – John Broome – the club (Manchester City) was almost certainly aware that the abuser had been arrested and of the nature of the allegations against him (putting his hands down the underpants of a young boy and touching his private parts) – but did not stand him down from his role at a nursery or feeder club (Whitehill Boys Football Club) pending his trial (see: Clubs);

50.2. in some circumstances, there was a delay before action was taken, either because the club official did not fully believe the allegation, or because it was felt that more concrete evidence was required before action could, or should, be taken (see the response at Newcastle United to allegations about Ormond (see: Newcastle’s State of Knowledge));

50.3. in other circumstances, the allegation was raised with the perpetrator, but no further action was taken (see: Chelsea’s State of Knowledge); and

50.4. in other circumstances, some steps were taken to investigate the allegation, but no further action resulted because the club formed the view that the allegations were not supported by evidence (see the response at Queen’s Park Rangers to allegations about Chris Gieler: see: QPR’s State of Knowledge).

5.3 Survivor Voices

5.3.1. In this section I have included 20 ‘voices’ of survivors. These are short extracts, approved by survivors themselves, setting out their experiences. They convey some of the pain and suffering experienced by the victims of abuse, whose dreams were shattered by the actions of their abusers.

5.3.2. I am grateful to those who agreed to be included and I acknowledge that these summaries cannot do justice to what survivors experienced and how this has affected, and continues to affect, their lives.

SURVIVOR 1

My father used to work for a big company which was associated with a particular football ground, and I remember from a very tender age he would take me to watch football games there. From then it was almost an obsession. I played for my first team from age seven or eight, and then eventually made it up to County football at age 12 or 13. That’s when I got scouted to join the training regime at the club where my abuser was a scout, just before my thirteenth birthday. I went on to sign schoolboy and apprentice forms there.

We trained mid-week at a local leisure centre and at a college during the school holidays. We were latch-key children in those days. My parents worked, and I made my own way to and from training by train. My abuser was in charge of the petty cash box and I remember him refunding more than my ticket cost. Looking back on it, that was probably one of his early grooming tactics.

He had his ‘blue eyed boys’ at all different levels of the club. He had his young favourite, then maybe a schoolboy favourite and then a favourite player in the full-time system. I became one of those favourites pretty quickly and he invited me to watch games with him; he would drive me there and treated me to a nice lunch.

One day he isolated me in a treatment room when I had a groin injury. It seemed to me almost premeditated: he knew I was injured, he knew the part of my body that was injured, he sent the physio away from the area on some sort of errand, all to get me alone in this room in a state of undress. He seemed to almost glaze over in that moment when he touched me, like he’d become a different person. I knew it was wrong straight away, but I didn’t know what to do. I knew if I reported it, it would be like throwing a stone in the water. It would just ripple out. I only reported it after seeing other former players speak out on a TV programme. Hearing their stories shook me to the core.

After my reporting, I feel like I have been going through a process of grief. I have felt a lot of guilt and get very emotional whenever I speak about it. Thankfully, time has been a bit of a healer and football has remained an obsession of mine. I returned to football in my twenties. Unfortunately a knee injury cut my playing career short, but I coach my two sons’ teams now and am involved in non-league management.

SURVIVOR 2

I was abused at a professional club from the age of 11. Luckily for me, I've had a great life after. I've actually managed to keep my life on track. But I do believe that I've got a moral obligation to say what happened to me. No child who goes out to play football, to pursue their dream, should have to experience what I experienced.

I was a football-mad kid. I lived to play football. Back in the mid-1980s it was a different world, there were no other distractions. I played for a local team at first and then I joined the club through trials when I started secondary school. I remember him being such an impressive figure. He's got all the best sports equipment, he can do every trick with a football. So you can imagine it was just hook line and sinker for a child whose dream is to play football. And even my dad who I would describe as being a very sensible man was totally swept away with it all. He had all the parents under his spell.

It was apparent to me very quickly that there were boys staying with him, and you almost wanted to be a part of that, for acceptance to a certain extent. When I stayed at his house, there were lots of other boys there too. I wasn't one of his 'favourites', and I'm grateful for that, but there were two occasions when it was just me there and he sexually assaulted me. He touched me over my clothes. Afterwards he said things like "You should just pretend it's your girlfriend who is doing it". Later he went on to bully and threaten me but I felt like I couldn't leave because the place just had a total hold over me; I was desperate to be a footballer. And my dad thought he was the best thing since sliced bread. So I buried it for a long time and just put it away in a box.

Although I know I didn't have it as bad as others, it has still affected me in my life. I think because I was a little bit defiant towards him whereas others weren't he always made a lot of derogatory comments towards me and tried to bully me in front of the other kids. For a year that never stopped. And I look at the way I am today in work and my boss will say to me "You've got to go for a promotion", and I won't have the confidence to do it. I'm filled with self-doubt. I attribute a lot of that to the way he treated me.

The motivation for me coming forward now is I want the world to know what happened at that football club. Because it was horrendous and kids should never have suffered that and it should never happen again.

SURVIVOR 3

I remember when I first met my abuser vividly, like it was yesterday. He came to one of my games and somebody told me he was a scout. I'd wanted to be a footballer ever since about the age of six, so when he asked my parents if I would come for a trial that was how it all started.

My parents, they were the most protective parents you could ever have. I wasn't really even allowed down the road. They would pick me up from wherever I was. At one stage after the abuse had started they began to ask me questions, and whether everything was all right. Looking back now, they said that there was a behavioural change in me, but they had no idea at the time about the reason for it, or what was happening. I think

they felt an immense amount of guilt once they found out; like all parents of that era, they wanted the best for their children. But they were groomed too; he groomed them. It went on for years, from the age of 11 all the way up to 17. It was systematic abuse. It was hundreds and hundreds of times. He wouldn't leave me alone. And everybody knew that I practically lived with him. I was always by his side.

I carried on playing professionally but it followed me for the rest of my career. People would say to me "I know what he does to you" and call me one of his "bum boys". People also used to say things like "I bet he bends you over and takes you from behind", and you know, I had to endure that for many years. Everyone knew what had happened. I'd suffered but I had to keep quiet. It was men's football. It was really degrading.

I've had therapy off and on since for years, and then five years ago I went on a downward spiral. What had been eating away at me all the time was that I knew that something drastic had happened in football, and I knew it was the biggest hidden secret. So, it was frustrating to know that. I was bitter and angry, and was starting to lose control of myself, my mind, my physical wellbeing, my mental health. It was going like that, and that's what was niggling away at me. I didn't know the magnitude of what had happened, but I knew at that football club and others, there was something not right.

People ask why I didn't speak out sooner. It's because the thing with football, it's the most powerful game, and the desire is immense to be a footballer, and the power that they had over us, it was an unwritten rule, you cannot say a word. I remember being on a train with another boy who I just knew had been abused too. We could never speak about it, but I remember looking at him and our eyes met; we just said it with our eyes.

SURVIVOR 4

Football was my life. I played 5-a-side from the age of about seven. My dream was to play for the professional club close to where I lived.

The abuse started more or less straight away when I joined a boys' team at age 11 which had loose links with the club. It was my coach who abused me, but he was also the physio for the club and he would take me into the little physio room at the club, lock the door and touch me.

Society was different then, you know, no DBS checks, no CRB checks, no qualifications, level one or level two, not even for physios. I mean, he was a physio at the club and he didn't even have a qualification for physiotherapy. So the culture then was they very much didn't have things in place. But also the boys club as a whole was, how do I put it, a seedy kind of environment in general. There were these games like 'who has the biggest penis?' And the coach would come into the showers with us and try to rub us down. And it was all quite open in front of everybody.

Later on as an adult I was a very fun-loving guy on the outside but inside I was just distraught. You know, I used to wake up every night sweating. I was drinking a lot. I had several broken marriages, and I was a very angry person. I wasn't very stable in

relationships because nobody could understand what was the matter with me. I ended up getting sectioned after I tried to commit suicide a few times and that's when I finally disclosed what had happened to me and started getting help.

I ended up confronting my abuser later in life, and in the end he was convicted. I was one of the first to come forward and until that point there was always that fear that I wouldn't be believed.

SURVIVOR 5

My club was quite a large club, from youngsters going up to under 18s. My dad was a policeman and my mum worked full-time too, so they would take me to training and to matches as often as they could, but the coach always offered to pick me up when they couldn't and sometimes he would offer to babysit me when they went for a night out. It was him that abused me, at his house.

I was seven or eight when it happened but I can't remember how long it went on. It's weird, I can remember my whole childhood apart from two or three years. It happened in that gap. I think I buried it in a deep, deep place, and it only surfaced after I saw the reports about Jimmy Savile. I never told anyone at the time, even though I wanted to. I felt so much guilt over the years. Like with who was behind, who was the next one in line. There was a lad that joined the club, and I remember thinking "he's next", because the focus came off me and onto him, and his situation with his parents was exactly the same, they both worked full-time too.

What happened has affected me in good and bad ways. I'm really protective of my kids, but I know I'm over-protective. It broke up my relationship with my partner because I wouldn't let them out of my sight; I didn't trust anyone. My daughter has done gymnastics to quite a high level and she was doing 15 hours a week. And I would sit there for the whole 15 hours. Even though I was working full-time, I would take her there and I would sit there from start to finish.

I also ended up coaching for the same club where I was abused. I remember going into the clubhouse and there was a picture of him and it kind of brought back memories. That's when I spoke to the police. And now it's not just about my kids. It's my kids in my football team, all twenty of them, I think of all of them as mine. It's about protecting them now.

SURVIVOR 6

I was scouted by my abuser and signed my schoolboy forms with him when I was 13 or 14 playing in the local Sunday league. I did nothing else, just played football every single minute of every day. After I joined, he gave me gear to wear and started asking me to do private sessions away from the Club in a park near where he lived. He did that with several other players too, but not everyone, so we felt special.

I would sometimes train at the Club's regional training centre, but that was a long way

from where I lived so he would often give me a lift. I remember he picked me up from school one day, which was the first time I'd been in the car with him alone. During that journey, he started asking me questions about girls and sex. Then he asked me to perform masturbation in front of him. I couldn't do it and I basically shut down. During another journey, he asked me to masturbate him. Again, I just froze. It could have been five minutes; it could have been an hour. I honestly don't know.

After those two incidents, I realised why players would jostle to sit in the back of the car rather than in the front with him when he was giving a group of us a lift somewhere. It was strange at the Club too. He would use the bath in our changing rooms, and invite us in to talk to him while he was in there. He would massage our legs after showers as well, and then make comments about our genitals.

I felt angry for a really long time afterwards and I would deal with emotional situations the same way I had dealt with the incidents in the car: I would just go into a little box. I finally told a girlfriend about the abuse when she asked why I was like that, but I still hadn't really come to terms with it. I felt embarrassed.

I've had problems in my personal life and with drink and gambling since the abuse, although I feel like I've dealt with some of those demons now.

SURVIVOR 7

Football was my passion from the age of being able to kick a ball really. From the age of about 10, I think I realised that I was a little bit better than most kids and that's when I thought, coming from a council estate, that I could better my life. I went through all the channels – got in the school team, then was picked to play for my town, then for my County. And that's when the scouts started coming in for you.

At age 13, a professional club started showing an interest and I started training there. I went on to sign schoolboy forms with them and everything was great. I was being looked after and playing for the youth team and basically loving life. I mean, they made me feel very privileged. I was put on a day release and I only had to go to school four days a week.

My abuser more or less appeared from nowhere within about six months of me signing as a schoolboy. He had been a scout for another club and he became kind of my mentor. He was always there. By the time I came to sign as an apprentice I knew there was something wrong, but by then it was too late. He had already started picking me up and dropping me off home on a regular basis. He'd come and met my parents and won them over. My parents thought "yeah, what a lovely guy".

That was fine for about two months, but then something changed. He started to rub my legs as we were driving, basically testing me. And I pushed him and said "I'm not like that". But it went on for about a month. Then he started parking the van out of view of the house. And it was all hands up the shorts and 'rubbing me down' after showers when we were the only people left in the club in the evening. And you know, you're

14, you're questioning your sexuality. Everything goes on. He'd say "I'm only messing about, I'm only messing".

In the end I let him do what he wanted. My day release had turned into hell for me because I knew that every time I went to training something would happen. Eventually, I retaliated and I beat him up. He was a big man as well. But I couldn't take it no more. I just snapped. I gave him a couple of black eyes. And I knew that was my way out, my revenge. I knew he wouldn't come near me again.

I carried on training after that, but I was too far gone and I went out one night and I got completely wasted. I got charged by the police and that's my first ever offence for assault. And that's all because of him, you know. I'd never been in trouble before and I haven't been in trouble since. I just flipped and it's all the abuse and everything else going round in my head. I went to rehab later because I basically lost the plot. I was drinking too much and taking drugs and I needed help. I hit rock-bottom. It was the rehab centre that prompted me to try and put it to bed, to disclose it and try and get it out of my head.

SURVIVOR 8

I first came into contact with my abuser in the early 80s. I was playing football at school and he scouted me for trials together with the best players from the other local schools in my area.

The abuse started within a few weeks of getting involved with him and it ended up lasting about 5 years. I followed him from team to team and signed for the team he was coaching, which ended up being one of the most stupid decisions of my life. I recall the first time, where there were 10 or 11 lads in the room with him at his house, mostly sitting around playing video games and stuff. A few were sat on the bed and when I came in he said, "are you jumping in next to me?" So I get in and he basically just decides to put his hands down my tracksuit bottoms. And as an 11 or 12 year old kid you've never been exposed to anything sexual before. I didn't know what was going on. That was the first time and then it escalated pretty quickly after that.

When it started and he was seeing how far he could take it with me he pulled me aside after getting off a bus and said "I've been with this other lad for a couple of months now, and I'd really like to be with you, too". He would take me out to pantomimes at Christmas time. And in his twisted world I think he saw it as a date kind of thing, taking his partner out for the evening, and then back to his house.

My parents were fooled. He was so charismatic. He told them I sometimes played better after staying at his house. And my parents were having difficulties in their relationship at the time, so for me it was kind of a way of avoiding the home situation. In hindsight, I think he picked up on those vulnerabilities and he knew how to take chances to see how far he could get with us, especially those of us who were less physically developed; and more submissive.

It ended when I was 16, when I was kind of a little bit more confident, and I suppose mature. You get to a point where you know that it's kind of wrong, so I decided I needed to get myself out of the situation. But after that things kind of spiralled out of control. Drinking, drug abuse, kind of took hold. I didn't do anything for a couple of years, just bumming around dead end jobs. In the end I had a mental breakdown and attempted to take my life. Then I finally got some counselling. I was lucky that my wife stayed with me throughout and against all the odds, we are still together.

SURVIVOR 9

What happened to me was something you would probably describe as fairly 'low level'. He was my coach on a course I was selected to go on. Kids loved him. He was a bit of a figurehead. Very calm; very good tactics; very good at motivating people; he had a very quiet, decent manner. There was nothing that would have given anybody cause for concern. I was 13 or 14 at the time and when he invited me on a residential trip it felt like an opportunity I couldn't afford to miss.

We were given particular exercises to do on the trip to 'develop our physique'. I didn't think anything was unusual in that. What concerned me though was the 'inspection'. We all had to line up in the reception area of this old property where we were staying and one by one we had to go up and see him.

Before I went up there had been some other lads, the jokers in the team, making light of it and winding the others up who were yet to go in. They said you had to strip naked. So I remember the overriding feeling I had before going in was dread. I didn't have to fully strip in the end, but I did have to undress down to my underpants. I remember him saying turn around let me see, and you know, "that's okay, carry on doing your exercises".

I don't believe what happened affected anything I've done in my life. I felt it was so inconsequential, like there was nothing in it. But when the allegations broke in the press I felt a sort of guilt. Because what if what happened to me was at the embryonic stages of his interests and it had developed into something far more serious? Maybe I could have helped nip it in the bud or prevent others being abused. That was my concern.

SURVIVOR 10

I played for various feeder teams through the age groups. The leagues wouldn't take professional clubs, so it was through the back door, although everyone knew who we were. We played in the professional club's kit.

I was scouted from school. The guy who scouted me was around for about six months before he handed me over to the coach who abused me from 11 to 15. He was very charismatic. Excellent ball skills. Probably the best I've ever seen and everyone looked up to him.

The abuse was predominantly at his home address. He got us there by saying he wanted two boys to visit each weekend as a meet and greet and to 'get to know' us. So we would stay overnight, me and another boy. And the abuse happened straight away on that first weekend. We all slept in the same bed and he was in the middle; I could hear the fumbling so I knew that the other boy was being abused too, although we never spoke about it.

After that I went to his house nearly every weekend. I think I was 'singled out' because he saw some sort of vulnerability or softness in me. I went over there virtually every weekend for four years, every school holiday, Christmas, trips abroad.

I think I wasn't able to talk about it until recently because I had no sexual experience at the time. I didn't particularly feel anything and I didn't want to rock the boat. He was sort of this big figure and I'm a little dot, for want of a better word. I didn't have the vocabulary, I didn't have the language. I didn't know what to say. He had this hold over me.

In the end I was released by the club at 16. I went to other clubs, looking for a new team and had trials but my confidence was shot. I fell away from the football scene and went on to try and get an education and a work life. But I struggled with a lack of confidence and all the horrible things inside. The shame, the embarrassment and wondering what the hell's just gone on for four or five years.

I've been a nervous wreck. I didn't want to have children because of what happened to me. It's had a substantial impact. But in the end I came forward and picked up the phone to the police because I didn't want to regret not doing anything in old age. And I started thinking it really goes against what I should stand for.

SURVIVOR 11

Football was the only thing I could just do. I could just naturally do it. I don't like blowing my own trumpet but I was really good at it, and I played for school, then borough, then the county and I was captain of the county. After that all the clubs were looking at me; they were all after me. But because of where I lived, the local club was just in my family. We were all fans and it was like an honour, playing for my childhood club from the age of 12 onwards.

It was the chief scout that abused me. He was the god of schoolboy football at the club. He was the one that decided whether you were going to be a professional footballer, or even if you stayed at the club. Everything was down to him and any dealings had to go through him. If you wanted to get your expenses and the envelope hadn't been left in your boot or on your peg where you were changing you had to go and see him to get them.

The abuse first happened when he called me into his office one time. He was in a suit and tie. He was always smart. I remember him saying something about my body and how I needed to get it to "tone up" and "get fitter". He told me to take my top off and

he was feeling my body. I just thought he was doing it for my own good. Then he said, “Have you ever had a cough and drop at school?” And I honestly didn’t know what he was talking about. I didn’t understand. But then he made me do it. I don’t know how but after that it became a regular occurrence. Always in his office.

He released me from the club when I was 14, even though I was the next big thing. I went to other clubs and I played with some big name players. But I just fell out of love with football. Every time there was a meeting with somebody, I couldn’t stay in the room with them, with someone I didn’t trust. I stopped playing for a long, long time after that. People would ask why I never made it, saying they couldn’t believe it. I just said I weren’t good enough, and that cuts the conversation down. It’s made me really bitter and spiteful. I’ve got a nasty edge to me now, because I’ve blocked out so much stuff. What he did has a lot to do with the man I am now.

I haven’t told anyone until this year. I was watching one of the TV programmes about the abuse that others had experienced and I got really emotional. The men who had come forward were just superstars to me, they were so much stronger than me. And when I see them, and I heard the interviews, and it was like, “I could have given that interview, that was me. They’re talking on my behalf”.

SURVIVOR 12

I played for one of the nursery/feeder teams. I was a big fan of the club and so was my dad. As far as I was concerned, I was going to play for the club and that was it. The abuse happened when I was playing for the under 11s and the under 12s. It was my coach that abused me. It happened three or four times over a 12 month period and it was all abroad.

I’d never been abroad before so my dad saw it as a great opportunity. He said, “You’ll have a week, you’ll be playing football, you’ll be getting coached, you’ll have a great time. Your game will improve.” Obviously, it was just exciting. It felt like, what a great opportunity. So off we went.

It became a really difficult situation between me and my dad, insomuch as it got to a point where my dad was obviously putting me in situations that were dangerous, but he didn’t know that. I couldn’t say to him, “I don’t want to go”. I remember I think, just once, trying to not go, and him saying, “Do you want to be a footballer?”, because my dad was very much like that. He was all about turning me into a footballer, but you obviously get to a point where it was too late to say, too late to say anything. And it’s just about your dream, isn’t it? How am I going to keep hold of my dream? I remember trying to make adult decisions in a 10 year old’s body about whether to say anything. In the end, I thought this is the route to my dream. And I was convinced that he was the only football coach in the world.

People would say, “You’ve had a great career”, but I know that I wasn’t strong enough in my career, and I know that I would have been a miles better player. But I lost that killer instinct, I lost that ferocious competitiveness, and I’ve got this relationship with

my dad that completely decimated my career, in many ways. Because I can't tell him, and I never have. I can't lay years of guilt on him.

SURVIVOR 13

I first started playing football when I went to secondary school. I played for some local teams and then did trials at some of the bigger clubs. I signed on schoolboy forms and played for England Schoolboys when I was 15. I scored in my first game, which felt great, but it meant the club where I signed as an apprentice expected big things of me. I struggled then, because I'm just from a little village and I'm a home boy really.

When I was a schoolboy I remember a man coming to games with a big minibus. He seemed to be involved with some of the lads who were using the training ground at the same time as us and he used to hand out free gear.

My first direct encounter with him was when I was an apprentice. I was injured and I was told to clean the bath. He said I needed better cleaning products to do it properly and if I jumped in his van he'd take me to get some. I remember he drove me down a little lane and just stopped. Then he said something about my injury and put his hands up my shorts. I didn't understand what had happened at that point. I just remember I had this lump in my throat on the bus home afterwards.

I experienced two more incidents of abuse after that. I knew what he was doing was wrong. I stopped scoring goals and started faking injuries because I was frightened to be alone with him again.

I walked away in the end and started playing for another team but my heart wasn't in it. Something inside me had switched. My life was pretty horrible after that. I felt like I let myself and my parents down by missing out on a career in football. I wished I could have let what happened to me go, but I couldn't. I still can't bear anybody touching me, not even my kids. Until now, I've never felt able to discuss it with anyone.

SURVIVOR 14

My abuser said he was a scout for a professional club. I played for a team that he ran by himself, with no assistance from anyone else. He came and watched me play football at school after that, on the premise that he wanted to see how I was doing. And he scouted other boys through that, including some younger boys.

At first, my dad drove me to all my games. He took a keen interest and he gave lifts to other local lads. He was pretty much always there. Later, my abuser started driving me around and having me stay at his house. I was 10 when it started and it lasted for three and a half years. It happened in his house, and abroad; he was the only adult on those trips. I often spent the entire school holidays at his house. I would even miss school and make excuses. He sold it to my parents that he was giving me more one on one coaching so I might be in with a better shot at a professional club and a professional career.

He had groomed my parents even more effectively than he had groomed me. He would be the font of knowledge, almost seen as part of the family, like a close family friend or family member, the way he was treated. Like an uncle or something. He employed my mum to sew numbers onto our shirts, so she was making quite a bit of money from him. He would come to our house for Sunday lunch. He even brought a first team professional player with him once, early on. He was trying to impress them.

It absolutely destroyed my personal life. I had intimacy issues later and suffered with depression for quite a long time. I defaulted to alcohol and recreational drugs. My work life and career were completely derailed. After I disclosed it I just basically felt like not only was I not being believed, but like I was exaggerating it in some way.

I recently had to tell my two young children after everything broke so they wouldn't Google me and find things out on the internet.

SURVIVOR 15

It was 1986 when I was abused by the coach of my grassroots club. I was 11 years old at the time and he abused me several times in his car after training, before dropping me home.

I told my parents but nothing was ever done. The police discouraged us from pursuing it and the parents of another boy who was also abused decided they didn't want him to have to live through it again if there was a trial.

I couldn't face playing football in a club environment ever again after what happened to me. My dad bought me a BMX, which allowed me to put my passion for sport and the outdoors into an activity which didn't require a coach or manager-type figure. Because I enjoyed that, my parents thought I had forgotten the abuse. Little did they know I have flashbacks of being in that car with him at least once every day. I can't even remember playing football, or any of the other boys on the team. It's just a blank.

I look back now and think I probably wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for BMX. Sometimes I feel like I can't go on with life anymore because of what happened to me. I have questioned my sexuality several times, but most of all I just don't like to be around people. I certainly can't handle people telling me what to do or trying to control me. I'm angry or upset most of the time and have low self-esteem and low confidence.

It took a long time for me get any help, even though I reached out to several organisations. I recently finally started therapy, which I hope will help me. At the moment it still feels like I'm on a rollercoaster ride.

SURVIVOR 16

I played for the junior team of a professional club as a youngster on Mondays and occasionally on Sundays. Mondays were all about training and building up skills. It was a long drive from where I lived, so I still played for my junior club at home at the same time. I was a good player and I had a lot of potential.

My first impression of him was he was very skilful, very flamboyant. I remember he told my parents that he had a child psychology degree. He would also exaggerate things about his house, although I never went there. It was very cliquy. If you got to go to his house it was like, “Look at me”. It was almost like an award, if you like.

The thing that sticks most in my mind was a trip abroad. He took us on his own and there was no other adult supervision there. He created this culture of fear. He showed scary horror movies; really violent and aggressive. He told us to stay close to him and not to go out of sight because it was dangerous and we could be killed. I think it was almost setting the scene to start the grooming, where he would go from bed to bed in the dormitory. I remember looking at the ceiling and just wishing I could beam away from the situation. When you’re that age you don’t show tears in front of lads because all of a sudden that’ll just take all credibility away.

I felt like I had to get out after that. I had to lie to my parents to say that I was being bullied on the team, because I didn’t want to let them down. My dad used to regularly say “The amount of time I’ve put into you travelling back and forward there”. It had quite a profound effect on me actually.

After I left the club my drive just went. I tried to rekindle a love, a desire for football somewhere else, and I went to my local team but it felt like a step down. I needed to be at a professional club. I was just dead in the water really. Even now I almost regret not staying on with him because if I had maybe things would have been different. I think I’ve been grieving for that missed opportunity ever since. I mean, when I speak to my psychotherapist it all seems to point in that direction.

I’ve really struggled with low mood and depression. When my partner and I had kids that was the biggest contributor. Thinking of them being on their own with their coach scared me. I started coaching them myself but I almost felt nauseous because all these images of what happened to me came back.

SURVIVOR 17

I wanted to play football from a very early age. I started playing at school in either the under-8s or under-10s, so very young. I won ‘Man of the Match’ in my very first game and that was it for me. I just loved it.

I read all the football magazines and I saw an advert in there for his goalkeeping school. My parents paid for me to go for a week. I was 13 at the time. He got different professionals in to coach us. He said I did really well and he asked me to go to his office to speak to him. He felt my wrists, my knees and my hips. I didn’t think anything of it.

He told me I needed to develop my body if I wanted to be a professional and I believed him.

I went on some more of his courses after that. He gave me some exercises to do as a home fitness program and he monitored whether I had done them. At the last course, he said he could get me a trial at one of the big clubs but I would need to do a 'fitness test' first. He came and got me from my bedroom at 3:30am one morning. I asked why the test needed to be so early and he said I "needed to be alert".

During the fitness test, he made me take my clothes off. He said it was so he could "see how your muscles work". I tried to leave my shorts on but he made me take them off too so I was completely naked doing these exercises right in front of him. He also said if I didn't beat my time between the shuttles he would beat me with a slipper. He hit me a few times on my bum.

I knew something wasn't right with this, but I didn't know for sure and I was just desperate to be a footballer. I knew he was a scout for some of the clubs and he did arrange a trial for me.

It hadn't really affected me until recently. I told some of my mates at the time and they laughed it off and in a weird way I think that did me good because then I forgot about it. But when the news came out about other abusers in football I became a bit obsessed about finding out whether others had experienced what I did. When I finally heard he'd been sent for trial, my head just sort of exploded. I didn't think anyone would have seen it as abuse before that. I've struggled with my emotions a bit since then.

SURVIVOR 18

I started playing at the age of 10. I just used to play Sunday football with my friends in teams, but I was quite talented and the PE teachers and the schools always picked me to play. I went on to represent my district, my county, and I went for schoolboy trials. It was whilst I was playing for a County schoolboys' team that I was scouted to a well-known club, and he was my abuser in the end, the man who scouted me. I was 14.

I only stayed at the club about six months before I moved on. The abuse happened a couple of times during that time frame. It was all on the premise that I needed to wear certain pants and do certain exercises to keep growing in the right way. The first time he made me take my pants down and prodded me in the changing rooms. After that he said "You cannot tell anybody what has just happened here. This is between us two. You need to trust me because I'm going to progress your career", "There's players at this club earning £6,000 a week" and "I'm the person that's going to help you get to where you want to get", and all this. He also said that no-one would believe me anyway.

I went home that day and I wanted to tell my mum and dad, but my dad was saying to my mum "I think he's going to go all the way. He took the trouble to talk to him and give him these exercises and he feels he's going to go a long way". They were so proud and I was lying in bed thinking, "I can't tell them what's happened". So I kept it to myself.

When my son started playing football I did my coaching badges and now I coach at primary schools. I've been doing it for over 25 years now and I really enjoy it. But the abuse has had terrible effects on my life. I sleep badly and have had nightmares. I've also had really bad OCD. Basically I felt dirty, so I tried to be over-clean, if that makes sense. When I'm thinking about what happened, I would always scrub my hair. He's inside me. He was there. Counselling has been absolutely essential to me. That and speaking to other people who have gone through the same thing.

SURVIVOR 19

I was obsessed with football as a kid. My parents were very proud and supportive and wanted me to follow whatever route I chose.

I lived quite far away from the club so when I was training I would travel down every Friday after school and stay until Sunday. Sometimes I stayed with the parents of other lads but I also stayed in the stadium a lot on a blow-up mattress in the changing rooms. There was one other lad who did the same thing and we would travel down and stay together. My coach was the one who supervised us. He was there until lights out and he would come back for us in the morning.

The coach would make me and the other boy strip down for special training sessions on Sundays. We tried to keep our shorts on but he said no, we had to be fully naked. He also made us massage each other and often we had to be naked then too. He said all of this was good for our muscle development and he needed to see this. He would feel the muscles on my back and legs to 'check' this. He said he was a trained physio. I normalised all of this in my head at the time because he had the power to make me a professional footballer.

As I got older I realised his methods were strange and I wanted to distance myself from football. I feel now like I was groomed. I've never felt able to tell my wife about what happened and talking about it is hard. After I disclosed what happened to the police I would see his face when I went to sleep at night for about a year.

SURVIVOR 20

I was on a family holiday to a holiday camp when I met him. I was 11 years old, and very close to my family, which was very much a loving family. When I got there, he was running the football sessions. The best player won 'boy of the week' at the end and got the chance to go for 'boy of the year'.

He was just a pure bundle of energy and just seemed like a fantastic coach. I sort of was hooked before the session even started. But as you go through the days, after a couple of days he was already paying me a lot of attention.

He asked me to keep in touch, and took my address. He invited me on his skills course over Easter. I was really chuffed. None of my mates had been on a skills course. It was an hour and a half drive away from where we lived. So my dad dropped me off at his

house on the Thursday night before the Friday session. As soon as the door shut it was like it was Christmas and I was his present.

The morning after the first night, I was just very lost. The second night; it was much worse. When my Dad arrived the following morning, I was out of the house, and had got into my dad's car before he could get out of the car. The first thing I did when I got home was run upstairs; there was a stack of the letters that he had sent to me. I got the letters and just ripped them up and threw them in the bin.

Sometime two, three weeks later, I came home from school one day, and he was sitting there talking to my mum. My mum said I should take him up and show him my trophies. I didn't feel I could get out of it. I tried to go up there as fast as I could, and within 30 seconds I was trying to get back out of the room. He had pitched himself in the doorway. He said "I don't want you to worry; I won't tell anyone what you did to me." That screwed me up completely because, obviously, then I'm thinking, who are they going to believe? I've got two older brothers who would just shred me for life basically.

I had no idea what a paedophile was or a sex offender; never heard of it. So I just presumed he was gay, which ultimately made me gay, because of the way my body reacted: I thought I must be gay. Later, I developed feelings for the ladies, and not for men, but in my first few relationships, even my first marriage, it was difficult to deal with.

I didn't feel that I could go to the police until after my mum had died. She and my Dad had split up and it was hard on her. I thought she had been through enough.

5.4 Crown Court Cases

5.4.1. Many cases of child sex abuse during the period of the Review occurred outside of the professional game. A number of these resulted in convictions for child sex offences and were reported briefly in the media. With the assistance of the Ministry of Justice, I have managed to obtain the Crown Court files with respect to a number of such cases. I set out a sample of these cases to highlight the variety of ways in which abuse in the grassroots game has arisen.⁵

5.4.2. In some of these examples, it can be seen that football was one of the arenas in which the abuse occurred, but the abusers also befriended young boys in other settings. Football was an activity which enabled the abuser to gain the trust of the abused, and provided opportunities for abuse. (This is different from the more high-profile cases that I deal with elsewhere in this Report, where the abuse is often linked to the ‘promise’ of a professional career). One feature that is common to several of the examples is the grooming of the child’s parents.

CASE OF SA

5.4.3. SA was convicted of five counts of indecent assault on a male (contrary to section 15(1) Sexual Offences Act 1956). The survivors of his abuse were aged between 11 and 14 years old. The abuse took place between the 1960s and the 1980s.

5.4.4. SA was active in football, both through his involvement in one of the County FAs (where he was employed), and as a referee in the game. SA came into contact with those he abused through a variety of routes:

- 4.1. KM met SA through the County FA. KM wrote to ask for recommendations of junior football clubs in the area. SA responded to the letter and subsequently built a relationship with him;
- 4.2. WY was a relative of SA, and SA took him to football matches and made him stay over at his house afterwards;
- 4.3. another survivor met SA in a tavern. SA took him to football matches as a spectator; and
- 4.4. another survivor was a younger colleague of SA, at a different place of employment.

5.4.5. The deeper the relationship that SA built with the survivor, the greater the level of abuse he appears to have ultimately perpetrated against them. He had two main methods of building relationships with the boys.

5.4.6. The first was taking boys to watch semi-professional or professional football matches. These were either matches that he refereed, or ones which he attended. SA used the opportunity of the journey to and from these matches to touch the survivors. Touching took place both above and below the survivors’ clothing. It took place in SA’s car. It took place in train carriages.

5. These have been anonymised in accordance with requests by the Ministry of Justice.

5.4.7. In the case of SA's relative, WY, he was also able to use the pretext of attending football matches to persuade WY to stay over at his house afterwards. In the middle of the night, SA then perpetrated the abuse. Due to the family connection between the two, the relationship of SA to WY was stronger than the other survivors. This enabled SA to commit the abuse over a longer period of time.

5.4.8. The second method SA used was to take advantage of his position at the County FA. The County FA received a letter from KM enquiring about junior football in the county's area, as he had dreams of becoming a footballer. SA replied by offering to train KM directly himself. KM attended a training session with SA, along with another boy. At the session, SA noticed that KM had some form of ankle strain, and insisted on massaging KM's ankle. The other boy present remembers that SA touched KM in an "odd" way.

5.4.9. SA offered KM various other opportunities where KM would be dependent on him. First, SA recommended that KM apply for a staff vacancy at the County FA's offices. He was told not to disclose his connection with SA in his application. He was then interviewed by SA for the role. The whole process was a set-up to ensure that KM secured the position, and worked directly for SA.

5.4.10. Second, SA took KM to football games. After he was employed with the County FA, SA took KM to a game at Wembley Stadium (a match where he obtained tickets as a result of his County FA connection). On the way home, SA assaulted KM in his car. KM was distressed, but felt that SA was both his boss and that he had the power to jeopardise his wider career in football. He did not want to speak out about the abuse, but he stopped attending matches with SA. Shortly afterwards, SA called KM into his office, accused KM of stealing money and dismissed him immediately. KM denies stealing any money. KM considers that SA acted to retaliate against him for refusing to go to matches with him, thereby denying SA the opportunity to abuse him further.

5.4.11. In all cases, SA moved quickly to begin the abuse once he was in contact with the survivor. The exception to this is WY, who was a relative of SA and therefore had known him his entire life.

5.4.12. The abuse may have been opportunistic in the moment, but SA created the conditions for it to occur: by trapping the survivor physically on a journey, or structurally by appearing to hold power over their career.

Prosecution of SA

5.4.13. The prosecution against SA was brought more than 25 years after the last instance of abuse. The reason for the delay was that the survivors did not feel able to disclose the abuse until much later in their lives. As a result of the local publicity surrounding this first case in a local newspaper, other survivors also came forward to tell their stories.

CASE OF OV

5.4.14. OV operated in a paedophile ring in the 1980s. Football was just one of many settings in which he gained access to children to service himself and others in this ring. The majority of child sex abuse offences for which he was successfully prosecuted do not relate to football. However, he was the manager and coach of a youth team. One of the abused boys was a youth football player from that team.

5.4.15. OV built a network of children who he and his friends could abuse. He met boys variously through involvement with football, driving around London and approaching children, and gaining introductions through the children he was already in contact with.

5.4.16. He built trust with children by offering them work at the company he ran. He also bought them gifts, such as clothing. He would then progress the relationship into a purported “friendship”. He repeatedly invited children to his flat to watch films and drink or smoke with him and the other adults in the ring. Once the trust was at a sufficient level, when boys visited his flat, he perpetrated abuse against them.

5.4.17. OV primarily targeted vulnerable boys (including those who attended special schools, or were economically disadvantaged), although some boys were relatively privileged. In the latter cases, OV would spend more time concentrating on the parents to facilitate his grooming. He would visit the boys’ parents, often with gifts, and then arrange through the parents for the boy to visit him in London or go on overnight trips with him. With parents and other adults, the reason he gave for spending time with children was that he was “involved with boys clubs”, including football. Some parents did say that they found OV a little “suspicious”, but did not prevent their children spending time with him.

5.4.18. OV perpetrated a variety of abuse, ranging from over the clothes touching to penetrative sex. He also took pornographic photographs. Often the other perpetrators in the paedophile ring would be present in the home at the time abuse was perpetrated. Sometimes other perpetrators watched abuse occurring with each other. In most instances, OV would “share” the boys with other perpetrators in his circle.

5.4.19. The grooming of the youth football player was typical of OV’s approach to other boys. OV was his football coach, which appears to have inspired trust in the boy. OV built up the boy’s trust by giving him work with his business. This gave him greater contact with the boy. It also gave him financial power over him. He then used this access and power to pressure the boy into receiving massages. The ostensible reason he gave for providing the massages was to help the boy with his football training. These massages later led to explicit sexual touching. As time progressed, the abuse continued and the boy was brought to OV’s home for the same purpose. The boy sustained this sexual abuse over a period of three and a half years.

Prosecution of OV

5.4.20. OV, and others in his ring, were prosecuted within a year of the last instance of sexual abuse charged in that case. OV was found guilty of indecent assault on a male person, taking indecent photographs, indecency with a child, and attempted buggery. He was sentenced to concurrent imprisonment terms of up to 11 years for his crimes.

CASE OF DK

5.4.21. DK perpetrated his abuse both inside and outside of football over a period of two decades. DK was the manager of an ‘Under 9s’ team from the late 1970s through to the early 1980s. He was also a referee in a local league.

5.4.22. DK used his position at the football club to place himself at the centre of the community. He was active at games and in coaching. He was well-liked. His strategy was to build relationships with parents through youth football. He then exploited these relationships in order to gain access to the parents’ children. He particularly targeted mothers for companionship.

5.4.23. In the football-related abuse case for which he was prosecuted, he built a relationship with one mother of two boys over a four-year period. He drank regularly with the parents at the family home. After drinking sessions, DK slept on the floor of the boys’ bedroom. DK then used this position to assault the two boys.

5.4.24. DK touched the boys under their clothing, and touched himself in their presence. One of the boys eventually reported the abuse to his mother and said he did not want to share a room with DK anymore. The mother asked DK about the incident. He denied that anything had happened. The mother took matters no further.

Prosecution of DK

5.4.25. DK was prosecuted four years after the last instance of abuse. He pleaded guilty to five counts of indecent assault on a male person (contrary to section 15(1) Sexual Offences Act 1956), and one count of possessing indecent images of a child (contrary to section 1(1)(c) of the Protection of Children Act 1978). For these crimes he was initially sentenced to two years’ imprisonment, later increased by the Court of Appeal to six and a half years.

CASE OF EJ

5.4.26. EJ sexually abused multiple boys over a 25-year period. The abuse he perpetrated ranged from over-the-clothes touching to penetration. At trial, the prosecutor explained that it seemed “to have been a matter of common knowledge” in the area that EJ had a sexual interest in boys.

5.4.27. Coaching football was one of the main tactics EJ used to gain access to boys. Other activities included entertaining at children’s parties, acting as a local NSPCC representative, and running a shop where he encouraged boys to hang out in their spare time.

5.4.28. EJ assaulted boys in a variety of ways. Sometimes his actions were after a period of trust-building with the survivor, but at other times they were more opportunistic and out-of-the-blue. EJ used the connection he had with boys in one area of his life (i.e. football) to get them involved in another area (i.e. his shop), thereby increasing the opportunities to groom and, ultimately, assault them.

5.4.29. Within football, he abused boys in the changing rooms which were situated next to his office, and in his office itself. When the boys visited his shop, he would make them sit on his lap to enable him to touch them over the clothes. He also organised a variety of trips which afforded him greater access to the boys.

5.4.30. One such trip involved a group of players in the ‘Under-11’ age group. After the trip, he took them back to his home. He isolated one child in his bedroom and assaulted him. On another trip, EJ cuddled a boy in his bedroom, and asked another boy to drop his towel after he had washed. Later, EJ made this boy rub him in bed. One of the players on that trip recalled telling his parents afterwards that EJ was “in and out of the boys’ beds all night long”.

5.4.31. EJ ingratiated himself and become friends with many of the boys’ parents. He often helped people with money. He also provided funding for the trips.

5.4.32. After the abuse occurred, EJ would frequently instruct the survivor not to tell his parents what had happened. In some cases, he made more significant threats, including that he would kill their parent if the abuse was disclosed. In addition to the ‘stick’ of these threats, EJ used the ‘carrot’ of small money payments, and gifts, including cigarettes, to conceal his abuse.

Prosecution of EJ

5.4.33. EJ was prosecuted more than 20 years after his first instances of his abuse, and two years after the last instance. He was found guilty of nine counts of indecent assault on a male person, and one count of indecency with a child. He was sentenced to five years in prison.

CASE OF NK

5.4.34. NK was a coach of a youth team. Like many other perpetrators, football was just one vehicle he used to gain access to children. He was also a volunteer at a school, a volunteer scout leader, and an employee at a residential college for children with learning difficulties.

5.4.35. Within football, NK used his position as coach to touch boys during practice and to watch them in the shower. He found various opportunities to touch boys over their clothes:

35.1. when speaking to the team, he encouraged boys to sit on his lap. On occasion this led to touching their genitals (over their clothing);

35.2. he frequently offered the boys lifts home. Once they were in the car he would stop off at places where he would caress them;

35.3. he took boys to watch a professional team play for free. One survivor recalls that NK touched his genitals over his clothes throughout the match; and

35.4. NK specifically recruited one local boy to come and play for the team. He then invited the boy to come over to his house before practice, on the pretext of transporting him to a game, and at his home NK touched the boy's genitals over his clothes.

Awareness of NK's Abuse

5.4.36. It appears that, over time, NK became known to players as a "pervert". Some players stopped attending the football club. A few informed their parents about incidents they had experienced with him. In one case, a father of a boy informed the club. The club told the father that nothing would be done if the allegations were not reported to the police (which they were not at that time).

5.4.37. Two other parents had indications of the abuse disclosed to them. One became aware of the abuse when he saw NK cupping a player's genitals during a coaching session. Later, his own son disclosed the touching to him. However, the father felt constrained from going to the police about the matter. He considered that it would be one person's word against another. A second father was alerted to the abuse when his son complained that his genitals hurt because NK had pulled on them. However, the father considered that this comment must have been an over-exaggeration. He did not pursue the matter.

Prosecution of NK

5.4.38. NK was found guilty of four counts of indecent assault on a male person and sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment.

CASE OF ER

5.4.39. ER's abuse occurred both inside and outside of football. He used a variety of tactics to access children: he pressured boys into accepting money for sex at bus stands or in public toilets, but also groomed a child over a lengthy period through football.

5.4.40. He founded a junior league football team, acting as its Chairman and coach. ER was careful not to behave inappropriately with boys when other adults were present. However, he targeted multiple players for abuse.

5.4.41. Some of his abuse took place openly in front of other boys at the club. It ranged from making the boys sit on his lap, to drying them off after their showers, to touching them on the pretence of making their tracksuits fit. However, he would then escalate this abuse outside of the club setting into more extreme forms – including kissing, simulated penetration, and forced oral intercourse.

5.4.42. As part of ER's grooming routine in football, he involved boys' families. He frequently befriended parents of the survivors, and used this friendship to gain access to boys. In one case, ER became so friendly with the parents of a survivor that he attended the family house several times a week. With the parents' full knowledge, ER would come into the survivors' bedroom to say goodnight. However, without the parents' knowledge, ER then took this opportunity to assault the survivor as he lay in his bed.

5.4.43. It became routine for various boys to stay overnight at ER's house after football training on Fridays and Saturdays. In some cases, ER sought parents' permission to have boys stay over. However, increasingly as time went on, the boys would go to his home without asking their parents. Survivors remember either sleeping in ER's bed with him or having the experience of falling asleep on the sofa and later waking up in ER's bed, having been moved by ER.

5.4.44. ER encouraged boys to come over to his house in the daytime, too. Again, sometimes this was with the knowledge of the boys' parents. ER often used an excuse such as needing assistance with a household task.

5.4.45. ER also sought access to the boys on his team by taking them on trips in his caravan. On one such trip, one survivor was instructed to creep into ER's room late at night. When he did so, he was sexually abused. On another trip, several boys were forced to perform sex acts on ER at the same time.

5.4.46. ER also appears to have supported several players' trials for a professional club's youth team by taking them to them to the club's training session. This was another method used for ER to spend more unsupervised time with the boys.

5.4.47. ER was able to embed himself in players' lives. Although the degree of intimacy and control in the relationship varied between survivors, ER appeared to go as far as he could with each boy. In one case he had groomed one survivor to such an

extent that ER regularly took the boy out without his parent's permission, and even collected him from hospital. ER felt confident enough to write his own name into the emergency contact book at the survivor's school, and told other people that the survivor was his son.

Awareness of ER's Abuse

5.4.48. It was common knowledge among the players at the club that ER touched boys. There also appears to have been indications that others had suspicions, or should have known about ER's behaviour.

5.4.49. First, a few parents recalled that ER behaved oddly, although they did not connect this to sexual abuse at the time.

5.4.50. Second, an incident took place after a football match. Both teams went back to ER's house. A member of the opposing team then complained that ER had touched him. This led to that team walking out and calling ER "gay". It appears that this team's manager was with them at the time. There does not appear to have been a report made about this incident to any relevant authorities.

5.4.51. Third, a second incident took place when two police officers came across ER and a boy parked in a car. The boy was looking down and ER's head emerged from below the dashboard where the boy was seated. The police officers asked some questions and followed up on the perpetrator's employment. They then wrote a statement to record the incident. But the police did not appear to take any further steps to investigate what had happened.

5.4.52. Fourth, some players told their parents about the abuse they were subject to. The parents took the matter to the manager of the club. The manager first sought assistance from another member of the club's committee, and then both of these men spoke with the parents. As a result of this discussion, a collective decision was made to inform the police about the abuse.

Prosecution of ER

5.4.53. ER pleaded guilty to 21 counts of indecent assault on a male person (contrary to section 15(1) Sexual Offences Act 1956). He was sentenced to a total of seven years' imprisonment.

CASE OF LU

5.4.54. LU's abuse was committed over three weeks in the early 2000s. The abuse involved touching a child over-the-clothes and on the skin.

5.4.55. LU was able to gain access to boys by impersonating a scout for a professional club. He approached the manager of a junior league club at a match and introduced

himself on the basis that he was a scout, and was interested in several of the youth players. He flashed an ID card. The manager only quickly glanced at it. He did not take any further steps to verify LU's identity until after the alarm was raised, weeks later.

5.4.56. LU appears to have instantly gained the manager's confidence. He was subsequently allowed to attend multiple matches and training sessions. At training, LU became involved in giving directions to the players. He quickly focused his attention on the survivor. One evening, he kept the survivor and one other boy behind after training for four hours, unsupervised by anyone from the club.

5.4.57. LU also gained the survivor's contact details from the manager. He then made contact and introduced himself to the survivor's parents. LU sent the survivor a fake letter from the professional club, stating his intention to train the boy on a one-on-one basis.

5.4.58. Alongside this build-up of contact and trust with the survivor, LU quickly began to touch the survivor's leg at training and matches on the side-line benches. He concocted a story about a competition that was allegedly being run to win a football kit and of which he claimed to be one of the judges. He encouraged the survivor to enter it. On the pretence of helping the survivor, he reviewed the boy's written entry. This review took place at a pub and during it he touched the survivor's leg. This was noticed by a parent of another player who was present. The parent was angered and removed the survivor from the pub. Very soon afterwards, LU announced to the survivor that he had won the competition. He brought him a football as the prize.

5.4.59. LU's behaviour ultimately aroused suspicion in other parents at the club:

59.1. one parent sought LU's ID card after he had offered to drive his son home after practice. LU refused to provide the card. This appeared to the father to be odd behaviour;

59.2. the parent who noticed the inappropriate touching at the pub also noted that it was strange that LU failed to produce any ID when introducing himself as a scout to an adult taking down goal nets at matches. He further found it strange that LU was approaching the players as "scouts don't usually introduce themselves to kids". He noted that the strange behaviour continued with LU having "taken over the training which didn't seem right". He also witnessed an incident on the side of the match where the perpetrator stroked the survivor's leg and "thought this very strange... and disturbing and I thought... rather perverted";

59.3. the parents of the other boy who received training from LU noted that he had kept their son for training four hours after a game had finished without seeking their permission and this "wasn't what a proper person would do"; and

59.4. when LU came to the survivor's family home he mainly directed his conversation towards the child, not the parents. One of the boy's parents noted that this made him "think that there was something not right about this man and that he may not be a scout. I thought he should have asked me a lot more questions than he did". The format and content of the letter which

had been sent to the survivor, purportedly from the professional football club, also raised concerns.

5.4.60. The survivor told his parents that LU had touched his leg. Around the same time, another parent contacted the professional club that LU claimed to be scouting for. The club confirmed that LU had no connection to it. The parents at the club shared the information among themselves, and took the matter to the police.

Prosecution of LU

5.4.61. Six months after the episode, LU was prosecuted on three counts of indecent assault on a male person (contrary to section 15(1) Sexual Offences Act 1956). He initially pleaded not guilty to all counts. He later changed his plea on one of the counts to guilty. He was sentenced to a community rehabilitation order for two years.

CASE OF NV

5.4.62. NV coached and managed a junior football team. Initially, NV required boys to come to his house when “signing on” to the team. NV was 18 years old at the time. When the boys arrived, he took them directly into his bedroom. Once there, NV locked the door. He explained to each boy that they had to pass a medical examination in order to join the team.

5.4.63. NV was not medically trained. He used the so-called medical examinations as opportunities to assault the boys sexually. This included both over-the-clothes touching, and penetration. In some cases, NV made up further pretexts for conducting the examination, including that he was doing a course at college which required a form of medical examination on the survivor. He convinced the survivor to participate through the offer of some money for his “participation” in the examination. In other cases, he promised special treatment at matches (for instance, to be first off the bench in a match).

5.4.64. The episodes of abuse led some boys to quit the team. Although it does not appear that any adults were ever alerted to NV’s behaviour, local boys appear to have been well aware of it. One survivor of abuse heard other boys joking at school that NV was a “pervert.” He understood this to mean that NV had also abused other boys.

5.4.65. Two decades later, in the 1990s, NV continued to use the excuse of football training to become closer to young boys. He organised a training session with a boy, and took the boy to his home. NV made the boy stretch and perform exercises indoors. NV indecently assaulted the boy by touching him when he was stretching.

Prosecution of NV

5.4.66. NV was prosecuted for his abuse nearly 20 years after the last instance of abuse. He pleaded guilty to three counts of indecent assault on a male person (contrary to section 15(1) Sexual Offences Act 1956). He was sentenced to a total of 39 months' imprisonment for his crimes.

5.5 Post-2016 Convictions

5.5.1. Following the disclosures by Andy Woodward and others in November 2016, a number of cases involving child sex abuse in football have been prosecuted. In addition to the trials of the abusers involved with the professional game that are referred to elsewhere in this Report (see: Barry Bennell; Bob Higgins; George Ormond), there have been several trials of individuals whose involvement in football was in the grass-roots game. I set out details from some of these cases so as to illustrate further the ways in which abusers were able to operate within the world of football during the Review period.

CASE OF TC

5.5.2. Four men contacted the police separately about TC following the FA's announcement of its inquiry into historic child sex abuse. TC was convicted and jailed in April 2019 for five counts of indecent assault against boys in the 1980s. He had singled out players from a football team for 'awards' which involved taking them to a training complex for 'one-on-one' coaching. There, TC encouraged boys to remove their clothes under the pretext of giving them sports massages and abused them.

CASE OF IH

5.5.3. IH was charged in early 2019 with a number of sexual offences committed between the 1970s and early 2000s against five survivors. At the time of the offences, IH was employed as a football coach and later as a hockey coach. The abuse came to light in 2016, when one of IH's survivors spoke to the police after seeing media coverage of football abuse cases. Further survivors came forward after IH was initially charged.

5.5.4. IH's survivors report that he used to buy them meals, birthday presents and arrange group trips where they would stay overnight, such as camping. This enabled IH to be alone with them and to inflict his abuse.

5.5.5. IH was tried in late 2019, and found guilty of 11 counts of indecent assault, five counts of indecency with a child and five counts of other sexual offences. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

CASE OF MF

5.5.6. MF was convicted in September 2018 of historic sexual offences against three boys during the 1970s and 1980s, and sentenced to 14 years in prison. MF groomed two teenage boys aged 14 and 16 while working as a football coach in the early 1970s. He abused them in his home. He later went on to qualify as a youth worker for a local authority where he perpetrated further sexual abuse against another boy.

CASE OF JR

5.5.7. JR was the first person jailed as part of Operation Corduroy, a nationwide investigation carried out in partnership with the NSPCC, the FA and local councils.

5.5.8. JR was a football coach in the 1980s, and encouraged boys to travel half a mile after matches to a sports centre, where he was the manager, to get changed. He insisted that the boys had a shower, and JR would shower with them. He followed one boy out of the shower, exposed himself and then forced the boy to engage in a sexual assault. Another survivor was touched inappropriately by JR while he administered physiotherapy for an injury.

5.5.9. JR was arrested in December 2016, and in December 2018 was found guilty of three counts of indecent assault. He was sentenced to seven years in prison.

CASE OF BN

5.5.10. BN was jailed for five years in August 2018 for sexually assaulting seven boys in the late 1970s and early 1980s. BN was a football coach for a youth team. He molested boys before or after training sessions, including whilst giving lifts home to the boys.

CASE OF UX

5.5.11. UX was a youth football coach and seen as a “pillar” of the community for more than two decades. He was jailed for 13-and-a-half years in March 2019, after being found guilty of abusing two children playing for the football team.

5.5.12. He told boys stories about how it was normal for friends to perform sexual acts in front of each other. He gave boys index cards with instructions of what he wanted them to do and enticed them with beer, money and presents. His reputation meant he was entrusted to enter boys’ homes unsupervised and even sexually abused one boy in his own bedroom. UX pleaded guilty to seven counts of committing indecency with a child, six counts of indecent assault and two counts of sexual assault.

5.6 Hazing Allegations

5.6.1. The Review has also heard evidence concerning allegations of a practice known as “hazing” which falls within the definition of child sex abuse, where the motivation was primarily to humiliate or intimidate the survivor.

Paragraphs 5.6.2, 5.6.3 and 5.6.4 have been removed by The FA on the basis that the consent of the relevant survivor(s) to use their personal data has not been provided.

5.7 Sexual Abuse in Girls' Football

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL

5.7.1. Women's football teams have formally existed since the late 1800s. However, women's football has only really become mainstream in England more recently. The Women's FA ("WFA") was formed in 1969 with 44 member clubs. The FA invited the WFA to affiliate on the same basis as a County FA in 1983, and then brought the women's game under its formal auspices ten years later, establishing a Women's Football Committee to run the women's game in England in 1993 (now known as the "Women's Football Board"). Every County FA also has a lead officer to oversee the development of the women's game.

5.7.2. Today, it is estimated that several million women and girls play recreational football. This marks a dramatic contrast with earlier periods. In 1983, for instance, the FA estimated that around 22,500 girls between the age of nine and 18 played football in the 1982-3 season, which was itself an increase of 650% over the previous ten years. This contrasted with an estimated 500,000 boys playing non-school team football at that time.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN GIRLS' FOOTBALL

5.7.3. The vast majority of the cases of child sexual abuse I have read or been told about as part of my Review concern male survivors. This prevalence of male child sex abuse in football appears to dovetail with the findings made by others. For example, Celia Brackenridge's analysis of the FA's 132 closed cases (for which data was available) up to 2002 revealed that only 17 survivors were female. This is unsurprising, given the historic, and continuing, male dominance in the sport.

5.7.4. Most of the material involving the abuse of young girls that I have reviewed concerns abuse outside of the footballing context, but where the abuser had a role in football. For instance, a founder member of a women's team was convicted of various sex offences against young girls in 2000, and was then suspended by the FA.

5.7.5. The most high-profile conviction outside of the footballing context was that of Graham Rix, the Chelsea football coach and former England international, who was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment and placed on the sex offender's register for ten years in 1999 after admitting two charges of unlawful sex and indecent assault against a 15-year old girl (see: Disciplinary and Referrals).

5.7.6. Of the evidence of child sex abuse within the footballing context, many of the cases involve the abuse of adolescent girls. The manager of one women's team was

accused of travelling alone with a child and acting in an improper manner, making improper physical contact with several girls, as well as using inappropriate language in the presence and hearing of children. He was subject to an interim suspension towards the end of the Review period, with this becoming permanent shortly afterwards.

5.7.7. In another case, a youth football coach pleaded guilty to ten counts of sexual activity with a minor: a young girl who played for his team. When sentencing him, the judge commented that:

“You were in almost a position of trust because parents knew you were helping young people and this is not the way people should be working with young people.”

The FA suspended the individual before trial.

5.7.8. A number of allegations of sex abuse involving girls is reflected in the material provided to the Review by the Clubs: (see: Clubs).

Chapter 6. Methodology

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INTRODUCTION

6.1. The findings in this Report are based on a huge quantity of evidence, derived from a variety of different sources, obtained by and provided to the Review Team. The main sources were:

- 1.1. The FA's hardcopy and electronic archives (collectively the "FA archives");
- 1.2. Questionnaire responses from clubs and County FAs ("CFAs"), along with supporting documentation where available;
- 1.3. Reports and supporting documentation provided by certain professional clubs;
- 1.4. Documents from a range of other organisations, including courts, police forces and sporting bodies;
- 1.5. Interviews with relevant persons, including former FA personnel, survivors and their families, and others involved with football and sport generally during the review period.

6.2. The Review Team consisted of six barristers from 11KBW Chambers who worked with me in completing the Review.

FA DOCUMENTS

6.3. The FA documents provided to the Review were held on an online document management system. The Review Team was guided by the need to conduct a thorough investigation but also for proportionality and personal data minimisation. Whilst the principal aim was to obtain all relevant documents, the Review Team also had regard to the practicalities of avoiding irrelevant and duplicate documents and (secondarily) reducing where proportionate the amount of time spent later on the filtering process.

THE FA'S HARDCOPY ARCHIVES

6.4. The FA had three collections of hardcopy documents.

6.5. First, a small collection of child protection policies and procedures was held at the FA offices at Wembley.

6.6. Secondly, the FA also kept at Wembley a near-complete collection of minutes of FA Council meetings, and reports of FA Committee meetings, dating back to the beginning of the Review's period of relevance. These were initially reviewed manually, and relevant minutes (totalling 5,368 pages) were digitised for further review. The FA Council met, on average, six times a year, and at each meeting received a set of reports of Committee meetings which had taken place since the previous Council meeting. The Executive Committee, later the Board, met on average once a month, and also received reports of other Committees' meetings (there was some overlap with the reports re-

ceived by the Council) as well as relevant correspondence. Other relevant Committees included (at various times): the Child Protection Working Group; the Instructional Committee; the Youth Committee; the Technical Control Board; the Education and Welfare Sub-Committee; the Centres for Excellence Central Liaison Sub-Committee; the Charter for Quality Liaison Sub-Committee; the Referees' Committee; the Disciplinary Committee; the Rules Committee; and the Finance Committee.

6.7. Thirdly, there was a much larger archive held offsite ("Offsite archives"). The Review was provided with an index of the 9,623 boxes in the Offsite archives ("the Index").¹ The Index included descriptors, indicating the contents of most (but not all) of the boxes in storage. Some of these descriptors were produced when the box was placed in storage by the FA, and some were produced later for the purposes of the Hillsborough Inquiry. The descriptors used in the Index varied in terms of detail and approach depending on the age of the contents of the box and the staff responsible for placing it in storage.

6.8. On the basis of the descriptors, the Review Team was able to discount 2,759 boxes as obviously irrelevant (due to either subject matter or date). These were dip-sampled, however, to ensure that the descriptions on the Index were accurate.

6.9. Some descriptors were not immediately clear as they contained codes rather than full descriptions. The Review Team sampled these boxes. A further 3,328 boxes were designated irrelevant through this process.

6.10. The remaining 3,536 boxes were retrieved from the Offsite archives and reviewed. This was completed by members of the Review Team, who also oversaw the work of paralegals engaged by solicitors for the FA (initially Charles Russell Speechlys LLP and later Northridge Law LLP). A document review protocol was prepared for the paralegals. This set out key terms and named individuals in advance (the named individuals were those perpetrators that the Review Team had identified from the media or from other sources as having potential relevance to the Review). The work of the paralegals was sampled to ensure consistency.

6.11. Some documents within the boxes were identified as potentially relevant to the Review's Terms of Reference but did not substantially contribute to the Review's understanding of the relevant issues. By way of example, feedback forms relating to FA child protection workshops which had been held by the FA, while potentially relevant, in that they related to child protection, were of limited evidential value. In such cases, representative samples of the class of document, but not all of the documents within that class, were digitised.

6.12. Boxes (or specific items within a box) identified during this initial review as potentially relevant were digitised and uploaded to a document management system for further review and analysis. In total, 310,209 pages were digitised from 524 boxes in the Offsite archives, as well as 82 video files and 30 audio files. While difficult to estimate with accuracy, the total number of pages reviewed (before digitisation) is likely to have exceeded one million.

1. 1,067 boxes listed on the index had been destroyed, unconnected to the Review or any underlying allegations.

6.13. The FA archives included the FA's disciplinary case files. This had its own index, which enabled the Review to (i) target specific cases of particular interest; (ii) avoid cases which were not relevant, due to subject matter or date; and (iii) sample various types of child protection cases.

6.14. Separately, a further 7,488 pages of documentation were obtained from various firms of solicitors which had been engaged by the FA during the relevant period.

6.15. It subsequently emerged that a small number of relevant documents, relating to individuals named in the document protocol, had not initially been digitised. Once these were identified they were digitised and provided to the Review.

THE FA'S ELECTRONIC FILES

6.16. The FA also provided the Review Team with access to its central digital database, as well as to the local devices of key individuals at the FA. From a map of the directories, the Review Team identified folders as being relevant and applied search terms (subject keywords and specific names) and date ranges.

6.17. Some folders were identified as potentially containing documents which would not be caught by the search terms. These were reviewed manually, and those documents identified as relevant were uploaded to the document management system.

6.18. In total, 825 documents were obtained from the FA's digital database (8,309 pages) and 95 from employees' devices (645 pages).

6.19. The FA's electronic files included recent case files, including historical investigations into the allegations which formed the background to the Review being established. The Review identified 176 of these case files which were potentially relevant to the Terms of Reference. These were provided to the Review: they consisted of 6,634 documents, including referral forms, transcripts of interviews and emails.

COUNTY FAS

6.20. At the outset, the Review sent a questionnaire to every CFA which deals with children (i.e. excluding the Amateur Football Alliance and armed forces FAs, but including the English Schools FA), requesting information about allegations, complaints and concerns raised to them, the actions they took and the level of involvement of the FA and other relevant bodies during the relevant period. The Review also asked for information about any child protection policies, procedures and personnel which had been put in place generally, again during the relevant period. CFAs were required to respond, enforced by the compulsory powers of the FA.

6.21. The responses reflected a broad spectrum of available resources, institutional memory and document retention policies. Whereas some CFAs were able to provide detailed responses with complete or near-complete supporting documentation, others explained that they were simply not in a position to answer questions about some or all of the Review period.

THE CLUBS

6.22. At the outset, the Review sent a questionnaire to every club (professional and non-professional, men’s and women’s) in the country, requesting information about allegations, complaints and concerns raised to them, and the actions they took and the level of involvement of the FA and other relevant bodies during the relevant period. The Review also asked for information about any child protection policies, procedures and personnel which had been put in place generally, again during the relevant period. Professional clubs (that is, clubs in the Premier League and the English Football League) were required to respond, enforced by the compulsory powers of the FA. For reasons of proportionality, non-league clubs were asked to provide on a voluntary basis any information that they considered to be relevant to the Review.

6.23. Not every professional club met the initial deadline imposed by the Review. However, the Review ultimately obtained responses from all of the 92 men’s league clubs (as of the 2016-17 season). The Review also received 434 responses from non-league clubs, most of which were “nil-returns”.

6.24. In relation to clubs “identified as linked to alleged sexual abusers”, the Terms of Reference set out my role as being to consider what steps the clubs have taken, and are taking, to investigate what the club “did or did not know and/or did or did not do in relation to child sexual abuse which have been brought to light in the press relating to the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and up until around 2005”.

6.25. Accordingly, where a professional club appeared to be connected with the more high-profile allegations raised in the media, the Review liaised with those clubs with a view to ensuring that they carried out appropriate investigations and reported their findings. These clubs were: Aston Villa, Blackpool, Cambridge United, Charlton Athletic, Chelsea, Crewe Alexandra, Leicester City, Leyton Orient, Manchester City, Millwall, Newcastle United, Norwich City, Peterborough United, Southampton, Stoke City and Tottenham Hotspur.

6.26. Chelsea instructed external lawyers to carry out a large-scale external review. I met with the external review team on a number of occasions to discuss the approach to the investigation and lines of enquiry. Where appropriate, information and documentation were shared. The Club published its report on August 6th 2019.² I shared with Chelsea the section of my Report that relates to the Club. Chelsea provided a response, which I considered before finalising that section of my report. The same process was applied to all of the clubs, who were investigating the “high-profile” allegations.

2. Charles Geekie QC, July 2019, Review of Non-Recent Child Sexual Abuse at Chelsea Football Club <https://www.chelseafc.com/en/about-chelsea/safe-guarding-review>

6.27. Manchester City also instructed external lawyers to carry out a large-scale external review. Again, I met with the Club and its external review team on a number of occasions to discuss the approach to the investigations and lines of enquiry, and, where appropriate, information and documentation was shared. The Club's external review team provided me with a near-final draft of the report that it had produced. I then used this report along with information gathered by my Review to prepare this Report to the FA.

6.28. Southampton instructed the children's charity Barnardo's to carry out an investigation. The Club's investigation is ongoing but the investigators at Barnardo's have provided me with various documents and information which have allowed me to form a view as to the adequacy of that investigation. I have discussed with the investigators the approach being adopted and lines of enquiry that I consider should be pursued. Where appropriate, information and documentation has been shared. I used information provided by Barnardo's along with information gathered by my Review to prepare this report.

6.29. Most of the other clubs listed above worked with lawyers (some with external lawyers, and others with internal lawyers) to carry out their investigations. I have worked more closely with these clubs, both in suggesting lines of enquiry and relevant interviewees, and in conducting some of the primary investigation such as interviewing certain witnesses and engaging with relevant police forces. These clubs have all provided me with reports of their investigations, which included whom they had spoken to, what documents they had seen, their conclusions as to what, if anything, the club knew at the relevant time and their conclusions as to what, if any, investigation had been carried out at the relevant time. These reports followed a structure that I had suggested to the clubs. I then used the clubs' reports along with information gathered by my Review to prepare this Report to the FA.

6.30. Crewe Alexandra's initial position was that Cheshire Constabulary had already conducted an investigation which the Club had fully engaged with. I liaised with the Club and its lawyers with a view to suggesting other lines of enquiry that could usefully be followed up by the Club. Ultimately, the Club agreed to conduct those further enquiries, and provided me with a report setting out its conclusions.

6.31. Watford FC is also in the process of conducting an investigation into its connection with and knowledge of the conduct of its former physiotherapist Phil Edwards, who has been accused of child sex abuse against a number of boys associated with the Club. I have been provided with various documents and information which have allowed me to form a view as to the adequacy of that investigation. I have discussed with the investigator the approach being adopted.

6.32. In relation to the clubs which were not connected with any high-profile allegations but in relation to which I was aware of a potential connection or concern relating to child sexual abuse, I liaised with those clubs and asked that they provide me with information and documentation. The amount and scope of material that I requested varied on a club by club basis. My purpose in making these requests was to understand

the connection with the club, the nature of the child protection concern, the extent of the club's contemporaneous knowledge/awareness of that concern, and whether any action taken by the club was appropriate in all the circumstances.

6.33. In answering the question in my Terms of Reference – “To consider the steps those clubs (that is any club at any level of the game including grass roots clubs) which are identified as linked to alleged sexual abusers took at the time of any incidents” – I did not apply current standards. Today, football has a very thorough and extensive set of child protection rules and procedures, and clubs should be well aware of their safeguarding obligations and of the warning signs of potential abuse. The same did not apply throughout the Review period. For the early part of the Review period where there was little awareness of child protection matters within football clubs, and no rules or guidance provided by the FA (or the professional leagues), I have sought to apply a standard of what would reasonably have been expected of them, as a matter of common sense and experience, at the particular point in time.

OPERATION HYDRANT

6.34. Paragraph 10 of the Review's Terms of Reference required me:

“To liaise with any other relevant ongoing inquiries and investigations with a view to ensuring that relevant information is shared but at the same time respecting the wishes and orders of criminal authorities in relation to their respective inquiries and investigations”

6.35. There was a substantial area of overlap between the scope of the Review and the ongoing criminal investigations being carried out by several police forces around the country, some of which progressed to trials. These investigations were being (and continue to be) overseen and co-ordinated by the National Police Chiefs' Council (“NPCC”), via Operation Hydrant.

6.36. The Review developed a good working relationship with Operation Hydrant. Operation Hydrant assisted the Review to obtain information from relevant police forces without impinging on any live investigations. Operation Hydrant also facilitated contact with survivors who wished to speak to the Review, after the conclusion of criminal proceedings.

6.37. Various police forces provided the Review with materials relating to criminal prosecutions. Some of this material was redacted to protect identities of witnesses. In total, in excess of 150 witness statements were shared with the Review by the police. This material assisted the Review in identifying whether disclosures had been made to anyone else – including individuals associated with clubs. Where the Review considered that an individual might have information relevant to disclosures or awareness of allegations, attempts were made to contact them, via the relevant police force, so that further information could be obtained.

OTHER SPORTING BODIES

6.38. A number of sporting organisations, both within and outside football, also made documents available to the Review, notably the English Football League, the Premier League, UK Sport and Sport England (formerly the UK Sports Council and English Sports) and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“the NSPCC”). These contained documents immediately relevant to the Terms of Reference (i.e. correspondence, minutes, etc., which shed light on child protection in football) as well as providing wider contextual information. The Review Team met with safeguarding leads and other officials at the English Football League, the Premier League and the NSPCC to discuss issues of child protection in football.

6.39. Celia Brackenridge had accumulated a large collection of documents relevant to child protection. Her archive is held by Brunel University (“the Brackenridge archives”). The Brackenridge archives included Celia Brackenridge’s correspondence and notes, academic literature, policies and documents from an array of sporting bodies, as well as press clippings. Before Celia Brackenridge passed away, the Review was granted access to the Brackenridge archives. Professor Mike Hartill examined the Brackenridge archives on behalf of the Review. I also had the privilege of speaking to Celia Brackenridge to discuss child protection in sport, and within football, before her death.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

6.40. The Review obtained records relating to trials at 19 Crown Courts and three Magistrates’ Courts. I am grateful for the assistance of the Ministry of Justice’s Departmental Library and Records Management Service, which acted as a Single Point of Contact for the Review in requesting, receiving and redacting (as required) those records from the relevant courts and the National Archives.

6.41. The records include: (i) indictments and record sheets; (ii) witness statements; (iii) applications and orders (including sex offender registration orders); (iv) records of judge(s) and counsel; and (v) certificates of acquittal and conviction.

6.42. The information provided further examples of abuse in football, and was of particular assistance in understanding how abuse occurred at the grassroots level.

6.43. The Review also had regard to the recent criminal proceedings against some of the individuals who came within the Terms of Reference. The Review arranged for these hearings to be attended and notes of those proceedings to be taken.

INTERVIEWS

6.44. In total, the Review Team interviewed 219 individuals across 217 separate interviews (some people were interviewed together, and others were interviewed more than once). In total, these interviews generated over 220 hours of recordings, and almost 10,000 pages of transcripts.

6.45. Of the 219 interviewees:

- 45.1. 62 were survivors of sexual abuse;
- 45.2. 11 were family members of survivors;
- 45.3. 21 were current or former FA personnel;
- 45.4. 60 were people who were or had been involved in relevant clubs or CFAs;
- 45.5. 24 were people involved in other football organisations;
- 45.6. 9 were people involved in other sport organisations;
- 45.7. 15 were people involved in child protection more broadly;
- 45.8. 17 were academics, journalists or witnesses with knowledge of specific allegations of abuse.

6.46. Many of these witnesses also provided supporting documentation. Survivors of abuse frequently provided photographs, match-day programmes, correspondence and other material relating to their playing days. One survivor provided a VHS video recording that had been produced by Barry Bennell for members of one of his junior clubs.

6.47. After each interview, a transcript was prepared by a third party from the recording. This transcript was then sent to the interviewee(s) for correction, clarification or supplementation.

6.48. The Review was also approached by members of the public who wished to volunteer information and documents. In some cases, the Review Team followed up the approach and carried out an interview with the relevant individual.

6.49. There were individuals whom I would have liked to have spoken to but was unable to do so because they were deceased, could not be contacted or declined to engage with my work.

INTERVIEWING SURVIVORS

6.50. Listening to survivors was a central element in the work of the Review. Members of the Review Team underwent training with former specialist police officers and counsellors on child protection issues generally, and in particular how to interview survivors of sexual abuse.

6.51. Interviews with survivors were, wherever possible, conducted by the Review Team in pairs, with a lead interviewer and a supporting note-taker.

6.52. All survivors were sent a factsheet in advance which explained the purpose and procedure of the interview, including an indication of what topics might be covered. It emphasised the voluntary nature of the interview, and in particular that there was no need to disclose any information the individual did not want to share. Survivors were also directed to counselling support organisations and were encouraged to contact them.

6.53. The Review was keen to speak to any survivor who wished to contribute. The Review sought to emphasise this in all of our public communications, and circulated contact details as widely as possible (to which end, the Review's contact details were referred to in press reports).

6.54. There were a variety of ways by which survivors came forward to the Review. Some responded to the Review's request to speak to survivors. Some came forward via the various survivor groups that were set up following Andy Woodward's disclosure in November 2016. Some came forward via lawyers who were acting for them in civil claims. Some came forward via the police who were investigating their complaints of abuse. Some came forward via the FA: many individuals contacted the FA to make a direct disclosure of the abuse they had suffered, and some of them wished to speak to the Review. Some individuals were identified by the Review itself as a result of media articles, material that the Review Team had reviewed, or following interviews that had been conducted with other survivors.

6.55. In considering the evidence of survivors my starting point was to presume that they were telling me the truth as to their abuse. It was not my role, however, to make findings about their abuse. I am aware that many of these survivors have had their accounts accepted by the criminal and/or civil courts. I acknowledge, however, that some survivors have not had their evidence tested in a courtroom.

SURVIVOR GROUPS

6.56. The Review Team met on a number of occasions with survivor groups – the Offside Trust, and SAVE (Safeguarding and Victim Engagement) – as well as with The Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group, a group set up by the FA to engage with survivors. The meetings provided an opportunity for the survivor groups to explain to the Review the work they were doing with survivors, and for the Review Team to explain the processes and procedures of the Review process.

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

6.57. A key part of the Review's Terms of Reference was to consider the context in which various decisions, acts and omissions took place during the period from 1970 to

2005, and in particular the level of legal and cultural awareness of and sensitivity to issues of child protection.

6.58. In this, the Review was greatly assisted by Mike Hartill (who drafted a paper on the history of child protection in sport, and in the voluntary sector more generally), and frequently made himself available to answer questions about child protection in sport. The Review also had recourse to the considerable academic output of Celia Brackenridge and her colleagues and associated researchers; this was in addition to the Brackenridge archives mentioned above.

6.59. This was supplemented with additional legal research, as well as a review of national and local press and academic literature.

6.60. The Review's Terms of Reference required me "To consider what steps The FA took to address safeguarding/child protection issues in the sport up until 2005, and to consider any failings by The FA at the time, in particular whether it failed to act appropriately to anything raised with it relating to child sexual abuse, in relation to any football club (at any level of the game including grass roots clubs) or alleged abuser that may come to light."

6.61. In reaching conclusions on this matter, I applied a test of what would have been reasonable for the FA to have done at a particular point in time, taking into account the broader context as to what was known about child protection, the materials that were available and what was being said about child protection by the national sporting bodies (primarily the Sports Council and the National Coaching Foundation) and public institutions at that time. I did not consider that it was appropriate to hold the FA to a higher standard than other sports national governing bodies, merely because of its role as "the national game".

CONFLICTS OF EVIDENCE

6.62. During the course of the Review, I have received a significant amount of evidence relating to the clubs, their connections with certain child sexual abusers and what they knew about allegations of abuse. Some of that evidence was provided by the clubs themselves; some was gathered directly by the Review Team; some was provided by the police; and some came from the FA archives.

6.63. On a number of key issues the evidence was conflicting or otherwise disputed, and different versions of events were put forward by individuals spoken to by the Review Team or by the clubs themselves. In a number of instances relevant witnesses were no longer available to be spoken with, leading to significant evidential gaps. Furthermore, even where witnesses were available, I was aware that the quality and reliability of their evidence may have been affected by the substantial passage of time since the events in question³. Furthermore, I was aware that witnesses would not be subject to the full extent of challenge and probing that would occur in a court setting by way of cross examination. I am also conscious that there are ongoing civil trials

3. In this regard, I am mindful of the observation made by Mr. Justice Leggatt (now Lord Leggatt, Justice of the Supreme Court) in the case of *Gestmin SGPS S.A. v. Credit Suisse (UK) Limited* and another [2013] EWHC 3560 (Comm), where he stated at [15-17] that "An obvious difficulty which affects allegations and oral evidence based on recollection of events which occurred several years ago is the unreliability of human memory. . . One of the most important lessons of [a century of psychological] research is that in everyday life we are not aware of the extent to which our own and other people's memories are unreliable and believe our memories to be more faithful than they are. . . . In fact, psychological research has demonstrated that memories are fluid and malleable, being constantly rewritten whenever they are retrieved."

where some of the disputed factual issues may fall to be determined in a court setting, where cross examination will be available.

6.64. In the circumstances, and given the impact that my findings could have on the reputation of an individual, the FA, or a club, where there is conflicting evidence I have decided that it is only appropriate for me to find that one version of events is correct, or should be favoured over the other version of events, where there is some clear corroborative evidence for preferring one version of events to another: that is, there is something over and above the particular account presented by the relevant individuals, such as a relevant document that supports one version of events, or an obvious inference based on other evidence that relates to the event or individuals in question.

6.65. I have applied a more stringent standard where not all materially relevant witnesses were available to be spoken with on a particular matter, whether as a result of illness, or because the individual is deceased. In those circumstances, I consider that it would be unfair to make findings against an individual who did not have the opportunity to put forward their own version of events without strong evidence to corroborate a particular account.

6.66. Where I am unable to reach a positive finding of fact, I set out the competing evidence and explain why I am unable to make a positive finding. Where that has occurred, that does not mean that the matter in question did (or did not) occur. Nor does it mean, nor should it be taken to mean, that I consider the interviewee to have been lying or not telling me what they genuinely believed to be the case. Rather, it simply means that, on the evidence available to me, I do not feel that it is appropriate for me to make a positive finding.

MAXWELLISATION

6.67. Towards the end of the process, when I had reached provisional findings, drafts of my findings and conclusions were sent to relevant institutions, individuals and clubs in order for them to consider and make any comments or provide further information as they saw fit. This process is referred to as *Maxwellisation* and is a standard feature of inquiries of this kind. It is designed to ensure fairness to those accused and accuracy in any reporting. I carefully considered the comments and information provided in response to my provisional findings, and took them into account when reaching my final conclusions.

ANONYMISATION

6.68. In writing the Report, the Review Team had to consider whether to name individuals or to anonymise them. For many individuals who were interviewed by the Review Team, anonymity was a condition of their providing evidence of their experiences, whether as survivors or otherwise. For some individuals who were interviewed

by clubs, this was a condition of their providing evidence to the club or of the club's sharing it with the Review Team. All survivors and their family members are anonymised – either through the use of random ciphers (e.g. “AB”, “CD”) or by describing them in a way which does not identify them (e.g. “a survivor”) – unless they have given explicit consent to be named.

6.69. When considering whether to anonymise individuals (other than survivors and their family members) who had been interviewed or who were referred to by interviewees or in documentation, a decision was made in each case as to whether the individual should be named. Where an individual consented to being named, and this was considered appropriate to a particular passage, then that individual has been expressly named there. Where an individual did not consent to be named, the Review Team identified the relevant basis under the General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”) for processing the individual's data and went on to carry out the proportionality analysis required by the GDPR: weighing up the public interest in using their name – which included consideration of: the significance to the narrative and findings of the Review of the individual's evidence; whether the individual has asked not to be named; the seniority of the individual in his or her organisation; and the extent to which identifying the individual was significant to the context of what was being said – against the impact that naming would, or might have, on the individual concerned. Where an individual has not been named, every effort has been taken to ensure that they are not identifiable from the context. To the extent that any identifying features have been used, it is because the public interest in doing so outweighed the potential impact on the individual.

6.70. I am conscious that the FA has its own obligations under the GDPR. As I was keen for this Report to be published in full, with a limited number of confidential annexes, I was also prepared to anonymise individuals where this was specifically requested by the FA.

USE OF INTERVIEWEE INFORMATION

6.71. Interviewees were provided with relevant extracts from their interviews which I proposed to include in the final Report, and they were asked to consent to the inclusion of those extracts. In a very small number of cases, interviewees withheld their consent, and I removed those extracts.

SCOTTISH FA

6.72. I also liaised with the Scottish FA's own inquiry to discuss points of common interest.

Chapter 7.
Terms of
Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE RELATING TO THE APPOINTMENT OF CLIVE SHELDON QC ON THE REVIEW INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ALLEGATIONS (“THE REVIEW”)

GENERAL

1. In November 2016 disclosures began to be made in the media relating to child sexual abuse which is alleged to have been carried out by Barry Bennell and others against a number of professional footballers and former academy scholars at various professional clubs. The precise number of players, alleged abusers and clubs as yet is unknown;

2. The FA has determined that it is necessary to instruct external leading counsel to conduct a review into what if anything The FA and clubs knew about these allegations at the relevant time, what action was taken or should have taken place;

PURPOSE

3. To consider the extent to which The FA was aware of any of the issues relating to non-recent child sexual abuse which have been brought to light in the press relating to the 1970's, 1980s and 1990s, and [up until around 2005];

4. To consider what steps The FA took to address safeguarding/child protection issues in the sport up until 2005, and to consider any failings by The FA at the time, in particular whether it failed to act appropriately to anything raised with it relating to child sexual abuse, in relation to any football club (at any level of the game including grass roots clubs) or alleged abuser that may come to light.

5. To consider the steps those clubs (that is any club at any level of the game including grass roots clubs) which are identified as linked to alleged sexual abusers took at the time of any incidents, and are taking to investigate what that club did or did not know and/or did or did not do in relation to child sexual abuse which have been brought to light in the press relating to the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and up until around 2005; in the event the Review finds such steps to be lacking the Review will look to extend its scope.

6. To consider what lessons can be learned by The FA and/or the clubs arising out of the investigations that are taking place/have taken place.

7. To make recommendations as appropriate;

AGREED PRINCIPLES

8. The Review will have access to all the materials it seeks and which are within The FA's possession; where any material is not in The FA's possession, it will take all reasonable steps to obtain such material;

9. The overriding objectives of the review are to ensure that any possible failings by The FA and clubs at the relevant time are brought to light and to ensure that lessons are learned such that any identified failings are not repeated;

10. To liaise with any other relevant ongoing inquiries and investigations with a view to ensuring that relevant information is shared but at the same time respecting the wishes and orders of criminal authorities in relation to their respective inquiries and investigations;

11. The Review will not cover any areas where The FA does not have jurisdiction but in the event information comes to light affecting or relating to other regulatory bodies (e.g. other sports or professions), such information will be passed on either to the Police or where appropriate to those bodies provided data protection and confidentiality principles allow; and for the avoidance of doubt any allegation of child abuse received by the Review will be referred to the Police;

12. It is not part of the Review's function to determine civil, regulatory or criminal liability of named individuals or organisations; however if any potential regulatory breaches of any football rules and regulations come to light these will be referred to The FA who will take whatever action it thinks fit.

13. These terms of reference may be amended by mutual agreement between Clive Sheldon QC and The FA in the event they need to be widened at any time.

14. The review will be conducted in such a way as to be as transparent as is possible within the scope of these terms of reference whilst having regard to all the relevant duties of confidentiality, security and data protection protocol;

15. Where possible, The FA wishes any reports to be transparent and to be published. The Review will therefore consider what should be published and at what stage and will liaise with The FA and other appropriate authorities, bodies and enforcement agencies in relation to what can be published once the Review is complete.

16. All Participants requested to assist the Review may be compelled to do so by The FA in accordance with The FA's Rules and Regulations;

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE REVIEW

17. The Review will be led by Clive Sheldon QC, a barrister in private practice at Chambers. A secretariat, to be agreed with The FA, will be appointed to assist Clive Sheldon QC which will be an external firm or company and the secretariat will liaise with members of The FA Executive as necessary. The FA will consider appointing other external assistance for the Review as required including any wing men/women to provide expert assistance to the Review to form a panel chaired by Clive Sheldon QC ("The Review Panel") Clive Sheldon QC (and any members of the Review Panel) will act with independence in the interests of justice. The Review's conclusions and recommendations will be theirs alone.

TIMETABLE

18. The Review will commence immediately. The findings of the Review will be reported to The FA Board. It is accepted that no final date can be agreed at this stage given the passage of time and the time it will take to recall files for review and to locate all those relevant people to interview who no longer work for The FA.

Chapter 8. Child Protection and the FA

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**COMMENTS ON THE DELAY IN PUTTING IN PLACE CHILD
PROTECTION MEASURES**

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Initial Lack of Awareness

Lack of Expertise

Lack of Strategic Thinking

No Child Protection Champion

Lack of Urgency and Other Priorities

No “Catastrophic Event”

Lack of Focus

Attention to the Professional Game and not the Grassroots

Summary

INTRODUCTION

8.1.1. I have been asked to consider what steps the FA took to address safeguarding and protect children from child sexual abuse in the sport from 1970 until 2005, and to consider any failings by the FA during that time.

8.1.2. Outside of the National School (see box 2: The National School), the FA did nothing proactive to address safeguarding and protect children from child sexual abuse in the sport until 1994. I do not consider that the FA's inaction during this period is blameworthy. For most of this period, child abuse was generally seen as something which occurred within the family setting or in residential environments, and not within the world of sport. This understanding was obviously wrong, as the recent disclosures by former football players have so harrowingly revealed.

8.1.3. It was only in the summer of 1993 that the issue of child sexual abuse in sport began to enter the national conversation with the broadcast of the BBC 2 documentary, *The Secrets of the Coach*, leading to the first conference on child protection in sport. It was only in 1993 that the Government produced guidance, *Safe from Harm? Code of Practice for Safeguarding the Welfare of Children in Voluntary Organisations in England and Wales* ("Safe from Harm"), which explained to voluntary organisations the various steps that could be taken to protect children from abuse. The documentary and the Government guidance do not appear, however, to have had any significant impact in expediting the introduction of child protection arrangements in most sports. In the circumstances, I consider that it would be unfair to criticise the FA for not addressing child protection in the period up to 1994 when so little was being done by most other sports and there was no guidance from national sporting bodies (the Sports Council, or the National Coaching Foundation ("NCF")) as to what could, or should, be done.

8.1.4. During the period from 1994 to September 1995, child protection was a matter which started to be discussed within the FA as something which the sport needed to address. From early 1995, consideration was given by the FA to how a screening regime could be introduced to prevent abusers from getting into the game, and a brief reference to child protection was incorporated into the FA's coaching training module.

8.1.5. I have considered carefully whether or not the FA should have done more during this period. I have concluded that it would not be fair to say that the FA should have done more than the preliminary steps that it was taking.

8.1.6. Had the FA done more, it would have been well ahead of the curve compared to other major sports, most of which were doing very little, if anything, about child protection. Indeed, one comparator – the governing body of swimming, the Amateur Swimming Association ("ASA") – had not put in place more child protection measures than the FA in this period, even though it was aware that the sport of swimming might be especially vulnerable to child sex abusers. In September 1992, the swimming coach Paul Hickson had been arrested. He was due to stand trial on very serious allegations of abuse in September 1993 but absconded before the trial.

8.1.7. Furthermore, for much of this period, there was no sport-specific material available to national governing bodies, including the FA, to draw upon if it had wished to do more child protection work. It was only in late March 1995 that the NCF and the NSPCC, along with the Royal Yachting Association published a 94-page training pack - *Protecting Children: a guide for Sportspeople* - explicitly written for “all those who have responsibility for the organisation of children’s sport (eg governing bodies of sport, centre managers, local authorities, sports clubs) and those who deliver children’s sport (eg sport coaches, leaders, teachers and instructors).” I do not consider that the FA can be criticised for not taking note of that material as soon as, or very shortly after, it was published, especially as there is no evidence that the work of the NCF and NSPCC in this area had been well publicised or had even been targeted at the FA.

8.1.8. Moreover, during this period, the FA was not aware that abuse had actually been committed in the football environment. It was only in the summer of 1995 that Barry Bennell was convicted in Florida in connection with a football-related tour the previous year.

8.1.9. I consider that the situation changed dramatically from the end of September 1995. From that point onwards I consider that the FA should have engaged more deeply with the issue of child protection and should have done more to bring in comprehensive measures to safeguard children in the game.

8.1.10. The key turning point was the conviction of Paul Hickson on September 26th 1995. Hickson, the Olympic swimming coach, was found guilty of raping two teenage swimmers and indecently assaulting several others over a 15-year period. Hickson’s conviction attracted headlines in the national newspapers, and the question of child abuse in sport became a serious item on the sports agenda. The case was a wake-up call for a number of sports to work quickly to develop and introduce child protection policies and programmes. The FA was plainly aware of the Hickson case as it was discussed internally.

8.1.11. The FA was also aware that Barry Bennell had recently been convicted in Florida of abusing a schoolboy player on an overseas football tour, and that a police investigation into allegations of abuse against Bennell in England was underway. The FA was not aware of the scale of Bennell’s abuse, or more generally of the prevalence of abuse within the game. As a result of Bennell’s conviction, however, the FA was aware that the game of football was not immune from child sexual abuse.

8.1.12. The FA’s primary response to learning of the Hickson conviction, and of Bennell’s abuse in Florida, was to push forward with efforts to introduce a screening regime. This was an important step for the FA to take. However, other than the brief mention of child protection in the FA’s coaching training, no efforts were made to think more broadly about the issue of child protection, and no steps were taken to contact experts in the field of child protection. Indeed, no discussion took place within the FA about the many other measures which might be necessary to safeguard children in football until the summer of 1996. In my view, this was too great a delay and is something for which I consider the FA should be criticised.

8.1.13. It took the FA until early 1997 before it reached out to third parties who had expertise in the field of safeguarding in sport. The FA could have spoken sooner to the NCF or the NSPCC: the publishers of the *Protecting Children: a Guide for Sportspeople* guidance.

8.1.14. In late June 1996, Tony Pickerin attended the Sports Council conference on child protection on behalf of the FA. At this conference, the FA (along with all other sports) were provided with the tools and know-how to develop a child protection programme, but it took a number of years before the FA implemented a comprehensive child protection programme.

8.1.15. I set out below in much more detail what did take place during the period from October 1995 to May 2000, when the FA's comprehensive child protection policy and strategy was launched. I acknowledge that during this period the FA introduced a number of measures to screen those involved with the game, and lobbied the Government for changes to the law to enable a comprehensive approach to screening. The FA also introduced a number of other important child protection measures. That said, I consider that the FA should and could have done far more from October 1995 - after the Hickson case had concluded - until May 2000, and far more quickly.

8.1.16. In my judgment, from October 1995 to May 2000, the FA acted far too slowly to introduce appropriate and sufficient child protection measures, and to ensure that safeguarding was taken seriously by those involved in the game. These are significant failings for which there is no excuse. The fact that the FA was ahead of the majority of its peers in sport in introducing various child protection measures during this time period does not justify the FA's own failures. It just means that other sports had failed to a greater degree than the FA to protect those children for whom they had a moral, if not legal, responsibility. All sports, including the FA, knew that child abuse could be a problem within their particular game, and all sports had easy access to materials and resources to introduce appropriate measures.

8.1.17. From May 2000 to the end of the Review period (2005), the FA invested considerable resources in child protection and put in place a wide variety of child protection measures. From May 2000, the FA had found its voice and was among those leading the national conversation about child protection in sport. The task was enormous, and the FA was rightly commended for the work that it did. There were, however, still a number of failings, particularly with respect to the grassroots game, where insufficient support was provided, and large numbers of affiliated clubs were allowed to pay little attention to child protection issues.

8.1.18. Below, I set out some initial comments as to why I consider that it was essential for the FA to introduce and implement a child protection policy and programme. I then set out in detail my findings on the FA's approach to developing a child protection policy and programme, breaking this down into key periods: (i) 1970-1993; (ii) 1994-May 1996; (iii) June 1996-1997; (iv) 1998; (v) 1999; (vi) 2000-2005. Finally, I set out my findings as to why it was that the FA failed to address child protection issues appropri-

ately in the period between October 1995 and the middle of 2000.

8.1.19. In the text, I highlight a number of significant events and strands of child protection work in distinct boxes. I do this to emphasise the importance of these matters. I also hope that it makes it easier to read and understand the text where strands or issues straddle several of the time periods. I address in separate sections the FA's work on screening (see: 8.2 Screening and Self Declaration), and disciplinary cases where the FA was alerted to specific allegations (see: 8.3 Disciplinary and Referrals). At various points I cross refer to those separate sections to ensure that as full and accurate an impression is given of what the FA was doing on these important issues during the various time periods.

INITIAL COMMENTS ON POLICY AND PROGRAMME

8.1.20. Before I set out my detailed findings, I set out some of my initial comments on the importance of having a child protection policy and a comprehensive child protection programme.

8.1.21. Having a child protection policy and a comprehensive programme for football has a number of important benefits. First, it provides practical measures to address the issue of child protection and minimises the risk of abuse for young people involved in the sport. Second, it sends a clear message to the footballing community and the wider world that child protection is being taken seriously. This sets the tone for discussion of issues of child protection. Third, it gives confidence to victims of abuse to speak out, and for those who were witnesses or are suspicious of abuse to report that abuse and to take steps to prevent it from happening.

8.1.22. The failure of the FA to have a child protection policy or comprehensive programme in place meant that these benefits were not achieved until the 2000s. As several witnesses told the Review, they did not know what to do when provided with allegations of abuse, let alone when faced with rumours and innuendo that abuse may be happening. For those who were suffering abuse, they did not know who they could speak to, or that there was anyone in football who would be prepared to listen and believe them. A comprehensive child protection programme, embedded throughout the game, would have changed this.

FA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROGRAMME: 1970-1993

8.1.23. During the period 1970 to 1993, issues of child protection were rarely looked at or considered by the FA. During this period, the FA did not have its attention drawn to the possibility that the game of football faced any systemic problem with child sex abusers, or that anything specific needed to be done to safeguard children playing football.

8.1.24. In 1983, the FA carried out an extensive survey of problems facing junior/youth football, but asked no question about child protection or risks to children from adults with whom they would come into contact. This was simply not a matter that was on the FA's radar. Furthermore, the issue was not put on the FA's radar by the responses to the survey, as none of the responses raised child protection as an issue with which the FA should be concerned.

8.1.25. The survey was entitled: *Investigation into Junior Football*. According to the FA's press release, the "major investigation" would "survey the present state of boys football as played by school and club teams, as well as enquire into the growing phenomenon of girls football". The impetus for the project was:

"[T]he concern felt by Bobby Robson, the England Team Manager, over the amount of competitive eleven - a - side football played by gifted young players and the overall way the game is presented to youngsters at an early age. . . . Of most interest will be the survey of the top 0.5% of young footballers in the age range 9 to 16 years, as to the amount of football played and the possible medical implications"

8.1.26. The report of the survey – which was written up in August 1984 by Robin Russell (at the time, the FA's Regional Coach for London (South)) concluded that "without doubt . . . the number of games played by the boys studied were not in the best interests of the boys concerned".

8.1.27. The fact that the FA carried out this investigation is, in my view, an acknowledgment that the FA owed a moral, even if not legal, obligation to look after the welfare of children playing the game of football under its auspices. At this point in time, however, the welfare of children with which the FA was concerned did not extend to issues of child protection. In 1983, child protection was simply not seen as a concern by anyone involved in the game.

8.1.28. In the same year as the survey was conducted, the FA approved the "Blueprint for the Achievement of Excellence", written by Charles Hughes (the FA's Director of Coaching) and Bobby Robson (the new England Team Manager). The *Blueprint for Excellence* recommended improvements to the way in which young players should be developed and introduced the Centres of Excellence system. This led to the FA's *Programme for Excellence*. I note here that the *Programme for Excellence* did not refer explicitly to child protection until the 1998/1999 season.

Box 1.

FA PROGRAMME FOR EXCELLENCE

In 1983, the FA Council approved the *Blueprint for the Achievement of Excellence* (more commonly referred to as the *Blueprint for Excellence*). This set out a number of recommendations intended to improve the development of young players, mostly relating to coaching and institutions. The three "major areas" were the Centres of Excellence, the National School (see box 2: The National School), and the Youth Training Scheme.

Centres of Excellence were football training institutions, attached to clubs and licensed by the FA. In October 1984, the FA licensed around 65 Centres of Excellence. By 1990, there were 133 Centres of Excellence throughout England, divided into regions (North-East, etc.), each of which had a Regional Committee. Governance and oversight were ultimately exercised by the FA's Centres of Excellence Central Liaison Committee (referred to as the Centres of Excellence Liaison Committee, and occasionally just Centres of Excellence Committee).

In February 1990, Tony Pickerin was placed in charge of the *Programme for Excellence*, shortly after his appointment as Housemaster of the National School. He was given the role of Assistant Director of Coaching and Education - Excellence.

In April 1993, the *Programme for Excellence* was revised to include "FA Independent Centres of Excellence", i.e. Centres of Excellence which were run by County FAs and not attached to a club. It was also proposed that the FA should develop qualification courses for personnel involved both in Centres of Excellence and youth coaching activities within clubs, in either the Football League or the newly established FA Premier League. Child protection issues – in a very limited way – formed part of the qualifications from 1994 (see: below).

The FA required Centres of Excellence to satisfy a number of conditions in order to become and remain licensed. From the 1994-95 season onwards, these requirements were set out in the Programme for Excellence Regulations in the FA Handbook. They were reviewed and updated as required annually. For the 1995-96 season, the FA Handbook stated (at p.160), that "All staff who work in Centres of Excellence will be expected to complete the necessary documentation and be subject to the requirements of The Children Act 1989." What was meant by the proposed rule was that there should be some sort of suitability assessment for staff working in the Centres of Excellence, but the precise details of this assessment were not fleshed out at that point and this was the subject of further discussion.

By 1997 there were 147 Centres of Excellence, training 10,000 young boys. Those involved with the *Programme for Excellence* may (from the mid-1990s) have received some limited training on child protection if they attended one of the FA's coaching courses.

8.1.29. In the late 1980s, there were a few cases reported in the national media of abusers connected with youth football. For instance, there were newspaper articles in 1987 about Daniel Swales – described in one newspaper as a "Child-sex pervert" – who was said to have run "a local football club involving hundreds of youngsters over seven years."¹ Swales subsequently pleaded guilty to a number of indecent assaults and was imprisoned.

8.1.30. In November 1988, there were newspaper reports about a "SOCCER BOSS",² known as Alan Delaney, who was tried with a number of other members of a "paedophile ring". The Court was told that Delaney had a football connection. Delaney "seduced a boy aged 15 whom he had met while acting as a trainer to a youth football

1. The Daily Mirror, Child sex beast on the run, July 4th 1987; The Sunday Telegraph, Child-sex pervert hunted, July 5th 1987; The Times, Man is sought, July 6th 1987; The Daily Mail, Holiday camp search for sex pervert, July 7th 1987.

2. The Daily Mirror, February 3rd 1989, Four evil child-sex men who face jail.

team... he gave the boy a holiday job in his office and offered massage to strengthen his muscles for football.”³ Delaney was said to have run “a North London football team and used that . . . to lure teenagers for sex.” The club that Delaney ran was affiliated with a County FA. Delaney was found guilty of a number of sexual offences and was imprisoned.

8.1.31. There is no evidence that the FA was contacted by police or social services in connection with Swales or Delaney. There is no evidence that anyone at the FA was made aware of these individuals or of the allegations against them. There is no reference to these news stories in the FA archives. There is no evidence that anyone at the FA considered that there might be a wider, systemic problem of abuse in football that needed to be addressed. This is not surprising as these cases and other information provided to the FA did not indicate a wider problem within the game, and more generally the issue of child sexual abuse in sport was only just beginning to be talked about in academic circles by Celia Brackenridge. Furthermore, the subject of child sexual abuse was not being discussed more generally among voluntary organisations or among sporting bodies (see: Context).

8.1.32. There is no evidence to suggest that, during this period of time (1970-1993), other than the allegations against Bob Higgins (in respect of which he was acquitted by a criminal court) the FA was aware of the allegations of abuse by any of the other perpetrators with whom we are now familiar: Ted Langford, George Ormond, Frank Roper, Kit Carson, Eddie Heath, Barry Bennell and Chris Gieler (see: 9. Clubs). That is not surprising as the evidence that I have heard from a number of individuals is that club personnel – even when they were themselves aware of allegations – did not think about referring the matter onwards to the FA, or the relevant County FA. The FA had provided no guidance or instructions that they should make such a referral, and the FA had no mechanisms or procedures in place for dealing with any such referral.

8.1.33. In my judgment, the lack of guidance, and the absence of a referral mechanism during this period, is not something for which the FA can be criticised. No, or at most very few, other sports were doing these things at this time and, if they were, it would only have been towards the end of the period. Child sexual abuse within sport, and beyond the residential setting, only started being discussed outside of academic circles towards the end of this period.

8.1.34. The FA’s main area of engagement with child protection issues during this period was at the FA’s National School in Lilleshall. The National School was regulated as a residential home under the Children Act. As a result, staff at the National School and its Governing Body (which was made up of the most senior lay people and professional staff working for the FA) were made aware of child protection matters as they applied in the residential school environment. The Governing Body were aware from at least 1992 that in this environment staff working closely with children should be trained to understand the signs of child abuse and what to do if allegations were made, that employees working closely with children needed to be screened for suitability, and that it was important to have a child protection policy.

3. The Times, November 12th 1988

8.1.35. There is no suggestion that any abuse took place at the National School, and none of the allegations drawn to the attention of the Review by individuals or by the police relate to the National School. There were, however, considerable delays at the National School in training staff about child protection matters, and there was a substantial delay in introducing a child protection policy at the National School. A policy was not introduced until 1997, even though the matter was repeatedly raised by those inspecting the school from 1992. In my view, this amounts to a significant failing. It evidences a failure to appreciate the benefits that a child protection policy can bring.

8.1.36. This failure was repeated by the FA when the question of a child protection policy for the game of football as a whole was raised from 1996/97. The FA publicised its child protection policy for the first time in May 2000.

Box. 2

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL

One of the recommendations of the *Blueprint for Excellence* was the establishment of a National School at Lilleshall. The National School was established in 1984. It was a residential home for promising young footballers aged 15-17, with daily coaching at Lilleshall alongside a GCSE curriculum at the local comprehensive school. Charles Hughes, the FA's Director of Coaching, was involved in its inception, and attended Governors' meetings, as did the Chair of the FA (initially, Bert Millichip, and later Keith Wiseman), as well as Graham Kelly, the FA's Chief Executive from 1989 to 1998, and Pat Smith, the FA's Administration Manager and subsequently the FA's Deputy Chief Executive.

Tony Pickerin was appointed Housemaster of the School on January 1st 1990. Tony Pickerin had previously been a Deputy Headmaster of a school in Somerset, and had been a County Coaching Representative to the Somerset CFA as well as a founder and director of a Centre of Excellence.

In 1991, the National School applied for registration as a children's home under the Children Act. As part of its application for registration, the National School was inspected by the local authority in whose area it was situated: Shropshire County Council. Following registration, the National School was inspected on an annual basis by Shropshire County Council, and copies of the inspection reports were found in the FA archives.

Based on the inspection reports, it can be seen that there was some considerable delay in arranging training for staff on issues of child abuse. There was also very substantial delay in putting together the National School's own Child Protection Procedures document, in spite of the annual reminder from inspectors of the National School that this needed to be done. The requirement for such a document was set out in inspection reports in 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995. A bespoke document for the National School was not produced until 1997. When I put it to him, Tony Pickerin accepted that he had been remiss in this regard. He was unable to explain the failure but did refer to the "pressures of work".

There is no explanation as to why the other Governors of the National School did not pick up on the failure to produce this document or the failure to train staff and insist that Tony Pickerin prioritise these matters. There is no indication from the archives that any of the Governors, or any of the other senior personnel at the FA, who were sent the minutes of the meetings of the National School's Governing Body and the inspection reports themselves, commented on or complained about the failure to introduce a formal child protection policy in a timely fashion.

Having a child protection policy is important. Apart from the substantive measures that a policy contains, having a policy provides a signal to those working for and interacting with an institution that child protection is taken seriously by those running and governing the institution.

At the National School, the FA first came into contact with screening or vetting requirements: that is, ensuring that adults working with junior football players were suitable for that role. On June 25th 1991, Peter Cates (then Director of Education for Shropshire County Council, and a Governor of the National School), wrote to Charles Hughes to say that the Children Act covered "any staff on the site". In his view, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 required "employers to ascertain that staff who will have contact with children have no previous convictions"

On September 11th 1991, Shropshire County Council forwarded to Tony Pickerin at the National School some internally produced guidance in anticipation of the coming into force of the Children Act. The short summary paper on "Staffing of Children's Homes" included the following points about screening:

"Recruitment and selection must 'screen out' those 'not suitable' to work with children - DOH Consultancy List, Police Checks etc. To include all staff - part-time, temporary, YT, volunteers etc. Requests for reference must enquire about any known 'impediments' to employment with children."

That document also referred to "Child Protection" and "Disclosure sexual abuse" as matters about which staff should receive training.

Once the Children Act was in force, the FA was also provided with a comprehensive set of "Guidelines for Practice" in relation to the registration and inspection of independent children homes. This included a section on Child Protection. One point in particular was emphasised in capital letters: "HOMES SHOULD HAVE THEIR OWN CLEAR POLICIES AND WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO ABUSE WHICH ARE INTEGRATED WITH LOCAL PROCEDURES AGREED BY THE AREA CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE".

Tony Pickerin addressed the Governing Body of the National School about the Children Act on November 21st 1991. He informed the Governors that "A statement of policy and procedures is also required. All adults connected with the School would have to be screened on DES list 99 and the Department of Health list." The minutes record

that the Chairman of the Governing Body, Bert Millichip, asked Tony Pickerin to send details of the Children Act to Graham Kelly for distribution to all the Governors.

The National School was first inspected by the Registration and Inspection Unit of Shropshire County Council's Social Services Department on March 26th and 27th 1992 as part of the application for registration as a children's home.

The inspection report, produced in June 1992, recorded that:

“The inspection revealed absolutely no concerns for the safety of the boys placed here and staff report no incidents or suspicions of any previous child protection issues.”

The report noted, however, that:

“Staff were not familiar with, indeed had no copies of [the government's guidance document] Working Together, or Shropshire's Guidelines on Child Protection. The FA School has no policy statement on child protection and no agreed procedures or guidelines for staff to follow. No training programmes have been pursued or identified to help staff appreciate possible Indicators, proper procedures and suitable counselling for child abuse.”

The inspection report also referred to “[r]ecent publicity given to the arrest of a visiting coach to the Lilleshall Centre, suspected of child abuse in other Countries, has heightened awareness and the need for a sensible and sensitive appreciation about possible dangers and appropriate actions”. I have not been able to ascertain which coach the report was referring to, but have received no evidence to suggest that this had anything to do with football. It is likely that the reference was to someone attending elsewhere on the Lilleshall site, which was also home to other sporting activities.

Under the heading of “Staffing”, the inspection report noted that:

“Inspectors were unable to complete any satisfactory checks on employment practice or staff records because all appointments and correspondence are managed and maintained by the FA Headquarters in London. There was, therefore, no way of establishing if all appropriate checks and references have been completed before appointment. Mr Pickerin agreed to seek the co-operation of all current staff with regard to Police checks and confirmation is sought from the FA in regard to all other appointments.”

Tony Pickerin sought approval from Charles Hughes for “all staff plus all those coaches within the Programme for Excellence” to complete the necessary forms, and sent “a proforma relating to the disclosure of criminal convictions/cautions which needs to be completed by the Chairman and Chief Executive.” The inspection report was discussed at the meeting of the Board of Governors on September 23rd 1992. The minutes state that: “Mr. Pickerin confirmed that he would prepare a policy statement and appropriate guidelines concerning child protection for the approval of the Governors.” The National School was subsequently registered as a children's home under section 63 of the Children Act on December 21st 1992.

The next inspection by Shropshire County Council took place on December 7th and 8th 1993. The report noted that the National School had “no separate policy statement on child protection”, although it did record that copies of the Government’s guidance, *Working Together*, and Shropshire’s *Guidelines on Child Protection* were available for staff. The inspection report noted that no training programmes had been pursued or identified to help staff to appreciate possible indicators or proper procedures.

In a note dated May 16th 1994, Tony Pickerin explained to Pat Smith that “all staff have been issued with the Local Authority guidelines”, a policy statement on child protection would be prepared and that there would “need to be an in-service training session for all staff conducted by a consultant.” Tony Pickerin explained that another employee of the National School had attended “the Shropshire County Council seminars on Child Abuse.” That employee’s attendance at a training seminar was mentioned in the December 1994 inspection report (following an inspection on November 30th to December 1st 1994). It was recorded that: “The school has indicated its commitment to attending any other courses which are organised and relevant.” However, it adds that Inspectors are unclear who the “officially nominated officer” was, who was responsible for child protection matters, and that the Council would “welcome clarification”.

The Child Protection Policy was “still outstanding” at the time of the December 1994 inspection, and the inspectors recommended that “The school should draw up a policy statement with regard to awareness of indicators and procedures in connection with Child Protection procedures. This should complement the Local Authority’s Guidelines”.

With respect to staffing, it was noted that new staff had “been appropriately checked for any conviction records or listings on either list 99 or the Department for health consultancy list” (these were lists of individuals regarded as unsuitable for working in schools or with vulnerable adults/children within health and social care settings). The inspectors noted, however, that:

“[T]he school does on occasions deploy specialist coaching staff. We would expect that the school would satisfy itself as to the suitability of such coaches, by either carrying out vetting procedures before they are used, or by asking them to sign a disclaimer form. It would, however, be inappropriate to allow any visiting specialist coach, to have unsupervised access to either individual or groups of young people unless all appropriate vetting had taken place.”

There is no suggestion that any visiting coaches did have unsupervised access to the young players at the National School.

The next annual inspection of the National School took place on December 7th and 8th 1995. The inspection report was received in February 1996. The executive summary noted that “The day to day management appears sound, additional policies have been drawn up in response to earlier recommendations, but others, notably covering Child Protection and Complaints are still outstanding.”

The inspection report noted that record-keeping relating to vetting:

“[S]howed considerable improvement since the first inspection, with all new staff employed at the school showing two references, one being their last employer and evidence of successful vetting by Police, list 99 and/or Department of Health consultancy list. Some files, of more established staff, still lack these aspects of good employment practice but do include a form declaring no previous significant convictions to afford the school a modicum of protection.”

It was stated that copies of these records “are now retained at the school and as such were available for inspection.” Inspectors were informed that a child protection statement was in the process of being formulated and would constitute part of the National School’s review of policies and formulation of a new prospectus to be undertaken in the new year.

With respect to training, it was reported by the inspectors that an employee:

“[H]as attended a relevant course on indicators and procedures in connection with Child Protection organised by the local authority and as such is the nominated Child Protection Officer. The school has indicated its commitment to pursuing further and additional training for its staff by attendance on any other relevant courses, however, at the time of inspection no other courses or training had been identified by the school, for attendance by staff.”

THE 1997 NATIONAL SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

The next inspection of the National School took place on December 16th and 17th 1996. The draft inspection report was provided on March 4th 1997 (shortly after the *Dispatches* documentary had been broadcast by Channel 4: (see: *Dispatches: Soccer’s Foul Play*)). The executive summary followed up the point about outstanding policies, noting that policies “covering Child Protection and complaints are still only available in draft format, there is now a pressing need for the school to formally adopt these policies, to satisfy legislation”.

The main body of the inspection report included a section on child protection:

“05.00 Child Protection

05.01 The formulation of an appropriate child protection policy in relation to the school has been an outstanding issue in both of the last two inspections conducted at the school. The school has always acknowledged the need to introduce a more focused and robust statement, and has indicated its intention to do so as part of its review of policies necessitated by the proposed update to the schools [sic] prospectus. Our last report indicated that it would be inappropriate for this situation to remain unfulfilled by this inspection. Unfortunately the new schools [sic] prospectus has been dogged by delays and as such was still not available for publication at the time of inspection, however draft policies covering a variety of issues, but in particular child protection were available and were shared with the inspector and comment was invited.

Most of the draft policies shared were found to be adequate, with the projected section on complaint being particularly good, the suggested section on child protection is fine as far as it goes but still needs to be specific to the operation of the school, should include a detailed route of investigation and indicate clearly at what point the school would report any concerns to the local child protection team.

05.02 [An employee] has attended a relevant course on indicators and procedures in connection with Child Protection organised by the local authority and as such is the nominated Child Protection Officer. There appears to be a need to expand the knowledge base throughout the schools [sic] staff, particularly those regularly responsible for the residential care of the boys. The school has always indicated its willingness and commitment to pursuing further and additional training for its staff in this area, but at the time of inspection had not done so. **There is a need we feel, particularly in the light of increasing public concern about the potential for abuse generally, but particularly within football, to ensure that the school as the Football Association Flagship establishment is robustly equipped to deal with any problems that arise, and can clearly demonstrate its commitment to the highest standards of child protection.**

05.03 All new staff employed by the Football Association, within the school are appropriately vetted before commencing their employment, this involves the processing of a police check, checking against list 99 and the Department of Health consultancy list and the receipt of two references, one of which is from their last previous employer. Some of the more long standing staff, who were employed before these checks became a requirement, do not have these checks on file, but do have an acceptable disclaimer form declaring them free from any relevant convictions.

05.04 Copies of Working Together and Shropshire Guidelines on child protection are kept in the school office and are available to staff.

05.05 The inspection revealed no concerns and no incidents or suspicions were reported to the inspectors or were indicated within records examined.

Recommendations

The school needs to expand the draft child protection procedure shared with inspectors to make it specific to the school, there is also a need to detail the expected route of any investigation, detailing responsibilities, and to clearly indicate at what point any concerns would be reported to the local child protection team.

The school needs to expand the knowledge base of the staff currently responsible for the residential care of the boys, in the area of child protection particularly in the area of indicators and appropriate

procedures. Whilst [an employee], as the home's nominated child protection officer has done some limited training none of the other staff responsible for the residential care within the school have done so."

(emphasis added)

The inspection report also touched on screening in its section on "Staffing", reiterating the distinction between long-standing and new staff, and emphasising that there is no expectation that the former category should be retrospectively vetted. With respect to "visiting specialist coaching staff", it was stated that the National School "acknowledged that it would be inappropriate for such visitors to have unsupervised access to either individuals or groups of young people, unless supervised/accompanied by other staff who have undertaken full appropriate vetting."

THE INTRODUCTION OF A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AT THE NATIONAL SCHOOL

The National School finally addressed the child protection policy issue later in 1997. This was to be included in a "newly written School Prospectus", which Tony Pickerin explained in a letter dated May 14th 1997, would "be issued to students and parents prior to September, 1997". In the letter, Tony Pickerin explained that "this will meet the demands under this section. I will consult with the Inspectors to ensure compliance".

NATIONAL SCHOOL: 1997-1998

The next annual inspection took place on December 8th 1997. The inspection report, sent to Tony Pickerin on January 21st 1998, noted in the executive summary that "Despite the location of the school within a large public complex issues of child protection and privacy are considered appropriate", and "necessary checks are undertaken on all these staff members along with any adults having substantial unsupervised access to the boys." There were no recommendations relating to child protection.

With respect to the regulatory requirement for residential schools to "produce and maintain written policies and practice guidelines for dealing with suspected Child Abuse", the inspection report included that:

"The school has adopted Shropshire's guidelines on child protection. The FA are currently reviewing general child protection issues around coaching. There is an increased awareness of child protection generally."

On August 1st 1999, the National School was closed. The closure was one of the recommendations of the Charter for Quality: (see: Charter for Quality). The Charter sought to build on the successes of the National School – where small numbers of potentially outstanding players had been subject to professional and intensive training – by developing what would become the academy system. The last intake of pupils at the National School was in September 1997. The National School was cited as an "exemplary organisation in Child Protection Procedure" when establishing the model of good practice for FA Premier League and Football League clubs.

8.1.37. Although the FA was aware of child protection requirements for the National School from the early 1990s, it was not until 1995 that the FA started to make the connection between the measures needed to protect children in the National School environment and the needs of children playing football outside of that environment. This connection could have been made sooner as there was some public discussion taking place about abuse in sport from 1993. In particular, the documentary *The Secrets of the Coach* was broadcast by BBC2 in August 1993; and this documentary inspired the Martial Arts Development Commission (“MADEC”) to organise a child protection conference for sports governing bodies in November 1993. The FA did not attend this conference, and neither did most other sports governing bodies.

8.1.38. One explanation for why it may have taken longer for the FA to make this connection is that football is a team sport, and the risk of abuse in sport may have been seen as primarily a concern for those sports such as swimming, gymnastics and athletics where there was frequent one-to-one contact between adults and young sportspeople. The sports which featured in *The Secrets of the Coach* were not team sports like football.

Box 3.

THE MARTIAL ARTS DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION CONFERENCE

In August 1993, BBC 2 broadcast a documentary, *The Secrets of the Coach*, which shone a light on child sex abuse in a number of sport settings, both in this country and abroad. No mention was made in the programme of football, or of allegations of abuse within football. The focus of the programme was on settings where adults would have frequent opportunities to have one-to-one dealings with young sportspeople. There is no reference to this programme in the FA archives, and none of the FA personnel that I spoke to had any recollection of seeing the programme.

The Secrets of the Coach documentary had a powerful effect on Richard Thomas, an officer of MADEC. Richard Thomas explained to me that he was so concerned with the revelations in the documentary that he made contact with Celia Brackenridge and, along with his colleague Robert Eagle, organised a conference on November 27th 1993 for sports governing bodies under the heading: *Protecting the Child – Challenge to Sport*. Richard Thomas told me that he invited to the conference all of the sports governing bodies that were on the mailing list of the CCPR (Central Council of Physical Recreation), and that this would have included the FA. The Review has not located an invitation to attend this conference in the FA archives. If the FA was invited, but did not attend, it may be that this was due to the fact that the conference was arranged by a relatively minor sports body in response to a documentary that did not cover football. I do not criticise the FA for not attending this conference.

A number of sports were present, including gymnastics and tennis. At the conference, Celia Brackenridge spoke about child abuse within sport. Other speakers talked about medical and psychological issues for those playing sport.

It does not appear that the MADEC conference triggered any significant child protection

developments in the sports whose representatives attended. Although a representative from the British Amateur Gymnastics Association attended the conference, its former Assistant Technical Director Lloyd Readhead told me that the introduction of child protection procedures did not take place within his sport until 1996/97.

Similarly, although a representative from the Lawn Tennis Association (“the LTA”) attended the MADEC conference, its former Coach Education Director, Anne Pankhurst, told me that when she was working at the LTA in the mid-1990s as a Coach Education Tutor it had very little in the way of child protection procedures. This was confirmed by Keith Wiseman (who was Chairman of the FA from July 1996 to January 1999), who sat on the LTA Board between 1984 and 2004. Keith Wiseman did not recall the LTA having policies and procedures on child protection any earlier than the FA.

8.1.39. In 1993, the Home Office produced a document called *Safe from Harm*, to provide guidance on child protection issues to voluntary organisations. The *Safe from Harm* guidance was relevant to organisations such as the FA, which worked directly and indirectly with children, as well as to football clubs regulated by the FA.

8.1.40. At the time, the FA ran coaching courses for large numbers of children. 50,000 children took part in the FA’s *Soccer Star* scheme, which was the FA’s skills award scheme for children between the ages of six and 16. Mini-Soccer (a small-sided version of the game) was played by over 50,000 children at 700 Centres within 10 months of its launch in May 1993. The FA also accredited *Funweeks* holiday programmes (approving County Football Associations, Clubs and Local Authorities to operate *Funweeks* on a franchise basis). Between 1984 (when the programme was launched) and autumn 1993, it was reported that more than 150,000 children had taken part in the *Funweeks* programme. The FA also supervised and licensed Centres of Excellence throughout the country. The FA also regulated all affiliated clubs, who worked with hundreds of thousands of children.

Box 4.

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE: SAFE FROM HARM

In 1989, the Home Office announced three pilot schemes to enable voluntary organisations to access police records (Circular 58/89). One recommendation that resulted from the research was that a code of practice should be produced for voluntary organisations. This led, in 1993, to the Home Office publishing guidance entitled *Safe from Harm? Code of Practice for Safeguarding the Welfare of Children in Voluntary Organisations in England and Wales* (“the Guidance”). The document noted that:

“[V]oluntary organisations share ... a duty of care for the children and young people under 16 years old with whom they come into contact. Sadly, even in the best run organisations, it has been known for children to be physically, emotionally or sexually abused.”

The Guidance stated that it was not imposing any new statutory duty on voluntary organisations, but supported and reinforced existing legislation, setting out “some key principles which are designed to help voluntary organisations to consider how best to fulfil their duty to care for the children and young people with whom they come into

contact.” It recognised that there were:

“[M]any types of voluntary organisation which work with children and young people up to 16 years old, and this code of practice aims to be relevant to them all. For the larger, professionally managed childcare or youth organisations, the code may only reflect practices which they have already introduced to meet the requirements of legislation and/or registration, or have adopted in the light of experience. For these organisations the code may prove a useful check-list against which to compare their current practice. Some smaller organisations may have no current policy on safe-guarding the welfare of children. For them the code will provide a framework for action, helping them to introduce practices which are appropriate to them in a systematic way.”

The Guidance recognised that sexual abuse could take place outside of the family, and outside of the residential context. It made clear that voluntary organisations working with children had a responsibility – albeit not a statutory obligation – to look after those children, and protect them from abuse.

The Guidance set out a number of recommendations for voluntary organisations:

1. Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding and the welfare of children;
2. Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur;
3. Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent adult;
4. Apply agreed procedures for protecting children to all paid staff and volunteers;
5. Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles;
6. Use supervision as a means of protecting children;
7. Treat all would-be paid staff and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children;
8. Gain at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicants paid work or volunteering with children;
9. Explore all applicants’ experience of working or contact with children in an interview before appointment;
10. Find out whether an applicant has any convictions for criminal offences against children;
11. Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period;
12. Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse;
13. Train paid staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.”

8.1.41. I have seen no evidence that the *Safe from Harm* guidance was known about by the FA at the time of its publication or in the following months. There is a copy of the full guidance in the FA archives, but this was downloaded from the internet many years after its publication: on October 28th 2003. There is no evidence that the *Safe*

from *Harm* guidance document was drawn to the attention of anyone at the FA at or around the time of its publication, nor is there any evidence that this document was discussed by any of the personnel involved in organising the FA's training and education functions.

8.1.42. The earliest reference to the *Safe from Harm* guidance in the FA archives is in an enclosure to a letter sent from BQ, an officer of the CCPR⁴ to XX – an employee at the FA – on October 20th 1995. BQ's letter discussed the Government's intention to introduce a 'White Paper' on screening. BQ enclosed a letter that the CCPR had received from the Home Office, dated April 7th 1995, relating to criminal records checks. The Home Office letter to the CCPR stated that it was enclosing "for what it is worth" a leaflet about a Code of Practice entitled *Safe from Harm* which was stated to be "published by the Home Office, in consultation with the Department of Health, the Department for Education and the Welsh Office, in 1993." The letter from the Home Office explained that:

"The Code offers voluntary organisations with responsibility for the care and welfare of children a guide to good policy and practice in areas such as recruitment, supervision and management, and sets out a number of recommendations and statements of principle which voluntary organisations are asked to consider in the light of their own particular circumstances."

The letter from the Home Office said that "I realise that a number of the recommendations may seem irrelevant to the CCPR and its member bodies but you may, nevertheless, find some of them worth considering." There is no evidence in the FA archives to suggest that the enclosure of the *Safe from Harm* leaflet was included with BQ's letter to XX. During an interview XX told me that he did not recall the guidance document.

8.1.43. As well as being relevant to the FA, the *Safe from Harm* guidance was also relevant to the football clubs (both professional and grassroots) which were regulated by the FA. I have seen no evidence that any club was aware of the document or that it had any impact on them. It also appears to have had little, if any, impact on other sports. It is not clear why this document had so little impact in the world of sport. It may simply be that it was not publicised well enough by the Government of the time.

8.1.44. I have considered whether the existence of the *Safe from Harm* guidance is of such importance that I should criticise the FA for its failure to implement the document's recommendations when, or shortly after, it was published. It could be said that the FA, as the governing body of a major sport should have made itself aware of governmental thinking about voluntary organisations and the procedures and policies that it should be introducing. However, in my view, this would be unfair.

8.1.45. In 1993, the FA was a more inward-looking organisation (the first Director of Public Affairs – David Davies – was appointed in 1994⁵). Furthermore, few, if any, other sport national governing bodies (let alone other voluntary organisations) appear to have been influenced by the Guidance to introduce child protection measures. In those circumstances, I consider that it would not be appropriate to single out the FA for criticism for not being aware of *Safe from Harm*, or for failing to implement its recommendations.

4. The Central Council for Physical Recreation, now known as the Sport and Recreation Alliance, was a representative body for national sports organisations in the United Kingdom.

5. Davies, D. "FA Confidential" (2008), Chapter 3.

8.1.46. By the end of 1993, the issue of child protection in the voluntary (that is, non-statutory) sector, including the sporting world, was entering the public consciousness and beginning to form part of the national conversation. I do not consider that the FA can be criticised for not taking part in that conversation at or before this time. Most sports were not engaging in that conversation, and the minority that were participating tended not to be team sports but rather were sports where it was common for adults to have frequent and intensive one-to-one encounters with young sportspeople.

FA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROGRAMME: 1994 - MAY 1996

8.1.47. During the period 1994 to May 1996, the FA began to recognise that it needed to adopt child protection measures. In 1994, some limited references were made to child protection in the FA's coach training courses. From early 1995 to the middle of 1996, there was discussion within the FA about the need to screen persons who wanted to be involved in football, and it was widely acknowledged within the FA that it was important to protect children playing football from abusers. No other child protection measures were discussed, however, or brought into force.

8.1.48. This can be contrasted with the steps taken by the ASA - the national governing body of the sport of swimming - which was very active in the area of child protection and put in place significant child protection measures during the period from October 1995 to May 1996. The introduction of these measures by the ASA was triggered by the conviction of the former Olympic swimming coach, Paul Hickson in September 1995.

Box 5.

AMATEUR SWIMMING ASSOCIATION

In the mid-1990s, the ASA led the way in relation to child protection in sport. There is no doubt that this was triggered by the conviction of Paul Hickson in 1995. The ASA had not initially acted following Hickson's arrest in September 1992. 13 swimmers came forward with allegations of abuse against Hickson, and a trial was due to take place in September 1993. Hickson absconded before trial and the case was put off until he was subsequently caught by the police on a visit to Center Parcs in England.

The ASA had initially seen the Hickson situation as being a "one off". This response was criticised by Celia Brackenridge⁶. David Sparkes, the Chief Executive of the ASA, told me that this initial understanding changed; that the organisation was concerned that there might be other abusers, and so something needed to be done. David Sparkes also explained to me that the ASA realised that if it failed to create a safe environment, parents would be reluctant to send their children swimming.

As a result, the ASA consulted with the Home Office, Sports Council and other agencies with expertise and relevant experience in the area of child protection. In October 1995, David Sparkes wrote to the Home Office to say that:

6. Brackenridge, C (2001) "Spoilsports: Understanding and Preventing Sexual Exploitation in Sport" p.182.

“The ASA is proud of its clean family image and is dismayed by the publicity which the Hickson case has created. We are anxious to take positive steps to improve our procedures and would ask if the Home Office could provide such advice as is possible to improve our vetting of coaches and teachers.”

In June 1996, in collaboration with the NCF, NSPCC, ChildLine and the Sports Council, the ASA published a document entitled *Child Protection Procedures in Swimming* (“*Procedures in Swimming*”). As well as setting out overriding principles, the document described: how abuse can be recognised; the different forms of abuse; the effects of abuse; listening to the child; responding to suspicions or allegations of child abuse (referring to the NSPCC free Helpline); how to deal with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers; promoting good practice to reduce the likelihood of abuse by members of staff; and good practice in the care of children. It recommended that:

“To help prevent abuse of children the club or organisation should have a policy which ensures that children are protected and kept safe from harm. Everyone involved in the care of children should know what to do if there are concerns about abuse and where procedures are kept.”

The ASA’s document, *Procedures in Swimming*, explained that abuse could occur in the sporting environment, and that “Everyone working in swimming either in a paid or voluntary capacity, together with those working in affiliated organisations have a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children and preventing their abuse.” It explained that “Swimming or related activities, which might involve physical contact with children, could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over young athletes, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.”

The ASA’s document was circulated to all ASA affiliated clubs and organisations. It was also discussed in the national press, with David Sparkes reported as saying that “swimming was the first sport to take such measures but he hoped others would follow.” In addition, David Sparkes was quoted as saying:

“We have been deeply concerned by the incidents of child abuse in swimming. It is the biggest participation sport in this country, a family sport enjoyed by ten and a half million people.

We believe it is of paramount importance to ensure that all our swimmers, of any age, feel safe in their sport. Our staff, coaches and members have set procedures to follow should they feel any of their athletes are in the slightest danger.”⁷

Around that time, the ASA also produced a poster for distribution to its members publicising a helpline – Swimline – for worried swimmers. The poster also directed readers to the NSPCC’s Child Protection Helpline.

From a regulatory perspective, the ASA gave emergency powers to its Chief Executive

7. The Times, June 26th 1996, Code aims to protect child swimmers from abuse

to allow temporary suspension of suspected child abusers who were involved in swimming and were the subject of a police investigation. The ASA also conferred the power to withdraw teaching and coaching certificates of convicted offenders, effectively excluding them from the sport. This approach was described by the ASA's Head of Legal Affairs as representing the sport's "rapid response" phase for the development of child protection procedures. The ASA recognised, however, that it "needed to do more in order to effectively follow through this process."⁸

As part of the ASA's medium-term strategy for child protection, a child protection database was set up, which included details of all individuals with intimate access to young swimmers. A standard form questionnaire was produced which asked individuals wishing to be involved in swimming questions about previous criminal records and whether they were known to social services. Consent was sought to obtain police checks.⁹

The ASA produced a *Code of Ethics* dealing with unacceptable coaching practices, which was designed principally to instil good coaching practice amongst coaches/teachers by highlighting examples of unacceptable practices. In order to reinforce the Code from an educational perspective, it was included as a syllabus item on all higher level swimming teaching and coaching certificates.

In the summer of 1997, working closely with the NSPCC, the ASA undertook a series of road shows designed to take the child protection procedures to the clubs at a local level. According to the ASA's Legal Advisor, the purpose of these road shows was to explain the procedures and their practical effect to those who would eventually be responsible for implementing the procedures on the ground; to identify persons within clubs at a local level who had the necessary skills to offer guidance and advice; and to assess the level of awareness and skills that existed and to ascertain further training needs. A Working Party was also established to formulate a strategy for undertaking the relevant training programme.

In June 1997, David Sparkes wrote to Anita White, the Director of Development at the Sports Council, to inform her that the ASA was "moving into the second stage of our strategy on protecting children". This involved the training by the NSPCC of a small group of volunteers with a view to them being a "sport specific support group on child protection issues." David Sparkes described the "road show" that would be delivered by the group in June and July 1997: including presentations from the Head of Legal Affairs and Head of Customer Services, as well as the NSPCC. David Sparkes said that the pilot presentation in Swindon had been attended by over 140 volunteers "and proved to be an extremely successful event and was well received by the membership."

The ASA was a far smaller operation than the FA. However, the ASA had a sizeable reach and responsibility. According to a minute from March 1997 found in the Sport England archive, there were some 300,000 members in the sport of swimming, with 90% of them aged under 16, at that time. There were some 2,000 swimming clubs and maybe 50/60,000 people involved in working with young people. In 2005, David Sparkes was reported as saying that, "out of 250,000 swimmers – the vast majority under 16 – at

8. Gray, A "Swimming and child protection: The story so far", *Sports Law Administration and Practice*, July/August 1997 Vol. 4 Issue No. 5.

9. *The Sun*, May 17th 1996, "Olympic diving coach in child sex quiz": "The arrests came as the Amateur Swimming Federation [sic] prepared to launch a national computer database of up to 50,000 swimming and diving teachers in a crackdown on suspected child abusers."

the ASA's 1,800 affiliated clubs, around 60 complaints are currently being dealt with, ranging from relatively minor allegations to 'one or two' that may suggest serious abuse has taken place".¹⁰

The ASA updated its document *Child Protection in Swimming: Procedures and Guidelines* in 1999. The new document included a Code of Ethics for all officials involved in the sport, and explained that a breach of the code was a disciplinary matter.

8.1.49. With respect to coach training, in 1994, Robin Russell, Assistant Director of Coaching and Education, had included child protection as part of a pilot training programme for a proposed NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) in Coaching Association Football that the FA was hoping to introduce. The proposed syllabus of the *Pilot Course of Training, Assessment and Accreditation* referred to a seminar on "Meeting the Needs of Players", including: "Responsibilities of working with children: 'in loco parentis', child abuse/protection." The study pack for that pilot course (first held on May 3rd to 5th 1994) included a small amount of material on child protection.

8.1.50. Robin Russell told me that the initial reference to child protection had been inspired by his attendance at a training course run by the NCF in the early 1990s, where mention had been made of child protection as something coaches should be aware of. I have seen the worksheets which candidates were required to complete as part of the NVQ course assessment. The worksheet on "Childhood Growth and Development" asked: "1. Please list five warning signs to alert coaches to the possibility of child abuse. 2. If you have concerns regarding possible child abuse, please state what action you would take". The worksheet on "The Needs of Players and the Needs of Young Players" did not refer explicitly to child protection, but did ask "What can children expect adults not to do?" and "What can children expect adults to do?" The material about child protection was minimal: it was described to me by Robin Russell as "fairly light touch".

8.1.51. Robin Russell subsequently introduced a module on child protection in the training course for the "New Generation of Courses" that were being introduced by the FA in 1996 to align with the Union of European Football Association ("UEFA") coaching licences. Among the courses was the UEFA 'B' Licence which was available from August 1996. Part I of this course was the FA Coaching Certificate (equivalent to the old Preparatory Award). Module 5(ii) related to child protection. The study notes for the course acknowledged that it was "now widely accepted that it is the responsibility of every adult to protect children from abuse." The study notes focused on defining types of abuse and how to identify when abuse had taken place or was occurring, noting that the coach was an "important link" and therefore well-positioned to pick up on symptoms or receive disclosures. The study notes also covered how a coach should react when faced with an allegation or concern (including allegations against a fellow member of staff), both in terms of interacting with the child and reporting upwards to appropriate adults. The notes were three pages long.

8.1.52. For the 1996 coaching courses, the worksheet that accompanied the training module on "The Needs of Young Players" contained one multiple choice question that

10. The Guardian, July 6th 2005, "This sporting strife"

related to child abuse (out of 17 questions in total). The question was:

“If a coach suspects there is evidence of possible child abuse, they should

ignore it;

confront the parents;

inform a senior colleague or relevant agency”

8.1.53. The material relating to child protection was extremely basic. Deborah Davies, the reporter on the *Dispatches* programme, was dismissive of the module when she read it in late 1996. In correspondence with Celia Brackenridge (seen in the Celia Brackenridge archives¹¹), Deborah Davies said that the guidelines given in the coaching course “just cover how to recognise abuse, not prevent it.”

8.1.54. Had the FA’s Technical Department wished to introduce a greater level of detail in the child protection training, there was far more substantial material that could have been drawn upon had the FA sought it out. In late March 1995, the NCF and the NSPCC had published a 94-page study pack entitled *Protecting Children: a Guide for Sportspeople*. There is no evidence in the FA archives that this document was known about by personnel at the FA at that time. The study pack does not appear to have been well publicised, and there is no evidence that it was targeted at the FA.

Box 6.

PROTECTING CHILDREN: A GUIDE FOR SPORTS PEOPLE

The document *Protecting Children: a Guide for Sportspeople* was produced in liaison with the Royal Yachting Association, and was published by the NCF and NSPCC in March 1995. It was designed to be used by national governing bodies in their coach education. While explicitly not a comprehensive manual, the document stated that it aimed to “increase awareness of child abuse and help people to recognise the signs of abuse and deal sensitively and effectively with the issue should it arise.”

The preface to the document referred to Government figures from 1993 that indicated over 32,500 children were registered as being in need of protection from abuse; and that these children were usually abused by people they knew and trusted, including “in a sports situation”. It said that the pack had been written for “all those who have responsibility for the organisation of children’s sport (eg governing bodies of sport, centre managers, local authorities, sports clubs) and those who deliver children’s sport (eg sport coaches, leaders, teachers and instructors).”

This document had four sections: (i) “Recognising and Responding to Signs of Abuse”, aimed at anyone involved in delivering a sports programme to children; (ii) “Responsibilities of Managers”, of particular relevance to those in charge of others working with children; (iii) “Evidence and Competence”, geared towards helping candidates gain accreditation for an NVQ unit; and (iv) “Further Help”, with contact details and suggested resources for further exploration. Contact details were provided for the NSPCC Helpline, and ChildLine. Suggested resources included the Home Office publication *Safe from Harm*.

11. The Celia Brackenridge archives are held by Brunel University London

The chapter dealing with “Responsibilities of Managers” was said to be designed to help “those in positions of responsibility in governing bodies” among others, “to clarify their roles and responsibilities in protecting children from abuse”. The chapter assumed that the national governing body would have its own child protection procedures.

In addition to the pack, the NCF piloted a three-hour child protection training course.

In 1996, the NCF produced a handbook entitled *The Successful Coach: Guidelines for Coaching Practice* (“the NCF Handbook”). This was expressly stated to be “for sports coaches wishing to develop their practical coaching skills and builds on the information contained in the NCF’s introductory study packs”. It examined the coach’s ethical and legal responsibilities. It covered the material for the NVQ level 3. Chapter 5 of the NCF Handbook dealt with “Your Responsibilities and Liabilities”. It dealt with “Protection from Abuse”, including sexual abuse. It explained that:

“Children can be abused within and outside their families and even within a sports setting. Consequently coaches are strongly recommended to be informed and able to recognise indicators which may signify abuse and take appropriate action if concerned.”

The NCF home study pack, *Protecting Children: A Guide for Sportspeople* was recommended. It went on to say that “All organisations (e.g. sports governing bodies, local authorities) should have a policy statement and guidelines regarding child abuse.”

8.1.55. The main area of discussion within the FA about child protection in the period 1994 to May 1996 involved the process of screening: that is, checking to see who was seeking to participate in football, and preventing those with dubious backgrounds from taking part (see: Screening and Self Declarations). The FA first discussed screening outside of the National School setting in early 1995. The discussion was led by Tony Pickerin, who explained to Charles Hughes that: “football provides opportunities for those of a paedophile nature because of the ease with which adults who volunteer help in the activities are willingly accepted”.

8.1.56. Research was carried out by Tony Pickerin as to what the FA could do on screening, and this was discussed by a variety of FA committees. It was considered that the FA could actually do very little, given the state of the law, and it was decided that the best way forward was to lobby the Government to amend the law to allow the FA to be a “clearing house” to screen all persons working in football clubs. The law did change, but was not until 2002 that the Government’s centralised system – the Criminal Records Bureau (“the CRB”) – was fully established and operational. Detailed discussion of the development of the FA’s approach to screening is set out in the section: Screening and Self-Declarations.

8.1.57. The conviction of Barry Bennell in Florida in July 1995, and the conviction of Paul Hickson, the Olympic swimming coach, in September 1995, emphasised to the FA (and, in particular, to XX) the importance of screening as a means of keeping undesirable adults out of football.

8.1.58. The FA was made aware of Bennell's arrest on a football tour in Florida in the summer of 1994, following a claim by a schoolboy player that he had been repeatedly molested by Bennell during the tour. In August 1995, the FA learned of Bennell's conviction. The FA was also informed that investigations were taking place in England by Cheshire Constabulary into further allegations of abuse by Bennell. By the summer of 1995, therefore, the FA was clearly aware that child sex abuse had taken place in the football environment (see: FA and Barry Bennell). It was not just a theoretical matter.

8.1.59. On September 28th 1995, XX wrote to Charles Hughes, copying in Graham Kelly, to say:

“The reaction to yesterday's conviction of Paul Hickson, a former international swimming coach, for offences which would seem to be similar to Mr Bennell's, reinforce my view that The FA should find out exactly what Mr Bennell is said to have done. If the story breaks in England (and the Hickson conviction may cause this to happen) The FA should be in a position to answer questions that will inevitably be asked of it. Most importantly. The FA should be aware of any connection with Mr Bennell's coaching.

The two incidents make the adoption of a screening regime, as we have previously discussed, even more important.

I would be happy to make contact with Crewe CID if you wish.”

8.1.60. XX was obviously aware, therefore, that Bennell's case could present reputational dangers for the FA. He was also clear that the FA had a responsibility to protect children from abuse, and that something needed to be done.

8.1.61. A screening regime to keep abusers out of the sport was an important child protection measure and was one which the FA was right to spend time thinking about and discussing. It was one which the Government regarded as of real importance (“*On the Record*”, a ‘White Paper’ was introduced on the subject in 1996 by the then Conservative Government), and the Director of the NSPCC's Central Children's Services, GR, subsequently spoke of proper recruitment practices as being among the “key building blocks” to prevent abuse in sport, when he gave his presentation to the Sports Council conference in June 1996 (see box 7: The Sports Council Conference 1996).

8.1.62. Nevertheless, focussing on screening was not sufficient by itself, especially given the practical difficulties of operating a screening regime in the absence of legislation. Had the FA sought external advice at this time, it would most probably have been told that screening was not a panacea; that screening, by itself, would not prevent abuse. The FA would most probably have been told that screening should be introduced as one of a number of child protection measures. This was the message contained in the *Protecting Children: a Guide for Sportspeople* publication that had been published in March 1995.

8.1.63. This was also the message of the Home Office's *Safe from Harm* publication in 1993. *Safe from Harm* referred to the fact that three pilot schemes had previously been

set up which enabled voluntary organisations to access police records. A researcher had looked into those schemes and concluded that there was “no evidence that the widespread extension of access to criminal records by voluntary organisations would prevent the abuse of children”.

8.1.64. Against this background, I have considered whether the FA should be criticised for failing to do more with respect to child protection during the period from 1994 to May 1996.

8.1.65. I consider that for part of this period – from 1994 to Hickson’s conviction in September 1995 – it would not be right to criticise the FA for the very limited child protection measures that had been adopted, or for the fact that the FA’s discussion about child protection had focused primarily on screening. Most other sports were also doing very little during this time, and in many cases less than the FA. It was only in the summer of 1995 that the FA learned that Bennell had been convicted in Florida; and the FA was only just learning that he may have committed further crimes of abuse in England. It would, in my view, be unfair to criticise the FA for not being ahead of the curve on introducing child protection measures in sport.

8.1.66. I recognise that during the period from 1994 to Hickson’s conviction in September 1995, there was material available to the FA to assist with developing a child protection programme and policy: in 1993, the *Safe from Harm* document had been published and in late March 1995, the *Protecting Children: a guide for sportspeople* had been published. The FA could have sought advice and assistance from organisations such as the NCF and the NSPCC. This material, and this assistance, was also available to all other sports. There was, however, no compelling reason why the FA, among major sports, should have led the way.

8.1.67. The situation changed dramatically, in my view, with the Hickson conviction at the end of September 1995. From that point onwards, I consider that all sports, including the FA, should have thought about, and then started the process of developing within a reasonably short time-frame, a broader child protection programme.

8.1.68. It is perhaps understandable that the sport of swimming was among the first to act in response to the Hickson conviction, but the ASA was not alone in regarding that conviction as a wake-up call to take action on child protection. A number of other sports also sought the advice of experts and started work on child protection measures. By January 23rd 1996, when they met with the Sports Council to discuss the response to Hickson’s conviction, the Great Britain Diving Federation (“GBDF”) had already sought the advice of, and worked closely with, the academic Celia Brackenridge. The GBDF had produced a code of ethics, had made a helpline available for victims, was establishing an independent disciplinary procedure, and was working on guidelines for parents and children to be available by summer 1996. The British Athletic Federation (“the BAF”) had introduced a code of practice; Childline’s number was publicised at athletics clubs, and the subject of child protection was included on the organisation’s forthcoming conference agenda.

8.1.69. I accept that these were sports where one-to-one encounters between adults and young sportspeople were common and so it might have been thought that the opportunities for abuse were greater than in football. Indeed, the FA had not even been invited by the Sports Council to its meeting on January 23rd 1996, to discuss sport's response to the Hickson case: see box 7: Sports Council Conference 1996.

8.1.70. Nevertheless, by the summer of 1996, the FA knew that football needed to do something to address child protection, even if the FA was not aware of the prevalence of abuse within the game. Just as the FA had sought the advice of Shropshire County Council on the question of screening, I consider that the FA could have sought out the advice of experts such as the NCF or the NSPCC, to see whether, and if so what, steps other than screening might be needed to protect children in the game. Had the FA done so, it would have been informed of a variety of child protection measures that could be developed. The FA would have been advised of the child protection materials that were available for those involved in sport. This may have included *Protecting Children: a Guide for Sportspeople* and the *Safe from Harm* guidance, which provided considerable detail of the measures that could and should be introduced.

8.1.71. I consider, therefore, that there was much more that the FA could, and should, have started to do during the period from September 1995 to May 1996. I consider that during that period, the FA should have engaged more deeply with the issue of child protection and to have worked on the process of bringing more comprehensive measures to safeguard children in the game.

FA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROGRAMME: JUNE 1996 - 1997

8.1.72. At the end of June 1996, Tony Pickerin attended the Sports Council conference on child protection on behalf of the FA. At that conference, Tony Pickerin first heard from, and spoke briefly to, Celia Brackenridge. At that conference, the FA was provided with the tools to develop a comprehensive child protection programme.

Box 7.

THE SPORTS COUNCIL CONFERENCE 1996

Following the conviction of the Olympic swimming coach, Paul Hickson, the Sports Council started to take the issue of child sex abuse in sport more seriously. The Sports Council responded by convening a meeting with a number of sports on January 23rd 1996 to discuss the world of sport's response to the Hickson case.

Attendees at the meeting were from the NCF, the NSPCC, the BAF, the British Olympic Association, the British Amateur Gymnastics Association, the GBDF, the ASA, and the National Association of Sports Coaches. The FA was not invited. Anita White, the Director of Development at the Sports Council, told me that this was probably because the Sports Council was focussing on the sports where they knew there was a problem; and the organisations which they thought would have a direct interest in the issue. This

would be sports where athletes were very young and where young people were getting intense coaching and travelling away from home and in cars alone with sports coaches.

One of the action points from that meeting was to hold a conference in the summer of 1996. The conference was organised by the Sports Council in conjunction with the NCF, the British Olympic Association, the CCPR and the NSPCC. The conference was held on June 28th 1996, at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, where Celia Brackenridge worked.

The conference was attended by over 150 delegates from 50 sports. Tony Pickerin (the Head of the FA's National School, and the person with responsibility for the FA's *Programme of Excellence*) attended on behalf of the FA.

The Sports Council conference heard presentations from Celia Brackenridge and GR, the Director of the NSPCC's Central Children's Services. Celia Brackenridge explained to attendees that "We cannot stop abuse but we can act more effectively to prevent it". She referred to the "Four Factor Theory" – a model to understand how and why someone may want to abuse – developed in 1984 by the American sociologist David Finkelhor. According to David Finkelhor, the factors known to contribute to child sexual abuse are grouped into four pre-conditions: motivation, internal inhibitions, external inhibitors and resistance. David Finkelhor argued that motivation to abuse must be resisted or overcome by the potential abuser personally and externally. Celia Brackenridge explained to the conference that the "external inhibitors" (policies, systems and prevention procedures) and the resistance of the child were the most important areas of work to address "if we are to reduce the risk of abuse within sport".

Celia Brackenridge proposed a "Sample Action Plan" for sports to work on to reduce the risk of abuse. This action plan contained the following elements:

1. Establish/disseminate/advise of Codes of Ethics and Conduct
2. Offer systematic grievance & disciplinary systems
3. Investigate the benefits of registers & criminal record checks
4. Make child protection modules compulsory in coach education
5. Distribute information for parents, athletes and coaches
6. Establish simple contracts between parents, athletes and coaches
7. Set up an independent listener/helpline outside NGBs
8. Adopt child-centered & democratic coaching styles
9. Strengthen links with child protection agencies
10. Disseminate and reward good practice
11. Encourage debate
12. Commission research to increase knowledge."

In his presentation to the conference, GR explained that the NSPCC's involvement with child protection in sport had grown out of the charity's collaboration with the Amateur Swimming Federation of Great Britain (of which the ASA was the English component) which he said had "sought to respond positively and decisively to abuse within its sport." He explained that over the past ten years, he had seen "sector after sector of UK society facing up to the painful truth that 'it can and does happen here.'" He said

that he was “aware that many sports have developed statements of principle, in order to promote good practice. These indirectly already serve to prevent abuse in sport.” For him, the key building blocks were proper recruitment and selection procedures for paid and unpaid staff, noting that “it has to be acknowledged that it is extremely difficult to screen out individuals entirely”, and that organisations should not be given “a false sense of comfort by the receipt of clear checks. Many abusers are not convicted”. He said that there must also be proper induction and training for staff, including training in awareness of child abuse.

“All staff need to be made aware that child abuse can and does occur and that it could be perpetrated by colleagues . . . They also need to be taught to dispel some of the myths about abusers, that they are not multi-headed horned monsters, but ordinary men and women, albeit more commonly men, and, at the extreme, clever, manipulative and powerful. They will also need to be made aware that children can find it very difficult to tell about abuse. They need to be listened to, taken seriously, and have their concerns acted upon. In a sport setting, the dependency and wish to please the coach can compound this difficulty.”

GR stressed that what was needed was:

“[A] basic awareness of the signs and indicators and an undertaking of the responsibility to act swiftly and sensitively when such concerns arise. This means that it is necessary to pay attention to one’s commonsense instinct and feelings when faced with individuals or incidents which leave you uncomfortable.”

GR referred also to the “twin planks of supervision and procedures or guidance in organisations.” He stated that “Quite possibly the most important single building block relates to the need to create an aware and listening environment for children.” There must be an environment in which children and staff are encouraged to share concerns or “blow the whistle”.

At the conference, practical workshop sessions covered topics such as recruitment and selection, dealing with allegations of abuse against coaches and volunteers, training issues for protecting children, listening to young athletes, promoting good practice in sport, and maintaining the boundaries in coaching. At the conference, delegates were provided with a copy of a document produced by the NCF in association with the ASA: *Guidance for Governing Bodies for Establishing Child Protection Procedures*. (A copy of this document was found in the FA archives among Tony Pickerin’s papers.) This document explained that:

“Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children in order to harm them. Everyone working in sport - in a paid or voluntary capacity, together with those working in affiliated organizations - has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children and preventing their abuse.

A coach, instructor, teacher or volunteer may have regular contact with children and be an important link in identifying cases where a child

needs protection. When establishing guidelines to protect children, it is important to recognize that an organization with responsibility for children has both a moral and possibly legal obligation to ensure it provides the highest possible standard of care.”

The document was designed to help national governing bodies (NGBs) to:

- “> identify their responsibilities with regard to child protection by:
 - safeguarding and promoting the interests and well-being of children with whom they are working
 - taking all reasonable practical steps to protect children from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment
 - respecting children’s rights, wishes and feelings
- > draw up policies which:
 - offer safeguards to children, members of staff/volunteers
 - help to maintain high standards of professionalism and practice
- > devise implementation procedures which demonstrate a commitment to:
 - sound recruitment
 - the provision of support, appropriate training and adequate supervision to all staff to enable them to work together with parents/carers and other organizations to ensure the welfare and needs of children remain paramount.

NGBs are strongly advised to use this template to draw up their own policies and procedures to protect the children in their sport.”

The document explained how to recognise abuse; how to respond to a child who says or indicates that they have been abused or where information gives rise to concern of abuse; how to deal with suspicions or allegations. It was explained that:

“Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse has occurred within institutions and may occur within other settings (eg sport or other social activities). Recent inquiries indicate that abuse which takes place within a public setting, is rarely a one-off event. It is crucial that those involved in sport are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action taken.”

The document talked about promoting good practice. It was said to be “important that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children”. There needed to be procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers, which included checks and references. In addition:

“To help prevent abuse of children, the club or organization should have a policy which ensures that children are protected and kept safe from harm. Everyone involved in the care of children should know what to do if there are concerns about abuse and where procedures are kept.”

...

It should be clearly recognized that checks are only part of the process to protect children from possible abuse. The checks must be operated in conjunction with appropriate training of staff/volunteers so they are

aware and sensitive to potentially abusive situations.

...

Managers should be sensitive to any concerns about abuse and act on them at an early stage. They should also offer appropriate support to those who report concerns.

...

The Management Committee of all clubs should ensure there is a well established complaints procedure in operation and that parents and children have the relevant information to allow easy access to this procedure.”

The document provided details of “Good practice in the care of children”, which reduced the situations where abuse could occur.

Delegates to the conference also received sample copies of a new poster for young people: “Sport should be fun and you should feel safe”, which publicised the telephone number for Childline and the NSPCC helpline. Delegates also received a leaflet for adults: “Protecting Children from Abuse”. Delegates were provided with an order form to obtain posters from the NCF. The order form does not say what the posters were, but it is likely that these were the posters handed out at the conference which publicised the telephone number for Childline and the NSPCC helpline. There is evidence in the FA archives that Tony Pickerin considered ordering 100 or so A2-size posters from the NCF, as there is a completed order form on which Tony Pickerin ticked the box asking for 100 copies of the document, next to which he wrote: “Possible for 125?/200?”) On the order form, Tony Pickerin wrote that these were to go to: all centres of excellence; 92 Premier League and Football League Clubs; 30 Independent FA Centres; Lilleshall National Sports Centre; and the National School. It is not clear, however, whether these forms were actually ordered, as the copy of the order form found in the FA archives has a post-it note on it with the notation “HOLD”. This suggests that the order was never processed.

I asked Tony Pickerin about this and he thought that the order had been fulfilled. There is, however, no evidence from the FA archives that the posters were sent out: there is, for instance, no cover letter to the various clubs or Centres of Excellence explaining what the posters were, or any encouragement to put them up in appropriate places. There is also no reference to this poster being sent out in any of the subsequent descriptions by FA personnel (including Tony Pickerin) of steps that had been taken by the FA to promote child protection. Tony Pickerin did not mention ordering these documents and sending them out when he wrote to Charles Hughes shortly after the Sports Council conference to explain the things that needed to be done by the FA to introduce child protection arrangements.

In any event, even if the posters were ordered, and were sent out to the intended beneficiaries, that was limited to the professional game. The vast majority of children play football in the grassroots game.

At the Sports Council conference, the NCF agreed to help customise child protection

guidelines for each sport's national governing body. Anita White told the delegates that the Sports Council was in principle willing to help, but national governing bodies "must spell out what they want first. The seminar is only the first step. Please write to the Sports Council to ask how it can help".

At the Sports Council conference, Tony Pickerin spoke for the first time with Celia Brackenridge. Celia Brackenridge records that: "As he left at the end of the day [Tony Pickerin] said quietly to me, 'I need to talk to you'. It was clear that the sport was beginning to come to terms with its duty of care for this vast army of young players, but it was some four years before we spoke again."¹²

Charles Hughes was aware that Tony Pickerin had attended the conference. The conference was referred to in the letter sent by Graham Kelly to the Secretary of State, Michael Howard MP, on August 5th 1996 (a letter that had been drafted by Tony Pickerin, and which Charles Hughes had asked to see a draft of before it was sent out).

8.1.73. At the Sports Council conference, all sports heard the clear message that child protection measures needed to be introduced, and were offered the tools and assistance to deliver them. From this point onwards, I consider that the FA had no excuse for failing to introduce a child protection policy and a comprehensive child protection programme as quickly as was reasonably possible.

8.1.74. The message of the Sports Council conference was well understood by Tony Pickerin, and he conveyed it to Charles Hughes. The details were not, however, subsequently conveyed to Charles Hughes' successor, Howard Wilkinson, or to his assistant, Robin Russell as part of any handover. Neither Robin Russell nor Howard Wilkinson was aware of the conference or of the recommendations made at the conference.

8.1.75. There was discussion within the FA about child protection from July 1996 until the end of 1997, and a number of measures were introduced. By the end of 1997, however, the FA was far off from developing and introducing a comprehensive suite of child protection measures. In my view, the FA could and should have done far more in that period.

8.1.76. A series of discussions about child protection took place in August and September 1996. These focused primarily on screening. A note prepared by XX (dated September 4th 1996) described the "Overall objective" of the FA as being "to have in place effective systems for protection of children involved in football..." In addition, to screening, XX referred to the sanctioning of trips abroad, and the sanctioning of trips within the country. A handwritten note of a meeting in mid-September 1996 also referred to having a "process whereby children can report their concerns/problems".

8.1.77. Tony Pickerin shared the course materials from the Sports Council conference with Charles Hughes on September 12th 1996, suggesting in a covering memorandum that, "As we are currently considering the FA's position and future strategy in this area, you may feel that this can add to the discussion."

¹² Brackenridge, C (2006) *Child Welfare in Football*, p.2

8.1.78. Charles Hughes showed an interest in these materials. He wrote to his personal assistant: “Perhaps we can discuss this with Tony when we next visit Lilleshall”. There is no record in the archives of Tony Pickerin and Charles Hughes having this conversation, although Tony Pickerin told me that he recalls having a conversation.

8.1.79. On October 29th 1996, Tony Pickerin corresponded with Charles Hughes about the materials again, stating that:

“[A]s you will be aware from the report of The Sports Council Conference held recently, only to screen criminal record checks is not regarded as sufficient. Governing Bodies were recommended to establish a variety of procedures at this conference and I would propose that we take this forward.”

This is the earliest record in the FA archives of someone in the FA calling for the FA to introduce policies and procedures.

8.1.80. The FA did introduce a number of measures in the next few years, but it took almost four years before the FA publicly launched the necessary comprehensive policies and procedures.

8.1.81. Tony Pickerin had recognised that introducing policies and procedures would take some time, and so he proposed a number of measures for the FA to adopt “in the interim period”. He suggested that the FA should:

- “(i) introduce a Code of Conduct for all staff, coaches and scouts involved in the FA Programme of Excellence;
- (ii) form a Development Group to include nationally recognised experts to formulate procedures for the FA to ensure all precautions have been taken;
- (iii) consult with the NCF, other agencies and governing bodies to establish best practice in the area; and
- (iv) develop in-service training for staff in the FA Programme for Excellence to both raise their awareness and increase their knowledge in this area.”

Tony Pickerin had clearly absorbed the messages of the Sports Council conference. This proposed course of action would have enabled the FA to approach the issue of child protection strategically and in a joined-up way. Tony Pickerin also acknowledged that the FA should not act alone, but needed to draw on external expertise.

8.1.82. With respect to the “Interim Period”, Charles Hughes responded to Tony Pickerin’s proposal for “the establishment of a Development Group, to include nationally recognised experts”, and asked him:

- “(a) Can you identify these “experts”?
- (b) Is it your view that The Football Association should establish the Development Group or that The Football Association should be part of a group set up by someone else e.g.. The Sports Council?”

I have not located a response from Tony Pickerin in the FA archives to this matter. It is possible that he did respond to this question. What is clear, however, is that the FA first set up a Development Group more than three years later: in early 2000.

8.1.83. The correspondence from Charles Hughes to Tony Pickerin about the proposed “Development Group” was shared with a wider group of people who Charles Hughes felt should be kept informed, and brought “up to speed” on the issues: this included Robin Russell (Assistant Director of Coaching and Education; in January 1997, Robin Russell became the FA’s Technical Co-ordinator) and XX, as well as the FA’s Head of Medical Education, the Co-ordinator of Competitions and Regulations, and the FA’s Referees Secretary.

8.1.84. Around the same time as Tony Pickerin was alerting Charles Hughes to the need to think about child protection matters other than screening, Charles Hughes was getting a similar message from the producers of the forthcoming *Dispatches* programme about child abuse in football. The producers of the programme – to be called *Soccer’s Foul Play* – were in correspondence with Charles Hughes, asking him probing questions as to the steps that the FA was taking in the field of child protection. The answer given by the FA was not very much. Apart from its work on screening, the FA had very little else to say about its child protection work.

8.1.85. Charles Hughes did not engage in any detail with the *Dispatches* production team and did not wish to be interviewed for the programme. The main reason for this was that, as he put it to David Davies the FA’s Director of Public Affairs, “there are so many areas where we would have to be rather evasive”.

Box 8.

DISPATCHES: SOCCER’S FOUL PLAY

On January 23rd 1997, Channel 4 broadcast a documentary in its *Dispatches* series entitled *Soccer’s Foul Play*. This programme sought to expose examples of child sex abuse in football, and investigated what the authorities – particularly the FA – were doing to protect children.

In advance of the broadcast, the producers of the programme – Clark Productions – corresponded with the FA. The producers invited the FA to participate in the programme and to put on the record the work that was being done in the area of child protection. The FA chose not to take part in the programme.

The programme shows Charles Hughes being asked a question about child protection by the reporter, Deborah Davies, as he walks towards the FA’s offices at Lancaster Gate. Charles Hughes ignores her. The impression given to viewers was that the FA was not really interested in child protection.

In correspondence with Celia Brackenridge (found in the Celia Brackenridge archives), Deborah Davies commented that “Charles Hughes quite literally turns his back on the questions.” Charles Hughes’ conduct was also commented upon in an article in *The Observer*, published the day after the broadcast: “Charles Hughes could have been more helpful when *Dispatches* wrote to him... They say his reply did not answer the questions, and when he refused an interview they buttonholed him outside FA headquarters. He ignored them and the FA did not look good.”¹³

13. *The Observer*, January 26th 1997 On the Box

The impression given by the *Dispatches* programme that the FA was not really interested in child protection is a little unfair. The FA had taken an interest in the matter, but its focus was on screening which although a useful measure was not something which the FA could practically achieve due to legislative constraints.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

Bernard Clark, of Clark Productions, who was the Executive Producer of the programme, told me that the idea behind the programme came from a letter that he received from someone saying that there was “*a real concern about stuff at Celtic Boys Club*” in Scotland. Bernard Clark investigated this further, and someone mentioned Barry Bennell’s name and that he had been imprisoned in Florida. Whilst on a business trip to Florida, Bernard Clark went to Jacksonville to meet the prosecutor in the Bennell case. Bernard Clark obtained a copy of the file on the case through a Freedom of Information request to the Florida prosecutor. A lot of the names of the complainants were redacted. The story that Bernard Clark wanted to tell then shifted from Celtic Boys Club to Barry Bennell.

The Florida court files were reviewed, and it was possible for the production team to work out some of the names of witnesses that the Florida police had attempted to redact. This led the production team to track down Ian Ackley who was prepared to be interviewed about his abuse. Ian Ackley’s interview for the documentary was an incredible act of bravery. He was a young man at the time of the interview talking openly about the serious sexual abuse that he had suffered.

Deborah Davies told me that what she had discovered was “this continuous line of abuse”. The boys:

“[W]ere aware that they had replaced someone else who’d got to thirteen, fourteen and that as they started to hit puberty someone else was being abused, that there were frequently two boys in the bed at the same time with Bennell and that he would abuse one and, literally, turn over and abuse the other and that, when you looked at the time that Ian was talking about and you then looked of the Florida arrest, there was obviously this long span.”

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE PRODUCERS

On October 2nd 1996, Ed Braman, one of the producers, wrote to Charles Hughes informing him about the proposed programme. Ed Braman sought the FA’s input on a variety of matters:

- “• A general briefing with an appropriate official as to the FA’s current position on child protection and the concerns - specific and general - which underwrite it.
- Does the FA currently have guidelines as to the protection of children and the handling of abuse allegations? If so, could I please see a copy? Also, I would be grateful if you could direct me towards an FA official who might be available for interview on this subject.
- Could you please supply me with a list of all the registered FA Centres of Excellence together with any information as to the conditions such a Centre must adhere to in order to maintain registration.

- Could you please supply me with a detailed account / syllabus of the FA coaching training system and outline what, if anything, is taught to potential coaches about child abuse, appropriate behaviour around young children and general child protection matters.”

Ed Braman explained that the subject of the programme was:

“[T]he protection of children in sport and the programme will examine the handling of abuse allegations within the sporting context, particularly football. . . [W]e are currently planning to explore a number of stories that have emerged in football generally.”

Ed Braman expressed the view that “we are aware that the FA takes these matters very seriously and polices the system under its jurisdiction carefully.” He was looking “to demonstrate ‘best practice’ in this area and would like the FA’s help in demonstrating the various ways in which child protection is incorporated in guidelines and policed in practice.”

Charles Hughes responded on October 8th 1996 (copying in Graham Kelly and David Davies), saying that:

“[I]t would not be appropriate for us to be involved with this type of programme, particularly in view of the fact that we are still involved in discussions with the Home Secretary concerning our future policies in relation to the protection of children and we are awaiting, of course, the White Paper following the Dunblane enquiry. I hope you will appreciate that, when we have formulated our recommendations on these matters, they will require approval and ratification by The F.A. Council. At the appropriate time, we will be prepared to discuss these matters publicly.”

(The reference to the Dunblane Inquiry was to Lord Cullen’s public investigation into the shootings by Thomas Hamilton at Dunblane Primary School, where the question of the suitability of people working with children more generally was being looked at. Hamilton had previously been involved with the scouts, and in local boys’ clubs.)

In his reply, Ed Braman expressed disappointment and surprise that the FA was unwilling to brief his team or contribute to the programme on the FA’s current position on child protection inside football. He urged Charles Hughes to reconsider, noting that his refusal to cooperate contradicted his original impression that “the FA takes the question of child protection seriously.”

Ed Braman said that he was aware that the FA, along with other sporting bodies, was working with the Home Office to develop policy in the area of child protection and child abuse, and that current procedures made the identification of known or potential abusers difficult for organisations like the FA “since they do not have access to the same records and lists as, for example, the teaching or social work professions.” That did not, however, explain the complete absence in football of child protection infrastructure.

Ed Braman asked Charles Hughes:

“Are you saying however that, until these recent discussions, the FA had no policy, guidelines or even concerns about possible child abuse? Are you saying that whatever recorded instances of abuse – or suspected abuse – there have been have had no impact on the FA’s thinking? Are you saying that FA procedures can only work with legislative backing?”

Ed Braman stressed that the programme would be made, and that “the role of the FA generally – or its ability to intervene in some difficult areas – have consistently featured as questions in the investigations we are pursuing.”

Meanwhile, Charles Hughes sought the views of David Davies, as to how he should engage with the forthcoming programme. On October 10th 1996, Charles Hughes forwarded Ed Braman’s second letter to David Davies, saying that it “has not persuaded me to change my mind and I don’t think it is a particularly clever letter to have written.”

David Davies’ advice to Charles Hughes was to “direct all inquiries from [Ed Braman] in my direction.” David Davies told Charles Hughes that “I certainly don’t think you should be interviewed on the subject,” although David Davies did recognise that there was “a significant downside of being totally unco-operative.” It seems to me that the main reason why Charles Hughes was not interviewed was that the FA had nothing to gain by being involved with the programme: at this time the FA had little to say about what it had been doing on child protection matters and that would have been exposed.

David Davies asked Charles Hughes in correspondence whether there was “a problem at all with our stance or how we have handled such problems?” This question implies that David Davies himself had not previously dealt with any concerns about the matter. When I spoke to him, David Davies said that he had “no significant recollection of child protection issues being raised with me personally by the media. If the subject had come up, it was usual for me to build a file on it. I had no such file.” Given the paucity of materials relating to child protection in the FA archives that refer to David Davies, it seems that he played little part in the development of child protection matters at the FA.

Hughes replied to David Davies on October 23rd 1996 saying:

“**Thank goodness, to date, we have not had any problems that have caused major concern.** However, it is quite clear that we shall need to stiffen our position, if only because we have, in coaching alone, over 5,000 itinerant coaches working for us who have not been screened, and the screening process is likely to cost money and should include everyone who is connected in any way with young children; scouts, administrators, referees etc. **Potentially, therefore, there is an enormous problem.**”
(emphasis added).

This communication is quite revealing. In my view, it is a frank expression of Charles Hughes’ own view at the time: Charles Hughes had no reason to believe that the correspondence would come under the microscope of this Review more than twenty years later, and he had no reason not to be candid with David Davies. Charles Hughes’

comments also demonstrate that he did not believe that the recent Bennell case was a particularly serious one for the FA. It also evidences the fact that Charles Hughes was not aware of other significant problems of abuse in football.

The correspondence with David Davies also reveals Charles Hughes' focus on screening, rather than the other measures that the Sports Council had recommended that the FA introduce, as urged upon him by Tony Pickerin. Screening was seen by Charles Hughes at the time as the main answer to the potential (and possibly "enormous") problem of abuse in the game. Charles Hughes explained to David Davies that the FA was "instigating a screening process whereby those who are looking to achieving an FA qualification, at whatever level, will be required to provide proof of having been screened before receiving their award."

Charles Hughes concluded his memorandum to David Davies by saying: "I hope you can understand, therefore, just why I would not wish to be interviewed on this subject because there are so many areas where we would have to be rather evasive."

Charles Hughes was patently aware, therefore, that the FA did not have answers to many of the criticisms that the *Dispatches* production team was seeking to make.

On November 26th 1996, the *Dispatches* production team wrote to Charles Hughes again, to inform the FA of the points that would be made in the programme:

- “• There is nothing in the FA Handbook on the issue of child protection
- Has the FA learned anything from the cases of Barry Bennell or Keith Ketley – both of them serving prison sentences for sexually abusing players in their FA registered teams?
- What method is there for recording convictions and making sure clubs – at all levels – are aware of them?
- Why there are no guidelines available to clubs on the issue of child protection
- What is your response to the criticism that the FA is slow and bureaucratic in dealing with issues of this type?”

Ed Braman urged Charles Hughes to reconsider his decision not to comment or to contribute to the programme. He noted that neither a statement nor a briefing with the FA's legal department had materialised. Ed Braman's letter suggests that this had been promised by one of David Davies' communications team. In any event, Ed Braman stated that: "I nonetheless feel that the questions we raise are of such seriousness they can only be dealt with in interview. I would therefore encourage you to give an interview your serious consideration."

Charles Hughes did not respond to this letter. In a note to David Davies dated November 29th 1996 (the deadline the *Dispatches* production team had set for a response), Charles Hughes said, "We shall take no action and no further reply will be made to this letter. We explained our position to Mr. Braman, in our letter of 8 October, and nothing has changed."

The reality is that the FA had nothing to say in response as:

- There was nothing in the FA Handbook on the issue of child protection;
- The FA had not – at this point - learned anything from the case of Barry Bennell;
- There was no method for recording convictions and making sure clubs were aware of them;
- There were no guidelines available to clubs on the issue of child protection.

The reason why there was nothing in the FA Handbook on the issue of child protection, no method of recording convictions and making sure clubs were aware of them, and no guidelines available to clubs on the issue, was that this whole area had only just started to be thought about by the FA, following Tony Pickerin's attendance at the Sports Council conference in June 1996.

With respect to Keith Ketley, there is no indication that the FA had been aware of Ketley's conviction. Internal inquiries were launched "as a matter of urgency" into the FA's knowledge of Ketley on November 29th 1996. It was thought that he had never obtained an FA coaching qualification. He did not appear on the FA's database as having done any medical courses, and did not appear in any capacity on the FA's Lilleshall database. Internal correspondence that was found in the FA archives stated that "it doesn't look as if he is known to us." Charles Hughes said "No", when asked at the time if he knew him. The FA cannot really be blamed for not knowing about Ketley or doing anything about him. He had changed his name upon coming out of prison (where he had served time for a football-related indecent assault with a team in a different county), and there would have been no way for the County FA in which he later operated to have known about his earlier convictions (see: County FA, Suffolk CFA).

At some point during this period, the FA had sent to the *Dispatches* production team its letter to the Home Secretary of November 11th 1996 and the Coaching Certification Child Protection module, as a reference to this was found in the Celia Brackenridge archives. I have seen a letter from Deborah Davies to Celia Brackenridge, dated December 6th 1996, in which Deborah Davies laments the FA's failure to respond to the producers' questions, and critiques the documents provided by the FA. Deborah Davies said of the FA that "they've hidden behind the complexities of police vetting." This is a reference to the FA saying that it was working hard to implement a screening programme and to lobby the Government for change. These were important steps for the FA to have taken in their own right although, as Deborah Davies implies, there were other child protection measures that could, and should, have been worked on by the FA.

On December 5th 1996, Tony Pickerin notified Charles Hughes that he had become aware of a Channel 4 *Dispatches* programme about "Paedophiles in Sport" which would be broadcast in January 1997. Tony Pickerin appears to have been unaware that Charles Hughes already knew about the programme. He also does not appear to have been privy to the correspondence with the producers, or between Charles Hughes and David Davies. Tony Pickerin explained to Charles Hughes that he understood that Bennell and his activities would form part of this programme, and that:

“The Football Association will undoubtedly be asked to comment by the Press and media. It may be that forewarning David Davies of this potential problem and briefing him on the policy developments in Child Protection by The Football Association would counter any adverse publicity.”

Charles Hughes responded to Tony Pickerin on 10th December, copying in David Davies:

“You will, of course, by now have received, from [XX], extracts from The Police Bill on Child Protection. It may be helpful if, by January, we can have clarified our thinking on the way ahead for football and can make a statement on the action we propose. I think we now have the necessary data to move ahead but, it is still the case that it is better to be right than quick.”

This correspondence suggests that Charles Hughes was keenly aware of the reputational issues for the FA arising from the *Dispatches* programme. It also suggests that in practical terms Charles Hughes was only really thinking about screening (which was the subject of the Police Bill) and not any other measures to safeguard children in the game that Tony Pickerin had raised with him, or were included in the notes of the Sports Council conference.

On December 18th 1996, David Davies wrote to Charles Hughes:

“Thank you for sending me a copy of your exchange of memorandum with Tony Pickerin on his knowledge of the Channel 4 programme “Paedophiles in Sport”. . . .

It would of course - as you say - be immensely helpful if we could make a statement in early January on the action we propose to take.”

There was a suggestion, in an email dated December 20th 1996, that there should be a direct conversation between David Davies and Tony Pickerin about this, but it is not clear whether such a conversation took place or, if so, what was said. When I asked him about it, David Davies seemed to recall that there was a conversation, but did not remember what was said. Tony Pickerin did not recall having this conversation, or any other conversation with David Davies about child protection matters.

Both David Davies and Charles Hughes were of the view that a statement from the FA as to the action that it proposed to take on child protection matters would be helpful for the organisation. The statement that was put out by the FA, in the form of a press release, made mention only of the FA’s work and proposed work on screening: (see: Screening and Self-Declarations). A letter that was sent out by Graham Kelly to a variety of stakeholders in the game on January 21st 1997 (two days before the *Dispatches* programme was broadcast) also focused on screening. The FA did not take the opportunity to set out a broader set of measures that it would be working on. At that point in time, the FA had not decided to introduce further measures.

On January 23rd 1997, Channel 4 aired the *Dispatches* programme under the heading *Soccer’s Foul Play*. It had originally been scheduled to go out in December 1996, but

correspondence that I have seen from Deborah Davies stated that after the running time was extended to an hour-long special (rather than the normal 40-minute slot), it was deferred until January 1997.

CONTENTS OF THE DISPATCHES PROGRAMME

The *Dispatches* programme featured allegations against Barry Bennell, Keith Ketley and Bob Higgins. With respect to Bennell, the programme contained an interview with Ian Ackley, who explained that he joined a Derbyshire side that Bennell coached. The understanding was that Bennell would guide him to a professional career at Manchester City. It was said that young players would be invited to Bennell's home where there was "everything you wanted to do at home but weren't allowed" like video games and take-away dinners. Football kit was left everywhere.

The abuse of Ian Ackley was vividly described. The programme said that statements from other young men confirming an identical pattern of behaviour had also been seen.

The programme explained that Manchester City did not employ Bennell: that Bennell received expenses for the teams he ran for seven years and that he used their training grounds at Platt Lane. In return Manchester City took its pick of his young players. The programme reported that when Bennell took the young players to a holiday camp one family complained that their sons were staying late in his bedroom. Ken Barnes, former Chief Scout for Manchester City, described it as a "bit of nothing, apparently he had got five or six of the lads in his chalet, and he was playing videos, and talking with them about this and that and the other". The reporter, Deborah Davies, asked whether the letter of complaint came into Manchester City and Ken Barnes confirmed that it did. Deborah Davies asked whether it sounded alarm bells. Ken Barnes said: "No, no".

Chris Muir, a former Director of Manchester City was interviewed. He said that: "In the world of football [Bennell] was looked upon as a fellow that wasn't right. But there was no firm complaints, so football is a macho game, and suspicions were shown that he might have been the other way which is very rare that you ever hear of this in football, it is a macho world."

The programme went on to discuss Bennell's involvement with Crewe Alexandra, where he had been recruited by its Manager, Dario Gradi, to coach the club's 12-18 year olds. Dario Gradi was aware of Bennell's practice of having boys stay at his house. Dario Gradi is interviewed on screen by Deborah Davies and told her that "we have never had any reports of any problems". The programme asserted, however, that Norman Rowlinson, the Crewe Alexandra's Chairman had concerns and had told the programme that "Bennell had a certain magnetic attraction with boys like the pied piper". Because of this, the programme reported that Norman Rowlinson rang Manchester City's Ken Barnes. In his interview shown on the programme, Ken Barnes said that he recalled Norman Rowlinson stating that Crewe Alexandra had had one or two reports about Bennell "mucking about with kids".¹⁴

The *Dispatches* programme explained that Crewe Alexandra sacked Bennell "six years ago" (1991) over "disagreements about football tactics". The programme described

14. The correspondence between Deborah Davies and Norman Rowlinson is described in the section of the report dealing with Crewe Alexandra and Barry Bennell (see: Barry Bennell)>

how in the summer of 1993, Bennell had gone to Jacksonville, Florida with youth teams from Staffordshire. Their club – Stone Dominoes – was sponsored by a British company which employed Bennell as a full-time coach. The teams went to Florida for three weeks. Bennell and the boys stayed with host families. A woman, DM, with whom Bennell and another boy stayed was interviewed. The boy had given the police a statement describing an incident of sexual assault. DM told the programme that she called “the owner or the president of that club” and stated her concerns about Bennell’s behaviour. In a solicitor’s letter to *Dispatches* on behalf of the company which paid for Stone Dominoes, it was stated that the club was unaware of any complaints.

The *Dispatches* programme went on to say that Bennell stayed with Stone Dominoes, and the following year Bennell and the same boy stayed at a hotel because DM would not permit them to stay at her home. The boy, who was 13, was raped by Bennell during this visit. He informed the authorities that he came forward because he was scared of catching AIDs. Bennell was arrested in Florida, and admitted buggery and indecent assault. He was sentenced to four years imprisonment.

The Florida Assistant State Attorney who had worked on the Bennell prosecution was interviewed for the programme and said: “I wrote to the FIFA organisation telling them of the charges, and what he was convicted of, and that obviously this had involved a child whom he had been coaching. And with his involvement in coaching I thought it was important that they know that... I have not gotten any response.” The programme reported that four other people were willing to go to America to give evidence in Bennell’s trial and that that abuse had happened in the years in which Bennell was associated with Manchester City. Ken Barnes responded to this allegation by saying: “you do surprise me, it’s a vast subject isn’t it”. Following Bennell’s sentencing in Florida, the programme explained that Ian Ackley came forward. This led to Bennell’s arrest when he returned to the United Kingdom.

The *Dispatches* programme also featured events concerning Keith Ketley. Ketley had been convicted in 1995 on four counts of indecent assault at a grassroots club Ipswich Saracens. The victim was 11 years old. Ketley was serving five years in prison. The programme explained that before Ketley set up the club he was already a convicted sex offender: he had pleaded guilty to indecently assaulting a boy he was coaching in Southend-on-Sea four years previously under a different name.

The *Dispatches* programme looked at the Suffolk County affiliation form and asked whether it was adequate. It was explained that the local County FA only wanted three names and did not ask for the names of coaches. No checks were completed by the local County FA.

Les Reed, the First Team Coach for Charlton Athletic also appeared on the *Dispatches* programme. He said “You ought to have guidelines.” He explained that he had introduced a Code of Conduct for all staff at Charlton Athletic. Les Reed explained that there was a duty of care owed by football clubs to look after the people for whom they were responsible. Les Reed gave examples of how coaches should behave: they should always work in pairs, they should not drive alone, and they should not be put in

a questionable situation.

The programme also featured events concerning Bob Higgins. A first team player with Southampton FC, Dean Radford, was interviewed. Dean Radford had trained with the Southampton youth team from the age of 13. The programme explained that Higgins had been Southampton's Youth Development Officer. It alleged that players stayed at his home, that he would ask young players to lie next to him and that he would open their shirt and rub their chest. When Higgins drove players to matches he would get them to lie across his lap. He also introduced soap water massages, which were performed on naked young players.

Dean Radford stated on the programme that he had been abused by Higgins, that the Southampton FC found out about this and called in the police. The programme explained that Higgins had been charged with indecently assaulting seven players. His trial was at Southampton Crown Court. The prosecution was unsuccessful.

The programme explained that Higgins subsequently joined Peterborough United. The job was offered on the personal recommendation of Kit Carson, Peterborough's Youth Development Officer.

A former Peterborough United Trainee, MK, was interviewed on the programme and described indecent assault by Higgins. Bob Higgins had at this point become a born-again Christian. It was explained that the *Dispatches* team had received statements from young players saying that Higgins baptised players in a bath at his home. It was explained that Bob Higgins left Peterborough in 1995 by mutual consent and because "the club were not willing to tolerate his religious behaviour". The programme said that Bob Higgins continued to run a private football academy.

The *Dispatches* programme explained that they had exchanged letters with Charles Hughes, the FA's Director of Coaching and Education, but Charles Hughes had refused their request for an interview. Nevertheless, the *Dispatches* programme pointed out that the FA had explained that if legislation, which was going through Parliament and would allow organisations to conduct criminal convictions background checks, was passed the FA would pay for clubs to make those checks.

When I interviewed Les Reed, he explained to me that Charlton Athletic's child protection efforts had started in mid-1995 (six months into his tenure at the club). He told me that he thinks that his background as a teacher and school counsellor (and, to some extent, his awareness of abuse in swimming and gymnastics through his role as a PE teacher) gave him the awareness to strive for best practice, and some of the knowledge to achieve it. He told me that his thoughts about introducing a policy were supported by QW, who was a teacher and the designated Child Protection Officer at his school, and was the Director of Charlton's Centre of Excellence.

MEDIA PRE-REACTION

In the week leading up to the *Dispatches* broadcast, the programme was previewed in the press. It was highlighted in the television listings as a "Critic's Choice" in *The Times*

– “A startling, bordering on salacious report...doorsteps some apparently uncaring Football Association officials”¹⁵ – and as a show not to be missed in *The Daily Express* – “the FA fails to protect its protégés”.¹⁶

The Daily Mail Sport section had run a pre-emptive story on January 20th 1997, with comment from the FA. Under the headline “FA rejects criticism over child protection”, the article reported the FA’s position that it had been “campaigning for a long time” regarding screening. David Davies is quoted as insisting that “football is at the forefront of seeking to do everything possible in this area,” and that the FA saw child protection as an issue “of absolutely top priority.”¹⁷ When I asked him about this quote, Robin Russell remarked, “I wouldn’t wish to defame David, but I would struggle to say that [child protection] was an absolute top priority.” David Davies did not demur from this when I put the same to him. Subsequently, David Davies told me that “The idea for me personally that making football safe for young people was NOT a top priority for a governing body would have been unthinkable.”

An article in *The Independent*, under the headline “Boy soccer players being put at risk”, on 23rd January 1997, described the contents of the documentary in detail.¹⁸ Noting the steps taken by Charlton Athletic, the article quoted the manager Les Reed as criticising the aloofness of the FA as follows: “The FA needs to come out of the towers at Lancaster Gate and really investigate what is going on.” The article in *The Independent* also included comment from the FA, stating the organisation’s strong support for legislation, and that:

“The FA has been a prime mover among sporting governing bodies to get an effective screening process which aids child protection. The FA is committed to what could be a £1m-plus programme of screening all those involved in youth football.”

The comment from the FA was drawn from a press release put out by the FA on January 22nd 1997. This read in full:

“The Football Association utterly refutes false allegations made by Channel Four’s Dispatches programme that it has taken “no steps” to ensure the protection of young players from “predatory coaches”.

On the contrary, The F.A. has been a prime mover among sporting governing bodies to get an effective screening process in place which aids child protection. Home Secretary Michael Howard has congratulated The F.A. on its initiatives and willingness to ensure that those working in youth football - either as employees or volunteers - are properly screened. The F.A. is committed to what could be a £1 million-plus programme of screening all those involved in youth football through its 43,000 affiliated clubs. It is the most comprehensive commitment to child protection ever undertaken in British sport.

Consequently The F.A is considering its legal position in the light of false and offensive statements widely distributed by the producers of Dispatches.

15. The Times, January 18th 1997

16. The Daily Express, January 23rd 1997

17. The Daily Mail, January 20th 1997

18. The Independent 23rd January 1997

Copies of correspondence between F.A. chief executive Graham Kelly and Home Secretary Michael Howard which explains The F.A.'s commitment to a comprehensive child protection screening process are available from The F.A press office.”

This press statement focused entirely on the FA's efforts around the screening process. In doing so it ignored the bulk of the allegations made in the programme. Although there is a reference to the FA “considering its legal position”, I have seen no material to suggest that any real consideration was given to doing this.

POST BROADCAST REACTION

After the broadcast, the *Daily Mail* carried an article under the headline “Scandal football won't tackle”. The article said: “That football has a problem with paedophilia is self evident. Those fresh-faced boys desperate to impress. The coaches eyeing the talent. The changing-room. The communal shower. The post-match drinking. The scope for abuse is obvious.”¹⁹ In *The Times*, the programme was commended for doing “a first class job of establishing that the sexual abuse of young athletes is not confined to a few middle-aged men preying on young female swimmers and gymnasts but extends into the traditionally masculine world of football” (while criticising the appearance of a “distastefully prurient interest in what had gone on”).²⁰

Several reviewers commented on the FA's response. An article in *The Observer* noted that “The FA does have serious and wide-ranging responsibilities to everyone associated with those clubs” and that “Some football people have been slow to acknowledge that their sport could attract paedophiles.”²¹ Similarly, an article in the *Sunday Express* said that the programme exposed “the lack of any checks or controls over football youth coaches with tendencies towards paedophilia” which would “chill all middle-aged parents to the marrow” and that while the documentary had not suggested that the problem was widespread, it “rightly questioned the Football Association's apparent lack of concern.” Noting the imminent passage of legislation in the area, the article concluded: “If *Dispatches* goads the FA into action, it will have strengthened TV's claim to have taken over from the print media the sacred torch of investigative journalism.”²²

Despite initial widespread media interest, the story did not continue to garner attention. Deborah Davies told me that she thinks this was because we “didn't have any star names and that there was no media appetite to move the story on.” She also suggested that “at the time sports journalists were so embedded with the game that I don't think they were open to criticism of it and I think that's been one of the big changes now, that the concept of a sports investigative journalist almost didn't exist then and now it does.”

The *Dispatches* programme did not elicit much public response. A confidential helpline was provided by Channel 4 for viewers to make contact after the programme. A subsequent report found in the Celia Brackenridge archives noted that the helpline was “much quieter than anticipated.” 349 working calls were received. 40% of the callers were survivors of sexual abuse, but only 9% of callers had experienced abuse in a sporting context. The report observed that:

“There are few programmes made about men suffering child sexual

19. The Daily Mail, January 24th 1997, Scandal football won't tackle

20. The Times, January 24th 1997, Doom, disaster and dirty deeds, as usual

21. The Observer, January 26th 1997, On The Box

22. The Sunday Express, January 26th 1997, Last Week's TV

abuse, and from the calls we took it is evident that men suffer afterwards as much as women, but possibly find abuse even more difficult to talk about, particularly abuse in the macho world of football.”

The Project Manager for the helpline observed that it was “shocking to think that there are so many supposedly ‘trusted adults’ who abuse their trust, and even more shocking to realise that when suspicions are raised, in many cases officials do very little about it.” Worried parents were also provided with a checklist, prepared by Les Reed. In a debriefing following the helpline, feedback from the helpline advisors suggested that the helpline had been quieter than expected because “men find it harder to talk about feelings than women, and particularly in the accepted macho domain of football, and that a lot of the potential audience was lost to the X Files on BBC 1 at the same time.”

Les Reed explained to me that when he met with people at clubs who had seen the *Dispatches* programme, they expressed the view that the problem was “exaggerated”. People told him that, “This is football, this is a man’s game, it doesn’t happen”. Les Reed said that it “shocked” him that after the programme, people were either putting their heads in the sand, or just thinking “Obviously, it doesn’t apply to our club”.

David White in his autobiography, *Shades of Blue*, describes watching the programme, which “chimed with me in many ways and exhumed lots of painful memories” (p.229). The programme did not, however, lead to him making disclosure of his abuse. He first spoke about it a year later when he was contacted by Cheshire Police who were once again investigating allegations against Barry Bennell.

I have received evidence, however, that one Bennell victim did contact the police after the *Dispatches* programme to disclose information about the abuse that he had suffered.

Some survivors of abuse did not recall watching the documentary at all. For many of those who did watch the programme it had a big impact, although it triggered different responses for different people. Some of their reactions are set out below.

Several survivors recall how the documentary prompted questions by their loved ones. One individual said that his mother had asked him whether anything had happened to him; he said no. He explained that although he did not disclose his abuse until after his mother had passed away, the documentary was “one aspect” of his later decision to come forward.

Another survivor also said that he denied that anything had happened between him and Bennell. He recalls his parents’ relief and their assumption at that point that Ian Ackley’s allegations had been made up. He told the Review that he remembered thinking, “what that lad is saying is true”.

One survivor felt that the documentary had had a negative impact on his personal life. He said, “I remember seeing it on and I kind of didn’t like . . . it [being put] into the public domain. It was the worst possible thing that could’ve happened to me.” He said that he had tried to put things behind him, disguising it as much as he could. He was getting on

reasonably well, but “the Dispatches programme was having to live through it again.” Another survivor said he had been approached about appearing on the documentary, but his ex-wife wanted to protect the family’s anonymity and talked him out of doing so. He said when he watched it subsequently, it prompted him to speak to his parents about what had happened to him at the hands of another alleged abuser.

Another survivor said that he had seen Ian Ackley on *Dispatches* in 1997 and was “horrified at the level of abuse that he had suffered.”

Several survivors lamented the fact that the documentary did not have more of a public impact at the time. One individual said, “I thought it was spot on, but it sort of died a death, didn’t it. I thought it might have kicked off from there, but it didn’t. I knew how big it was in my head, but it didn’t take like it has done recently.”

Ian Ackley has subsequently explained in an interview for a programme shown on *Al Jazeera* in February 2018 that he believed that:

“[T]he cultural climate at the time did not lend itself well to topics as awkward as child sexual abuse. Such subjects was taboo, as was talking about sex in general. Our awareness was poor and our prejudices many. It was still the time when children were told, ‘speak only when spoken to, respect your elders, do not argue or challenge an adult’. Successful individuals were given kudos and heralded as icons to look up to. All of this contributed to the silence that followed. Two decades of it.”

8.1.86. The *Dispatches* programme exposed the paucity of the FA’s child protection arrangements. At this point in time, more than one year after the Hickson conviction, the FA had no child protection policy. The FA had no formal procedures for referrals about allegations of abuse. The FA had no screening measures in place. The FA had no publications or source materials for County FAs or any of the thousands of affiliated clubs to rely upon. The FA had no one on staff who could give comprehensive advice about child protection. The FA had not insisted that any County FA, or *any* club – whether professional or the many thousands of clubs affiliated to the game via the County FAs – appoint a designated child protection officer. The FA had not developed any policy to safeguard children taken on football tours or attending tournaments. The FA had not developed widespread training of people involved in the game who work closely with children. What had been introduced was a brief module on child protection in the new generation of coach education courses brought in by the FA in August 1996, and the FA was investigating how to go about screening employees and volunteers working with young people in football and was lobbying Government to introduce legislation that would enable the FA to be a clearing house for football clubs carrying out checks.

8.1.87. In reality, by the time of the *Dispatches* documentary, the FA had achieved very little since Hickson’s conviction in September 1995. The FA had not sought assistance or advice from Celia Brackenridge or any other experts. The FA’s thinking on child protection matters had not developed very much.

8.1.88. More significant progress was made by the FA in 1997, after the *Dispatches* documentary had been broadcast. The idea of having a child protection programme was worked on, and approved by the FA's Executive Committee. The FA established a national coaches association which required its members to be screened and to adhere to a code of ethics. A leaflet about child protection to send out to parents of children involved in the game was drafted. Child protection measures were incorporated in the *Charter for Quality*, a new programme for junior football that was promoted by Howard Wilkinson. The FA was also working hard to lobby the Government to overhaul the screening or vetting process. Nevertheless, in spite of this movement in the right direction and a clear acknowledgment that things needed to be done, the development and implementation of a full and comprehensive child protection programme was still a long way off.

8.1.89. At the beginning of 1997, the FA appointed Howard Wilkinson as its Technical Director, and Charles Hughes retired. When interviewed by me, Charles Hughes had no recollection of the correspondence relating to child protection or of child protection issues at the FA. I believe that Charles Hughes' lack of recollection was genuine. He had left the FA twenty years previously, and had not taken documentation away with him. It is unsurprising that he had little grasp of the detail.

8.1.90. Charles Hughes was adamant, however, that had the FA known that there was a problem with child abuse in football it would have been dealt with. He rejected any suggestion that the FA had sought to cover things up. Charles Hughes explained to me that he expected football coaches to have high standards, and that he would have dealt with them if they departed from those standards. Based on all the materials that I have seen, and the evidence that I have heard, I believe that Charles Hughes did not cover things up. Tony Pickerin told me that "Charles never fudged an issue". If a child protection issue had been reported to him, Tony Pickerin says that Charles Hughes "would have dealt with it."

8.1.91. It is also clear to me from the evidence that I have seen in the FA archives that Charles Hughes acknowledged that the FA needed to take steps to address issues of child protection. Charles Hughes was, for instance, supportive of steps to screen those involved in the game. The evidence that I have seen did not suggest, however, that child protection was seen as a high priority for Charles Hughes. His primary focus was on the technical aspects of the game of football. Child protection was very much a subsidiary matter. Shortly before his departure from the FA, in a memorandum dated January 14th 1997, Charles Hughes discussed correspondence that had taken place with an officer of the Bury Managers Junior Football League - Inter League Teams, where there were concerns about clubs and leagues' responsibilities to children and their parents, particularly when clubs were away on tour. Charles Hughes said that "no doubt", the officer's "concerns will be taken account of when the whole matter of child protection is considered in more detail".

8.1.92. Howard Wilkinson told the Review that the subject of child protection was not mentioned in discussions with the FA about his new role, and it was not referred

to in the “Terms of Reference” document that he received regarding his role. Howard Wilkinson explained to the Review that he accepted the role without any indication that he was responsible for child protection at the FA. Howard Wilkinson did ensure, however, that child protection was included in the *Charter for Quality*, which was his programme to transform football education. The *Charter for Quality* included child protection as one of its ten key objectives, and a number of child protection measures were introduced as part of the *Charter for Quality*.

8.1.93. The FA’s Chief Executive, Graham Kelly, also acknowledged that child protection was something that the organisation needed to address, and he did sign off on the various initiatives that were proposed. In practice, the development of the FA’s child protection programme was carried out by others in the FA. It was worked on by the FA’s Technical Department; and in particular by Robin Russell, the Technical Co-ordinator, with the support of XX, and from late 1997/early 1998 by KN.

8.1.94. One piece of correspondence that did get sent by Graham Kelly during this period was shortly before the *Dispatches* programme was broadcast. On January 21st 1997, Graham Kelly sent a letter to all of the FA’s stakeholders – all members of the FA Council, Secretaries and Referees Secretaries of Affiliated Associations, Secretaries of Clubs in the Premier League and the Football League, as well as to the FA Premier League, the Football League, the Professional Footballers Association (“PFA”), and Centres of Excellence Directors – about the FA’s approach to child protection. The letter was written by XX.

8.1.95. The letter made no mention of the forthcoming *Dispatches* television programme, but I have no doubt that that programme spurred the FA to send this letter. This is likely to have been the statement that Charles Hughes and David Davies were discussing at the end of 1996 (box 8: *Dispatches: Soccer’s Foul Play*). The FA probably wished to contact its stakeholders, so as to mitigate some of the criticism that the FA knew would appear in the programme.

8.1.96. In the letter, Graham Kelly stated that: “The protection of children is an issue which the Football Association sees as one of the utmost importance. Careful consideration has been given over a considerable period as to how this can be achieved.” He summarised the FA’s early-stage thinking (enclosing a letter which he had sent to the Home Secretary on November 11th 1996 responding to the ‘White Paper’ about a criminal records scheme: “On the Record”) and invited comments. The focus of Graham Kelly’s letter was exclusively on screening. The broader issues that Tony Pickerin had raised with Charles Hughes in late 1996, following his attendance at the Sports Council conference (see box 7: Sports Council Conference 1996), had not been taken further forward.

8.1.97. A small number of clubs and CFAs responded to Graham Kelly’s letter.

Box 9.

RESPONSES TO THE FA JANUARY 21ST 1997 LETTER

A summary of responses from seven clubs is contained in the FA archives. This reads:

PREMIER LEAGUE

CLUB	COMMENT
Arsenal	Copied letter to all involved in Youth Football and community division. Agree with our recommendations
Crystal Palace	In complete agreement with central clearing house idea Offering help and co-operation
Everton	Agree with comments
Wimbledon	Should refer to member club's "Football in the Community Schemes" Generally in agreement with our proposals

FOOTBALL LEAGUE:

CLUB	COMMENT
Darlington	Broad agreement but areas that require fine-tuning No reference to spent sentences in our submission. Mandatory checks Feel that FA would require more staff and those with expertise to interpret criminal records system Suggest regional vetting not centralised as this will increase delay
Plymouth Argyle	Will support anything we do
Wigan Athletic	They assume coaches (p/t) who are teacher/ex-teachers will have already been vetted, that coaches who have at least Preliminary Coaching Badge have been vetted. All clubs should keep register of coaching staff with photos available for inspection at all times. Part-time coaches be interviewed. Clubs should liaise with Police over appointments

Not included in the summary was Rotherham United FC's response, dated February 20th 1997. This club stated that it agreed with the need for legislation, because of

- “1) Recent prosecutions/allegations in local football, schools football and professional football
- 2) The growth of Centres of Excellence
- 3) Lack of a screening process by a professional body, e.g. FA.”

The letter from Rotherham United listed several groups who should be screened as a pre-requisite to participation: Centres of Excellence staff; Youth Leagues; referees; scouts; schools; and agents. Rotherham United also considered that more was required than screening: it was “essential” that there be training, either through a course or by a written code of practice.

There were responses from County FAs. A summary of the responses is also contained in the FA archives:

Birmingham	In full support of our [campaign]. Feel that checks should not be voluntary but mandatory and form part of any FA qualification that may be taken. Also don't forget women's football
Cheshire	Copied our letter to Cheshire County Council Sent us copy letters from Cheshire County Council and copy of their leaflet
Hertfordshire	Full support. Admit that there will be additional burden with administration but the benefit will far [outweigh] the additional work required.o
Kent	Been in correspondence with Kent Police. Have a referee causing "concern" and trying to find evidence or information to confirm or allay that concern. Our measures would help them considerably
Lancashire	Fully support us
Middlesex	Hopes that fuller reply to proposals that are in letter to Home Secretary will be forthcoming after next Council meeting. Fully supportive
Royal Air Force	Ready to assist in any way possible RAF have their own screening in relation to entry to force therefore they back us
Surrey	Makes two suggestions. Firstly that mini-soccer centres keep record of all people helping Re: Tours - clubs submit list of all those adult helpers attending. Don't forget the girls football - also facing problems Supportive

Kent CFA's response on January 28th 1997 remarked that the FA's communication was "most timely". Kent CFA enclosed correspondence that it had had with Kent Police about a situation involving the County. The CFA reported:

"[P]erson – a registered referee – is causing, by his present actions, some concern. We have attempted to try to find some form of 'evidence' or other information to either justify that concern or to allay, so far as is possible, the fears of those who have brought the matter to our attention. We cannot obtain that information. We are not expecting, or indeed wanting, details of any previous convictions the person may have. All we really seek is a 'Yes you are right to be concerned' or 'There does not appear to be a problem.'"

There is no further reference to this matter in the FA archives, and so it is not possible to know what if anything the FA did in response.

Surrey CFA's response on February 3rd 1997 noted that:

"Having watched the Channel Four Programme, Dispatches, where the tendency appeared to concentrate on Boys, we must not lose sight of the fact that there are now Girls playing Football – This County having had an experience of 'Harassment' which involved the Child Protection Unit."

The Royal Air Force FA's ("RAF FA") response, dated February 4th 1997, also referred to *Dispatches*, and the "gravely disturbing allegations" it had highlighted. The programme's suggestion that "football as a whole has a blinkered approach to abuse" meant that the proposal that the FA act as a central clearing house was "most encouraging." The RAF FA also noted that all of its members were already screened by virtue of their entry into the Armed Forces.

Even though only a small number of CFAs responded to Graham Kelly's letter, other CFAs are likely to have taken on board its message. I have seen, for instance, a minute of a meeting of officers at the Manchester CFA on February 6th 1997. This records:

"Correspondence from Graham Kelly, FA: Information on Child Protection. It was agreed these papers should be passed to the youth and NCAC committees for their discussion and the secretary should write to the chief constable for advice on screening those involved with youth football."

8.1.98. Gordon Taylor of the PFA (the organisation that represents the interests of players and former players) responded to Graham Kelly's letter on January 27th 1997 saying that, "After the Channel 4 *Dispatches* programme last week the measures you are attempting to make seem most appropriate and we will offer you our full co-operation in this matter."

8.1.99. I have seen correspondence between Gordon Taylor of the PFA and a parent of a boy who was abused by Bennell. Writing on March 3rd 1997, Gordon Taylor said that:

"As you can imagine we are very concerned about the *Dispatches* programme and I discussed this with my colleagues particularly those involved in the Youth Training Programme. We have had some cause for concern about the care and attention of young players and have dealt with this through our officers visiting clubs and often in co-operation with Police enquiries."

When I met with Gordon Taylor, he was not able to recall any specific problems that the PFA had dealt with during this period.

8.1.100. I have also seen a letter from KV, the Chief Executive of the Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Society Ltd. ("the FFEVTS") to a parent of a boy who had been abused by Bennell dated March 19th 1997. The FFEVTS was managed collectively by the Football League, the PFA, the FA and the Premier League. KV explained that his society has responsibility for the Youth Training Programme in professional football: for 16-18 year olds. He said that:

"[T]he Society's Monitoring Staff monitor all programmes at Clubs and at College to ensure that boys on the Programme are treated in the right manner. I, like Gordon and yourself, saw the programme and it brought home to the Society's staff to remain vigilant in the monitoring of programmes."

KV referred to the proposed screening regime which would "ensure that abuses do not occur in the future". He concluded by saying "Be assured that the Society will remain

vigilant and rigorous in monitoring of the Youth Training Programme”.

8.1.101. As indicated above, a number of the responses to Graham Kelly’s letter made mention of the *Dispatches* programme. There is no record in the FA archives of the *Dispatches* programme being discussed by the FA’s Executive Committee or any other of the FA’s committees. Keith Wiseman, the Chairman of the FA at the time, told me that he did not recall seeing the programme. Keith Wiseman explained to me that he would be surprised if Graham Kelly had failed to mention it to him in one of their regular conversations, but he has no recollection of such a conversation. The agenda for the Management Team meeting of 5th February 1997, and indeed throughout February and March 1997, contains no reference to *Dispatches*. The minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of February 13th 1997 also made no mention of the programme, although under the heading “Child Protection” the minutes record the meeting placing “on record” receipt of Graham Kelly’s letter of January 21st 1997. It is possible that the *Dispatches* programme was mentioned at one or other of these meetings but simply not minuted.

8.1.102. The *Dispatches* documentary did strike a chord with a number of people who made contact with the FA: some with offers of help, some with criticisms, some with notifications of similar incidents to those which were shown on the programme. The first response appears to have been dated January 20th 1997 (it may have been prompted by the *Daily Mail* preview article published that day). The letter is not in the FA archives, but it is likely to have raised a specific allegation of abuse. I have seen XX’s reply, saying that he will “look into the very serious matters which you raise,” and urging the writer to “contact other concerned parents and ask if they could write to us in relation to this matter.” There is no further evidence in the FA archives about this matter, but based on the other material, which shows XX’s commitment to child protection and his responsiveness to allegations of abuse, it is likely that XX did look further into the matter.

8.1.103. On January 24th 1997, a call was made to the FA referring to “an ex-manager and scout who was doing strange things with young boys, i.e. going camping, taking showers with them, cuddling them.” The matter was referred to XX, who appears to have looked into the matter (see: Disciplinary and Referral). At this time, the FA had no formalised process for managing concerns of this type and there is no evidence in the FA archives as to what ultimately happened with this matter.

8.1.104. On January 24th 1997, the day after the *Dispatches* programme, and presumably prompted by the broadcast, the NCF sent Howard Wilkinson a copy of its document *Protecting Children – a guide for sportspeople*.

8.1.105. The NCF explained to the FA that it was offering “governing bodies vital education and training opportunities to increase protection of children in sport and would like to bring you up to date on our work in this area.” The NCF said it would welcome the opportunity to discuss specific provisions for the FA and that, with the Sports Council, workshops could be put on which could be tailored to suit the needs of football. Robin Russell responded to the NCF on February 7th 1997, saying that “We are

reviewing the resources provided in relation to the whole question of child protection. I will be in touch with you once this review has been completed.”

8.1.106. The FA did get in touch with the NCF later in the year. In August 1997, Robin Russell’s assistant spoke to HN at the NCF who said that its Child Protection Awareness courses were “up and running”, that approximately 30 people had been trained to train, and that the Sports Council was prepared to offer the FA one free course. The FA was told by HN that the course being offered to the FA was three hours long. This course covered recognising the signs of abuse, good practice procedures to limit the possibility of being accused of abuse, how to ensure that children are happy and safe and all general aspects of child protection. It was explained that the NCF did offer a six hour course, which also included three hours dealing with policy and procedure for governing bodies. Robin Russell’s assistant was told by HN that “with the work [the FA] have already undertaken, [the FA] have in effect completed the 3 hour ‘stint’”, and so this was not necessary. This was an acknowledgment by HN that the FA was aware of what needed to be done, and had already started to take steps to introduce child protection measures. HN was aware of the leaflet about child protection that by August 1997 XX had been working on, and which drew heavily from the NCF’s own publication. HN was also probably aware of the imminent launch of the Football Association Coaching Association (“FACA”).

8.1.107. In February 1998, the NCF provided a child protection training session to 15 members of staff of the FA’s Technical Department. As at the date of this session, the FA was one of seven priority sports, out of twenty three priority sports, which had taken up the Sports Council’s offer of a subsidised or free Child Protection Awareness training workshop delivered through the NCF.

8.1.108. On January 24th 1997, the day after the *Dispatches* programme, another letter arrived from a member of the public seeking Graham Kelly’s thoughts “as to the apparent total lack of understanding by the F.A.” of the problem of child protection. The writer said that the “head in the sand attitude” displayed by Charles Hughes in the programme enables abuse “to continue unabated.” The writer could not understand how “an organisation of such magnitude such as yours” did not have child protection guidelines. He continued: “Being involved in school boys football at a coaching level, I feel ashamed that the trust of the children and parents is being abused in this manner, with the F.A. taking no interest.” He asked for an assurance that the FA took these matters seriously, and that “they are investigating some form of guidelines to be sent down to County FA’s for onward transmissions to not only professional clubs but also ‘grass root’ ones.” Robin Russell responded on February 19th 1997, saying “I can assure you that The Football Association is taking all matters concerning the above very seriously and are investigating the development of guidelines for all those involved in junior football.” It would, however, take the FA until May 2000 – more than three years – before guidelines for those involved in junior football were published.

8.1.109. A parent of a boy who had been abused by Bennell wrote to Howard Wilkinson at the FA on January 29th 1997. The parent expressed disappointment at the lack of reaction from either the FA or the relevant clubs in the *Dispatches* programme, but ex-

pressed the hope that “following your recent appointment the problem of child abuse is one to which you will address yourself.” He asked for reassurance that “the FA and the clubs under their control are working towards eliminating the problems [of child abuse] and are genuinely concerned for the welfare of children under their influence.” Robin Russell replied on behalf of Howard Wilkinson on February 7th 1997 saying: “I can tell you that The Football Association has, and still is, in liaison with the Home Office and the NSPCC. . . . I can tell you that up until now it has not been legally possible for The Football Association to carry out its own screening process.”

8.1.110. The reference by Robin Russell to the NSPCC reflected correspondence that had taken place with the NSPCC at the end of January or early February 1997. In the FA archives, there is a memorandum dated January 27th 1997, in which XX informed Graham Kelly, Robin Russell, and David Davies that he would be drafting a letter to go out in Graham Kelly’s name to the NSPCC, in response to a query from the NSPCC, suggesting that the FA work “very closely with the NSPCC (and perhaps with Childline) in order to produce the best policy to educate parents and also to provide some form of confidential helpline through which children can notify any initial problems.” In XX’s view, this was “just as important as the establishment of the screening system”, which had been the main focus of the FA.

8.1.111. It is clear, therefore, that by the end of January or early February 1997, the FA (through XX and Robin Russell) were beginning to think more broadly about child protection – beyond the focus on screening – and were developing ideas about a child protection programme. The FA was also thinking about working closely with child protection experts.

8.1.112. This is reflected in XX’s response to a representative of the Middlesex County FA, who had written to the FA on January 25th 1997, in response to Graham Kelly’s letter, in which the representative congratulated the FA for having sent out details of its proposals to push for screening. In 1995 Middlesex County FA had sought to change the FA’s rules to allow for screening of those employed in activities involving children under the statutory school leaving age, but this attempt had failed to gain the approval of the relevant FA committee. (see: Screening and Self-Declarations). On February 9th 1997, the representative of Middlesex County FA raised the possibility of resurrecting its amendment to the rules to allow for screening. XX responded on February 24th 1997, and said that he had forwarded a copy to Robin Russell “who is formulating the overall policy in relation to child protection and the formulation of rules and regulations.” XX explained that the FA was also “seeking to co-ordinate this with other sports bodies and child protection agencies such as the NSPCC”. With respect to screening, as mentioned in Graham Kelly’s letter, XX said that “much depends on the progress of the Police Bill”. In the circumstances, he doubted that Robin Russell “would wish to push through amendments only to Rule 21 at this stage.” (In another document produced before March 12th 1997, primarily concerned with screening (see: Screening and Self-Declarations), the FA also referred to the need for “Awareness training in child protection; Further development of FA policy and procedure relating to child protection; Management and supervision; [and] staff care.”)

8.1.113. I have not seen a copy in the FA archives of the actual letter drafted by XX to the NSPCC (as referred to above), but I assume that it was sent, as there were a number of meetings with the NSPCC over the next few months. On April 2nd 1997, XX met with GR, of the NSPCC. They discussed the FA's child protection programme. In a letter to GR on August 14th 1997, XX said that "Following our meeting on 2nd April, The Football Association has been endeavouring to establish an effective child protection programme for the game. As you advised at the meeting, we have sought to ensure that the programme would have effect and would not simply be a paper exercise". XX also wrote that:

"As you suggested, it is important to ensure that there are persons at local level who may respond to complaints or reports relating to child abuse. We consider that, in addition to providing the contact numbers for your organisation and other relevant authorities, it is vital for The Football Association to establish a network of officers at local County Association level who may deal with such matters."

8.1.114. The FA did draw on the advice and support from the NSPCC (and other third parties) during this time. However, the FA did not ask the NSPCC to develop a child protection policy for the FA, or to develop a bespoke football telephone helpline until much later: towards the end of 1999 and early 2000. The FA's relationship with the NSPCC can be contrasted with the far deeper relationship that had been forged by the ASA and the NSPCC. The ASA and the NSPCC had worked together to develop swimming's child protection programme. In June 1996, the ASA (working with the Sports Council, NCF, as well as the NSPCC) published its child protection policy document (see box 5: Amateur Swimming Association). This relationship was also referred to in a letter from David Sparkes to Graham Kelly dated February 18th 1997, which stated that, together with the NSPCC, the ASA was developing a training programme for volunteers.

8.1.115. On March 7th 1997, XX attended a meeting held by the NSPCC at which David Sparkes described the progress that the ASA had made. Among other things, David Sparkes referred to the register of volunteers that had been established, and explained that the register had already uncovered a small number of sex offenders amongst the ASA workforce.

8.1.116. XX was influenced by what the ASA had done. XX told me that he worked closely with the ASA in developing the FA's child protection programme. However, the FA's progress was far slower than that of the ASA. I acknowledge that the ASA may have felt a greater sense of urgency than the FA in addressing the issue of child protection more quickly due to the role and profile of Hickson within the sport of swimming and the impact of the media attention around his conviction. However, this does not in my judgment explain the fact that it took the FA until August 1999 to amend its disciplinary procedures to deal specifically with child protection; or that it took the FA until 2000 to start training volunteers in child protection. The ASA had done these things within less than two years of the Hickson conviction.

8.1.117. Although the FA itself had not developed its own child protection policy, other entities within football were developing their own child protection policies at this time. Charlton Athletic was the first professional club to introduce a child protection policy, as highlighted by the *Dispatches* programme. It has not been possible to ascertain when the first grassroots club introduced such a policy, but the FA archives reveal correspondence between the FA and a grassroots club in Yorkshire which was developing a child protection policy in 1997 and asked for the FA's assistance.

8.1.118. On February 25th 1997, the FA was contacted by Hutton Cranswick Junior FC, a grassroots club with a membership of around 170 boys and girls. The club wrote to the FA to say that it was developing a child protection policy and asked for assistance. The club explained that its work “was brought about by our belief that all coaches and officials of the club need to be fully aware of our ‘Duty of Care’ while the youngsters were within our sphere of responsibility.” The club said that it had liaised with local police, but having learned that the FA was actively involved in developing proposals, asked for “any information that may be of help to us as we try to determine our policy in this most difficult of cases.” Robin Russell responded on March 5th 1997, asking to see a copy of the club's policy. Robin Russell said that “The FA is, indeed looking at proposals regarding this matter and the screening of coaches. I hope that recommendations will be published before the start of next season.” On December 3rd 1997, the club wrote to Robin Russell enclosing a copy of a child protection policy which it had produced and published. Robin Russell responded on December 31st 1997, to say that “My colleague, [KN], . . . now has the responsibility of developing the Child Protection Programme and I have passed on your correspondence to him. I am sure [KN] will find the details most valuable.”

8.1.119. The Cheshire County FA (the County in whose area Crewe Alexandra, where Bennell worked and committed much abuse, was situated) was also working on its child protection policy and did not wait for guidance from the central FA. On February 26th 1997, Cheshire CFA forwarded to XX a letter which it had recently sent to the secretaries of all minor affiliation clubs and all sanctioned youth and junior leagues within the county stating that “Because of the concern currently being expressed we thought we should give advice to all our junior clubs and leagues.” The letter noted that the subject of child abuse was “receiving a lot of publicity,” and so it was felt appropriate for the CFA to issue some advice, drawing on resources made available by the local authority. The first three points were mostly geared towards protecting the coaches, i.e. reducing “situations where accusations or suspicion of abuse may arise.” Points four to ten related to protecting children from abuse, but again mostly related to inappropriate (but innocently intended) behaviour. Point 9 stated: “Never let allegations any child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded – always act.”

8.1.120. The Welsh FA had also been working on child protection matters. In March 1997, XX corresponded with the Welsh FA about child protection issues and was provided with the Welsh FA's draft document entitled: *Child Protection Awareness and Code of Conduct*. The Welsh FA had been working on this document with the NSPCC, the Sports Council for Wales and the Welsh National Coaching Centre. This document was stated to be “for the attention of all adults and children who have an involvement

in football at all levels throughout Wales.” The document outlined the main types of abuse, provided indications of some of the typical signals that an abused child will show, set out clear guidelines that could be adopted by teams, clubs and leagues, and gave important contact details of professionals working in the field of abuse, and highlighted the role of the Child Protection Liaison Representation of the Welsh FA’s various Area Associations who could be contacted if there were child protection concerns “who may offer further advice on an issue”.

8.1.121. I have not found in the FA archives a copy of XX’s letter but from the response from the Welsh FA, it is clear that XX had referred to “the work that the Football Association has been undertaking with regard to child protection”. The Welsh FA explained that “We concur that this is probably the most important area of work that our Associations are involved in at this particular time and getting it right is of the utmost importance to my Association.” The Welsh FA also explained that it had “arranged a training course for all our junior leagues and coaches to take place” on April 18th 1997.

8.1.122. In contrast to the Welsh FA, the English FA did not put out its guidance on child protection until three years later. The English FA did not start training its junior leagues until even later.

8.1.123. The London County FA was also working on producing its own guidelines. In a brochure setting out the various coaching programmes that were available in the calendar year 1998, the London County FA devoted a page to “Football and Child Protection”, setting out information and guidelines about the “Recruitment and Selection of Staff/Volunteers”; “Policy and Procedure” (“To help prevent abuse of children the club or organisation should have a policy which ensures that children are protected and kept safe from harm. Everyone involved in the care of children should know what to do if there are concerns about abuse and what procedures to follow”); and some “Good Practice in the Care of Children” guidelines, including not sharing a room with a child, or inviting or allowing a child to stay at one’s home unsupervised. A representative for the London County FA, is quoted as saying:

“Over the last 12 months there has been considerable media attention on the subject of sexual abuse in football. The common reaction of those in the game to these allegations in the press and on television was one of disbelief and shock. However, whilst it is widely accepted that the problem is not endemic there is suspicion that some adults are exploiting their position to abuse children. So what steps can those club secretaries, managers, coaches and others involved in the game take to prevent this abhorrent behaviour? The National Coaching Foundation in conjunction with the [NSPCC] and the Amateur Swimming Federation of Great Britain has produced a set of guidelines for good practice that can easily be adopted by those providing football for young players.”

8.1.124. The representative for the London County FA had corresponded with Robin Russell about child protection and the FA on July 30th 1997. The representative had recently attended tutor training for the inaugural NCF Child Protection workshop, and said that he “would like to know the current progress made on this issue in the football

world”. He said that he had “learnt that British Gymnastic and the Amateur Swimming Association have produced a set of guidelines for clubs and coaches.” He asked whether the FA had “any plans for such developments?” The letter continued:

“Obviously I am aware of the Child Protection module in the FA Coaching Certificate Resource Pack but the excellent advice contained in it is only available to students on the course. If a set of guidelines could be made available for all football clubs interfacing with young people I am sure that it will be well received. The vast majority of junior team secretaries and managers are concerned about child protection issues and would welcome guidelines for good practice.”

Robin Russell responded on August 11th 1997 to say that the matter would be addressed via the new FA Coaches Association, and as part of the *Charter for Quality*, which had been launched by Howard Wilkinson on May 19th 1997. These were the two main initiatives worked on by the FA during 1997 that had child protection elements.

8.1.125. The *Charter for Quality* was Howard Wilkinson’s blueprint for change in football education. The *Charter* was developed with considerable assistance from Robin Russell. The final draft of the *Charter* was approved by the FA Council in November 1997, having been preceded by widespread consultation with a variety of stakeholders during 1997. The *Charter* included a number of child protection measures, and provided a framework for further child protection measures that were ultimately introduced in the grassroots game.

Box 10.

THE CHARTER FOR QUALITY

The *Charter for Quality* was the key project worked on by the FA’s Technical Department in the late 1990s. It took up much of the energy and resources of that department. Although there were some child protection measures within the *Charter for Quality*, it was not, and was not intended to be, a comprehensive child protection programme.

The *Charter for Quality* replaced Charles Hughes’ Programme for Excellence. It provided for a set of arrangements and structures which were designed to revolutionise football education and increase opportunities for young players, with the intention of raising standards. For the professional game, the *Charter for Quality* introduced the Academy system, and abolished the Associated Schoolboy system. (The Associated Schoolboy system had been the FA’s regime for junior players: boys aged 14 could sign “schoolboy forms” with a club, and they were permitted to attend that club for training or coaching on a regular basis. Associated Schoolboys were exclusive to that club: other clubs were banned from direct or indirect approaches to an Associated Schoolboy. When an Associated Schoolboy completed his full-time education, his club had first refusal on him as a Trainee or Contract Player and no other club could sign him without paying the club a transfer fee. Trainee Players (commonly known as apprentices) were 16 or 17 year olds not in full-time education. They were on a two-year contract (if 16) or a one-year contract (if 17). Under the age of 11, boys could attend a licensed Centre of Excellence run by the club with the approval of the FA “for training and coaching”.) For the grassroots, or national, game the *Charter for Quality* introduced the concept

of Charter-marking – a form of kite marking – for leagues, affiliated clubs, tours and tournaments and holiday programmes. The *Charter for Quality* also called for, and led to, the discontinuance of the FA's National School at Lilleshall.

The *Charter for Quality* was approved by the FA Council in November 10th 1997. Howard Wilkinson consulted very widely on the *Charter*: Howard Wilkinson told me that there were over 200 separate consultation meetings. When interviewed by me, neither Howard Wilkinson nor Robin Russell recalled there being any opposition or reluctance to the child protection or screening provisions within the *Charter for Quality*. The *Charter for Quality* was subsequently made available to stakeholders. For instance, Cheshire County FA was provided with a copy of the *Charter for Quality* by Robin Russell on January 6th 1998.

The *Charter for Quality* included a commitment to child protection: one of its “Ten Key Objectives” was “Only to endorse those programmes which include the appropriate arrangements concerning... The suitability of the adult to be working with children.” Another of the “Ten Key Objectives” was “To establish and maintain high ethical standards through agreed Codes of Conduct”.

The *Charter for Quality* was a vehicle for introducing a number of specific child protection measures. For professional clubs running Academies or Centres of Excellence, there was a requirement to have a designated person with responsibility for child protection “as part of the promotion of the welfare of children attending”. The designated person had to be suitably trained in child protection matters. It was the responsibility of the designated person to liaise with children, staff and volunteers, and the police, social services and FA, Premier League/Football League (as appropriate) in relation to any child protection issues that may arise. The designated person had to promote awareness of child protection issues generally and specifically best practice amongst staff and volunteers, and to monitor compliance. Everyone working with children at the Academy or Centre of Excellence would need to be screened. These requirements were introduced in the 1998/99 Programme for Excellence Regulations.

The Charter-marking system provided a framework in which child protection initiatives could be introduced for the grassroots game. The *Charter for Quality* itself envisaged that the FA would “finalize the criteria and method of award for Charter Mark, in conjunction with the Conference of County and Other Football Associations”. Through this process, it was agreed that County FAs would appoint a Junior Football Representative, whose responsibilities included the promotion of “The FA Child Protection Programme”, organising “The FA Child Protection Programme” training, training of the necessary local tutors for “The FA Child Protection Programme”, and monitoring child protection in liaison with the County FA as a whole.

It was also agreed that Charter Mark status would be awarded to clubs and leagues meeting the “required criteria” in certain areas, including “Screening and qualification of Managers and Coaches of teams” and “Acceptance of active promotion of a Code of Conduct”. Each League would need to “Appoint a Training Officer to liaise with The F.A. Regional Director”, and to provide in-service training including “The F.A. Child

Protection Programme of Awareness Training (3 hours)”.

Of course, not all affiliated clubs wished to obtain Charter Mark status. As Tony Pickerin accepted in interview with me, the *Charter for Quality* was never going to reach all the children who were playing football in the national game. It was a significant step, he said, but “if leagues and clubs chose not to participate then . . . a large number of children fell through that net really.”

The *Charter for Quality* was not designed to be the FA’s child protection programme, but rather was to run alongside that programme. The materials in the FA archives indicate that where the development of that programme came into conflict with the development of the *Charter for Quality*, the latter would prevail. As XX explained in a memorandum sent to Graham Kelly on August 13th 1997: “One of the important considerations throughout the evolution of the child protection programme has been to ensure that it does not in any way conflict with or prejudice the progress of the overall Charter for Quality programme”. In particular, XX referred to the FA’s consideration of child protection with respect to youth club tours at home and abroad, saying that it was felt that this “should be dealt with following the introduction of the Charter Mark system”.

I deal with tours and tournaments separately (see box 16: Tours and Tournaments). Specific guidance on tours and tournaments outside of the professional clubs was not introduced until 2004. The incredible delay in introducing child protection measures for youth club tours was a serious failing of the FA, especially as it was known that abuse of children could and did take place on overseas tours.

THE DRAFTING OF THE CHARTER FOR QUALITY

The initial draft of the *Charter for Quality* was handwritten by Robin Russell in April 1997. A typed up version was produced on May 19th 1997. The typed up draft contained a number of references to child protection and to the requirement for screening and suitability of those working with children. The insertion of these references was influenced by XX. Robin Russell told me that XX “persuaded us, if we needed persuading, that part of the Charter should address the issue of child protection”. Robin Russell told me that he remembered XX’s secretary coming to see him at Lancaster Gate and saying, “it’s really important that child protection becomes part of the Charter for Quality”.

In the initial draft of the *Charter for Quality*, the child protection references were limited to screening – that is, an attempt to ensure the suitability of adults working with children in the game. Further provisions relating to child protection were introduced later in the year.

The initial draft of the *Charter for Quality* was provided to the FA’s Executive Committee, as well as all members of the FA Council in May 1997. Graham Kelly included the principles from the *Charter for Quality* in his corporate plan for the FA. Graham Kelly explained that the Programme for Excellence had worked well, but noted that it had a number of drawbacks. He said that there were several issues requiring attention, including “the question of child protection.” Child protection by itself was not one of

the key items or objectives of the FA's corporate plan.

As the drafting of the *Charter for Quality* proceeded, Robin Russell sought further input from XX on elements relating to child protection. At a meeting between them on June 20th 1997 (recorded in a memorandum written by Robin Russell on June 23rd 1997), Robin Russell asked XX for his proposals on an abbreviated Code of Conduct for the FA Coaches Association which would “subsequently . . . be incorporated into the proposed Charter Mark Programme.” Robin Russell also asked for any proposals regarding three matters: including child protection in the *Charter for Quality's* objectives; criteria for Academies, Centres of Excellence with regard to child protection; and information to be included in the FA Coaches Association application form.

On August 13th 1997, XX sent a note to Graham Kelly (copying in Pat Smith, David Davies and Robin Russell), updating them as to the further work that had been carried out “in relation to establishing an effective child protection programme.” One of the matters referred to was the *Charter for Quality*, particularly in relation to youth leagues. XX explained that it was envisaged that a club would be Charter Marked to “signify that it complies with best practice in relation to various aspects of football coaching. A key component of the Charter Mark criteria will be [adherence] to The FA's child protection programme.” XX said that it was likely that this would involve not merely the requirement that coaches/managers be screened, but also that they be “aware of child protection issues.”

Robin Russell met with the Consultative Committee of Counties and Other Football Associations on September 30th 1997 to discuss the *Charter for Quality*, and the Charter Mark for Junior Clubs. The meeting was also attended by XX so that (according to a document in the FA archives), those associations could “take advantage of his expertise on the Child Protection issues as part of the Charter Mark Criteria.” The *Charter for Quality* envisaged that the FA would “finalize the criteria and method of award for Charter Mark, in conjunction with the Conference of County and Other Football Associations”.

The final draft of the *Charter for Quality* was published in October 1997. In his preamble, Howard Wilkinson noted that since the May version “there has been extensive discussion on the recommendations.” He said that the key objectives and key core issues remained unaltered.

8.1.126. One of the *Charter for Quality's* proposals was the creation of a national coaching association. This is something that the FA worked on and successfully established in 1997. The association was known as the Football Association Coaches Association or FACA.

8.1.127. Membership of FACA required coaches to sign up to a Code of Conduct. The Code did not mention child protection explicitly, but did refer to respecting “the rights, dignity and worth” of everyone, placing “the well-being and safety of each player above all other considerations.” Applicants to FACA had to self-certify that they were suitable to work with children. FACA was a vehicle through which child protec-

tion initiatives could be shared more widely: there were over 100,000 potential applicants for membership of FACA.

8.1.128. FACA was launched with great fanfare at a conference in October 1997 attended by 1,500 delegates. One of the speakers at the conference was Les Reed, Assistant Manager at Charlton Athletic, who had featured in the *Dispatches* programme as a pioneer in the area of child protection (his club being the first to introduce a child protection policy). Les Reed gave a presentation on child protection. He sought to show that “the danger of child abuse is very much a threat in our sport”. He called for each club to have a child protection policy, guidelines for staff, background checks, and guidelines for parents and children: they needed to know who to complain to if abuse occurred.

Box 11.

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION COACHES ASSOCIATION

A national coaches association had been mooted by the FA in the early 1990s as a “means of communication with the coaches and managers of the 60,000 affiliated teams in England” in connection with the FA’s emerging Coaching and Education Scheme. Nothing formal was established at that time.

Momentum for a national coaches association picked up in early 1997, as part of the *Charter for Quality*. Howard Wilkinson and Robin Russell believed that an association of coaches could provide a mechanism for the professionalisation of football coaching, similar to the approach being taken by a number of other sports: The ASA had developed the Institute of Swimming Teachers. Similar sport-specific National Coaches Associations had been initiated in Cricket, Rugby Union, Hockey, and Netball. The Scottish FA operated its own National Coaches Association. The first draft of the *Charter for Quality* in May 1997 noted that there was “a demand for a National Coaches Association”, which would help to service “Coach Education” needs.

From early on in the discussions about a National Coaches Association, there were conversations about screening its members. It was considered that this would help to address concerns about child protection. In late January 1997, XX and Robin Russell discussed a proposal to screen coaches. On February 19th 1997, Robin Russell informed Graham Kelly that such an association would allow the FA “to provide an ongoing after sales professional service to coaches and address the child protection issue by screening all members”. The marketing and business plan for the national coaches association, circulated at the end of February 1997, explained that one of the reasons for its establishment was: “To address the Child Protection issue in order to develop an effective screening process for coaches and the subsequent recommendations of ‘screened’ coaches to the football, leisure, recreation and physical education bodies.”

The idea of a National Coaches Association received support from all parts of the FA. On March 5th 1997, David Davies said he had only one observation as to the proposal for an association: “why has this not happened before!?” The FA’s Instructional Committee, at its meeting on April 17th 1997, supported the proposal in principle. The Executive Committee agreed with the proposal in principle at its meeting on May 19th 1997, and

it was signed off by the Finance Committee later that week. This is a good example of the FA acting quickly on a matter when it regarded this as the right thing to do.

On June 9th 1997, the FA wrote to local County Coaches Associations, informing them that the *Charter for Quality* recommendation of the establishment of the FACA had been approved. Robin Russell enclosed a paper giving “an outline of the [reasons] behind the Association, and the likely benefits.” The enclosed document asked “Why Establish a Coaches Association?”, answering at point 2.2: “To address the Child Protection issue in order to develop an effective screening process for coaches and the subsequent recommendations of ‘screened’ coaches to the football, leisure, recreation and physical education bodies.”

Robin Russell and XX discussed the issue of screening for FACA members, as well as a proposed Code of Conduct, in late June 1997. In a memorandum dated June 23rd 1997, Robin Russell indicated that an abbreviated Code of Conduct for the FACA would subsequently “be incorporated into the proposed Charter Mark Programme” for grassroots clubs.

On June 25th 1997, XX informed David Davies of the work that he had recently been doing on the “National Coaches Association and Child Protection”. XX explained that in his view:

“[T]here is a real need for a code of ethics aimed at coaches, managers, helpers and volunteers etc. I have already started working on this and have proposed to Robin Russell that it be expanded to cover all involved in the game, particularly with regard to child protection issues. This could form the starting point for the overall football Code of Conduct.”

AUGUST 1997

On August 13th 1997, XX sent a memorandum to Graham Kelly (copying in Pat Smith, David Davies and Robin Russell), regarding the “further work” that had been carried out “in relation to establishing an effective child protection programme.” This set out five elements, the first of which was the FACA, which was the vehicle for facilitating a screening process, which was a “vital component of the child protection programme.” It was said that a “proper screening process” would be a requirement of recognition as a qualified coach or FACA member. The mechanism would be a self-certification form, submitted along with the application.

FACA PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

In a memorandum to Robin Russell dated August 27th 1997, XX noted that Les Reed was proposed to be a speaker at the launch event for FACA. XX stated that he recalled Charlton Athletic’s:

“[I]nvolvement in child protection issues from the Dispatches programme last year. Whilst their policy, which I recall was that adopted by the NCF, was valuable in protecting coaches from accusations, it seems to me that there is a danger of losing sight of the fact that that is only one element of the child protection programme. You will recall that the programme itself was critical of the fact that The Football Association was not doing

anything. I wondered whether the speaker was to be briefed in relation to the overall child protection programme so that he could give a full and proper picture of what is being done.”

XX “wondered if the conference might be an opportunity to launch the wider programme, linking into the speech by the person from Charlton Athletic”.

Robin Russell and XX met on August 29th 1997, and in a memorandum sent on September 1st 1997 to summarise their meeting, Robin Russell stated that he would ensure that “Les Reed’s presentation at the launch of the [FACA] on 2 October is compatible with The FA’s Child Protection Programme and we will ensure that as part of this aspect on the Conference relating to Child Protection, The FA’s forthcoming programme will be highlighted.” It appears that this was done. Robin Russell told me that the FA’s child protection programme was not launched at the FACA inaugural meeting, but was referred to.

LAUNCH OF FACA IN OCTOBER 1997

FACA was launched on October 2nd 1997. The organisation had 102,000 potential applicants for individual membership. According to the marketing plan for the launch, approximately 88,000 people had completed the FA Coaching, Leaders and Teachers Courses since 1990. There were 11,000 Soccer Star Examiners and Mini-Soccer Centre Directors, and 3,000 FA Advance Licence Holders. An additional 13,000 students were expected on FA courses in the years 1997, 1998 and 1999.

With respect to child protection, the brochure which accompanied the launch of FACA announced that the protection and well-being of children was “an issue that The Football Association views with the utmost importance.” In addition to self-certification, successful applicants were required to inform FACA if they were subsequently convicted of a child abuse offence.

The self-certification form asked applicants:

“Have you been convicted of any offence or had a conviction or bind-over order, or is a prosecution pending related to children, any offence under the Sexual Offences Act, any offence involving violence of any nature or drug related offences?

Are you a person known to any Social Services Department as being an actual or potential risk to children?

Have you ever been disqualified or prohibited from fostering children or had your rights or powers in respect of any child vested in or assumed by a Local Authority or had a child ordered to be removed from your care?

Have you ever had a sanction imposed against you or been disciplined in any way for any matter relating to child abuse, sexual offences, violence or use of drugs? “

If the answer to any of these questions was yes, the applicant was required to “supply full details with this form”.

At this point in time, due to legislative constraints, this was as much as the FA could do

to screen coaches (see: Screening and Self Declaration).

Applicants were also required to sign up to a Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct was modelled on the NCF's "Responsible Coach" guidelines. A breach of the Code of Conduct would constitute a breach of Rule 26(a)(x) of the FA Rules: that is, conduct considered to be unsporting, insulting to improper behaviour or likely to bring the game into disrepute. The Code of Conduct did not mention child protection explicitly, but did refer to respecting "the rights, dignity and worth" of everyone, placing "the well-being and safety of each player above all other considerations", adhering "to all guidelines laid down by [the FACA] and [the FA]" and "developing an appropriate working relationship with each player". (The FACA Code of Conduct was approved by the FA Council at its meeting on November 19th 1998 and circulated to the FA's Executive Committee on December 15th 1998.)

The launch event for FACA was attended by more than 1,500 delegates. Speakers at the event included Glenn Hoddle, the then England Team Coach; Alex Ferguson, the Manager of Manchester United FC; Keith Wiseman, the Chairman of the FA; Howard Wilkinson; and Gerard Houllier, the Technical Director of the French Football Federation.

Les Reed spoke on "*Child Protection Issues*". He opened his presentation by saying:

"I apologise in advance to anyone who may be offended by any of my comments or by the extracts of video some of which are disturbing but necessarily hit the point. I hope I will be forgiven on the grounds that this topic is too important to take lightly. I shall be attempting to show that the danger of child abuse is very much a threat in our sport. That we ourselves may be responsible for creating an environment in which the abuser may thrive. And that we could also be attracting abusers who get their initial kicks from other forms of abuse; such as mental and emotional abuse deriving from power and fear."

Les Reed called for each club to have a child protection policy, which should include: a child protection statement acknowledging duty of care; guidelines for staff (working in pairs when supervising children, especially in changing areas; not giving lifts to children when on one's own without parental consent; transporting groups of children in pairs); staff resumés and background checks; codes of conduct; a service level agreement; guidelines for parents and children (discuss problems with parents and coaches, know the complaints procedure which can be used without prejudice); parental consents and parents' evenings; and staff meetings.

The launch of FACA received national media attention. An article about the launch in *The Independent* on October 3rd 1997, was headed "Football: Coaching revolution the name of the game". The article described how the "most blueblooded of the coaching aristocracy had been wheeled out" for the event. No mention was made in this article of the child protection arrangements that had been discussed.

FACA'S CONSTITUTION AND SCREENING ARRANGEMENTS

The Constitution of FACA described FACA's objects as including to establish and maintain high ethical standards in relation to the coaching of association football.

The Constitution also provided that "Applications for Membership shall be considered by The F.A. An application shall be refused or admitted into Membership at the discretion of The F.A. The F.A. shall be entitled to refuse admission to membership" on grounds which included:

"[T]he existence of a criminal conviction relating to children, any offence under the Sexual Offences Act, or involving violence, or any drug related offence, or any other matter referred to within the self-declaration section of the application form for membership, and any matters relating to child protection."

As part of the screening process for membership of FACA, a standard letter to be sent to directors of social services departments at local authorities was prepared. This explained that "One of the major objectives of The F.A. Coaches Association is to set up a mechanism by which individuals who obtain coaching qualifications through The Football Association can be screened and monitored in relation to child protection." The letter explained that the information received from an applicant was:

"[S]uch that we believe we should draw it to your attention. The primary purpose for doing so is to ask you whether, either from the information supplied by the individual, or your own records, you believe the individual to be appropriate to have contact with children through his activities as a football coach."

A number of these letters were sent out from 1997 onwards.

When the FA obtained List 99 – the Department of Education and Employment's list of those who were prohibited from working in a teaching role – names were checked against the database of FACA coaches. The FA archives contain correspondence with two individuals who were on List 99, who were informed in April 1999 that their membership of FACA had been terminated (see: Screening and Self Declaration).

FACA produced a journal for its members and others who wished to subscribe. This was known as *Insight*. From time to time, this journal contained articles about child protection.

8.1.129. On August 13th 1997, XX wrote to Graham Kelly (copying in Pat Smith, David Davies and Robin Russell), updating them as to the "further work" that had been carried out "in relation to establishing an effective child protection programme". XX explained that there were "a number of elements" to this. XX mentioned the establishment of FACA, and the Charter Mark programme.

8.1.130. XX also referred to referees, saying that no work had been done with respect to them, and that they were felt "to be a low priority" at this time. Although, as discussed

elsewhere (see: Disciplinary and Referrals), a number of cases of abuse involving referees did come to the FA's attention later on, overall I consider that it was appropriate for the FA to treat referees as being a lower priority at this stage. The FA did intend to address the question of referees in due course, but there were other, greater, priorities. Referees had far fewer opportunities to have unsupervised contact with young players, and did not have the same status or power relationship as others involved with the game: e.g. scouts and coaches.

8.1.131. In his memorandum of August 13th 1997, XX also mentioned a leaflet that he had been working on entitled "Protecting Children From Abuse: a guide for everyone involved in children's football". XX explained that this document "would be distributed through County Associations, to all Youth Football Leagues and Youth Clubs". XX explained that it was also "intended that the leaflet be circulated as far as possible to parents, through clubs and through schools. It is also suggested that this should be accompanied by a publicity campaign." This document was a very sensible idea. It would raise awareness of child protection issues throughout the national game. As discussed below, however, the leaflet does not appear to have been published.

8.1.132. XX explained that the leaflet would require "back up at local level following dissemination". He said that "each County Association should be invited to nominate a particular individual who shall have responsibility for child protection issues." This was another sensible idea. It would ensure that child protection could be embedded in the grassroots game. However, it took a very long time before this measure was actually put in place. Designation by the County FAs of child welfare officers, and training for them on the FA's child protection policies did not occur until mid-2000, nearly three years later.

8.1.133. I found a copy of the leaflet drafted by XX in the FA archives. The leaflet defined child abuse; it explained how to recognise abuse and what to do if concerns arose; and it gave advice regarding how to protect children, depending on the person's role (i.e. parent/carer or coach/manager/volunteer). The leaflet ran to ten pages. It was almost identical to the NCF's leaflet of the same title, which had been provided to Howard Wilkinson on January 24th 1997, the day after the *Dispatches* documentary was broadcast (see box 8: *Dispatches: Soccer's Foul Play*). The NCF approved the FA's use of its material on the basis that the NCF would receive some recognition for producing the underlying material. XX asked for permission from the FA to go ahead with production of the leaflet.

8.1.134. Pat Smith responded to XX's memorandum on August 14th 1997. She said:

"I believe it is important that The Football Association, as the National game, should give a lead in this area and should ensure that we are proactive. No doubt if Graham [Kelly] considers [it] appropriate, the draft leaflet could be included on the Executive Committee Agenda for 2nd September. One question that will arise is who will fund it! The FA Youth Trust may be a possibility I assume."

8.1.135. This response is significant. First, it demonstrates a recognition by a very se-

nior official at the FA (Pat Smith was at this time the FA's Deputy Chief Executive) that the FA should be leading the field in child protection as 'the national game'. This was an acknowledgment of the symbolic importance of the FA within the world of sport, as well as society as a whole. Second, it evidences the fact that as at August 1997 – a year after the Sports Council conference, and seven months after the *Dispatches* programme – the FA had not approved a specific budget for child protection work. The FA had not yet considered what level of resource would be needed to ensure that child protection was properly embedded within the sport.

8.1.136. XX shared the draft leaflet with GR of the NSPCC and asked for comments. On August 14th 1997, XX explained that since their meeting on April 2nd 1997, the FA had been endeavouring to establish an effective child protection programme for the game. XX said: "As you advised at the meeting, we have sought to ensure that the programme would have effect and would not simply be a paper exercise." XX elaborated on the two strands that had been developed so far. First, the establishment of the FACA. The other strand was a "leaflet in relation to child protection issues", which it was envisaged would be distributed to all members of the FACA, and all persons involved in youth football via local County Associations. XX said that the FA "very much hope to combine this with a press campaign to promote awareness amongst parents of the important issues."

8.1.137. XX also explained to GR that the FA understood the need to have its own child protection infrastructure, with people to respond to complaints and disclosures (rather than simply providing contact information for the NSPCC and other relevant authorities). XX also said that the FA was exploring with the Sports Council the establishment of a training course for officers at the County FA level. XX asked for GR's views as to the appropriateness of the courses being offered by the Sports Council, and asked whether the NSPCC would wish to assist the FA in this regard.

8.1.138. On September 3rd 1997, GR responded to XX's letter. GR stated that he was "pleased to see the progress that you have been making since our meeting" in April 1997. He was impressed by the "carrot and stick" approach to encouraging background checks through FACA. GR provided suggestions and comments on the draft leaflet that XX was preparing, and reiterated his offer to endorse the initiative, either in person at a launch or in writing. On the question of the network of the child protection officers for the County FAs, GR explained that training was being provided by the NCF, who had been trained by some of the NSPCC's child protection trainers. GR informed XX that the Sports Council was offering a one-off course for the various leading sports, and suggested that XX follow this up with the NCF.

8.1.139. XX's draft leaflet, and other aspects of his proposed child protection programme, was discussed and endorsed by the FA's Executive Committee at its meeting on September 2nd 1997. The minutes of the meeting read:

"The Committee received a paper from [XX] in relation to The Football Association's Child Protection Programme. This related to:-

The establishment of the FA Coaches Association and the requirement for

each member to be screened

The publication of a leaflet entitled ‘Protecting Children from Abuse’

The establishment through the Charter for Quality of a co-ordinated system of the establishment of child protection throughout the game through County Associations and Youth Leagues.

The Committee endorsed the child protection programme, in particular, the Executive Committee agreed the publication of the leaflet relating to ‘Protecting Children from Abuse’, and its distribution through County Associations to all Youth Leagues and Youth Clubs.”

There was approval, therefore, at the highest executive level within the FA for the work that XX was doing on child protection. XX had the green light to progress matters and develop the child protection programme.

8.1.140. Specific approval had been given by the Executive Committee to the publication and distribution of XX’s leaflet. There is, however, no evidence that the leaflet was ever produced. There is a reference to a “draft document” in early January 1998 in some internal correspondence. Other than that, there is no reference to the leaflet in any of the subsequent material that I have seen in the FA archives. I appreciate that the FA archives are not complete, but the materials that are in the archives and where I would have expected to refer to the leaflet if it had been published make no mention of it: the FA engaged in correspondence with external bodies about the steps that it was taking in respect of child protection but make no mention of the leaflet; there are numerous internal memoranda that refer to the steps that the FA was taking in respect of child protection, and these make no mention of the leaflet. The leaflet was not provided by the FA when asked to give advice about child protection. The leaflet was not referred to again in the Executive Committee minutes. When I interviewed them, XX, Robin Russell, KN and Tony Pickerin had no recollection of this leaflet. In January 1998, XX refers to work that needed to be done by KN who was taking over responsibility for child protection matters and refers to outstanding matters which included the “Production of a child protection publication for the game as whole”. This implies that such a document had not already been produced. Taking all of this evidence together, I consider it highly likely that the leaflet prepared by XX and approved by the FA’s Executive Committee was not produced.

8.1.141. I do not know why the leaflet was not produced. One possible reason is that there was a concern that publication would interfere with the *Charter for Quality* process which had been approved and where much work needed to be done to implement it. This possibility is suggested in the correspondence that XX had with Robin Russell in early January 1998. At that time, XX was passing on responsibility for child protection to KN (see: below). On January 8th 1998, XX asked Robin Russell whether he could “pass all my child protection files over to him?” XX referred to “the final draft of a circular which would set out The Football Association’s position in relation to child protection”. XX comments that:

“As far as I can see, we are the last of the home nations to put out any such policy statement. **I fully understand that timing is very important, particularly bearing in mind the Charter for Quality. However, I very much believe child protection to be an important issue.** I continue to receive regular phone calls from those at youth level who are concerned to know what The Football Association’s position is and seeking guidance.”
(emphasis added)

I raised this possible explanation with Robin Russell. He did not recall the leaflet at all, but disputed this interpretation of XX’s memorandum. He said that by early January 1998, the *Charter for Quality* had been approved by the FA Council, and so there was no concern that publishing a circular about child protection would interfere with the *Charter for Quality* approval process. There is no other evidence to assist as to what happened to the leaflet and why it was not produced.

8.1.142. Although the FA Executive Committee had approved XX’s child protection programme in September 1997, they do not seem to have pressed him or others to see what progress was being made. The Executive Committee did not show any urgency about the matter. Indeed, the next reference to the child protection programme in the minutes of the Executive Committee was almost a year later: on September 1st 1998, the minutes record that SN (a County FA representative) queried the FA’s progress on child protection issues. He was told that, in the context of the non-League game, these “were being developed through the Technical Department and, in particular, in relation to the proposed Charter Mark.”

8.1.143. There was no mention of child protection at all in the Executive Committee minutes for October 7th 1997, November 4th 1997, December 2nd 1997, February 17th 1998, March 11th 1998, April 7th 1998, May 18th 1998, June 17th 1998, or July 17th 1998. At the Executive Committee meeting of January 13th 1998, recorded under “Any Other Business” there is a reference to “any requests for information about individuals relating to child protection issues should be addressed by County Associations to the Police and Social Services as the bodies having a statutory duty to investigate such matters”. The absence of a reference to child protection in those minutes of the Executive Committee does not necessarily mean that the subject was not mentioned at all. However, the fact that it was not specifically written down in the minutes does suggest that it was not regarded as of sufficient importance to merit being a specific item on the agenda.

8.1.144. At the end of the year, in December 1997, the FA appointed KN: his job role included the development of the FA child protection programme. When writing the job description for the role, Robin Russell said that this would “ensure that the FA Child Protection Policy has its roots within mainstream football development for the benefit of this programme and the children it aims to protect.” Robin Russell had also advised XX that there would be a need to have “further discussions regarding a budget”. At this point, there was still no budget for child protection activities.

8.1.145. Robin Russell informed KN at the outset that child protection was “in his top three priorities”. KN explained to me that the primary objectives for the new position

were:

- “The mandating of mini-soccer for primary-aged children (6-a-side football) in Grassroots and Schools Football, which included rule changes and implementing consequent facility, pitch and goalpost changes across England at a budget of around £6m
- The implementation of a Charter Standard Kite Mark, aimed separately at Grassroots Clubs, Schools and Holiday Courses
- Embedding Child Protection practices into Grassroots Football
- Staffing national residential coaching courses at Lilleshall as part of the FA’s New Generation of Courses
- Chairing a working party which looked at Asian participation in football”

8.1.146. Before taking on this role, KN had worked as a Football in the Community officer and then Youth Development Officer for a professional club, and latterly he had worked for the FA with responsibility for looking after a number of County FAs, promoting Fun Weeks, Soccer Star scheme and coach education. In those roles, KN had not encountered child protection issues. In his interview with me, KN said that “I wonder now, with hindsight, was I the most qualified or best person, to be doing it? At the time, maybe, because there wasn’t the context of what was going to happen – I think if you . . . have 2018 knowledge, and then absolutely, I was a fish up a tree.” KN added that he was “not sure if there were many specialists at the time”.

8.1.147. It is correct that there were not the same number of experts or specialists in child protection in 1997 as there are now, but they did exist. Whilst there would have been few child protection experts who worked in football, there were many people who worked, or who had worked, for local authorities in the field of child protection. There were also experts, such as Celia Brackenridge, who could have been engaged as consultants for a short period to assist with the development of the FA’s child protection programme, or the NSPCC (which had been providing some advice and assistance to the FA) could have been asked to help with this work. As explained below, it was only in the middle of 1998 that the FA employed someone - as one of five Regional Football Development Officers - who had safeguarding experience and expertise, and was able to work with KN to develop the child protection programme.

8.1.148. Robin Russell explained to me that the FA had appointed KN to take forward the grassroots initiatives within the *Charter for Quality*. He told me that “We wanted [KN] to ensure child protection was embedded in the initiatives of the Charter for Quality”.

8.1.149. With respect to specific allegations of abuse, documents from the FA archives show that during 1997, a number of concerns about specific individuals were raised with the FA. They were all dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis, as no referral system was in place and no bespoke disciplinary procedure had been introduced. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that the FA deliberately ignored specific concerns that were brought to their attention, nor have I seen any evidence to suggest that the FA did not take any specific allegation seriously (see: Disciplinary and Referral).

8.1.150. It is clear to me that 1997 was a year in which the FA thought far more seriously about child protection issues than it had ever done previously, and the initial building blocks of a number of important child protection measures were put in place. This was particularly the case for the professional game. The FA agreed to amend its Programme for Excellence Regulations with effect from the 1998/99 season. These amendments would require all staff and volunteers involved at an Academy or Centre of Excellence to be registered and screened; and for there to be a designated person with responsibility for child protection matters at each Academy or Centre of Excellence. The effect of these measures was to begin to embed child protection in the youth operations of all professional clubs. The training of the designated persons took place in 1999 (see box 12: Implementing the Charter for Quality in the Professional Game).

8.1.151. The FA was rightly commended by GR of the NSPCC for the progress that was being made during the course of the year. Nevertheless, these positive and encouraging remarks cannot be seen in isolation: the FA had done very little before 1997, and it took the FA a further two and a half years before a comprehensive child protection programme was introduced. That was, in my judgment, too long.

FA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROGRAMME: 1998

8.1.152. At the beginning of 1998, XX handed over the child protection matters that he had been working on to KN. XX explained to KN during the hand over that there were a number of “outstanding matters which I have been dealing with previously which I guess will now become your responsibility.” The most important amongst these were:

- Formulation of FA Child Protection Policy;
- Production of a child protection publication for the game as whole;
- Consideration of the specific child protection procedures of a disciplinary nature to apply throughout the game.”

With respect to first of these matters – the formulation of the child protection policy – XX had previously pointed out to Robin Russell that the FA was the “last of the home nations to put out” a child protection policy statement.

8.1.153. The fact that the other nations had put out a child protection policy statement did not mean that their overall child protection programmes were necessarily better than the English FA’s. Indeed, KN wrote to XX on March 27th 1998 to say that he had recently spoken with an official at the Scottish FA and was “given the impression that we have better practices in operation than the Scottish Football Association, and they are struggling as to how best to disseminate information on Child Protection to the large voluntary sector”. Nevertheless, for reasons explained above, a policy document is important on a number of different levels (see: Initial Comments).

8.1.154. At the end of 1998, KN handed over responsibility for child protection matters to Tony Pickerin. Although progress had been made in a number of matters that XX

had specifically passed on to KN, by the end of 1998 the FA had still not produced a child protection policy, there was no child protection publication specifically designed for football which was branded (and therefore seen to be promoted) by the FA, and disciplinary procedures for child protection matters had not been implemented.

8.1.155. On December 14th 1998, KN wrote a memorandum to Robin Russell on the need to address child protection issues “as a matter of urgency”. In KN’s view, the FA, and particularly the Technical Department, was “in an extremely vulnerable position if an incident should occur”.

8.1.156. When I interviewed him about this memorandum, KN said that the language he used was “FA-speak and memorandum speak”. He noted that the FA, as an organisation, was at the time:

“[H]ellishly slow. And . . . there was this process that couldn’t really be fast-tracked. So, it was – I think there was a general frustration, just in process, which I guess sometimes, you know, you get that in Government, you get that in Local Authority, where you know, there’s so many layers between people. So that – I honest[ly] can’t recall if there was anything other than frustration that – organisational frustration”.

8.1.157. That is not the inference I draw from the vivid language used in the memorandum. KN was in my view acknowledging that participants in the game looked to the FA, and expected from the FA, proper guidance as to how to address child protection. By the end of 1998, the FA had not put out a guidance document for football and this was a major failing. KN was also sending a warning to others at the FA that the organisation could be in difficulties if an act of abuse occurred at a club and the FA had not put in place appropriate guidance and policies. I do not consider that it was KN’s fault that there was a lack of progress during the year. As he told me, he recognised that progressing the implementation of safeguarding procedures was a significant task and one which required specialist knowledge. He did not initially have this knowledge when he took on his new role.

8.1.158. KN spent the early part of 1998 learning about child protection issues. He met with a number of directors of social services and with Celia Brackenridge. Along with 14 other members of the FA’s Technical Department, KN attended a training session on child protection delivered by the NCF. Howard Wilkinson had encouraged members of the Technical Department to attend, stating that “In the light of the high profile of Child Protection issues and its incorporation within the New Generation of Courses, I feel it will be beneficial for you to attend.”

8.1.159. The training session was delivered by the London County FA Coaching Representative. The NCF described the aim of the workshop as taking decision makers within each sport “through the issues of child protection and offering guidance on procedures that your NGB may wish to implement”. Part of the training involved a session on a “Sport Organisations Action Plan For Protection Against Sexual Abuse In Sport”, the same document that had been prepared by Celia Brackenridge and had been presented at the Sports Council conference, attended by Tony Pickerin more than

eighteen months previously, in June 1996 (see box 7: Sports Council Conference 1996).

8.1.160. KN discussed the FA's emerging child protection procedures with the NSPCC. In May 1998, KN met with the NSPCC's Head of Child Protection Training, and in a letter written on May 19th 1998, after their meeting, KN said "It was encouraging that your comments on The Football Association's current and proposed Child Protection Procedures were both informative and re-assuring, and I will now endeavour to process these."

8.1.161. In the middle of 1998, the FA appointed five Regional Football Development Officers, reporting to KN. The jobs had been advertised in the Winter 1997 issue of *Insight*, the FACA publication. The responsibilities of the job were to implement, direct and evaluate "The F.A. Football Development Programme to enhance the quality and quantity of children's participation." The duties included:

"The implementation and direction of: the Small-Sided Games initiative for children under 10 years of age, the Charter Mark recommendations with regard to Schools, Junior Clubs, Holiday Courses and Coaching Centres, **The Football Association's Child Protection Policy**, Marketing the services of The F.A. Football Development Programme, Liaison with County Associations, Local Authorities, Schools, Football in the Community Schemes, Clubs, Local Leagues, Holiday Course providers, etc."

(emphasis added)

8.1.162. DX was one of the appointees: he had specific safeguarding experience and expertise. He was tasked in late June 1998 to draft a child protection policy. As I set out below, DX produced a draft by the end of September 1998. It was anticipated that the document would be signed off by the FA and published by January 1999. In fact, the policy was approved in May 1999.

8.1.163. The absence of a policy document and child protection guidelines continued to be raised by the grassroots game. For example, on February 24th 1998, West Riding County Football Association wrote to XX to ask "if it is the intention of the Football Association to issue guidelines to County Football Associations on child protection with a standard self declaration form for use." The matter was particularly pressing for the County FA as it was aware of a case that was due to come before the courts "concerning a person connected with one of our Junior Clubs, who has been charged with serious child abuse. Any assistance you are able to offer would be greatly appreciated". XX replied on March 4th 1998, explaining that KN was dealing with child protection matters and would be in touch. XX wrote to KN and asked whether there was "Any news on a Football Association policy document following your meeting with the Scottish F.A.?" This was the first of a number of references in the FA archives to XX chasing progress on this matter. (In February 1999, KN provided West Riding CFA with a copy of the draft child protection policy document that had been worked on by DX, and said that "I hope this addresses the concerns expressed and will provide guidelines both for County Associations and Clubs in implementing Child Protection procedures.")

8.1.164. On August 9th 1998, the Secretary of a grassroots club, Ampthill Boys FC,

wrote to the local County FA (Bedfordshire) with a query:

“At a recent committee meeting of our club, the question of possible child abuse was raised. I would like to know if there is any official FA policy on this. We would like to make sure that we are doing all we should in the unlikely event of any problem arising. I have contacted the police and there does not appear to be anything we can do, as screening of any adults is entirely up to the individual concerned and the police are under no obligation to reveal results to us. We take precautions if possible, as for example trying to always have two adults present with the boys, but with the best will in the world this is not always possible, as you no doubt appreciate. But if there are any specific directives from the FA or advice, then perhaps you will be good enough to advise us.”

The General Secretary of Bedfordshire CFA forwarded this letter to XX on August 20th 1998, remarking that this was “a question regularly asked, particularly when we attend League meetings, as I am sure you are aware. Are you in a position to give us advice on how best to respond to this and to similar enquiries in the future? Your guidance would be very much appreciated.” On August 24th 1998, XX provided what he described internally as a “holding response” saying that “This is, of course, an issue of considerable concern and I am glad that you have raised this. Responsibility for child care matters has for some time now been with [KN] and I will forward your letter to him for a response.”

8.1.165. Although the FA had no finalised child protection policy or guidance document to share, there is evidence from the archives that it did on occasion distribute a “Guidance Note for Coaches” document when queries about child protection were brought to its attention prior to the publication of the Child Protection Policy Statement. This document was very similar to the one that had been shared with XX by the Welsh FA in March 1997 (see: FA Child Protection Policy and Programme: 1997), with the addition of the FACA Code of Conduct for coaches. There was nothing specific about referring allegations of abuse or other concerns to the FA, which is not surprising as there was at this stage no referral mechanism in place. Although it is useful that the FA had a guidance document to share, the fact that the document was provided in response to queries, rather than provided more widely to all those involved in the game, meant that the broader benefits of an FA-branded child protection policy statement and guidance document were not obtained.

8.1.166. KN also sought to raise awareness of child protection matters among football coaches. The Autumn 1998 edition of *Insight* included an article by KN headed “Duty of Care”. The article outlined what the FA was doing with respect to child protection: campaigning for screening legislation to allow the FA to be a clearing house for checks on staff; incorporating a child protection module for the FA Coaching Certificate; screening for FACA members, and extending screening and education through Charter marking. KN also referred to the appointment of the Regional Football Development Officers.

8.1.167. In his *Insight* article, KN also referred to sexual abuse as being one of the forms of child abuse that can occur, describing this as when: “children are used to meet an-

other's sexual needs". He recommended listening to children if they wanted to express concern, and publicised NSPCC's child protection helpline. This article was clearly an attempt by the FA to get its child protection message across. However, the audience was limited to coaches. It did not automatically reach all affiliated clubs, let alone parents and children who were playing in the grassroots game. In my view, while it is fair to acknowledge that some steps had been taken by the FA by this time, and some progress had been made, this did not go far enough and the FA was still some way off from implementing the comprehensive child protection programme that was needed.

8.1.168. XX, in my view, was frustrated at the lack of progress with the development of the FA's policy materials. On August 11th 1998, he sent two memoranda to KN. One attached some information from the ASA. XX commented: "As we have previously discussed, The Football Association must look to make progress in this issue." The other memorandum attached a copy of a publication entitled "Play Action – Fair Play for Children", which contained an article which XX said "may be of interest. If we have something to say in this area, I think we should do so." When I asked KN about this in interview he denied that XX was concerned that the FA was not moving fast enough on this issue. That is not the inference that I draw from the contemporaneous documents: the observation that the FA "must look to make progress in this issue" is suggestive of a concern that progress was not being made sufficiently quickly.

8.1.169. The article which XX had shared with KN was headlined "Soccer Paedophile Jailed", and referred to the sentencing of Barry Bennell at Chester Crown Court on June 1st 1998. The article referred to the "Channel Four exposure last year into the ease with which paedophiles can access children and young people through sporting activities which are largely unable to access criminal records" (the *Dispatches* programme), and expressed the view that:

"The complacency of the major League Clubs, the Football Association etc is staggering – they operate as though such things had never happened over many years and yet it's crystal clear that such men have had easy access to children and young people because the controlling adults refuse to face up to a simple and yet crucial responsibility to ask – Is this person who and what he says he is?

The situation is compounded by the inability of many organisations to access police checks and most are not even aware of fundamental child protection issues. In this also Government Departments must take a share of the blame. They have known of such men and their compulsion to seek victims through such organisations for decades. Yet Thomas Hamilton [responsible for the shooting at the school in Dunblane] has not taught us the right lesson, football league chiefs go on living in cloud-cuckoo in their substantially-comfortable directors boxes, and government departments still talk about how much it will all cost. This is a continuing betrayal of children and of their bright trust. This story can be and has been repeated in rugby clubs, swimming clubs and other places attractive to children whose ambition leads them to rely on men who seem to offer so much."

8.1.170. The first draft of the FA's child protection policy was produced at the end of September 1998. DX shared a first draft of the Child Protection Policy and an Implementation Plan on October 5th 1998. In a covering note, DX outlined the process behind the draft, including: his training as a child protection tutor by the NCF; his meeting with the person at the NCF who had written the NCF guides on child protection; his meeting with an officer at the NSPCC; as well as his research and collation of good practice material from a number of sources. It is clear that DX had researched quite broadly in drafting the policy and plan. Many of these documents and experts, or similar documents and experts, could have been sourced by the FA a couple of years previously had the FA acted more swiftly after the Hickson conviction.

8.1.171. DX envisaged that the final copy of the policy, after any necessary amendments, would be ready for print by November 30th 1998, with publication in January 1999. The draft policy contained reference to the NSPCC helpline, and included material about what to do if allegations of abuse were made against members of staff or volunteers. It also included a flow-chart which explained that referrals should be made in the first instance to the County FA or to a Senior Official at the FA to decide on how to handle the issue. It explained that the FA would decide "whether to suspend temporarily pending enquiries."

8.1.172. The draft document stated that every club was encouraged to have a policy which ensures that children are protected and kept safe from harm. It stated that everyone involved in the care of children should know what to do if there are concerns about abuse and where procedures are kept. Regarding training, the document noted that:

"It should be clearly recognised that checks are only part of the process to protect children from possible abuse. The checks must be operated in conjunction with appropriate training of staff/volunteers so they are aware and sensitive to potentially abusive situations. The Football Association, in conjunction with the NSPCC and NCF, are in the process of developing suitable Child Protection Training Workshops."

8.1.173. The process for officially agreeing the Child Protection Policy was slow. On October 6th 1998, the FA's Executive Committee referred to the Child Protection Policy which had been prepared by DX and which "would be submitted through the [FA's] Technical Control Board", and "noted the importance of a Child Protection Policy for all parts of the game." The draft policy was also mentioned at the FA's Instructional Committee meeting on October 9th 1998. The minutes of that meeting also refer to a cascading tutor-training mechanism, and the development of a specific module for Academies and Centres of Excellence. At the meeting of the FA's Executive Committee on November 11th 1998, the County FA representative "stressed the importance of child protection policies for all levels of the game." XX reassured the County FA representative that detailed proposals had been drafted by the Technical Department, and that these "would be available for circulation in the near future."

8.1.174. On November 25th 1998, a County FA Coaching Representative and DX delivered a child protection workshop to the FA's Regional Development Officers and to others working at the FA. The workshop included a discussion of the FA's Child Pro-

tection Policy: “its implications” and “the implementation plan”. At the Instructional Committee meeting on November 26th 1998, the members were told that “Because of the complexity of this issue, which, in the normal way, would require the attention of some half a dozen or so Committees, it was agreed that, in the first instance, documentation would go directly to the Executive Committee to simplify the process.”

8.1.175. At the Technical Control Board meeting on December 1st 1998, Tony Pickerin (who had by then been appointed the FA’s Education and Welfare Officer: see below) announced that “Issues regarding Child Protection were progressing.” A week later, the Education and Welfare Sub-Committee meeting on December 8th 1998 received an update. The minutes record that: “Tony Pickerin was drawing up an overall Child Protection plan for The F.A. which will include a Child Protection Policy, Procedure and Training Programme for County Associations, Football Academies and Centres of Excellence. Tony Pickerin will be liaising with the [XX] on this matter.”

8.1.176. Although progress on developing the FA’s own child protection policy was slow, the FA had worked well with the Premier League and Football League to develop child protection policies for all of the professional clubs. On August 4th 1998, the Football League shared with all Academy Directors, and on August 7th 1998, with all Centre of Excellence Directors, the Child Protection Policy for the Football League and a template policy for individual football clubs. The same was done by the Premier League (see: Premier League).

8.1.177. The professional game was generally making good progress in implementing the *Charter for Quality* principles that related to child protection.

Box 12.

IMPLEMENTING THE CHARTER FOR QUALITY IN THE PROFESSIONAL GAME

Implementation of the *Charter for Quality* provisions for the professional clubs took place in 1998.

BUSINESS PLANS

Clubs wishing to operate an Academy or Centre of Excellence were required to submit a business plan to the FA. On July 9th 1998, the Football League circulated an outline guide to producing such a plan, demonstrating the way in which the club was committed to youth development. One aspect of the business plan was to explain which member of staff would be the nominated Child Protection Officer.

MONITORING

Academies and Centres of Excellence were monitored, including as to whether they were properly complying with the child protection obligations. Monitoring Pro Formas introduced by the Football League in 1998 contained a section on child protection: “All Football Academies must be able to demonstrate an informed approach to Child Protection issues within the framework of the local area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) procedures. The Football Association, F.A. Premier League and Football League have issued policy statements with respect to Child Protection and these will

form the basis of the requirements placed upon Football Academies.”

The Minimum Standards against which the Academies were checked were:

- “1. Self certification documents regarding child abuse signed by each staff member shall be held on file at the Academy.
2. All incidents and reports of child abuse must be referred to the local initial assessment response team.
3. The Academy should have written policy and practice guidelines for dealing with suspected Child Protection issues.
4. A senior member of staff should be the nominated Child Protection Officer for the Football Academy.
5. All members of staff should have access to and be conversant with League Child Protection policies.
6. The Academy shall keep on record a list of contact names and telephone numbers of relevant community agencies.
7. All staff should receive an appropriate induction and initial training in relation to Child Protection issues.
8. Nominated staff shall show a commitment to training in issues and aspects of child protection.
9. The Academy must have a clear procedure for the notification of any player who goes missing whilst in their care.
10. All players, staff and parents/guardians shall be aware of the procedures of notification regarding any missing persons.
11. Each staff member shall have had a police check conducted regarding child abuse offences.
12. The Academy should make available through posters or leaflets, the relevant telephone numbers for Helplines for players.
13. Academy staff responsible for child protection issues shall develop relationships with statutory bodies and voluntary agencies such as Social Services, Police, NSPCC, etc. in their area.”

The Premier League and the Football League took different approaches to the monitoring function. In a letter to the NCF on February 24th 2000, Tony Pickerin stated that the Premier League’s “monitoring of Child Protection issues is subjective and more *laissez faire*. The monitors from the Premier League are primarily football people who pursue the technical side including the Games Programme.” The Football League’s monitoring (which had been developed with Tony Pickerin’s involvement) was described by Tony Pickerin as being “more detailed”.

REGULATIONS

In line with the *Charter*, and the amendments to the *Programme for Excellence* regulations (see box 12: Developing the Chartermark) the Premier League and the Football League made reference to child protection in their respective Handbooks for the 1998-9 season as follows:

“At each Football Academy and Centre of Excellence operated by a Club a member of staff trained in child protection issues shall be given specific responsibility for the same and in particular shall:

- 24.1 prepare and ensure strict compliance with a child protection policy;
- 24.2 maintain the staff register, making it available for inspection as required;
- 24.3 liaise with Students, parents, staff, the police, the Social Services Department of the local authority, the League and other relevant persons and bodies in relation to child protection issues
- 24.4 promote awareness of child protection issues generally and encourage and monitor the adoption of best practice procedures in that regard.”

The Premier League and Football League amended their rules for the 2001-02 season so that child protection applied to all aspects of a professional football club’s activities (see: Child Protection Policy and Programme: 2000-2005).

TRAINING

During 1999, the FA delivered a training module (adapted by the FA Premier League’s child protection expert, Peter Cates) to the Directors of FA Academies and Centres of Excellence. A further training workshop was provided in 1999 for the person designated to be responsible for Child Protection at each of the Academies and Centres of Excellence.

8.1.178. The FA also started working with the professional clubs at the end of 1998 to screen their staff against the copy of List 99 – the list of persons prohibited from teaching roles – that had recently been obtained by the FA (see: Screening and Self Declaration). The Premier League and Football League were asked to provide details of people working for their clubs. In this way, the FA was essentially setting itself up as a clearing house to screen persons working as coaches, and within the *Programme for Excellence*, albeit against a rather limited dataset. The List 99 information was also used to check against members of FACA (see: Screening and Self Declaration). Although List 99 was limited in the information that it contained, this was the best resource available at this time for screening and vetting individuals. It is clear to me, therefore, that the FA was doing the most that it could do at this time within the constraints of the law to screen and vet individuals.

8.1.179. Tony Pickerin’s new role, to which he was appointed at the end of 1998, was entitled Education and Welfare Adviser. The “Purpose” of the role was “To provide an education and welfare service for The Football Association, including Child Protection”. His duties were

- “(1) to draft the FA’s Child Protection Statement, Policy and Procedures;
- (2) to implement Child Protection Policy and Procedures;
- (3) to provide Child Protection Training for nominated individuals, in County Associations, Centres of Excellence, Football Academies;
- (4) to monitor the implementation of The F.A. Child Protection Policy and Training;
- (5) to provide Education and Welfare Services for Football Academies and Centres of Excellence, including In-Service Training, Seminars, Conferences

and Courses;

(6) to provide appropriate resources to support the education and welfare services;

(7) to develop a Professional Education and Welfare Officers Award, and

(8) to have responsibility for the authorship, origination, development and editing of publications, video tapes and CD Roms and other materials in the field of Education, Welfare and Child Protection as directed by the FA.”

8.1.180. As explained above, at the time of his hand-over to Tony Pickerin, KN expressed real concern at the state of progress within the FA for child protection. KN referred to the fact that XX was “regularly trying to speed this initiative along”. KN provided Tony Pickerin some of the key papers that he had been working on, and made a number of recommendations:

- “1. The Football Association formally adopts a Child Protection Statement
2. The Football Association provide a generic Child Protection Policy
3. The F.A. Premier League and Football League adopt a Training Course for its members. Latterly to be used by grassroots football
4. The Football Association amend its rules to implement such a Policy
5. A process of training is cascaded downwards.”

8.1.181. In a memorandum written in early January 1999, KN explained that the training would consist of the following:

- “i. F.A. Premier League/Football League – Training Programme highlighted by [Peter Cates] and [Tony Pickerin]
- ii. Existing F.A. Coaches/F.A. Medical Award Holders – Series of 3 hour Child Protection Workshops using vehicle of F.A.C.A.
- iii. Future Coaches – Child Protection to become an integral part of:
 - F.A. Junior Team Managers
 - F.A. Coaching Certificate
 - F.A. Basic Treatment of Injuries similar to Emergency 1st Aid
- iv. Non-F.A. Coaching Personnel – A series of Child Protection Workshops through County and League structures prioritising Chartermark organisations first.”

8.1.182. On December 14th 1998, KN forwarded to Tony Pickerin three documents:

- “1. A proposed Child Protection Statement incorporating the objectives as discussed.
2. Proposed amendments to the Child Protection Policy Consultation Document you reviewed previously.
3. Draft Rule Amendments from [XX].”

KN commented, “I trust these meet with your approval and look forward to taking this forward to [XX] as soon as possible.”

8.1.183. These were essentially the matters that XX had passed on to KN to work on the year earlier. When I asked KN why so little progress had been made with respect to these matters, he told me that he had to learn about the subject matter, and had to

deal with “the machinations of the Football Association”. As for whether it would have been better for these matters to be have been dealt with quicker, he said: “absolutely. But was it alarming slow? No, I’d try and defend myself on that, that it was [not] alarmingly slow.” KN claimed that “the processes and the structure [of the FA] is very, very conservative, with lots and lots of checks, and it is a – that the game was enormous, to try and get things permeated through was a very, very slow process.” This no doubt explains some of the delay, but cannot explain it all.

8.1.184. It is likely that KN’s lack of expertise in the area, and the amount of time that he was able to devote to child protection also contributed to this lack of substantive progress. KN accepted that although child protection had been an important part of his role, it was not his number one priority. The fact that child protection fell down the list of KN’s priorities was confirmed to me by Robin Russell.

8.1.185. Robin Russell referred me to KN’s other responsibilities: the programme for mini soccer, the programme for Charter marking which was later changed to Charter standard for junior clubs and leagues, and the implementation of coach education as it applied to the game outside of the Academies and Centres of Excellence. Robin Russell told me that in mini soccer there had been a fatality involving the frame for a goal and addressing this matter took up some of KN’s time.

8.1.186. With respect to the work on the *Charter for Quality*, it is clear from the materials found in the FA archives that KN had spent time during 1998 developing Charter Mark materials for Junior Football. Draft documents had been worked on for clubs wishing to obtain Charter Mark status, as well as Charter Mark materials for Holiday Courses. The Charter Mark process was a means by which child protection could have been introduced into the grassroots game. It took a considerable amount of time, however, for the Charter Mark process to be rolled out: it began to be introduced in the 1999/2000 season.

Box 13.

DEVELOPING THE CHARTERMARK

In October 1998, KN shared drafts for the various Charter work-streams with XX. KN had prepared a draft for “Holiday Coaching Courses and Coaching Centres”, under the heading “Assuring Quality Football Experiences for Young Children”. The materials stated that the FA Chartermark for holiday coaching courses and coaching centres would “provide a nationally recognised quality control kitemark for courses for young children.” To acquire Chartermark status, organisations would be required to meet criteria “as an absolute minimum for staff”, including membership of the FACA (meaning they would have to be screened) and “A commitment to undertake training (3 hours) in The F.A./N.C.F. Child Protection Programmes.” Any breach of any criteria for Chartermark status by a Chartermark Organisation would constitute a breach of the FA’s Rule 26(a)(x) (that is, conduct which “is considered to be ungentlemanly, unsporting, insulting or improper behaviour or likely to bring the game into disrepute”), and would be dealt with under disciplinary procedures. Self-certification forms would need to be provided to both coaches and non-coaching personnel involved in the organisation, including “Administrators, helpers, First Aiders etc”.

KN prepared a draft for junior clubs who wished to obtain Chartermark status. They would need to register and arrange for the screening of managers, coaches and club officials, through the use of self-certification. (XX provided handwritten notes to this draft, which reads: “Agree to checks being made. Submission of: PNC [Police National Computer] check; certificate.”)

The minimum requirement for a manager or coach of a Chartermark Club was to have an FA Junior Team Management Certificate or to have attended fully an FA Coaching Certificate Course by December 2000, and New managers or coaches had to fulfil these criteria within 12 months of working with a Chartermark Club. The Management Certificate and the coaching course would involve child protection training. There was also a requirement to attend an annual workshop developed in conjunction with the league, the FA or the CFA.

In addition, KN produced a draft for Chartermark Junior Leagues. These would require a proportion of their members to be Chartermark Clubs. There would need to be screening of all league officials and club personnel. On October 30th 1998, KN explained to Robin Russell that the *Charter for Quality* Working Party recommended that the Chartermark for junior leagues should be rolled out in a “second phase”, along with festivals and tournaments, and that they should be reviewed after the first year of Chartermark Clubs and Holiday Courses. On November 26th 1998, the FA’s Instructional Committee approved documents regarding Chartermarks for Schools, Junior Clubs and Holiday Courses. It was recorded in the committee’s minutes that “Charter Marks for Leagues and Teams and Tournaments” would be “addressed at a suitable time following a review of the Charter Marks which, hopefully, will be launched early 1999.”

INTRODUCTION OF THE CHARTERMARK SCHEME

The Chartermark scheme started to be introduced in 1999/2000. At the club level, the FA launched two awards in February 2001: the FA Charter Standard Club and the FA Charter Standard Development Club.

The FA Charter Standard Club were for those clubs that could evidence:

- “• **Constitution:** This must include reference to affiliation, management committee, AGM/additional meetings, accounts, membership procedures, child protection, code of conduct, disciplinary procedures and sports equity
- **F.A. Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Practices:** Clubs must follow F.A. guidance in child protection, have a designated person (who has attended the F.A. 3-hour workshop Children – Ensuring Safety in Football) and use the F.A. personal disclosure forms
- **Qualifications:** All managers and coaches must be in receipt of at least the F.A. Junior Team Managers Award
- **In-Service Training:** A club representative must attend at least one F.A. in-service event each year
- **Code of Conduct:** Clubs must have a code for coaches/managers, players, team officials and spectators/parents that makes explicit reference to fair

play, sports equity, respect, behaviour and expectations”

The FA Charter Standard Development Clubs were those clubs that satisfied some further criteria, unrelated to child protection.

The development of the FA Charter Standard and the FA Charter Standard Development Clubs process was a good way of embedding child protection measures into the grassroots game.

8.1.187. It can be seen, therefore, that 1998 was a year of further work by the FA in developing child protection measures. Apart from initiatives in the professional game and some further screening work, however, it was a year in which nothing was actually introduced for the grassroots game: policies for the grassroots game were still being worked on. The delay in bringing forward a comprehensive child protection programme for the entire game since the Hickson conviction in the summer of 1995, and the Sports Council conference in June 1996 was, by now, considerable.

FA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROGRAMME: 1999

8.1.188. It is right to point out that at the beginning of 1999, the FA was regarded by the NSPCC as being one of the organisations that had been “particularly active” in child protection work. The NSPCC acknowledged that the FA may have some “good practice” to share with other sports. This assessment of the FA’s work was correct in comparison with many other sports, but it does not mean that there was not more for the FA to do. From the Sports Council conference in June 1996, the FA ought to have been aware of what needed to be done. By the beginning of 1999, there was still considerably more for the FA to do to implement the measures that had been highlighted at that conference.

8.1.189. 1999 saw more substantive progress being made by the FA, and a number of significant measures were introduced. On August 24th 1999, for instance, the FA Executive Committee approved new disciplinary regulations, which empowered the FA to remove persons from football activities where they were considered to be a risk to young people (see: Disciplinary and Referral). The FA’s new rule was similar to one that had been introduced by the ASA to cover risks in swimming two and a half years previously, in the aftermath of the Hickson affair. There is no reason why this rule could not have been introduced far earlier. The rule itself only took a matter of weeks to draft, with external legal input, and even though I accept that it takes some time for a rule to be discussed and consulted upon by stakeholders before it can be approved by the governing body, this does not explain why the rule was only introduced in late 1999, when XX had first mentioned the need for it in 1997 (see: Disciplinary and Referral).

8.1.190. During 1999, the FA made use of List 99. The FA informed two FACA members whose names were on List 99 that their membership of FACA had been terminat-

ed. The FA examined whether staff working in Football League clubs were on List 99. By November 23rd 1999, it was noted that all clubs had submitted lists for screening and it was reported that “no major problems [were] revealed.” (see: Screening and Self Declaration).

8.1.191. The FA’s Child Protection Policy was approved by the FA’s Executive Committee in May 1999 and by the FA Council in the summer of 1999, most probably at its meeting on September 6th 1999. XX sent a copy of the FA’s Child Protection Policy to the Home Office on October 18th 1999. A Home Office official responded on October 26th 1999 to say that “We were very interested to see what you propose in this excellent document.” The policy was reviewed by the NSPCC. In a memorandum dated December 8th 1999, an employee of the NSPCC, BW, described the FA’s draft as “In general...clear, well-written and cohesive”. BW said, however, that there were “a number of areas for change.” In her view, “The real issue,” was “how can such a long document be adapted to a mass audience in a readable and accessible form?” It was suggested that the current document be redrafted with edits by the NSPCC and be resubmitted to the executive committee. This was agreed to.

8.1.192. The relationship between the FA and the NSPCC was strengthened during 1999. Earlier in the year, on March 3rd 1999, XX had informed GR of the NSPCC of the FA’s ongoing efforts:

“I am sure you will have been kept fully up to date with our progress in relation to child protection issues. The F.A. Coaches Association is up and running and we hope very much that this shall prove an effective vehicle for child protection policies. Equally, we will shortly be launching our Chartermark programme which will put a great deal of emphasis on education and awareness in relation to child protection issues. **We are all very aware of the enormity of the task involved . . .** but that should not stop us from making every effort.”

8.1.193. On March 15th 1999, XX wrote to GR to say that the FA would be looking to the NSPCC for advice to make sure that the organisation was working “within best practice”. In June 1999, XX wrote to GR to say that the FA wished to retain the services of the NSPCC in relation to child protection in football. The initial idea was to ask the NSPCC to make available its Childline operation as a reporting line in football, and for the NSPCC to carry out an investigative function in relation to any allegations received by the FA, and to provide an opinion on which the FA could rely. GR gave specific assistance to the FA in 1999 on a number of disciplinary matters (see: Disciplinary and Referrals), but a formal consultancy contract between the FA and the NSPCC was not entered into until January 2000.

8.1.194. In April 1999, the NCF trained 16 FA staff and representatives to deliver “Good Practice and Child Protection” modules in football. Once the trainers had themselves been trained, it was possible for the FA to cascade that training to others, including those who were actually participating in the game of football. There is no specific explanation in the FA archives for why this training for trainers could not have occurred sooner.

8.1.195. Tony Pickerin worked closely with the County FAs during 1999, informing them of the FA's thinking about child protection, and assisting them to develop their own practices and procedures. The child protection policy document worked on by DX was shared with County FAs and discussed with them in a variety of fora, including the CFA Personnel and Office Procedures Working Group, the CFA Information Technology Working Group, and the CFA Finance, Funding and Procurement Working Group.

8.1.196. On November 8th 1999, at a meeting of the County Football Association's Steering Committee, a CFA representative "explained that the Working Group acknowledged the importance of The F.A. Child Protection policy, but emphasised concern that County Associations need additional guidance as a matter of some urgency." The following day, a meeting of the CFA Personnel and Office Procedures Working Group was attended by Tony Pickerin so that he could brief the committee on child protection matters. The minutes record:

"Following a series of presentations to County F.A. Working Groups Mr Pickerin explained he would seek to explain how Child Protection Legislation would affect football within County Associations.

It was acknowledged there was a need for practical solutions at a local level as well as a strategic plan on Child Protection. Mr Pickerin advised that legislation was still developing and The F.A. was working closely with the NSPCC. It was anticipated that a National Task Force in Sport to address Child Protection would be established.

Mr Pickerin explained that he proposed to establish a National Consultative Group on Child Protection and this would incorporate input from County Football Associations. It was acknowledged that vetting of adults, within football, would be difficult although Mr Pickerin advised that a National Database could exist within 18 months. It was however agreed that it would be important to share information although this would have to comply with the Data Protection Legislation.

It was noted that local registration and self-certification were only 2 ways to make circumstances more difficult in which child abuse could take place. The F.A. would therefore need to create both national and local plans to produce more effective procedures.

Mr Pickerin explained that for the immediate future County Associations should contact him for advice. He also undertook to write a short brief on Child Protection procedures to all County Association Secretaries, subject to approval by The F.A. Company Secretary."

8.1.197. Tony Pickerin prepared a briefing note entitled "Child Protection: Basic Protection Procedures for County F.A. Officials" which explained:

"Whilst The Football Association is developing a full Action Plan in Child Protection, it may be helpful for County F.A. officials and others to be aware of the action that should be taken following the receipt of an allegation concerning the abuse of children.

A simple schematic is shown that will help ensure that you follow the correct procedure. If you receive requests for advice from other adults then the authorities would recommend that:

- All children and allegations must be listened to and taken seriously
- Adults must not promise to keep information to themselves
- You should only ask those questions to identify what the child is telling you. Do not ask about explicit details.
- Make a written note of what you have been told and pass on the information without delay.

If anyone needs advice, then contact Tony Pickerin, F.A. Child Protection Officer [followed by contact details].”

8.1.198. A conference of CFA officials held on November 19th to 21st 1999 included a presentation on child protection matters. The assessment forms show that the presentation was well received (18 marked that it was “Excellent”, and 27 as “Very Good”, out of 53 responses). One attendee commented that “County Associations need suitable regular advice and support/training in this area”. Another gave somewhat sceptical feedback: “Are we overreacting, if we get it wrong ‘adult protection’ becomes necessary.” Slides which appear to relate to this session highlight that the issues for CFAs were: the nomination of Child Protection Officers; the development of a County Development Plan Implementation Strategy; the completion of an audit of existing good practice and of known adults (using the FA database); considering rule changes congruent with the FA Rules; development of codes of conduct; registration of league officials, club officials, coaches via FACA, referees and physiotherapists; procedures, including complaints, allegations, investigations, disciplinary procedures, sanctions; and vetting and self-declaration. It is clear, therefore, that by the end of 1999 there was still a considerable amount of child protection work for the CFAs to do.

8.1.199. Some of the work with the CFAs was held up due to lack of resources at the FA itself. For instance, a tutor training course for prospective trainers on child protection matters within the south east region of the FA was cancelled due to the lack of resources. Following cancellation, DX wrote to KN on August 13th 1999 to say that “Child Protection is of paramount importance and we must begin to help counties to formulate their policies and build an infrastructure which enables them to achieve this.” He went on to say that “We have been fortunate, within football, that we avoided any major Child Protection case but we must ensure that we do everything possible to make our sport as safe as possible for those players who choose to play football.”

8.1.200. The work that the FA needed to do on child protection was going to require a much greater financial commitment than the FA had previously spent in this area. Specific budget requests were called for during 1999. On February 12th 1999, KN presented Tony Pickerin with a breakdown of a proposed budget for child protection totalling £78,500. This involved £2,500 for the training of FA staff, £5,000 for the support and qualification of 10 tutor trainers, £10,000 for disseminated tutor training for 100 tutors nationwide, £25,000 for the FA child protection brochure, £5,000 for child protection meetings, £6,000 for the national launch of the child protection policy, and £25,000 for the regional launch at 10 venues.

8.1.201. On June 9th 1999, Robin Russell wrote to Tony Pickerin about a recent meeting Robin Russell had held with the FA’s Financial Controller, about the revised budget

for child protection. The total budget estimated for the Child Protection Policy was £265,400, about three quarters of which (£200,000) was a subsidy for accompanying child protection training, for the years 2000, 2001 and 2002. Taking into account administrative costs over those three years, the overall budget request was £303,200.

8.1.202. Robin Russell explained that he “would really like” Tony Pickerin “to take ownership of this budget”. Three budget areas were queried by Robin Russell: (i) the subsidy for the three-hour child protection module; (ii) the cost of the launch of the Child Protection Policy (Robin Russell asked how the figure of £5,000 could be justified); and (iii) the cost of producing the child protection booklet. The Finance Committee met on September 22nd 1999, and approved a budget for phase one of the FA’s Child Protection Policy.

8.1.203. The minutes of the Finance Committee also recorded that “The implementation strategy is being formulated.” This had been worked on by Tony Pickerin and produced on September 15th 1999. The objectives of this strategy were to:

- Ensure the delivery of initial training to all nominated officers in licensed F.A. Academies and F.A. Centres of Excellence.
- Establish with the County Football Associations and other partners a structure to ensure:
 - a. The development of full or part time appointments within The Football Association structure to ensure the delivery of the agreed Child Protection policy.
 - b. That each County F.A. has the opportunity to develop a three year plan for the development of the F.A. Policy at a county and local level.
- Ensure that there is an agreed complaints procedure that is consistent across all football and is integrated with The Football Association policies and procedures.
- Develop a mechanism exists for ongoing staff development in Child Protection issues.
- Provide for the organisation of an annual Child Protection Seminar on behalf of The Football Association and its partners.”

These measures were put in place over the next few years.

8.1.204. Tony Pickerin’s paper on child protection also addressed what was described as “Staff Development and Dissemination” among the Premier League and Football League. Tony Pickerin noted the need for the professional clubs to have child protection policy statements, for Academies to appoint Child Protection Officers and to undergo training. Tony Pickerin explained that the most difficult problem, however, was “to implement a Child Protection Policy across all football outside of the F.A. Premier League and Football League clubs.”

8.1.205. He said that it was “critical” that the FA provide “both resources and opportunities” for County FAs to protect children. To achieve this, the paper proposed:

- The Football Association to train 60 selected tutors through either the NSPCC or National Coaching Foundation.
- Candidates for Tutor Training to be nominated by the County F.A.s and

other partners.

- In the initial phase the tutors will be responsible for delivering the modular course in Child Protection awareness for those F.A. award bearing courses shown in Appendix B of the Child Protection Budget papers.
- The Football [Association] will bring forward proposals for full or part time appointments to play a critical role in the implementation of The Football Association Child Protection policy.
- At the appropriate point in this strategy. The Football Association will organise a 3 day seminar run by the NSPCC with a view to:
 - o Reviewing The Football Association Implementation Strategy. This strategy will ensure the implementation of the various elements of F.A. policy, particularly those relating to Charter Standard approval for clubs and schools, FACA and a range of award bearing Football Association courses.
 - o The development of a three year plan for County F.A.s and other partners for the dissemination of Child Protection policy.
- Within The Football Association to agree procedures for dealing with allegations and complaints with respect to Child Protection issues.
- On a regular basis for the Football Association Child Protection Officer to meet with the relevant representatives of County F.A.s and others to discuss progress.

Annually for The Football Association to organise a Child Protection Seminar for interested parties from both professional and non-professional backgrounds.”

Tony Pickerin had obviously been thinking hard about how to put together, and then implement, a joined-up child protection policy. There was no reason, however, why the FA could not have worked on and presented such a strategy two or even three years sooner.

8.1.206. The absence of progress in earlier years was highlighted in a speech given by XX in 2000 or 2001. In his speech, XX explained that a key focus for the FA was its work with children. He asked:

“What were we doing two years ago to promote best practice in this field?”

His answer was:

“Very little.”

There may have been an element of hyperbole in this speech by XX, as the FA had done a number of things during the previous period. However, he was right to imply that there was much more to be done.

8.1.207. In the same speech, XX explained that the FA had:

“[G]ot the NSPCC involved, and we’ve just received their annual report which says that in a year we’ve gone from nowhere, to perhaps the leading sports organisation in the UK with regards to child protection. That’s a good start but we’ve got a long way to go. Our ambition is to be able to say to parents that, if they entrust their children to football, they can know that football will look after them.”

By the end of 1999, it was not possible for the FA to say this to parents. The FA was on the cusp of introducing its child protection programme, but was not quite there yet.

FA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROGRAMME: 2000-2005

8.1.208. Between 2000 and 2005 the FA established, revised and embedded a comprehensive child protection system. That is not to say that the FA's policy or its implementation of that policy were without issues, but the substantial investment and commitment by individuals at the FA, and in the wider football community, to improving child protection in the period from 2000 to 2005 should not be understated. As at 2000 the FA estimated that approximately 2.5 million children aged 10 - 17 played in organised football each week and 1.5 million children aged 10 - 17 played football irregularly, with over 500,000 adults involved in the youth game. Delivering arrangements that could protect all of these children was an enormous undertaking. From 2000-2005, the FA took many significant steps to achieve this objective.

8.1.209. The FA's Child Protection Policy was launched on May 24th 2000. The launch, which also included an initiative to end bullying in the game, took place at the hotel where the England international team played. England international team players Michael Owen and Sol Campbell were involved with the launch. The NSPCC also collaborated on the launch, and both organisations announced the operation of the NSPCC helpline, which would enable children and their parents to have access to expert advice.

Box 14.

THE NSPCC HELPLINE

The FA helpline was a free, confidential 24 hour service, managed independently by the NSPCC, and staffed by counsellors. The NSPCC referred all football-related calls received by the helpline to Tony Pickerin at the FA. In the early period, the helpline received a very small number of calls: just 67 calls between 2000 and 2002, of which 24 concerned allegations of sexual abuse. In a presentation to the FA's Child Protection Working Group (see box 17: National FA Child Protection Working Group), a representative of the NSPCC noted that demand for the helpline had been "disappointing".

A review by the NSPCC of its helpline for the period March 2002 to February 2003 showed that of over 97,000 calls received, 29 were, or were deemed to be, of interest to the FA's special helpline. Of these, 12 were referred to the social services or the police, and 13 required advice. Nine of the calls concerned sexual abuse or unsolicited sexual advances. In a briefing paper, the FA noted that between January 2002 and 2003, 5.06% of all serious cases registered with the FA had been received as a direct result of calls to the helpline.

In a report written in 2002, BW of the NSPCC recorded that "The FA must over the next year begin to publicise the service in a more constructive and planned way and

market it properly, really asking what do they need to do to promote it?”

8.1.210. A media briefing strategy and a press release for the launch of the new policy was prepared by the FA and the NSPCC. The media briefing strategy made clear that the FA intended to make progress in this area, and was willing to invest in improving child protection across football. Some of the media picked up the story of the launch. The BBC website contained an article with the headline: “Tackling the football bullies”²³. The article described the launch of the FA and NSPCC’s initiative to address bullying and abuse in sport. The article concentrated mainly on the bullying angle rather than that of abuse, although it did include a reference to sexual abuse.

Box 15.

THE FA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The FA’s child protection policy was a short, 11 page, document. It stated that the FA was determined to ensure that all necessary steps were taken to protect from harm those children and young people who participate in football. It set out the following principles:

- The child’s welfare is paramount.
- All children have a right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

The policy stated that the FA recognised that it had a responsibility to safeguard children from physical, sexual or emotional harm. It set out a number of objectives:

- That the FA Premier League and the Football League should include a policy statement in their rules.
- That all affiliated Charter Standard Organisations, affiliated through the County FAs, which work with children should include in their policies a statement concerning child protection.
- To provide ongoing development and training opportunities to:
 - Those working with young people at a Charter Standard Club.
 - FA Coaching Association Members.
 - FA, Premier League and Football League staff.
 - Referees.

Although the document was short, it made clear to the wider world the FA’s commitment to child protection. The detail of the FA’s programme was set out in other documentation.

8.1.211. In November 2000, the FA published its FA Procedures and Practices Handbook (“the Handbook”): 50,000 copies were produced. They were distributed to all areas of football by December 2000 with the assistance of the County FAs. The Hand-

23. BBC, 24 May 2000, Tackling the Football Bullies <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/761847.stm> (accessed 20 October 2020)

book was intended to be “A document designed for those involved in football to know exactly what is expected of them, in relation to the protection of children and young people within our sport.” It included the proposed action that should be taken if an individual was directly informed, observed or had knowledge, of possible abuse in a football, or non-football, setting. It also provided guidance for child protection officers and designated persons: it was envisaged that all clubs and affiliated bodies would have a designated child protection person. The Handbook was updated in June 2001. The initial policy did not require all clubs affiliated with the FA to have their own child protection policy. This requirement was introduced in 2005 (see: below).

Box 16.

THE CASE OF EE

One case of abuse in football that occurred during the period 2000-2005 was that of EE. I highlight this case (even though it only came to the attention of the FA in 2006) because it involved someone who was a senior officer within a club affiliated to a County FA who was able to carry out abuse undetected for some time, in spite of the considerable steps that the FA had been taking from the early 2000s to introduce a comprehensive child protection regime. That regime did not initially apply, however, to non-Charter accredited clubs until 2005. EE was involved with a non-Charter accredited club.

EE was convicted in August 2007 of 60 child abuse charges: three counts of sexual assault of a child under 13, the assault of a child under 13, eight counts of indecent assault on a male person, 12 counts of making an indecent photograph, eight counts of taking an indecent photograph, 22 counts of possessing indecent photograph of a child, and six counts of possessing with a view to their being distributed or shown. EE was sentenced to twelve years imprisonment. The offences took place between 2002 and 2006; the majority of them between 2002 and 2005. Some of the abuse took place when EE was involved in private football coaching arrangements. Other abuse took place as part of EE’s activities at a junior club which was affiliated to a CFA.

When the allegations about EE came to the FA’s attention, he was suspended on an interim basis. On September 5th 2007, the FA permanently suspended EE from all football and football activity involving children under the age of 16. The terms of the suspension were that EE could not participate in any football activity involving children under the age of 16 years, with activity including “managing, coaching, refereeing, playing, undertaking administrative duties, transportation on behalf of the club (other than in relation to his own children) or any other activity which brings him into contact with children under the age of 16”. The suspension did not prohibit EE’s attendance at football matches as a spectator.

EE had been the Director of the club for four years. EE had also been Secretary, Coach, and Treasurer for the club. EE had completed his FA Coaching certificate in 2000, and his FA Coaching licence in 1999/2000. He had attended the first part of the UEFA ‘A’ Advanced Coaching award in 2002. When the matter was subsequently investigated (following his arrest), the FA described him as having had “significant influence over

children and other coaches at the club”. Both the FA and the CFA believed that the club had not complied with best practice.

In November 2006, the FA and CFA met with the newly appointed Chairman and Secretary of the club where EE had carried out much of his offending, and explained that:

“[T]he club had not complied with best practice and the following matters were to be addressed as a matter of urgency: setting up a full committee, addressing financial irregularities, submission of a Child Protection and Best Practice policy, enhanced CRB Disclosures for those with roles with children, all Committee members and officials to attend a Child Protection and Best Practice Workshop- also to be attended by parents from club, and for the club to appoint a Club Welfare Officer.”

At the time when most of EE’s offending occurred (between 2002 and 2005), as the club was not a Charter Standard or Charter Development Club, there was no requirement for the club to have met basic child protection standards. There was no requirement for non-Charter accredited clubs to have a child protection policy. Non-Charter accredited clubs were not required to have a club welfare officer; committee members and officers of non-Charter accredited clubs did not have to attend the FA’s Child Protection and Best Practice Workshop.

At the time when most of EE’s offending occurred, the connection that the local County FA had to affiliated (but not Charter-accredited) clubs was minimal, focussing mainly on County Cup competitions and on-field conduct matters. There was no real monitoring. I was told by one former senior official at a County FA that, at that time, there was “minimal oversight” of youth football.

8.1.212. In November 2000, the FA published its *Strategic Plan for Protection of Children/Young People and Disabled People in Football* (“the Strategic Plan”). The Strategic Plan set out in great detail the objectives and action points for ensuring that the FA would fully implement an effective child protection system across all of football. The Strategic Plan described and detailed eight areas of activity: co-ordination and planning, policy, infrastructure, communication, case management, tutor management, workshops and resources, and quality assurance. Three-year milestones were set for each of these areas. An Action Plan was set for 2001.

8.1.213. The FA’s child protection policy was updated in 2005. The document “Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Implementation Guidance for Grassroots Football”, contained a foreword from Brian Barwick, the FA Chief Executive. Brian Barwick explained that:

“Football is indisputably the number one sport in England, for both adults and children. It is part of our national culture, and our daily lives.

An estimated four million children play the game in clubs and schools up and down the country, and a further half million adults give their time and energy to organise and run the game for them. The future health of the game relies on making football a safe and enjoyable experience for children and young

people, whether they are playing, watching, refereeing or pumping up balls and putting up nets.

The FA is totally committed to this goal. With so many people involved in the game, it is our responsibility as the governing body to have a clear safeguarding policy that is accessible to and adopted by everyone in the football community. We can be really proud of our achievements in protecting young players and turning best practice into everyday practice.

The cornerstones of this commitment are our Child Protection and Best Practice Policy and Procedures, supported by clear and effective guidelines and ensuring that The FA has a proactive and integrated approach to safeguarding everyone in football. It is also backed up by a comprehensive training programme which is mandatory for everyone taking FA qualifications..

We are very conscious of the need to stay proactive and not rest on our laurels. We review our safeguarding strategy on a regular basis in line with the NSPCC/Sport England National Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Young People in Sport.

The safety and welfare of children involved in football relies on The FA leading the way. So does the long-term future of the national game. We are determined to fulfill, and exceed, this most important of responsibilities.”

8.1.214. The updated policy document stated that:

“Every football club and youth, mini soccer and girls’ league must have a child protection policy. For that policy to be effective members need to understand what it means and how it’s integrated into daily football activities. A child protection policy is the foundation of a well-run and effective club or league. By signing up to The FA’s Child Protection Policy . . . and implementing the key policies and procedures outlined below, best practice will soon become common practice.”
(emphasis added).

8.1.215. The “Policies check list” for clubs included having: a child protection policy statement, a selection and recruitment policy, a whistle-blowing policy, a health and safety policy, an anti-bullying policy, an equality policy, codes of conduct for coaches, players, officials and parents/spectators, and a clear club philosophy that is shared at the start of the season.

8.1.216. The “Procedures check list” for clubs referred to the appointment of a Club Welfare Officer, procedures for reporting concerns about the welfare of a child or young person, complaints and disciplinary procedures, a system for gathering player and parental consent, an avenue for young people to express their views and have them heard, information for parents, carers and players, a committee representative of the wider local community and one that was inclusive, and travel and overnight stay procedures.

8.1.217. It was not a requirement that every affiliated club have a Club Welfare Officer role – but it was something that the FA was working towards. It was explained that: “The FA is moving towards having a Club Welfare Officer (CWO) in every club who will also be part of the Club Management Committee in order that safeguarding becomes [e]mbedded in football.” Where clubs had appointed Club Welfare Officers, they could obtain training – the Welfare Officer Workshop – from the County FAs.

8.1.218. Getting all affiliated clubs to have a Club Welfare Officer had proved to be very difficult to achieve. An employee of the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (“the CPSU”) had investigated the matter in 2005, and explained that:

“[T]he challenges for the FA in implementing plans to establish the role of the Club Welfare Officer role across the sport are significant due to the vast numbers of affiliated clubs which children attend. Club Welfare Officers require support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities both from the FA’s training and learning resources but also from the County CPOs and county management structures. The CPSU has recommended to the FA that the successful implementation of its plans to safeguard children will now require additional resourcing at grass roots level.”

8.1.219. It was not until the 2008-09 season, that the FA required all clubs with under 18 teams to have a Club Welfare Officer, with an accepted Criminal Record Check.

Tours and Tournaments

8.1.220. The child protection programme launched by the FA in 2000 had no specific guidance or regulation of tours and tournaments. This is a surprising omission as for some considerable time the FA had been aware of the risks associated with tours and tournaments.

8.1.221. The absence of specific guidance for tours and tournaments does not mean that there were no safeguarding arrangements in place for any particular tour or tournament. Such arrangements may have been put in place by, for instance, the tour or tournament organiser, or the local football association. Furthermore, the participating clubs would also have been subject to the more general child protection rules under the *Charter for Quality* or the FA Coaches Association (if participating coaches were members of FACA). What was lacking, however, was a focused and considered approach from the FA to the particular risks associated with overnight stays on tours and tournaments.

8.1.222. The matter was not resolved until 2004 when a formal policy was introduced by the FA. Tony Pickerin told me that this had “slipped down the priority list”.

Box 17.

TOURS AND TOURNAMENTS POLICY

Ensuring children were safe when they were away from home should have been a key priority for the FA and should have been addressed early on when child protection was being looked at. It was not. There was a considerable delay in producing guidance for trips and tours. Although the FA was involved in developing a policy for professional clubs, which was introduced for the 2001-02 season, an FA policy for affiliated football was not introduced until 2004.

I have seen plenty of evidence to demonstrate that sexual abuse of young football players took place on tours and at tournaments held overseas. The first offences for which Barry Bennell was convicted took place in the United States, where Bennell had taken a group of boys with the junior team, Stone Dominoes. Similarly, Frank Roper abused boys who he took on tour to New Zealand, the US and the East Asia. Ted Langford abused boys while on tour in Sweden.

The FA was not contemporaneously aware of the abuse committed by Roper or Langford. Their abuse of boys on tour (and elsewhere) only came to light later. The FA was, however, aware following his conviction in 1995, that Bennell had committed abuse whilst taking English boys on a football tour to Florida: see FA and Bennell.

Even if the FA had not previously thought about the particular risks posed to young children when they were playing away from home, I consider that the Bennell case should have led the FA to respond more swiftly and comprehensively to the matter and take steps to mitigate those risks. When children are staying away from home, they will not be subject to parental supervision. Not only will perpetrators have a greater period of access to children, but children may be feeling particularly vulnerable when staying away from home.

As I set out below, the process for agreeing on a policy was long and tortuous. No one at the FA seemed to take control of the issue and ensure that a solution was found and then implemented. There was discussion by various people, but the matter was allowed to drift.

SANCTIONING OF TOURS

The FA had rule-making power with respect to tours taken by affiliated football teams since the mid-1980s. Rule 12(b) of the FA's Rules provided that those wishing to arrange matches against teams from non-British football associations had to apply to the FA at least fourteen days in advance of the game: (see FA Handbook 1986/87). The rule was silent as to the criteria that were to be applied by the FA in determining whether to give consent to these games.

The subject of tours and tournaments was discussed by the FA in the mid-1990s. The initial discussions took place for reasons unrelated to questions of child protection. Of concern to the FA was the involvement of commercial footballing organisations in taking young players abroad.

There were also discussions about the legal framework for tours. In October 1995, the FA sought legal advice on the matter of children playing abroad. The FA was concerned about the statutory requirements relating to children being taken abroad to “perform for profit”. On October 27th 1995, the FA was advised that section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 required that a licence had to be obtained by any person taking a child abroad for the purpose of performing for profit, which would include trips organised by the professional clubs. The same legislative provision set out the terms under which a licence is granted, including the duty on the organising body to make proper provisions “to secure [the child’s] health and kind treatment [and] that there will be adequate supervision while abroad”. It was clarified that children under 14 were not permitted to perform abroad for profit at all; that those under 16 required a section 25 licence and the appropriate permissions (e.g. from parents and headteachers); those between 16 and 18 needed a section 25 licence, but did not need specific permissions. While not addressed expressly in the legislation, the reference to “treatment” and “adequate supervision” would have been broad enough to cover safeguarding matters.

The first explicit reference to child protection in the context of regulating tours appears in the minutes of the meeting of the FA’s Instructional Committee on April 15th 1996, when it was agreed that the Children Act should be taken into account. At a meeting on May 14th 1996, Tony Pickerin stated that the whole area of tours abroad was “clearly in need of regulation and control”. He explained that the Children Act was concerned primarily with the removal of inappropriate adults from positions of contact and/or responsibility. He observed that:

“Clearly football provides opportunities for those of a paedophile nature because of the ease with which adults who volunteer help in the activities are willingly accepted.”

These opportunities included foreign tours. For Tony Pickerin, the solution was to screen those involved in the game generally, which would include foreign journeys.

Tony Pickerin explained that:

“The development of the FA Programme for Excellence and the difficulties encountered have shown that screening the relatively small number of staff concerned is very difficult, hence, the many thousands of adults involved in Junior football, some of whom take children abroad, offers a huge problem. Given that probably greater opportunities are presented to adults who seek out young children in the daily, routine, environment, a full registration of adults acting as club officials and managers would be the solution, particularly if the process of registration could incorporate a screening procedure. This would include foreign journeys. Although this would be ideal, the logistics are immense even given that the law could be changed to allow the FA or County FA to insist on this process. Within any scheme that evolves to control Category C football [the grassroots game], I believe it imperative to develop some form of registration and validation for those adults involved, particularly with Junior football. The difficulties for a national governing body to develop

such a scheme are great – however, no other governing body has even contemplated doing so. I am sure that the legal advice received will clarify the situation and enable regulatory legislation to be devised for this extremely complex area.”

On June 3rd 1996, Charles Hughes asked:

“Rather than endeavouring to take this matter forward ourselves, do you think it would be appropriate for us to seek advice from the Home Office to establish what guidelines may be set down, following the Dunblane tragedy, and the possible impact any ruling may have on The Football Association and its activities. Once we have this information, perhaps it would then be appropriate for yourself to become involved in drafting sanctioning procedures/regulations?”

In a note made on August 21st 1996 under the heading “Protection of Children”, XX explained that the issue of sanctioning trips abroad and in the UK was seen as a priority area for the FA. It was stated that the sanctioning process “should apply to both Programme for Excellence and affiliated youth/junior teams equally,” but “would obviously not apply to unaffiliated teams.” Unaffiliated teams would include the various commercial coaching organisations, such as Pass Soccer, Posh Soccer and All Star Soccer Schools, which had been discussed by the various committees of the FA for some time. They could not be regulated by the FA.

A working group was set up by the FA’s Instructional Committee “to Consider Tours, Tournament and Holiday Football”. The working group made no explicit mention of child protection in its report presented in September 1996.

A rule change concerning tours was made by the FA for the 1997/98 season. This required that permission had to be given from the children’s head teacher before consent would be given to the tour. The rule change did not specifically require that those taking children abroad had to be screened; and no other child protection requirements were imposed. The fact that the children’s head teacher had to provide consent did not mean that the head teacher had scrutinised and approved the safeguarding arrangements for the tour. That was not the head teacher’s responsibility.

At this time, although it was recognised that something needed to be done with respect to tours, and although XX had previously explained that this was a “priority area” for the FA, it was not, in fact, treated as a high priority.

First, as XX explained in a memorandum to Graham Kelly and others on August 13th 1997 the FA’s consideration of child protection with respect to youth club tours at home and abroad “should be dealt with following the introduction of the Charter Mark system”. In other words, the *Charter for Quality* came first (see box 12: Developing the Charter Mark).

Second, there was considerable delay before the matter was formally addressed, and this failure to impose requirements for tours and tournaments was subject to criticism

at the time. On November 5th 1999, an education welfare service officer at Milton Keynes Council wrote to the FA. The local authority officer wrote to express concern at the apparent “lack of concern” on the part of the FA in respect of football tournaments. He explained:

“In 1998 an organisation calling themselves Anglian Boys Football Club arranged to attend tournaments in Europe and USA. These trips were in school time and lasted approximately two weeks and involved several young people from this area. Subsequent enquiries revealed that the FA had sanctioned these trips but it appears that there was no investigation as to the relevance of them or more importantly that they were arranged by properly qualified and vetted persons. I am sure that you are aware of the great concern that has been expressed over recent years over the competence of people who organise trips away for young persons.”

On December 20th 1999, the local authority officer complained to Tony Pickerin that the form used for the approval process was “completely inadequate and does nothing to safeguard . . . wellbeing of the young people concerned”. The writer noted that “The issue of Child Protection continues to be a very high profile subject and I look forward to hearing from you to learn what strategies the Football Association intend putting into place to overcome this very serious matter.”

On January 21st 2000, the local authority officer asked Tony Pickerin:

“[W]hat safeguards are to be put in place to ensure that persons who are organising and supervising [tournaments abroad] have the appropriate credentials for the care of young persons whilst they are away from home. I realise that this request is easy to say but not so easy to put into practice, but I do feel it is important in view of the importance the Government is continuing to place on Child Protection.”

Tony Pickerin forwarded the correspondence to Robin Russell on February 1st 2000, noting that the question about safeguards was a legitimate one, and that he believed “that the developed Child Protection Plan will go some way to meeting this demand.” However, he noted that “reaching agreement with the F.A. Premier League and Football League on [Tours and Tournaments] is proving tortuous.”

The “tortuous” process that Tony Pickerin was referring to was the discussion that had been going on between the FA and the Premier League and Football League about new procedures for tours. The FA had proposed a requirement for clubs to provide details of who was taking part in the tournaments, and who would accompany the players, two months in advance of the trip. The Premier League argued that this was “impractical”, since personnel often changed at the last minute. In response, on December 8th 1999, Tony Pickerin contended:

“Without staff lists, how will the F.A. Premier League know that it has fulfilled its responsibilities under Child Protection legislation, that only bona fide adults are included in trips for young players? This is a clear possibility as at least one F.A. Premier League club employs a member of staff who is on the offenders register”

“I fully understand that clubs may not want to deal with the extra administration, however, new Home Office advice indicates a position of trust in which all adults dealing with those under the age of 18 are placed. Any club, and indeed, the F.A. Premier League itself, would be in a very difficult position were there to be an incident. Other statutory and volunteer bodies who take children abroad have to meet standards of good practice – what makes a football club any different?”

On December 17th 1999, the Premier League clarified that there was no disagreement on the need to know the details, but rather that they differed “on the timing of such a report”, and that the two-month requirement was “both impractical and likely to bring the proposed system into disrepute”. It proposed instead a “requirement for a signed list within a week after the event, which would meet needs and be respected.”

From the materials that I have seen, it appears that the Football League required clubs to provide information about the adults accompanying teams going abroad: their names, their position with the club, and confirmation that they had self-certificated and had been part of the club’s screening process for child protection issues. In the Football League archive, I found an application for permission from Bristol Rovers FC to take some of their Centre of Excellence players to Holland on a short tour in April 2000. They had been asked by the Football League for a list of players, with ages and dates of birth and confirmation that they were all registered with the club: as well as information about the adults. It was noted that the Football League had not yet developed standard forms for this process. They were “being developed and agreed between the Football Association, FA Premier League and Football League” and would “be operational from next season.”

On May 1st 2000, Tony Pickerin notified Education and Welfare Officers at a number of professional clubs in connection with tours and tournaments that:

“[T]he F.A. and NSPCC are in consultation regarding advice on [the matter of Tours and Tournaments] and this will be produced in due course. In addition, the F.A. Premier League and the Football League are considering new regulations for Tours and Tournaments that contain Child Protection elements and therefore it would probably be better to wait until the football authorities agree this series of new regulations before we as a group work on some further guidance.”

For Premier League clubs, Peter Cates had been working on a Code of Practice to be used by their Academies when taking players abroad. Peter Cates’ third draft was sent to Tony Pickerin on December 1st 2000. This included details of supervision while on tour:

- “1) A satisfactory ratio of staff to Students is essential. The minimum number is 1 adult to every 10 Students, in all age groups.
- 2) All staff must be employees of or well known to the Football Academy. No one should accompany the tour unless he/she has completed the Football Academy self-certification for Child Protection) and returned that Form to the Football Academy’s Designated Person.
- 3) Staff should ensure that they are never alone with a Student,

particularly in bedrooms and changing areas.”

These were sensible suggestions. It is difficult to understand why they could not have been agreed upon in the mid-1990s by all parties concerned.

Agreement was subsequently reached with the Premier League and the Football League to incorporate regulations about tours. This was noted by Robin Russell in a letter sent by him on February 16th 2001. Robin Russell had been in correspondence with the General Secretary of the Secondary Heads Association who had written to the FA expressing concern that there was currently no policy in place in relation to tours and travel. It was explained to Robin Russell that:

“Headteachers have to meet stringent regulations for securing the safety and welfare of children in school. It is a matter of importance to them that, where children are engaged in activities out of school, the welfare of the children will be equally strongly supported. In particular, heads are obliged to ensure that all people working with children are not on any register that precludes them from this work. If, as suggested at your last meeting, larger squads are needed for tours and tournaments, which would inevitably require chaperones and educational support, then these people also need training and clearance.”

In response, Robin Russell confirmed that the Premier League and Football League would be incorporating rules into their respective rule books, with the remainder of affiliated football being dealt with later.

On March 2nd 2001 Tony Pickerin sent Robin Russell a document entitled “A Guide to Ensuring the Safety and Welfare of Players on Tours and Tournaments”, saying that it would be “helpful to finally agree this document between The Football Association, F.A. Premier League and Football League prior to inclusion in the various rulebooks.” On April 24th 2001, an official at the Premier League wrote to the FA confirming that it was the Premier League’s intention to incorporate the Code of Conduct for Tours and Tournaments into its Rules for the following season, and this was done. In November 2001, the Premier League presented a booklet outlining the regulations for tours and tournaments to the FA’s Education and Welfare Committee. At the same meeting, the Committee “noted with pleasure the good practice The Football League has undertaken from this handbook as best practice.” Similarly, the Football League introduced requirements for tours and tournaments in its handbook from 2001-02. These rule changes only applied to the professional clubs, not to the wider affiliated game.

In 2001 the FA Youth Committee commenced work that would lead to specific regulation within the FA of tours and tournaments. The FA hoped that these regulations would be developed in early 2002. When asked in November 2001 about guidance for tours and tournament organisers in terms of child protection Tony Pickerin confirmed that “we currently have no direct advice to organisers of tournaments”.

The FA’s guidance was finally made available in 2004 (ten years after Bennell was arrested in Florida), in a document entitled: “Travel, Trips and Tournaments”. This

document explained that as part of “Essential planning – At the Start of the Season”, the club should ensure that they had put into practice: a club child protection policy, policy and procedures for selecting/recruiting staff or volunteers, a designated person for child protection, procedures for reporting concerns, and a code of best practice. It explained that if the group was aged over eight years there should always be two adults and a minimum of one adult to 10 children (more adults were required when working with younger age groups). It also made clear that when taking a male group, there should always be a male member of staff and when with a female group, there should always be female staff. It said that: “The more people who have completed the Child Protection and Best Practice - A Guide or Workshop the better”. When staying away it was necessary to “Name the designated person for child protection for the trip and ensure the group is aware who this person is”.

There is no real explanation for the FA’s considerable delay in introducing a rule for tours and tournaments which addressed child protection, other than what Tony Pickerin told me: the issue of tours and holiday football “slipped down the priority list”. This is not an acceptable excuse. The policy and procedures that were ultimately agreed to were straightforward and ought to have been agreed far earlier.

Child Protection Resources and Staffing

8.1.223. During the period 2000-2005, the scope of the child protection work that the FA planned to carry out demanded extra resources and staff. Over the period, the FA provided increasing levels of funding for child protection and expanded the staff working in the area.

8.1.224. For the first financial year of the FA’s child protection work, there was a budget of almost £1 million.

8.1.225. There was a requirement for clearer management structures. In a paper to the FA’s Board of Directors (formerly the FA’s Executive Committee, or ExCo) for its meeting of January 25th 2000, Tony Pickerin explained that the NSPCC had advised that:

“There is also an urgent need to develop a clear internal procedure for dealing with the increasing number of Child Protection concerns. It is becoming apparent that this is likely to need a more co-ordinated response than currently exists. It is our opinion that the success of The Football Association Child Protection Action Plan is dependent on three key factors: 1. Its endorsement by senior management. 2. Effective communication of aims and work plan across The Football Association. 3. Clear leadership, management and support structures.”

Tony Pickerin also explained that the workload involved in the creation and maintenance of such an action plan was too much for one person, and that a “Core Team” approach should be taken.

8.1.226. Formal recommendations for the Board were:

“That a core team approach is adopted. To be managed by the Company Secretary, with the brief to develop and implement The Football Association policy and good practice on Child Protection across the organisation. The staff team will include Tony Pickerin (as the operational team leader), [the FA’s Head of Discipline] (in relation to the disciplinary matters) and a dedicated member of the Public Affairs Department. That a new post is created to work to Tony Pickerin to assist with the operationalising of the Child Protection plan. That The Football Association Child Protection Working Group is established with its remit to oversee the work of the core team.”

8.1.227. In February 2000, the new post of Child Protection Case Administrator was created by the FA. The role involved co-ordinating all aspects of case management, and providing administrative support for child protection. In September 2000, the FA appointed a Child Protection Co-ordinator to co-ordinate all aspects of case management (the role was held as a job-share). In December 2000, a solicitor with responsibility for child protection issues was appointed.

8.1.228. In November 2000, the Education and Welfare aspects of Tony Pickerin’s role were removed, so that he could concentrate on Child Protection. Robin Russell explained to XX in a memorandum dated November 2nd 2000 that: “Tony has been unable to meet deadlines he has imposed on himself with regard to delivering initiatives and services”. Robin Russell pointed to some of the delays:

“Decided in 1999 (February) to include Child Protection modules on F.A. Courses. Delivery, mechanism, arrangements, resources and costs not yet finalized (16 months later).”

Robin Russell explained that “Removal of the ‘Education’ aspects will allow our department to action the Education and Welfare aspects and Tony to action the Child Protection aspects”.

8.1.229. Additional appointments were made in 2001: the FA employed a Database Administrator and a Child Protection Workshop Administrator.

8.1.230. In 2002, there was a review of staff roles and some additional appointments. The FA also decided that child protection should be seen as being a part of a broader framework of “Ethics and Equity”. The new organisational structure had the following posts:

- Head of Child Protection, Ethics and Sports Equity;
- Ethics and Sports Equity Manager;
- Ethics and Sports Equity Education Manager;
- Child Protection Coordinator;
- PA to Head of Child Protection, Ethics and Sports Equity; Administrator to support: Ethics and Sports Equity Manager, Ethics and Sports Equity Education Manager and Child Protection Coordinator;
- Case Administrator;
- 3 Workshop and Tutor Administrators;
- Database Administrator.

The individuals who jointly held the role of Child Protection Co-ordinator vacated this position in January 2002. Their replacement initially filled the role on a temporary basis, as budget cuts had resulted in a loss of the position (see: Resources and the Role of the NSPCC).

8.1.231. An increased budget for child protection for 2002-03 was sought by Tony Pickerin, but this was not provided. Tony Pickerin wrote that:

“I have already made the point that severe budget reductions could lead to damaging the integrity of the child protection programme. I believe that to now be the case. This process has required that essential activities be removed from the provision, I understand that the FA have chosen to cap their financial commitment to child protection in the budget for 2002 but believe that the Board must understand the consequences which I have attempted to analyse. Significantly there is no provision for disability in the revised budget. Whilst this is the case the FA should be aware of this fact. The proposed budget submitted previously was for approximately £1.8 million. The revised budget now stands at £1,013,100. This represents a reduction of 43.71% against the original planned budget which was supported by a full and comprehensive strategic plan. The budget for 2001 was £963,869. This represented year one of the three year strategic plan approved in December 2000.”

It seems that the increase sought by Tony Pickerin was not agreed to as the FA was facing financial difficulties at this time, and cuts were being made across the range of the FA's activities.

8.1.232. On October 18th 2002, Tony Pickerin wrote to XX seeking agreement to a “standstill” budget for 2003. The budget included training for referees and for CRB checks to be made. Tony Pickerin highlighted his concerns that the child protection team was understaffed and that “If The FA cannot enhance staffing in this area then we will have to revise our priorities and cut back.” In January 2003, Tony Pickerin wrote again to XX concerning the child protection budget and his concerns over the staffing of the department. In particular, Tony Pickerin sought approval for a full-time Child Protection Co-ordinator post to be reinstated. This was granted.

8.1.233. In 2003, the FA's Lilleshall offices were closed, and staff were relocated to Soho Square in London. Some child protection functions were outsourced: the contract for tutor management; the contract for child protection and best practice; and the contract for communications strategy for the FA's Criminal Records Bureau (“CRB”) Unit, which was awarded to the Media Group.

8.1.234. A Case Manager was appointed in 2004. On July 1st 2005, the Case Manager expressed her concerns about the under resourcing of the case management team (then made up of just two members of staff). She said that they were struggling to deal with the heavy workload of child protection matters, and a call for further resources was made. She stated that:

“They are only able to deal with the very serious cases and I would query

whether they are currently able to deal with those properly given the workload. They are currently dealing with over 300 'live' cases all of which involve allegations of actual child abuse or a recorded serious conviction which places the individual in the high risk category. There have been over 200 suspensions from the game due to evidence of actual/alleged child abuse; half of these are closed, the other half form part of the ongoing 300 'live' cases. The team are unable to deal with any less serious cases or 'poor practice' cases – those where there may be no actual serious abuse, but where poor practice is being operated by a club, for example, which heightens the likelihood of an abuse occurring....If we fail to increase the resource, there is a high risk that a case will not be dealt with appropriately/at all, leading to actual abuse.”

8.1.235. The Case Manager’s concerns were echoed by senior personnel and officers within the FA. At the FA’s Finance Sub-Committee meeting on November 24th 2005, which was chaired by the FA’s Chairman Geoff Thompson, the minutes record that:

“[There was a request] that two permanent positions should be created in the Governance division to ensure a) the backlog of CRB checks are cleared and b) in future this process is managed in a timely fashion. The temporary staff employed currently are insufficient to handle the volume of cases being received. With 300 people waiting to be processed, the FA could be embarrassed if an issue arose with one of the individuals on this list. [Brian Barwick] commented that despite the headcount and cost concerns that this raised, the importance of this issue was such that he agreed with the proposal. [Dave Richards] suggested that the NSPCC in Leicester be consulted to assist with this piece of work. [Brian Barwick] replied that the NSPCC had been approached two years ago and they were very clear that this was an issue for football and should be dealt with by the football authorities. The Chairman concluded that the CRB backlog was unacceptable and new staff should be recruited as soon as possible.”

8.1.236. Similarly, in a memorandum written on December 2nd 2005, the Director of Corporate Affairs wrote to support the appointment of two additional Case Managers for the Compliance Department, stating that:

“The back-log of work in the Compliance Department is such that even high priority cases are not being dealt with. That means that people who may have intentions to abuse and bully children in football are carrying on working, with The FA unable to take any action because we do not have sufficient resource in that Department. This in turn is leading to a lack of confidence in The FA from those people who we have worked hard to train over the years to bring matters to our attention.”

Two additional Case Managers were subsequently appointed. This was confirmed by the FA in its response to the report by the Independent Football Commission (“the IFC”) (see: Disciplinary and Referrals).

Child Protection Working Group

8.1.237. In the paper that Tony Pickerin had prepared for the FA's Board of Directors in early 2000, he included the recommendation of the NSPCC for the FA to set up a working group. This recommendation was accepted, and The National FA Child Protection Working Group was established in February 2000. The key aim of the group was to oversee action in relation to all aspects of child protection and good practice within the FA. This was a very sensible initiative. It meant that the child protection programme of the FA could be looked at holistically. The expertise on the Working Group meant that critical attention could be paid to what the FA was doing.

Box 18.

NATIONAL FA CHILD PROTECTION WORKING GROUP

The NSPCC advised the FA to establish a National FA Child Protection Working Group. In a letter dated December 8th 1999, an NSPCC employee, BW, wrote to Tony Pickerin to explain that the key aim of this Working Group would be “to drive action forward in relation to all aspects of child protection and good practice within the FA.” BW went on to say that:

“It is essential that the Working Group be cross-departmental and representative of all aspects of the FA. It should include, as you proposed in your draft action plan, representation from both grass roots and senior levels and include referees. In addition, we advise that the group is representative in terms of gender, race and disability to ensure diversity of perspectives. The group needs to have significant status in the FA, it should have a clear brief and terms of reference in order that recommendations for action can be easily endorsed by the Senior Executive Committee. The maintenance and workload of this group is likely at times to be substantial and individuals need to be given authority to contribute time to it away from their other duties. The [likelihood] is that it will formally meet quarterly for the first two years but will involve some action”

The setting up of the Working Group was supported by the FA's Chairman: Geoff Thompson, and the FA's Board.

The Working Group had its first meeting on February 17th 2000. Five specific “Task Groups” were identified and populated at the meeting, namely: Training and Education; Constitutional Issues; Football Development; Communication; and Quality Assurance.

All sectors of football were represented: the FA, Premier League, the Football League, the League Managers' Association, the County FAs, the NSPCC, and the FFEVTS and PFA. It was decided early on that the Working Group could make recommendations, via XX, to the main FA Board.

The Working Group established a series of sub-groups with the following membership and briefs:

- “• Training and Education Task Group: Overall task was to develop a comprehensive training strategy that addressed the needs of all the relevant sectors of the FA.
- Constitutional Issues Task Group: Aim of the group was to examine the structures and systems within the FA in order to identify potential blocks or hindrances to successful implementation of the policy and procedures across all sectors of football.
 - Football Development Task Group: The aim of the group was to ensure that all elements of football development integrate child protection issues into the provision. To develop models that attach child protection training to all initial FA awards in both coaching and refereeing. To explore mechanisms for ensuring that Child Protection is an integral part of all football activities.
 - Communication Task Group: The aim of the group was to ensure that a consistent message about child protection within the FA was communicated appropriately to all sectors both within the FA and to the external world.
 - Quality Assurance: Responsibility for looking at all initiatives and strategies to ensure a consistent standard and approach across all aspects of Child Protection within the FA.”

The introduction of the Working Group appears to have enabled the FA to progress with finalising and agreeing its child protection policy, the handbook, and strategy. The Working Group continued to play a role in developing and overseeing the FA’s child protection policy until it was disbanded in February 2005.

Resources and the Role of the NSPCC

8.1.238. There was considerable discussion in the period between 2000 and 2005 about the work that the FA was doing with the NSPCC. Not only was the FA paying the NSPCC for various services, the FA also engaged in fundraising for the NSPCC’s wider work. One idea that was considered was for the FA to divert the fundraising to the child protection projects that the FA was working on with the NSPCC.

8.1.239. On April 18th 2001, XX wrote to Adam Crozier, the FA’s Chief Executive, and the FA’s Director of Marketing and Communications to say that he wished to explore the possibility of

“[D]iverting funds which are properly raised in the name of NSPCC through to projects which we operate and pay for, but give NSPCC credit for by means of branding.”

In particular, XX explained that the FA was paying for various services to be provided by the NSPCC: professional development advice, best practice advice, and the dedicated helpline. XX also explained that:

“The most significant project is the £300,000 PA research project which NSPCC are a part of. However, it is The F.A. paying Cheltenham & Gloucester

College for the research project. As an immediate point, would it be possible to allocate the entirety of the contribution for The F.A. Cup Final programme to the joint F.A./NSPCC operations that are already running? It seems to me that NSPCC could not object to this as it is most definitely money being raised in their name, but which they are then reallocating back to projects.”

8.1.240. XX repeated this idea in correspondence with Dave Richards, the Chairman of the Premier League and a member of the FA Board, on June 10th 2002. Dave Richards was a supporter of the NSPCC, acting as Chairman of its Football Family Committee and later Deputy Chairman, and had helped raise considerable funds for the organisation. XX explained to Dave Richards that:

“[T]he child protection budget was significantly cut in the budget round last year, although leaving a substantial budget for this work. I am very conscious of the fact that The Football Association is raising a considerable amount of money for the NSPCC whilst at the same time spending a huge amount on child protection work which the NSPCC might otherwise fund. I would be interested in your views on how we might change this round to perhaps make some of this funding available for The Football Association child protection programme.”

8.1.241. This idea was not progressed. The FA continued to raise charitable funds for the NSPCC during the remainder of the Review period.

8.1.242. One voice within football, the Chairman of a professional team, thought that the NSPCC should actually be doing the child protection work that the FA was undertaking. This football club Chairman wrote a paper dated March 17th 2003 for the FA's Finance Sub Committee suggesting ten areas of savings for the FA at a time when the organisation was, in his words, in “serious financial trouble”. The football club Chairman wrote that some of the work of the FA child protection department – in particular, a request for clubs to write in their programmes about the importance of child protection and wear a Goal badge, and for managers to speak about putting children first and making sure they are free to play football in a positive environment free from abuse of any kind, be it bullying, verbal, physical or sexual abuse – was:

“[T]otal madness and is duplicating the good work of the NSPCC. This little empire should be totally scrapped together with the 12 people who are running it. It could be counter balanced by a donation of £1m per annum to the NSPCC who can do a much better job than the FA.”

The football club Chairman stressed to me that he did not have any issue with child protection work, but thought that the experts – the NSPCC – should do it. His suggestion did not find support within the FA and was not acted upon.

8.1.243. There was, however, further discussion about whether the work of the FA duplicated the work of the NSPCC. At an FA Board meeting on September 16th 2003, the minutes record that “it was agreed that opportunities to work more closely with the NSPCC would be investigated as Mr Richards felt that The FA duplicated a lot of work that is already done by the NSPCC”. XX was asked to prepare a paper about this

matter. In his paper, XX described the role of the NSPCC as an “organisation that has the status of a statutory organisation in the sphere of safeguarding of children. As an organisation NSPCC provides a series of services in this area of work.” XX explained that the NSPCC’s consultancy services for the FA had been beneficial in a number of areas: the development and periodic review of the FA Child Protection Strategy, the review of the case management process for dealing with referrals from within football of serious child protection matters and poor practice issues, and the development of the educational products that the FA have introduced. XX explained that the FA had investigated whether the NSPCC could take on any of the functions not already outsourced. XX said that the NSPCC would not wish to take on any of the work currently undertaken by the FA in this area.

8.1.244. XX explained that the Head of Training and Consultancy for the NSPCC had made a statement representing the “considered view of all the senior management at the NSPCC”, which said that:

“The NSPCC welcomes the continuing opportunity to support the FA in its vision to put children first in football. However, the duty of care that the FA has to safeguard children in football has to remain firmly within the FA’s remit. It would not be appropriate for any external organisation to take over this responsibility from the FA. There needs to be sufficient expertise in-house to deal with issues, concerns and complaints in relation to child protection. As with other issues such as drugs and racism, safeguarding children is best achieved when owned and discharged by the FA, drawing on specialist independent advice where necessary. The NSPCC is happy to provide independent external specialist guidance to the FA, either through our consultancy service or through the Child Protection in Sport Unit, but we would not think it appropriate to take over the responsibility for child protection from the FA. As the recent Government Green Paper ‘Every Child Matters’ highlights, it is the responsibility of society including voluntary organisations to play a crucial part in protecting children and promoting their interests. The FA has made significant progress in this respect. The final part of the action plan is to establish a case manager to co-ordinate action on complaints and to support the designated child protection officers through the county structure.”

XX concluded his paper by saying that “The relationship between the FA and NSPCC is wholly positive and productive, the advice the FA has received has allowed it to develop a well-respected provision for the safeguarding of children in football.”

8.1.245. Ultimately, the FA took on board the message given by the NSPCC: that the FA needed to do its own child protection work, and that although there was an overlap with some of the work that the NSPCC did, in substance, there was no duplication.

Relationship with the Premier League and Football League

8.1.246. The FA continued to work with the Premier League and Football League on child protection matters during this period.

8.1.247. The FA worked closely with the leagues to deliver training. In January 2000, the NCF delivered seven one-day awareness and policy workshops across England for around 100 staff from Premier League and Football League clubs. In February, the NCF delivered the workshop to Premier League and Football League monitors: persons who were responsible for inspecting Academies and Centres of Excellence to see that they were meeting the licensing requirements, including child protection.

8.1.248. There were, however, differences of opinion and approach on a number of matters between the different leagues. One example was that of case management: (see: Disciplinary and Referrals). The FA had wanted to be an umbrella organisation for all football-related requests to the CRB, but the Premier League clubs registered with the CRB separately. As Tony Pickerin told me, this “created a difficulty for case management because the Premier League could not refer any cases ... without breaking the rules and regulations of CRB registration.”

8.1.249. From the 2001-2002 season, the Premier League and the Football League required affiliated clubs to apply the relevant league’s child protection policies, practices and procedures to all aspects of club activities involving children, and not just to their Academies or Centres of Excellence.

County FAs

8.1.250. The success of the FA’s child protection policy depended heavily on the involvement of the County FAs (or CFAs). The vast majority of football played nationwide took place, and continues to take place, under the auspices of the County FAs.

8.1.251. The FA Strategy and Policy, Procedures and Practices document required all County FA’s to appoint a Child Protection Officer (or CPOs). In June 2000, the FA invited all the County FA’s to nominate Child Protection Officers. By August 2000, 43 County FA Child Protection Officers had been appointed. The Child Protection Officers were responsible for managing concerns and allegations, and making referrals to the FA where there were serious concerns of abuse, which would require disciplinary action and investigation. They were also responsible for liaising with local authorities and spreading good practice in relation to child protection. In conjunction with the NSPCC, the FA brought all County FA nominated CPOs together for procedural training in August/September 2000.

8.1.252. Many County FAs found it difficult to attract volunteers to take on, what was described by the Midland County FAs as, a “potentially onerous function”. They appointed existing members of staff or officers to the role. This led to a call for the appointment of full-time Regional Child Protection Officers. The Midland County FAs claimed, in a letter to Tony Pickerin dated January 24th 2001, that “This would ensure that fully trained, dedicated Officers were in place to deal with this most delicate of matters, it would also ensure that the same message is being given whether it be in Cornwall, Staffordshire or Durham to all those people in our Game who are involved with young people.”

8.1.253. County FAs were consulted in 2002, as a part of a broader review into the FA's Case Management Procedures and the role of Child Protection Officers. The responses from the CFAs were analysed in April 2003 and a report was prepared ("County FA Report"). It was reported that:

"[S]ome are content with current procedures, others seek changes. It is evident that counties have positively embraced our practices and procedures but over time individual systems have evolved – there would appear to be a lack of consistency both in terms of operation and recruitment types."

8.1.254. The key concerns raised by the CPOs which were included in the County FA Report were:

- The need for regular case updates and feedback;
- Acknowledgement of correspondence;
- Revisions to the current Case Referral Form;
- Amount of time taken to get information from police and social services;
- The CFA having to deal with complaints owing to the time taken by the CP Team;
- Issues discussed on the phone should be confirmed in writing;
- When suspending someone it is important that all relevant people are informed;
- The use of electronic mail for referrals should be investigated."

Two points were particularly emphasised in the County FA Report. First, was the need for more guidance regarding procedures for the referral of issues to the FA for advice or action. It was noted that the lack of clarity surrounding this issue could contribute to the differing referral rates nationwide and should be considered for inclusion in any training programme. Second, there was a need to formalise the Child Protection Officer position and the provision of funding sources for the Child Protection Officer's post. Most Child Protection Officer posts continued to be filled by volunteers.

8.1.255. In April 2005, an employee of the NSPCC discussed the County Child Protection Officer role as part of her review of the FA club Welfare Officer position (see: above). The NSPCC employee explained that the role had:

"[E]volved over time and there remains a mix of paid FA staff who have taken on this role in addition to their usual duties without further payment and volunteers fulfilling the role. There is an inevitable inequity in how the roles are working in practice and how much can be expected of volunteers to support their club colleagues who take on the designated person role. In order to provide appropriate support and training the FA will need to consider significant further resourcing of dedicated paid staff roles at county level."

8.1.256. The call for funding the Child Protection Officer post also came from the IFC report in 2005. The IFC recommended that the FA consider specific resourcing to enable CFA Child Protection Officers to become paid posts. The FA's response to this recommendation was that:

"The FA will review the use of central funding to the County Association with the intention of increasing support for the role of the CFA CPO. The

appointment of fulltime CPOs at each of the 47 County Associations is not a viable proposition at this stage but The FA will work towards establishing a more favourable position in terms of time and remuneration.”

8.1.257. It was not until September 2007 – April 2008 (outside of my review period) that the FA allocated resources for the payment of County FA Child Protection Officers.

8.1.258. For child protection to be addressed seriously within the grassroots game and to be monitored accordingly, it was necessary for County FAs to have full-time staff dedicated to the task. Each County FA has responsibility for significant numbers of leagues and clubs, and to provide proper guidance and assistance on child protection matters requires time. The failure to fund these posts during the Review period was a resource issue for the FA. From the information that I have received during the course of the Review, funding full-time Child Protection officers at the County FA level is money well spent.

Screening (a Summary)

8.1.259. The period 2000-2005 saw considerable progress in the development and implementation of the screening process: (see: Screening and Self Declarations).

8.1.260. At the beginning of the period (2000-2005), the FA had to refrain from using List 99 to check staff. The Department for Education informed the FA in October 2000 that List 99 could not be used as its use could contravene the Human Rights Act 1998, which was introduced in that month.

8.1.261. For most of the period, the FA worked with the emerging CRB to develop arrangements to register as an umbrella body: this would enable the FA to check all adults within any football organisation for which the FA had authority.

8.1.262. In October 2003, the FA's CRB Unit was established. Its goal was to process screening of all those involved in football. Given the magnitude of the task, the FA could not have been expected to screen all of those involved in football by the end of the Review period (just two years later), however, significant progress towards that goal had been made.

Case Management/Disciplinary Matters (a Summary)

8.1.263. From 2000 the FA introduced a systematic case management process to deal with referrals of potential disciplinary cases, and established a formal disciplinary procedure. By late 2003, the FA had received 527 referrals, of which 94 were of a serious nature (see: Disciplinary and Referrals).

Conferences and Raising Awareness of Child Protection

8.1.264. In November 2001, the FA held its first annual conference on child protection.

The FA was rightly feeling bold and proud about the child protection work that it was doing, and these conferences highlighted the importance to the organisation of child protection and raising awareness and knowledge of child protection issues.

8.1.265. Later in the period, the FA developed and implemented a communication strategy to raise awareness of child protection issues using the brand: ‘GOAL’. This provided some coherence to the work that the FA was doing, and an obvious and memorable name for its work.

Box 19.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CONFERENCES

Tony Pickerin told me that the communications strategy developed in the 2000s was “one of the most important elements” of the FA’s child protection work. He said that:

“In the context of football at that time, change was always going to be difficult and communicating with the people in the game became critical to [addressing the questions], Can we shift? Can we change people’s minds? Can we move – can we develop advocates? Can we develop ambassadors within the game?”

The FA thought hard about how to communicate the child protection message in this period. On June 11th 2001, the FA’s Youth Committee approved a provisional brand name “Safety Net” for the FA’s child protection arrangements. By September 2001 this had changed to GOAL, a brand name which had been introduced and was first being used in connection with an upcoming child protection conference on November 7th 2001. The branding was developed to make the FA child protection initiative easily identifiable by those involved in football: both children and adults alike. This appears to have been successful. In Celia Brackenridge’s second report she records that between 2002 and 2003 there was an increased recognition of the FA branded GOAL campaign (see box 19: Celia Brackenridge Research Project).

By July 2001 the FA had produced two editions and circulated 1200 copies of its new Child Protection Newsletter.

By June 2002, a three year communications strategy had been developed to raise awareness of child protection issues. The objectives for the first year were ambitious:

- “• To distribute posters to one third of the 75,000 football clubs and schools in the country
- To raise awareness amongst parents and carers by producing and distributing 100,000 briefing leaflets
- To distribute information cards to one million children and young people involved in football
- To provide training in best practice for 50,000 of those involved in football for children and young people
- To appoint four high-profile ambassadors
- To establish the PFA partnership
- To produce two high-profile media briefings a year with the ambassadors

- To provide national coverage of the Conference
- To produce at least six national stories per year
- To liaise with the Premier League, Football League and FA to include Goal placements in all programmes.”

In accordance with these objectives, the FA appointed high-profile ambassadors to the ‘GOAL’ campaign. In 2002, the ambassadors were Sir Bobby Robson, Alan Shearer, Hope Powell and Sir Alex Ferguson. In 2003, Graham Taylor, the manager of Aston Villa and former England manager was also appointed. In 2005, Kevin and Nicola Wells, the parents of Holly Wells, who along with her friend Jessica Chapman was murdered by Ian Huntley, a caretaker at local secondary school, were appointed ambassadors. The aim of the ambassadors was to encourage support for the child protection processes being introduced and embed it across football.

The FA held a number of child protection conferences. The first of these was held on November 7th 2001. Similar conferences were held in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005.

The conference held on October 1st 2002 was entitled “Making a change, making a difference: F.A. Child Protection Conference”. A review of the October 2002 conference summarised the feedback as

“A highly successfully conference in which the key purpose to raise and extend awareness of child protection and the work of The FA were fully accomplished. Unsolicited and solicited direct feedback was extremely positive; the high standard of professionalism set in 2001 was fully maintained and FA staff were once acclaimed for their customer care and attention.”

The event was covered in the media. Some of the coverage focused on the speech given at the conference by KC, who had recently been acquitted of child abuse. Tony Pickerin was quoted as saying:

“When [KC] recounts what happened to him, you can’t fail to be moved. We get asked to explain what could happen if false allegations are made against people in football. [KC]’s case was exceptional because it was so high-profile, but his experience – and attitude now – are thought-provoking as well as inspiring.”

KC’s involvement at the conference was controversial. At a meeting of the Steering Group for Celia Brackenridge’s research project on November 13th 2002, it was recorded that: “The NSPCC had sent a discordant note about [KC’s] involvement in the conference.” While the involvement of KC is in my view best described as a misstep by the FA I do not consider it a substantial one.

The 2003 Conference was titled “Putting Children First”. It was attended by Mark Palios, the FA’s newly appointed CEO, as well as Margaret Hodge, the Minister for Children. Together, they announced the formation of the FA CRB Unit (see: Screening and Self Declarations). Further conferences were held in 2004 and 2005. The 2004 conference “Moving Football Forward” included Professor Al Aynsley-Green, who

would later become the first Children’s Commissioner for England: 2005 to 2010. He applauded the lead taken by the FA and the leadership it had shown in child protection.

Part of the FA’s strategy to raise awareness of child protection within football was to include child protection on the FA’s website. Progress in establishing a strong website presence for child protection was slow.

FA WEBSITE

In April 2000, there was an “Education and Child Protection” section of the FA website. As early as August 2000, however, Tony Pickerin had sent a memorandum to the FA IT department and XX setting out his concerns about the FA website, in terms of the accessibility of child protection material. On December 6th 2000, Tony Pickerin wrote a memorandum to XX about IT for the coming year, requesting “Development of a specific site for Child Protection within the F.A. Website. To include an interactive FAQ option and an ability for information to be updated on a weekly basis.” In terms of timing, he suggested “F.A. Website development for January/February.” On March 27th 2001, Tony Pickerin sent a further memorandum to XX, requesting a section on the FA’s website for child protection: he envisaged a hub for relevant documents, details of training packages (including online booking capability) and a “Children’s Zone”. Tony Pickerin attached a memorandum he had sent three weeks previously to the IT department, asking to discuss a variety of child protection matters relating to the website. (The previous month, BW’s evaluation of the NSPCC consultancy had identified “development of website links” as a priority for 2001). On April 6th 2001, XX suggested that child protection should be included as a “quick win” on the new FA website that was being redesigned.

The six month review of the FA Strategy suggests that this had not been implemented by July 2001 and was delayed because of the corporate redesign of the FA’s website. At that time, the FA site structure had a Child Protection section, under: This is the F.A. > Developing the game > Player Development / Football Development / Coaching. Towards the end of 2001, the child protection team made a new media request in its “Proposed Programme for 2002”, asking that the “FA Child Protection Web Site” be actioned “Asap”. The attached list for website development included: a dedicated section appearing on the Home Page menu; a procedural section; an educational section; a Children’s Zone; and FAQs.

The ‘GOAL’ child protection section on the website appears to have gone live at the beginning of 2004. A hyperlink, titled “GOAL – Child Protection”, appeared on the side menu, as the sixth item from the top.

Celia Brackenridge and the FA

8.1.266. To understand and measure the impact of the child protection work that the FA was doing, the FA commissioned Celia Brackenridge to carry out a research project. The FA was thought to be the first sport organisation in the world to commission such research on child protection. From the materials that I have seen from the Bracken-

ridge archives, Celia Brackenridge had for some time been very keen to do research of this kind, but had previously failed to secure a commission from any sport.

8.1.267. The Celia Brackenridge research project was terminated mid-way through its work as a result of cutbacks more generally and financial difficulties at the FA. There is no evidence to suggest that the programme was terminated by the FA because it was not seen to have value. Essentially, at a time of retrenchment when a number of other activities was being reduced, the research project was regarded as being a lower priority than some of the other activities that the FA was working on.

Box 20.

CELIA BRACKENRIDGE RESEARCH PROJECT

COMMISSIONING CELIA BRACKENRIDGE'S RESEARCH

At the Sports Council conference in June 1996, Tony Pickerin said to Celia Brackenridge: "I need to talk to you". As Tony Pickerin explained to me, "I always knew that there would be a time when I would need to work with Celia. I always thought there would come a time when I would need her expertise, which was how the research project came about".

Four years later, in September 2000, as Head of Child Protection at the FA, Tony Pickerin did talk to Celia Brackenridge, telling her that he wanted her to conduct an impact study on the FA's child protection programme. This was a bold project for the FA to embark on, involving a substantial commitment of funds. It was the first of its kind for a national governing body, and shows how far the FA had come in the seriousness with which it was taking child protection.

Tony Pickerin explained to me that:

"I understood that the FA was in need of a massive organisational and cultural change if we were going to embed child protection and good practice within structures of affiliated football. I also understood that it was inevitable because of the generally conservative nature of the FA and its constituent bodies, particularly the county FAs, there would be significant resistance to change, there's an in-built inertia in organisations like the FA. My experience in education had been that, independent research could or should underpin the decision making that were about to embark on. I knew that the sceptics the county FAs, would not take my word or [XX's] word that this was a good idea. What we needed to do was to illustrate that what we were doing, (a) was correct, (b) was a change for the better for the children because they were the main stakeholders and also for the adults who worked with young players (c) would develop a safer more supportive environment for young people.

In order to drive the necessary cultural change, the need was for an evidential base to lead the decision-making process. We knew that there had been cases in football. We knew that there was poor practice; everybody who had been in football could identify issues of poor practice.

I wanted the research project to run in parallel to the implementation of the child protection policies and procedures and practices. In order that it could, at the earliest possible time inform us whether we were on the right road, give us signposts for the future, and identify areas of resistance which would inform our planning and future strategies.

. . . The research project was to reach across the three strands in our work, case management and allegations, how to deal with them and whether that process is adequate, appropriate or could be made better; across our educational and training programmes to see whether or not they were affecting the changes that they were intended to change and across our communication strategy.

The reason the research project was approved was that Adam Crozier was the Chief Executive. When I made the proposal to the committee he was absolutely 100 per cent in agreement. We were talking about a budget for year one in excess of £200,000.”

An outline of the proposed project was produced on October 31st 2000 by Celia Brackenridge. Celia Brackenridge explained that:

“The Football Association (FA) has recently drawn up a Child Protection (CP) policy, strategy, action plan and roll out programme. Its CP Working Group has a Quality Assessment Sub-Group that now needs an independent research project to monitor and evaluate the programme’s effectiveness. Many other governing bodies in the UK have set up policies and procedures for CP but few have successfully implemented these or collected evidence of their impact or effectiveness. Also, whilst there are examples of monitoring work on anti-racism in other some sport organisations (for example in Australia), the FA is, to our knowledge, the first sport organisation in the world to commission such research on child protection. To this extent, the FA is to be congratulated for taking such a bold and innovative step. This is certainly an initiative that fits with the FA’s strategic aim to ‘be seen as the leading sports governing body in the world.’”

The first phase of the research was to audit the FA’s practices and procedures. The second phase was to collect evidence as the child protection work was rolled out.

On January 16th 2001, Tony Pickerin informed Celia Brackenridge that the FA Board had approved the proposed research and would be looking for a co-funder for the project. Sport England agreed to co-fund the research but only up to a maximum of £20,000.

The 2001 FA budget included as one of its “Major new budget items”, the “Full implementation and research into the effectiveness of our Child Protection Policy”. The research project was budgeted to cost £296,000 in Year 1, out of a total budget for child protection (which also included protection of young and disabled people

involved in football) of £964,000. The Development of a Distance Learning product was budgeted to cost £450,000. (Information provided to the FA's Board in February 2001 highlighted that the FA had achieved a "record turnover" of £115 million; and profits before distributions of £25 million). The overall budget for the Celia Brackenridge research project was identified as £1,470,695 over five years.

In a press release prepared by the FA announcing the work in July 2001 Adam Crozier, the then Chief Executive of The Football Association, said

"The Football Association is committed to the safeguarding of children in football. Our game should be played in a safe and enjoyable environment by all those who participate. This research project is a fundamental part of The F.A. commitment to achieving this aim."

In her first report to the FA at the end of her first year of research Celia Brackenridge credited Adam Crozier for the FA's focus in 2000 on child protection and the cultural change that this signalled to the organisation.

FIRST YEAR OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In April 2002, Celia Brackenridge provided the FA with an interim report. This did not make any findings, but set out the parameters of the research and the methodology adopted. On July 11th 2002, XX wrote to Tony Pickerin to say that "It is now six months into the first year of the contract. Can I please now have a progress report? This is a costly contract. So far, I have seen no record of any output of any value." I do not read this document as suggesting that XX was not supportive of the project, but that he had an eye on its cost – it formed a significant portion of the budget for which he was responsible – and he wanted to see what had been achieved.

In November 2002 Celia Brackenridge presented a report into the first year of the project. That report records the following as the main findings:

- good child protection practice is evident in many facets of the game
- fear of false accusations of child abuse in football is unfounded
- The www.FA.com could be used more effectively to promote CP in the game
- The main advocates of child protection for the FA (CPOs and FDOs) are already actively involved
- Children and young people are not yet fully consulted about the FAs child protection activity
- Child protection accreditation processes are not always as responsive or flexible as stakeholders wish
- Communication about child protection is not penetrating all areas of the game
- Parent/carer behaviour is often poor
- young referees face particular stresses and frequent harassment
- maintaining high personal standards of child protection/welfare and securing a reliable police check system are priorities for the majority of stakeholders"

Celia Brackenridge recorded that the work of the FA on child protection was an excellent example of a governing body setting a trend for others to follow. However, she stated her concern that there were still those within the football community that did not support her work, or indeed see child protection as a priority. She stated:

“The football community has been, in the main, helpful and cooperative about the research project but it must also be said that researchers have had to face unfortunate instances of rudeness by some people, including some in paid positions within The FA and/or in positions of significant authority. As both the fact and the findings of the research become more widely known, however, it is to be hoped that the researchers will be welcomed back more willingly by such individuals.”

In her conclusions, Celia Brackenridge stated:

“The researchers found a wide range of attitudes and practices towards child protection and welfare in the game... For example, Football Development Officers (FDOs) were, in the main, keenly committed and active in this area, as were the W/CPOs. Not surprisingly, others in more peripheral or voluntary roles, such as parents and volunteers in clubs, were much less well informed or engaged. Worryingly, and with a few notable exceptions, the further the researchers went up the hierarchy of roles in the game, the less commitment there seemed to be to child protection. In more than a few cases, very obstructive responses were met In no stakeholder group did opponents of CP comprise more than a tiny minority, however.”

It is notable that Celia Brackenridge’s research found that most children involved in the game did not know who they could turn to in order to report abuse or raise concerns. This is perhaps not surprising as at this stage very little had been done to raise awareness among young players. The FA’s focus until then had been on the training and screening of adults involved in the game.

The research also highlighted that – apart from Child Protection Officers and Football Development Officers – there was generally a low level of awareness of child protection issues and how to deal with concerns. For example, none of the scouts interviewed were able to speak with any confidence about the FA’s child protection policies and the FA’s GOAL campaign. Knowledge of the various aspects of the FA’s child protection work was patchy among many administrators interviewed and some respondents revealed worrying assumptions about safety and a lack of understanding of the issues.

Celia Brackenridge also stated that the FA’s child protection objectives were not helped by the “apparent leniency extended to members of the game convicted of abuse against children”. This was a comment made by an agent interviewed by Celia Brackenridge’s team, and although the quote refers to “members of the game” is likely to have been a reference to Graham Rix (see: Disciplinary and Referrals).

On December 3rd 2002, Tony Pickerin sent Celia Brackenridge’s report to XX and others.

SECOND YEAR OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research project did not extend beyond its second year. A letter of termination, giving six months' notice, was sent to Celia Brackenridge on March 5th 2003. The termination letter stated that:

“Further to your recent conversations with Tony Pickerin and [OD] concerning The FA Child Protection Research Project, you will be aware that The Football Association has decided to terminate its current Licence Agreement with your company. ... please regard this letter as giving you six months written notice of termination of the Agreement. The Agreement will therefore end on 8 September 2003.

...

I must stress that the decision to terminate the Agreement is in no way indicative of the standards of work you and your research team have undertaken on behalf of The FA; indeed, we are very happy with this work.

It is the intention of The Football Association to continue The FA Child Protection Research Project in a revised form and to this end the Association would wish to negotiate a new contract with your company.”

No further contract was actually entered into.

Celia Brackenridge had been forewarned of the project's termination on January 22nd 2003, when Tony Pickerin wrote to inform her that all research budgets within the FA had been under scrutiny, and that this included the budget for her work. He further informed her that the child protection budget for 2003 would be substantially reduced and the consequence of this will be a much lower level of research activity.

The materials that I have seen strongly suggest that it was XX who was responsible for the decision to terminate the research project, albeit within the context of an expectation that Celia Brackenridge would continue to “provide services” in a different form. In the archive, I have seen a note dated February 11th 2003, which reads:

“[XX]‘wishes current agreement to be terminated’, However there is still scope for [Celia Brackenridge] to provide services | [OD] + Tony Pickerin to meet with [Celia Brackenridge], explain that we wish to terminate (but stressing no reflection on work given) | 6 months notice but with a view to renegotiating a separate agreement | [OD] to advise/update as to developments”.

The decision to terminate the project is likely to have been notified to the FA Board, but I have not been able to confirm that the matter was specifically discussed by the FA Board. There is one reference in an annotated minute of the Football Foundation Board (a charity funded by the Premier League, the FA, and the Government, which directs support to football at the grassroots, and which was asked if it would like to fund the research project, but declined to do so) which indicates that the matter had been discussed by the FA Board. The document states that:

“If the FA board had taken a decision that this was not a priority and they would not continue to fund this work, that was a matter for them. [One

representative] said that there had been no discussion on this issue at the FA Board YES THERE HAD!!.. He had asked for further information on why the FA could no longer fund this work, but had yet to receive this”

XX told me that he thought that the matter would probably not have been discussed by the FA Board, although they would have been aware of it through the paperwork presented to them. XX explained to me that the termination of the Celia Brackenridge research project took place at a time of considerable financial difficulty and uncertainty for the FA. This is corroborated by the many documents that I found in the FA archives that show the FA discussing its weakened financial position and seeking to cut costs at this time.

The FA had very substantial commitments to the redevelopment of Wembley Stadium, and the development of a National Football Centre near Burton on Trent. Close scrutiny of the FA’s spending commitments took place in late 2002. In a speech to the FA Council, on March 18th 2003, the FA’s Chairman Geoff Thompson said that in late 2002:

“Our Management Team were already involved in the annual budget process, but it quickly became clear to them that a major reassessment of how we run our organization was necessary - what we spend, how and when we spend it, and crucially what we can and cannot afford. . . . This review would have been prudent and necessary anyway. But it was particularly important in the light of difficult economic circumstances and prospects inside and outside the football industry. Plus of course we had new and substantial financial commitments on top of our already wide range of activities - notably the commitments to rebuild Wembley and develop a National Football Centre near Burton on Trent. Let me say unequivocally - these are projects this organization and all of us should be proud of. . . . The short point is significant cuts have had to be made - that is clear to [the Finance Sub-Committee and senior management] and the Board. We have simply been doing too much - we have overreached. . . . What quickly became clear is that we have a cashflow issue that, unless we took action, would have led to us being cash-negative from next month, through to August. These things are relatively easily dealt with, and have been. However, we also had to look at our overall costs - and quite simply we quickly came to the view that we are doing too much, and spending too much. We are addressing that.”

In a speech given by XX to staff, he explained that the FA was not:

“[C]areering towards bankruptcy as some papers (or some people) would have us believe. There are issues to deal with, but we are [dealing with them]. Another key point is that issues we face are not created by one specific project, Wembley - this is about the whole of our business. We have overreached and overstretched ourselves. We have been trying to do too much, across a vast array of activities. We have to take the opportunity to address this, to focus in on what we believe are our key priorities, and run effectively and efficiently.”

In November 2002, a meeting of the Senior Management Team of the FA's Corporate and Legal Affairs Division records concerns about the FA budget, noting that budget demands for the 2003 financial year outstrip forecasts by £25 million. On December 18th 2002, the FA's Management Team referred to "an additional 2003 budget saving of £8.2 million"; along with an action to "Review spend on research materials to consider possibility of cutting for 2003".

It is clear that cutting the research project was not the only item of retrenchment by the FA. There were also very significant redundancies, and other cuts. For example, the FA's operating expenses were reduced, largely through headcount reductions, by £265,000. There were savings of £181,000 in the budget for Women's Football. XX told me that he recalls that he had to make cuts of about 20%. (The state of the FA's budget, and the financial difficulties being experienced, was well known at the time. By way of example an article in the FA archives from the *Daily Mail*, March 10th 2003 bore the headline, "It defies belief that blundering FA could lose money").

When I discussed the matter with Tony Pickerin, he told me that "[T]he decision to terminate the research project . . . [was based on judgement] around the organisation's priorities ... they didn't place the research project within that rank of priorities which they thought the FA should support." XX told me that terminating the project was not "for any reason other than we had to save significant amounts of money. And my recollection is in terms of a priority spend it must have rolled out to the programme" for child protection. "That's the priority . . . to implement the plan as opposed to a research project."

I accept what XX says about this matter. XX was someone who was committed to child protection issues, and had sought to progress the development and implementation of the FA's child protection arrangements throughout his time at the FA. XX had to make substantial budgetary cuts. Part of the cuts would include looking at the area of governance, which include child protection. Cutting a research project which was due to cost many hundreds of thousands of pounds was an obvious target for cuts. This did not mean that the research was not regarded as being important, but that it was less of a priority than other matters, including other child protection spending. There is no evidence to indicate that pressure had been brought to bear on XX to close down this project because, for instance, there were child protection matters that individuals did not want Celia Brackenridge and her team to discover. Indeed, the FA sought financial support from external bodies to continue the research. These are not the actions of an organisation seeking to "cover up".

In October 2003, XX wrote to Margaret Hodge MP, the Minister of Children, informing her about Celia Brackenridge's research. XX explained that the FA had completed two years of a five-year study into the impact of the child protection strategy. XX asked whether the Government was "interested in developing this project through becoming a partner". He said that

"Evidence to date has indicated that the participation of some 50,000 volunteers on the FA Child protection and best practice workshop has begun to change the culture of the game – that is our overriding objective.

Clearly this research has the potential to inform a wider audience both within sport and at a local and national level in the child protection arena.”

If the Government was interested in assisting, XX said that he “would be delighted to discuss a proposal with you”. This suggests that XX was still keen for the project to be continued, but was seeking a way of sharing the costs. The Government was not interested.

In November 2003 Celia Brackenridge presented her report on the second year of the research project to the FA. Her main findings were recorded as:

- “• referees are in urgent need of child protection education as well as support against abuse
- poor parent/carer behaviour remains a problem for the sport that might also be addressed through education
- understanding of the needs of girls and women in the game is poor
- other agencies look to the FA to set an example in child protection
- some aspects of communication about child protection broke down this year, leading to uncertainty and a decline in confidence, especially at County FA level
- there is a danger of many voices, not one, speaking for CP in football, leading to inconsistency of service”

Celia Brackenridge noted that during 2003, following the departure of Adam Crozier as the FA’s Chief Executive, there was uncertainty about the future of the child protection work generally within the FA which percolated through the County FAs and into some clubs. While she recorded that there was generally an improved recognition and understanding of child protection issues, she also recorded that referees’ awareness of child protection issues and the practical implications for their role as match officials continued to be variable. She noted that there was still a sense that some referees and Referees Associations had failed to grasp fully the significance of child protection issues in their role as match officials.

Celia Brackenridge found that coaches on the whole did know who in a club was responsible for child protection although there was still a mixed response to the quality of support provided by the FA in terms of information and guidance. There was a perception, similar to that reported in the first year, that more care should be taken when looking after girls as opposed to boys. The issue of changing room facilities highlighted this issue with “many coaches reporting that they would never allow a solitary adult to go into a changing room and would always seek a female adult to help manage this situation.” Celia Brackenridge explained that “This particular aspect is strongly linked to fears of false allegations and a need to protect oneself as much as the child.”

Celia Brackenridge recorded that a relatively small minority of administrators remain to be convinced about the efficacy of the FA’s child protection work, perhaps influenced by well-publicised difficulties with background checks and the Criminal Records Bureau.

However, there was especially strong support for the workshop programme and praise for the published materials and resources.

Celia Brackenridge noted that concerns had been reported to her that the interests of the Premier League were seen to have a stranglehold over the finances of the game and the policy directions of the FA. That the focus on child protection had resulted in jealousy from others within football. This part of the report was discussed under a sub-heading “CP as an ethical mask”. It referred to:

“[T]he most depressing interview was that with a senior administrator in the sample, which gave insights into the internal machinations that beset the FA and ventured to set the CP initiative into this political context. Notwithstanding the appointment of a new CEO, what were termed ‘the powers of darkness’ in the FA - which we take to mean the interests of the Premier League - were seen to have a stranglehold over the finances of the game and thus over the policy directions that the FA would take in the future. The view was expressed, also endorsed by other county level administrators, that the CP initiative had been hyped too much and funded too heavily, a combination of factors that had drawn both jealousy and scepticism from some observers.”

The report continued:

“Worryingly, the same respondent hinted that the CP initiative was being used as a front, one which gave the impression of ethical practice. But which masked unethical activities: It’s a necessary frill which shows that they’re doing good deeds ... where people have just got basically their paws in the trough and sticking it in their back pockets ... it pays to do a bit of frippery ... and show that we’re interested in child protection when in fact ... At the highest level I think it’s just greed. In the past people were interested in the power the FA had because you could get trips overseas or you may be seen to have some influence in the game or because you could maybe get an OBE, an MBE or a knighthood. But now it’s money, it is money because at the highest level there is so much money flopping around. ... Years ago the people who were running after those [clubs] were basically the gentleman amateur, who’d made a lot of money somewhere else ... Money was not the reason they got involved in football. [Now] you’d be stupid if you got involved with a Football League club to make money because ... you can’t make money in the Football League. But you can at a Premier League club if you skim off the transfers basically.”

Celia Brackenridge commented on this by saying that:

“We are aware that these are serious allegations that cannot be substantiated. Nonetheless, they echo much of the material published in recent years in books that examine the darker corners of the game (for example Conn, 1997 and Bower, 2003). These views also reflect one side of a much-publicised argument about the regulation of the game and the tensions between commercial, state and voluntary interests in

it (BBC Radio 4, 27.8.03). It is also the case that proposals are being put forward by the Football League FA to ‘cut the risk of corruption in transfer transactions and improve the game’s image’ (Harris, 2003).”

Celia Brackenridge continued:

“It is obviously difficult for clubs in local communities to commit wholeheartedly to ethics initiatives like CP if they feel that, simultaneously, those in the upper echelons of the game lack such commitment. In 2002 the researchers found that commitment to CP waned as we went higher up the FA hierarchy. It remains to be seen whether the new Chief Executive will support the CP strategy to the same extent as his predecessor and whether it will retain its status as a policy and funding priority under his leadership. The new Chief Executive’s agreement to make the opening speech to the 2003 FA Child Protection Conference at Derby is, however, a positive indicator.”

Celia Brackenridge reported that the “Charter Standard initiative in promoting CP issues, and the use of codes of conduct and good practice were identified as of central importance in generating change”. It was noted by some Football Development Officers that “it would inevitably take time for the Charter Standard programme to gain more widespread acceptance”.

Under a sub-heading “Tensions with the FA”, Celia Brackenridge reported that:

“Whilst acknowledging the FA’s CP strategy, the impression was given that professional clubs would rather liaise directly with social services and ACPCs in their area than necessarily the FA CP team, or would go to the FA about referrals only after having reported them locally. The legal responsibilities of the professional clubs as employers were felt to make this imperative.”

Celia Brackenridge recorded that there had been some fairly open tensions between the FA and some of its partners in recent years, notably the NSPCC whose approach to child protection had been slightly different from the FA’s. She also, however, records that these tensions had been largely resolved in 2003.

Tony Pickerin was satisfied with the conclusions reached by Celia Brackenridge. He told me that he thought that:

“[G]enerally people understood the research project, we had presentations at the national conferences where we had virtually all the county FAs as well as others from the game. People within the affiliated game recognised that the research project was exposing some truths within the game that people may not have thought about previously. It served a useful purpose because it enabled us to begin to challenge the inertia. At this time the context was that the County FAs were by and large were resistant to change, it was easier to work with the coaches because by and large they were people-based, it was easier to work with the medical education team because they understood, it was easier to

work through [the] national game team because they were supportive. The referees were probably the most difficult internal issue that we had to deal with.”

Later in the year, it appears that the FA’s financial situation improved, or at least the FA’s perception of its finances was more positive. At a Board meeting on September 16th 2003, the new Chief Executive Mark Palios is reported to have said “that the recovery plan approved by the Board earlier in the year was delivering better than expected results”. However, the FA did not revive the project or indeed commission anything similar in the future. On February 15th 2004 Celia Brackenridge wrote to Tony Pickerin to propose a revised research project. This was not progressed.

On June 8th 2004, Tony Pickerin reported to the FA’s Youth Committee that the research findings would be circulated in July, but that the project itself was being discontinued: “Financial reductions have meant that the research project will not be actioned in 2004 although certain smaller specific research topics are being under way.”

In her report, Celia Brackenridge noted that the FA “can take pride in its work in the field of child protection and welfare”; the FA “is now the leading sport governing body on child protection matters in England and, arguably, the world.” Celia Brackenridge went on to say that “It would be wrong to imply, however, that no further work is needed.” Her research had picked up some important gaps and issues with the FA’s child protection programme. It had also identified that support for the programme was not solid throughout the game. These were matters that the FA sought to address over the next few years.

Child Protection Training

8.1.268. The FA carried out a considerable amount of training during the period 2000-2005. By late 2003, 56,000 people had been trained through the FA’s “Child Protection and Best Practice” workshop. This was made possible by recruiting and training an infrastructure of 250 tutors and workshop organisers. By the end of the Review period, the FA had trained 100,000 adults (out of the 500,000 to 750,000 adults involved in youth football). This was an impressive result; and was described as “remarkable” by the IFC (see box 21: The Independent Football Commission Report 2005).

8.1.269. For some time, the FA had realised that the child protection element of the training module that had been introduced by Robin Russell for the new UEFA courses in 1996, needed to be improved upon (see: Child Protection Policy and Programme: 1994-May 1996). In a memorandum to Robin Russell on July 22nd 1998, Tony Pickerin argued that “a detailed development course of Child Protection Awareness... should either complement or replace” that module. This would chime with the requirements of the *Charter for Quality* which called for a “Child Protection Programme of Awareness” course in a number of different areas of the game: (see: Charter for Quality).

8.1.270. In February 1999, the FA had decided to include child protection modules on FA courses. This had been approved by the Instructional Committee on April 20th 1999, who supported training that would embrace: “Recognizing and responding to signs of abuse. Good practice. Responding to allegations”. At an Instructional Committee meeting on November 29th 1999, Tony Pickerin explained that from September 1st 2000, all FA courses would contain a child protection module.

8.1.271. In 2000-2001 the FA, alongside the NSPCC, designed a bespoke workshop: FA Child Protection Workshop: Ensuring Safety in Football. The training was a freestanding three-hour workshop which was also a mandatory element in coaching courses, medical education courses and eventually referee training.

8.1.272. By November 2000, 60 tutors had been trained to deliver the FA Child Protection Workshop. By June 11th 2001 there were 225 tutors trained, although County FAs were still reporting difficulties in finding enough tutors to run the child protection courses.

8.1.273. From August 2001, the FA imposed a requirement that the three-hour Child Protection Workshop (“Ensuring Safety in Football”) needed to be completed before certain qualifications could be certified. These included: FA Junior Team Managers’ Award, 1st4sport Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Football (The FA); 1st4sport Level 3 Licence in Coaching Football [UEFA ‘B’ Coaching Award] (The FA). Some Sports Therapy Qualifications were also affected, including the FA Treatment and Management of Injury Diploma.

8.1.274. From April 2001 to December 2001, 740 workshops took place, each with an average of 20 candidates attending. By May 2002, around 30,000 people had attended the Child Protection Workshop. By February 2003 this had increased to approximately 45,000 individuals. The workshop was rebranded as the Child Protection and Best Practice – Workshop but remained substantially the same in terms of content. By 2004, 63,500 had completed the workshop and a process of re-accreditation of the earlier Ensuring Safety in Football Workshop had started. By June 2005, 103,343 adult participants had completed the workshop.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FA CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING

8.1.275. Celia Brackenridge’s research found that the workshops were an effective method for raising coaches’ awareness about child abuse and the need to eliminate poor practice. However, she recorded that there was also the feeling amongst some coaches, especially those who also acted as workshop tutors, that some coaches say one thing in the workshops and do another thing on the pitch.

8.1.276. While it is clear that this training was highly regarded, it was provided to less than a fifth of those involved in football, and only completed every three years. The IFC report recorded that the lack of follow up meant that the benefits seemed short term (see: The Independent Football Commission Report 2005). The IFC report also noted that certification happens on a three-year cycle and recorded a concern that there is limited or no ongoing training in-between.

8.1.277. The IFC also recorded that the FA's intention to include mentoring and monitoring to ensure the maintenance of consistent standards was not followed through. There was also no capacity or system in place to monitor the requirement that all Charter Standard clubs have one trained member of staff.

8.1.278. Following the publication of the IFC Report in 2005, the FA confirmed to the IFC that regular forums and seminars would be provided to keep these individuals up to date and appropriately supported.

8.1.279. The IFC also recommended that older players in professional clubs should be aware of child protection issues. In its response to the IFC, the Premier League stated that this matter would be discussed again with the FA on the basis that, in the first instance, the PFA representative at each club would be asked to complete the FA three-hour workshop on child protection matters. The IFC 2006 Annual Report recorded that the Premier League had prepared a pamphlet regarding child protection that would be distributed to 4,000 footballers.

CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING FOR FOOTBALL SCOUTS

8.1.280. The question of bespoke training for scouts had been canvassed by the FA in early 2000. On February 22nd 2000, Tony Pickerin had written to a colleague at the FA, YP, (copying in both the Premier League and the Football League) following a recent Scouts' Meeting in Loughborough, at which participants were "instructed to undergo a Child Protection module which would be delivered by the designated Child Protection officers at their clubs". Tony Pickerin said that should a child protection course tailored for scouts be required, the FA would be able to arrange for one to be created, together with the NSPCC and possibly the NCF.

8.1.281. YP's view, recorded in a memorandum dated March 3rd 2000 to Tony Pickerin and others, was that "We do not require a course specific to the needs of scouts which would involve further planning and finance. It is envisaged that the scouts employed by clubs who undertake The F.A. Talent Identification Certificate Course would attend the Child Protection Module along with the other relevant members of the club's staff – coaches, physios, etc."

8.1.282. In a subsequent letter from Manchester City's Education and Welfare Officer on May 17th 2000 it was noted:

- "a. Bearing in mind past incidents which have affected Manchester City Football Club we have to date had two Child Protection training days for all staff provided by members of the local standing committee on child protection.
- b. We included all our scouts and some members of our office staff in the training which has been both well received and where appropriate achieved. We have a full complaint policy and set of procedures.
- c. I can assure you that I would not think of delivering any training myself."

8.1.283. As for training on how to handle scouts, one of the recommendations of the IFC Report was that guidance on this matter should be included in child protection

training. It is clear that scouts, or those posing as scouts, have posed a risk to children. They have substantial access to children and promise the ultimate prize of a professional career in football. In its response to the IFC Report, the FA confirmed that the issue of information regarding scouts would be considered as part of the review of the Child Protection and Best Practice - Workshop materials in August 2006. The FA also confirmed that other avenues for disseminating this information would be sought.

TRAINING FOR REFEREES

8.1.284. The training of referees was a particular issue for the FA. For some time during the period of 2000-2005, a number of referees appeared reluctant to engage in child protection training. The main reason for this appeared to be a view that referees were not likely to be involved in child sex abuse. In particular, it was noted that many referees did not officiate at games where children were involved. There was also a question of funding for the training.

8.1.285. A document considered by the Child Protection Working Group on May 12th 2000 stated that the “Training of referees in child protection issues will require a staged introduction. We believe that Referee instructors should be the initial target for training”. As for new referees it was stated that

“The Football Association is currently piloting a new method of instruction for basic referee courses. It is envisaged that, subject to successful trials, the new method will be introduced in season 2001/2002. We see an advantage to an awareness session for new referees as a teaching module at the end of the current course. Introduction to Child Protection will be part of the pilot. Current referees. Referees will be required to self-certify from season 2001/2002. We need to have established by then what are requirement will be to provide training. General awareness and practice will be the elements to this training.”

8.1.286. In March 2001, Tony Pickerin circulated a memorandum explaining his concerns that the FA’s Referees Department, supported by the FA’s Referee Committee, was reluctant for all referees to be trained in child protection through the child protection workshop. In November 2001, Tony Pickerin wrote to the FA’s Head of Refereeing, reiterating the decision that had been taken that, in principle, all referees would be required to undertake child protection training. In October 2002 a compromise position was reached: from Spring 2003 people aged over 18 who attended initial referee training and completed the distance learning resource “Child protection and best practice: A guide” would need to complete the “Child protection and best practice” three hour workshop within one year of their completion of initial referee training. Final agreement was not reached as to which referees should take the workshop and who should pay for it until 2004.

8.1.287. A number of referees were reluctant take up of the course. This resulted in a further delay in training referees in child protection. By 2005, however, it is clear from the FA archives, that there was substantial support within the refereeing community for the child protection training. After attending a workshop, the Chairman of The FA Referees’ Committee was unequivocal in his praise and was supported publicly by

other top referees.

8.1.288. By October 2005 all County FAs had arranged for at least 30% of referees to undertake the FA Child Protection Workshop, with some Counties such as Leicestershire and Rutland, and Kent training over 70% of their referees. Overall, 14,793 referees had been through the required child protection education programme by November 2005: while 12,744 registered referees had not.

TRAINING FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

8.1.289. The FA had initially planned to deliver training to parents and carers. However, by July 2001 this had not been progressed and the FA had decided against providing an NSPCC leaflet to parents because of “budget implications”.

8.1.290. The question of what training to provide to parents was resolved in 2005. In June 2005 an on-line training module was launched aimed at parents, helpers and administrators: those who are involved with children in football but who have not taken an FA course.

8.1.291. This is not to say, however, that parents and carers were unfamiliar with the child protection work that the FA was doing. Celia Brackenridge had explained in her report that:

“In general, parental awareness of CP [Child Protection] has improved markedly on last year with a jump from 10% to 62% in awareness of the Goal campaign, and from 30% to 51% in knowledge of the FA Helpline number. Parents also demonstrated much higher levels of activity with respect to CP responsibilities, and policies in their children’s clubs. Importantly, parents also show greater confidence this year in the FA’s management of CP with 78% thinking that the FA is doing either ‘Very well’ or ‘Quite well’ on this issue, as opposed to 58% last year.”

TRAINING FOR FA STAFF AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

8.1.292. On May 4th 2000, XX wrote to the Chairman of the FA’s Disciplinary Committee – where decisions would be made as to the involvement in the game of people who were accused of abuse, or had criminal records which might make them unsuitable to work with children – to say that he agreed that those involved in disciplinary matters may require specialist training. In April 2002, the NSPCC delivered a one-day training session to the Disciplinary Committee members. Training was also provided to members of the FA’s Youth Committee.

8.1.293. In the meantime, to address concerns that those involved in making disciplinary decisions did not have sufficient expertise, the employees of the NSPCC were used as experts in relation to any child protection issues. XX explained to the Chairman of the FA’s Disciplinary Committee:

“Like you, I certainly do not hold out to have any expertise in the area of child protection. However, we have made the deliberate decision to fully involve those who do have expertise. Indeed, the NSPCC are one of the very few authorities who have statutory recognition in relation to their role as a child

protection organisation. The view, on advice, to which I have come, is that there is nothing more that The Football Association could do in this area. I have spoken at length on these issues to those involved in other sports who have an advanced child protection policy, and The Football Association policy is certainly on a par or better with these.”

8.1.294. Although consideration was given to whether the FA’s Board should receive training, it appears that this did not take place during the period of my Review. I asked Geoff Thompson, who was FA Chairman from 1999 to 2008, whether training had been provided at Board level on child protection. He told me that he could not recall ever having received any training.

Reflections on the FA’s Child Protection Work (2000-2005)

8.1.295. The work that the FA had done with respect to child protection within this period was widely admired. On February 13th 2001, the NSPCC produced a written evaluation of the FA’s progress on implementing its child protection policies. It stated that “The FA has achieved an enormous amount over the last twelve months and should be congratulated on its achievements”, although it was noted that “there is still a lot that the FA needs to do.”

8.1.296. Those working in other sports also commended the FA. In late 2002, a senior official of the Rugby Football Union (“the RFU”) wrote to Tony Pickerin to inform him that the RFU was exploring the possibility of adapting the FA’s Child Protection and Best Practice Guide to the needs of Rugby Union. He congratulated the FA on the production of “such a first class resource”, and confirmed that the RFU would like to pursue the opportunity to produce a “rugbyfied” version of the guide.

8.1.297. A senior official at Sport England was quoted in the FA’s 2002 Action Plan document as saying:

“It’s overwhelming to see the amount of enthusiasm, dedication and continued commitment the Football Association have put into this area of work. They’re not just working towards safeguarding the welfare of the future for the sport, they’re actually leading the way in England and within the world, I believe. It’s a pleasure to work with the Football Association especially in such a good partnership and I look forward to creating a better future for football in England.”

8.1.298. In 2004 a senior official of the NSPCC stated that:

“The FA’s commitment to safeguarding children and young people involved in football is to be applauded. As the country’s largest governing body of sport they have an unenviable task. The professionalism with which they have approached the NSPCC/Sport England National Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Young People in Sport is commendable.”

8.1.299. The National Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport were introduced in 2003. These standards are regulated by Sport England/NSPCC and

are a prerequisite of funding from Sport England. The FA achieved the Preliminary Award in 2004 with top marks for every element of both standard 1 and 9.

8.1.300. In 2005, a senior official at the NSPCC presented the FA with the CPSU Safeguarding Children award and added, “The FA is to be commended for showing leadership in child protection.”

8.1.301. The considerable work that the FA had done in this whole area also received approbation from the IFC in its 2005 report (see: The Independent Football Commission Report 2005).

8.1.302. There is nothing that I have seen in the FA archives, and nothing that I have heard from those in the broader world of sports governance, that contradicts these plaudits.

Box 21.

THE INDEPENDENT FOOTBALL COMMISSION REPORT 2005

The Independent Football Commission (“the IFC”) was established in 2001 by the governing bodies of football in England - the FA, the Premier League and the Football League - to scrutinise the performance of those governing bodies. In 2004, the IFC commenced a review of child protection work across football. The report of the review was published in August 2005 under the heading “Report on Child Protection in Football”. As part of its investigation, the IFC engaged with around 200 individuals and groups in consultation.

The IFC had been asked by the FA in 2003 to look at its work on child protection. The IFC decided to look at, and beyond, the professional game, noting the importance of grassroots football where “99% of children in football play the game”.

The IFC concluded that “Safeguarding children in football is . . . not a task to be underestimated. The work that has been done in the last 5 years and the progress made is astonishing”. The achievement of the FA was described as “impressive”.

The IFC made a number of findings. With respect to grassroots football, the IFC:

“[F]ound a great resilience within the [County FAs], understanding approval of the child protection initiatives, and a positive attitude to addressing the new issues and requirements.... The IFC encountered no one who felt the measures that were being introduced were disproportionate to the issues. Everyone to whom the IFC spoke expressed praise and respect for the team at the FA’s Child Protection Unit, commending its work ... and the unit’s professionalism and knowledge.”

The IFC was impressed that all of the County FAs had a Child Protection Officer in place. However, it was noted that:

“The amount of work at county level to provide the appropriate safeguards is significant. The IFC feels some concern for the dependency

on volunteers, whilst both respecting and admiring the work they do. In such an important area, it would be preferable to have a properly funded resource at county level on which the county infrastructure could more reliably call and which would feel supported, appropriately valued, willing to acquire new skills and to develop the job in line with an evolving environment.”

The IFC considered that the FA Child Protection and Best Practice Workshop had been “a major success”. The IFC recorded that “Achieving the target of 100,000 having done the workshop in the 4-year period since 2001 is remarkable”.

With respect to CRB checks, the IFC noted that the throughput for this work was “vast”. The achievement of the Media Group, acting on behalf of the FA and affiliated leagues (other than the Premier League) was described as “impressive”. The IFC noted that there was little resistance to the principle of criminal records checking with the CRB, with the exception being referees (see: Training for Referees).

The IFC explained that the FA’s policy was that all referees must be CRB-checked as a condition of re-registration. The original deadline for this was June 2005; this was subsequently extended to December 2005. The process was administered by the County FAs. A fee of £7.50 per check was charged. The FA also asked existing referees to complete the home-based guide version of the Child Protection and Best Practice Workshop, and submit the questionnaire for assessment. The IFC found that “Resentment, even hostility to all of this, appears to have been pretty widespread amongst the referee community.”

The IFC noted that child protection requirements may be a factor in referees choosing not to re-register as referees. The IFC also noted that the fact that referees were not registered did not stop them refereeing: there had been an increase in commercially-run small-sided football where child protection training and CRB checks were not necessarily required. This suggested to the IFC that:

“[C]hildren are under the supervision of referees who may not be sensitive to measures to safeguard them or may not be suited to work with children, and that those enabling this have perhaps little awareness of the likely wider risk to children from the individual’s encounter with them at a football game.”

The IFC praised the Charter Standard clubs, commenting that the Charter Standard scheme “is clearly contributing to embedding an informed understanding of child protection in grassroots football, within a broader success story of establishing monitorable standards, encouraging good practice and both incentivising and rewarding quality.” There were, however, “difficulties” faced by County FAs in monitoring these clubs. For example, a club may have had a representative attending a child protection workshop who may have then moved on from the club. The IFC noted that the County FAs had no system of checking for this.

The IFC commented, however, that “the vast majority of affiliated clubs are not Charter

Standard and many more are not affiliated and may have no child protection policies or practice”. The IFC asked whether it was possible to “reach out” to these clubs with respect to child protection. The IFC noted that the FA was looking to see Child Welfare Officers at all affiliated clubs, and not just Charter Standard clubs from the 2006/07 season. There was also a target for making the CRB check a condition of affiliation for coaches by 2007-08, and all adults in youth football by 2008-09.

The IFC expressed concern about scouts interfacing with grassroots clubs. The IFC noted that:

“The FL and PL hold registers of scouts, who receive training which the PL and FL monitor. There are ID systems, and club protocols for scouts. But it does not seem often that a grassroots club enquires of a visiting scout if he has signed up to one, still less whether he would please be careful to observe it. The fake scout, sadly, is not unknown. The scout is particularly positioned to approach a youngster and have one-to-one conversations that may well not be supervised.”

In addressing the professional game, the IFC remarked that while the FA’s “guidance and regulation is total at grassroots”; and that the FA “heavily influences the FL which uses the FA’s structures to implement child protection policy at FL clubs”; the situation was different with the Premier League: “the PL has affinity with FA policy but opts for procedural independence”.

The IFC noted that there remained “some areas that cause concern” with respect to the CRB process:

“The first is the fact that two different systems operate within football. The PL has its own good reasons for insisting that its clubs register independently with the CRB and are in control of data pertaining to individuals in, or wishing to be in their employ.”

However, the IFC commented that:

“The separation of functions between the FA and PL may not necessarily be in the best interests of children. ... It is possible for someone to be rejected for work with children in football by the FA, but accepted by a PL club, for example. It may also be that, when a disclosure on an individual is received from the CRB, different thresholds of acceptability for work in youth football apply within the FA and PL systems.”

The IFC also commented on the:

“[T]wo separate systems for examining reported allegations or cases of child abuse referred by counties and clubs. Case management for the FL and counties is handled by dedicated, qualified personnel in the FA’s Compliance Unit. There is a full referral form used by the counties and all FL clubs. In the event of a child abuse allegation or incident in the PL, clubs are asked to use a summary form to notify the PL and the Child Protection Manager at the FA of referral to the police or social services.”

The IFC noted that in 2005 the FA was dealing with around 250 referrals (most of which did not relate to child sexual abuse) and that “The PL told the IFC that it had had four cases since 2003, which it commissioned an independent company to investigate. All were resolved; a further two were ongoing (July 2005).” The IFC explained that:

“The numbers of referrals relative to the number of clubs and their populations are not high. But, as a system for protecting children, the bi-model is flawed. Shared processes and a predominant will to protect all children in all parts of the game would carry a stronger public message about child protection.”

The IFC expressed the opinion that:

“Children stand to be better protected if there is uniform case-handling and, more important, confidence that, whichever body is deciding who is appropriate to work in football, the response to an individual would be the same.”

The IFC also commented on the sharing of data. The IFC noted that decisions about individuals based on responses to enhanced disclosure requests could be shared by the FA with Football League clubs and counties, as they operated under the ‘umbrella’ provided by the Media Group. They could not be shared with the Premier League, and *vice versa*. There was, therefore, no guarantee that a Premier League club’s decision to refuse employment might be picked up by a subsequent CRB process at a Football League club. The IFC explained that “While this general uncoordinated situation obtains, the protection football offers children is imperfect. Portability i.e. data-sharing must be a target, within football and between football and other sports.”

With respect to the professional clubs, the IFC concluded by saying that

“All three football authorities have achieved a tremendous amount in the last four or five years. Professional clubs are evidently alert and sensitive to child protection needs. The CO/CPO structure is in place and established. Child protection has been incorporated into the rules and regulations governing professional clubs. Care is taken to make public professional football’s concern for young players, through academy/centre of excellence literature, through club practice, and through the behaviour of trained staff.

Differing policies, procedures, rules, standards do, however, inhibit widespread sharing of good practice and a common stand for the professional game on safeguarding children. This is a major concern.”

The IFC drew four main conclusions:

“1. The achievement is impressive. Now it may be time to slow down a little. The guidance, training, regulation, information have been very professional, comprehensive and manifold but there is a real sense of overload.

2. To maintain the professionalism there has to be a review of resourcing,

both human and financial. ‘Overstretched’ was the adjective the IFC heard repeatedly. The commitment of personnel in all areas is wonderful, but there must be a focus on sustainability, ensuring viability is there and that on-going needs such as training can have the necessary investment.

3. The FA’s strategy and the PL and FL programmes are supported and respected. The FA and the PL underlined to the IFC that they have the backing of their top management. It is important to the teams, and to those delivering the strategy in the field, that this support is steady and evident at the top of each structure throughout the game.

4. That the best way to build on what has been achieved and strengthen their future in football for the young and vulnerable, is for the three football authorities to work together, with aims and practices common across football. In the combination of all its parts lies football’s strength. It is not worth letting tensions get in the way.”

The IFC made 23 recommendations. Among the recommendations were that:

“ the FA to consider specific resourcing to enable CFA CPOs to become paid posts.

...

guidelines on the use of photographic and other images to be updated and reissued

...

portability of CRB decisions to be functional on CAS in early 2006

...

guidance on handling scouts to be included in training

...

the FL to issue central guidance and direction on general club activity and clarify which policies and procedures its clubs must follow, and monitor compliance

PL and FL monitoring to include quality and measures of effectiveness, as well as adherence to rules

at least 2 staff with responsibility for child protection at all clubs, one male, one female

minimum standards for the care and safety of ball boys/girls and child mascots, to include a requirement for guidance or training for those with direct responsibilities

clear instructions from the centre on appropriate child protection measures in stewarding, geared towards achieving consistent practice and the understanding of all security personnel

updated policy on the use of photos and recorded images of children to apply to all levels of the game

shared practice and closer liaison between the FA and PL on CRB checks, referrals and case management, with specific attention to portability

...

FL and PL in collaboration with the PFA and the FA to introduce basic child protection guidance and training for professional players

football authorities to include specific guidance on girls, as players and in other forms of participation, in their child protection policies and procedures]

...”

The IFC Report received a fair degree of media coverage. The focus of that coverage was on the number of cases being looked at by the FA and the Premier League. *The Mirror* published an article on September 19th 2005 under the headline: “250 kids in soccer ‘abused’”.

The Observer published an article on September 18th 2005 under the headline, “Top football clubs hit by child abuse allegations”. The article stated that:

“Hundreds of cases of suspected child abuse in football and serious flaws in the way young players and fans are cared for will be exposed this week in a report on the treatment of children in soccer.

The report, compiled by the government-backed Independent Football Commission after an 18-month investigation, discloses that 250 suspected child abuse cases are being probed by the Football Association and that two more allegations are being investigated at Premiership clubs. It also reveals that a further four cases of suspected child abuse have been investigated at Premiership clubs since 2003.”

A closer reading of the article, and the comment made by Tony Pickerin, revealed that the “suspected child abuse cases” included allegations of bullying, as the FA’s definition of child abuse in football included bullying.

Tony Pickerin was quoted as saying that:

“The FA’s role is to investigate more serious referrals. In the past four or five years, we have put 60 or 70 people out of the game. There are probably about six to 10 cases a week where criminal record checks show that a person has committed an offence that could represent a threat to children. Our duty is that the children’s safety be paramount.”

In the IFC’s Annual Report for 2005 (published in April 2006), the IFC stated that all three football authorities had welcomed its report and responded positively to it. The IFC applauded the work being done by the FA and the other football authorities, and commented that “High standards” had been set.

In particular, the IFC welcomed the creation of a Child Protection Forum, which aimed to deal with the issues of difficult communication between the different football authorities, much the same way as the FA's Child Protection Working Group had in 2000. The FA's Child Protection Working Group had been disbanded in February 2005.

The IFC was also pleased to note that the FA intended to increase the size of its Child Protection Department to cope with the extra workload by appointing two additional posts within the FA Case Management Team: this had been one of the IFC's main recommendations to the FA.

The IFC Annual Report for 2007 referred back to its 2005 report. The IFC stated that:

“[I]t is extremely encouraging to note how far football has moved to look after the welfare of youngsters involved in football and also make adults aware of their responsibilities. There are still some areas that need to be addressed such as the lack of guidance on young children attending football. It should also be pointed out that the IFC has spoken with clubs who freely admit that staff, including players, who have not been CRB checked, often work with children. The clubs and their governing bodies are taking a huge risk here. The individuals involved are also putting themselves in a susceptible position, although the IFC suspects they are probably not aware of this.

This may prove difficult and expensive, but the IFC recommends that CRB checks are carried out on all football club staff at all levels, and ensure that employees do not commence work until relevant documentation is in place. It will take time before best practice in the area of safeguarding children filters its way through to every level of the football pyramid but, in the meantime, football is moving in the right direction. If any other company or organisation needs to see how to ensure that it is taking every possible precaution in terms of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, then take a leaf out of football's book to see how it is done.”

8.1.303. The plaudits received by the FA did not mean that more work was not needed in the area. This was recognised by the NSPCC at the time, and the IFC Report.

8.1.304. It was also particularly important that those at the very top of the FA continued to advocate for child protection.

8.1.305. In May 2005, in a memorandum written by Tony Pickerin for the Director of Corporate Affairs entitled “Barriers and Opportunities” within the FA's Ethics and Sports Equity Department, he set out a concern as to whether there was buy-in for child protection at the top of the organisation. Tony Pickerin stated that there was a “Need for advocacy and support at top level of FA Leadership Team for work in safeguarding children, ethics and sports equity e.g. Brian Barwick as well as [the Director of Corporate Affairs].” He added that:

“We have a sense that some of the Leadership Team think what we currently

do is the governments/social work. Possible sense at top level that we've 'done child protection'. A common mis-perception is that if the FA have been doing it for a few years, then we must be able to 'tick the box' and move on."

Tony Pickerin stated that "some level of security over the Leadership Teams commitment to our area of work would help, given the journey we've had in downsizing in the last 2 years."

8.1.306. Tony Pickerin's memorandum was responded to by the Director of Corporate Affairs on June 6th 2005. The Director explained that "Many of the issues that you raise relate [to] lack of political support and advocacy, all of which are valid points." It was agreed that there was a need for support at the top level and stated that "I hope that both Brian [Barwick] and I have so far indicated our willingness to provide leadership in this area." In response to Tony Pickerin's comment that the FA had "done child protection", the Director of Corporate Affairs stated: "I hope that you are reassured by the priority given to Ethics and Equity issues in the first of our purpose sessions. How else can we correct this misconception outside of those sessions? ... I hope I have made it clear from my actions that you have my absolute commitment to this area of work as a priority."

8.1.307. By the end of 2005, the FA still had work to do to develop its safeguarding arrangements. By the time that my Review was commissioned, great strides had been taken by the FA. When interviewed by *The Guardian* in December 2016²⁴, Celia Brackenridge is quoted as saying: "I am definitely not an apologist for the FA but I would argue that for the child protection work they do now, they are the leading sports governing body in the world". That is the view that I have heard repeated by numerous people as I have conducted this Review.

8.1.308. It is clear to me that the situation that prevailed in the period between 1970 and the mid-1990s, when most of the abuse with which I have been investigating took place, has changed beyond recognition. Looking forwards, this does not mean that the FA can be complacent about what it does. The FA must continue to develop its safeguarding response as technology, and the ability of potential abusers to groom and access young players, changes. Sexual abuse of young players can still occur; and vigilance, suspicion and an openness to challenge and report are as vital as ever (see: Recommendations).

COMMENTS ON THE DELAY IN PUTTING IN PLACE CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES

8.1.309. As I have explained above, there was a considerable delay from October 1995 – the date from when I consider the FA should have engaged more deeply in child protection matters – and in particular from July 1996, following the Sports Council conference when the tools were made available for all sports to implement child protection

24. The Guardian, December 29th 2016, "Child abuse in sport and the progress made towards eradicating it".

measures, to May 2000, the date when detailed and comprehensive child protection arrangements were finally implemented.

8.1.310. From late 1995, and especially following the Sports Council conference at the end of June 1996, the FA was (or should have been) fully aware of the dangers to children playing football posed by child sex abusers, and of the need to put in place appropriate child protection arrangements. In any organisation it would inevitably take some time for appropriate arrangements to be put in place, especially as (in Tony Pickerin’s words) the FA was essentially a “blank sheet of paper” when it came to proper procedures and practices. The question that needs to be considered is whether the time taken to put in place those procedures and practices was reasonable. In answering this question, I consider that it is necessary to take into account (i) the resources available to the FA; and (ii) the speed with which other sports were able to put in place procedures and practices.

8.1.311. With respect to (i), resources, the FA was not the commercial/profitable organisation that we know today. XX said to me that the organisation that he joined was not “well-resourced because it didn’t have great revenues . . . It was a relatively small organisation generating revenues with a significant amount of I suppose call on those revenues for its wide variety of activities. . . it still has roughly the same scope now – then as it did now.”

8.1.312. However, during the mid-to-late 1990s, the FA was certainly still an organisation with significant resources. Based on its audited accounts, the FA’s turnover and profits (before taxation) were as follows:

1990	£24,414,855	£21,475
...		
1995	£47,642,500	(£43,032)
1996	£105,426,521	£2,716,022 ²⁵
1997	£53,555,858	£722,353
1998	£65,713,892	£2,409,477
1999	£101,730,000	£51,764
2000	£109,786,000	£39,494

These figures suggest to me that some further resource could have been allocated to child protection prior to 2000 had that been regarded as a priority.

8.1.313. With respect to (ii), it is clear that many sports took a considerable amount of time to introduce and implement child protection policies and procedures, and many did this after the FA had launched its own programme in 2000. However, there were sports such as swimming which, although nowhere near as large and administratively complex as football, was able to set up appropriate measures with much greater speed (see box 5: Amateur Swimming Association). There is, in my view, no reason why the FA should not be compared with swimming, and other sports that did work more speedily.

25. The Euro 96 competition took place in England in June, and the considerably increased income for 1996 would have been offset by the additional hosting costs.

8.1.314. I have also considered whether the FA should have acted quicker than it did

given its role as the “national game”. In this regard, I note that in August 1997 Pat Smith, Deputy Chief Executive of the FA, when presented by XX with his views as to what the FA needed to do, said that “it is important that the Football Association, as the National game, should give a lead in this area and should ensure that we are proactive.” I do not consider that, in spite of Pat Smith’s words, it is right or fair to hold the FA to a higher standard merely because it was the “national game”. The FA’s real responsibility was to its stakeholders and to the hundreds of thousands of children who played football throughout the country. The FA’s responsibility did not apply beyond the boundaries of the sport, even though the steps taken by the FA could have had an influential effect on other sports given the publicity that the FA, and the game of football, attracts.

8.1.315. Taking into account, therefore, the FA’s resources and the ability of other sports to put in place comprehensive child protection policies and programmes far more quickly, it seems to me that the FA did take too long in introducing its policy and programme. It should not have taken almost four years from the Sports Council conference for this to have been done; let alone the more than four and a half years from the date of Hickson’s conviction.

8.1.316. As for why it took the FA such a long time to put in place proper procedures and practices, there is no simple answer. There is no evidence that the delay was caused by hostility, or by opposition or resistance to child protection as a matter of principle. There is no evidence that the delay was caused by individuals who had something to hide or who wished for matters to be swept under the carpet. All of the individuals with responsibility for moving things forward at the FA seem to have shown sympathy and interest in the question of child protection. This was reflected in the written materials that I have seen in the various archives that I have had access to, and corroborated by the many discussions that I have had with people during the course of the Review. Those that worked with the FA (such as BW, from the NSPCC) have confirmed to me that there was no resistance from the FA to child protection.

8.1.317. I do not consider that the delay was caused by simple inertia, as the evidence shows the FA putting some of the building blocks in place from time to time, and especially from 1996 onwards.

8.1.318. XX observed to me that the ASA had an “easier governing body structure” and this may explain why progress was much quicker in the world of swimming than at the FA. I agree that this may explain why child protection measures could be implemented more quickly in swimming (along with a forceful Chief Executive: see below). However, the delay in introducing the measures at the FA was not caused by the FA’s bureaucracy.

8.1.319. In his book, *The Football Business*, first published in 1997 David Conn refers (at p.140) to the FA’s 22 committees, commenting that “All policy, developed by the FA’s staff, has to go through these committees, which then put proposals through for stamping by the council. . . . The tortuousness of the procedure and the large number of people involved has for a long time now undermined the FA’s ability to be a govern-

ing body”. There is no doubt that the FA was committee-heavy, and there seems to have been an element of overlap when some child protection issues were raised and needed to be addressed. However, bureaucratic obstacles do not explain the time that it took to get things done.

8.1.320. It seems to me that there are a number of interrelated reasons for the delay. Taken together they paint a picture of an institutional failure of the FA, rather than a failure of any particular individual or individuals.

Initial Lack of Awareness

8.1.321. Initially, there was a simple lack of awareness that child protection was a matter that needed to be addressed by the FA. The FA appears to have been ignorant of the *Safe from Harm* guidance, and no one saw or discussed the BBC documentary in 1993 – or felt that it had anything to do with football. The FA was detached from the conversations that were beginning to take place about child protection in the voluntary (non-statutory) sector.

8.1.322. It also took several years before anyone in the FA connected the dots between the child protection work that was required at the National School and the need to think about replicating that work for the FA’s other streams of activities. This suggests a lack of insight. The National School had been set up so that boys with exceptional talent could be nurtured, to run alongside the Centres of Excellence that many professional clubs were operating. There was no thinking that what was good and appropriate for the welfare of the boys at the National School, would also be good for those at the Centres of Excellence, and beyond.

8.1.323. Once the FA acknowledged that child protection was something that it did need to work on – from 1995/6 onwards – the failure to introduce measures expeditiously and comprehensively was caused by a number of other factors.

Lack of Expertise

8.1.324. The development of a comprehensive child protection programme requires careful thought, and a level of expertise. None of the people working on the FA’s programme had any real expertise in the area.

8.1.325. Tony Pickerin had some experience of child protection given his role as Principal of the National School, but when he worked initially with Charles Hughes on child protection issues, and when he was later brought in to assist with the development of the FA’s child protection programme, he was not an expert. According to BW, the consultant from the NSPCC who worked with the FA in putting together the FA’s child protection policy and strategy from late 1999: “Clearly [Tony Pickerin] had an understanding of some of the issues but I mean he wasn’t ... I’m sure he would say he was not an expert in safeguarding”. Tony Pickerin was “an educator”, not a child protection expert. It was only in the 2000s that Tony Pickerin became an expert in child protection through his work at the FA.

8.1.326. XX acknowledged, and continues to accept, that he had no expertise in child protection. Robin Russell was no expert either. KN who had responsibility for implementing the child protection programme in 1998 had very little knowledge of the subject matter before taking up his role.

8.1.327. If the FA's preference was to employ someone with a knowledge of football to develop its child protection arrangements, rather than – as Robin Russell explained to me – “parachuting somebody else into . . . [the] culture [of the FA which] can be difficult”, then the FA ought to have worked more closely and intensively with those who were experts. I consider that the FA failed to do this until late 1999.

8.1.328. The FA did seek advice from Shropshire County Council with respect to screening in 1995, but the FA did not seek advice and assistance from the NSPCC and the NCF until early 1997. From 1997, the FA sought advice and assistance from these organisations, but did not develop a close relationship with them, or with any other expert organisation; nor did the FA request their assistance in the detailed thinking through of the organisation's child protection arrangements until late 1999. By contrast, the ASA developed a close relationship with the NSPCC in late 1995 and into 1996, and also called on volunteer experts within the swimming community to service the swimming telephone helpline, and to provide guidance on child protection policy for the sport. As part of the Review, I spoke to one of the ASA's volunteer helpers: she was a local authority childcare social worker and knowledgeable about child protection, as well as being a parent of active swimmers.

8.1.329. Similarly, a number of sports governing bodies sought detailed advice on their policies from Celia Brackenridge, the leading academic in the field. For example, in the Celia Brackenridge archives, I have seen correspondence between her and the British Sub-Aqua Club in January 1997, where she comments on the sport's draft child protection policy, and commends them for “moving forward so positively” after the Sports Council conference in June 1996. There is evidence that KN met with Celia Brackenridge in early 1998, but there is no correspondence in either the Celia Brackenridge archives or the FA archives between the FA and Celia Brackenridge seeking her advice on particular documents or policies. The first correspondence with Celia Brackenridge that I have seen is in the early 2000s when she was invited by Tony Pickerin to make a proposal for a longitudinal research project.

8.1.330. Tony Pickerin had advised Charles Hughes on October 29th 1996 that the FA should form a Development Group to include nationally recognised experts to formulate procedures for the FA to ensure that all precautions have been taken. This proposal was not taken up at the time. It was only in February 2000 that the FA set up the Working Group on child protection which included external child protection experts, as well as key stakeholders from the world of football. Had this kind of group been set up much sooner, the introduction of appropriate child protection measures is likely to have happened much sooner.

Lack of Strategic Thinking

8.1.331. It took the FA a considerable amount of time to think strategically about how to develop a child protection programme. The FA finally did so, with assistance from the NSPCC, in late 1999.

8.1.332. BW explained to me that when starting work with the FA:

“It was literally starting from scratch that you could apply a kind of whole organisational system change is what you were trying to get. And I suppose what we tried to look at was how do we set out some basic principles and values using the Sports Standards for Safeguarding. . . . So we need to know who we’ve got in the sport. We need to train them properly. We need to check that they are who they say they are. We need to develop a code of conduct so we set out what we expect of people’s behaviour and what the consequences are if people breach that code of conduct. And if people within the sport or the parents of children in the sport or children have a problem or an issue, we need to be very clear about what the reporting routes might be. And they might be different depending on the structure of the access to the level of sport you’re in”.

No Child Protection Champion

8.1.333. In the period after the Hickson conviction in the summer of 1995, there was no champion at the highest levels of the FA pushing for child protection measures. The only person who seemed to be pushing for child protection work to get done quickly was XX. During this time, XX did not have sufficient seniority within the FA to insist that things moved faster. This can be contrasted with the situation in swimming where, as XX said to me, the ASA had a “very forthright Chief Executive who [could] really push an agenda”.

8.1.334. David Sparkes, the Chief Executive of the ASA, took a very close interest in pushing the child protection agenda within the sport of swimming. In a letter that he wrote to Anita White, the Director of Development at the Sports Council on June 6th 1997, David Sparkes explained that he personally led the organisation’s road show about child protection, “to ensure that the issue receives high priority amongst the membership”. Celia Brackenridge told me although David Sparkes had initially regarded the Hickson incident as a “one off”, he “went through a kind of epiphany, you know? He kept his eye on the problem and then eventually realised that he needed to do something about it.”

8.1.335. Whilst, at times, XX himself tried to push those working on child protection matters at the FA to produce their work-product faster, this did not translate into action (see: Child Protection Policy and Programme: 1998). If the instruction had come directly from someone more senior in the organisation, perhaps quicker progress would have been made.

8.1.336. This is not to say that more senior people within the FA were obstructive or

not supportive of putting in place child protection measures. There was, however, no senior person who was championing child protection in the way that David Sparkes drove the child protection agenda in swimming.

Lack of Urgency and Other Priorities

8.1.337. Child protection was not regarded as an urgent priority. From 1997 to the end of the 1990s, the development and implementation of the *Charter for Quality* (including the setting up of the new Academy system, as well as Charter Marks for the grassroots game) took priority and resource for the FA's Technical Department. On occasion, this ordering of priorities was explicitly articulated. More generally, however, it was implicit in the way in which resources were allocated.

8.1.338. Throughout this period, there were obviously other priorities for the FA. Robin Russell told me that:

“I mean our feeling was that child protection should be part of the initiatives that we were starting anyway in terms of kite marking clubs and coach education. Getting things done at the FA is never quick. And, I mean, I would say that at that period of time, from 1997 through to 1999 we changed a remarkable number of rules and regulations and brought in a number of initiatives which probably was unprecedented at the time, a raft, a whole raft of stuff. It just involved a heck of a lot of time. And did we slow march on child protection? No. But the evidence is that it – clearly because there was no concrete initiatives that obviously other things were – would appear to be – the evidence shows that other things were getting completed sooner.”

According to Robin Russell, this was not a “very conscious decision”. The FA did not say that they should “forget about” child protection.

8.1.339. I asked Geoff Thompson, Chairman of the FA from 1999 to 2008, why things that were agreed in 1997 took until 2000 before they were implemented. He told me that:

“I think it was a difficult period for the FA: you’ve got the issue of the Wembley Stadium; you’ve got the issue of bidding for the World Cup for 2006; and then the difficulties with Keith [Wiseman] and Graham Kelly’s situation; and the FA went without a Chairman and Chief Executive for a period of time.”

(Keith Wiseman resigned as Chairman of the FA in January 1999. Graham Kelly resigned as Chief Executive in December 1998. In February 1999 Glenn Hoddle resigned as England Manager, which necessitated Howard Wilkinson becoming the interim Manager. It was not until late 1999 when Adam Crozier was appointed as Chief Executive. There was clearly, therefore, a period of instability within the organisation during this period which may have contributed to the delay.)

8.1.340. I do not say that the FA should have ignored the other priorities during this period. Indeed, it is understandable that, from 1997, the main focus of the FA's Technical Department was on the *Charter for Quality*. The role of the FA is to oversee the

game of football as a whole, and the *Charter for Quality* was a mechanism to raise standards and opportunities across the whole game. However, given the importance of child protection – that the safety and wellbeing of children playing the sport is fundamental to the sport’s operation – it seems to me that it would have been reasonable for the FA to have ensured that child protection had greater priority than was actually the case.

No “Catastrophic Event”

8.1.341. Unlike the sport of swimming whose governing body (the ASA) introduced comprehensive child protection arrangements within a short time after the Hickson conviction, the FA did not consider that football had experienced a “catastrophic” incident of abuse which demanded a swift response. XX explained to me that if the FA had experienced a catastrophic incident like the ASA had with Hickson, then the FA would have acted more quickly. Tony Pickerin agreed. He told me that if the FA had suffered a “similar catastrophic incident” to Hickson, the FA “would have accelerated the development” of child protection measures. Tony Pickerin told me that the “FA were always sensitive to public impression and publicity”.

8.1.342. There is evidence to support this. The FA had acted swiftly on health and safety matters during this period, following serious incidents: former FA personnel told the Review that the FA had worked quickly to change the rules relating to goal posts for mini-soccer after an incident in which a child died when a goal frame fell on him; the FA also worked speedily to introduce heart monitors when a young player had suffered a heart attack during a game.

Lack of Focus

8.1.343. There was no one at the FA whose dedicated role was to work exclusively on child protection matters until 2000. Initially, the child protection programme was worked on by XX, but he had a wide variety of responsibilities. XX passed on his files to KN in 1998. KN’s role specifically included child protection, but he had other significant responsibilities: in particular, the development of mini-soccer and kite marking. KN was overseen by Robin Russell. According to Tony Pickerin, Robin Russell “had an awful lot to manage. He was overburdened because he was managing all technical, educational, refereeing and medical matters. In addition, he was developing FA Learning – a vehicle to manage all FA qualifications and courses.”

8.1.344. When Tony Pickerin took over KN’s responsibilities in late 1998/early 1999, his role was to be “Education and Welfare Adviser”, which encompassed child protection responsibilities but also considerable education and welfare responsibilities for young players. It was only in 2000 that Tony Pickerin could devote his time to child protection. When he did so, and when the NSPCC had been brought in to provide consultancy services, it can be seen that serious progress was made.

8.1.345. I am not saying that it was inappropriate for the FA not to have had someone working exclusively on child protection matters from 1995/96. It would have been sufficient for a person working on child protection part-time to have achieved substantially more *if* they were expert in the field, or *if* they had drawn more thoroughly on the advice of experts. Where the person, or persons, working on child protection were neither experts and did not draw heavily on the advice of experts, however, the fact that they had other work priorities meant that they were less effective in developing and driving the changes that were necessary.

Attention to the Professional Game and not the Grassroots

8.1.346. When looking at child protection measures, there was initially a greater focus on the professional game, compared with the national game. As Tony Pickerin explained to me, the FA's:

“[C]oncentration through Howard Wilkinson was on the development primarily of the Premier League and Football League's Academies and Centres of Excellence. And that the provision for the County Football Association provision of football clubs, young people – well, adults and young people was being seen less of a priority until the department is structured to have people within it who were purely focussed on the County FAs and their football.”

Tony Pickerin said to me that at the point when he took over at the end of 1998/early 1999, the “FA hadn't moved quickly enough to provide the level of protection for children within their activities and I think the assumption was that the FA Charter for Quality had covered the academies and centres of excellence”.

Summary

8.1.347. Based on the materials that I have seen and the people that I have interviewed, the delay was contributed to by a number of factors, including a lack of proper expertise in-house; an absence of strategic thinking about the issue; an absence of a champion from the very top; and no real sense of urgency. It is not the case that that there was deliberate obfuscation, or deliberate delay. Rather it was a combination of factors, common in many organisations and institutions, which meant that although the FA did introduce a number of child protection measures, and did more than most other sports, for four years or so (from October 1995, and especially from July 1996, to May 2000), the FA did not do enough to keep children safe. This was, in my view, an institutional failure on the part of the FA, rather than a failure of any particular individual or set of individuals.

8.2 Screening and Self-Declarations

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INTRODUCTION

8.2.1. I am setting out the FA's approach to screening in some detail. I do so because it illustrates that, once it realised that abuse was something which could happen in football, the FA expressed real concern to do something about child protection. Initially, this was seen as the only real step that the FA needed to take to address child protection: the mindset was that if 'bad apples' could be vetted or screened out of the game, then abuse would not take place. Of course, screening/vetting could only be part of the solution: there were many other essential steps that needed to be taken to mitigate against the risk of abuse.

8.2.2. There was no real resistance or opposition within the organisation to the FA working on this matter and trying to find a solution. The only real resistance came when comprehensive vetting of all those involved in football became viable, as a result of legislative and administrative change, and the question of affordability arose. Then the only opposition came from referees who did not understand why they should be screened, or did not wish to pay for the cost of screening.

8.2.3. In spite of the FA's considerable efforts, it took many years before an effective screening process was brought in. The main reason for the delay was external: the law did not make it easy for the FA to access criminal record materials. It was only when the Criminal Records Bureau ("CRB") was launched in March 2002 that the FA was able to commence a thorough programme of screening. Before the CRB was introduced, the FA had worked hard in lobbying the Government for changes to the legislation to allow for screening in football, and pressed hard for volunteers – who make up the bulk of coaches and administrators in the grassroots game – to be exempt from charges for their criminal record checks.

8.2.4. Until the establishment of the CRB, the FA had to rely upon self-certification (which could only be as reliable as the person making the relevant declaration wanted it to be), access to lists maintained by government departments of persons prohibited from working with children in the education and health sector, and any advice or information that the police or social services were willing to provide.

8.2.5. Once the FA was able to gain access to the relevant materials, it had to address the question of how to screen the vast numbers of adults – more than 500,000 – involved in youth football. In 2003, the FA set up a CRB Unit with a dedicated staff. By the end of the Review period, over 65,000 checks had been completed by the CRB Unit. This was a large number, but one that fell very short of the total number of adults involved with the game.

8.2.6. In the professional game, the FA sought to have responsibility for checking those involved in both the Premier League and the Football League. This would have allowed for seamless checking by clubs of anyone who had worked elsewhere in the professional game. During the Review period, this aim was not achieved, as the Premier League wished to conduct its own CRB checks. The FA therefore had responsibility only in relation to the Football League clubs.

8.2.7. In its report on child protection published in 2005, the IFC noted as an area of concern that “two different systems operate within football”. It added that the Premier League had its own good reasons for insisting that its clubs register independently with the CRB, including that it meant the Premier League was in control of data pertaining to individuals in, or wishing to be employed by those clubs”. Nevertheless, the IFC commented that:

“The separation of functions between the FA and PL may not necessarily be in the best interests of children. ... It is possible for someone to be rejected for work with children in football by the FA, but accepted by a PL club, for example. It may also be that, when a disclosure on an individual is received from the CRB, different thresholds of acceptability for work in youth football apply within the FA and PL systems.”

(see: Independent Football Commission Report 2005).

INITIAL INTEREST IN SCREENING

8.2.8. The FA first started to think about screening those working in football in the 1990s. The FA’s first exposure to screening was through its involvement with the National School. The Children Act 1989 (which came into force in October 1991) required those working at the National School to be screened (see box 2: The National School).

8.2.9. The first discussions about screening outside of the National School took place in early 1995. The matter was discussed by various FA committees. The FA committees saw the importance of screening staff working at the Centres of Excellence (the football training institutions, generally attached to clubs and licensed by the FA: (see box 9: Charter for Quality)). At the time, voluntary bodies such as the FA, and other sporting national governing bodies, could not obtain access to the criminal records of their employees or volunteers. The legal and administrative arrangements for accessing these records was largely confined to statutory bodies, such as local authorities and schools.

8.2.10. The issue of screening appears to have been raised initially by Tony Pickerin at the meeting of the FA’s Board of Control on February 22nd 1995. At a subsequent meeting of the FA’s Instructional Committee (attended by Graham Kelly, Charles Hughes and Tony Pickerin) on May 2nd 1995, it was agreed to amend the rules and regulations for the *Programme for Excellence* for the following season (1995/96), and the new rule was set out in the FA Handbook 1995-1996, (at p.160), to say that “All staff who work in Centres of Excellence will be expected to complete the necessary documentation and be subject to the requirements of The Children Act 1989.” This was to be a condition for obtaining a Centre of Excellence licence. What was meant by the proposed rule was that there should be some sort of suitability assessment for staff working in the Centres of Excellence, but the precise details of this assessment were not fleshed out at that point and this was the subject of further discussion.

8.2.11. It is not clear what the specific prompt was for raising the issue at this point in time. The fact that it coincided with more general discussion of screening by other

national governing bodies suggests that it may have been as a result of conversations with other sports. For example on February 9th 1995, BQ, a senior official at the CCPR, wrote to the Home Office enquiring whether the national governing bodies of different sports could obtain access to police criminal records in order to vet individuals wishing to become voluntary or paid sports coaches to children and young people.

8.2.12. In May 1995, Tony Pickerin was tasked by the FA with looking into the practicalities and legalities of setting up a screening regime. He sought advice from Shropshire County Council (the inspection authority for the National School) “as to the best way in which I may deal with some 750 adults” who were working in the Centres of Excellence. Tony Pickerin said that “Presumably self-declaration forms would be acceptable although not as thorough as a full screening.” Tony Pickerin asked “if a full check were appropriate: should these be dealt with centrally by The Football Association at Lilleshall? if we did, would Shropshire be prepared to assist with this process? what would the cost be to The Football Association for such a service?”

8.2.13. On May 17th 1995, the FA Centres of Excellence Liaison Committee discussed Tony Pickerin’s approach to the local authority, and expressed the view that screening should be extended to “staff additional to those involved directly in Centres of Excellence i.e. scouts.” A similar point was made at the Technical Control Board meeting of June 13th 1995, where an official of the Football League, stated that “it was important that checks were employed by all clubs on their members of staff that were looking after, or working with, children.”

8.2.14. The advice received by Tony Pickerin from Shropshire County Council was that screening by the FA could only be voluntary. There was “sympathy with the FA’s desire to initiate a regulation which requires all staff concerned with the programme of excellence to be appropriately vetted”, but the authority could “see no legal means how this can be achieved with the legislation as it exists”. This was both a legal matter, in terms of civil liberties, and an administrative one, as the cost and burden would be prohibitive. As such, Shropshire County Council advised that “it would appear that the only option available to you is to use a scheme of self-declaration, which as you state although not as thorough as full screening is still acceptable.”

8.2.15. Tony Pickerin forwarded the response received from Shropshire County Council to Charles Hughes on June 27th 1995, and summarised the options for the FA. According to Tony Pickerin, these were limited to: (a) “in the short term”, requiring all staff in Centres of Excellence to complete a self-certification form (though this should be checked by legal advisers); and (b) “in the longer term”, bringing the FA’s political influence to bear to amend the law to allow governing bodies to protect children within their sports.

8.2.16. Charles Hughes sought legal advice about the matter, which he received from an external law firm on August 16th 1995. The advice was to the effect that a form could be used for prospective employees and volunteers in which they would have to declare past convictions, bind-overs etc. However, it was not thought appropriate to require current employees to fill out the form and then dismiss them for non-com-

pliance or revealed convictions, as this would not be permitted by their contracts. The lawyers advised that guidelines should be established for evaluating the criminal record of a prospective employee, and this should be in place before operating the system. In terms of further action, the advice noted that the issue had exposed a flaw in the current legislation regarding checks on staff. It was recommended that the FA write to the Department for Education and Employment to argue that bodies such as the FA, where employees and unpaid volunteers have access to children, should be more closely regulated.

8.2.17. At the same time as the central FA was beginning to look into the matter of screening, two County FAs (Middlesex and London), were also raising the issue. These County FAs sought to amend the FA's rules to establish a registration process for coaches, which would include protecting young people under the Children Act. Charles Hughes thought that the proposal was a good idea. The Executive Committee, which discussed the matter on May 22nd 1995, was sympathetic towards the proposal, but expressed concern as to whether "detailed consideration had been given to the possible burden this proposal would place on County Football Associations with regard to the requirements" of the Children Act.

8.2.18. The proposed rule change was not approved by the FA Council, although it did receive the support of nearly 50% of those present. The Chairman of the FA (Bert Millichip) promised the proposers of the amendment that the concept would receive sympathetic consideration during the following football season.

8.2.19. Later that year, on August 31st 1995, Middlesex CFA re-submitted its proposal (this time seconded by the Kent CFA). A rule change was proposed which would require "clearance" as part of the registration of coaches. This proposal was subsequently abandoned, as Middlesex CFA appreciated "that implementation may be problematical and we are aware that further revisions to the Act are pending." Middlesex CFA was also informed by XX that the FA "was seeking to introduce a screening system for the Centres of Excellence."

8.2.20. On October 20th 1995, XX met with BQ of the CCPR. BQ subsequently wrote to XX informing him that he understood that the Government intended to introduce a 'White Paper' on the subject of screening during the next Parliamentary session, which would permit the voluntary sector to have access to criminal records. On October 30th 1995, XX informed Charles Hughes that the Government was drafting amending legislation.

8.2.21. XX advised that the FA could insist that its own staff on the *Programme for Excellence* complete a self-certification form, but cautioned that the situation was more difficult for employees of clubs. XX advised against making it a condition for the licensing of Centres of Excellence that club staff complete self-certification forms, although he hoped that clubs would not object to staff filling out a voluntary declaration "because this is such a topical and important matter", referring specifically to "the recent case of the swimming coach", Paul Hickson. XX also advised that the FA could recommend to the clubs that they run their own checks on employees with the Department

of Health (the Department of Health held a list of persons who were prohibited from working in the health sector).

8.2.22. The FA's Centres of Excellence Liaison Committee met on October 31st 1995 to consider protection for children. The minutes record that its members were "extremely concerned" about the matter, and proposed that:

"It should be a condition of licencing a Centre of Excellence that the Clubs themselves would have to have undertaken a full screening of all their employees who would have any connection with young players, including part-timers i.e. scouts etc. before a Licence be granted."

This proposal was approved by the Technical Control Board on January 10th 1996, and it was hoped that this would be approved by the FA's Council and then included within the *Programme of Excellence* regulations. This did not happen, as there were seen to be a number of difficulties with the proposal: it was believed that a national governing body could not require another body to enforce screening of their employees; and although a system of voluntary self-declaration could be instituted, it was thought that this would be open to abuse.

8.2.23. Instead, the FA's Centres of Excellence Liaison Committee recommended at its meeting on April 30th 1996 that the Government should be lobbied to legislate for the FA to be a "central clearing house" to screen all those working in football clubs. This recommendation was approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting of May 20th 1996. A letter to the Home Secretary, Michael Howard QC, was drafted by Tony Pickerin and sent out in the name of Graham Kelly, the FA's Chief Executive, on August 5th 1996. The letter explained:

"For some time, The Football Association has been concerned to apply the conditions of The Children Act 1989 to all aspects of its work involving children. The notion of major Governing Bodies taking a central role in actively screening the adults concerned, and thereby protecting children, has been discussed by The Football Association. It would appear that certain changes are necessary in order that The Football Association, as a major Governing Body, can ensure the protection of a large number of young people."

8.2.24. The FA explained that it wished to develop a "clearing house" system where coaches, particularly in the Programme for Excellence, are screened. The letter (in a reference presumably to Hickson and possibly Bennell) cited "recent events in sport" and the Sports Council Conference on child protection issues that had been held in June 1996 as having made it a priority for the FA to act (see box 7: Sports Council Conference 1996): "To do so we, as a National Governing Body, would wish the access, currently granted to statutory bodies, in order that the child protection issue can be addressed". In his final paragraph, Graham Kelly remarked that changes may already be under consideration by the Government which would assist the FA "in the stricter regulation of those employees and unpaid volunteers who have access to children through football."

8.2.25. The Home Secretary, Michael Howard QC, responded to Graham Kelly's let-

ter on September 16th 1996. The Home Secretary described the Government's long-standing concerns about the existing constraints on criminal records checks, and noted that while making them available was not "the sole answer to child protection, we recognise that they can play a useful part alongside other precautionary measures such as careful checking of employment history and references." The Home Secretary enclosed a copy of the recently issued 'White Paper', *On the Record*, which set out the Government's proposals for new criminal records arrangements. At that point, the Government's aim was for the Criminal Records Agency (later to become the Criminal Records Bureau) to begin operation in mid-1998.

8.2.26. The question of screening continued to be discussed internally by FA personnel. On August 21st 1996, Charles Hughes and XX discussed the "Protection of Children". A note prepared by XX (dated September 4th 1996) described the "Overall objective" of the FA as being "to have in place effective systems for protection of children involved in football..." The ideas which the FA had considered included (i) screening individuals (including referees); (ii) sanctioning trips abroad; and (iii) sanctioning trips within the UK – all in the context of both the *Programme for Excellence* and FA-affiliated youth football. XX noted that concern was particularly intense due to "the Dunblane disaster" (the killing by Thomas Hamilton, a former scout leader, of 16 school children and a teacher on March 13th 1996) and what were described as "the tragic events in France and Belgium over recent weeks and convictions of people involved in coaching children". (This was a reference to the rape and murder of a 13-year old British girl while on a school trip to France in July 1996²⁶, and the revelation in August 1996 that men in Neufchateau, Belgium, had kidnapped, abused and starved several young girls.²⁷)

8.2.27. With respect to screening, XX's note stated that:

"The F.A., in common with other sports governing bodies and the CCPR, has been in contact with the Home Secretary. There is an acknowledged fault in the screening system, which does not allow a private body, such [as] The F.A. or a club to make checks on the criminal records of persons involved with children. Schools and other public bodies are able to make such checks. It is suggested that the Home Office should be pressed on this point. The proposal is that The F.A. (as well as, perhaps, clubs and County Associations) should be able to screen all persons involved, either as employees or volunteers, in the Programme for Excellence. Similarly, a scheme could be set in place to screen all persons involved at club level with youth/childrens [sic] football, including Referees and Assistant Referees. This could involve County Associations, whereby designated youth/childrens [sic] coaches could be screened. The F.A. could undertake a monitoring role in relation to the Programme for Excellence and affiliated clubs. Clearly, this would not apply to unaffiliated football."

8.2.28. A further meeting took place on September 13th 1996 at the FA's Lancaster Gate offices, attended by Charles Hughes, Tony Pickerin, XX and a couple of other persons, including the Referees' Secretary. The Referees' Secretary had been invited because it was believed that there were "examples of referees who have convictions for sex

26. The Independent, Saturday 20th July 1996, "Girl murdered on school trip to France" <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/girl-murdered-on-school-trip-to-france-1329474.html> (accessed 20 October 2020)

27. The Irish Times, Belgian paedophiles admit starving two girls to death Monday 19th August 1996 <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/belgian-paedophiles-admit-starving-two-girls-to-death-1.77881> (accessed 20 October 2020)

offences where it is felt that they should not officiate at youth/children's matches." At the meeting, it was agreed that there were some steps that could be taken immediately: (i) it was proposed that all those involved in the Coaching and Education Scheme (that is, courses, Centres of Excellence, Funweeks, and physiotherapists) should show proof of being screened at the point of receiving the award while, for Centres of Excellence, screening of staff should be a condition of their licence; and (ii) although referees were not employed by the FA, it was proposed that proof of having been screened should be a condition of registering and re-registering. It was suggested that, in due time, screening of the people running junior clubs should also be a condition of affiliation. It was agreed that the FA should also write again to the Home Secretary, outlining "our plans and seeking support for a Central Clearing House for football, and hopefully, financial support from Government."

8.2.29. The screening issue continued to be discussed at various committee meetings. At the meeting of the Technical Control Board on October 11th 1996, the view was expressed that it should be the responsibility of clubs to screen their own employees involved in youth football, and the leagues should be responsible for those referees they employed.

8.2.30. Around this time, Graham Kelly received a letter (dated September 19th 1996) from a concerned junior team manager in Cheshire. The manager stated that his concerns had been growing over a number of years, but the Dunblane tragedy had brought the vulnerabilities within youth football into focus, and he was concerned that a similar incident could occur in football. The correspondence stated that:

"There is no vetting of people appointed to be in charge of junior football teams. (Someone banned from an organisation such as scouts, where there is some element of control, can become a Junior Football Manager without anyone knowing. There was no mechanism for preventing Thomas Hamilton from managing his gym classes even though scouts had banned him. I don't believe there is any mechanism for stopping anyone with a history of child abuse from getting involved in Junior Football.)"

8.2.31. He asked the FA, who he was sure shared his concerns, to let him know what it was planning to do to reduce the risk of "a Dunblane type incident". Noting that organisations such as the scouts, guides and church youth groups were applying measures to protect children, he concluded, "If any initiatives have been started they have not filtered down to junior football yet." This letter was received by one of those who had attended the meeting on September 13th 1996, who remarked when forwarding it to the other attendees that it "echoes the concerns raised" at that meeting.

8.2.32. In a further memorandum on October 23rd 1996, Charles Hughes emphasised the need for the FA "to take steps, so far as the staff involved with Courses, Centres of Excellence, Funweeks and Physiotherapists are concerned." One possible method was screening students at the point of receiving their awards, or alternatively on application. Charles Hughes concluded by saying: "I know it is not necessary for me to stress the importance of this and the need for us to be taking the relevant steps and, therefore, I shall be pleased to hear from yourself concerning the above...as soon as possible."

8.2.33. A further letter to the Home Secretary was sent on November 11th 1996, again under Graham Kelly's name. It was written by XX, with the assistance of Tony Pickering. The purpose of the letter was twofold: first, to outline the areas of concern which were particular to football (and indeed other sports) and where a screening process would be required; second, to comment on the Government's proposals in the 'White Paper', *On the Record*.

8.2.34. The letter stated that the FA could not "express strongly enough" its support for the introduction of legislation in this area, and noted that in common with other sports governing bodies it had been "seeking the widening of the Children Act provisions in relation to screening for some years. The Football Association has been hampered by the inability to carry out a screening process in the same way as public bodies can."

8.2.35. The letter explained that the FA's own efforts had been put on hold pending the legislative process:

"We have for some time been considering how football might implement, as an alternative to a legislative system, a private screening system. This would have to be the adoption of a scheme based on enforced subject access such as is outlined in 'On The Record'. As the White Paper acknowledges, this approach is laden with difficulties and is far from satisfactory. As I explain below, the sheer weight of numbers of those involved with youth football and the large number of different organisations involved presents great problems. The uncertainty of the progress of the White Paper proposals has added to this difficulty as we have been keen not to introduce a system which conflicts with the proposed legislative system. We therefore decided that we would have to wait for Government's proposals before taking further action in the hope that the process could have Government support and therefore be quicker."

8.2.36. In describing the scope of youth activities in football, where screening would be desirable, the letter delineated four areas: (1) Youth Teams; (2) Coaching; (3) Referees and Assistant Referees; and (4) Centres of Excellence.

8.2.37. The letter explained that there were approximately 43,000 clubs affiliated to the FA, that a large number of these had associated youth teams, the overwhelming majority of which were run by volunteers. The FA's position was that:

"[A]ll persons involved, either as employees or as volunteers, with junior teams of Clubs associated with The Football Association or its Affiliated Associations, should be the subject of a screening process. This would be a vast administrative task but is one which we consider to be of considerable importance."

It was recognised that this would require enormous changes to the organisation of youth football.

8.2.38. Children being taken on tours, either within the United Kingdom or abroad, was highlighted as a particular concern:

“Adults involved in such tours should, in our view, be subject to a screening and approval process. In this regard, there is of course legislation in relation to taking children abroad where there is a profit making element and also where a tour abroad involves time away from school. We would suggest that it may be worth considering extending the need for some form of Judicial, Local Government or other consent where any tours are undertaken abroad. Ideally, this would also extend to trips within the United Kingdom (which are only covered at present where a child is absent from school for a particular period), although we can see that this might be administratively impossible.”

8.2.39. Next, the letter noted that child protection was a subject on the syllabus for the FA’s Coaching Certificate, a copy of which was enclosed. It was said that:

“It would be a pre-condition of obtaining any Football Association qualification that an applicant complied with screening provisions. We are also to undertake a retrospective screening process in relation to those who have already obtained a coaching qualification.”

8.2.40. With respect to Referees and Assistant Referees, it was noted that they may also come into contact with children through their involvement with football:

“The level of contact is perhaps much less than the categories mentioned above, but still we feel, warrant consideration. Again, it is our intention to establish a comprehensive screening system whereby all Referees and Assistant Referees are checked. This will include both new applicants and those who have previously qualified.”

8.2.41. Finally, on Centres of Excellence, the letter said:

“All employees and volunteers associated with the Centre of Excellence will be required to be screened. The Programme for Excellence Regulations already provide for licensees to satisfy requirements in relation to their involvement with children. These will require each club to be satisfied as to the suitability of an employee or volunteer, including the provision of proof of no relevant criminal record. The staff involved with the National School at Lilleshall, which is operated directly by The Football Association, are already subject to screening.”

8.2.42. The letter also set out those areas in football which were beyond the FA’s reach, including:

“[A] considerable amount of unaffiliated football, whereby individuals are involved with the game outside the auspices of The Football Association or its Affiliated Associations. In addition, there are large numbers of coaching schemes which have no Football Association connection. These would therefore fall outside the scope of any Football Association screening system. The Football Association would seek to ensure that the public understood the difference between affiliated and unaffiliated football in this regard. There are of course sensitivities of a restraint of trade nature in this regard, which would have to be considered in the implementation of this. The purpose of any system is the protection of children, not to restrict trade.”

8.2.43. A further area of “particular concern” for the FA were the football scouts. Again, it was thought that these individuals “may well fall outside The FA’s area of influence.”

8.2.44. The FA noted that, as a general principle, it:

“[W]ould support the widest possible disclosure of information in relation to known paedophiles, by which we mean to include those involved in sex offences and child pornography.”

8.2.45. The letter then addressed the Government’s ‘White Paper’: *On the Record*. First, the FA urged the Government to consider giving specific legislative recognition to sports governing bodies as being entitled to make “enhanced” (as opposed to the less detailed “full”) checks in relation to persons involved with children on a regular basis. The FA said that “As you will see from above, this may well include a large number of individuals.” Meanwhile, full checks could be made on “those who have contact with children to a lesser degree, for instance Referees.”

8.2.46. Secondly, whether or not the check was to be “full” or “enhanced”, the letter stated that the FA:

“[W]ould wish to act as a central clearing house for all checks. We also consider it important for Affiliated Associations to be able to act as a clearing house. Information would necessarily have to flow between The FA, Affiliated Associations and the clubs which are the employers or the bodies with whom any volunteers are directly associated.”

8.2.47. Thirdly, it would be “helpful to have guidance in the Code of Conduct as to the decision making process as to whether a person is or is not fit to act in any particular capacity”. This would include who would be the decision-maker: the club/employer or the governing body. The FA’s view was that the governing bodies should “be taken to be able to act as if in the place of the employer”. The Code of Conduct should also address “the effect of a failure of an individual to agree to a check of his criminal record. This seems to us necessary due to the White Paper’s proposal that checks should only be made with the specific consent of the individual concerned.”

8.2.48. Fourthly, the FA considered it:

“[E]ssential that the fact of a record check having been made is recorded on the system and any relevant body who has made a check being automatically notified of any subsequent entry on the record. This ties into our comments in relation to notifications: it is vital for the Scheme to be effective for [there] to be such a ‘flagging’ process. We appreciate that there may need to be a time limit to such effect on the record of the individual or, as we would prefer, a procedure by which the flagging process ceased: perhaps with the written consent of both parties.”

8.2.49. Fifthly, and finally, the FA was:

“[W]illing to consider devoting considerable resources to this matter. However, as will be clear, tens of thousands of individuals would need to be

checked and we would have to consider the cost and how it is met... depending on the sort of flagging procedure adopted, if any, it may well be that checks have to be undertaken on a repeat basis at great cost. We consider that the individual cost of a check is an important issue and should not be set so high as to discourage use of the system.”

8.2.50. In his response on November 28th 1996, the Home Secretary observed that he was “pleased to see that child protection forms part of the FA Coaching Certificate”. The Home Secretary said that the FA “should be congratulated on its willingness to deal with this issue and for its concern that those working, either as employees or volunteers, in youth football should be properly screened.” The Home Secretary also said that it seemed “likely that the FA could act as a central body for the purposes of checks on those working in youth football.”

8.2.51. The Home Secretary’s response prompted the FA to consider the way forward. XX wrote to Charles Hughes on December 4th 1996, arguing that the FA should “now put in place procedures which can be triggered on enactment of the legislation”, in the following areas: (i) Centres of Excellence regulations; (ii) referees and assistant referees; (iii) all affiliated football clubs running youth teams; and (iv) coaches (i.e. the areas highlighted in Graham Kelly’s November 11th letter to the Home Secretary).

8.2.52. XX suggested that it might be worth making relevant committees aware of these matters so that the necessary provisions could be put in place in time for the registration/licensing process for Centres of Excellence and referees/assistant referees for the next season. XX’s view was that changes could be made very quickly for those applying for coaching qualifications now, but that the:

“[M]ost difficult and largest area is youth football. I think it will need considerable input at affiliated association level in order to set in place a program [sic] for screening all those involved with youth football. Again, I would be grateful for your suggestions as to how this might be taken forward.”

8.2.53. Charles Hughes responded the following day:

“I think that the problem goes beyond the areas you mention, certainly to include medical staff, scouts and a range of people who get involved with youth teams, tour organisers and the like. As far as the thousands of youth teams are concerned, the safest long term project will be to have mandatory qualifications, with qualifications as with all other coaching qualifications, to include a satisfactory certificate of screening.”

8.2.54. The matter was discussed at the Instructional Committee meeting on November 26th 1996. The minutes of the meeting record that the:

“[I]mportance of screening everyone concerned with young persons in football was recognised. There would, necessarily, be an enormous number of people involved and guidance is also sought on costs in relation to Government support and possible funding through the Lottery.”

8.2.55. The FA could not have known then that the Government's proposed arrangements for a Criminal Records Bureau (as it was subsequently to be known) would take so long to come into force: March 2002. The FA proceeded as if the legislation and the administrative arrangements that would allow it to be a clearing house would occur in the near future, and steps were taken to prepare for this.

8.2.56. On January 21st 1997, Graham Kelly wrote to stakeholders, including professional football clubs, to share the correspondence with the Home Secretary.

8.2.57. On January 30th 1997, XX discussed with Robin Russell the proposed role of the FA as a clearing house for screening persons involved with football. They also discussed the screening of coaches for a proposed National Coaches Association (later to be known as FACA) and for the Centres of Excellence.

8.2.58. A draft document entitled "A Proposal Advocating the Role of The Football Association as the Sole Screening Agency for Football" was produced by the FA Technical Department. It is not clear when this was initially produced, but certainly by March 12th 1997, as there is a copy of the document in the FA archives bearing that date. The "Purpose" of the document was explained as follows:

"The Football Association seeks to safeguard the welfare of all children involved in football by: Protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm. Implementing procedures for recruitment. Supporting, training and supervising staff to ensure welfare and needs of children remain paramount. The FA as the national governing body and with its vast infrastructure, is the only plausible organisation to co ordinate a child protection policy, in particular, to become a clearing house, carrying out criminal record checks on prospective employees and volunteers."

8.2.59. The document also stated that screening would coincide with "Awareness training in child protection; Further development of FA policy and procedure relating to child protection; Management and supervision; [and] staff care."

8.2.60. References to screening were also made by Robin Russell in the emerging *Charter for Quality* proposals (see box 9: Charter for Quality). The proposals called for a self-certification regime as part of the *Programme for Excellence*. This led to amendments being made to the rules for the *Programme for Excellence* for the 1998/99 season. In particular all staff and volunteers involved at a Football Academy/Centre of Excellence needed to be registered by the Football Academy/Centre of Excellence and needed to "complete and submit to the Football Academy/Centre of Excellence a self certification form in relation to child protection issues. All such persons may also be the subject of criminal and other record checks with the Police or Social Services".

8.2.61. The FA continued to engage with the Home Office over the question of screening. XX wrote to the Home Office on November 17th 1997 enquiring how the FA could obtain access to criminal record checks on applicants who were joining the newly established FACA. Membership of FACA required applicants to self-certify that they were suitable to work with children, and to declare criminal convictions: (see box

10: The Football Association Coaches Association).

8.2.62. XX's letter noted that this was an issue of considerable importance to the FA adding that:

“[W]e are about to launch a further initiative by which we will seek to cover all of youth football within England. Again, child protection will be a key component and a large number of people will be asked to make a declaration in the same way as applicants to The Football Association Coaches Association. Again, The Football Association will wish to police this by having the ability to carry out criminal record checks.”

8.2.63. The Home Office responded on February 4th 1998, apologising for the current “unsatisfactory” arrangement, which left the FA (among many other voluntary organisations) without access to criminal record checks. It was explained by the Home Office that the Government had decided to establish a Criminal Records Agency. The timeline for the introduction had not yet been finalised; and it was explained that until the body came into being, “the existing arrangements for criminal record checks will continue to apply”. It was stated that:

“At this stage, therefore, it would be premature to discuss in any detail how The Football Association should set about registering with the Agency and obtaining access to criminal record checks. The administrative arrangements for registration will be determined as plans for establishing the Agency are developed.”

8.2.64. XX responded on February 10th 1998, reiterating the FA's concerns around child protection; he asked that the FA be added to any list of potential users of the Criminal Records Agency.

8.2.65. In the meantime, the FA was receiving questions on the subject of screening from its own committees. At the Executive Committee meeting on January 13th 1998, a County FA representative raised the question of background checks. In response, XX “suggested that any requests for information about individuals relating to child protection issues should be addressed by County Associations to the Police and Social Services as the bodies having a statutory duty to investigate such matters.”

8.2.66. Until the FA could gain access itself to criminal conviction information, it had to rely on self-certification or declaration. The FA was aware that there were flaws with this process. Thus, at a meeting on August 19th 1998 of the Education and Welfare Sub-Committee, it was minuted that the sub-committee “recognized that the Self Certification process is entirely reliant on honesty when completing”. An individual could choose not to declare a relevant conviction. Indeed, the more serious the offence, the greater the incentive would be not to declare. Or a declaration might be made, but a particular ‘spin’ would be put on the incident in question which others might view differently. (To illustrate this point I have prepared a case study on an individual, NQ. There is an ongoing prosecution with respect to NQ, and so I have placed this case study in a confidential annexe for the FA).

8.2.67. The FA sought to address the flaws with self-certification by seeking to obtain access to List 99, the list held by the Department for Education and Employment (“DfEE”) of persons who were prohibited from working in education. The FA wrote to the DfEE on October 1st 1998:

“We should be grateful for information and guidance from you in relation to List 99 which we understand to relate to a ‘black-list’ of qualified teachers and other educationalists who have been prevented from teaching for disciplinary reasons.

The Football Association has recently been instrumental in setting up Football Academies and Centres of Excellence as part of The F.A.’s Charter for Quality. . . [E]ach Academy and Centre will have one or more Education and Welfare Officer. These officers are appointed either by The Football Association or the organisation controlling the Academy or Centre (normally a football club) under the overall auspices of The F.A.

The F.A.’s primary concern is that a person applying for appointment as an Education and or Welfare Officer may be blacklisted under List 99, although we are unlikely to be aware of this. The application process, as one would expect, relies to a large degree on the honesty of the applicant. We would like to be able to send names of applicants under final consideration to you on a regular basis to establish whether any such applicant is black-listed under List 99. We would also be very grateful for any other guidance, information or documentation which you may be able to provide in this area.

We look forward to receiving your views in relation to the above.”

8.2.68. A member of the Teachers Misconduct Team at the DfEE responded to the FA on October 6th 1998. It was explained that it was:

“[N]ot the Department’s general policy to release its ‘List of Persons Determined by the Secretary of State to be Unsuitable for Employment as Teachers or Workers with Young People’ (List 99) to individual organisations. It is circulated on a confidential basis to local education authorities, a number of Government Departments and certain other umbrella bodies concerned with the employment of teachers who are expected to look after the interests of bodies active within their sphere. You will appreciate that in determining the circulation of the document the Department had to balance carefully the ‘need to know’ criterion against the confidentiality aspect.”

8.2.69. The DfEE said that a copy of List 99 could be given to the FA, but only “on the condition that this Department receives an undertaking from yourselves, that it will be kept secure and access strictly limited to individuals responsible for checking the suitability of applicants.” On November 11th 1998, Robin Russell confirmed that he was content for the FA to obtain a copy of List 99 on the condition that the FA would not distribute it more widely. Robin Russell added that “Football Academies, in turn, could apply to us to check names”. List 99 was provided to the FA shortly afterwards.

8.2.70. List 99 was used in two ways. First, the list was used to check against the FACA membership list. Robin Russell asked to be informed if anyone on the list was on the FACA membership list. Second, a referral system for the Premier League and Foot-

ball League was set up. The leagues could approach Tony Pickerin “to check the names of any staff appointed in Football Academies or Centres of Excellence” against List 99. On December 18th 1998, the leagues were asked to provide the FA with details of individuals working in football for clearance purposes. In substance, therefore, the FA was setting itself up as a “clearing house” to screen persons working as coaches, and within the *Programme for Excellence*. Of course, this was very limited as List 99 only captured those persons who had been prohibited from working in education, as opposed to those who had a conviction or where the police or social services had concerns.

8.2.71. From February 1999, the Football League began to provide the FA with lists of names of personnel working for their affiliated teams. These were then checked by Tony Pickerin against List 99. At its meeting on November 23rd 1999, the Instructional Committee noted that “all clubs have now submitted lists for screening and no major problems revealed”.

8.2.72. When List 99 was checked against members of FACA, two names were identified. Both individuals had self-certified in their applications for membership of FACA that they had no convictions. The FA tried to find out more about the background to why the individuals were on List 99. The FA was informed that: “For data protection reasons, the DFEE will not disclose to us actual details of a person’s history”. However, the FA was told by the DfEE that “if a person appears on List 99 then that is sufficiently serious in itself to predicate that such person should not hold any position of responsibility of any nature vis a vis children, people with learning difficulties, etc”. In other words, although precise information could not be given to the FA, what was being told was sufficient to justify their prohibition from involvement with young children in football. As a result, the FA decided that both men’s membership of FACA “should be cancelled as soon as possible”. They were written to in April 1999, and informed that their membership of FACA had been terminated.

8.2.73. The FA subsequently developed a “Black List” of individuals known to have convictions in relation to child abuse; those known to have been administered cautions in relation to children; and those who, on the advice of the relevant authorities, were deemed not to be appropriate to be working with children. This aligned with what other sports national governing bodies, including the ASA and the British Amateur Gymnastics Association, had been doing: these organisations had developed databases on club coaches and volunteer helpers which included a self-declaration form on criminal convictions and matters pertaining to child protection issues.

8.2.74. I have not been able to confirm details about this “Black List”. It may be associated with a list of names which I have found in the FA archives. This list contains a number of type-written names, including “B Bennell” and “R Higgins”, XB and XC (referred to below) and a number whose names were written in by hand. The list appears to relate to cases where inquiries have been received about someone’s footballing status or qualifications. Some of the names were of people accused of sexual abuse, others accused of falsification of qualifications or failure to pay debts.

8.2.75. In May 1999, the FA made further random checks of FACA members. It wrote

to randomly chosen members requesting that they provide to the FA “a copy of the Certificate which can be obtained from your local police authority which states whether or not you have any criminal convictions and, if so, what they are.”

8.2.76. At around this time, the Premier League adopted a rule pursuant to which staff had to send self-certification forms to the police for verification. The Football League considered that this approach was not necessarily helpful. In the FA archives there is a letter from the Football League, stating that “Direct checks with the Police and Local Authorities is seen as a ‘quality standard’ but is seldom productive in getting a response”.

LIST 99 AND POCAL

8.2.77. On October 9th 2000, the DfEE wrote to the FA explaining that the FA would no longer have access to List 99, and asked the FA to delete all copies. The explanation offered by the DfEE was that this change was necessary as the previous approach was potentially in breach of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

8.2.78. The FA was advised that the Department of Health would be including a substantial number of people from List 99 on their new list of people considered unsuitable to work with children under the Protection of Children Act 1999 (“POCAL”), which came into force on October 2nd 2000. The FA duly registered to use POCAL to check certain classes of individuals.

8.2.79. POCAL was used by the FA between 2000 and 2001 for checking Charter Standard clubs (grassroots clubs who had to demonstrate, among other things, that those working with children were suitable) (see box 9: Charter for Quality). Clubs were required to write to the FA and provide forms for each of the individuals that would be working with children in that club. The FA sent those forms to the Department of Health who would confirm whether any individual was on POCAL. The FA also informed the Charter Standards Clubs that they should liaise with the police to see if they held any records about the various individuals that may be of concern.

REGISTERING WITH THE CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU

8.2.80. The FA engaged in discussion with the emerging CRB in respect of future developments and access to its records. On November 14th 2000, Tony Pickerin informed the FA’s Child Protection Working Group that the CRB had agreed that the FA would become a registered organisation. The CRB was to offer a “one stop shop” for disclosures which would combine the POCAL and List 99.

8.2.81. In June 2001 Tony Pickerin met with officials at the CRB to discuss the FA’s plan to register with the bureau. The FA intended at this stage that all existing per-

sonnel as well as those newly recruited would be checked over a three-year period. This amounted to between 500,000 and 750,000 checks every three years. The CRB informed the FA that once the Disclosure Service was launched, it would process up to 3,000 applications for Higher Level Disclosures per month in the first 6 months, after that the numbers could increase to 10,000 per month for the FA. Even at that higher rate of 10,000 screenings per month, and assuming that only 500,000 adults needed to be checked, it would take the CRB over four years to complete this screening process for all adults involved in youth football.

BUDGET CONCERNS WITHIN THE FA

8.2.82. The FA was aware that if a comprehensive screening regime was put in place, this would be costly. The point had been made by XX in a letter he wrote to the Sports Council on March 10th 1997:

“A central screening process would lead to a sizable cost. It will be an important decision as to how such costs are to be met if the total game is to be screened. This is something which I have no doubt should be discussed between us and other sports at some stage in the future, probably after the Police Bill has been enacted and the programme costs been finalised.”

8.2.83. Of particular concern for the FA was the cost for volunteers (not employees) applying to obtain checks. On January 29th 2001, XX wrote to the then Home Secretary (Charles Clarke MP), explaining that criminal record checks were central to the FA’s volunteer and employment strategy for persons involved with children in football. XX explained that:

“[T]he economics are daunting. We estimate that the total cost of checks alone, on an estimated £10 check, will lead to expense of £2.5 million per annum. For the three year programme, a total cost of £7.5 million. On top of this, The Football Association, would have to spend in the region of £100,000-150,000”

The £100,000-£150,000 of expenditure was presumably on administration. XX expressed the hope that the Government “would see the virtue of free checks on volunteers involved in football with children in order to make parents that much more confident that their children are safe.”

8.2.84. The FA’s lobbying efforts were successful and volunteers were exempt from the fee.

THE PREMIER LEAGUE

8.2.85. On September 2nd 2002, the Premier League’s Company Secretary wrote to Tony Pickerin to tell him that the Premier League would not be using the FA to screen Academy staff. Rather, the Premier League would advise all of its clubs to register individually with the CRB, and that the Premier League would similarly be registering with the CRB to conduct its own personnel checks for those of its staff working directly with children. Tony Pickerin regarded this as problematic. He was concerned that if the Premier League and the clubs did not utilise the FA as an umbrella body, they would not be able to share information with the FA or with each other. Tony Pickerin regarded it as preferable for the clubs to be checked through the FA. Tony Pickerin wrote to the Premier League explaining these concerns on January 14th 2003 and February 10th 2003. The Premier League disagreed and continued with its separate approach. The disparate approach was later criticised by the IFC when it reported in 2005: (see box 21: Independent Football Commission Report 2005).

ESTABLISHING THE CRB UNIT

8.2.86. At an FA Board meeting on April 8th 2003, it was “stressed that CRB checks were important and should be established if at all possible.” It was soon decided, however, that this would not be possible in the short term. Towards the end of April 2003, the FA issued a public statement announcing its decision not to proceed at this time with a full vetting scheme for all adults working with football. This coincided with the Government reviewing the operation of the CRB.

8.2.87. In its public statement, the FA explained that (i) it was appropriate to see what steps would be taken to the statutory scheme following the Government’s review of CRB; (ii) there were doubts about the practicality of administering a programme that involved the vetting of all volunteers involved in football (then estimated at 500,000 people); (iii) vetting was “only one of the measures that clubs can adopt when recruiting volunteers”; (iv) the financial implications of administering a vetting programme were substantial (at a meeting of the Youth Committee on February 6th 2003, it was noted that the cost of a full vetting strategy would be between £4 million to £10 million. The FA believed that “investment in education and raising awareness of child protection issues could prove to be a more beneficial use of funds”); and (v) the FA would continue to require CRB checks as part of its internal case management processes and would consider those groups for whom CRB checks would be mandatory.

8.2.88. The FA did proceed to carry out some CRB checks. It arranged for this process to be carried out by a third party, The Media Group, which had already been working with the FA on the provision of child protection training. The setting up of the CRB Unit was announced by Mark Palios, the FA’s newly appointed CEO, at the FA Child Protection Conference held in Derby on October 7th 2003.

8.2.89. By January 2004, the CRB Unit had written to all County FA’s, and Char-

ter Standard Clubs and was processing checks. Agreement had also been reached to process all members of FACA, all FA trained medics and all referees: approximately 50,000 people. By October 2004, the CRB Unit was fully operational with around 2,000 checks being processed each month, anticipated to rise to 4,000 per month in the following year. Where checks raised a cause for concern these were reviewed by a panel and a recommendation made whether the information warranted a case file being opened by the FA. The panel consisted of an independent chairperson, lay persons and members of the FA's Disciplinary Committee. By September 2005, 34,587 disclosures had been completed, and by November 2005, 53 people had been suspended as a result of information contained in CRB disclosures. By the end of 2005, over 65,000 checks had been completed by the CRB Unit. Documents in the FA archives record that 50% of Charter Standard Clubs and FACA members, and 66% of referees had obtained relevant checks. One CFA, West Riding, had almost 100% compliance for CRB checks within its area.

8.2.90. The CRB Unit appears to have been well run. It had in place clear procedures for managing the high volume of disclosures. These included prioritising individuals based on offence. Where a high risk to children was identified, an interim suspension could be issued immediately by the FA. Except in urgent cases the decision on appropriate action would be made by the Panel. The CRB Unit was audited in 2005 by the CRB and was highly praised by the CRB for the process and systems it had in place.

8.2.91. By February 2005 a CRB Strategy had been devised and was put before the FA Board. The CRB Strategy made clear that the aim was to present a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of CRB disclosures in affiliated football. The CRB Strategy noted that this was the largest project of its type in the world and needed to be viewed as an on-going project. By September 1st 2007, it would be mandatory for all new volunteers to be checked, and it was recommended that all adults in children's football be checked.

8.2.92. The CRB Strategy document recognised that in the intervening period there would be people who had not been checked. It was noted that:

“It seems unlikely to ever reach a situation where everyone in children's football has been checked. This is because of the mobility of helpers in grassroots football and the challenges faced by enforcement of a massive participant sport played largely in public places and supported by parents and friends.”

8.2.93. It was anticipated, however, that as:

“[T]he numbers of completed Disclosures grow and as more people undertake the Child protection and best practice workshops ... that there will be more and more people working to create a safer environment for children. As this critical mass continues to grow football should become safer for children.”

8.2.94. There were still issues with the CRB system, however. A report on the CRB Unit from 2005 recorded that the failure to roll out a standardised process across non-Charter accredited clubs had resulted in “confusion”. The use of other umbrella bodies for

doing the checks affected the portability of CRB checks, and there was the risk that offenders could migrate from Charter Standard clubs to non-charter standard clubs.

8.2.95. The question of portability – being able to use a CRB check in different settings – was one of the matters highlighted by the IFC in its report in 2005 (see box 21: Independent Football Commission Report 2005). The IFC recommended shared practice and closer liaison between the FA and Premier League on CRB checks, referrals and case management, with specific attention to portability. In response, the FA committed to working together with the football leagues to explore these issues further, and to address any inherent risks to the safeguarding of children in football.

8.2.96. There was also opposition to the checking system from some people involved in the game. I have found in the FA archives an email from the Manager of the CRB Unit, saying on October 28th 2004 that “I am increasingly being challenged by FACA members from the Professional game who believes the FA is being too intrusive”.

8.2.97. There were also issues with referees. The FA’s Referees Committee had expressed the view that referees should not be subject to the same regime as coaches and medics. The primary concern appeared to be that the additional requirement for a referee to undertake a CRB check, and particularly to pay for a CRB check, may deter referees from registering as referees. Referees who received match fees were deemed not to be volunteers and so were liable to pay the charge for the CRB checks. (In 2002, the FA had lobbied the Government to amend the definition of volunteer to include referees, who “receive a small fee to cover expenses”. This lobbying attempt was unsuccessful.)

8.2.98. The decision of the FA that all referees needed to be cleared by the CRB even led one Secretary to a County Referees’ Association to complain to the Home Secretary in January 2005. The County Secretary wrote that that “this action is being instituted by a zealous administrator for political correctness reasons, and as such, can be conceived as an intrusion into privacy and civil liberty.”

8.2.99. The requirement for referees to be CRB checked resulted in a drop in referee registrations with the FA. The FA was concerned about this and agreed, on a one-off basis, to fund the CRB checks for volunteer referees in early 2005. By November 2005 12,979 referees had been through CRB checks, with 14,649 referees still remaining to be checked.

AGENTS AND SCREENING

8.2.100. In 2005, the FA began requiring Players’ Agents to obtain an Enhanced CRB. Previously, the FA had relied on applicants to obtain a “police verification letter”, so as to comply with Article 2.2 of the FIFA Players’ Agents Regulations, namely to have “an impeccable reputation”. The “police verification letter” contained the applicant’s criminal record. However, as was explained in an internal memorandum dated April 7th 2005, “Detailed information about convictions and pending cases/investigations

is not included. We also do not publish guidelines on which behaviour is considered acceptable”. In addition, “Current agents are not assessed for their compliance with Article 2.2 on an ongoing basis. Once licensed, their ‘impeccable reputation’ may be challenged in the event of the FA receiving a complaint, but it is not monitored systematically”. It was proposed that the CRB Unit should “ask for disclosure on areas concerning both child protection AND financial probity”, and that the CRB clearance should be continuously reviewed on a three-yearly cycle.

8.2.101. The rationale for this requirement was that agents could have “unsupervised access” to children when taking them to trials with clubs and to matches. It was not unusual for agents to contact children as young as 14, and “in some cases considerably younger”. They are in a “position of trust and influence”.

CONCLUSION

8.2.102. I do not consider that the FA’s approach to screening over the years constituted a failing in its approach to child protection, other than to say that the initial focus on screening as the solution to child protection meant that less thought was given to other, maybe more effective, child protection measures.

8.2.103. What can be seen from the materials described above is that the FA clearly thought very hard about screening from 1995, and the fact that it was not until the early 2000s that a comprehensive screening regime started to be put in place was no fault of the FA’s: the legislation and public administrative arrangements did not allow the FA to have access to criminal records of its employees or the employees and volunteers engaged by other stakeholders within the game.

8.2.104. Once the national system for criminal records checks – via the CRB – was up and running and the FA was allowed to be a clearing house for football, substantial sums were invested by the FA in administering the process.

8.3 Disciplinary and Referrals

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INTRODUCTION

8.3.1. In this section I set out the how over the period of my review, 1970 to 2005, the FA dealt with allegations of abuse made against individuals involved in football. I divide the analysis into three time periods: (i) 1970 to 1995, (ii) 1996 to 1999, and (iii) 2000 to 2005.

8.3.2. In the period from 1970 to 1995, the evidence that I have seen demonstrates that only a small number of allegations of abuse came to the FA's attention.

8.3.3. Between 1996 and 1999, the number of allegations of abuse brought to the FA's attention increased. The FA's response on learning of allegations was rather *ad hoc*. Although the FA used the NSPCC to advise on individual cases from 1998, it was only in 1999 that the FA was beginning to formalise matters by setting up a sub-committee of the FA Board to consider allegations of abuse, and approving a formal disciplinary rule to deal specifically with allegations of abuse.

8.3.4. The FA's case management system was introduced in 2000. This was improved upon, so that by 2005 it can be said that there was a systematic and largely efficient system in place for dealing with concerns of abuse.

8.3.5. I have found one piece of evidence in the FA archives to suggest that the FA might not have acted on an allegation or concern about child sex abuse in the footballing context. However, this evidence could not be corroborated and ultimately I have not reached a conclusion on this issue.

8.3.6. There has also been evidence presented to the Review to suggest that an allegation about Barry Bennell's inappropriate behaviour was brought to the FA's attention but was not acted upon. The evidence is hearsay (a second-hand account) and there is no support for it in the FA archives, and no corroboration from any of the former FA personnel that I have spoken to. I cannot be satisfied that that the allegation was brought to the attention of those working for the FA centrally, and I am doubtful that it was. If, in fact, the allegation was raised with "the FA", it is more likely to have been made to one of the County FAs. There is, however, no evidence to support this from the County FA archives, and the matter cannot be corroborated by anyone who worked for the County FAs at the relevant time (see: FA and Barry Bennell).

8.3.7. There has also been evidence presented to the Review to suggest that the FA was aware of concerns about Chris Gieler, who ran the youth programme at Queens Park Rangers (QPR). The evidence has not been corroborated, and I cannot be satisfied that the FA was aware of these concerns (see: FA and Chris Gieler).

8.3.8. There is, in my view, a question mark over whether the FA's response to allegations of abuse was appropriate in every case. This is particularly the case with the allegations involving the former professional player Graham Rix: as I explain below, I consider that the FA should have taken disciplinary action against Graham Rix, rather than rely on an "agreement" with Graham Rix's club (see: the Graham Rix case).

REFERRAL MANAGEMENT: 1970-1995

8.3.9. During the period 1970-1995, only a small number of allegations of child sex abuse by those involved in football came to the FA's attention. This is not surprising given that there were few disclosures of abuse, and the FA had not communicated to the leagues or clubs that they should make referrals about allegations of abuse. During this period the FA had not produced any advice or guidance as to how to clubs or leagues should deal with allegations of abuse.

8.3.10. It has been suggested in recent media reports that in 1986, an abuse survivor (Russell Davy) wrote to the FA to complain about abuse by Eddie Heath, who had been a coach for Chelsea Football Club among other teams. There is no record in the FA archives of this letter and Charles Hughes (when interviewed by me) did not recall his name. When I interviewed Russell Davy, he stated that he probably sent the letter to the Professional Footballers' Association ("PFA") and not the FA. In my view, that seems more likely. The PFA was the organisation that Russell Davy had previously been corresponding with on some personal matters, and he believes that he contacted them about Eddie Heath. I have asked the PFA if it has any record of this letter, but have not received a response. Eddie Heath died in 1983, and so even if the FA had been informed about his misconduct there would have been no disciplinary steps that it could have taken against him.

8.3.11. The FA was aware of allegations against Bob Higgins, as soon as he had been charged in January 1989. It is possible that the FA was aware of allegations against Higgins before he was charged. There is also evidence that concerns about Higgins (but no allegations of abuse) were brought to the FA's attention a few years earlier by Billy Seymour, one of the young players enrolled at the National School (see: FA and Bob Higgins).

8.3.12. The FA was also aware of the case of NQ. In light of the ongoing criminal prosecution of NQ, I have addressed that matter in a confidential annexe.

CASE IN THE EARLY 1990S

8.3.13. There is a suggestion in the FA archives that an allegation was made in the early 1990s about an individual who was involved with a grassroots side which was not dealt with by the FA. This suggestion is made in a record of a telephone call made to the FA on January 24th 1997. A note of the call says that the caller had "reported [that] . . . several years ago [he reported an incident] to someone at The FA – can't remember who – no one was interested."

8.3.14. The caller, who was described by an FA employee as "a decent bloke, not a nutter, ex-policeman and referee", claimed that the incident that he had reported several years previously related to "an ex-manager and scout who was doing strange things with young boys, i.e. going camping, taking showers with them, cuddling them".

8.3.15. It has not been possible to track down the caller to see whether he can remember any more about his initial conversation, and there is no record of such a conversation in the FA archives. XX has no recollection of the matter. I cannot discount that the earlier disclosure was made, or that the response received was one of lack of interest as he says. At the time of any earlier call there was no referral system in place, and no organised arrangements for dealing with any concern or allegation of abuse. That said, it is possible that the caller may not even have called the “central FA”²⁸, but had spoken instead to one of the County FAs about his concerns, given that they related to grassroots football which would have been within the remit of the County FAs. In the circumstances I cannot reach a conclusion on this issue.

REFERRAL MANAGEMENT: 1996-1999

8.3.16. During the period 1996-1999, more allegations of child sex abuse came to the FA’s attention, although the number of cases remained relatively low. For much of this period, the FA did not have a formal system in place for how to deal with the allegations.

8.3.17. Indeed, when the FA employee took the call on January 24th 1997 (as discussed above), she emailed details of what she had been told to XX, and prefaced her report by saying: “I don’t know who to pass this to but you may be able to help”. When I spoke to XX about this correspondence, not only did he not recall the specific correspondence (which I do not find surprising), but he queried why he had been asked to help. XX did not think that this fell within his area of responsibility at the time.

8.3.18. Following the email, XX made contact with the caller, and set out the nature of the conversation in a memorandum to Robin Russell (copying in Graham Kelly and David Davies) on January 27th 1997. According to XX’s memorandum, the caller was particularly concerned about a named individual who was involved with a particular grassroots club.

8.3.19. According to XX’s memorandum, the caller had become aware of the individual through his involvement with the police, although no police investigation had ever been launched into the individual. XX asked Robin Russell for views as to how they should take this matter forward, suggesting that they should do so as a matter of urgency. One potential course of action noted in the memo was to make enquiries with the local police and the County FA. There is no evidence of what subsequently took place with respect to this matter.

OTHER CASES: 1996-1999

8.3.20. The FA archives show that a small number of individual cases were brought to the attention of the FA during the mid to late 1990s. There were referrals from statutory authorities – schools, local authority and/or police – sometimes directly to

28. I use the term the “central FA” to describe those working centrally for the FA at its head office: initially at Lancaster Gate, and then subsequently at Wembley. This is to be distinguished from those staff who worked in the various regions of the FA’s operation, as well as from the County FAs.

the FA, and sometimes to the local CFA who would pass the information up to the FA. From the materials that I have seen, the FA took the referrals seriously, and sought to provide assistance where this was possible.

8.3.21. The FA's response was generally reactive and *ad hoc*. There was no consideration at the time that a formal system of case management needed to be put in place. There was no consideration that the FA should notify its stakeholders – the leagues or affiliated clubs – of a particular process for referring allegations or concerns of abuse. The FA did not sense that this was necessary.

8.3.22. I will describe in some detail a number of the cases that I have found in the archives to illustrate the types of problem that the FA was required to deal with during this period and how the FA responded. For the later period (2000-2005), the number of cases that the FA had to deal with increased considerably, and I will summarise how they were addressed, including a number of failings in the case management system that I have identified.

CASE OF XB

8.3.23. I have seen correspondence relating to an individual who I will identify as XB. On October 15th 1996, West Midlands Police alerted the FA to an ongoing investigation into XB who was thought to be “a registered F.A. Coach and as such, acts as a Coach to children of all ages”. By October 18th 1996, the FA had ascertained that this individual was not recorded as a Preliminary Award Coach: I have seen a post-it note, undated, reading: “2.40pm – Please check to see if [XB] is a Prelim holder. This is v. urgent + needs to be done this afternoon”. On October 21st 1996, Charles Hughes replied to the police, noting that the FA's records showed no signs of XB holding any coaching qualifications, but asking to be advised of the outcome of the investigation in due course. (In December 2004, this individual was found guilty of 15 charges of indecent assault involving six boys aged 10-14 between 1982 and 2004. There is no indication that his conviction had a football-related element to it.) The materials that I have seen show that the FA acted promptly in response to the concerns about XB and acted appropriately.

CASE OF XC

8.3.24. Later in 1996, there is reference to another individual who I will identify as XC. On November 11th 1996, a local authority notified the FA of “grave concerns” regarding XC's involvement with young persons, and the fact of an ongoing investigation into the welfare of children under section 47 of the Children Act. After making internal inquiries, Charles Hughes responded on November 15th 1996 to the local authority to say that XC did not have FA coaching qualifications, nor was he a registered Soccer Star Examiner. Charles Hughes gave the local authority the contact details for the local County FA, in case it had information about XC. On November 22nd 1996, Charles Hughes confirmed that XC had not undertaken a medical course at FA level. It can be seen, therefore, that the FA acted promptly in response to concerns about XC and acted appropriately.

CASE OF XD

8.3.25. The first reference that I have seen to the FA taking action against anyone as

a result of an allegation of abuse concerns an individual who I shall call XD. XD was suspended in early 1997 from certain footballing activities following a referral about his potential misconduct. On February 10th 1997, XX told Tony Pickerin (copying in Robin Russell) that he had received a call from the Chairman of a County FA, which was employing XD. The County FA had learned from the relevant Local Education Authority that XD was the subject of an enquiry by the Department of Education in relation to his suitability to be a teacher or carry out any job which involved contact with children. XX informed Tony Pickerin that he had advised the Chairman of the County FA to raise the matter directly with XD. XX advised that: “If [XD] was involved in teaching or coaching under 18’s, he should be told that it was not appropriate for him to do so. This was on the basis that he should have told [the County] FA of something so fundamentally important as this”.

8.3.26. Shortly afterwards, the FA realised that the FA Medical Officer had recommended that XD should serve as a physiotherapist at festival of football being organised by the English Schools Football Association. XX advised Robin Russell and the FA Medical Officer that they should make contact with the County FA “in order to coordinate an approach to [XD] to find out exactly what the situation is”. On March 3rd 1997, the FA learned that XD had been suspended as a teacher following an investigation by the local education authority. XD was then suspended by the FA from carrying out duties at the festival. XD was also informed by Robin Russell that he should let the FA know of the outcome of the investigation so that the FA could review his position for future involvement in football.

8.3.27. I consider that the FA’s response was an appropriate one. The FA made the connection between the initial inquiry and the subsequent involvement of XD in footballing activity. The FA made inquiries as to what had taken place and then applied an appropriate sanction.

CASE OF XA

8.3.28. In mid-1997, a County FA expressed concerns about an individual, XA, to the local authority. The County FA notified the FA about the matter, and a report was prepared for a meeting between the FA, the NSPCC, the police, and social services. The advice from all parties was that XA “should eventually be removed from all football activities within the County based on his previous conviction and all interested parties notified”. Further investigations were required before this action could be taken.

8.3.29. It was known that XA was involved in youth football at the grassroots level as a Referees’ Secretary, a Referee, Club Secretary, and Team Manager and Coach. He was also a Steward for a professional team. He had befriended a young referee (aged 15). Under a different name (which was changed by deed poll), XA had several years previously been convicted of taking illicit photographs of young boys and simulating sexual acts for which he had received a suspended jail sentence.

8.3.30. On August 4th 1997, the local authority confirmed that, after referring those concerns to the NSPCC and holding strategy meetings, and after having met with XA himself on July 15th 1997, it was “the belief of [the social services] Department and the

Police that [the individual] does pose a risk to children. It was agreed that this decision be conveyed to you, with the request that you let me know what actions you will be taking in response to this information". (The same day, the local authority wrote to XA stating the same and that it would be notifying the County FA of its decision.)

8.3.31. On August 14th 1997, these letters were sent to the ASA for that body's information. It was suggested that the ASA "may wish to include reference to this person in your records". This was an attempt by the FA to share information about potential risks to other sports, as there was a fear that abusers could move undetected from one sport to another.

8.3.32. On August 21st 1997, the County FA wrote to "All Youth Leagues" and "Adjoining County Association" to pass on the information from social services about XA. The leagues were asked "to relay to all their member Clubs that the above mentioned person will not be involved in Youth Football in the future". On September 26th 1997, Robin Russell distributed the letter from the County FA to all of the FA's Regional and Assistant Regional Directors, and explained that "Social Services advised that [XA] should not be involved in any activity involving children". After taking advice from the FA, on July 13th 1998, the County FA banned XA from all footballing activities indefinitely.

8.3.33. Shortly afterwards, XA was convicted of taking indecent photographs, and of indecency with a child, and was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. XA's case was considered by the FA Executive Sub-Committee in early 1999. The Sub-Committee decided that, "As an urgent matter, under Rule 26(a)(x)", XA would "following conviction for offences relating to children, be suspended from all football activities sine die [indefinitely] and that he shall have the ability to apply for the suspension to be reviewed only after 1 August 1999".

8.3.34. Rule 26(a)(x) provided that it shall be "misconduct" if any:

"Official, Referee, Assistant Referee or Player committed any act or made any statement either verbally or in writing, or been responsible for conduct, continuing misconduct or any matter which, in the opinion of the Council, is considered to be unsporting, insulting or improper behaviour or likely to bring the game into disrepute."

This rule was a generic disciplinary provision relating to misconduct. It only applied to a situation where proof of an offence or incident occurring had been made out. A bespoke disciplinary rule to deal with child protection matters was not introduced until August 1999. (Further details about XA, and his subsequent attempts to have his suspension lifted are set out in the XA Case Study: see XA Case Study).

Box 22.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DISCIPLINARY RULE

The FA had been aware from early 1997 that introducing a rule to deal specifically with child protection was an important component of a comprehensive child protection system. In February 1997, David Sparkes, the Chief Executive of the ASA, wrote to Graham Kelly to inform him of the progress that swimming had made in the past year to develop child protection arrangements. One of the matters that had been worked on was the approval by the ASA Council of “strong laws for the protection of children”. A copy of those laws was provided to the FA. These rules allowed the ASA to suspend persons involved with swimming on an interim basis, where they were subject to formal investigation or where there was a reasonable basis to conclude that they had committed an offence against a child.

During 1997, XX gave consideration to the FA doing something similar, but this work was not completed. XX passed on this matter to KN in January 1998, following KN’s appointment as the FA’s National Development Officer (see: FA Child Protection Policy and Programme: 1998). In November 1998, XX sought advice about a proposed rule change from a firm of external solicitors. The re-drafted rules were provided to Tony Pickerin in December 1998. These were presented to the Executive Committee on May 6th 1999. Further revisions were made, and revised rules were presented to a special meeting of the FA Executive Committee on August 24th 1999, where they were approved.

The new rules were as follows:

“General

1. Any act, statement, conduct or other matter which harms a child or children, or poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children, shall constitute behaviour which is improper and brings the game into disrepute.
2. In these Regulations the expression ‘Offence’ shall mean any one or more of the offences contained in Schedule 1 to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and any other criminal offence which reasonably causes The Association to believe that the person accused of the offence poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children.
3. Upon receipt by The Association of:-
 - 3.1 notification that an individual has been charged with an Offence; or
 - 3.2 notification that an individual is the subject of an investigation by the Police, social services or any other authority relating to an Offence; or
 - 3.3 any other information which causes The Association reasonably to believe that a person poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children

then The Association shall have the power to order that the individual be suspended from all or any specific football activity for such period and on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit.

4. In reaching its determination as to whether an order under Regulation 2 should be made The Association shall give consideration, inter alia, to

the following factors:-

- 4.1 whether a child is or children are or may be at risk of harm;
- 4.2 whether the matters are of a serious nature;
- 4.3 whether an order is necessary or desirable to allow the conduct of any investigation by The Association or any other authority or body to proceed unimpeded.
5. The period of an order referred to in 2 above shall not be capable of lasting beyond the date upon which any charge under the Rules of The Association or any Offence is decided or brought to an end.
6. Where an order is imposed on an individual under Regulation 2 above, The Association shall bring and conclude any proceedings under the Rules of The Association against the person relating to the matters as soon as reasonably practicable.
7. Where a person is convicted or is made the subject of a caution in respect of an Offence, that shall constitute a breach of the Rules of The Association and The Association shall have the power to order the suspension of the person from all or any specific football for such period (including indefinitely) and on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit.
8. For the purposes of these Regulations, The Association shall act through its Council or any committee or sub-committee thereof, including the Executive Sub-Committee.
9. Notification in writing of an order referred to above shall be given to the person concerned and/or any club with which he is associated as soon as reasonably practicable.”

The rules were a significant improvement on what had previously existed. They provided a clear statement that harming children, or putting children at risk of harm, was something that would not be tolerated by the FA.

The rules gave the FA the power to suspend an individual at a time when an allegation of abuse was being investigated by third parties, or where the FA learned of information that led the FA to believe that the individual may pose a risk of harm. This gave the FA precautionary powers and did not require it to await a conviction or finding of abuse by some other body. In amending its Regulations in this way, the FA granted itself broad powers to investigate, determine and take action where it considered there to be risk to children.

There is no obvious explanation for why it took so long for the FA to introduce a new rule. The ASA had introduced some significant changes to its rules in early 1997, and the FA was aware of this. There is no indication from the materials in the FA archives that there was any specific resistance from the FA Council or other senior personnel within the organisation to making changes to the rules. It seems to me that the delay was a result of the lack of urgency with which the FA was approaching child protection more generally.

The number of cases being referred were small and may, at least in part, explain the lack of urgency. However, the rule change was important. On a practical level it gave the FA

greater powers to deal with the referrals that were being made. It was also important symbolically, as it demonstrated the seriousness with which the FA was taking child protection.

The new rule was disseminated throughout the FA. Tony Pickerin informed the FA's Education and Welfare Sub-Committee about the new rule on September 14th 1999. He explained that "The F.A. can now, on the basis of evidence without a charge, suspend individuals. There has already been one instance where a person has been banned from all football [a reference to XA]". A letter to County FAs was sent in October 1999. It was explained to them that "The Football Association has taken powers under this regulation to remove from the game of football those adults who are considered to be a risk to children." The rule change was brought to the attention of the FA's Referee's Committee at its meeting of November 3rd 1999.

Box 23.

CASE STUDY: XA

XA attended a hearing with the FA in 2000. His application to lift his suspension was refused. Later, XA changed his name and successfully applied to be a referee in the area of a County FA. He also served as a mentor to two sixteen year old boys who had been accepted as Assistant Referees. This shows that the FA's suspension regime had drawbacks. It was name-based, and individuals could try to get around the system by changing their names or using a different name. This is obviously a difficult matter for the FA to mitigate against.

In 2004, the FA permanently suspended XA from footballing activities. This was not effective in stopping XA from involving himself in affiliated football, however, as he continued to referee games at a 'Powerleague', an organisation affiliated to a County FA, on at least 13 occasions in 2005. This came to the FA's attention as one of the other referees informed the manager of a five-a-side company affiliated to the County FA which used the Powerleague site that XA was a sex offender. That other referee had apparently been one of XA's victims. It was, therefore, by chance that the FA was alerted to XA's further footballing activity.

Policing suspensions is a difficult matter. The FA has to rely on local clubs and leagues being aware of the suspension, making sure that they are asking the right questions of participants in the game, and checking with the County FA and central FA as to the suitability of those participants to involve themselves in the game. That had not been done here. Furthermore, at this point in time, the FA was rolling out the requirement for all referees to be subject to CRB checks (see: Screening and Self Declaration), and this may explain why checks were not made on XA's suitability.

XA was charged by the FA with breaching the terms of his suspension. He admitted the charge, but asserted that:

"No explanation is made to explain what 'all football and football activity' actually means. Taken literally would I not be permitted to a watch

football match nor kick a football in a park with appropriate people? My interpretation would be non-involvement with organised football clubs at grass roots level upwards.’

XA asked for clarity as to “whether or not I could play football with my work colleagues in corporate tournaments or social after-work friendlies should the opportunity arise”. XA was informed by the FA that whether he could play in “after-work friendlies” or corporate tournaments would depend on who he was intending to play with and in what circumstances.

The FA informed the police of XA’s activities, and he was recalled to prison for breaching the conditions of his licence arrangements.

In October 2006, the FA wrote to a number of Powerleague providers informing them of XA’s real name and his alias together with a photograph. They were asked to ensure that he did not involve himself in football in their area. An FA Case Manager explained to a probation meeting in July 2006 that the FA has “limited powers if he breaches (i.e. fine). FA requires support from police and probation and cannot guarantee [XA] is not involved in football under a different name”.

OBTAINING ADVICE FROM THE NSPCC: 1999

8.3.35. There is reference in the FA archives to the FA taking advice from the NSPCC in relation to reports of child abuse by persons involved with the game from at least the beginning of 1998. I am not aware, however, from the FA archives of the specific advice that was obtained or of any particular cases with which the NSPCC assisted in 1998. The FA archives contain evidence of more detailed support from the NSPCC in 1999 and onwards with respect to individuals who were causing the FA concern.

CASE OF KV

8.3.36. One such case was KV. KV was a coach for a County’s Schools FA, a Premiership Club scout, and a Vice-President of a local football club. He was arrested for indecency against a boy aged 11 in February 1999. Newspaper articles referring to this were provided to KN by the County FA. KN forwarded the information to XX, Robin Russell and Tony Pickerin all of whom were described by him as having “expertise in child welfare”. The local police asked the FA to send a representative to a meeting with social services. Tony Pickerin attended, along with two officers from Oxfordshire CFA.

8.3.37. The meeting was held on April 19th 1999, and the police advised that KV could not be charged. However, it was commented that there was “ongoing concern about possible inappropriate behaviour by him, towards boys, in the future”. It was agreed that the FA would seek to address this by banning KV from participation in football (but not from spectating), with the possibility of seeking a Sex Offender’s Order should the ban not prove effective. The concerns were that through his links with

football clubs, KV was able:

“[T]o gain regular, unsupervised access to young boys. This extends to organising tours out of County where accommodation is provided both for players and coaches. In addition, [KV] accepts that he has taken individual boys on short holidays when he sleeps with the child in his camper van. A number of young boys have complained of instances where [KV] has behaved inappropriately towards them, by kissing them on the face and had them sit on his knee during bus journeys.”

KV had received a previous conviction, and the police were concerned that: “Given his previous conviction, his current access to young boys and alleged inappropriate behaviour... children are at risk of being abused by him.”

8.3.38. On May 21st 1999, XX notified the County FA of the police’s view that it was not appropriate for KV to “have any contact with minors through coaching or other involvement in football”. KN requested the County FA to “take action to inform clubs with which [KV] is associated and any League, Competition or other County F.A. in whose activities [KV] may be involved either directly or indirectly.”

8.3.39. XX sought advice from GR of the NSPCC as to what should be done about KV. GR informed XX that his view was that given KV’s previous “Schedule 1 (Children and Young Person’s Act 1933) offence”, he was “an unsuitable person to have contact with children, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, in organised football.” As a result of this advice, the FA’s Executive Sub-Committee was requested to deal with this matter urgently, and on August 5th 1999, the FA suspended KV. The suspension was made under the FA’s general rule: Rule 26(a)(x) and was ostensibly based on the conviction that KV had received 40 years previously.

8.3.40. The suspension letter explained that the FA had received information in relation to behaviour of KV which it considered may constitute a charge against him pursuant to Rule 26(a)(x) of the FA’s Rules. It referred to behaviour leading to his conviction on September 27th 1960 of an offence of indecent assault on a male, and information relating to more recent allegations which were the subject of an investigation by the police. It was explained that statutory bodies had been consulted, as well as the NSPCC, who felt that “the offence itself renders you an unsuitable person to have contact with children, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, in organised football. The separate allegations made more recently give rise to similar concerns in relation to your unsuitability to have contact with children through football”. The letter explained that the conviction had been referred to the FA’s Executive Sub-Committee, which had determined that KV be suspended indefinitely from any involvement in football which led him to have contact with children.

8.3.41. The case of KV was referred to in an editorial in a local newspaper on August 23rd 1999 headed: “Why did the FA delay?” This accompanied a front-page article, headlined “FA Bans Soccer Coach: Sex offence shame”, regarding the decision to bar KV from football. The editorial noted that KV had “blotted his copy book more than 40 years ago. It is a matter of public record he was fined for an indecency offence. So how come it has

taken the Football Association all this time to ban [KV] from coaching young boys?” The substance of the decision was welcomed, but the paper asked: “what of the FA’s failure to take action all those years ago? It was irresponsible to the extreme”.

8.3.42. The local newspaper assumed that the FA should have known about KV’s previous conviction. However, as explained elsewhere in this report (see: Screening and Self Declaration), the FA was not entitled to access conviction information and had to rely on self-certification, which was notably unreliable, or List 99 which contained information about a limited number of individuals. The FA’s inaction, therefore, is explained by the statutory regime that was then in place, and not by any fault of the FA. The FA could not realistically be expected to have known about media reporting of KV’s offence forty years previously. When the FA learned of KV’s more recent alleged conduct, it acted expeditiously by taking steps to prevent KV from involving himself in football in his local area, and a few months later by suspending him from organised football entirely. This was appropriate action by the FA.

CASE OF NQ

8.3.43. I have also found in the FA archives the request for advice made to the NSPCC in 2000 with respect to NQ. In light of the ongoing prosecution of NQ this information is contained in a confidential annexe for the FA.

CASE OF XE

8.3.44. Another case that the FA asked the NSPCC to look at in 1999 was that of an individual who I shall call XE. He was a referee who also coached a number of youth teams. XE had not received a criminal conviction or caution for offences against children, but an accusation of abuse within the family context had been made. Discussions took place between the local County FA and XX. They agreed that pending further investigation, XE’s activities should be restricted. The County FA notified the club for which XE coached that it was the strong recommendation of the County FA that he should not be used in any coaching capacity due to the advice received from social services. In addition, the organisers of the youth tournament in Denmark that he travelled to on a yearly basis to referee, had been informed that he was not to be used in that competition.

8.3.45. The case was considered further by GR of the NSPCC, who informed the FA that consideration of his case within the County’s child protection procedures had produced the view that XE posed a risk to children and should not be employed to work with children in a paid or voluntary capacity. GR recommended to the FA that they should “follow this advice in the interest of the protection of children involved in organised football”.

8.3.46. Subsequently, the County FA withdrew XE’s registration as a referee and permanently suspended him from football. This seems to have been a reasonable response.

THE GRAHAM RIX CASE: 1999

8.3.47. One matter which received considerable media attention, and brought into focus the FA's approach to child protection, was the conviction of Graham Rix. Graham Rix was a former professional player for Arsenal and England, and was the youth team coach at Chelsea. Graham Rix admitted two charges of unlawful sex with a 15 year old girl and indecently assaulting her. On March 26th 1999, he was jailed for 12 months, and placed on the sex offenders' register for 10 years. A newspaper article about Graham Rix's conviction that appeared in *The Guardian* the following day under the headline "Top soccer coach jailed in sex case", referred to the trial judge's sentencing remarks:

"There is no evidence in this case at all to suggest, let alone to establish, that this girl herself deliberately set out to seduce you, no evidence that she was the one who made all the running and no evidence of her initiating any sexual activity.' The judge said that the girl had regarded Rix as a kind man and trusted him and 'therefore was willing to go at your invitation to your house and your hotel bedroom."

8.3.48. The article also referred to the fact that after the hearing:

"Chelsea football club said that they would keep Rix's job open for him.... [a senior executive], said: 'He is probably unemployable in football, but the job will be kept open and he will return to his post. This is the wish of the club, the wish of the manager ... and the wish of the players."

In addition, the article said that: "The Football Association is to look into the matter once it has all the facts of the case and after discussions with Chelsea officials".

8.3.49. From the FA archives, it can be seen that the matter was raised at the FA's Executive Committee meeting on April 13th 1999, which "noted the conviction of Mr Graham Rix and that any considerations for the FA arising out of this would be considered by the office in the normal course".

8.3.50. On June 10th 1999, David Davies (Executive Director of the FA) wrote to Chelsea to say that the FA had considered the issues brought to light through the proceedings against Graham Rix, and in particular having regard to "1. The Rules of The Football Association which give disciplinary jurisdiction and; 2, The Football Association's child protection policy and the Football Academy system." It was noted that:

"The conviction of Mr Rix is, clearly, a very serious matter. However, taking into account all the circumstances, The Football Association would not propose to issue formal disciplinary proceedings. Mr Rix has publicly apologised for the shame which his conduct has brought on himself, the club and the game. He has been punished in the severest way by a prison sentence. As to the future, it is agreed that Mr Rix shall not have any unsupervised contact with minors through his involvement with football, at all, and in particular through his employment at Chelsea Football Club. It was agreed that Mr Rix should have no contact with minors specifically through the Chelsea Football Academy."

8.3.51. This letter was drafted by XX. It referred to a press statement that the FA had drafted and planned to publish. This stated that:

“Following the conviction of Graham Rix for sexual offences, a meeting has taken place between The Football Association and officials of Chelsea FC.

Uppermost in everyone’s minds was the need for The F.A.’s child protection policies to be respected and upheld.

It was noted that Graham Rix has apologised for an episode which has brought shame upon himself, the game and his club.

It has been agreed that Graham Rix should not have any unsupervised contact with children through his involvement with Chelsea, or elsewhere in football. In particular he will have no contact with minors through Chelsea FC’s Football Academy. The club will closely monitor this, particularly through their Academy Director.”

8.3.52. In the FA archives, I have found a draft letter to a Queen’s Counsel (“the QC”) – a senior Barrister – asking for legal advice with respect to the Graham Rix matter. The draft letter is dated March 23rd 1999. In the draft, it was stated that Graham Rix has pleaded guilty to two offences of indecency with a 15 year old girl and was due to be sentenced. It was stated that the media suggested that Graham Rix had used his position as the first team coach at Chelsea FC as influence over the 15 year old girl, and that he had indecently assaulted her at his home and supplied her with cannabis. Graham Rix had admitted that he had sexual intercourse with the 15 year old girl at the team hotel on the night before a FA Premier League game. It was explained that there were “two aspects of concern: 1. The F.A. seek your views as to whether or not Mr Rix may be charged with a breach of disciplinary regulations relating to his misconduct, namely (a) child sex offence; and (b) supply of cannabis.” A copy of the relevant rules, taken from the FA Handbook were enclosed, and Rule 26(a)(x) was specifically referred to. The letter asked whether Rix’s conduct could “be said to be contemplated within the ambit of The F.A. Rules? If it is, do you consider it to be in breach of the Rules?”

8.3.53. The second point was:

“You will be aware of the need for sports to promote child protection policies. Regardless of the sex of the child, these matters are such that Mr Rix will be convicted of a child sex offence and The F.A. will have to act to prevent him from involvement in football with ‘minors’. That is in itself problematic as ‘minor’ in sex offence terms may be different to the definitions used elsewhere.”

8.3.54. The letter also enclosed a copy of the FACA policy. There is no record in the archive of any response to this draft letter. I have asked the QC about the matter. The QC has no recollection of being instructed on the matter, and there is no record of the QC receiving payment for advice on this matter. The QC was very busy at that time on other work. If the FA did, in fact, seek to instruct the QC on this matter, it is most likely that he was he was told that the QC was too busy to accommodate the request.

It is possible that another barrister or law firm were instructed to give advice on the matter, although there is no evidence of this in the FA archives, or in any of the materials still held by the law firms which the FA engaged during this time period and which was made available to the Review.

8.3.55. When asked by me about his involvement in this matter, David Davies said that “The decision . . . not to charge [Rix] and take FA proceedings against him would’ve been taken by our disciplinary department, not by me.” The person who drafted the letter of instruction to the QC was asked whether he remembered his involvement with this case. He did not have any recollection.

8.3.56. In September 2005, Graham Rix asked for his case to be reviewed. He was asked to complete a disclosure request to the Criminal Records Bureau, which he did. This led in 2006 to his permanent suspension from football or footballing activity with girls under 18.

8.3.57. The Graham Rix case was commented upon by others who were caught up in the FA disciplinary processes. Towards the end of 2000, an officer of a County FA asked Tony Pickerin about perceived inconsistencies between the treatment of KV (see: above) and Graham Rix: KV receiving an indefinite suspension. It was said that “If we are to have credibility in Child Protection we need to stop these apparent inconsistencies in punishment”. Tony Pickerin’s response was that both men were Schedule 1 offenders and should therefore be on the Sex Offenders Register.

“[KV]’s original offence involved male children. As you are aware the Authorities advised the Football Association that following their latest investigation he remains a threat to young children - he has operated through football to gain access. It was decided therefore that children were at risk if [KV] continued to have access through football related activity. Rix offended with an underage female. Although on the register his work in football does not expose any young females to risk. He did not use football, other than by way of his assumed status, to aid his offence. Whilst I understand that people would want all treated equally we need to be cognisant of the varying circumstances.”

8.3.58. Tony Pickerin continued “Privately you and I agree that Rix offended as we were developing F.A. Policy and Procedures. Any case in the future would be dealt with solely by The Football Association. This has the potential to bring us into conflict with a range of other organisations”, referring presumably to football clubs and the various professional leagues.

8.3.59. I consider that the FA’s response to the Rix matter in 1999 represents a failing. Graham Rix had committed a criminal offence, albeit outside of an immediate football environment, which in my view had brought the game into disrepute. It was in both the FA’s interests and in the public interest that the FA take, and be seen to take, the matter very seriously. That required the FA to bring disciplinary proceedings against Graham Rix and apply a disciplinary punishment. It was not sufficient for the FA to have agreed with Graham Rix’s club that there would be no unsupervised contact with minors.

This should have been the FA's disciplinary decision. By doing so, the FA would have sent a powerful message that it was taking child protection seriously, and was doing so irrespective of the status and renown of the perpetrator of the sexual abuse.

8.3.60. It is possible that, in fact, disciplinary action may have been less restrictive and of minimal practical effect. However, the symbolism of the disciplinary action would have been important.

FA SUSPENSIONS IN 1999: YA AND XF

8.3.61. The FA initially set up a sub-committee of its Board to deal with suspension decisions. One of the earliest cases dealt with by the FA Board Sub-Committee was that of XA (discussed above). Other early cases were YA and an individual I shall refer to as XF.

8.3.62. YA was first brought to the FA's attention in a letter dated September 23rd 1999. A County FA Football Development Officer had learned that YA, a founder member of a Women's and Girl's Football Club, was under investigation by social services and the police, concerning an allegation of sexual abuse towards a young girl, and apparently had admitted committing the offence. In a letter to Tony Pickerin, the County FA representative asked "If there is anything either the club, the County F.A. or I should do at this stage."

8.3.63. Tony Pickerin replied on September 29th 1999 to say that, as the matter was "in the hands of the authorities, I believe that no further action should be taken at this time." However, Tony Pickerin said that:

"The Football Association will need to be informed of any outcome of the investigation being conducted by Social Services and the Police. I assume that the Chief Executive of the ... County Football Association is aware of your letter to me concerning this matter."

8.3.64. Tony Pickerin forwarded the correspondence with the County FA to XX. He said that: "I assume that 'a watching brief' on this case until there is a clear outcome should be our position". XX and Tony Pickerin appear to have discussed the case on October 5th 1999, with a handwritten note by XX simply recording: "Police investigating". No decision was taken to suspend YA from footballing activities pending the outcome of the investigation. This seems to me to have been a poor decision. The FA's new rules allowed for suspension in this kind of situation, and the allegation against the individual was serious.

8.3.65. On January 28th 2000, XX sent the YA correspondence to the FA's Board Sub-Committee, noting that YA had now been "convicted of one count of gross indecency and two counts of indecent assault on young girls". The Sub-Committee agreed with the recommendation that YA be "removed from the game as a matter of urgency", and XX informed County FA of the decision on February 4th 2000. XX asked the County FA to "take action to inform any other clubs with which [YA] is or may be asso-

ciated and any League, Competition or other County F.A. in whose activities [YA] may be involved either directly or indirectly”. The decision to suspend YA was approved by the FA Board on February 22nd 2000.

8.3.66. On December 21st 1999, the FA was notified of another case involving an individual I shall refer to as XF. A social services officer from a local authority wrote to Tony Pickerin to confirm that she had advised that XF be suspended from coaching activities of children at his football club, as a result of information that XF had been arrested and charged with indecency offences against children. The matter was discussed by Tony Pickerin and XX. On January 14th 2000, XX circulated the correspondence to the Board Sub-Committee, recommending that XF be suspended from coaching activities pursuant to the new disciplinary rule (see box 22: Introduction of the Disciplinary Rule).

8.3.67. The FA’s Board Sub-Committee decided to suspend XF, following which XX informed the County FA on January 28th 2000 of the suspension, and requested the County FA to cascade the information to clubs, leagues, competitions and other CFAs in whose areas XF “may be involved either directly or indirectly”.

8.3.68. On January 31st 2000, the FA wrote to XF to inform him that he was:
 “[C]onsidered an unsuitable person to have contact with children, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity and you are therefore suspended from all football activities involving children (under 18s) forthwith. We have written to the relevant authorities in this regard.”

The decision to suspend XF was approved by the FA Board at its meeting on February 20th 2000.

8.3.69. There is no obvious reason as to why XF was suspended pending his criminal trial, but YA was not.

CASE OF XG: 1999

8.3.70. A particularly difficult case for the FA during this period (1996-1999) (and continuing beyond this period) was that of XG. XG was permanently suspended from all footballing activities by the FA in July 2002. He subsequently changed his name (he reversed his first and last names) and thereby managed to circumvent the suspension. This is an example of a situation where in spite of the FA’s efforts to keep certain individuals out of the game, the system cannot be watertight, especially where there are individuals who are prepared to go to great lengths to continue having access to children.

8.3.71. XG first came to the attention of two County FAs (I shall describe as CFA #1 and CFA #2) in October 1999, when they were contacted by the local police to inform them that XG was “a suspect in a serious indecent assault on a boy aged 15 years”. On learning of this information, CFA #1 suspended XG’s registration under what it de-

scribed as the FA's "Child Protection policy". CFA #1 explained that it had "received information of a serious nature", and was left "with no alternative" to suspending his registration as a referee until further notice. It stated that CFA #2 as his "parent body, are similarly bound to suspend your registration". XG was informed that "You are, thereby, not permitted to operate in any capacity within football either as a referee/match official or Referees Society member".

8.3.72. The Secretary of a branch of CFA #2's Referees' Association wrote to CFA #1 to say that CFA #2 had not suspended XG. The Secretary contended that although the society took allegations of abuse seriously, CFA #1's "decision is not within the spirit of the new child protection policy". There was concern as to the basis of the decision. It was suggested that the alleged incident took place over two years ago, was not football related and no decision about prosecution had been made. The Secretary asked CFA #1 to reconsider its decision and allow XG some involvement in football: it was suggested that XG had given an undertaking not to be involved in youth football pending the result of the police investigation.

8.3.73. The CFA #1 replied on November 10th 1999, maintaining that "we have acted very much within the spirit of the F.A.'s child protection policy". CFA #1 quoted from the FA's child protection policy (which had been approved by the FA Council – albeit this was not the document that was subsequently introduced and launched to the public in May 2000: (see: FA Child Protection Policy and Programme 2000-2005)):

"Every child who plays football should be able to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from abuse. This is the responsibility of every adult involved in youth football....The Football Association recognises that the game has a duty towards children, defined as those under 18 years of age, who enjoy playing football and that it has an obligation to ensure that those clubs and organisations providing football opportunities for children do so to the highest possible standard of care."

8.3.74. In light of the allegation and police investigation, CFA #1 asked, "how could anyone justify allowing [XG] to continue within the game while simultaneously claiming to support the F.A.'s policy?" CFA #1 explained: "It is essential that those children attracted to and participating in football do so in a quality, safe and enjoyable environment." And that "The F.A.'s principle on child protection is: the child's protection is paramount, all suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. This we believe we have done."

8.3.75. In the meantime, on November 8th 1999, CFA #2 wrote to XG, and said that the CFA #1 had been "quite correct in the action they have taken which is in accordance with the provisions of the newly devised Football Association's Child Protection Policy". However, CFA #2 said that: "providing that you will give a written undertaking that all the time the allegations made against you remain unresolved you will completely divorce yourself from all activities involving persons of eighteen years and under then we would have no objections in your continuing to be involved in football where all participants are adult".

8.3.76. On November 25th 1999, CFA #1 wrote to Tony Pickerin at the FA to inform him about the case. The matter was forwarded to the NSPCC for advice. On December 22nd 1999, the NSPCC replied, expressing regret that “it is not possible to comment or advise in relation to [XG] without more information. At this stage the alleged assault appears to be under investigation by the Police”. If convicted, that would “render him unsuitable to work with children in an unsupervised capacity”. However, it was noted that if a prosecution did not proceed, it would be necessary for the FA to make an assessment of any future risk based on a balance of probability, and to do this “it would be necessary to assess the evidence from the young man said to be the subject of the assault, any evidence from witnesses and from [XG himself]”. There was insufficient information to make an informed judgement at this stage. It was recommended that the suspension should remain until the FA could make a judgement based on the police investigation.

8.3.77. On May 15th 2000, CFA #1 notified Tony Pickerin of an incident in which XG reportedly “presented a trophy to an under-13 team on behalf of [a named Schools FA] and was seen in a dressing room. This is only hearsay however I think you should be informed.” Tony Pickerin forwarded the letter to CFA #2.

8.3.78. XG was convicted and imprisoned later in 2000. Following his conviction, Tony Pickerin wrote to CFA #2 informing them of XG’s conviction and that he would be placed on the Protection of Children Act List and the Sex Offenders Register. He asked CFA #2 to ensure that XG was not involved in any affiliated football related activity.

8.3.79. XG was released from prison in 2002. Following his release, the Referees Committee of the FA removed his name permanently from its list of Registered Referees. Before doing so, XX had written to CFA #2 explaining that it needed to consider whether XG’s removal from the Referees List would be proportionate to the offence. XX said that “I have to say that, bearing in mind that the conviction relates to a minor (i.e. an under 18) and open age football commences much earlier, then removal from the Referees List may well be appropriate and proportionate”.

8.3.80. Following his release from prison, and in spite of the suspension, XG continued to referee under a different name (the reversal of his first and last names). When this was brought to the attention of CFA #1, and the Amateur Football Alliance (an affiliate of the FA), they sent out a circular informing their members of his suspension. This did not stop XG from refereeing. In January 2004, the Amateur Football Alliance sent a letter to all League Secretaries saying that:

“I have been advised that the above named person, who has been banned from ALL football and has had his referee registration withdrawn, was seen to be refereeing an AFA match last Saturday.

May I remind all Leagues that he should NOT be given any matches to referee as he is banned by The Football Association following his conviction for indecently assaulting a minor.

I understand that he operates in two ways to get a match, namely he looks for matches that appear uncovered by a referee and ‘volunteers’ and he tells people that he can referee if he does so without a badge and that the players

are over 18.

This is NOT the case and I should be grateful if you will ensure that ALL your clubs are advised of such and of his ban.”

8.3.81. The FA was informed in January 2004 of the outcome of a Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel meeting concerning XG. The FA was asked to circulate a pro-forma setting out XG’s name and his alias and saying that he has “a conviction for Indecent Assault on a boy under the age of 16 years. He is known to frequent football grounds in order to referee matches and these football grounds have children or youths playing”. If he was seen at a football ground, the police should be alerted. The pro-forma was not to be circulated at grounds where XG was refereeing adult games and there were no youth football teams playing or training at them.

8.3.82. In August 2016, XG was convicted for further offences for indecent assault: one from the 1970s and one from the 1990s. One of XG’s victims had been befriended by him on a referee’s course. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison. In July 2017, it was reported that XG had been given an additional two years to his prison sentence, following his admission to three further acts of gross indecency with a child under the age of 14 in the 1970s.

DISCIPLINARY CASE MANAGEMENT: 2000-2005

Formalising Case Management Processes

8.3.83. From October 2000, the FA introduced a more formal and structured case management system. This new system included monthly case meetings to follow up and monitor cases. The FA also entered into a service level agreement with the NSPCC for advice concerning individual cases. At various stages the procedures were reviewed and updated by the FA. This was necessary as the volume of cases increased, as more people became aware of the possibility of reporting concerns to the FA.

8.3.84. Most of the FA’s case management processes changed following a review of the case management files by WK, an employee of the NSPCC, in 2002.

8.3.85. WK initially carried out an audit of the case files. The audit revealed that while no further action was required on any of the closed files²⁹ there were a number of issues in the case management system which included that (i) some cases had been allowed to “drift” without proper resolution; (ii) in other cases key pieces of information had not, or had not been accurately, recorded; (iii) there was a need to develop appropriate processes for following up on cases: in particular, it was noted that where an individual had been sentenced to a long prison sentence the FA should ensure that it followed this up at the end of that sentence and provided appropriate guidance; and (iv) the FA needed to ensure consistent decision making based, as far as possible, on objective facts. I have no reason to dispute WK’s conclusions.

29. A closed case management file is one where either a final decision to suspend permanently has been made or where, following investigation, the FA made a decision to take no further action. An open case management file is one where the FA’s investigation is still ongoing, and the case has not yet been closed.

8.3.86. A further review which built on the audit of the FA's case management systems was completed by WK later in the year. WK's report explained that the FA's Child Protection Department had recognised that there was "a need to not only review the current way in which cases and instances of child abuse and poor practice are managed, but also to set up new procedures and policies that will help ensure that best practice in case management is adhered to". Noting that it was "less than three years since the FA formally embraced the necessity to address child protection issues", the FA had made "considerable and admirable progress".

8.3.87. Raising awareness of child protection issues had led to an increased level of referrals and expressions of concern. The number of referrals dealt with by the FA were, as at: September 2001 – 135 (59 closed, 76 open); February 2002 – 195 (83 closed, 112 open); May 2004 – 607 (428 closed 179 open); October 2004 – 676 (565 closed, 111 open); February 2005 – 709 (590 closed, 119 open). I note for completeness that the majority of these referrals did not relate to child sexual abuse, but would have concerned other child protection concerns such as general bad practice, bullying, racist behaviour and physical aggression.

8.3.88. When WK carried out his review, the FA's case load included: 127 closed files, and 94 open files. This had been categorised by the FA as follows:

“Category 1 (Cases involving Schedule 1 Offenders or persons with previous or suspected criminal offences) 34

Category 2 (Nature of concerns requiring onward referral to a Statutory Agency) 50

Category 3 (Concerns justifying action via FA Disciplinary Procedures) 50

Category 4 (Cases dealt with by other means (advised, via training, warned, monitored locally etc) 35”

8.3.89. WK's report highlighted that the FA's case records were inadequate: they did not consistently record the case by name, which would cause problems when cross checking or retrieving information. The report identified that for those working with the County FAs, there were concerns about "the delay in cases being acted upon or about the lack of communication of case progress back to the County". WK considered that this needed "urgent resolution". In particular, there was concern about the delays in reaching outcomes in Category 1 cases, as "these cases potentially pose the greatest threat to the safety of children and young people". The delay was "often the lack of timely response from statutory agencies, most commonly the Police, despite persistent requests for information or response from the FA".

8.3.90. WK also identified that "there are some instances when, although a case is concluded, there is still a process of monitoring the potential continued or future involvement in football of an individual about whom there are serious concerns. There may also be the need to review the case at a later date, e.g. at the end of a prison sentence or period of suspension, in particularly concerning circumstances. A 'bring forward system' as detailed previously would help with this process." The FA did seek to introduce this system.

8.3.91. During this period, amendments were made to the FA's disciplinary rules. In 2003, it was confirmed that, where applicable, the standard of proof would be the civil standard and that the FA should be aware of the need for its actions to be proportionate. By the end of 2005, along with other national governing bodies, the FA was moving towards a model which looked at whether there was an ongoing or future risk to children, rather than seeking to prove that an incident of abuse had occurred.

8.3.92. From 2004, the rules were amended so that all County FAs (in particular, the County Secretary and the Child Protection Officer within each County FA) would be informed when an individual was permanently suspended from all football. This was an important amendment as it meant that there was a far better chance of suspension decisions being policed as County FAs could know whether an individual had already been suspended by the FA. There was probably reasonable justification for the earlier practice – of sharing the information with the particular County FA with whom an individual was associated – as there were legitimate concerns about “naming and shaming”, and not circulating information beyond those who had a “need to know”.

8.3.93. At the Rules Committee on April 13th 2005, a further rule change was implemented that required all persons in positions whose normal duties include caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children would be required to obtain an Enhanced Disclosure via the FA's CRB process. This allowed the FA to demand that a wider group of participants in the game had to provide the FA with permission to conduct a CRB check or face suspension.

8.3.94. At the Disciplinary Sub-Committee on 12 October 2005, a policy change regarding failures to respond to correspondence was announced: where participants failed to respond to correspondence the participant would usually be fined £250, along with the imposition of a suspension from all football and football activities. This enabled the FA to deal effectively with and monitor individuals who refused or failed to engage with an investigation. That failure would be recorded against their individual FA Number ('FAN') and, should they attempt to engage in football activity in a different area or club, an alert could be raised.

Referral Processes

8.3.95. A referral to the FA occurred in two main ways. First, where a CRB check disclosed information. Second, through referral by the County FA CPO, or by another statutory agency, such as the police or social services, or a member of the public. In addition a small number of cases were referred by the NSPCC following calls to the helpline. Only at the very end of my review period was the Football League referring cases to the FA Case Management Team. At the end of the review period, the Premier League was still dealing with matters internally without reference to the FA case management process.

8.3.96. At the very early stages of the FA's case management system, the Premier League had noted a concern that the FA's policies did not require an initial, or first, referral in all instances of concern to be made to local social services or police in accor-

dance with local ACPC (Area Child Protection Committee) arrangements. This issue was promptly resolved. In the Child Protection Procedures and Practices Handbook 2001 the advice was clear that the initial, or first, referral should be made to social services or the police.

8.3.97. Following referral, the FA would make a decision as to whether to suspend an individual pending the outcome of the investigation. Initially this was made by an FA officer without further consideration. By the end of the Review period, any initial decision to suspend was considered by the Child Protection, Ethics and Sports Equity Review Commission (the “Commission”).

8.3.98. The Commission was a sub-committee of the FA Disciplinary Committee and had the authority to conduct disciplinary hearings in respect of charges of misconduct related to child protection concerns, or behaviours that contravened the FA’s Child Protection Policy and Procedures or Best Practice Guidelines or Code of Conduct. A Chairperson for the Commission was selected from its membership. The Commission incorporated at least one additional independent member with expertise in Child Protection matters who could provide objective advice to the Commission. Individuals with particular expertise were co-opted onto the Commission at times when specialist advice and input was needed (e.g. regarding disability, race etc). An individual whose case was heard by the Commission had the right to an independent appeal. The FA Child Protection Appeals Commission was chaired by an independent chairperson – a senior Barrister, a QC, with child protection expertise – sitting with two members of the FA Disciplinary Commission.

8.3.99. Where an allegation was under investigation by the police, or social services, the FA awaited the outcome of that investigation before commencing its own investigation. Where there was subsequently a prosecution, the FA would generally keep the individual on an interim suspension until the prosecution was completed and would rely on the police investigation to determine risk. Where the police decided not to prosecute, or where the concern related to poor practice, which was not necessarily an offence, the FA would then conduct its own investigation.

8.3.100. By the end of the Review period, the person under investigation was also generally required to agree to a new CRB check and provide two character witnesses. If the CRB check revealed, or if the allegation involved, a historic allegation, the individual was required to provide an explanation for the incident and any evidence which demonstrated that they did not continue to pose a risk to children. By the end of the Review period, more complex cases would involve a risk assessment being conducted by the NSPCC, and later by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation (a charity dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse).

CASE MANAGEMENT FILE REVIEW: 2000-2005

Introduction

8.3.101. As part of the Review, I have investigated the way in which the FA dealt with concerns of child abuse that were referred to it in the relevant period. This involved a review of what are described by the FA as open and closed case management files.

8.3.102. Over 600 case files were reviewed by the Review Team. This included all case files recorded on the case management database by the FA which had been commenced before the end of 2003. It also included a sample (20%) of those files which had been commenced before the end of 2010, weighted towards those cases which were more likely to concern child sexual abuse in the relevant period (1970-2005), and all of those marked 'historic' and 'sexual' in the FA's 'open' case management system (around 170 files). A total of 233 closed files were marked as relevant by the Review Team: that is, they concerned an allegation of child sexual abuse that occurred in the relevant period, or an offence which was related to child sexual abuse including the possession of indecent images of children, or indicated grooming type behaviour. A further 28 child sex abuse files worked on by QX, who was involved in advising on and prosecuting child protection matters under the FA's disciplinary procedures, were also reviewed.

8.3.103. The Review adopted a sampling approach to the files commenced between 2004 and 2010, as a matter of proportionality. During the early period of the FA's case management system, the FA did not maintain a systematic record of what its files related to: for example, whether the file concerned an allegation of sexual abuse, bullying, physical abuse, or a criminal offence. Instead the files were categorised as Category 1 (Cases involving Schedule 1 Offenders or persons with previous or suspected criminal offences), Category 2 (Nature of concerns requiring onward referral to a Statutory Agency), Category 3 (Concerns justifying action via FA Disciplinary Procedures), Category 4 (Cases dealt with by other means (advised, via training, warned, monitored locally etc.)). It was not proportionate to examine every case management file. However, if the Review Team had found substantial flaws in the case management process, then the Review would have considered the matter further, in particular as to whether to expand the number of files being reviewed. Ultimately, this was not necessary as while the Review Team did find some errors in individual cases, these did not amount to a substantial flaw in the system itself.

Summary of Findings of Case Management Review

8.3.104. Of the 261 closed case files that were marked as relevant or were files worked on by QX, 67 involved an allegation of abuse within the world of football. The remainder 194 involved an allegation of abuse that took place outside of the world of football.

8.3.105. As a result of looking at these case files, a number of observations can be made about the allegations of abuse investigated by the FA:

104.1 All of the individuals who were investigated by the FA in relation to allegations of child sexual abuse, whether that abuse occurred within or outside of football, were men.

104.2 The substantial majority of cases investigated by the FA involved allegations of abuse which took place outside of the world of football. This is particularly so for those cases which were investigated after 2004/5, when the FA introduced widespread requirements for CRB checks by those seeking to be involved in the game.

104.3 Of the 55 which involved abuse within the world of football, and which were investigated before the end of 2005, 13 involved allegations relating to girls, and 42 involved allegations about boys. It is not surprising that the majority of allegations related to boys, rather than girls. While more and more girls are playing football, for the period covered by the Review it was still very much a sport dominated by boys.

104.4 Where the allegations related to abuse within the world of football, the majority of these, 40 (out of 67) involved the player's coach.

104.5 In the minority of these cases, seven out of 67, the individual being investigated only acted as the Referee. A further four cases involved an individual who performed the joint role of coach and referee.

104.6 The vast majority of allegations related to individuals who were involved with non-professional grassroots clubs.

104.7 Most of the allegations of abuse concerned incidents that took place away from football grounds, although some abuse took place in changing rooms. Generally, the abuse took place when the coach had responsibility and was alone with the child (this was often on trips, or at the coach's home).

104.8 Most of the investigations involved single or a small number of incidents alleged against an individual, with only one or two boys as the alleged victims.

104.9 The allegations were usually referred to the FA by a County FA, or by a statutory agency (police or social services). Where the referral was made by a County FA, the FA generally contacted the statutory agencies promptly.

104.10 In the vast majority of cases, the FA permanently suspended the individual concerned. Where the allegation involved abuse of a girl, the suspension was generally from women's football; where the allegation involved abuse of a boy, the suspension was from all football activity. In the early period, the FA would occasionally suspend the individual's involvement in the under 16 game, rather than under 18. This caused difficulties as adult games would often involve individuals over 16 but under 18 years old.

104.11 The FA frequently experienced difficulty policing suspensions in the grassroots game, often because of the practice that suspensions were not published widely: the FA would only tell the County FA responsible officer and the clubs that were registered as being linked to that individual. A breach of the suspension was usually reported to the FA by the County FA. In these circumstances, the FA would generally (i) fine the individual (ii) fine the club, and (iii) attempt to work closely with the relevant local authority or the police.

104.12 Of the abuse that took place outside of football, this was mostly perpetrated by men against girls, and much of this took place within the family

structure (including step-children and extended family). Some involved the downloading of child pornographic images. Other than where the abuse took place in the home, the allegations were generally single or isolated incidents. Most of the cases came to light through the CRB checking process, although a small number of allegations were self-reported by referees, and some by the County FA or statutory agency.

8.3.106. Many, but not all, of the cases marked open were cases which had been reported to the FA since Andy Woodward's interview with *The Guardian* in November 2016. As these investigations were ongoing the FA provided updates to the Review to ensure that the records the FA Review Team were considering were comprehensive. The review of the open case management files, identified by the FA as historic sexual abuse allegations, was focused on whether or not any of the more recent disclosures revealed evidence of an earlier failure on the part of the FA or a club to identify or deal with a specific allegation of abuse. The reason for this difference of approach was that the terms of reference of the Review did not include consideration of the more recent (post 2005) case management systems and as such these files were only relevant if they disclosed an earlier failure on the part of the FA or a club: no such evidence was found.

Issues in the FA's Case Management Processes

8.3.107. In conducting the review of the FA's case management files a number of potential areas of concern about how matters were handled were identified. I asked the FA to comment on these areas of concern, and to assist this process I identified the relevant files that demonstrated the particular concern.

8.3.108. In response, the FA explained that (i) the documents retained in the case management files may not be a complete picture of what occurred in relation to that individual, (ii) it was possible that further steps were taken which were not recorded, and (iii) in many cases the employees which dealt with those cases on a day-to-day basis were no longer employed by the FA and therefore not able to explain their decision making. These comments were all valid. Indeed, even where employees were available, most of the cases in question related to decisions taken over 10 or 15 years ago, and I would not expect that an employee would retain a detailed knowledge of the case in question.

8.3.109. The FA also pointed out that the cases I highlighted to them reflected a small number and as such could not be said to represent a general failing on the part of the FA. I agree with this. There does not appear to have been any general failing on the part of the FA in the case management processes. However, I did identify a number of cases where it appears to me that errors were made.

DELAY IN TAKING APPROPRIATE ACTION

8.3.110. In a small number of cases, I identified a delay between an issue being brought to the FA's attention, and the FA taking interim action, namely suspending the individual in question. The FA accepted that there had on occasion been a delay,

but added that without a full understanding of the other priorities at that time, I did not have full knowledge of the relevant facts. I accept that at times the FA had to make difficult decisions about prioritising one case over another where there was a finite team of individuals working at any one time, and the FA may have sought to direct resources at those cases where there was perceived to be a more imminent risk of harm. Even so, this would still mean that there were cases with a potential risk of child sexual abuse which were not being dealt with.

8.3.111. Furthermore, I also note that during this time there were repeated concerns brought to the FA's attention about the child protection team being understaffed, which were only finally resolved in 2005 when, as explained elsewhere (see: FA Child Protection Policy and Programme: 2000-2005) the FA appointed two additional members of the case management team.

8.3.112. In one case, the FA received notice that the individual was charged with indecent assault on a minor in November 2000. The matter was considered by the relevant sub-committee on 9 November 2000, but no actions were taken until April 2001 when a suspension letter was sent out.

8.3.113. In another case, the FA received a referral from the NSPCC in July 2002, alleging that an individual involved in football, VM, had raped his daughter when she was under 10 years old. The FA contacted the local authority in April 2003, some eight months later. It is not clear to me why this delay occurred. It is also unclear why the FA only contacted the local authority and not the relevant police force (although I note that if the local authority had concerns it would also refer the matter to the police). It may be that steps were taken between July 2002 and April 2003 that are not recorded in the case file, and I am also aware that in May 2003 the local authority had assessed that it would take no further child protection measures with respect to VM's other children. It is certainly the case, however, that VM was not suspended until sometime later after his conviction for the rape in 2004.

8.3.114. In another case, the FA was notified by the police in May 2005 that an individual was being investigated for possessing child abuse images. The individual was suspended from his club, but the FA did not suspend him for a further three months while it obtained further information from the police. From the file it appears that the delay in obtaining information was not the fault of the FA, rather it appears to have been because there was a delay in receiving information from police in this instance. That said, in my view it would have been good practice to issue an interim suspension while that investigation was ongoing, so as to prevent the individual from coaching at another club.

8.3.115. The case of Barry Bennell is the most troubling. It is set out in detail in the case study (see: FA and Barry Bennell).

8.3.116. My concerns over delays are corroborated by documents in the archive. A note on the case management systems in 2005 states that:

“A Case Manager was appointed in October 2004. Prior to her appointment,

the NSPCC were providing advice on how child protection cases should be dealt with. This consisted of 2 consultants reviewing files and then leaving notes on the files with a recommendation as to how the cases should be progressed.

A Case Administrator was in post and was expected to then progress all of the child protection cases. The Case Administrator was overstretched and, as a result, approximately half of the files were not progressed. Therefore, whilst the perception was that child protection referrals were being dealt with, the reality was very different. Since her appointment, the Case Manager has conducted a file review. All live cases have therefore been reviewed within the last 12 months.”

8.3.117. I am of the view that in a small, but not insignificant, number of cases there is evidence that the FA did not act sufficiently quickly to ensure that those about whom concerns had been raised were prevented from engaging in football activity involving children.

DIFFICULTIES IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FA AND CFA

8.3.118. The role of the Child Protection Officer (“CPO”) at County FA level was an essential part of the case management system. The CPO was generally the individual who referred cases to the FA. In addition the CPO would often conduct some investigation into whether individuals were engaged in football, and would generally be responsible for reporting potential breaches of suspensions to the FA. The NSPCC audit and review of County FA CPOs in 2003 revealed a mixed picture in terms of reporting concerns to the FA, and how suspensions were communicated. It was only in late 2003 that the FA operated a policy of informing County Secretaries and County CPOs of the decisions referred to the FA’s Case Management department by a County FA, or where the decision may have repercussions within a county.

8.3.119. I found a very small number of cases where there may have been an issue in relation to communication between the FA and the CFA. In one case the County FA was not notified of an individual’s permanent suspension for over a year between November 2005 and December 2006. The reason given was “an oversight”. I note that the County FA had been informed earlier of the interim suspension in August 2005 and as such I think it unlikely that this oversight exposed children to a risk of harm.

8.3.120. In another case the individual appears to have been suspended by the County FA in 2000, but not by the FA from national football until he was suspended on an interim basis in 2005, and permanently in 2006. It is not clear to me why this occurred, but having reviewed the papers it seems likely to have been a failure in proper communication.

BREACH OF SUSPENSIONS

8.3.121. The review of case management files identified a very small number of cases where an individual suspended by the FA had breached a suspension and the FA had not acted promptly in taking action.

8.3.122. In one case, an assistant referee was arrested in 2000 for indecent assault. At this time, he was a volunteer Youth Worker and was suspended by the local authority from this activity while the police investigation was ongoing. The County FA informed the FA about this in December 2000. The individual was suspended by the County FA from all football activity, but no action was taken centrally by the FA and so other County FAs would not have been made aware of this suspension. In 2003, a different County FA informed the FA that the same individual was running the line at games and acting as a coach. The FA did not formally suspend this individual until August 30th 2005, despite having been made aware – at least by July 2003 – of concerns about breaches of his suspension. It seems to me that the FA did not properly police this decision to suspend.

8.3.123. In another case, the individual worked for a professional football club and was suspended following allegations of poor practice that could amount to grooming activity in 2001. Later in the year, the FA was informed by the club that the individual had “taken up full time employment elsewhere”, but the FA did not investigate whether this was within football. The individual was also a teacher, and the FA might have assumed that his other employment was in education and not football, but that does not mean that the question as to whether his employment was football-related should not have been asked. While the individual was under interim suspension, however, he commenced employment in February 2002 with a second professional club, and was employed by this club for a number of months. In August 2002, the FA became aware of the breach of suspension and took prompt action to investigate, and advise the second club of the interim suspension. The fact that the second professional club was able to employ someone subject to an interim suspension is troubling, however, and was probably due to the fact that at the time the FA did not disseminate information about suspensions. I acknowledge that the question of how widely to share information is not a straightforward matter, as it may infringe on the accused’s right to a private life.

8.3.124. Having reviewed the case files it was apparent that some individuals would persistently breach suspensions, that they changed their names, and that they went to great lengths to ‘get around’ a suspension. In one case, there was even evidence of a suspended individual fabricating a letter from the FA which said that the FA had “concluded our investigation and can find no evidence of this allegation and that you are now able to partake in football activities again”, when that was simply not the case.

8.3.125. In such circumstances there is little the FA can do except respond proactively when informed of a breach. I have seen evidence that the FA has attempted to do this on a number of occasions.

8.3.126. There are other themes that emerge from the case management files which demonstrate potential problems inherent in the system.

INCOMPLETE RECORD KEEPING

8.3.127. In conducting the review of the case management files it is appropriate to note that many of these files were incomplete, and did not evidence the FA’s full de-

cision making process. This was highlighted in the report conducted by WK of the NSPCC in 2002, as one of his concerns (see: above). I am of the view that this issue was resolved over time, and having now had the opportunity to review some of the FA's current case management files (which are all stored electronically) the record keeping is full and comprehensive.

EFFECTIVENESS IN RELATION TO REFEREES

8.3.128. There were particular problems with respect to referees (as mentioned above). The FA's Referee Committee raised concerns on October 12th 2004 as to how difficult it was to ensure that someone did not participate in under-18 football even when they have had their referee registration either temporarily or permanently suspended from all football and football related activities involving children under the age of 18 years. The minutes note, "Whilst Youth Leagues may be advised not to engage the individual, it is more difficult to monitor in open-age football where under 18 year olds may also be playing." This issue was still being raised within the FA in 2005 notably at the Council meeting on November 23rd 2005.

8.3.129. In one case, a referee changed his name and moved to a different county having been convicted and placed on the Sex Offenders Register. The FA took steps to resolve this issue, namely seeking to attend the Risk Assessment Meeting that would take place upon the individual's release.

8.3.130. There were also difficulties identified by a County FA with respect to a referee who had had his registration as a referee removed in the 1999/2000 season as a result of being a Schedule 1 Offender. The County FA noted that even though he was "not appointed to fixtures by any of the affiliated leagues, he has remained somewhat operational, as teams without appointed match officials, have on occasions contacted him direct". The County FA explained that "Where such contact has been confirmed" they "attempted to advise those individuals concerned that he is not a registered referee and therefore should not be used. Should any disciplinary reports be submitted by this gentleman, we have adopted a policy not to process them".

8.3.131. The case management files contain an example of an individual who was subject to an interim suspension from under-18 football as a result of an allegation of indecent assault (feeling a boy's penis through his trouser pocket), but this was not known about by a club that had used him to run the line and referee a match. I have seen a number of references in the FA archives to local clubs, particularly at this early stage, not checking whether a referee's membership was up to date before asking them to referee a match.

8.3.132. Prior to 2001, CFAs maintained local lists of registered referees. From 2001 onwards this process was centralised and referees were required to register with the FA (as opposed to the CFA). Prior to the introduction of this centralised system, clubs and County FAs were not be able to check easily whether an individual should be running the line or not. This meant that the FA was very dependent on local knowledge and a referee who was suspended could move to another location and continue refereeing.

JURISDICTION TO INTERVENE

8.3.133. Not a failing of the FA, but something worth highlighting about the FA's approach to child protection during this period, is how it dealt with matters that were outside of its jurisdiction. The FA is not a statutory regulator, rather it is a membership organisation that has the authority to suspend, investigate and sanction its members where there is a breach of its rules. Where the allegation relates to a parent, or spectator, who is not a member of the FA, it is limited in its options.

8.3.134. In one case, a parent spectator was convicted of indecent assault on a child family member. It was not possible to suspend him from football activity. However, the club was informed and ultimately an agreement was entered into between the individual and the local authority to put in place voluntary safeguarding measures. I consider this to have been an appropriate approach given the limitation of the FA's authority to police individuals who may attend children's football games, but are not actively involved.

8.3.135. In another case, a parent spectator had been charged with abuse of position of trust and possessing indecent photographs. The FA had no jurisdiction to intervene. However, the club asked the parent not to attend any games or training sessions. In response to this, the individual removed his son from the club. The son moved to a different team. That team confirmed that the individual occasionally attended games to watch his son play. The manager of the team was aware of the concerns and was confident that he could keep the children safe during their football activities. The local County FA was kept informed of the situation.

The FA's Knowledge of Specific Abusers

8.3.136. Based on materials examined by the Review, as well as witness accounts, I have been able to analyse what the FA knew about the specific abusers that are referred to in greater detail in this Report: Barry Bennell, Bob Higgins, and Chris Gieler. The FA did not know of allegations against Kit Carson until after the end of the Review period³⁰.

30. The FA dealt with Carson in 1998 when he was at Peterborough United, and the club was seeking permission from the FA to open an Academy. Carson's name was also mentioned in connection with Posh Academy in the mid-1990s. The first that the FA appears to have been informed of concerns that Carson may have perpetrated child sex abuse was in 2007, when an enquiry was conducted by Cambridgeshire Police following suggestions of inappropriate behaviour by Carson during a tournament in Denmark in 2004. In 2007, the FA suspended Carson on an interim basis from all football activity involving children under 18. In 2008, Carson agreed to a supervision agreement proposed by the FA. This governed what he could do at Histon FC, the football club with which he was associated, and that he would be permanently suspended from under 18s football if he left that club (see: Carson case study).

8.4 FA and Key Perpetrators

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INTRODUCTION

8.4.1. In the clubs section of the Report (see: Clubs), I set out in detail the links between the key perpetrators of child sex abuse and the clubs. In this section I set out what the FA knew and did about each of the perpetrators it had any knowledge of during the relevant period (1970-2005).

FA AND BARRY BENNELL

Bennell Arrested in USA: August 1994

8.4.2. At the beginning of August 1994, Barry Bennell was arrested in Florida following a complaint that he had committed sexual abuse against a youth player whom he had taken on tour to the United States with the junior team, Stone Dominoes. The FA was aware of Bennell's arrest, and this was discussed internally in August and September 1994.

8.4.3. The FA archives contain a copy of an article about Bennell which had appeared in the *Today* newspaper on August 4th 1994, headlined: "Soccer scout charged with sex abuse of boy players". The article commented that Bennell "had been charged with sexually abusing a schoolboy player. Barry Bennell was arrested in Florida after a British boy claimed he had been repeatedly molested by the coach during a tour of the States".

8.4.4. Charles Hughes distributed this article internally and asked whether there was further knowledge of "other background details" about Bennell "which may be relevant". Charles Hughes had already discovered that Bennell held a Preliminary Coaching Certificate (gained in July 1985). The records in the FA archives also state that Bennell was "Single", had no playing experience, had a coaching appointment as a "Crewe Alexandra Youth Coach, Centre of Excellence", and had also been on a "Treatment of Injuries Course".

FA's Knowledge Before Bennell's Arrest

8.4.5. There is no evidence in the FA archives to suggest that Charles Hughes, or any other person working centrally for the FA, were aware of allegations of abuse against Bennell, or of any rumours or innuendo about him. There is no evidence in the FA archives to suggest that Bennell was even known to Charles Hughes or other persons working centrally for the FA, other than to persons involved with the FA's Disciplinary process. The FA archives show that Bennell had been sanctioned five times for bringing the game into disrepute between 1988 and 1992. None of these occasions involved allegations of child sex abuse.

8.4.6. The records reveal that Bennell had been found guilty of directing a foul comment at a linesman during the match between Blackpool and Crewe Alexandra, on October 15th 1988. Bennell was fined £25 and warned as to his future conduct. Simi-

larly, Bennell was found guilty of directing insulting comments at the Match Officials during and after the game between Crewe Alexandra and Hull City in the FA Youth Cup on 6th December 1988, and fined £50 and warned as to his future conduct. Later incidents incurred fines of £100, and then £250.

8.4.7. Although Charles Hughes was on friendly terms with Dario Gradi – both Charles Hughes and Dario Gradi confirmed this to me when we spoke, and there is a letter in the FA archives from Dario Gradi to Charles Hughes which refers to a meal and a talk that they had recently had – there is no evidence that they ever discussed Bennell.

8.4.8. It has been suggested to the Review that the FA was informed of allegations about Bennell by Ken Barnes, Manchester City’s Chief Scout in the mid-1980s (see Barry Bennell: Manchester City’s State of Knowledge). An individual (DB) who was involved with the youth function at Stoke City told the Review that:

“We used to go on a youth tour to northern France, in the Lille area, take under 16s, under 17s. And Man[chester] City were there one year. Ken Barnes was with them...And he said to me, ‘Have you come in contact with this Bennell?’ and I said, ‘Not really, no’. I said, ‘He’s with Gradi, ain’t he at Crewe?’ And he says, ‘Yes’. He says, ‘Stay away from him. I’ve had a lot of complaints of kiddy fiddling’. He says, ‘And I’ve reported to the FA but they’ve never got back to me.’”

8.4.9. DB said that Ken Barnes informed him that the complaints came from parents. Later in the interview with the Review, DB said that Ken Barnes probably did not use the term “kiddy fiddling” himself, but used the term “inappropriate behaviour”. DB said that Ken Barnes “was a bit of a gentleman really”.

8.4.10. DB was asked about Ken Barnes telling “the FA”. DB said that Ken Barnes did not tell him whom he had spoken to at “the FA”. When asked what Ken Barnes had told him that he had said to the FA, DB said: “He just told them that he’d had a lot of complaints about inappropriate behaviour with young boys with Barry Bennell and that he must be banned from coaching, obviously, but they never got back to him.”

8.4.11. I accept that DB probably met with Ken Barnes in northern France in the mid-1980s, as I have seen evidence that both of their clubs attended a youth tournament in the Lille area in 1985.

8.4.12. There is no corroboration for the suggestion that Ken Barnes told anyone at “the FA” about the complaints regarding Bennell, and so I cannot be satisfied that this did occur. There is no hint in the FA archives that people working centrally for the FA (e.g. at the FA’s Technical Department, or in senior management), or as a Regional Coach in the FA’s North West area were aware of complaints against, or allegations about, Bennell. (The FA’s North-West Regional Coach was responsible for overseeing coach training and education for a number of Centres of Excellence in the North West Region, under the FA’s Programme for Excellence. This included Manchester City and Crewe Alexandra.)

8.4.13. No one at the FA who I have spoken to – Charles Hughes and Robin Russell, as well as those who served as Regional Coach in the FA’s North West area – were aware of any allegations or complaints. I also note that Ken Barnes did not mention this when he was interviewed by the *Dispatches* programme (see: *Dispatches: Soccer’s Foul Play*). If Ken Barnes had mentioned the matter to the FA, I would have expected him to have said so, as I suspect that it would have been of great interest to the programme makers. Indeed, Ed Braman (one of the programme’s producers) has told the Review that he has no recollection as to whether Ken Barnes told them that he had spoken to the FA, but if he had told them he would have remembered it as it would have been a major issue, of “headline significance”, and was something that would have needed to be put to the FA for a “right to reply”.

8.4.14. If Ken Barnes had passed on complaints to the FA, I consider that this is more likely to have been to the local County FA with whom Ken Barnes would have had a closer and more regular connection than to the central FA, or the Regional Coaches. There is, however, no record of any of the local County FAs to Manchester City being made aware of any complaints about Bennell in their archives, and no one that the Review has spoken to at the local County FAs has any knowledge of this.

8.4.15. Although I do not consider that the FA knew about allegations or complaints against Bennell, there is evidence that rumours and innuendos about Bennell were heard by and discussed by some FA regional coaching staff, although not by those working for the FA centrally.

8.4.16. Someone who worked with Bennell (who gave evidence to the Review on condition that he remain anonymous) informed the Review that “rumours” about Bennell were discussed at meetings of coaches in the North West area, where FA staff coaches were in attendance. He told the Review that

“Bennell came up as gossip regularly at these meetings. Bennell was a successful scout and other coaches [said] that Bennell would get players by devious means. For instance, he had a monkey, a puma and juke boxes, which were all things that attracted the boys. Everybody who spoke of him was alarmed and nauseated by his behaviour. . . People would say he was ‘dodgy’, ‘weird’ and an ‘oddball’.”

8.4.17. This individual named some people who he said were present when Bennell’s name came up. I have spoken to two of these individuals who told me that they had no such recollection of this taking place. The other people referred to are now deceased.

8.4.18. One person who worked freelance as an FA coach, JH, recalls hearing rumours of inappropriate sexual behaviour by Bennell. He told the Review that these rumours were “rife” and were discussed with FA Regional Coaches. I discussed this with other FA Regional Coaches, and they had no recollection of this.

8.4.19. On September 9th 1994, a memorandum was sent to Charles Hughes in response to his request for information about Bennell (see: above). The memorandum was written by an FA employee who was not based centrally at the FA. There is no

evidence that what was stated in the memorandum had been raised previously with senior members of the FA or anyone working centrally for the FA before the memorandum had been sent. This has been confirmed by the FA employee who wrote the memorandum when I spoke to him. The memorandum stated that:

“After a strange dismissal at Manchester City, where he was working as a junior scout, he arrived at Crewe with Dario Gradi. There were many rumours about why Mr Bennell left Manchester City, but I am not aware of any concrete evidence. However, he ran football teams on behalf of the club which were illegal. He has been known to offer boys gifts and quite a number stayed at his house. He has been like a ‘pied piper’ to children, he seems to have an attraction for them.

His work at the Crewe Centre of Excellence was very good and he persuaded some very talented youngsters to sign for Crewe. Once again whilst at Crewe he ran teams under the title of Railway Athletics. Again Mr Bennell disappeared from Crewe with many rumours surrounding the reason why and he apparently left for America.

. . . [Following Bennell’s return from America] There were several occasions where I witnessed behaviour which I did not feel suitable to coaching youngsters. Although I had no evidence of Bennell’s activities with children, I was very suspicious of a 38 year old man staying alone with a nine year old boy in a caravan.

Bennell was sacked from Crewe Alexandra by Dario Gradi last year for reasons which appear to be arguing with the manager and not following Club policy. He then turned up at Stoke City, but I am not sure in what capacity.

I hope this brief background is sufficient and ... as I am sure you will be aware I was extremely suspicious about his behaviour with children.”

8.4.20. Charles Hughes’ personal assistant acknowledged receipt of that memorandum on September 21st 1994, saying that she would “bring [it] to Charles’ attention as soon as possible”. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Charles Hughes read the memorandum. The FA archives do not reveal what was done with the information that was provided. Charles Hughes has no recollection now.

8.4.21. There is no evidence, therefore, that allegations of abuse were known to FA coaching staff, or to staff at the central FA prior to Bennell’s arrest.

8.4.22. It is possible that rumours and innuendo about Bennell were discussed and known about by at least some staff who worked for the FA in the Manchester and Crewe area, but there is no evidence that they informed the central FA of these rumours. I have considered whether – if they were aware of such rumours – they ought to be criticised for not passing them on to the central FA. I do not consider that they should be criticised for not passing on the rumours, as these were not allegations of wrongdoing and there was, therefore, nothing that the central FA could have done.

However, I consider that if they were aware of rumours, they ought to have discussed the rumours with the clubs who would have been in a position to investigate or to monitor Bennell's activities.

FA Correspondence with Cheshire Constabulary: May 1995

8.4.23. The evidence that I have seen indicates that in the middle of 1995, the FA had dealings with the Cheshire Constabulary concerning Bennell. In files obtained from the State Attorney's office in Florida, there is a letter dated May 26th 1995 from a Cheshire police officer informing the Florida State Attorney's Office that the English FA had confirmed that Bennell was the holder of the FA's Preliminary Coaching Award, allowing him to coach in the UK. The letter continues: "They say that once he is convicted they will revoke this on receipt of a letter from yourselves."

8.4.24. There is no written record in the FA archives reflecting this commitment, although it is likely that Charles Hughes did speak to the police officer around that time. I say this because there is a post-it note in the FA's archives which includes the police officer's name and phone number, and reads: "Re - a football coach who has been charged with serious sexual offences. Currently in USA". This post-it note was found attached to a document which relates to Bennell's conviction, but given its reference to Bennell being "charged" is likely to predate that. In addition, in subsequent correspondence from Charles Hughes to Cheshire Constabulary, dated October 3rd 1995, he refers to having been contacted by the police officer previously.

8.4.25. In the May 26th 1995 letter to the Florida prosecutor, the Cheshire police officer suggested that getting Bennell to agree never to coach again for the rest of his life, would "be the only way to stop him becoming involved in football again". I cannot verify whether Charles Hughes did make the commitment to the police officer that the FA would revoke Bennell's coaching qualification if he was convicted. Charles Hughes has no recollection of the Bennell matter. Furthermore, there was no mechanism for revoking a coaching award, so there is some doubt as to whether this was actually offered.

Bennell's Conviction: June 1995

8.4.26. Between June 23rd and July 5th 1995, Bennell pleaded guilty in Florida to five counts of custodial sexual battery on a child and one count of lewd and lascivious assault on a child. On July 7th 1995, Sepp Blatter, General Secretary of FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), the international governing body for football, wrote to the FA attaching a press clipping about Bennell's conviction. The article referred to the Florida State Attorney's intention to write to FIFA asking that organisation to issue a world-wide ban on Bennell. Blatter asked whether the FA had any "more information on this case". Charles Hughes responded on July 10th 1995: "We really have no further information in relation to this matter".

8.4.27. On August 21st 1995, the Florida Assistant State Attorney wrote directly to Charles Hughes, informing him of Bennell's convictions and of his anticipated release

date: August 29th 1997. She explained that the English police authorities were investigating additional charges against Bennell. The letter ended by expressing the hope that:

“[T]his information will serve you and serve to protect other children from abuse at the hands of Barry Bennell. Your organization can help ensure this by taking whatever action is appropriate to prevent Mr. Bennell from participating in any soccer activity.”

8.4.28. Charles Hughes’ personal assistant acknowledged receipt, and said that she would draw the correspondence to Charles Hughes’ attention when he was back in the office. There is no record in the FA archives of a further response from Charles Hughes, and nothing in the Florida files either. It is reasonable to infer that there was no further contact between Charles Hughes and the Florida prosecutor.

8.4.29. Although Charles Hughes may not have responded to the Florida prosecutor, he did take further steps with respect to her correspondence. He forwarded the prosecutor’s letter to XX (copying in Graham Kelly) on September 25th 1995, asking him to “advise on the appropriate action we should take, if indeed, any action is required.” The next day, on September 26th 1995, Charles Hughes was advised by XX that he should contact Cheshire Constabulary to find out more details. XX suggested that they should find out if there was a football connection with the police investigation, and advised that the FA should not take any action until they had received confirmation of this from the police. XX explained in his memorandum to Charles Hughes, “If the story breaks in England . . . The FA should be in a position to answer questions that will inevitably be asked of it.”

8.4.30. In a letter to Cheshire Constabulary dated October 3rd 1995, Charles Hughes explained that the FA would need to think about what action the FA would need to take, if any, should Bennell endeavour to become involved in football when he is deported back to England. Charles Hughes informed Tony Pickerin that the FA was in liaison with the Cheshire Constabulary about Barry Bennell, who had pleaded guilty to “a number of charges relating to various assaults on children and is currently serving a sentence in the United States. Mr. Bennell is due for release on 29 August 1997 and will be deported back to England”.

8.4.31. In his reply dated November 7th 1995, a police officer at Cheshire Constabulary reported that:

“An investigation is currently in its infancy in England with regard to similar offences being committed on juvenile victims by Bennell over a number of years.”

He concluded by saying that:

“it would be inappropriate of me to make further comment until the offences are proved or Bennell is charged with specific offences.”

8.4.32. On November 15th 1995, Charles Hughes replied to Cheshire Constabulary, noting that “investigations are currently underway in England and, as you say, it would be inappropriate to comment until such offences are proved.” The same day, Charles Hughes forwarded Cheshire Constabulary’s latest letter to XX and Graham Kelly, and

expressed the view that until investigations in England were concluded, “it would be inappropriate for us to take any further action.” Nothing further was done with respect to Bennell at this time.

8.4.33. I have considered whether the FA’s decision not to do anything with respect to Bennell at this time was a failing. On the one hand, Bennell was an FA-accredited coach who had been convicted of serious sexual assault against a child. He had done this whilst taking a child on a football tour, and had betrayed the child’s trust in the most serious of ways. The fact that the tour does not appear to have been approved by the FA is not relevant. The FA could have taken the view that, regardless of any investigation of his activities in England, what Bennell had done had brought the game of football into disrepute, justifying his permanent suspension from under-18 football under the FA’s disciplinary rules. It seems to me that this would have been an entirely reasonable and appropriate course of action for the FA.

8.4.34. Nevertheless, given that Bennell was imprisoned in the United States, and was therefore no risk to children playing football in England, any disciplinary proceedings against Bennell would not have served any practical purpose at the time. I do not consider, therefore, that the FA can be criticised for not doing anything at this point. It was appropriate for the FA to await Bennell’s return to England before taking action against him.

Bennell’s Return to the United Kingdom and his Conviction in 1998

8.4.35. Bennell returned to England in 1997, and he was arrested on arrival. He was remanded in custody pending trial of further allegations of abuse that had been discovered by Cheshire Constabulary. In June 1998, Bennell was found guilty of 23 counts of sexual abuse (indecent assault and buggery) against 15 boys (between the ages of 9 and 14) in the period 1978 to 1992. Bennell was sentenced to nine years imprisonment.

8.4.36. There is no record in the FA archives concerning Bennell’s return from the United States, and there is no record of his conviction, although it does appear that a Bennell- related file has been lost and so it may have been mentioned there: the loss of the Bennell file from 1998 was noted by the FA in a file note found in the FA archives dated February 10th 2011 (see: below).

8.4.37. The Review spoke to QX, he believed that Bennell had already been suspended by the FA before he started work in 2000. There is, however, no documentary evidence to corroborate this – although, again, I note that the 1998 file has been lost. There is no mention of any such suspension anywhere in the FA archives, and the materials that are contained in the FA archives suggest that there was no suspension of Bennell.

8.4.38. There is a file note in the FA archives dated February 10th 2011, which reads:

“Crewe Probation Service initially provided info to The FA and outlined continuing risk.

No suspension issued, no reference to refer to [case management] on our system!!!!

2006 review - 1998 file lost (still lost).

No suspension / safeguarding measures put in place.”

8.4.39. If Bennell had been suspended before QX’s arrival, I expect that mention would have been made of it elsewhere in the FA archives, and not just on Bennell’s personal file which has been lost. I expect that mention would have been made of it in internal correspondence dealing more generally with child protection: e.g. when FA personnel were describing steps that had been taken to introduce child protection measures. I expect that mention would have been made of it in internal correspondence dealing with disciplinary processes. I expect that mention would have been made of it in correspondence with the NSPCC and other third parties when dealing with child protection matters. I expect that mention would have been made of it in the FA’s minutes of disciplinary matters. There is no such reference.

8.4.40. If Bennell had not been suspended by the FA in 1998, this is not necessarily a failing on the FA’s part. Bennell was imprisoned and so was not a risk to children at that time. What was important, however, is that steps should have been taken to suspend Bennell on his release from prison.

8.4.41. Bennell was released from prison in September 2003. In advance of his release, the FA was contacted by the Probation Service. The FA archives contain an internal email dated June 26th 2003, which was referring to Bennell. The email states

“I have just had a phone call from . . . Crew[e] Probation Service, she has a client which is due for release in September 03, he has been serving a sentence for sexual offences against children, before his imprisonment he was a youth coach with 2nd division clubs but also spent sometime coaching with Man City. [Probation] felt that although he may not commit any offences immediately he is still quite dangerous and the likelihood of further offences being committed would be quite high. A multi risk panel is due to sit on Tuesday 1st July and they would like to have information from the FA as to what measures are in place that would prevent this man from being employed as a coach with children. I understand that he also uses quite a few different names, she also felt that there was a possibility of this case reaching the press [Probation] has not given me the name of the person in question but if you could please phone her tomorrow she will inform you of this, . . . they have stressed that it is quite urgent.”

8.4.42. The FA archives do not contain any evidence to demonstrate that any measures were being put in place by the FA to prevent Bennell from being employed as a coach. The FA archives do not contain any evidence to demonstrate that the FA made contact with the multi-risk panel. I cannot say that this did not happen, but if it did, it is not recorded in the FA archives. There is no record that the FA suspended Bennell, or if he had been suspended previously that the FA took any steps to remind Bennell of this suspension. The FA was aware of Bennell’s whereabouts, as it was provided with a bail hostel address for him and so could have made contact with Bennell to inform him of the suspension. This was a failing.

8.4.43. It is correct that, until September 2006, Bennell was subject to licence conditions:

“[N]ot to engage in any work or other organised activity involving a person under the age of 18 years old either on a professional or voluntary basis; not to make contact with any child under the age of 18 years old; not to engage in any coaching activities; and not to seek to approach or communicate with the victims.”

However, these restrictions would not necessarily be known to any football club seeking to hire or work with Bennell, on a voluntary or permanent basis, unless Bennell volunteered that information to them. If Bennell had been suspended by the FA, then this information could have been cascaded down to the leagues and clubs, or clubs could check with the FA if Bennell had sought opportunities to work in football.

8.4.44. Bennell’s case was looked into in 2006 and early 2007, following a newspaper article that had referred to him. It was understood that Bennell had been seen in the Stone area (not far from Stoke), but had stated that he was not involved in football coaching. There was an intention to suspend Bennell once his address was located. It would appear, however, that the FA “did not have an address to send correspondence to” and so no suspension was issued.

8.4.45. The FA took action in respect of Bennell on December 19th 2011, when he was permanently suspended from taking part in any football-related activity involving a child or children under the age of 18.

8.4.46. The failure to take any action with respect to Bennell following his release from prison in 2003 is troubling. Although there is no evidence that Bennell did seek to involve himself further with football, the FA had taken no steps to prevent this from happening. As a result, the FA allowed children to be put at potential risk of abuse by Bennell had he attempted to involve himself in football, albeit I accept that this risk was mitigated to some extent by the fact that (i) Bennell was subject to licence conditions restricting his involvement in coaching and work or other organised activity with under 18s until September 2006, and this may have deterred him from involving himself in the game; and (ii) had Bennell sought to involve himself in football under that name, a CRB check may have been made, and this would have revealed his conviction to a football club seeking to recruit him.

8.4.47. I consider that the FA should have taken steps to ensure that, as soon as Bennell was released from prison in 2003, he was formally served with a notice banning him from being involved with children in football (or, at the very least, reminding him of the ban that had been imposed in 1998: if a permanent suspension had been issued then). Information about Bennell’s release from prison was specifically drawn to the FA’s attention and could and should have been acted on.

Other References to Bennell

8.4.48. The FA archives do contain other references to Bennell. As set out elsewhere in this Report (see: Crewe Alexandra), in December 2000, Tony Pickerin met with Hamilton Smith, a former Director of Crewe Alexandra, to consider allegations that the club had failed to act properly in dealing with Barry Bennell. In a note from Tony Pickerin to XX dated December 19th 2000, Tony Pickerin wrote that:

“Over a long period Mr. Smith expressed concerns over Crewe Alexandra, Barry Bennell, who worked for the club and who is currently in prison for abuse, and the relationship of the current Manager, Dario Gradi, and Chairman John Bowler to the activities of Bennell at the club.”

Tony Pickerin carried out an investigation and on July 19th 2001, he wrote to Hamilton Smith to say that:

“Further to the meeting held at Lilleshall and following consideration of the issues you raised with The Football Association at that time, I am writing to inform you of its findings.

The Football Association has investigated the issues and is satisfied that there is no case to answer”.

8.4.49. The FA archives contain evidence of what Tony Pickerin’s investigation involved. Tony Pickerin spoke to John Bowler, the Chairman of Crewe Alexandra on two occasions and listened to his account of what had taken place (see: Crewe Alexandra). John Bowler informed Tony Pickerin that he had met with the police to review what, if anything, the club could have done, and was told that the club had acted correctly. Tony Pickerin reached the view that: “[T]he relationship between Barry Bennell, Dario Gradi and John Bowler was apparently investigated fully by the police who found no grounds to proceed. The conclusion could be that this resolves ... interest in the ‘concerns’ raised by [Hamilton Smith]”. Tony Pickerin considered, however, that it would be appropriate to contact Cheshire Police to ensure that there were no “cause for concern issues that remain in the situation”.

8.4.50. Tony Pickerin wrote to Cheshire police, asking them to “confirm that there are no remaining causes for concerns as a result of this investigation in relation to Crewe Alexandra F.C.”. There is no record in the archives of any reply.

8.4.51. I consider that the investigation conducted by Tony Pickerin was reasonable in the circumstances. He discussed Hamilton Smith’s allegations with John Bowler, and then sought to follow up with the police.

Allegation of Request for Support for Bennell Survivor

8.4.52. The Review was told by a parent of DD – one of the survivors of Bennell’s abuse – that when he became aware of DD’s abuse, he called the FA and told someone there that his son had been sexually abused by Bennell. The parent was unclear about the date of the call, but DD has informed the Review that he disclosed the abuse in

2001 and so, if a call was made, I consider that it would have been around that time. The parent of DD said that the person at the FA who he spoke to had said “nice” words but took no keen interest in what he was saying. The parent said that the FA did not offer help or advice, and there was no follow up. It is not possible to corroborate the parent’s account: there is no reference to this call in the FA archives, and it is not possible to explore the matter further given that the parent of DD does not recall the name of the person who he says he spoke to.

FA AND BOB HIGGINS

8.4.53. There are numerous references to Bob Higgins in the documents held in the FA archives. Many of these references relate to the FA’s concerns that Higgins was involved in coaching organisations which operated outside of the FA’s rules. Some of those references, however, also indicate that the FA had concerns about Higgins’ conduct when around young players both before and after his acquittal by the Southampton Crown Court of charges of indecency with minors in January 1992.

1987-1988

8.4.54. The earliest references in the FA archives concern the “Bob Higgins Soccer Academy” which was operating in possible contravention of the FA’s rules relating to junior football. In the 1980s, the FA’s rules limited the amount of time young players could play for and train with affiliated clubs through their youth development programmes: the Centres of Excellence. The Bob Higgins Soccer Academy was not a Centre of Excellence, and was not subject to these rules. The Bob Higgins Soccer Academy was, however, closely aligned with Southampton FC, where Higgins was also employed. There was a concern that Higgins was using his Soccer Academy to get around the constraints on what Southampton’s Centre of Excellence was permitted to do under the FA’s rules. There were also concerns within the FA that Higgins was using his Soccer Academy to get around the rules that prohibited one Centre of Excellence poaching players from another Centre of Excellence.

8.4.55. In late 1987 the FA initiated an investigation into the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy after complaints had been raised about the Soccer Academy’s activities. In a letter to Chris Nicholl, the manager of Southampton, dated October 9th 1987, Charles Hughes set out his concerns that Higgins’ Academy was competing with the FA’s Centres of Excellence (see box 1: Programme of Excellence). Charles Hughes wrote that:

“As you know, we have, in the pursuit of excellence, established around the country, over 120 Centres of Excellence for boys to attend between the ages of 10 and 14 years, provided they have outstanding potential. I think we can say that all the parties subscribing to the scheme, the Football League, the ESFA (the English Schools Football Association) and The Football Association, judge the scheme to be extremely successful. We are, however, concerned that the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy is setting up in competition to these Centres and the Academy, and the concept of it, may not be in the best interest of football as a whole.”

Charles Hughes also expressed concern that Higgins would direct boys with footballing potential to Southampton FC, as Higgins also worked for that club, rather than other clubs.

8.4.56. Charles Hughes also noted to Chris Nicholl that “There are a number of other matters which are causing us disquiet...”

8.4.57. I cannot be sure what Charles Hughes was referring to, but in my view it is possible that Charles Hughes was alluding to concerns about Higgins’ relationship with a young player Billy Seymour. I say this because I have received evidence that concerns over Higgins’ conduct with Billy Seymour had been brought to Charles Hughes’ attention a short time before the letter to Chris Nicholl was written.

8.4.58. During the course of my interviews with Robin Russell, who was the FA’s South-East Regional Coach at the time, Robin Russell told me that he was aware that a young player attending at the FA’s National School, who he remembered by the name “Billy” (and later confirmed that he was referring to Billy Seymour), had informed FA coaching staff (probably Dave Sexton) that he did not wish to go back to Southampton FC during the school holidays, as he had to stay at Higgins’ home and he was uncomfortable doing so. Robin Russell did not recall that specific allegations of abuse were made by Billy Seymour. There was, however, sufficient concern for the matter to be raised formally with Southampton FC. Robin Russell recalled that this was done by Charles Hughes, and that Charles Hughes had raised Billy Seymour’s position with Bob Higgins himself. Charles Hughes had no recollection of any of these matters, when I spoke to him, and there is no documentary material in the FA archives or in materials from Southampton FC to confirm Charles Hughes’ involvement.

8.4.59. Robin Russell’s recollection that concerns were expressed about Higgins, and were known by Charles Hughes was corroborated by Mick Wadsworth. Mick Wadsworth told me that he recalled attending a meeting of Regional Coaches at Lilleshall, the site of the National School, at which Charles Hughes was present, and where reference was made to a former National School player who had complained about Bob Higgins. Mick Wadsworth recalls that at the meeting it was suggested that there was “more to [Higgins] than meets the eye in terms of his relationship with some of the players, some of his boys”.

8.4.60. There is also support for Robin Russell’s account in the evidence that Billy Seymour provided to the police when they investigated allegations of abuse by Higgins.

8.4.61. In the first criminal case against Higgins in the early 1990s, Billy Seymour gave a statement which referred to him staying at Higgins’ house for two weeks prior to starting his two-year scholarship at the National School in September 1986. Billy Seymour said that he remained in contact with Higgins by phone from Lilleshall. In February 1987, however, he stated that: “I decided I could take no more of him and decided to leave. After a while, Bob agreed to release me from Southampton Football Club, and from the Schoolboy forms I had signed with the club.”

8.4.62. For the second criminal case, Billy Seymour told police in 2016 that he got released from Southampton, and said that: “I don’t know how we did but we managed to get released. I had some help from a few Dave SEXTON and Mike, Mike KELLY there who are main coaches and I managed to get released.”

8.4.63. Documents in the FA archives confirm that Billy Seymour was released by Southampton whilst he was at the National School. The FA archives show that Billy Seymour transferred from Southampton to Coventry City: in a list of boys and their teams, the typed up name of “Southampton” has been crossed out and “Coventry City” has been handwritten next to it. On an adjacent list, Billy Seymour’s name is crossed out next to Southampton, and written in next to Coventry.

8.4.64. I have interviewed Mike Kelly, who had been the FA’s goalkeeping coach. He had no recollection of this matter. Dave Sexton died in 2012. I was unable to speak to Billy Seymour himself about the matter as Billy was killed in a car accident on January 5th 2019, and I was unable to speak to him before his death as a result of the various criminal cases against Higgins.

8.4.65. I did manage to speak to Billy Seymour’s mother who told me that, some time after he had publicly disclosed his allegations of abuse by Higgins, Billy mentioned to her that when he was at the National School he had wanted to tell Mike Kelly of the abuse by Higgins, but he “couldn’t”. It seems to be the case, therefore, that the FA did not know of the abuse, or allegations of abuse, committed by Higgins against Billy Seymour.

8.4.66. The remainder of the correspondence in the FA archives at this time does not provide any further assistance. There is no further reference to those “other matters” which were causing “disquiet”. In a memorandum sent to Robin Russell on February 4th 1988, headed “The Bob Higgins Soccer Academy”, Charles Hughes stated:

“Whilst it is felt that no direct action can, or should, be taken at the present time, it is the view of the Committee that there are inherent potential dangers in this activity of Higgins and that the matter should be monitored very closely. Essentially, therefore, this is an area of activity for your Regional Committee, although I do appreciate that the activities of Higgins and his Soccer Academies may spread into other regions. I would be grateful if you could keep me advised should it be felt by your Committee that Higgins, through these Academies, has breached any of our regulations.”

8.4.67. Later in the year, following allegations that Higgins had been poaching players, the FA’s Centres of Excellence London (South) Regional Committee suspended Southampton’s licence to operate a Centre of Excellence, and the FA’s Instructional Committee decided that “the solution to the problems posed by Mr. Higgins, of Southampton Football Club, lay in either re-drafting the existing rules or inserting additional rules”. In my view, these references were most likely about rule-breaking by Higgins, rather than child protection concerns.

8.4.68. It is not possible to be certain, therefore, whether Charles Hughes was made aware of the concerns expressed by Billy Seymour and whether it was him, rather than

Dave Sexton, who contacted Southampton to get Billy Seymour released. The evidence of Robin Russell, and then Mick Wadsworth, indicate that Charles Hughes was aware of the matter and Robin Russell thought that Charles Hughes had acted on it. The language of “other matters” relating to Higgins that were causing “disquiet” in Charles Hughes’ letter to Chris Nicholl is also supportive of the fact that he knew of some concerns about Higgins.

8.4.69. I have considered whether the FA – whoever it was that knew about Billy Seymour’s concerns about Higgins – ought to have done more than arrange for Billy Seymour to be transferred from Southampton. I do not consider that the FA should have done more at this time. Billy Seymour did not inform his coaches at the National School that he had actually been abused by Higgins, and the FA had no reason to believe that Higgins was behaving, or potentially behaving, inappropriately with any other boy from Southampton FC. There was no reason for the FA to consider that there was a broader problem which needed to be investigated or monitored.

1989

8.4.70. Allegations of abuse by Higgins were brought to Southampton’s attention in February 1989. Very shortly afterwards, and for unconnected reasons, on February 23rd 1989, a meeting took place between representatives of the FA, the Football League, the ESFA and Southampton FC to discuss a potential breach of rules and regulations in relation to Southampton’s involvement with Bob Higgins and his Soccer Academy. At that meeting, it was noted that there were four main areas of concern:

- “1) Academy activities take place on the club’s premises and are run by club employees;
- 2) The Academy approaches boys registered with other club’s Centres of Excellence;
- 3) The Academy does not safeguard the best interests of boys (unlike the Centres of Excellence Scheme), e.g. the long distances travelled to attend; no limit on time spent coaching etc.; no stipulation regarding facilities, qualification of coaches or the programme of work;
- 4) School activities do not take priority.”

8.4.71. By the date of the meeting of February 23rd 1989, Higgins had announced his departure from Southampton. The minutes of the meeting refer to Keith Wiseman (then the Vice Chairman of Southampton) saying that “the present position was that Mr. Higgins would be leaving the club’s employment at the end of the season.” The minutes record that “The club was not prepared to reveal the reasons behind the termination of Mr. Higgins’ employment.”

8.4.72. Robin Russell (at the time, an FA Regional Coach) attended the meeting on behalf of the FA. Robin Russell told me that the club was asked why Higgins was leaving, but no answer was given. Southampton subsequently informed Robin Russell that Bob Higgins’ departure was “for reasons not associated with the Bob Higgins’ Soccer Academy”. Robin Russell informed Charles Hughes of this on March 16th 1989. Southampton also informed Robin Russell that the club would have nothing further to do

with the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy.

8.4.73. I asked Keith Wiseman about the FA/Football League minutes of the meeting about Higgins. He said that he had no independent recollection of the meeting of February 23rd 1989. Based on the timeline of events, however, he thought that it was likely that, at the time of the meeting, he knew the reasons for Higgins' pending departure from the club, and that these included the allegations of abuse being made against Higgins. For Keith Wiseman, the main reason for Higgins' departure was a perceived conflict of interest between the work for the Soccer Academy and its young players and Higgins' formal role with Southampton FC as a Youth Development Officer. Keith Wiseman told the Review that he would not have informed the FA at the meeting about the allegations of abuse as, at that stage, there were only allegations of abuse and nothing had been substantiated.

8.4.74. The situation with Higgins was discussed at the next meeting of the FA's Instructional Committee on March 21st 1989. The minutes record that:

“The Committee were advised that all parties to the discussions were unanimous in their disapproval of certain activities in which Mr. Higgins had become involved. Doubt was also expressed concerning whether the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy should be affiliated with the Hampshire County Football Association. It was hoped that enquiries could be made concerning this matter. The Committee was also advised that Mr. Higgins was no longer an employee of the Southampton Football Club. It was further agreed that the office would write an appropriate letter to the Portsmouth Football Club”.

8.4.75. It is not known precisely when the FA was first informed of the allegations of abuse against Higgins. The FA archives contain a reference to the decision made by the police to charge Higgins in early January 1990 (see: below), and so it is clear that the FA was aware of the allegations against Higgins by that point.

8.4.76. It is likely that personnel working for the FA were informed of the allegations earlier than that date. Tony Pickerin recalls being at a meeting with the FA Regional Coach South West, who informed other coaches that “there were concerns about an individual named Bob Higgins, who had left Southampton Football Club and therefore was a coach to be avoided in terms of his access to children”. Tony Pickerin could not recall precisely when this meeting took place, but it must have been before he became the Principal of the National School in January 1990, and after Higgins' departure from Southampton. There is no evidence, however, that the FA Regional Coach South West forwarded the information that he had to anyone at the central FA.

8.4.77. It is possible that the central FA was aware of the allegations against Higgins before April 27th 1989 when a letter was sent out by the Football League to warn off professional clubs from having further dealings with Higgins' Soccer Academy. The Football League wrote “To the Managers of All Clubs”, saying:

“I understand that you may recently have received a letter from Mr. Bob Higgins, inviting your club to become involved with the above organisation [The Bob Higgins Soccer Academy].

The Football Association, Football League and English Schools' Football

Association are opposed to the activities of this organisation and I would ask all clubs which might be thinking of becoming involved to give this office the opportunity of appraising them of the situation before taking any steps in this direction.”

8.4.78. The fact that this letter did not set out what the concerns were, but asked clubs to call the Football League’s offices, may support the proposition that the footballing authorities (including the FA) were aware of allegations of abuse by Higgins at this point, but were cautious about putting this down in writing.

8.4.79. That was the view expressed to me by Robin Russell. He told the Review that he assumed that the Football League may have known by the time it sent the letter about the allegations of abuse against Higgins, and that this was why clubs were being advised against involvement with his Soccer Academy.

8.4.80. On the other hand, the fact that the concerns of the footballing authorities were not set out in the letter of April 27th 1989, may be totally unrelated to their knowledge of allegations of abuse by Higgins, but may be related to other concerns about Higgins’ Soccer Academy, such as those articulated at the meeting with Southampton on February 23rd 1989. I also note that it was only in June 1989 that the Southampton Board of Directors agreed to inform the police of the allegations concerning Higgins (see: Bob Higgins). It is possible that the club did not inform the FA until after notifying the police. Ultimately, it is not possible to reach a firm view on this either way.

8.4.81. There is other correspondence in the FA archives which pre-dates the letter of April 27th 1989 and which makes it clear that the footballing authorities disapproved of Higgins’ Soccer Academy, but this correspondence does not say what those concerns were.

8.4.82. Around the time of his departure from Southampton, Higgins had sent a letter to “all Managers Football League Clubs”, announcing that he was leaving the club to “build up” his Academy. The letter stated that “we do not come under FA, Football League, ESFA Regulations being a limited company”, and as such were able to avoid restrictions on how long players could train for. This letter was shared with the Football League by Southampton FC on April 14th 1989, and passed on to Robin Russell at the FA in a letter from the Football League dated April 18th 1989.

8.4.83. The letter to Robin Russell stated that “I feel that clubs should be made aware of our position, but rather than addressing individual points in a letter, I have invited clubs to contact me before deciding whether or not to become involved.” This shows that there was a deliberate decision not to set out reasons for avoiding the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy in the letter to clubs, although it does not assist with what those reasons were.

8.4.84. The FA archives also contain correspondence between Dario Gradi, the Manager of Crewe Alexandra, and Charles Hughes in connection with the correspondence to clubs from the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy. Dario Gradi received a copy of this

letter, and wrote to Charles Hughes on April 10th 1989 to say: “Dear Charles, Enclosed letter which I’m sure will interest you. Received in post today!” Charles Hughes replied to Dario Gradi on April 24th 1989, informing him: “Needless to say, we disapprove of the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy and I think all Football League Managers will be receiving a letter shortly from the Football League.” Again, this correspondence from Charles Hughes does not say why the FA, and the Football League, disapproved of the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy, but it may be for reasons other than allegations of abuse.

8.4.85. At the FA’s Instructional Committee meeting on June 12th 1989, there was further discussion about Higgins and Southampton. The Committee was advised that a letter had been sent by the Football League to all Football League clubs advising them against being involved with the Higgins Football Academy (this is a reference to the letter of April 27th 1989). It was confirmed that Higgins was no longer employed by Southampton.

8.4.86. Higgins instructed solicitors who wrote to the Football League to express concern about the round-robin letter sent out by the Football League opposing the activities of his Academy. In a response dated July 12th 1989, the Football League wrote that:

“The football authorities were also concerned that the best interests and welfare of the boys attending the Academy were not being looked after. There are very firm conditions laid down for the licencing of Club’s Centres of Excellence e.g. recruitment area, suitable facilities, qualifications of coaches; and there was no evidence that the Academy adopted similar safeguards.”

(emphasis added).

8.4.87. It might be thought that this response was hinting at the abuse allegations. That is possible. On the other hand, this language is almost identical to wording in a report of the meeting held on February 17th 1989 between the ESFA, the Football League, and the FA, at which Robin Russell explained the various areas of concern that he had with Higgins’ activities which do not indicate that there were concerns about abuse, and was written before the FA was informed of the allegations of abuse. The report said:

“The Academy does not safeguard the best interest of boys (unlike the Centres of Excellence scheme), e.g. the long distances travelled to attend; no limit on time spent coaching etc.; no stipulation re age grouping for medical/safety reasons; no stipulation regarding facilities, qualification of coaches or the programme of work”.

8.4.88. On November 30th 1989, Charles Hughes wrote to all Centres of Excellence Directors reminding them that it would be a contravention of the FA’s regulations for any of their teams to enter the Scarborough Cup 1990, or any other competition involving 11-a-side matches. He noted that this cup competition which was due to take place in May 1990 was presented by “the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy” and another organisation.

8.4.89. It is clear that the FA was taking steps throughout this period to discourage others from becoming involved with Higgins. It is possible that, at least in respect of

the April 27th 1989 correspondence, concerns about Higgins' inappropriate behaviour with young players were a motivating factor for the FA, although (as explained above) I cannot reach a firm view of this.

8.4.90. If this was a motivating factor, however, then the steps taken by the FA were, in my view, reasonable in the circumstances of the time. Higgins was not actually working for a football team affiliated to the FA. Furthermore, at that time, the FA did not have power to suspend Higgins without the FA finding that he had “committed” an “act”, or that “conduct” had taken place. At this stage, there were only allegations against Higgins, and the police were carrying out an investigation.

1990-1993

8.4.91. On January 10th 1990, Higgins was charged with indecency with minors. The charging decision was brought to the FA's attention on that date by the County Coaching Representative of Hampshire County FA. This information was conveyed to Graham Kelly, Charles Hughes and Robin Russell. Further details were provided the following day, when they were sent a brief clipping from the local newspaper: the *Evening Echo*. The newspaper said that Higgins was subject to “two charges of indecent assault involving two boys aged 14 and 15 years of age.”

8.4.92. Higgins was acquitted at Southampton Crown Court on January 16th 1992. As a result of the acquittal; under the FA's rules at that time it did not have the power to suspend him absent other cause. The FA's Rule 26(a)(x) required that an act had to have been “committed”, or “conduct” had to have taken place, before a suspension could be effected (see: Disciplinary and Referrals).

8.4.93. I have seen no evidence in the FA archives as to whether the FA gave any consideration to the option of conducting its own investigation into Higgins' conduct. It is doubtful that the FA did this. At this point in time, the FA had no child protection experience (see: FA Child Protection Policy and Procedure), and even if the FA had had such experience, it is unlikely that the FA would have wished to act in circumstances where a criminal prosecution had failed, and where the FA's own procedures required proof of misconduct on the criminal standard. It is most doubtful that at this point in time other governing bodies, or voluntary bodies, would have taken steps to investigate, and then suspend, an individual who had been acquitted by a criminal court. In the circumstances, therefore, in my opinion the FA cannot be criticised for not suspending Higgins following his acquittal in 1992.

8.4.94. It is in my view likely that the FA continued to have concerns about Higgins, however, in the years following his acquittal. This is reflected in a couple of pieces of evidence from the FA archives.

8.4.95. First, in April 1994, the Malta Football Coaches Association contacted Charles Hughes asking him to provide a “full report viz a viz [sic] Mr Bob Higgins of Southampton as to his coaching/professional qualifications and any other details including a possible character evaluation on him”; noting also that Higgins “claims to be a fully qualified coach from your Association.”

8.4.96. In his response, Charles Hughes stated that it was the opinion of the FA coaching staff that: “Bob Higgins is not suitable for a coaching appointment which carries responsibility for coaching players or teachers and coaches.”

8.4.97. Charles Hughes did not have any recollection of this correspondence during my interview with him. Robin Russell told me that he was not aware of this letter at the time, but considered it likely that Charles Hughes was attempting to convey that Higgins was not suitable for a coaching appointment as he was not a good coach, and had also flouted FA and Football League rules, rather than that he had concerns about Higgins working with children. I consider that a different interpretation is possible: that Charles Hughes had lingering doubts about Higgins’ suitability to coach young players with whom he would be working. The language of “not suitable” suggests something other than coaching ability.

8.4.98. Second, Higgins wrote to the FA in the summer of 1994 to say that he was back in the country and wanted to undertake a course. Charles Hughes responded to Bob Higgins on August 22nd 1994, inviting him to contact the office in December “should you wish to receive details for courses in 1995.” He advised Higgins to contact Tony Pickerin for details. Tony Pickerin was contacted and entered into correspondence with Charles Hughes’ personal assistant on January 6th 1995. Tony Pickerin wrote to say that the FA had received an application for a place on an FA preparatory course from Bob Higgins: “I know that before my appointment to The Football Association there was considerable concern over Mr. Higgins.” Tony Pickerin asked to be informed (i) whether Higgins had been listed as “not an appropriate person to attend F.A. courses”; and (ii) whether Higgins was “a registered holder of the F.A. Preliminary Award.” Charles Hughes’ personal assistant responded the same day: “There were a few problem [sic] with Mr. Higgins but nothing that could be proved”. This suggests to me that there may have been lingering doubts about Higgins, even if not enough evidence against him to result in a criminal conviction.

8.4.99. Whatever the concerns that the FA may have had about Higgins, no steps were taken to prevent him from attending coaching courses, nor did the FA take any steps to prevent Higgins from having any further involvement in affiliated football on his return to the country. However, I do not consider that the FA can be criticised for this. As discussed above, Higgins had been acquitted, and at this time no further allegations of abuse had been referred to the FA. The FA’s own rules at this point in time only permitted suspension where an “act” had been committed, and the criminal standard of proof applied. It would not, therefore, have been open to the FA to go behind the decision in the criminal case against Higgins.

1993-1995

8.4.100. On his return to England, Bob Higgins was involved in a coaching business called “Posh Soccer” (as well as with Peterborough United FC). Higgins’ activities with Posh Soccer again attracted the attention of the FA. This was not as a result of any specific concerns about Higgins’ conduct with children, but in connection with whether Posh Soccer was flouting the FA’s rules: its coaching activities and games overlapped

with the activities and games of the FA's Centres of Excellence programme.

8.4.101. During the period 1993 to 1995, there had been considerable interest shown by the FA in a number of coaching schools, and detailed investigations were carried out into their activities. The FA's view was that these organisations did not come under its jurisdiction, but that their relationship with Centres of Excellence did.

8.4.102. In a memorandum from Tony Pickerin to Charles Hughes on March 8th 1995, it was noted that "one name that is regularly referred to at both Cambridge and Peterborough is that of Bob Higgins. Indeed a number of boys, at least 6/19, signed on Associated Schoolboy forms with Cambridge are from the Southampton/Hampshire area". It was explained by Tony Pickerin that "the roots of Posh Soccer lie in the original organisation, development and management of the Canary Cup competition at Norwich". He referred to Kit Carson as one of those who was involved with the Canary Cup. Carson was described as having "left Norwich City in 1993, joined Peterborough United as Youth Development Officer. . . I understand that . . . Kit Carson [is] among the Directors" of Posh Soccer.

8.4.103. A member of the FA staff explained to Tony Pickerin in a memorandum dated March 24th 1995 that he had recently had a meeting with the Junior Development Officer of Posh Soccer, and the possible Centre of Excellence Director of Peterborough United for the next season. The FA member of staff's points of note included the following:

"Posh Soccer runs coaching courses over a very wide area i.e. Berks & Bucks, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. There are Development Officers in most of these regions.

It has been mentioned by a third person that attendance on these courses leads to a trial at the Centre of Excellence.

...

The question of Bob Higgins coaching in the Hampshire area with boys from Peterborough United was raised. He is actually the Manager of the Under 16 group and they see additional tuition on the needs of these players as a positive move. It was pointed out that this was an illegal activity and as of next season they must be coached in The F.A. Independent Centre."

8.4.104. Tony Pickerin summarised these findings in a memorandum to Charles Hughes on March 29th 1995, including the following on Higgins:

"Bob Higgins is connected with Peterborough United - he is the coach to their Under 16 team. Currently the club has a number of Associate Schoolboys signed from Hampshire and he has been coaching them. The club has been warned that this must take place in a Football Association Independent Centre in the Season 1995/1996."

8.4.105. In June 1995, the FA discussed the directorships of "Junior Posh Soccer Limited", another organisation connected to Bob Higgins. Charles Hughes wrote to Tony Pickerin on June 1st 1995, saying that, while the directorships may be questionable, "I do not think we are in a position to say there has been any impropriety." On June 9th

1995, Tony Pickerin agreed, suggesting that they “should continue to keep a watching brief on these activities.” There is no suggestion in the documents I have seen that the concerns of Tony Pickerin or Charles Hughes related at this stage to any risk that Higgins might pose to children, rather they related to the FA’s jurisdiction and more general concerns about unregulated football. Tony Pickerin confirmed this to me when I spoke to him.

The Dispatches Documentary

8.4.106. Documents in the FA archives refer to Bob Higgins a couple of years later, when the *Dispatches* documentary was broadcast in January 1997. As part of that programme there was an interview with Dean Radford, a first team player for Southampton, who described abuse by Higgins. The prosecution was unsuccessful. It was then said that Higgins subsequently joined Peterborough United, and an interview took place with a former trainee, MK. The documentary said that Higgins had become a born-again Christian, and there were references to Higgins baptising players in the bath at his home. It was explained that Bob Higgins left Peterborough United in 1995 by mutual consent and because “the club were not willing to tolerate his religious behaviour” (see box 8: Dispatches: Soccer’s Foul Play).

8.4.107. There is no evidence in the FA archives to suggest that the *Dispatches* programme prompted the FA to investigate Higgins’ activities or to consider whether he should be prevented from working in affiliated football. It is, in my view, unlikely that such steps were taken. At this point in time, the FA’s approach to child protection matters was reactive, rather than proactive. When concerns about Higgins were raised, the FA responded and provided assistance.

8.4.108. There is a handwritten note in the FA archives, written by XX on March 25th 1997, which records a phone call that he had had with the Marketing Resource Manager of a school in the South East of England which had licensed the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy Ltd. to use its facilities for a coaching school. The Manager had spoken to someone from another school in Peterborough, who had suggested not doing business with Higgins. The Manager had also seen the *Dispatches* broadcast and was concerned. He wanted to get out of the contract with Higgins. XX said that he could not formally advise, but did suggest a number of options, including raising the issue “directly” with Higgins. Other options included repudiating the contract as the limited company did not exist, getting in touch with parents, or exploring a Children Act licence point with the local authority.

8.4.109. Concerns were also raised by Hampshire CFA, as it was also aware that Higgins was seeking to involve himself in football in its local area. A meeting was held between the Hampshire CFA, the Hampshire Youth FA, and an official from the central FA, to discuss the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy. It was agreed that the Hampshire Youth FA could and should withdraw the affiliation of the Soccer Academy. The effect of this would be to prevent players registered with other clubs playing for the Soccer Academy. One of the reasons for this decision was that whilst:

“Higgins was never convicted of offences against young players in his

academy many parents had shown concern following the screening of Foul Play by Channel 4 in January 1997. . . In view of the allegations made in the television documentary it was felt that this Association should detach itself from the academy by withdrawing the affiliation”.

8.4.110. It is not clear precisely when Hampshire CFA withdrew its affiliation with the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy, but disaffiliation had occurred by November 11th 1997. Before that date, it would appear that Higgins had been able to take his youth team on a tour to Belgium, but a subsequent trip by the youth team to Sweden was refused permission by Hampshire CFA.

8.4.111. The disaffiliation of the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy FC followed some intervention by the Social Services Directors of both Southampton City Council and Hampshire County Council. On October 1st 1997, they sent a letter to the Hampshire Youth Football Association saying that:

“re; ROBERT HIGGINS - 02.03.53

The above-named has come to the attention of our Departments and Hampshire Constabulary as a football coach in this area. We would ask the Football Association to refer any potential users of his services to us, so that we can let the parents of boys proposing to join his academy know of our concern.”

8.4.112. The General Secretary of Hampshire CFA asked the FA for advice as to whether the CFA could circulate this correspondence. In a letter dated November 11th 1997, XX (copied into Graham Kelly) advised that the Hampshire CFA could forward the correspondence from the police and social services to the persons referred to in the letter, on the basis that these were:

“[T]he two primary authorities with statutory responsibility in relation to child protection issues. The letter is a request made directly from one of those authorities to the Hampshire Football Association. It is our view that Hampshire Football Association is entitled to rely on the expertise of the Social Services Department in such a matter, and should act on their request, and does not have a responsibility to question their decisions.”

Accordingly, although Higgins was not prohibited from footballing activities, the Hampshire CFA (with the consent of the central FA) took steps to put parents on notice of concerns about him and this would no doubt have minimised his opportunities to have access to children in a footballing context.

8.4.113. An argument can be made that the FA should have taken a more proactive approach towards Higgins, and should have suspended him from all footballing activities with under 18s, or under 16s. This position appears to have been held by a case worker for the FA who examined Higgins’ case many years later. In 2007, the case worker wrote to a police officer who was investigating Higgins to say that:

“Mr Higgins had been arrested in 1990 for indecent assault on 14 and 15 year old boys. I understand that Mr Higgins was not convicted of the offences.

In 1997, The FA did not have satisfactory child protection procedures in place and Mr Higgins was not suspended on the basis that there had been no criminal conviction.

The FA now has a dedicated Case Management team dealing solely with child protection cases.

I am concerned that Mr Higgins is not suspended and that there are no restrictions on him being involved with children in football”.

(emphasis added).

8.4.114. It seems to me that it would have been possible for the FA to investigate Higgins and consider suspending him following the *Dispatches* documentary and the disclosures made in the programme about Higgins’ conduct at Peterborough United: that is, Higgins’ baptising of boys in the bath at his home (see box 8: *Dispatches*: Soccer’s Foul Play). The baptism of boys in the bath at Higgins’ home would probably have amounted to an “act” or “conduct” which under the existing FA’s Disciplinary Rules could have justified suspension.³¹ From the materials in the FA archives, it does not appear that thought was even given to whether Higgins should be investigated for these matters. In my view, this was a failing. That is not to say that Higgins would have been found to be in breach of the FA’s Disciplinary Rules, and suspension might not even have been necessary if Higgins was found not to be engaged in footballing activities that fell within the FA’s jurisdiction, but I consider that it would have been reasonable for the FA to have at least considered disciplinary action. This does not appear to have been done.

2001- 2006

8.4.115. In 2001, a copy of the *Dispatches* programme was sent to the FA by Hampshire CFA, and a case file on Higgins was opened by the FA. Higgins continued to be involved in football. He was employed by Winchester FC, and also sought coaching opportunities in a number of schools in the area. Hampshire CFA shared the *Dispatches* programme with Winchester FC, and the club severed its connection with Higgins towards the end of 2002. Hampshire CFA considered that Higgins was not suitable to be working closely with children and young people, and asked the FA for advice.

8.4.116. On December 6th 2002, the FA advised Hampshire CFA that:

“Mr Higgins is a cause for concern, because of the content of the [Dispatches] programme. Mr Higgins does not, however, (to the best of our knowledge) have criminal convictions that would form a basis for a permanent suspension. Our investigations are not yet at a point where we can take material action. My advice would therefore be that should a club become known as having the intention of forming connections with Higgins that they are made aware of the existence of the [Dispatches] programme, and they can form their own view on the contents. If you hear of Higgins becoming active again, please let me know.”

8.4.117. At this point in time, therefore, the FA did not believe that it could suspend Higgins on the available information, but sought to ensure that people were aware of Higgins' background so that they could make their own decisions about being involved with him. This was a questionable decision as the focus of the FA's position was on whether Higgins had any "criminal convictions", rather than on whether he had done anything which created a "risk of harm", the test that applied to disciplinary cases from 1999 (see: Disciplinary and Referrals).

8.4.118. I cannot conclude, however, that this amounted to a failing. It appears that Higgins' conduct had been investigated by the FA. There is no evidence from the materials that I have seen that Higgins continued to baptise children – as shown in the *Dispatches* programme – or had otherwise engaged in inappropriate activity with children since the *Dispatches* programme. Furthermore, although from 1999 the FA had applied a "risk of harm" test (see: Disciplinary and Referrals), at this point in time the FA continued to apply a criminal standard of proof to its disciplinary cases and so it would not have been possible to look again at the materials that led to Higgins' acquittal in 1992 applying a lesser standard of proof.

8.4.119. The FA amended its disciplinary rules in 2003, so that the civil standard of proof applied (see: Disciplinary and Referrals). There is no evidence from the FA archives that Higgins' case was reviewed against the civil standard until after the end of the Review period. In my view, this was a failing. Only in the previous year, the FA had been made aware that concerns about Higgins' continued involvement in football had been raised by a County FA. These concerns could have been allayed by reviewing the underlying allegations that had led to the 1992 criminal trial, as well as the baptism in the bath allegations, against the lower standard of proof.

2007

8.4.120. In 2007, the FA carried out a case review of Higgins. There was concern that he had not been suspended. The FA requested Higgins to seek a CRB check, telling him that this was necessary "to establish your suitability to be involved in children's football." Higgins replied that he had not been involved in football for the past five or 10 years. He completed the check which came back "clear". As a result, no further action was taken. It was only in 2013 that Higgins was suspended from footballing activities.

31. Rule 26(a)(x) provided that it shall be "misconduct" if any: "Official, Referee, Assistant Referee or Player committed any act or made any statement either verbally or in writing, or been responsible for conduct, continuing misconduct or any matter which, in the opinion of the Council, is considered to be unsporting, insulting or improper behaviour or likely to bring the game into disrepute".

FA AND CHRIS GIELER

8.4.121. A former employee of the FA (not based centrally at the FA, and not a senior member of staff) who spoke to the Review said that he recalled a very brief conversation with Charles Hughes about child sex abuse in football, possibly at Lilleshall and probably in the 1980s, and that the name of Chris Gieler was mentioned. The interviewee said that “out of the blue” Charles Hughes asked him if he had heard of any people who may be involved in abuse and the interviewee mentioned the name Chris Gieler. The interviewee did not know that Gieler had committed abuse, and had not heard of any allegations, but was aware of rumours about him. The interviewee then told me that he said to Charles Hughes, “why aren’t the FA doing anything?” Charles Hughes then said, “Well they can’t . . . We’ve got no proof. And we can’t get enough proof to make it stick”. The interviewee said that the conversation came out of the blue, and lasted about 30 seconds.

8.4.122. It is not possible to verify this account. I wrote to Charles Hughes to see if he had any recollection of this conversation, and have not received a response. There is no hint of such a conversation in any of the FA archives materials that I have seen. It is also a very unusual question for Charles Hughes to have asked, and there was no obvious prompt for the conversation to take place. No other witness who worked with Charles Hughes has suggested that he had sought such information. It is also not something which fits with what various witnesses have told me about Charles Hughes and the way that he conducted himself. When engaging with matters of importance, he put things in writing. I have some doubts, therefore, as to whether this conversation took place as described by the former FA employee.

8.4.123. There are documents in the FA archives which suggest that senior personnel at the FA may have been aware of rumours about Chris Gieler in the late 1990s. QPR made an application to the FA to operate a football Academy in early 1998, and the proposed Academy Director was Gieler. The club vouched that “All our staff have been screened and we have no qualms regarding their working with children”. In spite of this declaration by the club, the FA made its own inquiries about Gieler with the police and social services authorities.

8.4.124. On receipt of the application from QPR, Robin Russell wrote to XX on March 3rd 1998 to say:

“We have received an application to operate a Football Academy from Queens Park Rangers. The proposed Academy Director is Chris Gieler, whom we have had cause to discuss recently. I would be grateful if you could make enquires with the appropriate County Council to establish if Mr. Gieler has been subject to any disqualification or prohibition by Local Authorities or if he is a person known to any similar Social Services Department as being an actual or potential risk to children and, in addition, whether he has been convicted of any crime relating to children.

This is the first application we have received and, obviously, we would wish to tread warily.”

There is handwriting on the memorandum with the telephone number of Hammer-smith and Fulham Child Protection Unit, as well as the words “Police Checks”, and “Dept of Health List 99”. KN informed me that this was his handwriting.

8.4.125. Robin Russell forwarded his memorandum to KN saying that XX “tells me you are looking after child protection issues and I would be grateful if you could take forward the request enclosed with the appropriate Social Services Department, obviously, confidentially.” Handwriting on Robin Russell’s cover message says “Shepherds Bush” and gives a telephone number. This is again in KN’s handwriting. The reference to “Shepherds Bush” is most probably the police station near to QPR’s ground.

8.4.126. The memorandum of March 3rd 1998 from Robin Russell to XX stated that they had “had cause” to discuss Chris Gieler recently. It is not known what it was about Gieler that they discussed. The memorandum also stated that “we would wish to tread carefully” with QPR’s application. When I questioned the former FA personnel about this, none of them had any recollection of the matter.

8.4.127. I consider that a likely inference from the correspondence is that there was something specific about Gieler that made Robin Russell and XX want to carry out some checks on him. It is possible that Robin Russell and XX were aware of rumours or innuendo about Gieler and that this caused them concern about his suitability to be an Academy Director, and they wanted to be comfortable that they had done all that they could to check on his suitability. There is no evidence in the FA archives to suggest that the FA carried out similar checks on other proposed Academy Directors at this point in time.

8.4.128. If Robin Russell and XX did have suspicions about Gieler, but had not received a specific allegation, then the approach that they adopted was a reasonable one. They checked Gieler’s name against the relevant list of persons who were held to be unsuitable to work with children, and they spoke to the local police and social services. It is most likely that these investigations revealed no cause for concern about Gieler. There was nothing further for the FA to do about Gieler and his application to be Academy Director for QPR.

8.4.129. The FA was subsequently made aware of allegations against Gieler in late 2002, shortly before Gieler’s death. There is correspondence in the FA archives dated September 12th 2002, which refers to a member of the FA staff receiving a telephone call from someone who used to work for QPR. The correspondence states that:

“[C]ertain unspecified players (past and present) have made allegations to the police regarding the behaviour of Chris Gieler during his many years at QPR when he held a number of positions including Youth Development Officer and Academy Director.”

The former QPR worker said that he had been “contacted by the police and made a statement”. The correspondence went on to say that “Chris Gieler who has left the employment of QPR is now terminally ill and . . . unlikely to live more than a couple of months – a year at the outside”.

8.4.130. A case file in Gieler's name was set up by the FA but, on learning of Gieler's death the previous week, was closed on October 3rd 2002. There is no record of the FA doing anything to investigate this matter any further, or to take any other steps. Disciplinary action could obviously not be taken against Gieler, and the FA did not know who the individuals were who had made the allegations and so it would not have been possible – even if the FA had wanted to – to make contact with them to see if they needed any counselling or other support.

8.5 County FAs:

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INTRODUCTION

8.5.1. There are 51 County Football Associations affiliated to the FA. This includes the Army FA, Royal Navy FA and the RAF FA as well as the Amateur Football Alliance. These are the local governing bodies for football, with responsibility for administering club and player registration and to promote development of clubs, players and referees. Most of these CFAs have responsibility for clubs which include junior players (that is, under 18s).

8.5.2. I wrote to each of the County FAs who have responsibility for clubs with junior players asking them to review their records, and speak to those who were officers or staff during the review period, to see what information they had about complaints or concerns raised with their association in relation to child sex abuse. In particular, I asked them to consider whether, in relation to the period 1970-2005:

- “1. any complaints or concerns were raised with your association (whether by clubs, individuals or other entities such as the police) in relation to child sex abuse. I would like to hear about these complaints/concerns regardless of whether they were made contemporaneously or came to your association’s attention at some later stage.
2. your association otherwise had any concerns about child sex abuse in football. If so, what gave rise to these concerns?
3. your association referred any of these concerns/complaints to the FA. If so, when and to whom?
4. your association implemented any child protection initiatives. If so, what were they and when were they implemented.”

8.5.3. Each of the County FAs responded and co-operated with the Review’s requests for further information and inquiry. Many of the County FAs were able to provide the Review with some information, including records, of complaints or concerns that had been raised with them, although for most of them their archival records were incomplete, and relevant office-holders and staff no longer worked for the association.

8.5.4. The information provided was valuable to the Review. In particular, their responses highlighted that:

- 4.1. Prior to 2000 when the FA formally introduced a child protection policy very little was done or recorded by CFAs in relation to referring allegations of abuse to the FA.
- 4.2. The CFAs were heavily reliant on the FA for advice and guidance on how to manage allegations of abuse. From the documents I have seen where the CFA had a concern, this was raised with the FA who would provide advice on how to proceed.
- 4.3. There appears to have been frequent communications between the CFAs and statutory services such as the local authority and the police, and in many cases the CFAs were alerted to allegations of abuse by the statutory services.
- 4.4. The information provided by the CFAs showed that most of the allegations they dealt with were one-off, or opportunistic instances, of abuse

as opposed to the targeted and sustained abuse that I describe elsewhere in the report and which has been the subject of much of the media coverage about abuse in football.

4.5. CFA records relating to child protection, were in the majority of cases, very limited. This is not surprising, as CFAs were often staffed largely by volunteers and prior to 2000 most these individuals had received no training in child protection.

8.5.5. One CFA referred to an individual who is subject to ongoing criminal proceedings (NQ) and references to him have been included in a confidential annexe for the FA. Other matters are set out in other sections of the Report, without identifying the particular CFA that was involved. Other than these matters, I set out a summary of the responses from the CFAs as follows:

CUMBERLAND FA

8.5.6. One of the matters that Cumberland CFA was aware of in the Review period related to a referee BT. The CFA told the Review that it had provided paperwork about BT to the FA's Child Protection Unit. I was able to review that paperwork from the FA's archives.

8.5.7. BT had been refereeing an under-16 football match in a local park, when he became aware of a young girl who had been hit by another young person. BT offered the young girl a lift home, and indecently assaulted her. BT had been a referee in the local Youth Football League for 28 years.

8.5.8. The matter had come to the CFA's attention by the police in February 2003. The CFA suspended BT from all football activities "until the result of their investigation is declared." The CFA brought BT's case to the FA's attention in or around March 2003. BT was convicted and sentenced in April 2003. The CFA informed the FA of the outcome and provided the FA with press cuttings about BT's case. The FA suspended BT permanently from all football and football activity on 28 April 2003.

8.5.9. The incident in question was not child sex abuse in the football context, but is a good example of how the CFA communicated their concern about an individual involved in football to the FA. The FA acted swiftly in imposing a temporary suspension pending the referee's criminal trial and made this permanent shortly after BT's conviction.

ESSEX FA

8.5.10. Essex CFA referred the Review to a number of matters within the relevant period.

8.5.11. One of these involved a coach, HK, who was known to be a registered sex offender having been convicted of two offences of gross indecency with a child (boy). HK was suspended from football in November 2002 pending enquiries. In June 2004, the police raised concerns that HK was still involving himself in football, in breach of his suspension, and asked the FA to investigate: the FA in turn asked the CFA to conduct “discreet enquiries to ascertain whether or not [HK] is involved in youth football.” There was no evidence from the CFA that HK was involved in football. The FA issued HK with a permanent suspension from football on March 21st 2005.

8.5.12. Another matter involved a man, NN, who was found guilty of 13 counts of gross indecency towards children. The FA archives contain correspondence with the CFA, which shows that a few months before NN’s conviction, the CFA had raised concerns about NN with the FA. NN was not registered as a referee, but turned up at football venues offering his services as a referee or acted as a referee having been contacted directly by local clubs. The advice from the FA was for the CFA to notify the secretaries of the local Youth League and the local Sunday League by telephone about NN, and request that they telephone their clubs to say that NN should not be used as a referee as it was understood that he was the subject of a police investigation.

8.5.13. This is a good example of the FA giving appropriate advice to a CFA about how to minimise the risk of an individual’s involvement in football pending a criminal trial.

GLoucestershire FA

8.5.14. Gloucestershire FA informed the Review of one matter from the period of the Review. This concerned an individual, LR. Adults in local football leagues had been aware of investigations of allegations of child abuse against LR from 1995-1998, but the CFA informed me that there is no documentary evidence available to indicate that this information was shared with either the CFA or the FA at the time. The Review has been informed that an official of the CFA had some knowledge of the investigation into LR. The official has said that his understanding was that the FA was aware of LR prior to his conviction for sexual offences in 1999. There is no record of this, however, in the FA archives, and so it is not possible to corroborate the CFA official’s account.

8.5.15. From materials provided by Somerset FA (dealing with the same individual), it appears that on November 28th 2001, LR was suspended permanently from football, and football activities, by Gloucestershire FA. Gloucestershire FA have told the Review that once informed of LR’s release into the community, the CFA liaised with the FA (Tony Pickerin) and Gloucestershire FA’s Youth Association secretary, which led to the issue of a suspension notice.

8.5.16. LR subsequently sought to apply for registration as a referee with Somerset FA. In 2002, the FA suspended LR indefinitely.

GUERNSEY FA

8.5.17. The Guernsey footballing community is a small one, but I was told that the CFA is one of the more significant institutions on the island. Seven teams play in a league. From the information I have seen, because of the size of the local community there is significant overlap in personnel between the teams and the CFA. The CFA was diligent and proactive in its dealings with the Review, including instigating a face-to-face meeting to discuss historical concerns.

8.5.18. Due to the small size of the island's population and the community of those involved in football, it is not possible to describe the circumstances of any individual's case without running the serious risk of disclosing their identity. I consider that it would be unfair on the individuals to have their identities revealed and so I have decided to set out the details of what the CFA told me in a confidential annexe for the FA.

HAMPSHIRE FA

8.5.19. The County FA's involvement with Bob Higgins is set out above (see: FA and Bob Higgins).

HERTFORDSHIRE FA

8.5.20. Hertfordshire FA informed the Review of a number of matters. The most significant matters were as follows.

8.5.21. Case of OQ: In April 2000, a parent wrote to Hertfordshire FA concerning OQ. The parent expressed her surprise that someone who was "well known in the community" and had committed "paedophile offences" was refereeing in the area. OQ had been registered as a referee since 1989 and coached youth football. The CFA corresponded with the FA over the matter and appears to have obtained the files from the Crown Court. These files confirmed that OQ had been convicted for indecent assault on girls aged under 14 years old. His registration as a referee for 2000/1 was refused due to these prior convictions. The CFA wrote to OQ on January 26th 2001 to explain that he was now suspended from all football activities, "in line with the FA Child Protection Policy". This was noted at the FA Referees' Committee meeting in March 2001, where it was stated that "Hertfordshire FA has suspended referee [OQ] [indefinitely] from all footballing activities on child protection grounds." The FA permanently suspended OQ in March 2002.

8.5.22. Case of RW: RW was a registered secretary of a football league, a coach, and founding manager of a junior football team. He was convicted of sexual offences against children – indecent assault, attempted buggery, gross indecency with a male child – and sentenced to eight years imprisonment on September 5th 2000.

8.5.23. It appears that the CFA was first informed about RW by the club on March 11th 2000. The CFA contacted the FA about the matter on March 17th 2000, when the individual was arrested. The FA's case file on RW contains a letter to the Executive Sub-Committee, recommending that RW be suspended, noting that the FA "is presently liaising with the Hertfordshire Football Association and the Hertfordshire Police" regarding RW who was presently remanded in custody charged with 17 offences of indecent assault and buggery on minors. RW had been arrested as a result of an investigation involving the police, social services and the NSPCC.

8.5.24. The relevant youth league issued a statement in March 2000 stating that it would give full support to RW's club and would help the police to the best of its ability. On April 17th 2000, the FA recommended that RW be removed from football contact with juniors.

8.5.25. Following his release from prison, the FA archives show that there was further activity with respect to RW. On March 18th 2005, the FA permanently suspended RW from all football. The FA informed the County FA on the same day. It appears that RW may have also used an alias name on his release from prison. The person bearing that other name was suspended by the FA from all football and football activity on March 17th 2005.

8.5.26. Case of FO: Following a newspaper story which alleged that FO, who was involved with youth football in the CFA's area, had sought to buy sex from a 12-year-old girl, the CFA asked the FA for advice. On April 15th 2002, the FA recommended an interim suspension whilst the allegations were investigated. On April 16th 2002, the CFA placed FO under immediate suspension from all football activities pending further investigation.

8.5.27. Case of CT: CT was issued with an indefinite suspension from all football activities "Sine Die with immediate effect" by the CFA on February 20th 2001 "in line with the FA Child Protection Policy". It is not known the reason for the suspension. In spite of the suspension, however, CT continued to referee games in the CFA's area. This happened where teams needed a substitute referee. CT had informed clubs that he was available to referee at "very short notice". The CFA put out a notice in the newsletter to all leagues within the area to inform them of CT's suspension, and warned clubs that if they appointed CT as a referee they would face disciplinary action.

8.5.28. Case of SE: The CFA was informed by the police on March 19th 2000 that a football official in their area, SE, was associated with an alleged sex offender who had taken children abroad and had allegedly abused a child there. The police recommended suspending SE from football responsibilities until the investigations were complete. The CFA suspended SE. In a letter from the CFA, dated March 29th 2000, SE was informed that he was suspended from all activities involving football and youths. He was not made aware of the basis for the charges. The CFA informed the FA of this suspension on April 3rd 2000. SE was subject to a temporary suspension by the FA. In July 2001, the decision was made to "Keep open, Keep reviewing, and Keep banning him." On September 3rd 2001, the CFA was informed by the FA that SE was temporarily

suspended and “will be put before a commission when the matter will be considered further”.

KENT FA

8.5.29. The County FA disclosed a number of matters to the Review. The significant matters were as follows:

8.5.30. Case of UQ: The Metropolitan Police advised the FA that UQ was banned for life from working with children. On December 16th 2003, the FA suspended UQ from all football activity involving under 18s and informed the CFA. A number of years later, the CFA received reports that UQ was refereeing despite his suspension. The CFA liaised with the FA and sent advice to the leagues within the area. In 2012, the FA found that UQ had breached his suspension, and imposed a five-year suspension from all football and football related activity involving children under the age of 18 years, to run consecutively to any suspension currently in effect. UQ was also fined the sum of £250.

8.5.31. Case of PI: Concerns were raised with the CFA in September 2005 about inappropriate behaviour of PI, who was a coach and referee. It was alleged that PI had touched players and been present in the changing rooms. The CFA referred the case to the FA and an interim suspension from all U18 football activity was issued.

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND FA

8.5.32. Leicestershire FA disclosed one matter of significance to the Review.

8.5.33. Case BL: Allegations of child sexual abuse in an educational environment were notified to the CFA by the police on October 18th 2005. The referral was relayed to the FA. The child who had been allegedly abused appeared to be in BL’s under 15 football team. An interim suspension was issued on October 20th 2005. The CFA informed relevant leagues of the interim suspension on October 25th 2005. The interim suspension was continued by the FA in 2007.

LINCOLNSHIRE FA

8.5.34. Lincolnshire informed me of the **Case of QG:** QG was an award-winning referee and League Registrar who was referred to the CFA by the police in 2003 for making indecent photographs of children. QG agreed with the police to resign his position and cease refereeing. The CFA also withdrew QG’s referee status immediately, and referred the case to the FA. In 2004, following his conviction, the FA suspended QG from all football activity.

SOMERSET FA

8.5.35. Somerset FA had a number of matters to disclose to the Review. Those of significance were as follows:

8.5.36. Case IM: In 2001, a coach from a football club within the CFA's area told two girls, who were 11 years old, to undress in front of him. IM was not prosecuted. In 2002, after IM's club cut off ties with him and the incident was covered in the local press, the CFA sought advice from the FA. IM was subsequently suspended by the CFA from football and footballing activities. IM's suspension was endorsed by the FA some months later.

8.5.37. Case LR: In 1999, LR, a referee who had previously been associated with a different CFA was convicted of indecent assault on children, and received a five-year sentence. The CFA drew the matter to the FA's attention when LR sought to register as a referee in 2002. In a cover note to his application, LR said that he had been convicted of indecent assault, but said that he was "innocent of the charge". The FA permanently suspended LR from football in July 2002. Notes in the FA archives record that a police officer informed the FA that LR had been: "Handing out cards at tournaments to indicate his availability as a referee", that he had used "football as a means of accessing boys", and was "Inherently dangerous".

8.5.38. The FA notified the CFA of LR's suspension, and requested the CFA "to make all relevant officials, especially those involved with junior football, aware of the fact that [LR] has been suspended permanently and particularly that he should not be allowed to referee or attend at junior games".

8.5.39. Subsequently, LR attempted to get involved in football again on a number of occasions. In 2005, he attempted to re-register as a referee. The CFA refused LR's registration and wrote to all League Secretaries to warn them about him. The CFA resisted a local newspaper's attempt to publicise the warning more broadly, on the basis that the information was provided on a "need to know" basis. The CFA contended that "Any convicted paedophile on release from prison has a right to try and rebuild his life without undue harassment, intimidation from people etc." One local league informed the CFA that, despite the letter, a club had allowed LR to referee at an adult game, in which children under 18-years-old had played. The CFA wrote to the club to reprimand it for failing to follow their advice, and said that the League may regard what the club had done as misconduct.

8.5.40. Case MD: In 2003, MD (a club manager) was convicted of indecent assault of three boys, including a young player at his club. The matter came to the attention of the CFA when it was reported in the press. Prior to this, MD's club appears to have informed the relevant League about the matter, but did not pass on information about the conviction to the CFA. The relevant League had recommended that the club remove MD from his position, which it did. When the CFA learned of the matter from the press, it wrote to the League to complain about its failure to pass on information about MD, and to remind the League of its child protection responsibilities.

SUFFOLK FA

8.5.41. Suffolk FA referred to Keith Ketley, whose case had featured on the *Dispatches* programme (see box 8: Dispatches: Soccer's Foul Play).

8.5.42. The allegations in the *Dispatches* programme were that Ketley had been the manager of a junior team based in the Ipswich area – initially called Rangers Boys FC and later Ipswich Saracens FC. Ketley abused boys at the junior team. This abuse was reported to the police, and Ketley was subsequently convicted and sentenced to imprisonment. Ketley had previously been involved with a junior team in Southend, in the county of Essex, where he had abused boys and served 18 months in prison having pleaded guilty to four counts of indecent assault. Ketley moved to the Suffolk area after coming out of prison and changed his name. The *Dispatches* programme contained an interview with the man who had been a senior official of the CFA. The *Dispatches* programme explained that no checks had been carried out by the CFA on Ketley. The CFA official explained that, at that time, the CFA would not carry out background checks on individuals involved with its clubs unless there were suspicions about them. The CFA has advised the Review that, at the time, it had no oversight or involvement in the operation, supervision, or management of staff or volunteers hired by football clubs.

8.5.43. The CFA did not have any records from the time in question, and its investigations for the Review had revealed no new information relating to Ketley and the clubs with whom he was involved.

8.5.44. The failure of the CFA to carry out checks on Ketley is explained by the fact that, in the 1990s, there was no screening regime which the CFA could access. The FA's first attempt at instituting a screening regime for coaches via the Football Association Coaches' Association (FACA), which might have assisted the CFA (although I note that the FACA scheme was dependent on self-disclosure, and therefore the honesty of applicants for registration), was commenced after Ketley had been imprisoned for the second time (see: Screening and Self-Declarations).

SUSSEX FA

8.5.45. Sussex FA disclosed a number of relevant matters to the Review.

8.5.46. Case KJ: KJ (a referee) was reported to the CFA in 2001 by the Chairman of a junior team, alleging that KJ had touched boys on their backsides during matches. The matter was referred on to the FA, and KJ was issued with an interim suspension, and then a permanent under-18 suspension in 2002. KJ eventually withdrew from any involvement with football.

8.5.47. Case EV: EV, who was connected to a club within the area of the CFA, was convicted of rape and sexual assault of boys. The CFA became aware of the conviction and sentence from a newspaper article. The CFA referred the matter to the FA, which issued EV with a permanent suspension from football.

8.5.48. Case CA: CA had been a referee in the CFA's area. In 2003, the CFA received concerns from the social services department recommending that CA "is not able to continue in any activity that would place children in a position where they would be at risk of harm from him." The recommendation arose from concerns in the family setting. The CFA referred the matter to the FA, and in January 2004, CA was permanently suspended by the FA from involvement in under-18s football and from refereeing.

8.5.49. Case RH: In 2000, a senior official of the Sussex Girls Football League was notified by the parent of a player in a girls' team that RH, another parent who had also coached and refereed, had served a custodial sentence for "child abuse". The senior official forwarded the information directly to the FA. The FA was unable to obtain from the police the details of RH's offences, due to data protection legislation. However, RH gave an assurance that he would not be involved in youth football, and his case file was closed by the FA. There is no evidence that RH had any further involvement with football.

WILTSHIRE FA

8.5.50. Wiltshire FA disclosed two matters of significance to the Review.

8.5.51. Case XT: A member of the CFA Council (XT) was charged with soliciting boys for sex in a park in the late 1990s. The police contacted the CFA at the time about it and XT was immediately suspended from all football activities. A member of the CFA Council informed the Review that:

"When I asked Council to endorse my decision I did have a rather rough ride before they finally agreed to my action. [XT] had previously been extremely well respected by all of us on Council. There was therefore a reluctance to believe that he would be found guilty. The CFA's Council was initially resistant but eventually approved this action".

XT pleaded guilty, and served a custodial sentence. He was subsequently permanently banned from football. The member of the CFA Council has stated that at that time there were no prescribed procedures and "I felt very alone in taking the action which I was convinced was right."

8.5.52. Case LE: LE was a convicted sex offender who had been refereeing in the County's area. Following information received from the local police and social services department, the CFA contacted the FA and LE was suspended from refereeing under 18s football. LE continued to referee in open age football: where a minority of the players (those 16-18 years old) were children. In January 2001, the CFA asked the FA for advice with respect to LE continuing to referee open age football. In June 2001, the FA suspended LE from any involvement in football which led him to have contact with children. LE was informed that he would be in breach of the suspension if he refereed open age football and a child was playing in the game. The FA also informed the CFA that LE's application for registration as a referee should be rejected.

Chapter 9. Clubs

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9.1 Introduction

9.1.1. In this section of the Report I set out (i) the information that I have received from the clubs that have formed the basis of my Review, (ii) the investigations which were conducted by the clubs and whether I considered those investigations to be adequate, and (iii) my findings as to what was known and done about child sexual abuse in football by these clubs in the relevant period.

9.1.2. The approach taken by the Review to clubs is set out in the Methodology (see: Methodology). Essentially, where a professional club appeared to be connected with the more high-profile allegations raised in the media, the Review liaised with those clubs with a view to ensuring that they carried out appropriate investigations and reported their findings. The information provided to the Review by the clubs and information obtained by the Review from other sources was then collated and used as the basis for the detailed reports set out in this section on the following prolific abusers:

9.2 Barry Bennell;

9.3 Robert ‘Bob’ Higgins;

9.4 Edward ‘Ted’ Langford;

9.5 Christopher Gieler;

9.6 Edward ‘Eddie’ Heath;

9.7 George Ormond;

9.8 James Francis ‘Frank’ Roper;

9.9 Michael Sean ‘Kit’ Carson.

9.1.3. The focus of the detailed reports is on (i) the extent of the link that existed between the abuser and the associated club(s) and (ii) what the clubs knew about the abusers. I also consider and explain my view as to whether each club has carried out an adequate investigation as required by the Terms of Reference.

9.1.4. I then consider the evidence I have received as to whether the most prolific abusers, or some of them, were part of a so-called “paedophile ring”.

9.1.5. In relation to other clubs (i.e. those which were not connected with the most prolific abusers), I asked that each provide me with information on complaints received and/or concerns held in relation to child sexual abuse during the relevant period. Where the club was a professional club, I required a response. Where appropriate, the Review Team made follow-up enquiries and conducted further investigations. I have summarised the information received from these clubs. In this section, I also consider information provided to me in relation to John Broome (by Manchester City and other sources), Bill Toner (by Manchester City) and Phil Edwards (by Watford).

9.1.6. In the text, I do not detail the accounts of the abuse that survivors have shared with the Review, save to the extent necessary to explain how I have reached my conclusions. I have also removed details that could identify different survivors, unless they have explicitly consented to being identified. I have adopted this approach so as to avoid causing further unnecessary trauma to those whose accounts I received. It is im-

portant, however, that the FA read the accounts of those who were abused, and I have therefore included detailed anonymised summaries of those accounts in a confidential annexe for the FA.

9.2 Barry Bennell

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INTRODUCTION

9.2.1. Barry Bennell (“Bennell”) is a convicted child sexual offender. In this section of the Report I first set out a summary of Bennell’s involvement in football during the relevant period. I then set out the links between Bennell and Manchester City, Crewe Alexandra, and Stoke City. I then summarise the reports of the abuse perpetrated by Bennell that I have received: this summary cannot do justice to the horror of the abuse suffered by so many. I then set out the general level of knowledge at the time abuse was being carried out by Bennell, before looking specifically at what the three clubs (Manchester City, Crewe Alexandra, and Stoke City) knew about any allegations of abuse. Finally, I consider whether the investigation conducted by each of the clubs was adequate.

9.2.2. Bennell has been convicted on five separate occasions of sexual offences against children. Bennell’s convictions are as follows:

2.1. In 1995, Bennell was convicted in Florida of four counts of indecently assaulting a 13 year old male in 1994 while they were on a football tour in Florida, for which he was sentenced to 4 years’ imprisonment.

2.2. In 1998, Bennell was convicted at Chester Crown Court of 23 counts of sexual abuse (indecent assault, buggery and attempted buggery) against 15 individuals – all of whom were male and were aged between nine and 14 at the dates of offending (1978-1992). Bennell was sentenced to 9 years’ imprisonment. 22 counts were to lie on file.

2.3. In 2015, Bennell was convicted at Chester Crown Court of four counts of sexual abuse (indecent assault and inciting a child aged under 14 years to commit acts of gross indecency) against a 12 year old male in 1980 for which he was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment.

2.4. In February 2018, Bennell was convicted at Liverpool Crown Court of 50 counts of sexual abuse (indecent assault, buggery and attempted buggery) against 12 individuals – all of whom were male and were aged between eight and 14 at the dates of offending (1979-1991) – for which he was sentenced to 30 years’ imprisonment.

2.5. In July 2020, Bennell was convicted at Chester Crown Court of nine counts of sexual abuse (indecent assault and buggery) against two individuals – both of whom were male and aged between 11 and 14 at the dates of offending (1979-1988) – for which he was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment, to be served consecutively to his current term, meaning a total sentence of 34 years in custody.

9.2.3. A number of other individuals have come forward and reported that they too were sexually abused by Bennell. The Review has no reason to doubt these further accounts of Bennell’s abuse. The accounts are consistent with one another, and there is no evidence of collusion or of one individual ‘piggy-backing’ his story on another. There is also no evidence that any of the individuals whose accounts we have seen or heard have made up these stories for financial gain or otherwise. I take them as honest accounts of horrific experiences of abuse. It is not my role, however, to make findings about any individual’s abuse.

9.2.4. Bennell was involved in football for many years. During that time he was associated with a number of professional clubs. He initially ran a team which he said was linked to Chelsea; he subsequently scouted for Manchester City and coached its unofficial feeder teams; he then worked on the professional staff at Crewe Alexandra; later he provided scouting and coaching services to Stoke City while also coaching at a youth team, Stone Dominoes.

9.2.5. Bennell used football and, in particular, the links he had with these professional clubs, to meet, manipulate, control and ultimately abuse a large number of boys. Bennell was seen by many as a “star-maker”. In fact, he was a prolific paedophile who destroyed the lives and dreams of many of those entrusted to his care.

9.2.6. When sentencing Bennell, following the 2018 convictions, the Recorder of Liverpool, His Honour Judge Goldstone QC said of Bennell:

“There is no doubt that you were good at spotting talent in young footballers and in developing their skills, but there is equally no doubt that behind the youth coach, there lay a totally different person – one who was hell-bent upon abusing those boys and using the control and power which you were able to exert over them in order to do so...your behaviour towards these boys in grooming and seducing them before subjecting them to, in some cases, the most serious, degrading and humiliating abuse was sheer evil... you were the devil incarnate; you stole their childhoods and their innocence to satisfy your own perversion...”

SUMMARY OF BENNELL'S INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL

9.2.7. In the 1970s, Bennell worked at a clothing shop in Manchester, and also on a market stall in Manchester, from which Bennell would give “discounts” to those boys who played for his football teams.

9.2.8. During the 1970s and into the 1980s, Bennell worked as a sports coach at Butlins holiday camps. Bennell returned to Butlins many times over the following years, both as a coach offering courses to guests and as a guest himself. He would invariably be accompanied by young boys, many of whom he sexually abused. I received accounts from three boys who were at Butlins during the summer of 1979, all of whom were abused by Bennell.

9.2.9. From November 1979 to June/July 1981, Bennell worked at a children's home as a Residential Social Worker. In support of his application for the role, Bennell provided a number of references, including one from the head of Physical Education for boys at a local school. This described Bennell as being the manager of a boys' Sunday League football team and stated that Bennell had “shown tremendous zeal and genuine interest & concern for the boys in his charge regardless of the fact that he was always working on a voluntary basis”.

9.2.10. Another individual also wrote to say that he had known Bennell for “several years”, and referred to Bennell as having “a gift for communicating with youngsters” and to Bennell’s “record of achievement with junior sporting groups, particularly with young footballers...[which] has been reached with little or no help from other sources”. In addition, the person giving the reference said, “I have been privileged to witness his involvement with boys from 8 to 18 years of age and can honestly say that I have learned a great deal from him.”

9.2.11. In early 1981, a staff member at the children’s home complained that Bennell was not giving sufficient attention to his role at the children’s home and had “boys sleeping in his flat at the weekend [which] causes problems on his duty weekend”. In February 1981 the children’s home sent Bennell a formal warning which included a requirement that he “cease to entertain guests at [the children’s home] who are under the age of 18 years, and you will not in any case permit guests to stay over-night without the express prior permission of the Officer-in-Charge.” It appears that Bennell’s conduct did not improve, and he was suspended from his post pending a meeting with senior staff members. Before that meeting was held, it appears that Bennell tendered his resignation and left the children’s home.

9.2.12. During the first half the 1970s, Bennell managed a football team based in Manchester known as “Senrab”. (This team is not to be confused with the team of the same name which played in London leagues.) Bennell initially told those who played for Senrab that it was affiliated to Chelsea FC. The report commissioned by Chelsea and led by Charles Geekie QC concluded that, whatever Bennell may have said, there was as a matter of fact no connection between Bennell’s Senrab and Chelsea FC.

9.2.13. One former Senrab player recounted:

“Between the dates of 1970-1975, I played football for a team called Senrab, which was based in the Hulme area of Manchester.

...I was recruited by a male called Barry Bennell ...

Barry Bennell was my only coach during that time and he advised myself and other players that Senrab was Chelsea’s junior team, but based in the North West. He used to organize trips to London, to play the same named team, Senrab of London, who were also junior members of Chelsea Football Club.

Bennell would also make arrangements for our team to visit Wales where we would stay in a large complex. There would be members of the London Senrab present and Bennell would organize games between both teams.

I also visited Wales with Bennell and the rest of the team and during another excursion our team travelled to the Chelsea football ground. I recall Bennell being friends with the Chelsea chief scout, although I cannot recall the scout’s name.

...

I know that Bennell and the Chief Scout had a friendship as we met up with him and on one occasion he took us on a tour of Stamford Bridge. I can always remember walking on the pitch at the Chelsea ground.”

9.2.14. Another former Senrab player recalled:

“I went training in a place in Hulme ... I was aged 12 then so it was 1971/72. I played really well so Bennell asked me to join a team he ran called ‘Senrab’.

...

Bennell picked all the best players from around Manchester area for his team so each year we had to call ourselves a different name otherwise they wouldn’t let us play in the league if they really knew we were ‘Senrab’, this was because we were so successful. One of the other names we used was ‘Pegasus’. Senrab is Barnes spelt backwards which is where Chelsea had their training ground and I believe he was a trainee footballer with them. We played in the Manchester leagues and won everything. Senrab eventually folded for some reason when Bennell was still the coach.”

This former player thought that their kits had been sponsored by Chelsea, as “everything had ‘CFC’ on them”.

9.2.15. The Review received evidence that Frank Roper (an abuser who was associated with Blackpool FC) had some involvement with Bennell’s Senrab team.

9.2.16. One former Senrab player told the Review that:

“Senrab was actually, sort of, Chelsea’s junior feeder team if you like... we actually played in the Chelsea kit for quite a while, the blue kit.

...

Frank Roper actually came to my parent’s house to ask me to play for Nova Juniors because at the time, Nova Juniors and Senrab...they were two completely different teams... I seem to remember that Frank Roper and Barry Bennell then, sort of, got together...We did go on trips with Bennell and Roper to Barry Island. I went to Senrab more with Barry Bennell and then Frank Roper, from what I remember, came along, but then in the end...he started running his own Nova Juniors and he asked me to play for them.

The running of [Senrab] was mainly done by Bennell. Frank Roper came along and sort of joined in. But...If you mention Senrab, everyone would always say, “Oh, did you play for Barry Bennell?” Not...“Did you play for Frank Roper and Barry Bennell?” It was more Barry Bennell, Senrab. Frank Roper came along and we did have trips to Wales and half stayed in one chalet and half stayed in another.

I seem to remember that [Roper did not take] a massive part being involved in Senrab. I think he actually did it to drive players away and play for - eventually play for this Nova Juniors. Yeah, I think they did have a bit of a fall out to be honest because from...what I can remember vaguely that Frank Roper knew that Senrab had some very, very good footballers. And he was trying to prise them away from Barry Bennell.”

9.2.17. Another former Senrab player recounted his experience of playing for Senrab in a football tournament in South Wales:

“We travelled there and back in a minibus. We slept in dormitories that had

bunk beds in, there were only boys in the dormitory all aged 12 or 13. During the course of the night I saw a man of small stature come into the room. I don't know where he came from as he hadn't travelled with us down there and I had never seen him before. He went to one of the boys in one of the bottom bunk beds, I could see him going under the bedding with his hands, he was half kneeling down to the bottom bunkbed. I knew something wasn't right and so I turned my back on it. I didn't want to see anything. The man had walked past a couple of other bunks to get to this particular one.

...

When we travelled back we were in a minibus but then for some reason I was in a car, I think this was because I was going to be dropped off in my home town... I remember being really tired in the car. It was actually the man who had come into the dormitory who was driving the car and there was a boy next to him in the front passenger seat. This man had not been with us on the journey down. I was sat in the back of the car with Bennell, he was sat behind the driver's seat and I was on Bennell's knee, asleep on him, there were three other boys to the side of me.

I can remember the man's name who was driving was 'Frank'. ...

When I woke up, Bennell had his finger inside my zip and was fiddling around with [my] penis. I believe I would have had long trousers on, so he must have had to unzip my trousers. ... I pretend that I was still asleep. ...

When I got out of the car, my first thought was that I was going to be in the front pages of the News of the World newspaper, which would have been awful as I wanted to be a professional footballer. I stood on the pavement and was in shock, at what had happened. I didn't want to go home to face my [family]..."

It is likely that the "Frank" described by the former Senrab player was Frank Roper. I consider the connection between Bennell and Roper in the section of this Report on connections between perpetrators (see: Connections Between Abusers and Alleged Abusers).

9.2.18. From mid-1975 until 1984, Bennell was associated with Manchester City. I consider Bennell's connection with Manchester City in more detail below.

9.2.19. It was reported to me that around 1982 Bennell was coaching "Northwest Derbyshire School Boys, an FA-backed team". I have not been able to find out more about this position.

9.2.20. In January 1985, Bennell commenced employment with Crewe Alexandra, where he stayed until 1989. After a period of time living in the United States, Bennell returned to Crewe in 1990, where he stayed until 1992. I consider Bennell's connection with Crewe in more detail below.

9.2.21. Between 1992 and 1994, Bennell was employed by a company owned by LT,

the founder and Chairman of a youth team called Stone Dominoes based in Staffordshire. At the same time, Bennell was also involved with Stoke City FC – providing coaching and scouting services to that club. I consider Bennell’s connection with Stone Dominoes and Stoke City in more detail below.

9.2.22. In 1994, during a Stone Dominoes football tour to the United States, Bennell was arrested. He was tried in Florida on counts of indecent assault on a 13 year old male who had played for the Stone Dominoes team (and had been on the US tour). Bennell was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment. In 1997, Bennell was deported back to the United Kingdom. By that point, a United Kingdom police investigation was well under way (see: FA and Bennell). On his return to the United Kingdom, Bennell was charged with a number of offences leading, ultimately, to his conviction in May 1998 at Chester Crown Court and his subsequent imprisonment. As set out above, further convictions and custodial sentences followed in 2015, 2018 and 2020.

9.2.23. I have seen no evidence to suggest that Bennell was involved in football following his deportation to the United Kingdom in 1997.

Links with Manchester City FC

9.2.24. Manchester City commissioned an external review into its association with Bennell and what, if anything, the Club knew about the abuse he committed. This review was led by Jane Mulcahy QC and Julian Diaz-Rainey of Pinsent Masons LLP (“the MCFC Review Team”). They produced a detailed report setting out their findings (“the Mulcahy Report”). I have had the benefit of reading and considering that report.

9.2.25. In this section, I give an overview of Bennell’s association with the Club based on the Mulcahy Report, information shared with me by the MCFC Review Team and information obtained directly from other sources.

9.2.26. The Mulcahy Report concludes that Bennell “had a form of association with MCFC in two distinct time periods... Period 1 – between summer 1975 and late 1979; and Period 2 – between late 1981 and spring/summer 1984”.

9.2.27. In relation to “Period 1”, the Mulcahy Report concludes that Bennell:

- 27.1. ran and coached a feeder team (Whitehill) which was, in effect, an unofficial Manchester City junior team; and
- 27.2. was not an employee of the Club.

I agree with these conclusions. Further, on the basis of the evidence I have seen, as summarised below, it seems to me that, despite not being employed by the Club, Bennell’s association with the Club was a close one and he can properly be described as having been part of Manchester City’s youth function.

9.2.28. In relation to “Period 2”, the Mulcahy Report concludes that Bennell had “some form of association” with the Club, albeit “not at the same level as it was during

Period 1". I agree that there was an association between Bennell and the Club during this period. I cannot say whether or not it was at the "same level" as in Period 1, but there is evidence to indicate a close connection in Period 2. In particular, I have seen video footage (described at paragraph 9.2.44 below) which suggests that Bennell remained a key figure in Manchester City's youth set-up. Further, a number of individuals who played for Bennell's teams from this period spoke about playing in Manchester City kit, using Manchester City's training facilities and Bennell having a level of access at the Club suggestive of a close association.

9.2.29. The Mulcahy Report describes the period between late 1979 and late 1981 as Bennell having a "break from being associated with MCFC". This is generally correct, although Bennell may have continued to give the impression that there was some form of connection between him and the Club even during this period.

9.2.30. During the period between late 1979 and late 1981, Bennell was working (and living) at a children's home, and his involvement with Manchester City was clearly very much reduced. Bennell was also no longer running Whitehill and was seen much less regularly at or around the Club. It appears, however, that Bennell continued to recommend players to the junior teams which fed players to, and were associated with, Manchester City. The Club has said that this was without any formal instruction or direction from the Club (and I have seen no evidence to suggest otherwise). During this period, Bennell ran a number of boys' football teams, including White Knowl, Palace and New Mills Juniors in the Derbyshire area. I have no doubt that Bennell told the boys who played for these teams that the teams were connected with Manchester City. In a way, they were: Bennell would "borrow" players from the youth clubs which had a closer association with Manchester City to play for his teams, and sometimes Bennell would recommend players from his teams to the established Manchester City feeder teams (such as Bluestar, which was run by an individual whom I shall refer to as SJ). However, I agree that these clubs do not appear to have had the established connection with Manchester City that Whitehill had.

9.2.31. My view on Bennell's association with Manchester City is based on the Mulcahy Report, evidence which was presented to my Review, and from a summary of the evidence that the Club has produced from a variety of witnesses (as described below).

9.2.32. SJ, who from about 1976 was involved in running a number of teams that fed young players into Manchester City, stated:

"[In about 1976], I was approached by Barry Bennell who asked me if [my son] would come and play for his team. He explained he was a scout for Manchester City and he showed me his identity card to prove he was a scout. He explained that his team Whitehill was the nursery team for Manchester City...

...

[In about 1976], Ken Barnes, the chief scout for Manchester City, came to me and asked if I would help run the [Whitehill] team. He said that Bennell was

in trouble with the league the team were playing in for playing unregistered players and poaching players. I agreed [to help out] ...I was more of a figure head...Bennell was still at the club training and coaching the kids.

...

When Bennell left the club, I was still there running a number of teams, these were 'Bluestar' which changed its name to 'Adswold [Amateurs]'... Bennell would come and watch the team play every now and again. He would sometimes ask if he could borrow a few players for his team. I let him, but it was between him and the player's parents to sort that out. From what I have heard they just took their child to a game and brought them back again, there was no staying over at his house.

...

Bennell was away from Manchester City only a couple of years or so, before he came back. Ken Barnes told me that Bennell was back in the fold again and back at City. I knew that Bennell was a great coach and good with the kids and I was happy to have him back. I was still there...but Bennell came and took over the training. He did take some of the kids and played them in other teams..."

9.2.33. The father ("AX") of a former player ("FX") told the Review that his son had been recommended to the Club by the parent of a school friend. AX was told to take FX along to training at Maine Road, the Club's ground:

"In September 1976, I took [FX] to his first training session at Maine Road...I knocked on the players' entrance door. Barry Bennell answered the door. He introduced himself as Bené. I assumed he was an MCFC coach as we were at Maine Road, he was wearing a City tracksuit and he answered the door...Bennell took us to the changing room where other boys were getting changed...Bennell told the boys to go into the stadium and warm up by doing laps around the pitch then he had them running up and down the steps in the main stand...After the warm up, the boys went back into the gym...Bennell led the training session...the boys played in different coloured MCFC bibs. Bennell seemed to have free rein around Maine Road stadium.

...

At the end [of the first training session]...Bennell said [FX] had done well and invited him to attend [future training sessions] ... [FX] played a few matches for Whitehill's under 12s team...I can recall three or so friendly matches during the summer or autumn of 1977 where [FX] played for an older Whitehill team. They played in a full MCFC strip or the Ajax style City away kit...

...

Most of the boys from Whitehill went on to sign schoolboy forms with MCFC... we attended a presentation evening in the social club at Maine Road. This was arranged by MCFC. Ken Barnes gave out the trophies...

...

We received some financial support from MCFC. They donated footballs and also footed the bill for the services of the ex-City physio [to treat players].

...

In terms of the tickets we received for matches, the usual procedure was for the team and the parents to turn up at Maine Road with Bennell. He would go to the reception and would be given an envelope with tickets in, he would hand them out. The boys who were particularly desirable to MCFC would be given director box tickets and might be invited for a drink in Ken Barnes' office after the match. Bennell never went to Ken Barnes' office with me or the other parents.

...

[In 1978/79, I] would often meet up with Bennell to go to Park Road at Cheadle to watch the MCFC teams training...Bennell would wear a MCFC tracksuit top, which you could not buy in the shops at the time...MCFC coaches would acknowledge Bennell.

...

During the summer of 1978, '79 and I think '80, Bennell was the resident football coach at Pwllheli Butlins...Butlins had nothing to do with MCFC, although Bennell did wear an MCFC top and kit and they advertised him in their magazine as a Man City youth coach. I also remember that Bennell managed to get a couple of MCFC players...to go down to present the 'Boy of the Week' trophy."

9.2.34. JY told me that in 1978, when he was 10, he joined a team called Whitehill which he said "was a feeder team, a nursery team to Manchester City". Bennell was a coach at Whitehill where he ran an under 11s and under 12s team. JY said that Whitehill trained at one of the Club's training grounds (at Cheadle Town), and that they were looked after by a man called Ted Davies. He recalls that Whitehill played in Manchester City coloured kits. JY said that "It always felt like you were at City. We were." He said that:

"I couldn't say that City were employing Bennell to run this team for them, or if Bennell had this team that was full of great players and so City were tapping into that. Either way, the connection was absolute."

9.2.35. JY also said that:

"In the summer of 1981, Whitehill ceased as a team. Bené at that time disappeared from City, I believe. The Whitehill and Blue Star merged and became the Blue Star team that remained. I then went over and started playing for Blue Star."

9.2.36. Ian Ackley told me that, in 1979, when he was 10, he joined a team called White Knowl which "was Bennell's team... he sold it to me that he was Manchester City's Northwest Regional Scout and that by playing for him in that side, there could very well be an opportunity to progress to play at Manchester City." Ian Ackley said that Bennell was "certainly connected with Manchester City as a scout at that time, because I regularly went to Platt Fields to train, once a week. That was like their trial academy thing."

9.2.37. Gary Cliffe told me that from 1980, when he was aged 11, he played for teams associated with Manchester City. He named those teams as "Blue Star, Peg-

asus, Adswood, Glossop and Midas”. Gary Cliffe explained that:

“[The teams] didn’t call themselves Manchester City because then you couldn’t get in the leagues. The leagues wouldn’t take professional clubs so it was through the back door. Everyone knew it was Man City, we played in the Man City kit etc., etc., but we didn’t call ourselves that.”

9.2.38. Gary Cliffe said that he first met Bennell at Platt Lane during a “meet and greet” and that Bennell “had the run” of Maine Road. He told me that he signed on as an associated schoolboy player for Manchester City at the age of 14. “My parents and Bennell attending the signing process at the club following a 1st team game at Maine Road.”

9.2.39. A former player for one of Bennell’s junior sides, CW, stated when he was 11 years old, he was introduced to a man who ran a team called Pegasus which he says was a feeder team for Manchester City. CW said that:

“I was then introduced to my new coach Barry Bennell [in 1982], I knew that Barry... was taking on kids on behalf of Manchester City... [W]e went to Maine Road (Manchester City’s ground) to watch the match. ... We walked through the crowds, through the player’s tunnel, and the first team players were there, they were all acknowledging each other. We then walked to the Directors box – we were 12 years old at this time and all I could think was ‘this is going to be me’. Barry turned to us and said ‘what do you think lads?’ He would turn to the directors and say to them ‘he is one of my lads’.

After the game we both met the chief scouts, we were in the Directors room and boardroom. Barry was saying again, ‘These are my 2 best lads – under 15’s and will do trials for England.’ He went on to say, ‘If they listen to me, if they work hard.’ We were blown away.

After the game we went to the first team changing room...”

9.2.40. Another former player has said that between 1981 and 1984 he played for “New Mills Juniors and then I believe it changed to White Knowl”. He explained that Bennell had approached him as he played football and “identified himself as a scout for Manchester City and provided me with his business card”.

9.2.41. Another former player said that Adswood Amateurs, Glossop Juniors, North-west Derbyshire, Midas, were the main team names associated with Bennell. He said:

“We represented... Manchester City. ... We trained at Platt Lane which was a Manchester City training ground on a Friday evening. Played games on the Astroturf at City’s training ground. Attended matches with complimentary tickets handed out by Barry Bennell to the players that we went in Manchester City tracksuits and we attended the games on a Saturday, home games, so yeah, quite frequently around the club with him.”

9.2.42. In an article from the Buxton Advertiser, dated November 18th 1983, relating to White Knowl, Bennell is described as “Manchester City’s north-west

regional scout”.

9.2.43. I was told that by around 1982/1983, Bennell was running a team called Glossop Juniors. It was reported to me that that team played in the Manchester City kit and the players understood that the team was affiliated to Manchester City. A Glossop Juniors player stated:

“In approximately 1984 Barry held a meeting which included both the players and children and the parents. He told everyone that he was moving to Crewe Alexandra so the team would no longer just be affiliated to Manchester City. He was encouraging to the team saying that the players would have both Manchester City and Crewe Alexandra looking at us to further our footballing future. Once Barry Bennell moved over to Crewe Alexandra the team trained more in Crewe and the games that were played were generally played more in that area, the affiliation to Crewe became stronger than it was to Manchester City.”

9.2.44. One individual who was abused by Bennell provided me with a VHS cassette on which there was recorded, among other material, a short section of what appears to be part of a television programme. I do not know the name of the programme, but the section that I saw showed young players wearing Manchester City kits playing at Platt Lane, being watched by Ken Barnes (the Club’s Chief Scout) and other Manchester City staff. The presenter commented that the players are “under the watchful eye of the Club’s trainers and scouts”, at which point the camera moved from showing Ken Barnes to a shot of Bennell coaching the players. Some of the players are shown wearing the Manchester City sky blue “Saab” sponsored kit, whereas others are in a black and red stripe Manchester City away kit: this likely places the footage to 1982-1984.

9.2.45. Andy Woodward said that, when Bennell first approached his parents, Bennell told them that he worked for Manchester City but also had some kind of relationship with Crewe. According to Andy Woodward, Bennell invited him to attend training at Platt Lane. Andy Woodward described Bennell as “having the run” of Platt Lane and Maine Road. Shortly after he began attending the training sessions at Platt Lane, Andy Woodward said that Bennell told him and the rest of the team that they were to play as “Railway Juniors”.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OBTAINED BY MANCHESTER CITY FC

9.2.46. The MCFC Review Team provided me with a summary of the evidence obtained from a variety of witnesses, and afforded me the opportunity of confidentially viewing a sample of the witness accounts that had been taken. In light of the legally privileged and confidential circumstances of MCFC’s external review, I considered this summary of evidence (the “Summary of Evidence”) during a visit to the offices of the MCFC Review Team. The Summary of Evidence contained information from a variety of witnesses: scouts, former club employees, parents of youth players who were coached by Bennell as well youth players who were coached by Bennell including some who had been abused by him. The witnesses recalled: Bennell’s involvement with different feeder teams for Manchester City; that Bennell would train these teams at Maine Road or the club’s training ground; and that Bennell had a Manchester City

scout's card which he showed to parents.

9.2.47. The Summary of Evidence included the following information:

MANCHESTER CITY STAFF/SCOUTS

47.1. A scout associated with Manchester City throughout the 1970s and early 1980s said that Bennell initially ran a Chelsea feeder team, Senrab. However, in about 1975, Bennell became linked to Manchester City as a scout and had involvement with Whitehill. Whitehill was a feeder team for City. Bennell was not employed by Manchester City, but an outsider looking on would think he was because he had decision-making power granted to him by Ken Barnes.

47.2. A former Manchester City employee stated that Bennell had worked as part of Ken Barnes's staff and helped out with the feeder club, Whitehill.

47.3. A scout associated with Manchester City throughout the 1970s and 1980s said that Bennell had run Whitehill (which was also known as Bluestar), Pegasus and other names in the early to mid-1970s but was not at Maine Road often.

47.4. A scout associated with Manchester City from the late 1970s through to the 1980s said that Bennell had run local feeder sides which were connected with Manchester City and played at Manchester City's training ground. This scout referred to Pegasus and Whitehill.

47.5. A former Manchester City employee said that Bennell had been involved with feeder teams at Manchester City naming Whitehill and Bluestar.

47.6. A scout associated with Manchester City from the early 1970s to the early 1980s said that Bennell had run local feeder sides, Pegasus and Whitehill. This scout said that he did not think Bennell had worked fulltime at Manchester City.

47.7. A former Manchester City employee said that Bennell had often been around the Club, and had been a scout and coach for young players but not a club employee.

47.8. A former Manchester City employee said that Bennell had been involved with feeder teams at Manchester City, naming Whitehill and Bluestar.

47.9. A former Manchester City employee said that Bennell had been involved with Whitehill and Bluestar, which were feeder teams at Manchester City.

47.10. A former Manchester City employee said that Bennell had been a scout for the Club and been involved in running feeder teams for the Club, but had not coached the official teams/associated schoolboys.

47.11. A former Manchester City employee said that Whitehill had been an independent youth team which had had a big interface with Manchester City. The former employee said that Bennell was always hanging around Maine Road trying to see Ken Barnes.

47.12. A former Manchester City employee said that Whitehill and Bluestar were feeder sides for Manchester City. If a player did well for those teams, he would be brought into Manchester City on schoolboy forms.

47.13. A former scout associated with Manchester City from the mid-1970s

through the 1980s said that Bennell had been a coach/scout for the Club.

47.14. A former scout associated with Manchester City from the mid-1970s through the 1980s said that Bennell had run Whitehill, a feeder side for Manchester City and later known as Bluestar. This scout reported that Bennell “had the run” of Maine Road.

47.15. A former Manchester City employee stated that when Bennell had been at Crewe, he had used Platt Lane for training.

FORMER YOUTH PLAYERS

47.16. An individual who was coached, and was sexually abused, by Bennell said that Bennell had been initially linked to Chelsea and run a team called Senrab. However, he said that in around 1975, the team had changed to being called “Whitehill” and was Manchester City’s junior team.

47.17. An individual who was coached by Bennell said that Bennell had been initially connected with Chelsea and ran their feeder team, Senrab. Senrab’s last season was 1974/75 and over the closed season the team became Whitehill. Whitehill was a feeder team for Manchester City.

47.18. An individual who was coached, and sexually abused, by Bennell said that Whitehill, Bluestar, Pegasus and Xerxes had been nursery teams for Manchester City. This individual further recounted that Bennell had had a Manchester City scout’s card that he would show to parents.

47.19. An individual who was coached by Bennell in the late 1970s/early 1980s said that Whitehill, Bluestar, Pegasus and Adswood had been feeder clubs for Manchester City.

47.20. An individual who was coached by Bennell in the early 1980s said that Bluestar, Pegasus and Midas had been feeder clubs for Manchester City.

47.21. An individual who was coached by Bennell in the late 1970s described Bennell as having been part of the system at Manchester City.

47.22. An individual who was coached, and sexually abused, by Bennell said that Pegasus and Midas had been feeder teams for Manchester City, and that Bennell had been involved in coaching those teams. This individual also said that Bennell seemed to have had “free rein” around Manchester City.

47.23. An individual who was coached, and sexually abused, by Bennell said that Bluestar, Midas, and Adswood Amateurs had been feeder teams for Manchester City, and explained that Bennell was the coach of Bluestar.

47.24. An individual who was coached, and sexually abused, by Bennell said Bennell, who was introduced as a Manchester City scout, had conducted “guest training” at New Mills Juniors but that that team had not been linked to Manchester City. He said that Bennell had also run Bluestar which was a Manchester City feeder team.

PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

47.25. An individual who was a parent/family member of a boy who was coached by Bennell at New Mills Juniors said that Bennell had run Bluestar, a Manchester City feeder team. This individual also said that Bennell had helped out with training at New Mills Juniors, but that New Mills Juniors had not been linked to Manchester City, albeit that Bennell had arranged the loan

of Manchester City kit to New Mills Juniors.

47.26. The mother of a boy who was coached by Bennell in the early 1980s said that Bluestar, Pegasus, Midas and Adswold Amateurs were different names for Manchester City's junior teams. Bennell was the coach of this individual's son's team. When boys got to the age of 14 they signed for "City Proper" and Bennell was not involved anymore.

Links with Crewe Alexandra FC

9.2.48. In its report to me, Crewe Alexandra stated that the club "employed Bennell between about January 1985 and September 1989 and from about August 1990 until January 1992". This description accords with the evidence that I have seen, although there is some evidence that before he was employed by the Club (from January 1985), Bennell had a less formal link potentially commencing in 1984. The evidence for this is Andy Woodward's account that, when he first met Bennell, Bennell stated that he was connected both to Manchester City and Crewe; and also the account provided by a Glossop Juniors player who stated that in 1984 Bennell announced that the junior team would be switching allegiances from Manchester City to Crewe. This is also supported by the evidence obtained by the MGFC Review Team.

9.2.49. Bennell was employed by Crewe as a youth coach and scout. While he formally reported to Dario Gradi, it is clear that Bennell had a significant amount of power and autonomy.

9.2.50. In the period between his two episodes of employment at Crewe, Bennell lived in the United States.

BOARD MINUTES

9.2.51. There are a number of references to Bennell in the Crewe Alexandra's Board minutes. The first entry relating to Bennell was on January 10th 1985. This records:

"Mr Gradi reported that he had appointed a person to help with the youth work, Mr Barry Bennell. He will be paying him £120 per week which includes his expenses. This help is badly needed as there are now training sessions on four nights of the week. The Chairman was very impressed with this news and felt that it was the best he had heard for a while."

9.2.52. On September 10th 1987, Crewe Alexandra's Board minutes record that "it is not appropriate to offer [Bennell] a new contract at this time". There is no further explanation of this in the minutes, and neither the Club nor anyone who has spoken to the Review is able to recall what this meant or why this decision was taken at that point in time. Given that Bennell's employment at the Club clearly continued, it is likely that this simply meant that Bennell was not offered new terms and conditions, but continued working for the Club on the same basis as previously.

9.2.53. Bennell carried on working for Crewe until 1989. On September 7th 1989, the minutes record that "Barry Bennell has decided to leave but there is a possibility that he may come back after a good break. The Manager [Dario Gradi] said it was import-

ant he takes on someone very quickly in order to keep the continuity.”

9.2.54. Bennell returned to Crewe following a period living in the United States. On April 19th 1990, the Board minutes record that “[Bennell] has been offered the job of taking the apprentices next season”. The minutes of the meeting of May 31st 1990 record that:

“[Bennell is] returning to the Club, possibly in August, to look after the YTS players...[Bennell] would need assistance re the purchase of a house, this would be in the form of a loan to be offset against future commission earned.”

9.2.55. Bennell is referred to in the minutes of the meeting of October 25th 1990:

“[TG] was leaving the Company as it would seem he has had a number of differences with Barry Bennell.”

9.2.56. The minutes of the meeting dated January 23rd 1992 record that “[Bennell] has left the employment of the Club”.

DARIO GRADI'S EVIDENCE

9.2.57. Bennell's recruitment by Crewe Alexandra was described by Dario Gradi in a police witness statement in 1996:

“I have been manager [of the Club] since 1983.

Approximately twelve months after I arrived I became aware of a coach called Barry Bennell. He coached schoolboy teams, and occasionally played my junior sides. I believe at that time he was working on an unpaid basis for Manchester City. During this time I came to respect him professionally and decided to offer him a part-time post having “Railway Junior” sides up to the age of fourteen. The team he was coaching at the time, he continued to, for around twelve months, the majority of whom went to Manchester City. At this time he was living in Buxton and was running a video shop at Holmes Chapel. He also ran a video sports shop opposite our ground in Gresty Road.”

9.2.58. In a witness statement dated October 14th 2003 (prepared for civil proceedings brought against Crewe Alexandra by a former player (“the 2003 Civil Proceedings”)), Dario Gradi stated:

“In or about 1984 there was a game between our youngsters and a youth team run by Barry Bennell. One of the local boys playing for us was playing for Barry Bennell on a Sunday and it was through him that the game was organised and ultimately that we were put in touch with Barry Bennell. The game was at our ground and our players were destroyed by Barry Bennell's team. At the time Barry Bennell had some arrangement with Manchester City to channel his players through to them although they were not actually paying him. A lot of the players which he recruited and developed did however go on to Manchester City.

Bennell had a talent for recruiting and keeping good quality players. I invited him to work at Crewe and agreed to pay him. No references were checked with Manchester City who I cannot imagine would have been particularly

enamoured at the prospect of me poaching one of their sources of youth team players. Barry Bennell only agreed to come to Crewe because we were paying him whereas Manchester City were not.

One or two of the boys that Barry Bennell had playing with him in 1984 came to Crewe although the majority went to Manchester City as they had always been destined to do. Bennell went out and recruited, effectively, a new team and was given a lot of autonomy as to how he built that team..."

9.2.59. In his police statement in 1996, Dario Gradi said that:

"Up until 1989 Barry continued to work for us he was a very good coach and I was particularly impressed with his scouting methods. Around about 1989 I was informed by Barry that he was leaving to go to live in America, he only mentioned pressure from parents as a reason for going. I was surprised that he was going but nevertheless he left. ..."

9.2.60. Bennell returned to Crewe Alexandra in August 1990, and stayed with the Club until his dismissal in January 1992. In his police statement in 1996, Dario Gradi explained that, when Bennell:

"informed me he was coming back to the area, I offered him a full-time position as coach, for the 16-18 year olds which he accepted. The club assisted him in buying a house in the Alsager area. He remained at the club for around twelve months during which time I encountered frequent problems with him obeying instructions. These came to a head around about Christmas 1991 when I asked Barry to leave which he did."

9.2.61. When I interviewed Dario Gradi, I asked him about Bennell's role at Crewe Alexandra. He said:

"He was in charge of the youth. We had sort of scouts, but I don't think he was running that. He did all of the work. He was recruiting, coaching, took -- he was in charge, and I was coaching.... He was here to recruit good kids and to coach them. ...

[The age group that Bennell dealt with] was probably under14s. I don't think it was any younger than that. It might've been a bit older... he wasn't running [Railway Juniors], but he might've been coaching it. He wasn't running it. We had some dads that were running it. ...

He'd be here [at the Club] quite a lot, but...he didn't clock in and clock out, but then none of us did.

[When Bennell came back to the Club in 1990 following a period in the United States he was in charge of the 16-18 year olds] but he still coached the kids in the evening, like I did.

...

I think he probably did coach the younger age groups during the week. I wouldn't have stopped him coaching the young boys at the academy. He would have been doing that in the evenings. I would be very surprised if that wasn't the case."

BENNELL'S OWN EVIDENCE

9.2.62. In a witness statement prepared for civil proceedings brought against the Club in 2003, Bennell said:

“In 1984/85 I was approached by Crewe Alexandra and Dario Gradi specifically, to undertake the coaching of the youth team there. In those days, your actions spoke louder than words and because I was developing a reputation as a good youth coach, I was simply invited to join the team without I believe any formal references having been taken up, or indeed any investigations undertaken into my past... Dario Gradi had been the youth coach at Chelsea and I believe he had spotted me when I was coaching with Manchester City... The approach by Dario Gradi coincided with a feeling that whilst I was at Manchester City I was running out of challenges in life and at that stage, Crewe were a team with a fairly lowly reputation that had not much money. To me it seemed the perfect challenge. At that stage and as far as I can recall there were 3 other coaches employed at Crewe and I was put in charge of the “Railway Juniors” [which was the main] Crewe feeder team.’

9.2.63. When Bennell moved to work for Crewe Alexandra, he took with him a number of players who had been involved with his junior teams (see above).

Links with Stoke City FC

9.2.64. Bennell was associated with Stoke City as a coach and a scout. In its report to me, Stoke City stated that:

“The Club believes that, in the early 1990s (most likely at some time between 1992 and 1994), it is likely that Bennell was a temporary ad hoc coach of one or more of its youth teams for a period of a few months. The Club has been unable to establish exactly what role Bennell had (if any was actually assigned to him) within the youth department at the Club ... but it seems likely that he took or assisted in some coaching sessions on a Friday evening at ... Staffordshire Polytechnic.

...

The Club also believes that it is likely that Bennell undertook some form of youth team recruitment/scouting roles for the Club during this period (1992-1994) with it now being understood that Bennell would collect expenses from the Club on a Friday.

The Club understands that, at some point between November 1992 and September 1994, Bennell might have been considered for a full time role within the Club's youth department, possibly as Assistant Youth Development Officer... [However], the Club does not believe that Bennell has ever held or was ever offered a full time position at the Club. ...

...despite Bennell never holding a formal or full time position with the Club, it seems he gave the impression to some youth team players and/or their parents that he had a position of authority within the Club. It also seems that Bennell gave this impression to support a story of him being able to give

young aspiring players the chance at becoming a professional football player at Stoke City. From the Club's investigations, it has not found any evidence to support such a claim of Bennell having that authority at Stoke City."

9.2.65. I am satisfied that Stoke City's conclusion as to the extent of its association with Bennell is correct. There is evidence that Bennell scouted for the Club. There is also evidence that he coached at the Club, and evidence that Bennell sought, but was not given, a full-time coaching role at the Club.

9.2.66. PO was a scout for Stoke City in the 1990s. In his interview with the Review, PO said:

"I was out scouting one particular day, I forget where it was and Barry [Bennell] came to watch the same game as me. And I got talking to Barry ... and he was at Crewe at the time. Anyhow, he was after a job and he said, 'Have they got any jobs at Stoke?' I said, 'You want me to ask for you?' And I asked [KF, an individual involved with the Club's Youth function] and ... Lou Macari, I think it was Lou. And [KF] said, "Yeah, tell him to come to see me".

So I said to [Bennell], 'Why do you want to leave Crewe when you've been with' - he says, 'Well, I've just won a trophy with Crewe'. And he was on crutches at the time. And he said to me -- he said, 'I've asked Dario if I can parade the trophy with the kids round the pitch, showing it to the supporters. And Dario said no. And I told Dario...' he says, 'I told Dario that if I can't parade the trophy, I'm packing in'. Anyhow, Dario wouldn't give in so that's when he asked me to get him a job... [KF] said, "I'll speak to him and then I'll have a word". And [then Bennell] told me -- like, I saw him and he says, 'I've got the job at Stoke, I'm going to coach a certain age group'. I forget the age group but I think it was the 9s - 8s and 9s I think something like that."

9.2.67. RG was a Stoke City scout in the 1990s. During an interview with the Stoke City, RG said that Bennell had been a "coach and a scout at the [Stoke City] School of Excellence".

9.2.68. TT was a member of Stoke City staff during the early 1990s. In his interview with the Review, TT said:

"A number of Fridays you would see [Bennell] collecting expenses [at the Club]. So therefore he must have been doing something to earn those expenses. So that was either taking the training sessions or covering the games and scouting."

"I think he was probably doing something with the junior age groups and the unofficial; the 11s, 12s, 13s. Or whatever that group looked like. So the next intake of under 14s. I think he was probably involved in that space... At the time I think he was probably somebody who got involved in a couple of things but didn't have a specific role. So I think he may have provided a bit of cover role, coaching, to certainly the 14s and 15s at some stage. But very periodic. Not very often."

9.2.69. TT also said that during the period that Lou Macari (the Club’s manager from June 1991 to October 1993, and from September 1994 to June 1997) was away from Stoke City he believes Bennell became more visible at the Club and may have seen the appointment of a new manager as a window of opportunity to secure a more formal role at the Club.

9.2.70. During an interview with the Review, ZK, a former Stoke youth player (who had previously played under Bennell at Crewe), recalled that it was in August/September 1992 that Bennell became involved with Stoke City. When he returned to the Club after the summer break, Bennell was in the changing rooms at the Club’s Victoria Ground “wearing a Stoke City tracksuit”.

9.2.71. During an interview with the Review, a former youth player (TR) explained that, in January 1993, when he was 11 years old and playing for a Sunday league side, he received a call from KF, the head of the Club’s youth function, who said that a Stoke City scout had talent spotted him and that he was invited to attend a training session with the Club at the Victoria Ground. Following that training session, TR was invited to attend Friday night training sessions at Staffordshire Polytechnic. TR said that Bennell began to take the training and that after a few weeks he was invited – “we were kind of cherry picked from the group at Stoke, the best players” – to Stone Dominoes training sessions on a different night of the week.

9.2.72. During an interview with Stoke City, Lou Macari said that, during his time as manager of the Club, Bennell had not been involved with the Club and he had no knowledge of Bennell having coached at the Club’s School of Excellence. Lou Macari thought that it had been during Joe Jordan’s time as manager that the Club considered appointing Bennell.

9.2.73. During an interview with the Review, Lou Macari was asked whether Bennell was associated with the Club by 1992, to which Lou Macari replied:

“No, that wouldn’t be true because I was manager there from 1991 ... to 1993. During that time, he wasn’t at Stoke because I wouldn’t have Barry Bennell near my club...”

Lou Macari’s recollection is probably mistaken. There is considerable evidence that Bennell was associated with the Club during Lou Macari’s tenure as manager. It is possible that Lou Macari had nothing to do with that arrangement and did not actually know about Bennell’s involvement.

9.2.74. A member of Stoke City staff (AR) associated with the Club from the mid-1980s through to the late 1990s told the Review that he thought Bennell had worked at the Club in some capacity as part of the Centre of Excellence. AR also said that during Joe Jordan’s tenure as manager, there had been a suggestion (which he believes had come from KF) that Bennell should be appointed as Stoke City’s Assistant Youth Development Officer. AR explained that KF had wanted Bennell to be appointed as Stoke City’s Assistant Youth Development Officer, but that Bennell was not offered the role.

9.2.75. Joe Jordan (the Club’s manager from 1993 to 1994) said that he was not aware that Bennell was involved with the Centre of Excellence. He did, however, recollect Bennell being put forward for a role at the Club (he cannot recollect by whom), but he had not taken this forward as he had only wanted people on staff whom he knew and trusted – and he had never heard of Bennell. Joe Jordan had no recollection of speaking with Lou Macari or AR about Bennell.

STONE DOMINOES

9.2.76. Between 1992 and 1994, Bennell was employed by a company owned by LT, the founder and Chairman of a youth team called Stone Dominoes, which was based in the town of Stone in Staffordshire.

9.2.77. In a statement provided for the purposes of Bennell’s prosecution in Florida in 1994, LT said that in 1986, he started a football club for the benefit of his son and his son’s friends. This club became “Dominoes”, and the teams started playing in leagues. LT explained that by 1991 they had five teams. He said that the teams were successful:

“Because of that, local professional clubs started to show an interest in the football abilities of the club and that was when I got to know Barry Bennell, because he ran the centre of excellence for Crewe Alexandra...

...

[I met Bennell] I think it was 1990. 1990/91. ... A man called Stan... spotted our team... and in fact two players, a goalkeeper and a young forward actually went along to Crewe and that’s where we got to know Barry... So, that’s where I got to know him and so, we would go and play games against Crewe...”

9.2.78. LT explained to the Florida police that Bennell had joined Stone Dominoes “in the spring of 1992 when he left Crewe Alexandra because our club had got to a size that I couldn’t personally cope with. It was either a question of stepping down altogether or getting somebody to run it and he became available.”

9.2.79. LT said that Bennell was initially paid £18,000 per annum to run Stone Dominoes, which later reduced to £12,000. LT told Bennell in the winter of 1993 that he should look for a full-time job with a professional team. LT arranged for Bennell to meet with Port Vale FC to discuss working with that club. LT informed the Florida police that Bennell was “actually offered the job there to run their youth and I thought that was the ideal scenario. They took all the expenses, we just paid a few grand and that was the end of the story but they changed their minds having made the offer.”

9.2.80. A former Port Vale official was asked by the Review about the job offer said to have been made to Bennell in or around late 1993. That official said that the Port Vale Chairman:

“asked if I would be happy to appoint Barry Bennell as Youth Coach to Port Vale. I answered no due to the fact of rumours which I had no evidence whatsoever were true. Mr Bell accepted my reasoning and Barry Bennell was not appointed.”

The Review was unable to speak with the Chairman, Bill Bell, as he is deceased.

9.2.81. In 1994, during a Stone Dominoes football tour to the United States, Bennell was arrested. Bennell was tried in Florida on counts of indecent assault on a 13 year old male who had played for the Stone Dominoes team (and had been on the US tour but had returned home to England). Bennell pleaded guilty and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment. After Bennell had served his sentence in Florida, he was deported to the United Kingdom.

THE LINK BETWEEN STOKE CITY AND STONE DOMINOES

9.2.82. In its report to me, Stoke City has explained the link between the Club and Stone Dominoes:

“The Club also understand that some youth team players who trained at the Club in the early 1990s due to FA rules in place at that time, were unable to play matches for the Club and so played for Stone Dominoes. ... It is understood that Bennell was a coach at Stone Dominoes around this time.

Stone Dominoes' pitches are located about 10 miles away from the Club. These pitches were (and still are to a small extent) hired and used by the Club for training and matches...

The lines between what was Stone Dominoes and what was Stoke City [in the early 1990s] appear to have been blurred by things like Stone Dominoes playing in Stoke City kit and using Stoke City minibuses at times, some coaches might have taken session for both clubs and wore Stoke City branded kit when completing Stone Dominoes duties, a number of players might also have trained and/or played matches for both teams, and both clubs used the same pitches... The blurring of lines in this way is likely to have caused some ... confusion and perhaps led/allowed some players and parents to think that Bennell had a more regular and significant role at Stoke City than he actually did.”

9.2.83. The evidence received by the Review includes the recollection of TR, a former youth player, who said:

“There was a perception of a loose relationship between Stone Dominoes and Stoke City. [Bennell] gave the impression of him being the Head Coach at Stone Dominoes and Stoke City.

...

I didn't know if it was a formal link. What I do know is that every time I played a game, whether it be for Stoke or Stone Dominoes, I wore a Stoke strip. The team wore a Stoke strip. We were almost -- we were constantly badged as Stoke. I don't know how formal that link was though. All I knew was that Barry was running the Stoke youth teams. Then at the same time, he was running Stone Dominoes.”

9.2.84. AR told the Review that before 1998, LT had become a “sponsor of the youth setup” at Stoke City. AR said that “there was a sort of a loose connection but the connection was a person rather than an official connectiveness...the only connection I think is a personal one with LT. I don't think there [was] an official connection be-

tween Stone Dominoes and Stoke City.”

9.2.85. Lou Macari told the Review that there had been lots of clubs like Stone Dominoes in the area, but that none of them had been feeder clubs for Stoke City.

9.2.86. LT informed the Florida authorities, who were investigating allegations of abuse against Bennell during a Stone Dominoes tour in the United States, that he “hadn’t realised how close we ... to Stoke City”. He said that “really all that work we were doing with the younger teams was almost wasted from a [Stone Dominoes] club point of view because at the age of 12 and 13 [Stoke City] takes these players en masse so whereas they’d played for us they were now playing for them”.

9.2.87. Based on all of the available evidence, I am of the view that Stone Dominoes cannot be described as having been part of the Stoke City youth function, even on an informal basis. It was a separate and distinct team. It was also not a formal feeder team. However, I agree with Stoke City’s conclusions in its report to me that “the lines between what was Stone Dominoes and what was Stoke City appear to have been blurred ... [and] the blurring of lines in this way is likely to have caused some confusion and perhaps led/allowed some players and parents to think that Bennell had a more regular and significant role at Stoke City than he actually did.”

SUMMARY OF THE ABUSE COMMITTED BY BENNELL

9.2.88. I have met with and reviewed accounts of more than 60 individuals in relation to whom Bennell has been convicted of sexual abuse, or who allege that they were abused by Bennell.

9.2.89. From these accounts, it is clear that Bennell is a paedophile who wanted access to boys in order to sexually abuse them. The game of football gave Bennell that access. Bennell’s connections with Manchester City, Crewe and Stoke gave him a respectability and importance that led young players (and, often, their parents) to feel that he was the key to achieving the dream of playing professional football. As one survivor of abuse told me:

“As a 12 year old, you’re thinking, ‘He’s chose me, I must be special. I’m going to make it as a footballer, because he’s chose me, and he now can’t not pick [me] in this team, because of what he’s doing. So if I just go along with this, I’m going to make it; I’m going to make it as a footballer, because of what he’s doing’....as a kid, that was my thought process, ‘I’m going to make it, because he’s doing this...’”

9.2.90. Another survivor recounted:

“Nobody said anything. Even the lad that had done it previously or whatever. It was almost like an untold rule of ‘shut up’. Don’t spoil any chances. I want to make it, I want to be a footballer. I want to play for City. So you knew but

you didn't say anything."

9.2.91. Another said:

"At no time did I fight him off or tell him I didn't want it. I don't know why. I just wanted to be a footballer and he had a lot of control over us. If you upset him he would alienate you, ignore you and not include you in the fun things. All this played on my mind and I would just succumb to him in order to get on."

9.2.92. Another survivor has told the Review that the fact that the game of football allowed Bennell access to clubs and their grounds, and provided him with some status in the game, meant that young players and their parents thought that they could trust him. This survivor recalls that, having won "Boy of the Week" at a Butlin's tournament, he was invited to train at Manchester United's training ground where he saw Bennell who was watching the young players. This survivor has said that he and his family thought that, if Bennell was allowed into the training ground, he must have been someone who could be trusted.

9.2.93. Bennell's hold over the boys was well expressed by HHJ Goldstone QC in sentencing Bennell:

"You knew that to each of these boys, football was their life; that was the career for which they would give anything, and it was the career for which you would take anything and everything they had to offer. To those boys you appeared as a god who had it in his gift to help fulfil their ambitions and realise their dreams."

9.2.94. In addition, Bennell used classic grooming techniques with both the boys and their parents:

- 94.1. He would "charm" parents and make them feel that he was a positive influence in the boys' lives;
- 94.2. His house was furnished in a way which would have had obvious appeal for boys, this included games tables and exotic pets;
- 94.3. He would make gifts to the boys, often of sports clothing;
- 94.4. He would take boys on holiday; and
- 94.5. He would have "favourites".

9.2.95. One survivor recounted:

"Barry's house was a four bedroomed detached house in Doveholes near Buxton. I remember that the front door led straight into a room which contained a pool table and fruit machines. The next room had a massive television and Barry had hundreds of videos. He also had a pet Puma which he kept in a cage and also a monkey. I also remember that there was sports gear and clothing everywhere ... Barry's room contained a double bed and one room had 2-3 bunkbeds in it. ...

Barry was amazingly skilful with a football, we were all in awe of him. He got on really well with the kids, helped by the fact that if you stayed at his house,

he would let you stay up late and watch 18 movies. I never saw him put any pornographic material on but it was there lying about available if you wanted to. All in all I thought he was a really good bloke.”

9.2.96. Another survivor told me:

“Bennell is the most impressive figure to a young child that you’ve ever seen. He’s got all the best sports equipment on. He can do every trick with a football.”

9.2.97. Another survivor said:

“Barry was impressive. He was a tanned, good looking guy and had all the decent sportswear. Back then you didn’t have the stars you can see today all the time in the media so when you saw him doing tricks and things with a football you were like ‘Wow’. I looked up to him. He was like a god. He groomed us and our parents into thinking if you did what he said you could be a success. He groomed me and my parents with his charm and swagger. I was excited to play for Barry...

...

He’d come to my parents’ house. He was giving me footie boots, he was giving my parents stuff. You know, he was grooming them as well as me. So they were sucked in, and obviously my dad’s thinking, “My son’s going to be this footballer”. I was thinking, “I’m going to be this footballer”.”

9.2.98. Another survivor recalled:

“When you walked in the front door at Barry’s house there was a pool table as soon as you walked in, which was surrounded by lots of sports clothes and sports gear. Around the pool table there were arcade games, slot machines and also a Jukebox. When you went through this room you went into his main living room, which I can remember because he was one of the first people to have one of those big-screen televisions. He had all of the latest films that we used to watch.”

9.2.99. Another survivor said:

“Bennell made everything fun, I played on the slot machines in his house, watched videos, went to Manchester United’s training ground etc so there was some glamour attached to it. He had a room full of football boots and would give us some for free. He showered me with gifts. It was all quite novel and all this did entice boys to his house to stay over. It was things that I would never do at home and because of this it made it fun to go to his house. I would phone on a Thursday and there was always a ‘carrot dangled’ such as we’re going fishing and then we’ll go to the game on the Sunday when we played.”

9.2.100. Another survivor recalled that Bennell would:

“give away sports gear to some players and not to others, he would also pick out certain players to take out on day trips, places such as Alton Towers, Blackpool, and would take you into the amusement arcades. If you were not one of the players chosen you would be left feeling that you had done

something wrong, or that you hadn't played well. He would bring you in, and then leave you out, which made you want to please and impress him even more."

9.2.101. A parent of one of the boys who stayed at Bennell's house and was abused by Bennell recalled that Bennell's house had had a large television, videogames and a pet monkey. He said that, when he first visited Bennell's house, he had thought "lucky so and so's...I can understand why kids wanted to go there..."

9.2.102. Bennell also used violence and fear to "test the water" with and control those entrusted to his care. One survivor told me:

"In front of the whole team, he was pressing on my temples, he was being the big, macho kind of - so, I mean, I was 11 years of age, and he's pressing on my temples, to the point of me actually crying, in front of the other [kids]... At the time, I don't know what I thought, but looking back now, I think that was another one of his grooming process, where I didn't tell my parents about that, and I think he's given it a couple of weeks, to see if my parents have approached him to say, 'Hey, why did you this to our [son]?' And nothing come back, and that was a step of his, 'Right, well he's not telling his parents anything, he's not' ... he'd see which kids were telling their parents and stuff, and who wasn't. And I was obviously one of the ones not telling my parents..."

9.2.103. Numerous others explained how Bennell would seek to scare the boys with ghost stories, horror movies, visits to "haunted" buildings and visits to places where he led the boys to believe they might be physically in danger. Bennell would then offer the boys "comfort" which in turn led to abuse.

9.2.104. As one survivor recounted:

"Whilst staying at the house, Barry would put horror films on the TV, films like *The Exorcist*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *The Amityville Horror*. At that age [11 years old], these films would scare me and I would cuddle up to Barry for comfort whilst we watched them."

9.2.105. Another survivor said:

"I remember on one occasion it was New Year's Eve 1984, Bennell took a group of us ice skating ... on the way back... Bennell stopped the Ford Transit, we were in Dunham Massey Stately Home. We walked around the grounds in the dark and Bennell would tell us ghost stories. Everyone was very scared by his stories and the fact that it was dark in the grounds. When we got back to [Bennell's house], Bennell would show us horror films on the video. The outcome of this was that I and some of the other lads would be very scared so it would have been reassuring to get into bed with someone, and it was time like this that I would get in bed with Bennell."

9.2.106. Bennell also exercised a coercive control over the boys. He made boys want, and at points almost beg, to be with him. Some boys were required to call him at a fixed time each week, failing which they would not be allowed to stay at Bennell's

house that weekend. On other occasions, Bennell insisted that boys miss important family events (including over the Christmas period) to spend time at his house. Bennell was seeking to isolate those he abused from their families and to make the boys ever more dependent on him. No doubt this was all done in an attempt to create an environment where it was less likely that the boys would disclose Bennell's abuse.

9.2.107. As one survivor explained:

“His routine was that he would want me to ring on a Thursday morning if I was going to stay over. He said if I didn't phone on a Thursday then I couldn't stay.”

9.2.108. Boys who sought to challenge Bennell were ostracised, often by Bennell telling lies about them. This often involved Bennell saying that the boy he was seeking to ostracise was dishonest and “could not be trusted”.

9.2.109. Bennell's grooming techniques were described by HHJ Goldstone QC as follows:

“In the case of each bit, the grooming process began in exactly the same way – your first target would be the parents, not the boys themselves; you used your so-called charisma to earn their trust and confidence that their sons would be safe and properly looked after in your care and in your home. Once that was achieved, you groomed the boys. You furnished your home with video and arcade games and a pool table, you showered them with sports clothing which very often they or their parents would otherwise have been unable to afford, you treated them to meals and you took them on holidays. Your homes were described variously as an Aladdin's cave and a paradise; and you kept exotic animals, including a puma and a monkey. I am satisfied that they, together with your large dogs served two purposes; one to excite the boys, the other to frighten them. Very often, you intentionally frightened them by showing horror films so that you could use their fear as a pretext for cuddling them – and that was generally how the abuse began.”

9.2.110. Bennell often initiated abuse by way of device or “game” that he referred to as “trace” or “follow me”. Survivors have said:

“[Bennell] said we had to play a game called ‘trace’. Basically this game meant that I had to copy whatever he did so when he touched a part of my body I had to touch the same part of his body. This game culminated in me having to masturbate him until he ejaculated.”

“I was already in the bed when I was joined by Bennell shortly after. The lights were off so it was dark. He immediately started with the ‘follow me game’ this game would consist of Bennell touching or tickling me on a part of my body, and then he would instruct me to touch him or tickle him on the same spot.”

“I had witnessed Bennell play the ‘follow me game’ with other boys when I had stayed at his house on previous occasions, this game would usually occur in the living room when we were watching TV. He never really explained the

‘follow me game’ as such, he would just touch a part of your body and then direct your hand to the same part of his body. However, I only recall on these occasions it being a fun game and nothing untoward went on with me and I did not witness him touching any of the boys inappropriately. Therefore when he got into bed with me on this occasion, I did not expect what occurred next.”

“I remember that Barry started tracing circles on my stomach and chest with his finger. He told me to copy him and do it to him which I did but it felt weird and uncomfortable so I kept stopping to which he kept encouraging me to continue. He then worked his hand down into my pants and started to masturbate me. He kept on asking me to copy him and masturbate him which I did but I think I just took hold of his erect penis without actually masturbating him. Barry just kept saying to me things like ‘just do what I do, just copy me’.”

9.2.111. Other survivors recounted how Bennell would introduce the abuse by asking if the boy wanted a “thrill”:

“I remember all three of us, Bennell and the other boy being in bed together, sharing Bennell’s bed. The other boy was either asleep or feigning sleep. This was when Bennell started a conversation with me, along the lines of ‘have you touched yourself here’ meaning my genitalia. He was moving the conversation onto that. I can’t remember the exact words but the meaning of the conversation was ‘like this’ and at some point soon after he put his hands inside of my pyjamas and inside of my underpants and fondled my penis.

...

Whilst Bennell was fondling my penis he said either, ‘this is what I call “the thrill”’...At this point he put both hands in my pants and rubbed my penis with both of his hands, in the same way as you do when your hands are cold and you are trying to warm them up, rubbing them together, palms facing and fingers straight.”

9.2.112. The abuse perpetrated by Bennell ranged from sexual touching and masturbation through to oral and anal rape. Some boys were abused hundreds of times over a number of years. The earliest abuse that I have received an account of was 1971, the latest was 1994. That is not to say that Bennell did not abuse earlier or later than these dates.

9.2.113. The abuse took place in a wide variety of locations including:

- 113.1. at Bennell’s house;
- 113.2. in vehicles;
- 113.3. in the pitch at Maine Road (during the summer close season, when the stadium was largely deserted);
- 113.4. at Butlins;
- 113.5. on holidays;
- 113.6. in the Crewe Alexandra changing rooms; and
- 113.7. at Dario Gradi’s house (when Dario Gradi was not present).

9.2.114. I received numerous accounts of Bennell abusing multiple boys simultaneously. One survivor stated:

“We went to Pwllheli [Butlins] ... in a minibus. I sat in the front seat [with another boy] with Barry who was driving. Through the journey Barry was placing his hand inside our pants and playing with our penises. I was aware that it was happening but neither of us did anything, I just pretended to be asleep and I assume he did the same.

...

[The other boy] and I stayed in Barry’s room one night, in bed with him. [The other boy] was on one side of Barry and I was on the other. I remember Barry putting his hand inside my pants and masturbating me. I think [the other boy] must have been aware of what Barry was doing but I don’t know for sure, he didn’t say anything, and I think he was doing the same to him. I could see movement, under the sheets on the other side of Barry suggesting he was masturbating him as well.”

9.2.115. Another survivor said:

“I have been present on a few occasions when Barry has been masturbating [another boy] and [a different boy] and they would have been present in the bed when Barry masturbated me as I masturbated him.

However, on the occasions when Barry tried to bugger me, we would be alone.”

9.2.116. A number of the survivors also highlighted how the abuse inflicted by Bennell was their first “sexual encounter”. One survivor recounted:

“I tried to be really rubbish at it because I did not feel comfortable doing it. I’d never had any sexual experience, full stop. He just masturbated me until I did orgasm. And I’d never had that before in my life. I just remember crying and feeling really dirty and horrible. I didn’t know what to do.”

9.2.117. One survivor recounted that the morning after he had been abused by Bennell, Bennell stated: “You did ok, you were alright, just pretend it’s your girlfriend doing it.”

9.2.118. Another recounted a conversation with Bennell:

“We were in the hills around Buxton, I don’t remember how the conversation started, but Barry said to me ‘What do you think about what I’m doing’, or words similar to that. I asked him, ‘Why do you do it?’ He said along the lines of, ‘I get enjoyment from it and I think you must like it’. I don’t think I said anything to that, Barry said something like, ‘What’s the matter do you think you’re going to turn out gay?’ I remember saying, ‘Well no not really but I don’t know why you do it.’ Barry just laughed.”

9.2.119. The abuse was well described by HHJ Goldstone QC:

“Once the boys were ready for you to abuse, your normal approach was to invite them to stay overnight in your house – although sometimes abuse, in a relatively minor way, started when you were driving them in your car.

Sometimes, the boys slept in bunk beds; sometimes, they were invited – and were expected – to sleep in your bed. The abuse often began with a game which you played, called ‘follow me’ whereby you touched them in a certain way and they were expected to do the same to you; this would end up with you and they touching each others’ genitals. From there, you would graduate to mutual masturbation – although as you yourself said in interview, there was nothing mutual about it from their point of view. Mutual masturbation would very often lead to oral sex, in which you would suck their penises; but more often, they would be required to suck yours, and often to the point of your ejaculation; with some of the boys, this was the limit of your perversion, but others were less fortunate; your desire for anal sex would lead sometimes to digital penetration, or pressure by thrusting your erect penis against their backsides. Thrusting escalated to attempted buggery in the case of [two] of the boys on regular occasions when they were aged between 10 and 14, and to repeated acts of buggery with [four] separate boys when they were of a similar age. Whilst you were ever anxious to point out in interview that you would never have done anything to hurt these boys, as you wanted them to like you, the reality is that you could not have cared less, as long as you obtained sexual gratification from your abuse of them. Those boys cried out in pain on occasion, but rarely if at all did you stop on their account.”

Andy Woodward

9.2.120. Andy Woodward has given a detailed and harrowing account of the abuse that Bennell perpetrated against him. No summary can do justice to that account or recreate the raw emotion that so was obvious during Andy Woodward’s interview with Victoria Derbyshire in November 2016. For present purposes, I draw out the following:

120.1. Andy Woodward was scouted by Bennell when he was 11 years old.

Within a few weeks, the abuse began.

120.2. The abuse took place at various of Bennell’s properties where Andy Woodward would regularly stay. Andy Woodward recounted that Bennell’s homes were “like a treasure trove, a child’s dream. When you walked through the door there were three fruit machines. He had a pool table. There was a little monkey upstairs in a cage who would sit on your shoulder. He had two Pyrenean mountain dogs. He even kept a wild cat.”

120.3. Bennell knew how much Andy Woodward wanted a career in football and preyed on that: “It was my dream, remember, to be a footballer and it was like he was dropping little sweets towards me: ‘You can stay with me and this is what I can do for you’. Plus, he had a reputation as the best youth coach in the country. So I’d stay at weekends and summer holidays and even take time out of school sometimes.”

120.4. Andy Woodward’s ordeal lasted for years. He described how he was abused “hundreds and hundreds of times, he wouldn’t leave me alone, and everybody knew that I lived with him, practically, and I was always by his side. It was every single weekend, six-week holidays, every single day.”

120.5. “Initially it was sexual touching. But then it rapidly got worse and he raped me.”

120.6. Bennell threatened Andy Woodward: “He said, if I ever said anything, that he would do some serious damage to me.” Bennell also used blackmail and other manipulation techniques, such as dropping Andy Woodward from the team.

120.7. Bennell formed a relationship with Andy Woodward’s sister. Andy Woodward was 14 at the time, and his sister was 16. Bennell later went on to marry Andy Woodward’s sister: “I had to live with that on top of everything else. I had to attend that wedding, standing in the church when I really wanted to rip his throat out. It was torture – that’s the only word to describe it.”

120.8. There were often other players present when Andy Woodward was abused, but it was never discussed: “The thing with football, it’s the most powerful game, and the desire is immense to be a footballer, and the power that they had over us, it was an unwritten rule: you cannot say a word.”

STATEMENT FOR THE REVIEW BY ANDY WOODWARD, FEBRUARY 18TH, 2021

I expressed a lot of my pain in relation to being abused and raped in excess of 300 times as a child from the age of ten until sixteen. This included the start of my YTS at Crewe when Barry Bennell was then employed as Youth Manager at the club. I told various organisations including the Police, Crewe Alexandra and the PFA but all of the individuals across these organisations and those responsible ignored what happened to me and many other people around the globe.

As the public are aware this has not only destroyed my life in various ways including multiple suicide attempts, but it has also negatively affected my immediate families lives including my 5 boys. Due to my trauma their dad was often absent with various mental health conditions and addiction brought about by the continued abuse, bullying and manipulation I experienced as a child and have continued to experience throughout my adult life.

My complex PTSD and desire at times to be loved and accepted at any cost has led me down a path of heartache, loneliness and suicidality. I know one billion percent the severe verbal, physical, emotional, sexual abuse and trauma I experienced as a child and as an adult in various relationships has caused even more pain and destruction. This includes in recent years false promises, lies, unfairness and unkindness at the expense of so called various professional organisations who claim to have my best interests at heart.

I decided to go public in November 2016 as I could no longer let those who had tried to destroy my life and the lives of others go ignored. I put my own life on the line to protect others and the sole purpose of speaking out was to give others the courage to come forward and no longer suffer alone in silence.

I have continued to keep my dignity, holding back on speaking my full truth at times in order to protect others. I have been in some extremely dark places and have spent numerous months in rehab. Battling through, healing and trying to fully recover from what I went through is a lifelong process. The pain at times is excruciating but

somehow I have found the inner strength and courage to keep going when at times I have felt like curling up in a ball and dying.

There are millions that suffer at the hands of those evil, greedy abusers whose only concern is protecting themselves. I like many others around the world did not ask to be abused and no child should ever suffer at the hands of these people and establishments that continue to do such horrific acts to innocent lives.

My prayer is for all those that have been abused and continue to be abused is that the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth comes to the surface so that people can no longer hide, turn a blind eye and or ignore what has been going on in football and across other sports for years.

It is imperative that those in a position of trust make their primary concern the wellbeing of those children they are responsible for. I will continue to speak out against these injustices and believe that safeguarding of all children must be the utmost priority now and moving forward.

I am also expecting that the review has assessed the impact that our abuse as children has had on our adult lives and provisions and support are outlined to support us now and in the future.

GENERAL LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF ABUSE COMMITTED BY BENNELL

9.2.121. Many of the individuals sexually abused by Bennell did not tell anyone about the abuse until many years later. For some this was down to fear and/or a feeling of “shame”; for others it was because they did not want to jeopardise their chances of playing the sport that they loved at the highest level; for others there was simply nowhere to turn. As one survivor recounted:

“I ... really want[ed] to tell someone, but thought that nobody would believe me. There were no safeguarding measures in place in those days. Bennell was a key person within the football circuit, therefore there was nobody to turn to.”

9.2.122. Some of those abused by Bennell did speak out. Some made disclosures to their parents, family members, friends or other players. By way of example:

122.1. An individual who played for one of Bennell’s teams (“Palace”) in the early 1980s and was abused by Bennell said:

“My best friend was also a decent footballer ... I remember him asking me if anything had ever happened to me. He told me that Barry had ‘tried something on’ with him. I cannot remember what he said or what he was saying Barry had tried with him. I told him that nothing had ever happened to me. [He] must have said something to his dad because [they] approached me to ask me if Barry had ever done anything to me but I denied that anything had ever happened.”

122.2. An individual abused by Bennell in the 1980s recalled:

“I sat down again, and Barry put his hands on my genitals and was grabbing hold of them. I thought that this just wasn’t right, and I jumped up again, and I went and stood up behind the chair. No more was said about it, but later on I told my brother ... and some of the lads but they didn’t really believe me.”

122.3. An individual who attended Crewe’s Centre of Excellence in the mid-1980s stated:

“I remember around the age of 12 years, that a lad... stayed at Barry’s house with us. He was an American. One day me and [the other boy] were out walking Barry’s dog... I can’t remember how the conversation came about but [the other boy] told me that he had awoken and Barry was ‘jacking him off’. I said something like, ‘Oh yeah he’s done it to me’; I thought, ‘Oh he must do it to everyone.’”

I have not received any evidence that anyone at Crewe was made aware of this.

122.4. A parent of a former player recounted:

“I have a son ... who, at the age of 11 years, went to play football for a team called Glossop Juniors, which was coached by a man called Barry Bennell who lived in Doveholes in Derbyshire and he was connected to Manchester City football club...

[My son] would stay at Bennell’s house on occasions with other lads from the team...

...

About the summer of 1984 Barry took the team to Tottenham in London. The team travelled down by coach and myself and my wife followed down in the car.

Following the game we travelled back to Crewe. [My son] then got off the coach and came over to us. He told me that Barry had asked him to stay at his house. [My son] asked me to make up an excuse so that he didn’t have to stay. I can’t remember now what I told Barry.

While I was travelling home with [my son] I asked him why he didn’t want to stay. [My son] started crying and said that Barry had been asking the lads to get into bed with him. [My son] said that some of the lads had slept in his bed, and he, Barry, had asked them to ‘Jerk him off’.

I asked [my son] if anything had happened to him. I’m not 100% sure now what [my son] told me, however as a result of what he said to me I contacted [another parent whose] son...played in the same team...

The next weekend when the team played, I got some of the parents together in a pub at the end of the game. ... As a result of this meeting myself [and a group of other parents] went to Barry Bennell’s house in Doveholes, to confront him.

I don’t remember the exact conversation, but an allegation that he had been interfering with the kids was put to him. I remember that Barry was sitting in the living room. Barry put his head into his hands and began to cry. We threatened Barry that he wasn’t to mess with the kids again, I remember that the language was quite strong, I don’t remember Barry saying anything. As a result of this confrontation with Bennell at Doveholes, it was the opinion

of the kids that they wanted the team to stay together which it did. The only difference however was that [my son] was not allowed to stay at Barry's house."

122.5. A former Glossop Juniors player recalled that in or about 1985:

"[W]e went to Norwich to play in a tournament when I was thirteen years old. Our parents all went as well but again all the players stayed in caravans together. There were about six caravans just for all the players but the parents all stayed elsewhere. We played really well that weekend and got through to the final. The night before we played in the final some of the players were all in our caravan together and we were all talking. One of the players, I can't recall which one, made a comment about Barry Bennell. This comment started each player telling stories about Barry and things he had done. Nothing really specific but people were basically commenting on the inappropriate behaviour of Barry Bennell. We were a group of 12/13 year old boys having a really grown up conversation....

The following day ... Barry came up the coach and invited some of the players to stay at his house. I immediately told him that I couldn't and had homework. Barry stated that he was sure he could speak to my parents and they would let me stay but I again said I didn't think they would. I remember being one of the first ones off the coach that day and running over to my parents and telling my dad to say I couldn't stay over at Barry's house as I had homework. When Barry did ask my dad he told Barry I couldn't stay as agreed.

On the way home in the car my parents were obviously inquisitive but didn't push anything with me...When we arrived home it had gone midnight and the house phone was ringing. My dad answered it and it was one of the parents of another player on the team. The other players had obviously started telling their parents what had been happening with Barry.

The parents all met up in Flixton and discussed what had been going on. From what I have been told it was the mothers who wanted to remove their children from playing football for Barry Bennell but the fathers wanted to keep them playing for him but with some restrictions. It's my belief that they didn't want it affecting their children's chances at becoming professional footballers. There was one lad whose father removed him from playing for the team straight away...I never saw him again.

The parents all went and spoke to Barry Bennell at his house. Barry apparently denied what was put to him, making excuses and he broke down in tears. The result of this was that none of us were allowed to stay at his house again.

At the next game, the dads took control and Barry was stood well away from us on a mound of grass watching. At the end of the game, he came over to us and said sorry and he was welcomed back and with that he continued to coach us."

I have not received any evidence to support that Crewe was made aware of this confrontation or the event leading to it.

122.6. An individual who was coached by Bennell in the early to mid-1980s stated:

"The first time I ever heard [Bennell had] been found out was when we were at a tournament in Norwich. We were the older team by this time and there

was a younger team with us. Some of the parents would come on tour with us and I remember some of them had got Barry in a caravan or chalet, I can't remember what we were staying in at the time in Norwich. I heard that two of the kids from the younger team had told a parent how Bennell had touched them. The parents had got him in and were talking to him. I was thinking 'This is great, finally this is the end' and then being devastated when he talked his way out of it. I'd heard that he just sat there crying in front of the parents and saying it was a mistake and that he'd never do it again."

122.7. Another survivor recounted that he had told his mother that Bennell had sexually abused him during Bennell's association with Crewe. This disclosure occurred in 1991/1992. I have been unable to speak with this individual's mother so cannot say what, if any, action she took having received this information. I have not received any evidence to suggest that Crewe was made aware of this matter.

122.8. Another youth player who played at Crewe under Bennell stated that he had attended a football tournament in France with Bennell. Two players were talking one night in the boys' dormitory about Bennell abusing young boys. Bennell had been standing outside and overheard their conversations. The following day, the youth player told me that Bennell got the boys together and "bollocked" them for talking about him and spreading rumours. On returning to Crewe, Bennell dismissed the two players from the youth academy.

9.2.123. ZK, who played at Crewe Alexandra during the time Bennell was there, and later played as a youth player for Stoke City, told the Review about an incident that occurred when he was at Crewe:

"I was with Crewe Alexandra from about the age of 11 to, I would say, 13. Stayed at Barry's house over a long weekend. Witnessed a few things which were quite unpleasant for some of the boys. There was...a lot of kissing, touching, very strange behaviour. And then there was an incident in my room where I was in a bunk bed with a guy called [PR]. I was fast asleep and then [PR] disappeared from the room. Whether something happened to him when Barry entered or something. ... And then [PR] called his parents and all hell broke loose when his parents arrived. I literally never played for Crewe after that day."

9.2.124. ZK said that, when PR's parents arrived, PR's mother was "holding back" his father "so he didn't do anything in front of the other kids. There was kids in the kitchen crying, very upset about what had gone on. I can't possibly tell you what happened but it was enough - whatever had happened to [PR] or whatever [PR] saw - was enough for him to have major concerns to ring his parents and get them to drag him out." I have not received any evidence that PR or his parents informed anyone at Crewe Alexandra about this.

9.2.125. ZK told his father that he was uncomfortable staying with Bennell, and that PR's parents had taken him away from the house. ZK did not tell his father the full details of what he had seen, but it was enough for his father to call up Bennell and tell

him that ZK was not coming back. I have not received any evidence that ZK's father informed anyone at Crewe Alexandra about this.

9.2.126. The Stone Dominoes player (ZZ) abused by Bennell in the United States in 1994 recounted that in or about January 1993 he had told his parents that Bennell had sexually abused him:

“[Bennell] was, like, touching [my] penis and that, and my dad was working. They fetched him over and we talked. My mum said you are not to go this week-end, like, you can tell him that you're staying at a mate's house or friend's house.”

9.2.127. ZZ's father gave a statement in the US prosecution in which he stated that, in or about 1991, he had been approached by Bennell at a game in which his son was playing:

“At that time I thought [Bennell] was with Crewe, I'm sure he put that over to me, saying he was with Crewe Alexandra, he'd like to take [my son] on a trial with a view to playing for Crewe.

...

I hadn't heard of [Bennell] prior to that date.

Obviously, on that day, individuals came up to me on that day and said, 'That's Barry Bennell, you want to watch him' and at that time I just thought well, what are they on about... I just thought you want to watch him because of football, if you know what I mean.”

9.2.128. ZZ's father went on to say:

“There was always [three] or [four] lads with [Bennell], out of that particular team. If not [three] or [four], [one] or [two], [seven] or [eight] even. I've been to his house sometimes, the lounge was full of them.

...

I know [there was] a lot of heartache when [my son] first went because I was in the middle, I was between [my son, my parents, my wife, my friends] and they were saying, hold on a minute he's taking over [my son], you'd better be careful... I was having pressure from my wife, my family to say, you shouldn't let him go, especially like he started going at weekends and obviously as a parent I would say to [to my son], 'Is everything all right'. My wife was as well.

... But at that time I thought, again I didn't know, I thought [Bennell had] got his wife . . . at home. It wasn't until some time later that I found out that she was going to her mother's . . .

...

I think my wife found out that [my son] was staying in the same bed [as Bennell].

...

On the Friday evening if I dropped him off or he came to pick him up, he'd got [his wife] with him or [his wife] was there... So more often than not there was other lads there....[But] occasionally, he used to pick him up from my house on his own and there'd just be him... not too long a time but sometime

after, we found out or my wife did that he was going over there, the wife asked where he was sleeping, he's in [Bennell's] bed. So... we had this conversation where my family know what's happening, the wife knows what's happening, I ask [my son] what's happening, [and he said] 'Everything's all right'.

...

...Obviously I had a word with Barry. I had two words with him, one on the 'phone and, basically, I'm saying, we've found out they're in the same bed... we just kept him away for a couple of weeks. ... From going on weekends. He didn't go weekends. He just went the football and from then a couple of weeks I think he was left out of the team... so obviously I have the tears at home... I was saying, 'Listen Barry, I know it might be awkward for you when you've got a load of lads sleeping in your house, but I don't want [my son] sleeping with an adult or yourself', because I thought I've got to give the bloke the benefit of the doubt, nothing might be happening, but obviously you think... Anyway, that's what I said to him and next time I met him again I said, 'You remember the conversation on the 'phone?' 'Yeah, yeah, it's all sorted, that's all sorted' and that was it...[After that] we'd lost [my son], he'd gone, because [Bennell] told [my son] that he didn't want him playing cricket, golf, anything that wasn't related to football...[previously] he loved going for a game of golf with me, yes. He was on about getting cricket practice with his friends. That was totally out. It was just as though whatever [Bennell] said went. If I asked him to do something, I'd have to ask him again, I'd have to ask him again, I have to ask him again and then he'd do it but if Barry said something to you, just snap the fingers, I'll do that...

...

We had discussions every time he came home, every time on the Sunday we had discussions all week until the Friday... From the time that the problem we had when we found out about sleeping in his bed, obviously, I meant that, is everything all right, where are you sleeping. If I didn't ask, his mum asked. He said, 'No, it's all right, it's okay.' I said, 'Are you sure?' 'I'm sure.'

...

[After these discussions, my son went to the United States with Bennell.] I met him at the airport, put my arm around him, obviously greeted him home. 'Have you had a good time?' 'Yes, great.' 'Are you glad to be home?' 'Well, yes.' Enjoyed it that much, sort of thing, and he was depressed, crying at night because I think he'd had a good time, but he never mentioned anything.

...

We discussed his sleeping arrangements in America and he said, 'Well, we had 2 rooms and everybody was in them 2 rooms.' 'So how many beds are in there?' He said, 'Oh, [two] or [three].' I said, 'So what were you doing, like [four] in a bed.' But, at that time I thought, well, it's convenience.

...

For him to walk away from that it would have been devastating to him but on saying that if I'd have thought anything was wrong, he wouldn't have had a choice, he would have been away from it."

9.2.129. ZZ's mother gave a statement, in which she said:

"[At the] very beginning [of when my son started staying at Bennell's house]... I went up to his bedroom and I asked him just general questions and I just said, 'Where do you sleep when you're there?'... He happened to mention that he had slept in his bed and I went mad and I said you don't do that. ... I told him it must never happen again, he was not to do it and he assured me that it wouldn't. I was concerned about it, I had a word with [my husband] about it and he'll probably tell you anyway, he did have a word with Barry saying that we did not agree with it and if he wished to come he was to sleep in his own room in the bunk beds which I had found out ... he had got, and that he couldn't stay there on his own, there would have to be other boys there which they assured me there always were. ... I asked [my son] constantly, all the time, where he slept and he said the bunk beds. I asked him, now a mother, you feel things aren't right, you can feel that, so I constantly kept on and he kept, I couldn't do any more than I did. I probably did feel at times that he wanted to tell me something but couldn't I used to say to him, '...have you got something to tell me' and he just would say, 'No, shut up, go away...'

...

He'd say if I don't go I can't play, he won't play me but I used to say to him on that, well that's stupid, there are other football teams...

...

[In 1994, my son was supposed to stay in the United States with Bennell and the team for] [four] weeks, the same as the other boys. He came home one week-end to say that he could stay another [three] weeks, Barry had said he could stay another [three] weeks and it wouldn't cost him anything extra...

...

We had to ask for special permission [from my son's school]... went to see the headmaster to explain the situation and even they totally agreed, and the Education Committee, that it was too good an opportunity to miss...

...

The first [four] weeks we knew where he was and the second [three] weeks we hardly knew at all."

9.2.130. In his statement, ZZ also stated that his parents had told him:

"We'll sort it out. I'm not sure what day it was but then like the training session he come and I said [to Bennell], is it all right if I might be able to stay at a friend's house this week-end and he was like...you'll be dropped from the team and all that and so I just went to my nan and grandad's house and the following week-end he like asked me to come again and he sat down and talked with me and I said to him that is all right if I can go in like the bunk beds in the next room and I can't remember what he said after that and the next few week-ends I started going in the bunk beds and downstairs on the settee ...

... because I was like sleeping in the bunk beds, he used to do, like touch my penis and that, this is what he would do in the double bed but he did it downstairs.

...

[During a 1993 trip to the United States] I ended up in another room, separate from Barry Bennell and I was thinking like, in my head like, it's going to be like a terrible holiday, he's going to put me sub every time and all that so I asked him if I could go into the same room as him just so that I wouldn't be dropped from the football team."

9.2.131. I address below whether any disclosures of abuse, or allegations of abuse, were made to the clubs with which Bennell was associated (see: Manchester City's State of Knowledge, Crewe Alexandra's State of Knowledge, and Stoke City's State of Knowledge).

9.2.132. There were clearly rumours, and concerns held by some, about Bennell from the early 1970s. By way of example:

132.1. A survivor who played for Bennell's Senrab team in the early 1970s said:

"Barry Bennell lived in Garside, Manchester at the time and there were rumours circulating that he had players staying over or visiting his house. Bennell did ask me to go to his house but I never as my dad would not have allowed it. My dad did ask me if Bennell was ok with me and I said he was. My dad also had a word with ... a Police Office with [Greater Manchester Police], and asked him if he knew anything about Bennell and was told that Police had nothing on him. I suppose my dad wanted to be sure I was not in any sort of danger."

132.2. Another survivor who played for Bennell's Senrab team in the early 1970s said that the mum of another player saw him sitting on Bennell's knee: "She said 'why is he sat on your knee?' Bennell was just laughing and dismissed it. In hindsight I guess she thought it was odd that a teenager was sat on his knee."

9.2.133. I was told that the rumours and concerns about Bennell became increasingly prevalent such that they were ultimately "rife" within footballing circles. I consider below the extent of the rumours and concerns during Bennell's association with each of Manchester City, Crewe Alexandra and Stoke City, and further consider the extent to which those concerns and rumours were known to the clubs.

MANCHESTER CITY'S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.2.134. In relation to the period from 1975 to 1979 (Period 1 in the Mulcahy Report), the Mulcahy Report found:

134.1. In 1978/79, Bennell was being considered for a role as the Club's Youth Development Officer until HQ refused to work with him and complained to Ken Barnes that Bennell was a "weirdo" and an "oddball" and raised concerns about Bennell's closeness with boys and his habit of having things such as exotic pets and jukeboxes at his house to attract boys to his teams;

134.2. HQ did not directly or explicitly accuse Bennell of being a paedophile or of abusing boys;

134.3. Another member of Club staff, PV, reported to Ken Barnes rumours that Bennell was a child abuser but did not make a direct allegation of abuse;

134.4. PV and Bennell were "rivals" so "claims made by [PV] were considered less credible as a result".

134.5. PV stated that prior to 1981 the Club had received a complaint about Bennell's behaviour, but he provided no details about that complaint. Further, PV's evidence that board members were made aware of the complaint was refuted by Directors from the time, and so it was not possible to verify whether any complaint was made.

134.6. "It is likely that MCFC heard rumours about Bennell during Period 1. These rumours, however, were likely not to have been explicit in their content, and during that time there is no evidence of any direct allegations of child sexual abuse being made to MCFC ... [and] it is the [MCFC Review] team's view that the end of Bennell's first association with MCFC did not relate to a complaint from a parent or an allegation of child sexual abuse."

9.2.135. In relation to the period late 1981 to summer 1984 (Period 2 in the Mulcahy Report), the Mulcahy Report found:

135.1. Rumours about Bennell appear to have been more widespread.

135.2. "In contrast to Period 1, there is evidence that other adults involved in the feeder teams and involved in local football were aware of the rumours."

135.3. "It seems to have been particularly well known – at least by other scouts and parents of players – that Bennell had boys stay at his house before matches."

135.4. "Witnesses from Period 2 remain split on whether they believe MCFC (and particularly [Chief Scout] Ken Barnes and [Club Director] Chris Muir) had heard rumours or knew of Bennell's child sexual abuse."

135.5. "At the very least towards the end of Bennell's time associated with the club, [the Club] was told of inappropriate behaviour by Bennell," such as boys staying overnight at his house and having boys stay up late in his chalet during an overnight trip.

135.6. "The escalation of rumours ... coincided with Bennell beginning an association with Crewe Alexandra. The Review Team have seen photographs of Bennell with Dario Gradi at soccer schools during late 1983/early 1984

and witness accounts place the disassociation with MCFC and the stronger association with Crewe as beginning in 1984.”

135.7. “the [MCFC] Review Team considers it likely that this combination of factors led to MCFC simply allowing Bennell to leave rather than investigating the rumours further.”

135.8. The Mulcahy Report summarises its conclusions on the issue of the Club’s knowledge as follows:

“The [MCFC] Review Team has received no direct evidence of anyone making a specific report of child sexual abuse by Bennell to anyone at MCFC. Though survivors are split on their views of what MCFC (and particularly Ken Barnes) knew, a common factor of all survivor accounts is that there is no evidence of such a report. The Review Team does not, therefore, believe that Ken Barnes or anyone else at MCFC were told explicitly about child sexual abuse by Bennell or had any direct evidence of such abuse prior to his association with the club ending.

It is the Review Team’s view, however, that Ken Barnes, and likely other senior MCFC figures such as Chris Muir and [the Club’s Chairman] Peter Swales were told of or at least became aware of inappropriate behaviour by Bennell (such as keeping boys up late on trips and boy staying overnight at his house and were aware of rumours about Bennell with a sexual connotation, and of his relationships with boys being inappropriate).

The [MCFC] Review Team believes that the accumulation of these rumours, together with Bennell being offered a paid position by Crewe Alexandra FC towards the end of the 1983/84 season, contributed to the end of Bennell being associated with MCFC.”

135.9. I am of the view that these findings were appropriate ones for the MCFC Review Team to have made. In forming that view, I have considered the analysis set out in the Mulcahy Report and various other materials that have been received by my Review.

135.10. This material has included the following: First, I have been provided with the Summary of Evidence obtained from a variety of witnesses, and had the opportunity to view a sample of the witness accounts taken by the MCFC Review Team. Secondly, I have had access to the files of the State’s Attorney in connection with the prosecution of Bennell in Florida in 1994/95. Thirdly, I have viewed a number of witness statements prepared for the prosecutions of Bennell in England and have reviewed a transcript of the 2018 trial. Fourthly, I have met with a number of survivors, and others associated with Manchester City at the relevant time. Fifthly, I have viewed the *Dispatches* documentary which featured Ken Barnes, Chief Scout at Manchester City, and Chris Muir, who was a Director of the Club throughout the 1970s and 80s.

Ken Barnes’ Knowledge

9.2.136. As part of the Review I received evidence that Ken Barnes, Manchester City’s Chief Scout, had told one individual, DB, that complaints of “inappropriate behaviour” by Bennell (which DB understood to be “kiddy fiddling”) had been made to him.

9.2.137. DB, who was involved with the youth function at Stoke City from the early 1970s through to the early 1990s, stated:

“We used to go on a youth tour to northern France, in the Lille area, take under 16s, under 17s. And Man City were there one year. Ken Barnes was with them. ... And he said to me, ‘Have you come in contact with this Bennell?’ and I said, ‘Not really, no.’ I said, ‘He’s with Gradi, ain’t he at Crewe?’ And he says, ‘Yes.’ He says, ‘Stay away from him. I’ve had a lot of complaints of kiddy fiddling.’ He says, ‘And I’ve reported to the FA but they’ve never got back to me.’”

9.2.138. Ken Barnes told DB that the complaints had come from parents. When questioned further by the Review, DB said that Ken Barnes “Didn’t say... kiddy fiddling probably. He said ‘inappropriate behaviour’ because Ken was a bit of a gentleman really...”. The term “kiddy fiddling” was actually that of DB. During the Review’s interview with him, DB explained that when Ken Barnes had told him about the complaints, he had said to Ken Barnes, “What, like kiddy fiddling and that?” to which Ken Barnes had said, “Yes.” Later on in the interview, DB said that in response to his question Ken Barnes had in fact “just shrugged. So I assumed, yes ... a silent yes.”

9.2.139. DB said that this conversation with Ken Barnes had taken place in the early 1980s, maybe 1984. The MCFC Review Team provided me with a copy of a Manchester City match day programme which confirms that Stoke City and Manchester City attended a youth tournament in Lille in April 1985. By this point, Bennell was employed by Crewe Alexandra. The programme also states that Ken Barnes attended as part of the Manchester City contingent. The programme also refers to the tournament in 1985 as being the “18th annual tournament” in Lille but does not indicate whether Manchester City and Stoke had attended in previous years.

9.2.140. DB also said that Ken Barnes had told him that he had contacted the FA about Bennell: “He just told them that he’d had a lot of complaints about inappropriate behaviour with young boys with Barry Bennell and that he must be banned from coaching, obviously, but they never got back to him.” It is possible that Ken Barnes told DB this (and I note that, in its report, the MCFC Review Team do not doubt that Ken Barnes told DB that he had made a report, or intended to make a report, to the FA), but I am doubtful that Ken Barnes did actually tell the FA of his concerns about Bennell. There is no evidence in the FA archives or among the County FAs to corroborate this.

9.2.141. Furthermore, if Ken Barnes had contacted the FA about Bennell, I consider that it is likely that he would have told the producers of the *Dispatches* programme about it (see further below re Ken Barnes’ interview on that programme). There is no reference to this conversation with the FA in the *Dispatches* programme and, although I have not had access to the full interviews carried out by the *Dispatches* programme, I doubt that they would have omitted a reference to this matter in the programme had it been mentioned to them. I interviewed Ed Braman, who was the producer of the *Dispatches* programme, and he told me that, as far as he was aware, Ken Barnes had not told them that he had contacted the FA about Bennell. Ed Braman told me that, had Ken Barnes disclosed this, it would have featured in the programme as it was of real

significance – it would have been “headline news”. It would also have been something which, as a journalist, he would have put to the FA so that it could have an opportunity to reply. I have seen the correspondence between Ed Braman and the FA in 1996 about the forthcoming *Dispatches* programme and there is no mention of the contact from Ken Barnes about Bennell. I also spoke to Deborah Davies, the reporter on the programme, and she did not suggest that Ken Barnes had made such a claim to her.

9.2.142. In addition, DB said that in the late 1980s/early 1990s he had been told by Ken Barnes that he had heard “the rumour that [Bennell] was rooting round for a coaching job. ... [Ken Barnes] just said, ‘Remember what I said.’” DB said that he responded: “Yes. Don’t worry, Ken. He won’t get a job here [with Stoke City]. Not while I’m here.”

9.2.143. I have carefully considered the evidence given to the Review by DB. I am not surprised that DB struggled to recall the details of a conversation he had in the mid-1980s. As with many of the witnesses I have spoken to as part of this Review, his recollection is limited, and his memory may have been affected by other things that he has heard or read about Bennell over the years. I consider it unlikely that Ken Barnes did refer explicitly to receiving complaints of “kiddy fiddling”; as, indeed, DB later clarified. But I accept that Ken Barnes probably did say something to DB about Bennell with a view to “warning him off” working with him. I note that, when interviewed as part of the *Dispatches* programme that aired in January 1997, Ken Barnes stated that the idea of paedophilia in sport “never enters your head”. Similarly, when told that boys who had been associated with Manchester City had been due to attend Bennell’s trial in the US to give evidence of the sexual abuse that they had been subjected to, Ken Barnes said, “You do surprise me.” However, Ken Barnes also said that when he was contacted by Norman Rowlinson in relation to a concern that Bennell was “mucking about with kids”, he told Norman Rowlinson, “I’ve got no evidence whatsoever. ... I know what you’re going to say, if you get the little bits and pieces, there is no smoke without fire ... but ... unless you actually have evidence ... what can you do? ... I can’t help you ... but I know what you’re saying.”

9.2.144. All this suggests to me that, while Ken Barnes may not have received any firm evidence, or allegations, of sexually inappropriate behaviour by Bennell, he does appear to have been aware of rumours and innuendo about Bennell’s sexual interest in children. It may have been this concern that Ken Barnes was seeking to convey to DB.

9.2.145. I cannot, however, say why Ken Barnes did not specifically warn Norman Rowlinson off Bennell in the same way as he warned off DB. The difference of approach may be because Bennell was already employed at Crewe at the time the Norman Rowlinson/Ken Barnes conversation took place. Ken Barnes may have considered that it was one thing to pass rumours on to third parties who may be prospective employers, but another thing altogether to pass rumour (not based on evidence) to a current employer.

Police Interviews with Manchester City Personnel in 1994

9.2.146. The Florida files¹ contain witness statements from police officers from Cheshire Constabulary who were investigating allegations against Bennell in 1994. As part of that investigation, they spoke to a number of Manchester City personnel, including Chris Muir and Ken Barnes. Below I set out the extracts from those files which relate to Chris Muir’s and Ken Barnes’ knowledge of rumours about Bennell.

9.2.147. One of the police officers referred to one individual, HQ, and said that:
 “He couldn’t really tell us anything. He’d heard rumours about Barry... He’d heard lots of rumours but he couldn’t point us in any direction to speak to people to try and confirm or disprove those rumours.

...

He didn’t outright come out and say Barry was gay or he was involved with boys. He would just say, ‘I didn’t like him’ and that was as much as he would say. He wouldn’t expand.”

9.2.148. In relation to Ken Barnes, the officer said:

“He had had involvement with Barry very early on at Manchester City and again he didn’t tell us much. He was very cagey, sort of played his cards close to his chest. He’s not the type of man who wanted to repeat any rumours that he’d heard again.”

9.2.149. In relation to Chris Muir, the officer said:

“I’m sure he mentioned that he’d heard rumours and talk about an incident involving children but he didn’t know who was involved.”

9.2.150. Another officer involved in the 1994 police investigation referred to his interaction with Ken Barnes.

“Very basically, [Ken Barnes said] that Barry at some stage had been employed in some capacity for Manchester City Football Club because of his scouting ability for footballers. His services had been dispensed with at the club for what he called irregularities... He wasn’t really prepared to go into them all, no. We found that they were quite evasive at the club really... I got the impression that Mr Barnes didn’t want ...to tell us why he left the club. But bear in mind that they are a quite prominent professional football club in this country and possibly wouldn’t want any sort of media attention drawn to the club over something.”

References to a “Strange Dismissal” from the Club

9.2.151. In a document written in September 1994, following Bennell’s arrest, one individual (TG) who had worked with Bennell said:

“After a strange dismissal at Manchester City, where he was working as a junior scout, he arrived at Crewe with Dario Gradi. There were many rumours about why Bennell left Manchester City, but I am not aware of any concrete evidence. However, he ran football teams on behalf of the club which were

1. These are files from the Prosecution of Barry Bennell in 1994, made public under the Florida Freedom of Information Act

illegal. He has been known to offer boys gifts and quite a number stayed at his house. He has been like a pied piper to children, he seems to have an attraction for them.”

9.2.152. I asked TG about the content of his memorandum; our exchange was as follows:

“Q. What do you mean by ‘strange dismissal’ at Man City?

A. I can’t recall, but someone would have said that he was at Man City, that he left and no one knew why.

Q. You refer to ‘many rumours’ about why Bennell left Man City: what were the rumours and where did you hear them?

A. I can’t recall. It was just ‘chat’. I can’t say that there were rumours about misbehaviour with children.

Q. You said ‘quite a few stayed at his house’ – what do you know about that?

A. I don’t have any specific names. I don’t recall discussing this with others. There were rumours that he had kids staying with him.

Q. You said ‘he seems to have an attraction for them’ – what did you mean by that?

A. I didn’t mean ‘sexual’.”

9.2.153. I have considered TG’s more recent recollections and his written record from 1994. I consider that the more reliable source is that earlier document. It was written and produced much nearer the date and is therefore more likely to be an accurate reflection of TG’s views at the time. It seems likely to me that the rumours TG had heard about Bennell had sexual connotations, and that he suspected this to be connected with Bennell leaving Manchester City.

Bennell’s Youth Team Described as “Bum Boys”

9.2.154. Gary Cliffe told me that, while he was playing for Bennell’s team, another coach, UW, who was associated with Manchester City and involved with a feeder team – Midas – had made lewd comments which suggested an awareness of rumours about Bennell’s conduct. Gary Cliffe explained to me:

“The coach from 15 to 16 at ... [the junior team] Midas, which was the City official team, was managed by a chap who used to take the mick, call me Bennell’s bum-boy and horrible things like that and other boys that were in that team. And that was like alluded to before we’d moved up the age group. So he took that on but Bennell was at Crewe at that stage, but still around.”

9.2.155. UW was spoken to by the Review, and he denied making these comments. The Mulcahy Report states that other witnesses recall the same sort of insults being made by UW.

Knowledge that Boys Were Staying at Bennell’s House

9.2.156. Gary Cliffe told me that he believed that Ken Barnes had also been aware that boys stayed over at Bennell’s house. Gary Cliffe continued:

“I used to go with Bennell to the club on numerous occasions, wag school² on Mondays. Bennell would have the two or three hour meetings with [Ken Barnes] and I would be sat through the club waiting outside. ... And he knew that Bennell had boys staying, he saw it with his own eyes, he saw me there, he knew I wasn’t [Bennell’s] son. And it was – the school, and why didn’t he say, ‘Why aren’t you at school?’ or anything like that. He knew I stayed there all the time.”

9.2.157. Gary Cliffe also said that SJ knew that boys were staying overnight at Bennell’s property. SJ was involved in running various Manchester City feeder teams, but was not employed by the Club.

9.2.158. SJ has stated that he became aware that boys stayed at Bennell’s house. He visited Bennell’s house in Furness Vale, Derbyshire:

“I only ever went to his house once ... inside I recall there were duvets all over the house. Bennell told me that they were for when the kids stayed over at his house. I knew that he had taken some of the lads on holiday, and I never thought anything of it. I thought if the parents are fine with it then so was I. When he told me the kids stayed over at his house, I didn’t really think anything of it...”

...

I never once saw Bennell acting inappropriately with the kids. I would have challenged him if I had. Nobody has ever mentioned to me that they had witnessed him being inappropriate with the kids either.

...

I never asked any of the boys if they wanted to tell me anything about Bennell or if they had any concerns about him, I never had any reason to. There was nothing that Bennell did or said that gave me cause for concern.”

9.2.159. From this information and information summarised below (see: The Summary of Evidence), it does appear likely that individuals associated with Manchester City were aware that Bennell had boys stay at his house. Some individuals thought that this was inappropriate or suspicious. Others did not. SJ explained that if the boys’ parents had approved the arrangement, the Club may well have thought it was not suspicious or inappropriate.

Parental Complaint to Bennell and Comments Made by Other Boys

9.2.160. In his interview with me, Ian Ackley explained that a group of parents had confronted Bennell about his behaviour while Bennell was coaching a club known as White Knowl. Ian Ackley told me that this was not something he personally had witnessed, rather it was information he had been told by a third party:

“There were a group of parents who had approached Bennell in the past and confronted him about the fact that they believed that he was posing a risk or an attempt of something on one of their children.

...

Now, they were a group of parents from Chapel en le Frith, and they all knew

2. i.e. play truant from school.

each other. There were about five or six boys from Chapel en le Frith that played.

...

And there all in this same local area on the edge of the Peak District. They confronted him. I was told, although I never actually witnessed it, that he broke down and cried and said that it was a big mistake and that he would never do it again.”

9.2.161. I have not received any evidence to demonstrate that anyone at Manchester City was made aware of this confrontation or the events leading up to it.

9.2.162. In the same interview, Ian Ackley explained to me that from that time onwards he and others who stayed at Bennell’s house would be subject to homophobic ridicule by other boys. Ian Ackley explained to me that this ridicule gave the impression that these other boys knew or suspected Bennell had been abusing boys:

“From that point on, I remember quite clearly that core group of half a dozen boys or so of taunting and ridiculing myself and one other boy. There were two of us that stayed there most regularly. Other people were there, but we were there at the same time, for most of the time.

It was all the sort of 1980s, homophobic, you’re a nonce, gay, we know what’s happening to you and all the rest of it. So they definitely knew.”

The Summary of Evidence Provided by the MCFC Review Team

9.2.163. I was not provided with access to all of the evidential accounts that the MCFC Review Team obtained. For the reasons I explain above, I was, however, given a Summary of Evidence produced by the MCFC Review Team of those accounts and given access (at the time of my visit to the MCFC Review Team’s offices) to a number of the underlying witness accounts, which satisfied me that the Summary of Evidence was fair and accurate.

163.1. A Manchester City scout said that he had heard rumours about Bennell which pre-dated Bennell’s association with the Club. He told Ken Barnes and Chris Muir about these rumours – which were that Bennell was a child abuser. He also said that he was present when another staff member warned Ken Barnes about Bennell, saying that Bennell “wasn’t right”. He said that he believes that Bennell left Manchester City “under a cloud” in the late 1970s/early 1980s after the parents of a boy complained about him to the Directors.

163.2. Another scout for Manchester City said that he had heard rumours that Bennell was “too close” to the kids and that the rumours were widespread but there was nothing concrete. The same individual also said that Ken Barnes “got rid of” Bennell when he heard the rumours/received complaints from parents (although the individual was unaware of the content of any complaints made).

163.3. A former employee of Manchester City said that rumours about Bennell had been rife at FA coaches’ meetings and that Bennell’s manner with the boys had been “wrong”. The same individual also said that, in the late 1970s, Ken Barnes had wanted to bring Bennell into a full-time position but that the

individual had told Ken Barnes, Chris Muir and one other employee of the Club about his concerns that Bennell was an “oddball” and a “weirdo”. While he did not use the words “pervert” or “child abuse”, he believes that those he spoke to understood what he meant. This employee said that ultimately the Club did not offer Bennell the full-time role that Bennell wanted and Bennell “went to ground”. This individual also said that subsequently he had been told that City received two complaints about Bennell after a tournament on the Isle of Wight but that he did not know the specifics of these complaints.

163.4. A scout associated with the Club said that everyone talked about Bennell and his conduct “was an open secret”.

163.5. A scout associated with the Club said that one of the Club’s employees (who was involved in the Club’s youth function) used to say that Bennell was a “Kiddy Fiddler”, but this individual had not believed the rumours and had put it down to animosity between the two.

163.6. A former Manchester City player said he had been aware that Bennell held “sleepovers” for kids before games, and had held suspicions about Bennell’s conduct due to how close he was with young players.

163.7. A former Manchester City employee said he had heard rumours about Bennell “always having sleepovers with the Boys” and that people had been suspicious of Bennell and did not like him.

163.8. A former Manchester City employee who said that he had heard rumours about Bennell to the effect that he was “always around children”, was “dodgy” and “you don’t want to go near him”.

163.9. A scout associated with the Club said he had been aware of Bennell having boys sleeping over at his house before games and training. The same individual also said that he had been told that Ken Barnes was asked about rumours about Bennell by two parents – but he was not told this by Ken Barnes.

163.10. The mother of a boy who played for what she described as one of Manchester City’s junior sides in the early 1980s said that she had been aware of boys staying overnight at Bennell’s house and this was “part of the culture”. This individual also said that, after her son had left Bennell’s team (which The Summary of Evidence states is “earliest 1985”), her husband had heard a rumour about Bennell’s abusing children and had passed this information to parents of players in the team then being coached by Bennell. This individual did not think that her husband had passed this information to Manchester City.

163.11. A former Manchester City employee said that in or about 1986, he was told by another member of the Club’s staff that they had gotten rid of Bennell as he was too “flashy and creepy”.

163.12. A survivor of sexual abuse by Bennell said after a tournament in Norwich (the Canary Cup), several team members had told their parents about abuse by Bennell, following which the parents had confronted Bennell. However, the individual does not believe that anyone told Manchester City. (This is probably a different incident to that described by Ian Ackley: see above, and may post-date the end of Bennell’s association with the Club.) The same individual said that a coach of an older Manchester City feeder team, Midas, had known about Bennell as he would “joke about him”.

163.13. A former Manchester City employee said that he had recently been

told by another former member of the Club's staff that a complaint was made by a parent about Bennell and this was passed to Ken Barnes to deal with. The individual was unaware of the nature of the complaint.

163.14. A former Manchester City employee said that the Club had not received any complaints about Bennell abusing children but had received two telephone calls (said to be "comments rather than complaints") regarding Bennell's conduct on summer tours, specifically keeping boys up late in his chalet.

9.2.164. However, a number of people spoken to by Manchester City denied ever having heard any rumours or concerns about Bennell, including:

164.1. A former Manchester City Director (in post during Bennell's association with the Club) said he did not recall any complaint/allegation ever being raised at Board level and does not recall any rumour about Bennell.

164.2. A former Manchester City player who did not hear any rumours about Bennell believes that Bennell would have been "out the door" if the Club had had any knowledge of Bennell's abuse.

164.3. A scout associated with Manchester City said that he had not heard any "specific rumours about Bennell during MCFC period".

164.4. A number of former players, parents and Manchester City staff and Directors said that they had never heard any complaints, concerns or rumours about Bennell's sexual interest in children.

164.5. A number of individuals said that that if Ken Barnes or Chris Muir had been told of abuse, they believe they would have taken action.

The Dispatches Programme

9.2.165. I have described, above, comments Ken Barnes made, when interviewed for the *Dispatches* 'Soccer's Foul Play' programme which aired in January 1997, about his conversation with Norman Rowlinson (the Chairman of Crewe Alexandra).

9.2.166. In addition, Ken Barnes told the *Dispatches* programme that:

"When Bennell took players to a holiday camp one family complained that their sons were staying late in his bedroom... it was a bit of a sort of nothing... talking with them... it was a bit irresponsible... [Bennell should have] seen the boys back to chalets at a respectable time."

Ken Barnes then confirmed that a letter of complaint had come into Manchester City in relation to this incident but that it had not set any alarm bells ringing for him.

9.2.167. When interviewed for the same *Dispatches* programme, Chris Muir stated:

"In the world of football [Bennell] was looked on as a fella that wasn't right but there was no firm complaints... football is a macho game. Suspicions were thrown at him that he might have been 'the other way'."

Conclusion as to What Manchester City Knew About Bennell's Abuse and What Should Have Been Done

9.2.168. The MCFC Review Team's conclusions on the issue of the Club's knowledge are summarised in the Mulcahy Report as follows:

"The [MCFC] Review Team has received no direct evidence of anyone making a specific report of child sexual abuse by Bennell to anyone at MCFC. Though survivors are split on their views of what MCFC (and particularly Ken Barnes) knew, a common factor of all survivor accounts is that there is no evidence of such a report. The [MCFC] Review Team does not, therefore, believe that Ken Barnes or anyone else at MCFC were told explicitly about child sexual abuse by Bennell or had any direct evidence of such abuse prior to his association with the club ending.

It is the [MCFC] Review Team's view, however, that Ken Barnes, and likely other senior MCFC figures such as Chris Muir and [the Club's Chairman] Peter Swales were told of or at least became aware of inappropriate behaviour by Bennell (such as keeping boys up late on trips and boy staying overnight at his house and were aware of rumours about Bennell with a sexual connotation, and of his relationships with boys being inappropriate).

The [MCFC] Review Team believes that the accumulation of these rumours, together with Bennell being offered a paid position by Crewe Alexandra FC towards the end of the 1983/84 season, contributed to the end of Bennell being associated with MCFC."

9.2.169. Based on the materials that I have received, these conclusions were reasonable ones for the MCFC Review Team to make.

9.2.170. The Mulcahy Report also states:

"...given that it is the [MCFC] Review Team's view that MCFC senior management were made aware of rumours and concerns about Bennell's conduct on at least two separate occasions, with the rumours about him appearing to escalate during Period 2, it is the [MCFC] Review Team's view that MCFC's response to the reports it received was inadequate even given the lack of knowledge around child safeguarding at the time.

Whilst it is possible, as above, that such rumours were reported to the FA and possibly other clubs in the North West/Midlands areas, the content of them was likely of sufficient severity that they should have been, as a minimum action, investigated further by the club to determine whether police involvement was necessary, and reported accordingly. The failure to do this constituted a failure to take full responsibility for the issues, even if the club at that stage did not have full knowledge of their severity.

...

... it seems to the [MCFC] Review Team that far too much weight was given to the potential consequences of making the false allegation or report without

such direct evidence - including (i) the possibility of losing the young players that Bennell brought to the club and (ii) the damage that would be caused to the club's reputation. This was, clearly, wrong. The potential consequences for the club should have been, by some distance, secondary to the potential consequences for the boys involved.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the [MCFC] Review Team further believes that the lack of understanding of and framework around reporting child sexual abuse (and safeguarding issues generally) within football and wider society contributed significantly to the failure to report. This is particularly the case when faced with an offender like Bennell who was extremely cunning and deceptive in his approach.

...

The lack of reporting structure, however, is a mitigating circumstance and not something which absolves MCFC of responsibility.”

9.2.171. I agree with these conclusions as to the Club's failings. I consider that the Club's response to the reports that it received about Bennell was inadequate. The Club should have investigated further to see whether there was any truth to the rumours which were circulating about Bennell, and then should have determined whether to raise those matters with the police. I also consider that the Club should have examined further the circumstances in which boys were staying overnight with Bennell. This was not a usual arrangement, even at that time. The fact that parents allowed their children to stay with Bennell did not mean that the Club could, or should, not have looked into it further.

CREWE ALEXANDRA'S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

Summary of findings on Crewe Alexandra's State of Knowledge

9.2.172. Bennell's abuse of boys who played for, or were associated with, Crewe Alexandra was prolific. Numerous boys were abused, and many of these boys were abused repeatedly over a significant period. Many people have told the Review that this must have been known by the Club: that it is inconceivable that a small football club, with Bennell playing a key role in youth development, did not know, or at the very least suspect, that abuse was taking place.

9.2.173. There is, however, no evidence to show that anyone at Crewe Alexandra witnessed any act of sexual abuse by Barry Bennell. Cheshire Constabulary carried out a detailed investigation of what might have been known by the Club and concluded that “there is no evidence to corroborate Crewe Alexandra Football Club were aware of what Bennell was doing”. I have seen no evidence that could properly lead me to a different conclusion.

9.2.174. Furthermore, other than Hamilton Smith (a former Director of the Club), nobody has come forward to say that an allegation of sexual abuse by Bennell was made known to the Club prior to Bennell's arrest in the United States. For the reasons explained in detail below, I am unable to conclude that Hamilton Smith did receive an allegation of sexual abuse, or that he raised this allegation with other Board members.

9.2.175. However, I consider that it is likely that three Directors of the Club, specifically Hamilton Smith, Norman Rowlinson (who was Chairman of Crewe Alexandra from 1964 until 1988), and John Bowler, did discuss concerns about Bennell – which hinted at a sexual interest in children – and that, in light of these concerns, Norman Rowlinson sought further information about Bennell from Bennell's former club Manchester City, and was told by a senior police officer to keep a “watching brief” on the situation. There is no evidence that he did so.

9.2.176. I am also satisfied that, during Bennell's time at the Club, there were rumours circulating about him and his sexual interest in children which were heard by some of the Club's staff, including Dario Gradi. I consider that the Club should have monitored Bennell's activities and should have done more to check on the well-being of the boys who, to the Club's knowledge, were spending considerable amounts of time with Bennell, including staying overnight at his home. Had such steps been taken, it might have led to boys making disclosures to the Club.

Was an Allegation of Abuse Made to Hamilton Smith and Shared with Other Members of the Board?

OVERVIEW

9.2.177. Hamilton Smith, a former Director of the Club, has stated to the media, to the police and to me that, during Bennell's time at the Club:

- 177.1. An allegation of sexual abuse by Bennell was drawn to his attention;
- 177.2. He brought this allegation to the attention of the Club's Chairman (Norman Rowlinson) and Vice Chairman (John Bowler), and potentially other members of the Board;
- 177.3. Norman Rowlinson contacted the police in relation to Bennell;
- 177.4. Hamilton Smith was deputed along with John Bowler to speak with Dario Gradi in relation to Bennell;
- 177.5. Some time later, Hamilton Smith raised again with John Bowler the issue of boys saying over at Bennell's house;
- 177.6. After the *Dispatches* programme aired, Hamilton Smith again met with John Bowler to discuss Bennell.

9.2.178. Hamilton Smith's account is disputed by the Club, John Bowler, other members of the Board and Dario Gradi. Norman Rowlinson is deceased.

9.2.179. For reasons explained below, I am satisfied that:

- 179.1. Hamilton Smith had heard things about Bennell which caused him concern, which led to a discussion with John Bowler and Norman Rowlinson. The sub-text of the discussion was the possibility that Bennell had a sexual

interest in children.

179.2. In view of the concerns discussed about Bennell's possible sexual interest in children, Norman Rowlinson contacted the police and Bennell's former club Manchester City to see if that club held any further relevant information about Bennell.

9.2.180. For reasons explained below, I am unable to find that:

180.1. An allegation of sexual abuse was made to Hamilton Smith and that this allegation was raised by him with John Bowler and Norman Rowlinson, or other members of the Board.

180.2. There was a discussion between Hamilton Smith, John Bowler and Dario Gradi relating to concerns about Bennell.

180.3. Hamilton Smith raised with John Bowler on a further occasion a concern about boys staying over at Bennell's house.

HAMILTON SMITH'S ACCOUNT

9.2.181. Hamilton Smith was appointed to the Board of Directors of Crewe Alexandra in March/April 1986. In May 1987, Hamilton Smith was appointed as Managing Director of the Club.

9.2.182. Hamilton Smith was interviewed by the Review on three occasions.

9.2.183. I first met with Hamilton Smith on June 17th 2017. In summary, Hamilton Smith told me that, shortly after joining the Club, he had been told by Gill Palin (the Club's Secretary and later the Commercial Manager) that she did not trust Bennell and had stopped her son from training with Bennell.

9.2.184. Hamilton Smith told me that, in late 1987 or 1988, he had been watching his son playing in a Sunday league game when he was approached by an individual who said to him: "My friend's son has been abused by a football coach at Crewe Alex and you need to know it."

9.2.185. Hamilton Smith told me that he had shared this allegation with some of his fellow Directors: including Norman Rowlinson and John Bowler. He says that there had then been a discussion with Dario Gradi about Bennell, but that ultimately the Club had taken no action following this allegation being made.

9.2.186. A more detailed account of what Hamilton Smith told me is as follows:

186.1. Hints from Gill Palin to Hamilton Smith:

"I suppose the first couple of weeks was a bit of an eye-opener because Gill Palin was the font of knowledge and I wanted to know who was who. There was a guy who kept coming in and out, fancily dressed in a tracksuit and everything else, all very upbeat. I said to Gill, 'Who is this chap with the tracksuit, Gill? Where does he come in?' 'That's Barry Bennell.' I said, 'Does he work at the Club?' 'No, he does the youth, and Dario gives him the expenses for taking them to games and that sort of thing.' I said, 'So he's not actually employed?' and she said, 'No'. ... She said, 'I need to tell you, Hamilton, I

don't trust Barry Bennell.' I said, 'What do you mean, you don't trust Barry Bennell?' She said, 'Well, he does the coaching for the youth teams and all that sort of thing,' she said. 'Now ... my son, I've stopped [him] going to these sessions because Bennell is surrounded the whole time by little lads...', which even I knew was true, I saw that in my first few weeks. So anyway, 'They're little lads,' she said. 'Bennell's got a relationship with Dario but I'm not quite sure what that relationship is.' I said, 'What do you mean, their relationship? Professional relationship?' She said, 'Well he was supposed to be at Chelsea when Dario was at Chelsea as a coach there. That's where they met. Apart from that, I know very little about him. I just don't trust him. I wouldn't want to say anything that is wrong with somebody, especially down that lane, but that's how I feel about it.' She subsequently went on to be a lot more frank...

...

As the weeks developed ... I said to Dario ... 'So he's come from Manchester City to here, but we don't employ him, do we?'

'No,' he said, 'but what I do...' and this is very important, he said, 'I give him expenses for taking the youth teams, I cover all that, travel and that sort of thing,' he said, 'But he's not actually employed. Mind you, I'm looking for him in the future, hopefully the club will be in a position to employ him at some time in the future.'"

9.2.187. Hamilton Smith's growing concerns about Bennell:

"My lad was playing a quite good level of football, and Barry would turn up at these games himself, and on quite a few occasions we had a chat. So actually, in a sense we knew each other. When Gill made that statement to me so early on in our relationship, even though I think we clicked straight away, it was uncomfortable and it sat uncomfortably with me and it sat in the back of my head. Because in-between times, before asking Dario the question, 'How did we get Barry Bennell? Where did Barry come from?' I'd seen more of Barry coming in from the kids and I was thinking, now I know what Gill is talking about.

...

As the time went on, my reservations about Barry grew. Now, when I went to see my son – I took my son to play football as well. As I tell you it was a good league ... Then as time went on, and I'm near enough to eavesdrop, which I'll admit to, then I hear parents discussing Barry Bennell a lot crosser. I remember distinctly just arriving at one game and the game hadn't started, and this parent said, 'And I told him there's no damn way that he's going to Crewe. That guy has kids back at his house and that's on the weekends.' And they knew that I was a Director at Crewe.

As this guy was saying this, there were nods of agreement and, 'I've had the same problem with [name supplied to the Review].' And this was a lad called [name supplied to the Review], who eventually ended up playing for [a professional club]. I was hearing these bits in conversations every week.

And [name supplied to the Review's] dad, he came up to me one day and said,

‘[my son] wants to go to Crewe, to get a bit of coaching from Bennell. I’m very doubtful about it, Hamilton.’ I said, ‘What’s the problem?’ He said, ‘Well, there’s so many stories about him, I just – as a parent, I know he’s successful at training these kids, but to fair I’m very apprehensive about it and I’d rather Bennell didn’t actually approach him.’ I said, ‘Look, you’re his father and you must do exactly what you said.’”

9.2.188. The allegation of abuse made to Hamilton Smith:

“I went to see [my son ... play football]. It was pouring with rain. It was a good game, but there wasn’t long to go and I had to go, I had to get away from the game quickly, because I had a business appointment. I’d said to [my son], ‘As soon as the whistle goes, ... could you miss having a shower, gather up everything and I need to make a dash.’ So, I was making my way towards where the car was parked, and I think there was only a couple of minutes to go, two or three minutes to go. It was a hell of a game so I was stopping and looking and stopping and looking. There was a corner given and I stopped, and as I stopped this man came up to me and he said, ‘Are you a Director of Crewe Alexandra Football Club?’ and I thought, here comes the corner, and he’s going to ask when we’re going to sign the centre forward, or when we’re going to bring in that centre half, or whatever, which some of the dads did. I said, ‘Yes I am – Why’s that?’ He said, ‘My friend’s son has been abused by a football coach at Crewe Alex and you need to know it.’ And he turned and walked away. I don’t know how to express how stunned I was, I have suspicions and they’d grown and damn me, here was this man coming up and – you know, I can’t even remember what happened.”

9.2.189. Hamilton Smith informing members of the Board:

“The next evening ... we were due to have what’s called a Football Meeting. ... After I’d done my business with the Sunday night, this was still at the back of my mind and I was very, very troubled. What came back to my mind was what Gill had said at the very beginning about her son, and taking him away from [Bennell]. And the whole thing...”

Anyhow, the football meeting was due Monday night. I rang John Bowler the Vice Chairman, that Sunday night and said, ‘Look, we’ve got this meeting organised tomorrow for the football.’ He said, ‘Yes.’ I said, ‘Well, I need to see you. I need to see you before that meeting in the evening. I’ve got some things I need to share with you very quickly.’ He said, ‘Quickly, Hamilton?’ I said, ‘Definitely. I’ve had quite enough, I’d like you as Vice Chairman, to know what is happening.’ He said, ‘Look, if I can come up and see you early in the morning is that okay, because I’ve also got a meeting.’ I said, ‘John, it will take me ten minutes to tell you.’

He came up, I told him and he also in his mind had conflict about the relationship between Dario and Barry and that sort of thing. So, when I was saying to him about what had happened, that didn’t come as any huge surprise. He didn’t sit down on the chair saying, ‘Hell, this is bad,’ or whatever. I said,

‘John, this football meeting that we’ve got tonight has got to be cancelled. This has got to be the subject tonight. Unfortunately, not all of the board members will be there, but I don’t care. The Chairman will be there and that’s important, because frankly John, I’ve had enough. I’ve had it up to here.’

He totally agreed with me. I said, ‘Now, the problem that we’ve got there is that Dario will be at that meeting. Now, I know that you’ve got some thoughts about that.’ And he said, ‘Well, I’ll have a word with Norman, because I think he shouldn’t be there.’ I said, ‘You’re the Vice Chairman, you do what you want to do. I shall be at Norman’s at 6.30pm or whatever time it is and I don’t want to talk about football, John. If what I’m hearing is actually going on, this could ruin the club.’ And the Crewe Alexandra did have a good youth club, a good team, at that time. They got to the youth cup and performed particularly well, there were some good kids there.

Anyhow, John then rang me back and he said, ‘Look, I spoke to Norman and he’s agreed to cancel the football and he’s going to get his secretary to ring Dario and tell him the meeting has been cancelled.’ So off we went to this meeting at night-time. Now, Norman is, Norman at that time must have been thinking, ‘I’m not very good at this. I’m 75.’ something like that, and the other Directors were there. I said, ‘Sorry, we’re not going to be talking about football. This is what we’re going to talk about.’ And I explained what had happened, and Norman said to me, ‘Well you know, what do you mean Hamilton, is he going around with little lads, playing with their bits and pieces?’ I said, ‘Well that’s about right, Norman.’ Norman was a different generation to me at that time, and I said, ‘Yes. That seems to be -- something is happening and it’s not right.’

And he said, ‘Well how does he get these kids? Where do...’, and I said, ‘Look, Norman...’, and this phrase came up again, ‘Barry is like the pied piper to these kids.’ And he was. Barry was everything. Barry was their teacher. Barry was the guy that was going to make them professionals. Not only that, but Barry had the record behind him of producing good players, good lads, good teams. I said, ‘He’s like the pied piper, and these kids...’, and he said ‘Well, this has got to stop. Get rid of him’.

If I’d have said to Norman, ‘Norman, I think the possibility is that Barry Bennell is a paedophile’, I think Norman would have said to me, ‘What’s a paedophile?’ I really honestly do. Norman Rowlinson is one of the board that’s genuinely innocent. His immediate reaction was, get rid of him. Then one or two of the Directors said, ‘Well, that’s all very well Norman, but let’s talk about this, he’s running the team, we haven’t had anybody come and complain, we haven’t had any parents coming to complain’.

At this time, Bennell had been on the staff. He was now on the staff, at this time. One of the Directors quite rightly said, ‘He is on the staff. He’s a member of the staff. We can’t just...’ And Norman said to John Bowler, ‘John, I want

you to fix a meeting with Dario. This has got to stop. He's got to stop having these kids home. Then when we get the opportunity we're going to start to move this man on'. And that was Norman's solution to problems. He was quite - boom. Cut it through, we're not having it. Like that. Never thinking, Norman wouldn't be thinking, 'What's Dario going to say to this? How is he going to respond?'

Norman wouldn't take that into account. Anyway, what he did do, he went, he said, 'Let me just have a word with somebody.' He came back after about five minutes and said, 'I've just spoken to the Chief Superintendent,' and obviously Norman knew the Chief Superintendent. He said, 'They've got nothing on him but suggests that we move him on.' When he said that, I thought, 'Gosh, yes, John, fix up this meeting with Dario as soon as possible and this has got to stop.' He's got to stop having these kids over at weekends or whatever.

So, after we left the meeting, John Bowler said to me, 'I'll ring Dario after I get home. Tell me, are you busy tomorrow morning?' and I said, 'I am John, from 11 o'clock, and I'll be busy for a couple of days. I won't even be in Nantwich.' He said, 'Look, if I can fix up a meeting with Dario for early in the morning...,' because he's at the ground pretty early, '...fix up a meeting in the morning, will you come along with me?'"

9.2.190. Meeting with Hamilton Smith, John Bowler and with Dario Gradi:

"Now at that time, Dario had given up being Managing Director, it had been passed to me, because in a sense I was the one that was trying to organise the club into some shape. I said, 'Yes, provided John, it's before half past ten, because I really need to move on by then.' He said, 'Well, don't worry about it, now listen, all I want is you to be here. I don't want you to say anything, you just leave it to me, I'll do the talking.' I said, 'Yes, if you can fix it up for that time.'

Half an hour later or whatever, John rang up to say he's got this meeting at half past nine. We're going to meet him at the club. I said yes. So, we met him at the club and we're into Dario's office, Dario was expecting us. So, 'Hi', and blah blah. John was facing Dario and he said, 'Dario, we've had a meeting of the board and they are very, very concerned about the activities of Barry Bennell. We understand and there's some good, sound information that he is taking kids home at the weekend. Not only one kid, it could be two or three kids, whatever.'

Immediately the tone of that meeting -- Dario's face changed and he said, 'What do you mean?', and John said, 'Well, it's got to stop. If there is anything untoward happening, then this could be so damaging to the club.' And Dario said, 'So then, what are you going to do about me, John? I take kids home.' And I'm sitting there and John said, 'Well...,' and Dario said, 'Before you say anything else, have you had any parent come to you or any kid come to you complaining? I haven't had any kids' parents come. They all seem happy enough to me, so I don't know what you're on about.'

I'm sitting there and Dario was up in temper. John got up and said, 'Right, okay, I'm passing on what is going to happen, Dario, but I will leave it for you to fix it.' I'm sitting there thinking, Christ, John. He was out of the door and I got up and went out after him. Dario was throwing paper. I said, 'John, what was all that about?' He said, 'Well, we haven't had any kids...' I said, 'John, it was a question of saying to Dario, "Dario, I don't care if we've had any parents, kids or anybody else coming to complain, it is stopping and it's stopping now.'" And if Dario's chosen to get up and leave the club, what the hell, I mean – that says to me – that meeting lasted about five minutes, I should think. Five damned minutes. John said – when I said this to John, 'What's happened John? It doesn't matter...' He said, 'I'm the same as you, I've got to be somewhere else in the next fifteen minutes. I'll speak to you later.' And off he went.

I just couldn't believe it. Gill was sitting in her office with her office door open and I just stood there. Gill said, 'What was all that about?' and I said, 'Well, it's to do with Barry Bennell. We've heard noises, Gill, about the behaviour of Barry Bennell with kids.' 'Well...' she said. 'Surprise me,' I said. 'Things haven't worked out this morning. We'll have to revisit it.' She said, 'Well, I gave you a big hint about this Hamilton, when you first joined the Club.' I said, 'Yes, I know, Gill, but Dario has just made the point to John, that he hasn't had any kids complain, no parents have complained and everyone just seems happy enough. John has accepted that. I need to go Gill anyhow, I'll speak to you later.'"

9.2.191. Hamilton Smith confirmed to me that, when the individual approached him at the Sunday league game and said "My friend's son has been abused by a football coach at Crewe Alex...", that individual did not say the abuse was sexual in nature, nor did that individual name Bennell as the coach in question. However, Hamilton Smith inferred that that was the case because:

"I had heard so many stories, and I remembered Gill Palin as well. We're talking now around about 1989. In between there, one of the things that I said, that everybody had got to do a budget, and that included Bennell, for his youth team. The budget had to come to me and it would then be passed to whoever was doing marketing, or whoever was doing football.

I looked at his budget and on his budget, he was claiming monies for having kids at home at weekends sometimes, and in school holidays. Gill Palin in that interim period had also told me that he's got - because she opened up quite a bit more, about him. He's got fruit machines, he's got god knows what else in his house, that attracts these kids. 'God knows, Hamilton, what's going on there.' Gill was very, very apprehensive about it."

9.2.192. When I asked what year the meetings had taken place, Hamilton Smith initially stated that they had been in late 1987, and then corrected that to 1988. He said:

"Even though I knew that Barry Bennell wasn't – what happened at the meeting with John Bowler, my determination had gone up a notch or two too,

to make sure that I was following what the hell was going on with him, and keeping my ears very much open, like going to training, coaching sessions. Listening to the parents that were watching these coaching sessions. ... It just seemed to be that everybody around about us knew something was wrong. Some of the kids, some of the players, some of the senior players. It just seemed to be – and of course, into that came Dario, as well. The Dario dimension came into it. That was important, in that last year of 1989, because Bennell was a nuisance to every team in that league. They knew his reputation and poaching kids from their teams to get him to Crewe. ... Apparently, there were occasions where there were actually scuffles with him, and he was thrown out from football matches because they knew what Bennell was there for, he was there to get their players. So, he had that reputation.

On one occasion in particular, he broke the rules and somebody complained to Dario and Dario went up in the air. ‘Right, get Bennell.’ He said to Gill. ‘I want him in here.’ And I said, ‘Christ, what’s happened?’ And I was in the office at the time. It took about an hour and by the time Bennell arrived and Dario had been coming in and out of the office saying, ‘When is he getting here?’ and I thought, well, this is going to be... So Barry arrives into the office, into the reception area if you like, with Gill’s office there, and he’s got a Barry Bennell grin on his face. He was cocky – he really was. He did produce players but he was a cocky monkey, with a grin. And he went in.

I said to Gill, ‘He’s for it, this time. Whatever it is, he’s done.’ He came out ten minutes later whatever, fifteen minutes later, smile on his face. Never even heard any raised voices in that office. ... My feeling is that Barry Bennell subsequently had something on Dario Gradi. That’s my feeling and how I look back on it. At that time – Barry Bennell came out of there with a smile on his face.”

9.2.193. Hamilton Smith said that John Bowler and Norman Rowlinson had been at the meeting at Norman Rowlinson’s house, and he “can’t imagine” that Richard Clayton and Jim McMillan (who were both Directors at the Club) were not there. He said that David Rowlinson, the Chairman’s son, was not there.

9.2.194. I asked Hamilton Smith how he had felt after the meeting between him and John Bowler and Dario Gradi. Hamilton Smith replied: “Very... Very let down... I mean, I was – I think I was rude to John, I think I said something like, ‘What the hell’s that about?’”

9.2.195. I asked why he had not gone back to Norman Rowlinson when he realised, after the meeting with John Bowler and Dario Gradi, that nothing was going to happen about Bennell, to say, “They haven’t complied with your request.” Hamilton Smith replied: “No. I don’t know why... This is one of things that you – I’ve tortured myself with. Did you do enough? I don’t know.”

9.2.196. Hamilton Smith elaborated:

“There were all things happening at the club as well, that had gone on. We were producing better players and there were some big transfers going through. There was one other factor. I got close to Dario and Dario told me on more than one occasion, ‘Barry Bennell is more important to the club than I am.’ And he told me that on more than one occasion. And he meant it. And before that, one of the other big things that happened was that Dario was on 10 per cent of any transfer fee of kids that came through the ranks. I was the Managing Director at that time. Dario came to me and said, ‘Look, this 10 per cent I get for any of the kids that move on or transfer, I want to split that. I’m going to have 7 per cent and I want 3 per cent to go to Barry.’ And I said, ‘Are you sure?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ And I said, ‘Really sure?’, and he said, ‘Yes.’ I said, ‘Dario, it’s your money.’ And he said, ‘Yes. Get that on the record and get it moved.’ So, I went to Gill who did all these bits and pieces, I told Gill and she just gasped. I said, ‘Gill, at the end of the day I’ve just said to Dario, “It’s your money.” And that’s what he’s chosen to do.’

There were lots of other things that came across that meant that there was a relationship of some sort between the two. Dario had then been at Crewe a bit longer. There were very often obscene chants at the ground about Dario’s sexuality. That was distasteful. I remember one particular time where it was particularly nasty and he said to me after the game that was it, he’d had enough. Again, I said, ‘Dario, it’s your future and you have to decide, but you know, I wouldn’t respond to that sort of chant. I think that’s obscene and wrong. You need to just think about it.’ ...

The other funny thing that struck me as well, was despite the success that Dario had as manager, and the kids he was bringing through, there was never an approach from any club for Dario as a manager. That was in the days when it was important within a club to develop your own kids. It was before the Sky time and the billions of pounds that were pouring in. It was a time when bringing on your kids was very important. But nobody ever approached Crewe, and certainly never approached me, to say, ‘Could we have a chat with your manager?’

That struck me as a bit odd. The thing is I was thinking, does somebody know something that I don’t know, here? Because it wouldn’t have been very difficult to get Dario away from Crewe, because it was hardly the place to be, but nobody ever approached me.”

9.2.197. Hamilton Smith was asked whether it was correct that, after the alleged meeting at Norman Rowlinson’s house and after John Bowler’s conversation with Dario Gradi, he nonetheless proposed John Bowler to be Chairman of the Club. Hamilton Smith replied:

“Yes, yes. That’s the one that appears in the minutes, and that was one of the things that annoys me, because here is a situation, we’re talking about kids at the time, young men now, being abused, and they -- and they bring this up, as an important issue. John Bowler was the only one, the only candidate that

they had to be Chairman. There wasn't anybody else, there. So when you say 'I nominated him', no, I didn't nominate him. I didn't put forward his name, and say, 'John.' When he was put up for Chairman, I supported it, but I didn't say to the board, 'I'm going to nominate John Bowler as the Chairman.'"

9.2.198. Hamilton Smith told the Review about the *Dispatches* programme and what he says took place after it was broadcast:

"My reaction [to the *Dispatches* programme in 1997] was – they denied any knowledge of anything, and of course I knew that I had had the meeting with them. I'd called the meeting. I had cancelled one to have another... The next day I rang up John Bowler and I hadn't seen John Bowler since I left the Club, and said, 'John, can I meet with you?' He said, 'Yes.' I said, 'It's only for half an hour or so, John. We'll meet at the Peacock pub.' It was a pub mid-way between where we both lived, really. He said, 'Yes, okay.' Half-past six at night, it was. Went in, John bought me a half pint of lager and we sat down. I said, 'John, did you watch this programme last night on the television, *Dispatches*?' He said, 'No.' I said, 'Well, you recall the meeting we had with Norman about Barry Bennell and the message I was delivering, and yet everybody questioned has said that they knew nothing about it.' And he said, 'No, I haven't a clue. That's not what happened. What happened was...' and he started talking about some old thing. When he said that, it was such a barefaced lie, and I looked at him... I said, 'You're a lying bastard.'

And I got up ... and he followed behind me and I was absolutely fuming, because the thought came into my mind as well, is this man using my illness, that I don't remember things? That was another attack on me if you like, for my illness. I turned around and he was at one end of the car park and I called out to him, 'John, one day. One day.' It was just such a barefaced lie, and there had to be a reason for that lie. The only reason I could think of was a cover up. There had to be a cover up. In actual fact, if you think about it, he could have said to me, 'Yes, I do remember the meeting, Hamilton. You need to remember as well that we didn't have any victims and you couldn't have proved that.' And I couldn't have argued with that... But he didn't. He said, 'No Hamilton, that's not what happened.' And I don't know what story he was beginning to tell when he said that wasn't what happened.'

9.2.199. In a witness statement Hamilton Smith gave to Cheshire Constabulary in March 2017, Hamilton Smith stated:

"In late 1988 I received a complaint from a man who was watching a Timperley league football match. My son [...] was playing for Allostock when this man approached me. It was a Sunday morning although I don't recall who the other team was and I was stood near to the goal line waiting for the match to finish. I had told [my son] that I would be by my car as I wanted to make a quick exit from the game that day as I had something on. Once I had got my car sorted I returned to the goal line. The man, who I did not recognise, said something like, 'A coach at Crewe has abused my friends [sic] son.' He did not say who the coach was and did not say who the friend or the boy he was referring to

was. He then said 'You need to know about this.' The man just walked off. I was gobsmacked. When [my son] finished his match I got him in the car and drove home. To this day I have no idea who this man was but I believe he was a parent of one of the boys at the game we were watching that day.

When I was at home later that day I decided that I must report what I had been told to someone at the club, as the allegation was serious. We were due to have a meeting at Norman Rowlinson's house the following day, so I decided the best thing would be to bring it up then. I phoned John Bowler, Vice Chairman, and told him I needed to see him in person and that it was urgent. He visited me at my home and I told him what this man had said to me. We agreed that we would discuss it at the meeting. I told John that I'd had enough of all the gossip about Barry Bennell and something needed sorting out.

John and I decided not to invite Dario to the meeting. He was due to attend but John let him know he was not needed. He didn't tell Dario the reasons, but I knew Dario would have been happy with this, as he was not one for board meetings which did not involve football. The meeting took place at Norman's house and the persons present were myself, John Bowler, Norman, Jim McMillan and I think Richard [Clayton]. I spoke to them about what I had been told the previous day and that I had serious reservations about Barry Bennell's behaviour with the young lads at the club, and in particular them staying at his house. Norman was really surprised as he had no idea this was going on, and he said 'Well get rid of him then'. That was what Norman was like, if there was a problem then sort it out, was his attitude.

We discussed how we could dismiss Bennell. I had no firm evidence that he had done anything wrong, as it was just the say so of a man who had approached me. Norman said he would phone someone he knew, who was a chief Superintendent in the Police, and left the meeting to make this phone call. I did not hear what was said during this phone conversation but when Norman returned to the meeting he told us that this Police Officer had said we should just move Bennell on. He said that the Police had nothing on Bennell, but that the club should move him on, that was it.

Norman told John Bowler to get hold of Dario and let him know that Bennell's activities had to stop immediately. There was no suggestion that Bennell was going to be sacked as we only had evidence which was rumour and not enough to sack him. The day after the meeting John Bowler and I met up with Dario in his office at Crewe Alex. I remember John telling Dario that there was a problem with Bennell and that he had been having the boys staying at his house overnight and that there had been complaints about his conduct (Bennell). Before speaking with Dario, John told me to leave all the talking to him and I was not to say anything. On hearing what John had to say, Dario was clearly not happy, and asked John to explain what he meant. Dario said he had not received any complaints about Bennell and he also had the lads staying at his house, so could not understand what the problem was. John did

not specifically mention what I had been told by the man the previous Sunday while watching my son.

John told Dario that he needed to monitor Bennell's activities with the boys and basically the meeting ended. There was no mention of Bennell being moved on, which really surprised and annoyed me. Dario should have been told about what the man had alleged to me and when we left Dario's office I confronted John about this. The rumours about Bennell's behaviour with the boys were rife around the club at this time. Everyone at the club knew what was being said and he should have been dismissed. Something should have been done to protect the boys but it wasn't.

I left the club not long after this meeting due to my ill health."

9.2.200. I should note here that Hamilton Smith said he did not believe the police officer who took his statement accurately recorded everything he said. Hamilton Smith also provided the police with a typed document that he described as an "addition" to his March 2017 witness statement as well as a summary document setting out his account (copies of which, with Hamilton Smith's consent, were provided to the Club). There are a number of differences of detail between the account given to the police and the account given to me in interview. However, the accounts are broadly consistent.

9.2.201. The Review met with Hamilton Smith again on July 4th 2018, and discussed with him a document which he had provided to the Review, which was on Crewe Alexandra paper headed "Expenses Account" and showed various youth expenditure including "trips" and overnight accommodation during weekends and holidays. This document purported to show that money was being paid by Crewe Alexandra to Bennell to have children stay over at his home. Hamilton Smith said that this document had been prepared by Bennell and was used by Dario Gradi in putting together his budget for youth development. Hamilton Smith presented the overall budget to the Board.

9.2.202. Hamilton Smith told me:

"If you add up everything else, it will give you a budget total of £14,000, for youth development... I'm going through the old board minutes, where the budget was approved. And that included the youth development scheme, of £14,000.

...

Now, you can - reading that budget minute, you can see it was very obvious that I was highly involved in the whole thing, of the budget... And one of the things that...I had also got that expenses sheet from Bennell, which had been taken to Dario; Dario came back to me with it, and he had scrubbed out the travelling expenses, and everything else was, 'Okay.' Now, this was after the meeting that we had at Rowlinson's house... We had the meeting in Rowlinson's place in early 1988, and this was June 1988...

... Now, Dario comes to me with his full budget for '88/'89 season. £300,000

which included £14,000 for youth development... I had then a meeting, with John Bowler... He was now the Chairman of the Club...we had a meeting arranged, to go through the budget.... We came to Bennell's budget. ... And I said, 'Now, have a look at this.' ... And I said, 'Now, John, there is absolutely no way that we can allow this to go on. This can't be allowed, these kids. Who's supervising these kids, when they go on these trips, and so on?'

...

And I reminded John about the meeting with Norman Rowlinson, and the kids staying ... at [Bennell's] house...

John said, 'Absolutely agreed, no problem, I shall deal with this, I shall tackle Dario...'

...

John said to me, 'Leave it, I will take care of it, it's not going to happen.' I came back on the night of the board meeting [on 9 June 1988], for the budget, and was 20 minutes, 25 minutes late, in actually getting to the meeting.

Got in, and there was the copy of the budget in front of me, and there was this £14,000, still in – for youth development. I couldn't say anything in there, because Dario's there, they're talking about the budget that I'd done all the groundwork on. All I wanted was for the meeting to finish, and talk to John. And that's what happened. Now, I had driven back from Scotland and I was pretty tired. After the meeting, I said, 'John, this budget,' I said, 'There's still the £14,000 in the budget,' I said, 'For this youth development scheme.' I said, 'What's happening? ... how did your meeting go with Dario? Because we ...'

... So when I came back from Scotland and saw the £14,000 still there, that worried me straightaway, of, 'What happened with your conversation with Dario, John?'

... and the problem was, I was 20 to 25 minutes late in getting to the meeting. John Bowler had assured me that he was going to look into it, and take care of this. So when that figure was there – and it was still there, I hadn't had a word with John, because he was chair ... he was chairing the meeting, and so I hadn't had a chance to say anything to him, about how did this meeting go. 'Well, why have we still got this?' And to have opened it up, I was then bringing in Dario, who himself talks about having kids at home, and, "So what's the problem?' And I didn't know how – what Bowler had agreed with Dario, what the situation – if he'd had come back to me and said, 'I've got – everything's cast iron, everything's in its place", well okay. Nobody at the meeting mentioned the youth development budget...'

HAMILTON SMITH'S INTERVIEW WITH THE FA IN DECEMBER 2000

9.2.203. In late 2000, Hamilton Smith made contact with the FA to raise concerns about the Club. I have seen a note prepared by the FA's Tony Pickerin of a summary of an interview which he conducted with Hamilton Smith in December 2000.

9.2.204. Tony Pickerin recorded as follows:

"Over a long period Mr. Smith expressed concerns over Crewe Alexandra F.C., Barry Bennell, who worked for the club and who is currently in prison

for abuse, and the relationship of the current Manager, Dario Gradi and Chairman John Bowler to the activities of Bennell at the club.

The salient points as described by Mr. Smith are as follows:

- In the late 1980s, early 1990s, his relationship with the club was as a Director, and for year was as Managing Director.

- He became aware that Barry Bennell was associated with the club in terms of recruitment and development of young players. From parents and others he gathered serious concerns over Bennell – children staying at his home, his over-close relationship with children – he was a Pied Piper. A number of parents would not allow their sons who were talented players to attend the Crewe Centre of Excellence because of the concerns over Bennell.

- Mr. Smith drew this to the attention of the Club Secretary, Gill Palin, who also had prevented her own son from attending.

- Given these concerns, Mr. Smith raised the issue with the then Chairman, Norman [Rowlinson] and John Bowler, then the Vice Chairman, now the Chairman of the club. This was done at a meeting of the three Directors.

- Once he had been informed, the Chairman rang the local Police, who, it is said, recommended moving Bennell out of the club.

- As Bennell was appointed to the technical side of the club, Dario Gradi felt it his responsibility to deal with the matter as Manager. Smith and Bowler met with Dario Gradi to discuss this. That this meeting took place has subsequently been denied by Bowler.

- At this point, January, 1990, Mr. Smith became ill ... and was in hospital for 6 weeks.

- ...

- Smith met with John Bowler, now Chairman, regarding the return of money invested in the club and the Dispatches programme – Mr. Bowler denied ever meeting Dario Gradi and Mr. Smith to discuss Bennell.”

9.2.205. In his memorandum, Tony Pickerin commented, “Clearly [Hamilton] Smith feels guilty for not having acted at the time to confirm that Gradi had indeed spoken to Bennell as agreed, and possibly prevented subsequent abuse in places other than the football club.”

JOHN BOWLER’S ACCOUNT

9.2.206. The Review interviewed John Bowler on July 20th 2018. He said that the conversations described by Hamilton Smith had simply not occurred. He said that there was no meeting at which a complaint of abuse by Bennell and/or any other concerns

about Bennell's behaviour were discussed. He was adamant that he and Hamilton Smith had not been deputed to speak with Dario Gradi about Bennell. Nor had there been any discussion between John Bowler and Hamilton Smith about boys staying at Bennell's house and the Club paying for these overnight stays (indeed, John Bowler told me that he had been unaware that boys were staying at Bennell's house). In addition, John Bowler said that there was no meeting between him and Hamilton Smith following the *Dispatches* programme.

9.2.207. John Bowler informed me that Hamilton Smith had once told him that someone had said that Bennell was "not very likeable" and that "you're going to want to watch him", but no mention was made of abuse. John Bowler told me:

"Mr Smith mentioned to me he'd had this conversation with - he'd had this conversation with this chap on the Sunday and that, you know, 'You're going to want to watch him. He's not a very likeable character,' or whatever it was. And that was - as far as was concerned, that was the end of that matter. Mr Smith, to the best of my knowledge, didn't mention it to anybody else. I can't remember him raising it at a board meeting. ... If there had been claims of abuse, frankly the police would have been brought in? And why didn't Mr Smith get more details about it all? We would have wanted to have followed those up, that kind of accusations up.

I just find it incredible that Mr Smith is passing the buck on this one, or trying to pass the buck on this one, because to be honest with you, I'd got young children at the time. If somebody had been telling me that there was somebody, one of our members of staff, sexually abusing or physically abusing, well, frankly I would have - I'd have been saying to him, 'Well, we need to follow this through. Who is it? Where have they gone? Who do they play for? What is it that's going on?' and I would have been saying, 'You know, we need to get the police in on this.'"

9.2.208. John Bowler also told me that he had no recollection of ever seeing the "Expenses Account" document provided to the Review by Hamilton Smith. The account given to me by John Bowler was consistent with the account that he gave to Cheshire Constabulary.

JOHN BOWLER'S MEETINGS WITH THE FA

9.2.209. As part of his investigation into the matters raised by Hamilton Smith, Tony Pickerin met with John Bowler to hear his version of events. I have seen a note prepared by Tony Pickerin of a discussion with John Bowler on January 26th 2001. Those notes record that Tony Pickerin informed John Bowler of "concerns raised by Mr Hamilton Smythe" (a misspelling of Smith) and that John Bowler indicated that he was very open to a further meeting to discuss matters.

9.2.210. I have also seen a summary prepared by Tony Pickerin of a meeting with John Bowler on March 26th 2001 which records:

"Further to the previous discussion with Mr Bowler, I met him at the club to discuss the concerns raised by Mr Hamilton Smythe [sic] concerning the

period when Barry Bennell was employed by the club prior to his eventual prosecution and conviction.

John Bowler was very open in these discussions and offered every assistance.

It was agreed that

- The chairman of the club at the time, Norman Rollinson [sic], had met with John Bowler and Hamilton Smyth to discuss concerns raised by a parent over Barry Bennell.

- Mr Rollinson [sic] contacted the head of the local police for his advice which was that there was no clear grounds for suspension, but that the club should keep a watching brief on the situation.

- At this time it is thought that Mr Smyth was the Managing Director of the club - he took no action.

- Barry Bennell was eventually dismissed by the manager of the club because of his failure to comply with managerial guidelines unrelated to Child Protection matters.

- Mr Smythe then left the club due to a health.

- The only allegation made to me by Mr Smythe was that when the Dispatches programme was broadcast, Dario Gradi Crewe Alexandra FC's manager, made statements to camera that contradicted Mr Smythe's view of what had actually happened.

- John Bowler described the club's cooperation with the investigation and confirmed that police had interviewed a number of people at the club, including himself, Dario Gradi and Gill Palin, the club secretary.

- At the conclusion of the investigation John Bowler met with the police to review what, if anything, the club could have done. Police advice was that the club had acted correctly. It is worth noting that my understanding is that Bennell was not charged in relation to activities at Crewe Alexandra FC.

As a result of this meeting my view is that the relationship between Barry Bennell, Dario Gradi and John Bowler was apparently investigated fully by the police who found no grounds to proceed.

..."

JOHN BOWLER'S RESPONSE IN RELATION TO TONY PICKERIN'S NOTE

9.2.211. When I met with John Bowler in July 2018, he told me that he had no recollection of ever meeting with Tony Pickerin. He also, as stated above, denied that there had ever been a meeting between himself, Hamilton Smith and Norman Rowlinson in relation to Barry Bennell.

9.2.212. At the time of that interview with John Bowler, I had not yet come into pos-

session of Tony Pickerin’s notes of the meetings on January 26th 2001 and March 26th 2001. Once these notes came into my possession, I sought to ask John Bowler a series of further questions. It was not possible to meet with him due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and so I put questions to him in writing. The questions I asked (underlined), and John Bowler’s responses, are set out below:

9.2.213. First, I asked him a series of questions “In relation to the document headed ‘Call Register’ with the detail ‘Meeting at the PFA with John Bowler...’”:

“1. Does Mr Bowler now recollect meeting with Mr Pickerin at the PFA on 26th January 2001 (or at all)?”

Mr. Bowler (JB) has no recollection of meeting Mr Pickerin (TP) at the PFA on 26th January 2001 or at all.

The only occasions when JB recollects going to the PFA was for the purpose of attending joint meetings held between the FA, Football League and the PFA. It is possible that JB bumped into TP on one of these occasions but, if he did, then it is not something which JB can recall so many years later.

2. How and when did Hamilton Smith indicate to Mr Bowler that “there were events at the club in the past”?

Since HS left the Club in 1990, JB has never met with HS or discussed any matters relating to the Club. During this time, to the best of his knowledge, over the last thirty years, JB has only seen HS on a couple of occasions at his local Sainsbury’s in Nantwich when HS was dropping off, waiting for or collecting passengers. JB believes that HS was/is a taxi driver. On these occasions, JB/HS did not more than “pass the time of day” and matters relating to the Club were never mentioned.

3. What “events” did Mr Smith indicate there had been at the club in the past?

See 2 above.”

9.2.214. Secondly, I asked him a series of questions “In relation to the document headed ‘Meeting with John Bowler, Chairman, Crewe Alexandra FC at Crewe on 26th March 2001’ (in relation to which Mr Pickerin has told us that the bullet points – under the sentence “It was agreed” – reflect what he was told by Mr Bowler)”:

1. Does Mr Bowler now recollect meeting with Mr Pickerin at Crewe on 26 March 2001 (or at all)?

JB has a vague recollection of meeting TP at the Club but does not know when that meeting took place. As far as JB recalls, the purpose of the meeting was to discuss general safeguarding issues and not specific concerns raised by HS. Nearly twenty years later, JB does not recollect any of the specific points raised by HS in his 18th December 2000 meeting being put to him by TP.

Of: “The Chairman of the club at the time, Norman Rollinson, had met with John Bowler and Hamilton Smythe to discuss concerns raised by a parent over Barry Bennell.”

2. What were the concerns raised by the parent in relation to Bennell?

The only concerns (about which JB was aware) that had been raised by a parent about Bennell related the matters set out in paragraphs 8-10 of JB's witness statement dated 18th August 2003 in the proceedings commenced against the Club ... ("JB's August 2003 statement") and on the second page of his section 9 statement ("JB's s9 statement"). JB cannot recollect if he mentioned this to TP at the meeting but, if he did, he would have been referring to those concerns.

3. When were the concerns raised?

See relevant paragraphs of JB's August 2003 statement and JB's s9 statement referred to above.

4. Who at the Club were these concerns first raised with?

See relevant paragraphs of JB's August 2003 statement and JB's s9 statement referred to above.

5. When and where did the meeting between Mr Bowler, Mr Rowlinson and Mr Smith take place?

There was no meeting between NR, JB and HS to discuss Bennell. JB did not tell TP that there had been any such meeting.

6. Who arranged that meeting?

See 5 above.

7. What was discussed at that meeting?

See 5 above.

8. What was the outcome of the meeting?

See 5 above.

9. What further steps, if any, did Mr Bowler take following that meeting in connection with the concerns discussed?

See 5 above.

10. To Mr Bowler's knowledge what steps, if any, did Mr Rowlinson or Mr Smith (or any other person) take following that meeting in connection with the concerns discussed?

See 5 above.

Of: "Mr. Rollinson contacted the head of the local police for his advice which was that there were no clear grounds for suspension, but that the club should keep a watching brief on the situation"

11. How and when did Mr Bowler become aware that Mr Rowlinson had contacted the police in relation to Bennell?

As JB has said previously, he was not aware at the time that NR had been in

contact with the police and he cannot recall how and when he became aware that NR had made that contact.

12. What did Mr Rowlinson tell the police?

JB has no direct knowledge of what NR told the police.

13. What steps did the Club take so as to keep a “watching brief” on the situation?

JB has no direct knowledge of there being any “watching brief”.

14. What steps did Mr Bowler take so as to keep a “watching brief” on the situation?

See 13 above.

Of: “The only allegation made to me by Mr. Smythe was that when the Dispatches programme was broadcast, Dario Gradi, Crewe Alexandra F.C.’s manager, made statements to camera that contradicted Mr. Smythe’s view of what had actually happened.”

15. When and where was the allegation (that Dario Gradi had made statements on camera that Mr Smith considered to be inaccurate) made to Mr Bowler by Mr Smith?

This allegation was never made by HS to JB. JB did not say this to TP.

16. What did Mr Smith actually say, and what was Mr Bowler’s response?

See 15 above

Of: “John Bowler ... confirmed that the police had interviewed a number of people at the club, including himself ... “

17. When was Mr Bowler interviewed by the police?

28th April 2017 as set out in JB’s s9 statement. JB did not tell TP that he had been interviewed by the police.

JB did not meet with police at the conclusion of the investigation. JB did not tell TP that he had met the police at the conclusion of the investigation.

9.2.215. In his response to my questions, John Bowler referred to his witness statement prepared for the civil claim brought against the Club in 2003. At paragraphs 8-10 of that witness statement, signed by him in August 2003, John Bowler stated:

“It is, however, fair to say that myself and Dario Gradi did have some conversations about some of the training methods adopted by Barry Bennell. It is too long ago to be entirely specific but I recall conversations about instances where Barry Bennell had dropped off boys in his care on their way back from a match and told them to find their way home.

On one of these occasions I seem to recall there had been a complaint from a

father of one of these boys. I spoke to Dario Gradi about it and Barry Bennell was, to the best of my recollection, reprimanded.

I would prefer to be able to produce written documentation confirming this was the case but the simple fact of the matter is that we are talking about the mid 1980's to early 1990's and the reality is that the documented procedures that are now in place for the protection of minors were not in place at that time."

9.2.216. In his response to my questions, John Bowler also referred to the statement that he gave to the police in 2017. In this statement, John Bowler stated that:

"It is, however fair to say that myself and Dario Gradi did have some conversations about some of the training methods adopted by Barry Bennell. It is too long ago to be entirely specific but I recall conversations about instances where Barry Bennell had dropped off boys in his care on their way back from a match and told them to find their own way home. On one of these occasions I seem to recall there had been a complaint from a father of one of these boys. I spoke to Dario Gradi about it and Bennell was, to the best of my recollection, reprimanded."

GILL PALIN'S ACCOUNT

9.2.217. I interviewed Gill Palin on August 7th 2018. Gill Palin told me that she had not told Hamilton Smith that she did not trust Bennell, although she may have said to Hamilton Smith that she did not like Bennell. As to Hamilton Smith's suggestion that Gill Palin had told him that she had stopped her son from attending Crewe training sessions because of her distrust of Bennell, Gill Palin said:

"I don't really know if he ever went to the sessions, but I didn't stop [my son] doing anything at the football club.... As far as I know, [my son] wasn't [coached by Bennell] and, if he had of been... I'd have had no reason to stop him... I know that Barry had young lads training with him but I still wouldn't have stopped [my son] training with him because of that because I didn't think, at the time, there was any problem with that."

9.2.218. Gill Palin went on to say, "If I had have thought there was any problem [with Bennell], I would have spoken to somebody about it and I was close enough to Dario to have spoken to Dario about it."

9.2.219. I asked Gill Palin about Hamilton Smith's statement that, immediately following the alleged conversation between him, John Bowler and Dario Gradi, she had asked what the conversation had been about and had said that she had given a "big hint" to Hamilton Smith when he first joined the Club. Gill Palin was emphatic that she had no knowledge of such a conversation having occurred:

"Absolutely not. I wouldn't give a big hint. If I'd got any qualms, it would have a damn sight more than a hint and it wouldn't have been with him. ... If anything like that had taken place in Dario's room, I wouldn't have had to have asked, I could have heard it. You could hear everything that was going on

in our offices. There were no secrets from anybody.”

9.2.220. The account Gill Palin gave me was consistent with the one she gave to Cheshire Constabulary.

DARIO GRADI'S ACCOUNT

9.2.221. I interviewed Dario Gradi. He said that the conversation with John Bowler about Bennell which had been described by Hamilton Smith had simply not occurred.

NORMAN ROWLINSON

9.2.222. I was unable to speak with Norman Rowlinson as he is deceased. However, I was able to read a letter he sent to Deborah Davies in December 1996 in advance of the *Dispatches* programme *Soccer's Foul Play*, which was broadcast in January 1997. Norman Rowlinson wrote, “I certainly never received any complaint about sexual impropriety from any parent, player, member of staff or member of the general public.”

9.2.223. I have also seen Norman Rowlinson's witness statement for the civil proceedings brought against the Club in 2003. Norman Rowlinson stated:

“I am the President of Crewe Alexandra Football Club.

Between 1964 and 1988 I was the Chairman of the Club, being succeeded in that position by John Bowler in 1988.

[In] the mid 1980's I had a golfing friend who had two sons training in our Youth Development Programme. He told me that he thought Barry Bennell was an unlikeable character and also often avoided eye contact with parents. This was about 1985/1986 but approximately 2 years later he told me that Barry Bennell had a shop in Glossop where blue videos were available. At no stage did he advise me of any reports of improper sexual behaviour. My own impression was that there was something odd about Bennell's character and that his behaviour seemed rather erratic for my liking. I had no doubt that he was good at his job, but I did not like him and decided (on my own initiative) to make some enquiries into his background.

At this time I was on friendly terms with the Chief Superintendent of Police, [identified by name] (now deceased), who sometimes called in the Directors Room after a match to brief us on any crowd trouble etc. I privately told him that I was uneasy about Barry Bennell. He advised me to keep quiet about it but ready to listen to any reports and he asked me to report privately to him at Police Headquarters. For this reason I did not inform the rest of the Board of Directors at this time.

I spoke to Chief Superintendent . . . about contacting Manchester City Football Club who were Bennell's previous employers, to which he agreed. I spoke to Ken Barnes (who was in charge of Youth Development at Manchester City)

about Barry Bennell. Ken Barnes had not been at Manchester City during the time that Barry Bennell was employed there (he had been manager at Wrexham which is where I knew him from) but I asked him to make a few discrete [sic] enquiries. He came back to me a short time later to say that he had not been able to find out anything untoward save that, as per my own thoughts, that Barry Bennell was an odd character. This report was given directly to the Chief Superintendent of Police who suggested to me that I go back to Manchester City once again in an attempt to trace former youth team players who had trained under Bennell.

In the circumstances I again contacted Manchester City Football Club to ask them if they had any youths of 18+ who had been in their Youth Development Programme when Bennell was employed there. Ken Barnes came back to me to say that he had not been able to uncover anything of an improper nature. This conversation was also reported to the Chief Superintendent of Police.

After Bennell left Crewe he went to work in Florida where he was eventually arrested and charged with sexual assault. At this time I was contacted by a television company for information on Barry Bennell. I told them initially that I could not speak to them until this had been cleared by the Police and on 02.12.96 the Police sent a plain clothes detective to interview me at my office who then confirmed that I need no longer keep silent and that I could speak to the television company.”

OTHER DIRECTORS OF THE CLUB

9.2.224. As part of its enquiry, Cheshire Constabulary spoke with Richard Clayton who refuted Hamilton Smith’s claim that Bennell’s behaviour had been raised with him and other Directors.

9.2.225. Cheshire Constabulary was unable to speak with James (Jim) McMillan (one of the Directors that Hamilton Smith said may have been at the meeting at Norman Rowlinson’s house) due to ill health.

9.2.226. Norman Hassall, a Director of Crewe Alexandra since 1978, was not alleged to have been present at the alleged meeting at Norman Rowlinson’s house. In his statement to Cheshire Constabulary, he stated:

“I can be sure that Hamilton Smith never brought to my attention anything concerning the behaviour of Barry Bennell. I cannot recall him ever bringing anything of this nature to the attention of the board, there was never a board meeting. All board meetings were minuted and a meeting of this nature never took place. I would be amazed if anything was ever discussed out of the board room concerning the behaviour of a member of staff, certainly something as serious as this. I never heard anyone discussing that Bennell had been abusing anyone.”

Norman Hassall maintained this position during my Review’s interview with him.

9.2.227. David Rowlinson, a Director of Crewe Alexandra since 1979 (and the son of Norman Rowlinson), gave a statement to the police in which he said:

“No one ever made me aware that Barry Bennell was acting inappropriately with any of the players or staff associated with Crewe Alexandra Football Club. I was never made aware of any complaints or concerns about Bennell’s behaviour by anyone. If anything of this nature would have been brought to my attention I would have reported it. I was aware that Barry Bennell left the club but I have no knowledge of why he left. I am also aware that Bennell was arrested in America in 1994, this was widely reported in the media. This was the first I became aware of his alleged offending. His arrest was in connection with allegations of sexual abuse being made against him.”

The Club’s Board Minutes

9.2.228. Crewe Alexandra declined to provide me with copies of the minutes of the Club’s Board meetings citing data protection concerns, although the Club has provided me with relevant extracts. I have, however, been able to view many of the minutes from other sources. There are no references in these minutes to Hamilton Smith’s raising any concerns about Bennell. This was confirmed by the Club in its report to me.

The Club’s Response to the Account Given by Hamilton Smith

9.2.229. In its report to me, Crewe submitted that what Hamilton Smith has said should be “completely disregarded”. The Club said that his various allegations are contradicted by “empirical contemporaneous evidence and/or are untrue”. The reasons given by the Club were as follows:

229.1. First, that there is no reference in any of the Board minutes to Hamilton Smith raising any concern, whether at a meeting or otherwise.

229.2. Secondly, there are a number of inaccuracies in Hamilton Smith’s account and/or inconsistencies between the various accounts given by him. Specifically:

229.2.1. In an interview with the television network HBO, Hamilton Smith referred to “making a report to his bosses” in 1987. In other interviews, he refers to raising the matter in 1988.

229.2.2. In an interview with HBO, Hamilton Smith said that John Bowler should have been the one to investigate Bennell, although Norman Rowlinson was the Chair and Hamilton Smith was the Managing Director of Crewe Alexandra at this time.

229.2.3. In the account given to the police, Hamilton Smith referred to Dario Gradi being Managing Director of the Club. Dario Gradi was never Managing Director.

229.2.4. In the account given to the police and in his interview with the Review, Hamilton Smith said that Bennell was not a “permanent member of staff, instead he was paid expenses to scout at local schools and football clubs”, when in fact, as recorded in the January 1985 Board Minutes, Bennell signed a contract with the Club and was paid £120 per week (including expenses).

229.2.5. Hamilton Smith referred to attending an FA session “on

Child Protection” with KP (now deceased). There is no reference in the Board Minutes to this.

229.2.6. In the account given to the police, Hamilton Smith said that Dario Gradi presented to the Board that Bennell should be taken on permanently by the Club. This is inconsistent with the January 1985 Board minutes which show that Bennell was, from the outset of his involvement with the Club (i.e. January 1985), a permanent club employee.

229.2.7. In the account given to the police, Hamilton Smith said that DH was appointed assistant youth coach and was brought into the Club by Bennell. However, DH was never assistant youth coach, he was a volunteer who had been involved with the Club long before Bennell came to the Club.

229.2.8. In the account given to the police, Hamilton Smith referred to “questions” (saying “Often other parents would chat with [Hamilton Smith], and over time questions were asked of BB behaviour. No evidence was provided by the parents, it was rumour and speculation”) being raised by parents about Bennell’s behaviour. The Club has pointed out that, on his own evidence, Hamilton Smith did not raise this with anyone else.

229.2.9. In the account given to the police, Hamilton Smith said that at a football match he had been approached by someone who said, “You need to know that my friend’s son has been abused by Bennell.” Hamilton Smith went on to say, “Later that day [I] contacted Norman Rowlinson to address the accusation through a meeting that was taking place the following day with Board members.” Yet in his interview with the Review on June 17th 2017, Hamilton Smith referred to contacting John Bowler and saying “John, this football meeting that we’ve got tonight has got to be cancelled. This has got to be the subject tonight. Unfortunately, not all of the board members will be there, but I don’t care. The Chairman will be there and that’s important. Because frankly John, I’ve had enough.”

229.2.10. In the account given to the police, Hamilton Smith said that he met with Norman Rowlinson and John Bowler the day after the allegation had been made to him and they agreed that the agenda for the planned meeting needed to be changed from “financial discussions” to “how to address the accusation”. Yet in his June 17th 2017 interview with the Review, Hamilton Smith refers to the fact that there was due to be a “football meeting” the following day and not a meeting to discuss finances. Further, there is no reference to a football committee/sub-committee in any of the Club’s Board Minutes which there would be if such a committee/sub-committee had existed.

229.2.11. In his interview with the Review (and in a statement provided to the police), Hamilton Smith said that Norman Rowlinson left the meeting for approximately five minutes and, on his return, said, “I’ve spoken to the Chief Superintendent...they’ve got nothing on [Bennell] but suggests that we move him on.” The Club say that it is extremely unlikely that the Chief Superintendent would have been able to confirm this to Norman Rowlinson within five minutes.

229.2.12. In the account given to the police, Hamilton Smith said that shortly after the alleged meeting he became seriously ill and was hospitalised.

The Clubs has said that that is inaccurate. Hamilton Smith was a regular attendee at Board meetings in 1987 and 1988.

229.2.13. In his interview with the Review, Hamilton Smith was asked whether he had proposed John Bowler as Chairman, and said that John Bowler had been “the only candidate that they had... I didn’t nominate him...”, whereas the Board Minutes record “there were apparently two possible candidates, Mr J Bowler and Mr N Hassall. Mr Smith had monitored and assessed the situation since January and felt he would like to nominate Mr Bowler.”

229.2.14. In his interview with the Review, Hamilton Smith said he had been 20 to 25 minutes late in getting to the meeting on June 9th 1988, whereas item 1 of the Minutes records: “The Board considered the budget proposals tabled by Mr H Smith...Mr Smith confirmed he would arrange to have the details of the budget incorporated into the Club’s new computer administration system.” The implication of this is that Hamilton Smith was not late to the meeting, as otherwise he would not have been able to table the first item.

229.3. Thirdly, the Club released a statement in March 2018 to say that it was “aware that a former Director, Hamilton Smith, has alleged that he received a complaint of abuse involving Mr Bennell and reported these allegations to the board of directors in or about 1988”³. (In the Club’s statement, it sets out some of the reasons why Hamilton Smith’s version was erroneous.) Shortly afterwards, Hamilton Smith issued a statement saying, “To be absolutely clear, I have received no complaint from a victim or from a parent of any of the victims. Had I any evidence that these despicable acts were being committed against boys at the Club, I would have provided the police with evidence at that time.” Yet, argues the Club, on the basis of his own account, Hamilton Smith had received a “complaint” and did have evidence of abuse.

229.4. Fourthly, Hamilton Smith’s statements are inconsistent with Norman Rowlinson’s written evidence in the civil trial; and John Bowler, Dario Gradi and Gill Palin all deny the account given by Hamilton Smith.

229.5. Fifthly, after Hamilton Smith says he raised his “concerns” (following which John Bowler was deputed to speak with Dario Gradi – which conversation left Mr Smith feeling “very let down” by John Bowler), he proposed John Bowler for Chairman (as recorded in the May 1988 Board Minutes) and the following year seconded John Bowler’s appointment as Chairman (as recorded in the March 1989 minutes).

229.6. Sixthly, all current and former Directors who could be spoken to, as well as Gill Palin, have said that if what Hamilton Smith has alleged had been put to them, they would have insisted it be discussed at a Board meeting and would have reported the matter to the police if appropriate.

229.7. Seventhly, Hamilton Smith did not raise his “concerns” with a third party until 2001 (by which time Bennell had been convicted of offences both in the United States and in the UK).

229.8. Eighthly, Hamilton Smith provided the Review with a document headed “Expenses Account” which he discussed in his interview with the Review in July 2018. The Club says that Hamilton Smith’s version of events

3. <https://www.crewealex.net/news/2018/march/club-statement-barry-bennell-2/>

hinges on the ‘Expenses Account’ document being in existence prior to the Board Meeting of June 9th 1988. However, the ‘Expenses Account’ document (which is not signed or dated) is on Club notepaper which states that Gill Palin is “Secretary & Commercial manager”, John Bowler is “Chairman” and James McMillan is “Vice-Chairman”. The Club says that these positions were taken up by those individuals on December 28th 1988, May 26th 1988 and June 30th 1988 respectively. Accordingly, the earliest that the “Expenses Account” document could have been prepared was early 1989. In other words, the sum of £14,000 for youth development was included in the budget tabled by Hamilton Smith at the Board Meeting of June 9th 1988 and was re-confirmed at the Board Meeting on October 5th 1988 but that figure cannot, on any analysis, have been based on the “Expenses Account” document. The Club questions whether the “Expenses Account” document was even prepared by Bennell.

229.9. Ninthly, Hamilton Smith resigned from the Club in February 1990. He had signed leasing agreements on behalf of the Club when they ought to have been signed in his own name. This cost the Club a lot of money. After his departure, Hamilton Smith tried to sue the Club on the basis that the Club owed him money, when in fact the opposite was the case.

CONSIDERATION OF THE CLUB’S RESPONSE TO THE ACCOUNT GIVEN BY HAMILTON SMITH

9.2.230. I have considered the reasons put forward by the Club as to why I should reject Hamilton Smith’s account in its entirety:

a) Board minutes

9.2.231. Crewe Alexandra said that there is no reference in the Board minutes to Hamilton Smith’s raising a concern about Bennell. This is not determinative of whether or not Hamilton Smith did, in fact, raise the allegation with Board members. The meeting at which Hamilton Smith says he notified some Board members of the allegation was not a full Board meeting.

9.2.232. Furthermore, not every concern about a staff member is mentioned in the Club’s minutes. During my interview with Gill Palin she told me that she had heard that Bennell had left a number of youth players some way from home requiring them to walk some distance and had “discuss[ed] that with the board and they did have a meeting about it afterwards. They knew about it as well. We all talked about it and certain rules were then put into, because I just thought that was dreadful.” The Club confirmed that that discussion is not recorded in the Board minutes. Gill Palin was asked about this and replied, “I can only assume from that, that the meeting or the conversation took place off a Board meeting.” This demonstrates that just because concerns about a staff member are not recorded in Board minutes does not mean that such a concern was not discussed by Board members. Further, the Club has told me that there is no reference in the Board Minutes to Bennell’s arrest/prosecution in the United States in 1994, the *Dispatches* programme, or the prosecution of Bennell in England after his return from the United States. I would find it very surprising if these matters were not discussed given Bennell’s role at

the Club and the magnitude of these events. I find it more likely that they were discussed by the Board, or at least by members of the Board, but that these conversations were not minuted.

b) Inaccuracies and Inconsistencies in Hamilton Smith's Account

9.2.233. The Club has referred to a number of inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the accounts given by Hamilton Smith. The fact that there are inconsistencies in Hamilton Smith's various accounts does not mean that his account of the key meetings should be rejected. Hamilton Smith's account relates to events said to have occurred 30 years ago. Some inaccuracy or inconsistency with respect to those events is, in my view, inevitable with respect to matters that took place so long ago.

9.2.234. As stated above, I have seen a summary prepared by the FA's Tony Pickerin of an interview which he conducted with Hamilton Smith on December 19th 2000, much closer to the time of the alleged incident.

9.2.235. There are many similarities between what Hamilton Smith told the Review, and what Tony Pickerin has recorded in his memorandum. There are, however, a couple of significant matters which are not recorded in Tony Pickerin's memorandum. I cannot be sure that Hamilton Smith did not say more things to Tony Pickerin than those which are recorded in the memorandum, and this cannot be confirmed or rejected by Tony Pickerin as he does not remember anything specific about the conversation with Hamilton Smith. I consider that it would be surprising, however, if Tony Pickerin had failed to record matters of real significance which had been told to him. What is not mentioned by Tony Pickerin is the specific allegation that an individual approached Hamilton Smith after a youth game in which his son was playing to say, "My friend's son has been abused by a football coach at Crewe Alex and you need to know it." According to Hamilton Smith, this was the prompt that led him to insist on a meeting with Norman Rowlinson and John Bowler. If this matter had been mentioned, it would be very surprising if Tony Pickerin had not recorded it. Tony Pickerin's note refers to "serious concerns" about Bennell from parents and others, but not an actual allegation of abuse being referred to.

9.2.236. There is also no mention in Tony Pickerin's memorandum of Hamilton Smith's allegation that John Bowler subsequently promised to deal with the fact that boys were staying at Bennell's house later in 1988, when Hamilton Smith realised that the practice was still going on. Tony Pickerin mentions the one meeting only, where Hamilton Smith and John Bowler met with Dario Gradi. On Hamilton Smith's version of events, there was a further occasion when he expressed concern to John Bowler about Bennell's activities.

c) Hamilton Smith said that he did not Receive any Complaint

9.2.237. In a statement made in March 2018, Hamilton Smith said, "I have received no complaint from a victim or from a parent of any of the victims. Had I any evidence that these despicable acts were being committed against boys at the Club, I would have provided the police with evidence at that time." Crewe Alexandra contends that this contradicts Hamilton Smith's other accounts. However, the dif-

ferent accounts are strictly speaking consistent with one another.

9.2.238. On Hamilton Smith's account to the Review and to Cheshire Constabulary, a survivor or the parent of a survivor had not made a complaint. The allegation had been made by a friend of a parent whose son had been abused. I do not, then, think that the 'inconsistency' raised by Crewe in this regard is well-founded.

d) Denials by John Bowler, Gill Palin and Dario Gradi, and Norman Rowlinson's evidence

9.2.239. John Bowler, Gill Palin and Dario Gradi all refute the account given by Hamilton Smith.

9.2.240. In his statement for the civil proceedings brought in 2003, and in his letter to Deborah Davies of *Dispatches*, Norman Rowlinson makes no mention of such an allegation or meeting with Hamilton Smith, and specifically stated that he "certainly never received any complaint about sexual impropriety from any parent, player, member of staff or member of the general public".

e) Nominating John Bowler as Chairman of the Club

9.2.241. Hamilton Smith nominated John Bowler to be Chairman of the Club even though he told me that he had felt very let down by him. If the events described by Hamilton Smith had occurred and he felt as strongly about the matter as he now says he did, it is difficult to understand why he decided to put John Bowler forward for the position of Chairman. The explanation given to me by Hamilton Smith that John Bowler was the only candidate is inconsistent with the contemporaneous minutes of the relevant Board meeting, where Norman Hassall's name is also mentioned as a possible candidate.

f) What Others Say They Would Have Done

9.2.242. Other Directors (former and existing) have said that if what Hamilton Smith has alleged had been put to them, they would have insisted it be discussed at a Board meeting and would have reported the matter to the police if appropriate.

g) When did Hamilton Smith First Raise the Matter with Third Parties?

9.2.243. The Club contends that Hamilton Smith did not raise the matter with a third party until 2001. In fact, there is evidence that Hamilton Smith raised the matter with his wife, his daughter and his friends GW and HW (discussed below) much earlier than 2001, and I have received evidence that Hamilton Smith discussed his concerns about abuse at Crewe with a doctor well before 2001. Hamilton Smith also told me that he raised the matter with his local MP, Gwyneth Dunwoody, in 1997.

9.2.244. Hamilton Smith and Gwyneth Dunwoody MP were friends, and he says that he wrote her a letter after the *Dispatches* programme relating to his time at Crewe. I have not seen that letter, but I have seen a letter that the MP wrote to Hamilton Smith dated October 10th 1997:

"It has been brought to my attention that an ex-football coach once employed

by Crewe Alexandra has been deported from America after serving a jail sentence for abusing young footballers.

If my recall is correct, the individual would have been employed by the Club during your term in office as a Director. I would be grateful if you could contact me to let me know any recollection you have of that period..."

9.2.245. The fact that Hamilton Smith had raised matters about Bennell with his MP is also reflected in the Tony Pickerin memorandum of December 19th 2000. Tony Pickerin records that:

"At the time of [the *Dispatches*] programme Smith received a request, in writing, dated October, 1997, from Gwynneth [sic] Dunwoody, his local M.P. and a family friend, for information about Bennell and his work at Crewe when Mr. Smith was a director.

- Mr. Smith met with and told the M.P. all of the above...
- Mrs. Dunwoody advised Mr. Smith not to raise the matter publicly because of the potential threat to his health from the resulting publicity."

9.2.246. Nevertheless, the fact that Hamilton Smith discussed matters with his MP in 1997 does not corroborate his account of what they talked about, as the correspondence from Gwyneth Dunwoody does not provide any detail of what he told her.

9.2.247. The Review met with a couple, GW and HW, who had been friends with Hamilton Smith and his wife, but for the past 20 years or so were just "Christmas Card friends", rather than people who had a closer, or more frequent, connection. For Christmas 2017, the couple sent the Smiths a Christmas card which read: "[I] did ring you a couple of weeks ago, but no answer... [GW] and I remember what Hamilton told us, years ago, re Crewe Alex. It's all coming out now isn't it."

9.2.248. GW informed the Review that he recalled Hamilton Smith telling him about someone coming up to him and telling him that his son, or a friend of his son, had been abused at Crewe, and that Hamilton Smith had told the Chairman about this. He recalled Hamilton Smith telling him that he called a meeting with some Directors, and that Dario Gradi was made aware of the allegation. GW said that he remembered Hamilton Smith telling him these things on several occasions, the first time being in the early 1990s, probably 1991, and before Bennell's arrest. GW recalled that at the time when Hamilton Smith had told him these things, he was no longer a Director at the Club. GW said that the first conversation about these matters took place at Hamilton Smith's house, which he recalled was in a place called Shavington. Jeannette Smith, Hamilton Smith's wife, has confirmed that they lived at a house in Shavington in 1994/95. That was the period in which Bennell was arrested in Florida, a matter which was written about in the national press.

9.2.249. HW informed the Review that she recalled a conversation with Hamilton Smith at the Smiths' home in about 1991. HW dated this as being shortly after she had moved house. HW recalled Hamilton Smith telling her and her husband about the abuse that had been happening at the Club. She recalled that Hamilton Smith had said that he had been at a match with his son and a parent had come over to him and said that there was abuse going on at the Club and that the son of his friend had been abused. She recalled Hamilton Smith saying he was absolutely shocked by this and had reported it to the Chairman and to some of the Board. She said that the Club had told Hamilton Smith that they would look into it, but were doing nothing about it, and he was getting really upset about that.

9.2.250. I have no reason to disbelieve that GW and HW were told certain matters by Hamilton Smith. They are not close friends of Hamilton Smith or his wife. They had no reason to make up the comment in the Christmas card to Hamilton Smith and his wife about remembering what Hamilton had told them "years ago, re Crewe Alex. It's all coming out now isn't it." The key questions for the Review are *when* they were first told anything by Hamilton Smith and *what* they were told.

9.2.251. The Review met with Hamilton Smith's wife, Jeannette, who recalled that in the late 1980s her husband returned home having been at a match with their son and told her about "A most peculiar thing" that had happened. She said that Hamilton Smith had said, "It was near the end of the match and I was waiting for the match to finish and suddenly somebody came in front of me, a man, and said, 'You're connected with Crewe Alexandra, aren't you?'" Jeannette Smith said that Hamilton Smith had told her that he had said "Yes", and that the man had looked at him and said broadly that he had a friend whose son had been abused by the coach there. As Hamilton Smith was trying to assimilate this information, he told her, the man had turned and left. Jeannette Smith told me that Hamilton Smith was obviously shocked at what he'd just heard. Jeannette Smith recalled her husband saying that he would call Norman Rowlinson, the Chairman, and saying that he wanted to cancel the next evening's football meeting to have a special meeting where he would raise what had just occurred.

9.2.252. Jeannette Smith recalled that after the meeting with the Directors, Hamilton Smith told her that the Directors had had no suspicions about Bennell. That Norman Rowlinson went out and came back and said that "he'd rung the chief constable and made him aware of the situation". In addition, Norman Rowlinson "was going to ring Manchester City, which I think he would have done because it came up in a programme later on, years later".

9.2.253. Jeannette Smith recalled that Hamilton Smith told her that he would be meeting with John Bowler and Dario Gradi the following day. Jeannette Smith said that Hamilton Smith

"came home frustrated. I know that because John Bowler had said to him not to – he'd do the talking. So they went in to see Dario and, as far as I can remember, Mr Bowler said about Dario about Barry Bennell taking children home at weekends and this has got to stop. Dario was pretty annoyed about

this and said, ‘Well I have children home and no parent’s ever said anything to me about it.’ At that stage, it was very soon after that, I think, Mr Bowler said, ‘We’ll have to talk more about this,’ and that was the end of the meeting. So they came out and Hamilton said, ‘Well, what are you going to do now?’ They said, ‘We’ll have to talk about it again.’ and it was very soon after that, of course, that Hamilton became ill and it was never talked about again.”

Jeannette Smith did not recall Hamilton Smith telling her about a subsequent meeting with John Bowler about the budget where these issues about Bennell were raised again.

9.2.254. Jeannette Smith said that she recalled watching the *Dispatches* programme in 1997. She remembered Hamilton Smith being “very annoyed and upset” to see Dario Gradi’s interview where he said that he knew nothing about the abuse. Jeannette Smith said that Hamilton Smith had told her that “he was going to ask to see John Bowler” to see if anything was done about Bennell. She said that they had met at the local pub, that Hamilton Smith had referred to the Board meeting that he had called and that John Bowler had told him, “No. It didn’t happen like that, Hamilton. That wasn’t how it was.”

9.2.255. Jeannette Smith recalled that Hamilton Smith had spoken to the FA about what he knew and had done, that this had been at the time when Bennell was imprisoned in England, and that Hamilton Smith “was really fobbed off by the FA”.

9.2.256. Jeannette Smith explained that after Andy Woodward came forward, they had spoken “a lot” about these matters. She also acknowledged watching the televised interview that Hamilton Smith given to Deborah Davies for the *Al Jazeera* documentary: *Football’s Wall of Silence*, which aired on February 15th 2018.

9.2.257. The Review also spoke with Joanne Smith, Hamilton and Jeannette Smith’s eldest daughter. Joanne Smith stated that there was a “general noise” at the Club that “something’s not right with Barry” (I consider this further below). Joanne Smith said that in the early 1990s (and prior to Bennell’s arrest in the United States), Hamilton Smith had talked to her about his concerns relating to Bennell, and that Hamilton Smith had been “carrying this guilt”. She said:

“We used to sit up talking late at night, quite often talking about these things. As I say, by the time Barry was arrested, I’m guessing that we’d had a good couple of years of conversations about it, but I couldn’t put a date on that.”

9.2.258. When asked whether Hamilton Smith had ever told her he had received a complaint about Bennell, Joanne Smith stated:

“Yeah. Now, when I heard that, I don’t know, to be honest, I know it was before the *Dispatches* programme in 1997. The phone call Norman Rowlinson made to the Man City guy was just clarification of something I had already heard from Dad. My reaction to the *Dispatches* programme was – so this is when my Dad had raised the issue with the board as he said otherwise why would Norman have called City. My Dad is not a gossip. He hates tittle tattle,

the banal, small talk etc and he is the last person who would have made a mission, and it was a mission, out of proving there was truth to a load of vague rumours. The fact that it was such a mission to him to prove the Barry situation was known about and to stop it continuing to happen for so many years and to ensure it couldn't and wasn't happening with anyone else was because he had something more concrete to go on – e.g. the complaint.

I sat and watched the *Dispatches* programme with him, I do not know how many times on VHS, and yeah, we were talking about the fact that he'd you know, at that point, we were definitely talking about the fact that he'd had the complaint and nobody did anything about it, and how frustrated he was."

9.2.259. Joanne Smith went on to say that Hamilton Smith had also told her that "he'd brought it up with [the Club]. We didn't go into any great detail particularly at that stage about what it was."

9.2.260. Joanne Smith also said that she recalls her father going to a meeting with John Bowler at a pub not long after the *Dispatches* programme aired. When asked whether she knew in advance that her father was going to attend the meeting or whether she was told about it afterwards, she said, "I can't remember. I can't remember. I would have no idea."

9.2.261. A doctor who treated Hamilton Smith in the 1990s told the Review that Hamilton Smith had told her about sexual abuse at Crewe Alexandra, and that he had tried to raise this with the Board. The doctor could not recall precisely when they had had these conversations, but believed that this had been before the *Dispatches* programme, but not earlier than 1995. That would place the conversations after Bennell's arrest in Florida.

9.2.262. The evidence which Hamilton Smith's wife and daughter gave to the Review, and the evidence of the family friends GW and HW, as well as Hamilton Smith's doctor, provide some corroboration for Hamilton Smith's account. There are, however, some discrepancies between their various accounts and that of Hamilton Smith, and there are differing recollections as to when they say that they were first informed by Hamilton Smith that he had raised an allegation of abuse with Board members at Crewe Alexandra.

h) The "Expenses Account" document

9.2.263. Crewe Alexandra has cast doubt on the veracity of the "Expenses Account" document (which is on the Club's headed notepaper), given the date when Hamilton Smith says it was prepared by Bennell and then used by Dario Gradi in putting together his budget for youth development before the Board meeting of June 8th 1988. That date does not fit with the notepaper, which describes various office holders of the Club. In particular, the notepaper describes Gill Palin as holding the role of "Secretary & Commercial manager", and yet she did not assume this post until December 28th 1988, many months after the document was said to have been prepared by Bennell and then used by Dario Gradi in preparing his budget for

youth development which was shared with Hamilton Smith. Jim McMillan did not become Vice Chairman of the Club until after June 30th 1988, and yet the document was shared with Hamilton Smith before that date.

9.2.264. These inconsistencies mean that I cannot accept that this document was provided to Hamilton Smith before the Board meeting to discuss the Club's budget on June 9th 1988. This casts doubt on the assertion by Hamilton Smith that, as part of budget discussions in or around June 1988, there was discussion between him and John Bowler about boys staying at Bennell's house and that this would be dealt with by John Bowler raising the matter with Dario Gradi. Both Dario Gradi and John Bowler deny that any such conversation took place.

i) Disputes between the Club and Hamilton Smith

9.2.265. The Club has referred to Hamilton Smith's having signed certain leasing agreements and subsequent threats of litigation. The inference is that Hamilton Smith had animosity towards the Club and so had a "motive" for telling untruths. I do not consider that this is correct. The conversation that Hamilton Smith had with Tony Pickerin, as reflected in the notes made by Tony Pickerin, reflects a genuine concern for safeguarding issues at the Club.

Further Matters

9.2.266. I also note that there are questions to be asked about Hamilton Smith's account of the initial conversation with the unidentified adult at the end of the football match, and whether this did happen in the way now described by him. Hamilton Smith says that a man approached him to say "My friend's son has been abused by a football coach at Crewe Alex and you need to know it", and then walked away. A very serious allegation is said to have been made by the unidentified man, but not enough information is provided for Hamilton Smith to act on, to investigate. No detail of when or where the abuse took place, or what it consisted of, is provided. No information is given of who the "friend" was, or who his "friend's son" was. In those circumstances, I do question why Hamilton Smith did not probe the man for more information or make any attempt to discover who this man was, so that further details could be provided, or so that he could verify the information that was being provided. Hamilton Smith told the Review that he did not ask others who had attended the match, or were regulars at his son's games, as to who this unidentified man might have been.

CONCLUSION ON WHETHER AN ALLEGATION OF ABUSE WAS MADE TO HAMILTON SMITH AND RAISED WITH NORMAN ROWLINSON AND JOHN BOWLER, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

9.2.267. In circumstances where one of the key witnesses, Norman Rowlinson, is deceased, I consider that I should only reach a conclusion that an allegation of abuse was raised with other members of the Club's Board, if the evidence to corroborate Hamilton Smith's account is strong. I do not consider that it is, and so cannot conclude that this matter was raised by Hamilton Smith with members of the Club's Board.

9.2.268. There is some evidence to suggest that Hamilton Smith told family members and friends about the allegation of abuse, and that he had shared this with Board members, before Bennell's arrest in 1994. However, there is some evidence that this was talked about after Bennell's arrest. By that time, therefore, allegations about Bennell's sexual interest in boys were in the public domain. On the other hand, all of those Board members who have been spoken to deny that an allegation of abuse was raised with them by Hamilton Smith. Furthermore, Hamilton Smith does not appear to have raised this matter with Tony Pickerin at their interview in December 2000, even though it was said by him to have been the trigger for his meeting with Norman Rowlinson and John Bowler.

9.2.269. For the same reasons, as well as the "Further Matters" that I set out above, I am also unable to conclude that an allegation of abuse was made to Hamilton Smith by the unidentified man after the youth game. There is no clear corroborative evidence to support Hamilton Smith's account.

CONCLUSION ON WHETHER THERE WAS A MEETING BETWEEN NORMAN ROWLINSON, JOHN BOWLER AND HAMILTON SMITH

9.2.270. Even though I am unable to conclude that Hamilton Smith notified Norman Rowlinson and John Bowler of an allegation of abuse, this does not mean that there was no meeting between the three of them at which concerns relating to Bennell and his possible sexual interest in young boys were discussed or hinted at.

9.2.271. Hamilton Smith is adamant that there was a meeting between himself, Norman Rowlinson and John Bowler at which they discussed concerns about Bennell's behaviour.

9.2.272. John Bowler told me that there had been no such meeting. Consistent with that position, John Bowler made no mention of any such meeting in the witness statement filed in the civil claim brought in 2003, or in the statement he gave to the police in 2017. John Bowler has repeated this position in his response to my questions about Tony Pickerin's memorandum of March 26th 2001.

9.2.273. Norman Rowlinson is deceased so I was unable to ask him about the meeting. However, Norman Rowlinson did not refer to any meeting with Hamilton Smith in the correspondence with the *Dispatches* programme, or in his witness statement filed in the civil claim brought against the Club in 2003.

9.2.274. That there was a meeting between Norman Rowlinson, John Bowler and Hamilton Smith to discuss Bennell is clearly supported by the notes of Tony Pickerin's meeting with John Bowler on March 26th 2001. While Tony Pickerin cannot now recollect the detail of his conversation with John Bowler, he did tell me that he would not have made reference to a meeting between the three men unless that is what John Bowler had told him. I accept this.

9.2.275. I have considered whether Tony Pickerin may have misunderstood something that John Bowler said or otherwise recorded something that was not said by John

Bowler. In this regard, Crewe Alexandra has pointed out that Tony Pickerin did not take notes during the meeting, or send the note to John Bowler for his comments or approval. The Club has also commented that Tony Pickerin's note contains reference to numerous matters that John Bowler would obviously not have said, such as those relating to his and the Club's involvement with the Police. It is possible that Tony Pickerin may have made a mistake in his recording of the conversation, although I consider that this is unlikely. Tony Pickerin was carrying out an investigation into the matters raised by Hamilton Smith, and appears to have done so conscientiously: he met twice with John Bowler to get his account of events. His memorandum of March 26th 2001 reads as if it is a record of John Bowler's response to the points that had been raised by Hamilton Smith in December 2000. In December 2000, Hamilton Smith is recorded as saying that he raised the issue of Bennell at a meeting with Norman Rowlinson and John Bowler. The observation in the memorandum of March 26th 2001 that "The chairman of the club ... had met with John Bowler and Hamilton Smythe [sic]" reads as a confirmation that there was a meeting between the three of them. In addition, the point about the meeting taking place is clear, and is not an inherently unlikely matter to have occurred.

9.2.276. I consider that it is likely, therefore, that a meeting did take place, and that this was what John Bowler told Tony Pickerin in March 2001. I recognise that John Bowler denies that there was such a meeting. However, his memory of events that occurred in the late 1980s would have likely been much clearer in 2001 when he met with Tony Pickerin than when he spoke with me in 2018, and when he responded to my questions in 2020.

9.2.277. I also reach this conclusion in spite of the fact that John Bowler made no mention of such a meeting in his witness statement for the civil proceedings brought by Andy Woodward (noting, in this regard, that John Bowler is unlikely to have forgotten something in 2003 that he remembered in 2001), or in his statement to the police in 2017.

CONCLUSION ON DISCUSSION AT THE MEETING

9.2.278. As for what was discussed at the meeting, that I consider was likely to have taken place between the three Directors, Tony Pickerin's notes record that they discussed "concerns raised by a parent over Barry Bennell". No further detail was given by Tony Pickerin about these "concerns". The memorandum also refers to Norman Rowlinson contacting the head of the local police for advice and that "the club should keep a watching brief on the situation". The Club has said that these two points in the note are not connected. However, it is likely that they are, as the second point appears to be a response to Hamilton Smith's assertion made at the meeting with Tony Pickerin in December 2000 that "Once he had been informed, the Chairman rang the local Police, who, it is said, recommended moving Bennell out of the club".

9.2.279. As for the nature of the "concerns" which were discussed at the meeting, and which appear to have led Norman Rowlinson to make contact with the local police, the detail is not reflected in Tony Pickerin's note. In the note of his meeting with Hamilton Smith in December 2000, Tony Pickerin recorded that there were

concerns from a number of parents that Bennell had “children staying at his home, his over-close relationship with children – he was a Pied Piper”. In Tony Pickerin’s note of his meeting with John Bowler, however, he refers to the concerns raised by “a parent” in the singular, and not the concerns of multiple parents.

9.2.280. The Club has said that what probably happened was that when Tony Pickerin raised with John Bowler what Hamilton Smith had said to him, John Bowler responded by giving details of the concerns raised by a particular parent about Bennell dropping off boys in his care on their way back from a match and told them to find their own way home, and it is this that Tony Pickerin reflected in his note as there having been a meeting at which the “concerns” of a parent were discussed.

9.2.281. I consider that this explanation is unlikely. If the “concerns” were merely about Bennell making boys find their own way home after a match, it is unlikely that Norman Rowlinson would have contacted the Chief Superintendent to discuss what should be done. It is more likely that the “concerns” were of the type that Hamilton Smith had referred to when he met with Tony Pickerin in December 2000: that Bennell had “children staying at his home, his over-close relationship with children – he was a Pied Piper”. In other words, that Bennell may have had a sexual interest in children, even if at the time that he spoke to Tony Pickerin, John Bowler may have recalled (and said to Tony Pickerin) that the concerns were from one parent only. My view here is also supported by Norman Rowlinson’s references, in discussion with Ken Barnes, to “mucking about with kids”: see: Norman Rowlinson below.

9.2.282. I consider, therefore, that it is likely that there was a meeting between Hamilton Smith, John Bowler and Norman Rowlinson at which concerns about Bennell were discussed. The subtext to these concerns was that Bennell may have had a sexual interest in children. I consider that there is strong evidence to support this conclusion, and so feel able to reach this conclusion, even though Norman Rowlinson is deceased and it has not been possible to raise these allegations to him.

CONCLUSIONS ON FURTHER MEETINGS

9.2.283. While I consider that it is likely that there was a meeting between Hamilton Smith, John Bowler and Norman Rowlinson, I am unable to conclude that concerns about Bennell were also raised with other members of the Club’s Board. There is no corroborating evidence to support this conclusion.

9.2.284. I am also unable to conclude that Hamilton Smith was involved in a subsequent meeting with Dario Gradi and John Bowler to discuss what needed to be done with Bennell, or that there was a further discussion with John Bowler about Bennell and him having boys staying at his home later in 1988. There is no corroboration for Hamilton Smith’s account of these matters and, as explained above, there are reasons to call that account into question.

9.2.285. As for whether there was a further meeting between Hamilton Smith and John Bowler after the *Dispatches* programme, John Bowler has denied this. How-

ever, Tony Pickerin’s memorandum of March 26th 2001 records John Bowler as saying that: “The only allegation made to me by Mr Smythe [sic] was that when the Dispatches programme was broadcast, Dario Gradi, Crewe Alexandra FC’s manager, made statements to camera that contradicted Mr Smythe’s [sic] view of what had actually happened.” This suggests that there was, at the very least, a further conversation between Hamilton Smith and John Bowler about what had taken place at the Club, even if there was no further meeting between them.

Other Allegations of Abuse Made Known to the Club

9.2.286. I have also considered four other sources of evidence which could potentially indicate that staff at Crewe Alexandra knew of allegations of abuse by Bennell. I set out the evidence below.

1. OZ: letter from Bennell

9.2.287. I spoke with OZ, who had played for Bennell’s teams, including Nova, from around 1982 and was sexually abused by Bennell. OZ said that he had told one of the Nova coaches that Bennell was “dodgy, he’s got a reputation for touching, yeah, he fondles kids”.

9.2.288. OZ reported to me that he had subsequently received a letter on Crewe Alexandra headed paper, signed by Bennell. In the letter, OZ said, Bennell “wish[ed] me luck with playing football ... but then asking me why I was making allegations and saying things about him after all the things he done for me”. OZ said that the letter was destroyed in a house fire and so was not available for the Review to look at.

9.2.289. Crewe Alexandra responded to OZ’s account as follows:

“None of the [individuals spoken with by the Club – including Dario Gradi, John Bowler and Gill Palin] was aware of any allegations being made by [OZ] or of the letter apparently sent to him by Bennell on Club notepaper ... in the mid-1980s, Bennell would sometimes come into the office and would have been able to access Club notepaper as that notepaper was not locked away.”

9.2.290. It is not possible to verify OZ’s account, but it is certainly possible that Bennell did send him that letter. Sending this letter would not incriminate Bennell if it got into the hands of the authorities. It would, however, fit with Bennell’s various attempts to ingratiate himself with the victims of his abuse, by making them feel as if they owed him something.

9.2.291. I have received no evidence from which I could conclude, however, that anyone else at the Club had been aware of what OZ had said or of the fact that Bennell had written to him. I have been told that Bennell had extensive access to the Club at this time and it is likely that this included access to the Club’s headed paper.

2. DP

9.2.292. Joanne Smith, Hamilton Smith’s daughter, told the Review that, during a car journey (potentially in 1989), a former youth player, DP, told her that Bennell was

a “perv” who “used to come in and perv on them when they were in the bath or the shower, whatever it was in those days. I remember then just kind of like [thinking], ‘Okay, we all knew he was a perv.’ ...Was DP trying to ... reach out there?” DP had no recollection of this discussion with Joanne Smith. He did, however, say that the anger he felt towards Bennell may have led him to make a comment of this sort. Joanne Smith has said that she did not discuss this comment with anyone at the Club.

3. Disclosures Made by Others

9.2.293. As set out above, I received evidence that some of the boys who were abused by Bennell during his association with the Club did speak out at the time and make disclosures to their parents, siblings, friends and other players. However, I have received no evidence to suggest that any of the boys who were abused made disclosures of abuse to Club staff or officials, or that those to whom the disclosures were made passed them on to anyone associated with Crewe.

4. Bennell’s evidence

9.2.294. In the civil proceedings brought against Crewe Alexandra in 2003, the claim was supported by a witness statement signed by Bennell. Bennell’s statement included the following⁴:

“It was ... in late 1991/1992 that I genuinely tried to end what I was doing. I got the feeling that I was losing control of my actions, and I needed to get away to clear my head. In addition there had been many complaints at this stage made and I was starting to feel “heat”. I decided to go to America and said to Dario that I needed to get out of the country because I was suffering from some pressure at the club. Dario understood entirely and agreed that I needed to get away, in view of the increasing number of complaints and the fact that I was overtly having boys staying at my house every single weekend ... I went to North America for about a year. I ran a couple of small businesses and managed a few youth teams... I therefore telephoned Dario and said that I would be coming back and he simply say [sic] “okay I want you to come back and run the under 18s”. He confirmed that he had another coach in charge of the youth team... .

... I managed the under 18s for a year and then went back to dealing with the 11 to 14 year olds after that... .

As part of the way of developing the boys’ skills and bringing them closer to Crewe, I would often have them staying at various houses that I owned or rented, at the weekends. This was done with the full knowledge of Crewe Alexandra and specifically Dario Gradi. Dario Gradi knew everything that went on with his club. He exerted immense power there and was held in great esteem. In particular, I recall in the mid late 80s, organising many trips for the youth teams, to play competition. I recall trips to Majorca, Minehead, Butlins (Skegness and Pwllheli), Pontins, Norwich (for the Canary Cup), Southampton and Ireland.

I have read paragraph 5 of the Defence and I note that it is stated that no

4. I put some of Bennell’s comments to Dario Gradi in an interview and I set out Dario Gradi’s response below under the heading Bennell’s Departure(s) from the Club.

servant or agent of the Defendant was at any material time aware of any sexual or other abuse being perpetrated by me on [the Claimant] or other players. ... This is untrue. I think perhaps it is best to deal with this issue by going back to the history of my time at Crewe which should clarify the state of knowledge of the club at the time, concerning abuse.

Going back to the suggestion in the Defence therefore that no-one knew or suspected that sexual abuse was being perpetrated, is ridiculous. In addition, every member of the management and possibly team at Crewe knew that I had boys staying at my house and when I look back now, I cannot imagine why I was not told to stop in view of the complaints made. That said however, with what I know now, and the fact that Dario Gradi had many boys staying at his house which I believe he continues to have, then it is not surprising at all.

As far as Gill Palin is concerned, she was also employed in a very senior position by the club and she knew absolutely everything that was going on, ... and I simply find it very difficult to believe that those other than Dario Gradi did not know about what was happening, bearing in mind what I now know are the level of complaints that have been made to the club about the alleged sexual abuse...

Now when I look back at those times, I seem to remember that in my view certain people knew what was going on but no action was ever taken, within the club. It is only in later years have I learned that people both in and outside the football world, also suspected that there is more going on at the club than met the eye....

...Dario Gradi and others within the club specifically knew that I had boys staying at my house. In fact Dario Gradi at that time also had many boys staying at his house and no questions were ever asked at that time...

When I went to [Stone D]ominoes, and I had boys staying at my house, I remember LT, our manager, saying to me to put an end to it because people were starting to spread rumours about me. Clearly he was a responsible manager and recognised a danger and put an end to it.”

9.2.295. I carefully considered whether or not it was right or necessary for me to speak with or interview Bennell as part of my Review. In making the decision I was conscious that some survivors may have found the idea of me meeting with him distressing. Other survivors, however, told me that they thought I should meet with Bennell. Ultimately, I concluded that, particularly in light of Bennell’s witness statement as set out above, it was important for me attempt to interview Bennell as part of this Review. My requests to meet with or send written questions to Bennell were declined.

9.2.296. I have carefully considered what weight to give to Bennell’s witness statement. Ultimately, I have decided that Bennell’s account cannot be relied upon to

suggest that the Club knew about his abuse.

9.2.297. Although Bennell refers to “complaints that have been made to the club about the alleged sexual abuse”, he does not give any detail. He does not specify who they were from, or what they described. As explained above, the only “complaint” (which is really an allegation of abuse) that the Review has received evidence about was the conversation that Hamilton Smith says he had with the unidentified man. I have set out my findings about that above.

9.2.298. Furthermore, the bulk of Bennell’s statement seeks to accuse Dario Gradi of sexual abuse of young boys. Bennell seeks to imply that Dario Gradi must have known what was going on at Bennell’s house, because he was doing the same with the boys who were staying with him. There is, however, no evidence that Dario Gradi was abusing boys, and no evidence from any other source that Dario Gradi was aware of Bennell’s abuse, or allegations of abuse. In my view, Bennell’s witness statement is not a statement which can be relied upon as evidence of what Dario Gradi or anyone else at the Club knew.

CHARACTER REFERENCES FOR BENNELL

9.2.299. When Bennell was being prosecuted in Florida, several members of the Club’s staff gave character references for him, for example:

299.1. Dario Gradi gave a reference on Crewe headed paper, dated August 17th 1994:

“I have known Barry for just over ten years and he has worked for me for about five of those years. He was employed both as a Youth Development Officer and as Youth Coach during that time.

He has a great ability to communicate with kids and was responsible for bringing many boys to this club. Several of them are now Professional Players here. Not once during that time have I ever received a complaint from a boy or his parents of a sexual nature.”

299.2. SC, a former member of the Club’s staff, gave a reference on Crewe headed paper. SC stated that he had found working with Bennell to be “a privilege and an honour”. He stated that during his time with the Club, Bennell was “respected and admired by everyone, players, staff, parents and boys, and I for one feel sure that the allegations are completely untrue”.

9.2.300. I do not believe that these statements would have been given by SC or other staff members if they had received complaints about Bennell. As for Dario Gradi, I have formed the view that he was not aware of any allegation of abuse, and so he could give a reference stating he had not received any “complaint from a boy or his parents of a sexual nature”. As detailed below, I am satisfied that Dario Gradi did hear relevant rumours about Bennell. However, for the reasons explained below, he did not pay any heed to those rumours which might explain why, despite hearing these rumours, he was willing to provide a character reference.

Conclusion on Whether Allegations of Abuse Were Made Known to Crewe

9.2.301. Having considered all of the evidence available to me, I conclude that no specific allegations of abuse were made to (or otherwise drawn to the attention of) the Crewe Alexandra during the period when Bennell was associated with the Club (or at any point prior to Bennell’s arrest in the United States).

Concerns Relating to Bennell

9.2.302. I have seen and heard evidence that concerns about Bennell’s behaviour (even if not amounting to a direct allegation of abuse) were raised with the Club or otherwise came to the Club’s attention prior to his arrest in 1994.

NORMAN ROWLINSON

9.2.303. One piece of evidence which I have carefully considered involves Norman Rowlinson, who was the Chairman of the Club from 1964 until 1988. Norman Rowlinson died in 2004, and so it was not possible to interview him. There is evidence that Norman Rowlinson mentioned “reports” about Bennell to Ken Barnes. Ken Barnes died in 2010 and so he could not be interviewed either. The inability of the Review (or of any of the clubs carrying out their own investigations) to speak to either of these men makes it more difficult to reach a definitive view.

9.2.304. In the *Dispatches* documentary *Soccer’s Foul Play*, Ken Barnes, former Chief Scout at Manchester City, is on record as saying that Norman Rowlinson called him in relation to Bennell. Ken Barnes said that:

“[Rowlinson] rang me and questioned me about [Bennell]. I said, ‘What are you trying to say?’ [Rowlinson said,] ‘Well, we’ve had one or two reports about him mucking about with kids’ or something. [I said,] ‘No, I can’t help you. I’ve got no evidence whatsoever from that side of the fence ... unless you have evidence, what can you do ... but I know what you’re saying.’”

9.2.305. Prior to the broadcast of the *Dispatches* programme, Deborah Davies (the lead Reporter) wrote to Norman Rowlinson:

“...I understand that when you were Chairman of Crewe you expressed concern about Barry Bennell’s behaviour towards young players and sought to check out his background. ... since you were the one who expressed the concern at the time, you are the person I would like to speak to first of all...”

9.2.306. On November 26th 1996, Deborah Davies followed up with a further letter:

“Dario Gradi has co-operated fully with the programme and I believe this was a decision which was endorsed at Board level. He has endeavoured to answer all our questions to the best of his knowledge. However, there are certain points he’s not in a position to comment on:

(a) What prompted your phone call to Ken Barnes, at Manchester City? He recalls you telling him you’d received reports of Bennell ‘mucking about

with kids'. Was this one or more specific complaints from parents, players or members of staff and what was the substance of these complaints?

(b) What action did you take as a result of your phone call and did you put your concerns directly to Barry Bennell?

(c) Why did you not inform Dario Gradi at that time of the phone call and your concerns?"

9.2.307. On December 2nd 1996, Norman Rowlinson wrote to Deborah Davies as follows:

"I spoke to you from my car phone on Wednesday 27 November, when you asked me the questions outlined in your letter of 26th November. It was only about one hour before that the police agreed that I should speak to you.

I was Chairman of the Club for 24 years from 1964 to 1988. Barry Bennell was engaged by the Manager and supervised by him and I never had a conversation with him except passing the time of day. His appearance and manner never appealed to me and I thought of him as an unreliable character, particularly with regard to the timing of arrangements which he made for various practice sessions.

He had a reputation of being a very good football coach but he was an erratic character. However, he had a certain magnetic attraction with boys and acted like the "Pied Piper". I occasionally saw him getting out of a car or club transport and he would lead off with a gaggle of boys behind but possibly not caring too much about the stragglers.

We have quite a number of young players who came to the Club for practice games and extended trials. Where necessary several of the boys were boarding out with our coaching staff or approved friends of the Club.

You asked if I was aware that some boys were accommodated at the house of Barry Bennell. I do not think I particularly knew at that time but even if I had been told I would not have placed any significance on it.

However I was vaguely uneasy about Barry Bennell and kept an ear open for any complaints although I certainly never received any complaint about sexual impropriety from any parent, player, member of staff or member of the general public.

At that time the Chief Superintendent of Police occasionally called in after a big match and I knew him well enough to ask confidentially about Barry Bennell. He asked me to keep him informed of any specific complaints and to speak with him without any intermediaries.

I did not consult my fellow Directors or the manager or the Secretary because confidentiality could not be assured and I had no grounds for a full investigation.

Barry Bennell had previously worked at Manchester City and I knew Ken Barnes who had previously managed Wrexham. I think Manchester City were miffed that Crewe had poached Barry Bennell.

I phoned Ken Barnes to ask what he thought of Barry Bennell. He told me that he thought Barry Bennell was rather an unreliable character, particularly with regard to his time keeping and arrangements for practice matches. I asked him if he had any reports about Barry Bennell ‘mucking about with kids’ (This is different to the way in which the question is phrased in your letter). He said that he did not but that he had one or two youngsters now aged 18/19 who were coached by Barry Bennell at a younger age and would not now be afraid to give a truthful answer. However, Ken Barnes later told me that he had not been able to uncover any evidence or complaints of a sexual nature.

This contact was reported to the Chief Superintendent and I did not receive any further information from him.

You will realise that I had no evidence with which to confront Barry Bennell and any concerns I had could have been totally unjustified.

I think this letter amplifies our phone conversation but does not contradict any of the pertinent answers. I would be pleased if you would confirm this position as I would not want your programme to assert or imply that there was any lack of attention on the part of C.A.F.C or their officers.”

9.2.308. This correspondence was provided to me by the Club. On the letter dated November 26th 1996 from Deborah Davies someone has in manuscript circled the words “you’d received reports” and written “no” next to those words. In its report to me, the Club has stated that it was Norman Rowlinson who made this manuscript addition.

9.2.309. Having considered Norman Rowlinson’s correspondence with Deborah Davies and his witness statement in the 2003 civil proceedings, I informed the Club that I considered that the correspondence (in particular the reference to “mucking about with kids”) might indicate that Norman Rowlinson had held a suspicion that Bennell was sexually abusing children.

9.2.310. In its report to me, the Club stated:

“As we have said, (and rather unusually in cases where someone is no longer with us) Norman Rowlinson has set out in correspondence to a reporter and in a witness statement, verified by a statement of truth, what led him to call Mr Barnes and why he had concerns about Barry Bennell and it is clear that it was not because he suspected or had heard a rumour in relation to Barry Bennell and child sexual abuse. Further, it must be remembered that this conversation took place over 30 years ago and it is important not to attempt to draw conclusions from the words used during that conversation based on current applicable standard.”

9.2.311. The Club's report also stated:

"It is clear from [Norman Rowlinson's letter of December 2nd 1996] and from Norman Rowlinson's statement in [the civil] proceedings that, in essence, Norman Rowlinson thought Barry Bennell was odd and erratic and that he did not like him. Norman Rowlinson also makes clear that, when he asked Ken Barnes if he had any reports about 'mucking about with kids', that was different from the way the question was phrased in Deborah Davies' letter (in other words there was no sexual connotation to this request)."

9.2.312. The Club concluded:

"There is actual evidence of what led Norman Rowlinson to call Mr Barnes, of what he thought about Barry Bennell and why he had concerns about Barry Bennell; and it is clear that it was not because Norman Rowlinson suspected or had heard a rumour in relation to Barry Bennell and child sexual abuse.

As Norman Rowlinson is no longer with us, it is simply not possible to investigate this further or for any assumptions to be made that are contrary to his previous written evidence.

A leading police officer who has worked in child protection for many years has told [the Club] that, even now, the phrase 'mucking about with kids' would not be seen as evidence that Norman Rowlinson had 'some suspicion or had heard a rumour relating to Barry Bennell and child sex abuse.'

All those interviewed are very clear in their views that Norman Rowlinson would not have kept the matter to himself had he had a suspicion or heard a rumour relating to Barry Bennell and child sexual abuse."

9.2.313. I have carefully considered the correspondence between Norman Rowlinson and the *Dispatches* team, Norman Rowlinson's witness statement for the civil proceedings and everything that the Club has said in its report to me. Having done so, I have concluded that in the mid to late 1980s, Norman Rowlinson had some concern in relation to Barry Bennell's potential sexual interest in children, and that his reference to "mucking about with kids" was activity with kids of a sexual nature.

9.2.314. I have reached this conclusion for the following reasons:

314.1. In the letter of December 2nd 1996, Norman Rowlinson accepts that he contacted Ken Barnes to ask whether Ken Barnes had had any reports about Bennell "mucking about with kids". This enquiry led Ken Barnes to later confirm "he had not been able to uncover any evidence or complaints of a sexual nature". Had Norman Rowlinson not been using the phrase "mucking about with kids" to denote some form of sexual impropriety, it makes little sense for Ken Barnes to have responded in this way. Ken Barnes must have understood that this was what Norman Rowlinson was asking him, otherwise I do not understand why Ken Barnes would have sought to "uncover any evidence or complaints" against Bennell of "a sexual nature". The only other possibility, it seems to me, is that Ken Barnes had simply misunderstood what Norman Rowlinson meant by the phrase "mucking about with kids", or what Norman Rowlinson was really asking of him. In my

view, that is doubtful. Nowhere in the correspondence with Deborah Davies, or in his witness statement for the civil claim, did Norman Rowlinson suggest that Ken Barnes had misunderstood him. In my view, it is more likely that they both understood that what Norman Rowlinson had been asking about was whether Bennell had done anything to interfere with young boys in a sexual way.

314.2. In addition, Norman Rowlinson was sufficiently concerned about Bennell that he considered it appropriate to ask the Chief Superintendent of Police about him. It seems unlikely that Norman Rowlinson would have taken this step simply on the basis that he thought Bennell “odd and erratic and that he did not like him”, or that he was “mucking about” with kids in a non-sexual way. It is more likely, in my view, that Norman Rowlinson wanted to know whether there was something about Bennell’s activities with, or interests in, children that explained his unease about him. Similarly, it is doubtful that Norman Rowlinson would have contacted Ken Barnes if his concerns were merely that Bennell was a strange character.

9.2.315. I also acknowledge that the Club has referred to the opinion of an experienced police officer to the effect that, even now, use of the phrase “mucking about with kids” would not be seen as evidence that Norman Rowlinson had “some suspicion or had heard a rumour relating to Barry Bennell and child sex abuse”. I accept that it is possible that the phrase “mucking about with kids” could be used to describe non-sexual conduct. However, as explained above, that is not how I believe it was understood by Ken Barnes, and it was not what I believe Norman Rowlinson meant it to mean.

9.2.316. I am satisfied, therefore, that Norman Rowlinson did have some concern in relation to Bennell’s possible sexual interest in children.

9.2.317. As for where Norman Rowlinson’s concern about Bennell’s sexual interest in kids came from, it is possible that it was an accumulation of things, including his own observations of Bennell who he remarked was often in the company of boys, his understanding that boys were staying overnight with Bennell (albeit in correspondence with Deborah Davies he said that he did not think he particularly knew about that at the time) and the comments from his “golfing friend” to the effect that Bennell was an unlikeable character and avoided eye contact with parents. However, I think it more likely that it was the comments made to him (and John Bowler) by Hamilton Smith (as referred to in Tony Pickerin’s memorandum of March 26th 2001) that triggered this concern (see above).

GE’S ANONYMOUS LETTER TO DARIO GRADI

9.2.318. GE spoke to the Victoria Derbyshire programme on the BBC, and said that she had written to Dario Gradi anonymously to inform him that a member of staff was taking young footballers on footballing weekends, that the boys were told that “they hadn’t booked enough beds for all the boys and some of them would have to share beds with this member of staff”. This letter was said to have been sent in 1989 or 1990.

9.2.319. I have not been able to speak with GE and have not been able to see the witness statement that she gave to the police. Neither the Club, nor Dario Gradi, had any recollection or record of this letter being received. I am therefore unable to reach any conclusions on this issue.

BOYS WHO HAD BEING STAYING WITH BENNELL

9.2.320. DP, who had been a youth player at Crewe, told me that after regularly staying overnight at Bennell's house where he had been subjected by Bennell to serious sexual abuse, he was suddenly no longer expected to stay there. Rather, he was to stay at Dario Gradi's house. DP was unsure how this had come about but felt that Dario Gradi must have known or heard something and therefore took the decision to ensure that he would no longer have to stay with Bennell.

9.2.321. Another person who had been abused by Bennell informed the Review of a similar matter: that he had told Dario Gradi that he did not wish to stay at Bennell's house anymore and that Dario Gradi had let him stay with him. This survivor did not tell Dario Gradi that he was being abused by Bennell, and did not hint at why he no longer wished to stay with Bennell.

9.2.322. Dario Gradi was asked about both of these accounts. He said that he had never taken any steps to stop any boy from staying at Bennell's house, and had had no reason to.

9.2.323. There is no corroboration for either of these incidents, and I do not consider that the accounts corroborate one another as they were unrelated to one another. I do not consider that it is possible to draw any inferences from these two accounts, therefore, that Dario Gradi was aware, or suspected, that Bennell was abusing DP or any other boy who stayed with him.

ABUSE BY BENNELL AT DARIO GRADI'S HOUSE

9.2.324. I was told by a survivor (KO) that he was abused by Bennell at Dario Gradi's house. KO said that this abuse had occurred when Bennell was staying with Dario Gradi for a short period, and KO (who was approximately 13 at the time) was also staying at Dario Gradi's for the weekend and shared a bedroom with Bennell. KO did not think that Dario Gradi (who was not at home when the abuse occurred) had known of the abuse. However, he told me that he believed that Dario Gradi had been aware that KO and Bennell were sharing a bedroom (but not a bed). KO said:

“Dario was in the house with us. And I'm staying in the room that Bennell is sleeping in. So, I would be absolutely flabbergasted if Dario Gradi wasn't aware that he was sharing that room with us. And I specifically remember, after it had happened, Bennell saying – because it actually happened on the double bed where Bennell was. And I remember him making the comment, ‘Go back to that bed, because...’ and I can't word for word but, ‘I don't want Dario to find out.’”

9.2.325. I asked Dario Gradi about this incident, who said, “No, I don't – well, I can't believe that I would allow that to happen. No, I can't believe I would allow that to

happen.” Dario Gradi did recall Bennell staying with him at his bungalow, and said that if a boy was staying there at the same time, Bennell would have stayed in Dario Gradi’s room, although he did not specifically remember that that had occurred.

9.2.326. I cannot be satisfied that Dario Gradi knew that Bennell was sharing a bedroom with KO. While KO said that he believed that Dario Gradi had been aware that they were sharing a bedroom, he did not point to anything specific (such as something said by Dario Gradi) that supported his belief. Dario Gradi specifically denies that he would have allowed Bennell to share a room with KO.

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS

9.2.327. Other than the instance considered above (GE), I have not been able to identify any parent who raised with the Club any concern that Bennell was or might be sexually abusing children. In its own investigation, the Club did not receive any evidence from a parent alleging that they had made any such complaint.

9.2.328. I am aware, however, that in February 2018 there were a number of press reports that a former Crewe youth player and his mother had claimed that Bennell was challenged by a group of parents a short time before he left Crewe in 1992. The Review has spoken with the individuals (former player (“TK”) and his mother (“BK”)) referred to in these reports. TK’s father is deceased.

9.2.329. TK told the Review:

“There was an occasion, and again this has come from [my] mum telling me later, and I didn’t know about it at the time. But my dad had said to my mum that there was occasion at training, it was after a training session. We used to train right next to the, where the Alexander Stage is, there used to be a little Astroturf that was right next to it.

So we used to train in there, and then lots of the parents would stand outside and watch sort of through the fence. And my dad had said that some parents had confronted Barry about something happening, but again I don’t know the specifics of it. That’s what me mum has told me from my dad telling me mum. And obviously they at the time must have been trying to protect me in some way, I don’t know. But it was another parent of another boy who would have been in my team.”

9.2.330. The Review then spoke with BK. The following is an extract from that interview:

“Q. Now there comes a point where Barry Bennell leaves Crewe. Do you remember anything about how that came about, or anything that happened?
A. No, he just kind of suddenly went and my husband ... did say that some other parents had said that there were rumours surrounding this. Obviously now it’s all come out and come to light with, was true you know, but the complaints about him regarding the boys. ... I think one of the parents had said to my husband that there were rumours regarding it ... about child, abuse of the boys... Sexual abuse... it kind of fizzled out ... and then you’re sort of

left wondering whether it was just a rumour, because rumours do go around don't they?

Q. When your husband told you that some of the parents, or one of the parents had said that there's this issue over Bennell abusing boys, or rumours about it. Do you know whether anyone ever raised it, did he say whether anyone ever raised it with anyone at the Club, or did he just not say anything about that?

A. I don't know, I don't know. But I would have thought so. I mean, but I'm only saying it, well I would have thought so but I don't know."

9.2.331. The evidence of TK and of his mother is suggestive of a confrontation between some parents and Bennell. This is something which others have also mentioned: and is set out above. However, there is no evidence that this was brought to the attention of the Club itself. Both the Club and Dario Gradi deny that any complaints or concerns about Bennell's sexual interest in children were ever raised with them.

9.2.332. The only evidence of a complaint being made directly to the Club did not relate to sexual abuse. In his interview with me, John Bowler recalled that a parent had complained about Bennell's conduct in dropping off boys on their way back from a match and telling them to find their way home. John Bowler recalled having been alerted to this issue by Gill Palin.

9.2.333. Gill Palin, however, said that to the best of her recollection no parents had complained about Bennell dropping the boys off (which surprised her) but the Board did somehow (Gill Palin could not remember how) become aware of what Bennell had done and speak to Bennell about his conduct.

9.2.334. I note that in his witness statement dated August 18th 2003 (for use in the 2003 civil proceedings), John Bowler said:

"It is, however, fair to say that myself and Dario Gradi did have some conversations about some of the training methods adopted by Barry Bennell. It is too long ago to be entirely specific but I recall conversations about instances where Barry Bennell had dropped off boys in his care on their way back from a match and told them to find their way home.

On one of these occasions I seem to recall there had been a complaint from a father of one of these boys. I spoke to Dario Gradi about it and Barry Bennell was, to the best of my recollection, reprimanded."

It is likely, therefore, that there was a complaint to the Club about Bennell, but that this complaint did not have a sexual element.

9.2.335. In the absence of anyone (other than Hamilton Smith (see above: Hamilton Smith)) coming forward to say that he or she had raised a concern or complained to the Club about Bennell, or that they had been present when such a concern or complaint was raised by someone else, there is no basis on which I can conclude that any formal complaint was made to the Club about Bennell's sexual

interest in or abuse of children. If someone had made such a complaint, I would have expected by now that they would have come forward (either to me, the police or the press). This has not occurred.

BENNELL'S DEPARTURE(S) FROM THE CLUB

9.2.336. Bennell left Crewe Alexandra on two occasions. He left in 1989, returning to the Club in August 1990. He left again, for good, in 1992.

9.2.337. In a witness statement provided to the police in 1996, Dario Gradi described the circumstances in which Bennell came to leave the Club in 1989: "Around about 1989 I was informed by Barry that he was leaving to go to live in America. He only mentioned pressure from parents as a reason for going."

9.2.338. When I asked him about this statement, Dario Gradi said, "[Bennell had made] reference to how parents were getting on his nerves, and ... I understood that, because I had the same with parents if they didn't think their boy was being picked properly or being given – it's all football-related stuff."

9.2.339. Dario Gradi also told me, "So, the fact that parents were complaining about Barry doesn't necessarily mean it was a sexual thing, and obviously, if it had been a sexual thing, as I keep saying, I would've done something about it."

9.2.340. In his witness statement in the 2003 civil proceedings, Dario Gradi said the following about Bennell's first departure from Crewe Alexandra:

"The first period of employment with the Club for Barry Bennell would have been from the mid to late 1980s. At that time he was also running a sports shop/video business in the town but that closed down as a result, I think, of financial problems and Barry Bennell left to go to America for a few years..."

9.2.341. Dario Gradi went on to say:

"When Bennell left following his first spell with the Club to go to America and I realised that he had had too much influence over the boys whom he had recruited given that had he left the Club those boys would have gone with him. Thoughts of abuse never occurred to me but I was concerned about keeping those boys for Crewe and therefore I wanted to put a system in place such that no one person had long term control over any of the players. For that reason I put a system in place whereby teams move on between coaches every year. In those days boys tended to go where they liked until the age of 14 (which is one of the reasons why I am so surprised that Barry Bennell's behaviour was not revealed earlier)."

9.2.342. During my interview with Dario Gradi, the account given by Bennell in the 2003 witness statement for the civil proceedings was put to him. Dario Gradi responded as follows:

Q. ... Barry Bennell himself said in a witness statement which was in the civil proceedings back at the Bolton County Court:

"I needed to get away to clear my head. In addition, there had been many

complaints at this stage made, and I was starting to feel heat. I decided to go to America and said to Dario that I needed to get out of the country because I was suffering from some pressure at the club. Dario understood entirely and agreed that I needed to get away in view of the increasing number of complaints and the fact that I overtly had boys staying at my house every single weekend.”

So, that’s –

DARIO GRADI: I didn’t agree with him going; he chose to go. I accepted it.

Q. But, Bennell said: “I needed to get out of the country because I was suffering from some pressure at the club.” Is that right?

DARIO GRADI: No. Well, I don’t remember saying that. Again, it never occurred to me that any pressure he was receiving was other than from parents who were disappointed with their boys’ progress.

Q. Anyway, the second half of it: “Dario understood entirely and agreed that I needed to get away in view of the increasing number of complaints and the fact that I overtly had boys staying at my house every single weekend.”

DARIO GRADI: I didn’t agree that he needed to go away.

Q: Did you know there was an increasing number of complaints?

DARIO GRADI: No. Well, there weren’t any complaints to me.

Q: Did he tell you that there were complaints, that there was “heat”, as he put it?

DARIO GRADI: Well, as I said to you, there was reference to how parents were getting on his nerves, and I only took that to believe – I understood that, because I had the same with parents if they didn’t think their boy was being picked properly or being given – it’s all football-related stuff.

Q. But leaving your steady job and going off to the US because of parents having a complaint about --

DARIO GRADI: No, he wasn’t going to the US because parents were complaining; he was going off to the US because he was being invited or he had an opportunity that he saw, and I think the impression I had was that the decision was easier to make because he was getting fed up with the parents. Not, ‘I am going to America because I am getting fed up with the parents’; it was, ‘I’ve got a chance to go to America, and I might as well go, because I am getting fed up with the parents.’ Do you see that difference?

...

Q: But you took that to mean, parents complaining, moaning about their boys not getting picked?

DARIO GRADI: Yes.”

9.2.343. It is not possible to know exactly what the circumstances were surrounding Bennell’s initial departure from the Club in 1989. In his police interview in 1996, Dario Gradi spoke about Bennell having suffered “pressure from parents”. When interviewed by the Review, Dario Gradi was adamant that, as he understood it, this “pressure” had not been connected to complaints or allegations of abuse, but had been football-related. I have considered whether Dario Gradi’s evidence about this should be accepted or whether, in fact, Dario Gradi understood that the “pressure” from parents that Bennell was referring to related to complaints or allegations of sexual abuse.

9.2.344. In his witness statement for the civil claim against the Club in 2003, Bennell refers to “complaints”, and that he had boys staying over at his house every weekend. He was hinting that the complaints were related to abuse, and that Dario Gradi was aware of this, or understood that this was happening.

9.2.345. However, I do not consider that Bennell’s witness evidence on this point is credible. It is undermined by his attempt in his witness statement to portray Dario Gradi as an abuser, in circumstances where there is no material evidence to support this. Furthermore, the reference to complaints is not substantiated by any detail from Bennell, and is not supported by the evidence that the Review has seen or heard.

9.2.346. Furthermore, Dario Gradi’s explanation is plausible. The Review has heard evidence that parents of young players did put “pressure” on youth coaches, as they wanted to progress their children’s footballing opportunities and careers. In the circumstances, therefore, I accept Dario Gradi’s evidence, and do not consider that the “pressure” that Bennell was referring to as an explanation for his leaving the Club in 1989 was understood by Dario Gradi as having been related to allegations or complaints of sexual abuse.

9.2.347. Bennell returned to the Club in August 1990. According to the Club’s report, Bennell was ultimately dismissed from the Club in 1992. In his witness statement for the civil proceedings, Dario Gradi said the following:

“When Bennell came back he did not like the control that was placed upon him at that time and, thinking back on it, did not appear to handle the lack of influence which it gave him...

I have only ever sacked one person at Crewe and that was Barry Bennell. I ultimately sacked him for failing to accept specific instructions regarding a coaching session on the pitch before a game (against Liverpool I think). In the circumstances I simply do not accept that I would have had any problem sacking him for serious sexual abuse.”

9.2.348. Bennell (in his witness statement in the civil claim) and Dario Gradi agree that the reason given for the termination of his employment in 1992 was an incident at a match with Liverpool. In his interview with me, Dario Gradi said that Bennell had been sacked because of a “specific incident” which he explained as follows:

“We had a relationship with Liverpool, and so we were going to put one of the kids’ teams on the pitch before the game, which was a treat for them, to go on the pitch, and at halftime. Barry wanted to do that, but I said he couldn’t ... and he got very upset.”

9.2.349. In his witness statement for the 2003 civil proceedings, Bennell stated:

“On one occasion ... Crewe were playing at Liverpool in a cup game ... there was a great deal of media attention ... the powers that be wanted to see the Crewe ‘school of excellence’ in practice and they wanted the youth coach on

the field helping the kids displaying their talents. I recall that Dario Gradi said to me at that time that there was too much attention focused on me at that moment and which reflected badly on him and the club and he wanted [another coach] ... to take over the coaching on the pitch. I tried to explain to him that it was I they had come to see, perhaps selfishly, but it just led to a violent row between myself and Dario Gradi which led me to eventually leave the Club.”

9.2.350. Historic fixture records show that on January 6th 1992, Crewe played Liverpool in the third round of the FA Cup. The Club’s minutes of January 23rd 1992 record that Bennell had left the Club. There is circumstantial evidence, therefore, that the departure in January 1992 was connected with an incident at the Liverpool game; furthermore, both Bennell and Dario Gradi confirm this.

9.2.351. A few months later, Dario Gradi was writing to parents of children who played at the Club’s Centre of Excellence. TK provided me with a letter sent by Dario Gradi to his father, dated May 29th 1992. The letter states:

“You will have received a letter by now saying that we would like your son to continue at our Centre of Excellence.

I do not want any of the boys who attended the Centre to go to other coaching sessions or games organised by our former youth coach Barry Bennell. If this is going to cause you a problem then I will be pleased to talk to you about it personally. I can be contacted on [Club and Home telephone numbers supplied].”

9.2.352. I have considered whether this letter was sent because Dario Gradi was aware of the complaints made by parents or had other concerns about Bennell.

9.2.353. Dario Gradi told me that it had come to his attention that one of the players attending Crewe’s Centre of Excellence was also “going with Barry to Stoke” and so he wrote the letter because Bennell was “trying to take our boys elsewhere”. When I asked Dario Gradi whether this was an attempt to “warn” parents about Bennell because Dario Gradi knew there were concerns about him, Dario Gradi replied “absolutely not”. I accept this explanation. Dario Gradi did not want to lose players to Bennell’s new venture. That was Dario Gradi’s overwhelming priority.

Bennell’s Reputation and Rumours About Bennell

9.2.354. As set out above, I am satisfied that by the late 1970s/early 1980s there were rumours in footballing circles about Bennell’s sexual interest in children. These rumours initially were heard in the Manchester area. The evidence that I have heard strongly suggests that the rumours subsequently spread to the Crewe and Stoke-on-Trent areas.

9.2.355. I received the following accounts:

355.1. A survivor told me that in or about 1985:

“...I went to high school, the teacher there...had something to do with one of the older Manchester Boys Teams. He was asking around to find out if anybody played football for any teams. I said that I played for Crewe and he asked who the manager was. I replied, ‘Barry Bennell.’ I remember him looking at me and saying, ‘I could tell you a couple of things about him.’”

355.2. Another Crewe youth player told me:

“Within the first couple of weeks of starting senior school [in 1987/1988], obviously you’ve got your PE teacher who’s trying to get a football team together...[he] approached me, and said, ‘Listen, you know, obviously you’re going to be in the team, but I’m also not just your PE teacher, I’m a scout for Wrexham’, and I’ve said, ‘Oh, I’m already at Crewe Alex,’ to which his reply was, ‘Oh, can you do me a favour when your dad’s – or when your parents are here, can you let me know?’” And on the first actual match for the school, he approached my dad, and told him about the rumours about Barry Bennell. So obviously, my parents then approached me ... [and said] ‘Something is not right with Barry, you know, how is it with you – how has he been with you?’ And at that time, everything was great, and I’ve told my dad, ‘It’s brilliant...’ [My dad then] approached Barry Bennell ... [and] Barry’s told my dad, basically, what my dad needed to hear, or what Barry wanted my dad to hear. That ‘these rumours are following me for years, there’s nothing I can do. People are jealous; it’s parents of kids who don’t make it. It’s jealousy, it’s this, it’s that’...”

355.3. Former Crewe youth players reported being referred to as “Barry’s bum boys” and “gay bastards” by opposing teams.

355.4. One former Crewe youth player said:

“There was a lot of rumours going about at Crewe Alexandra and at school. The rumours were that there was a lot of lads staying over at Barry’s house and people were saying things to me like ‘he’s a faggot, you must be getting bummed’.” The same was being said of Dario Gradi. Personally I never knew or heard anything suspicious about Dario, or anyone else for that matter ... All this made me withdraw and go into myself.”

355.5. An individual who had played for one of Bennell’s teams in the early 1980s and then went on as an adult, in the early 1990s, to be involved in coaching in the Cheshire area told me that:

“It was kind of an unspoken – it was out there, but nobody actually ever really, aggressively, you know, made the observation frankly. ... I don’t ever recall anybody actually saying specifically that such and such a player had been sexually abused by Barry Bennell.... What I do remember is there was doubt ... on his integrity and his behaviour with kids. Certainly, the opposing teams, as I’ve said before, that was always an insight. Looking back, there was a perception that that kind of behaviour had gone on.”

355.6. An individual involved in Sunday league youth football in the Manchester area reported that, by the mid-to-late 1980s, rumours about Bennell being a “kiddie fiddler” were rife in football circles. He specifically recalled attending a football awards dinner where Bennell’s name came up and comments were made about his sexual interest in children. This individual reported that whenever Bennell’s name came up, someone would

make a comment about his sexual interest in children.

355.7. A member of the Port Vale youth staff, JH, told the Review:

“The second [Bennell] joined Crewe, there were rumours straightaway why he'd left Man City. Man City had let him go because of child [sexual] abuse. That was a rumour going around. We had no proof of it. ... After training [at Crewe] if there was a first team game he'd be sitting in the stands with two or three kids, and then he'd take them home, which wasn't natural. Then you start to look and think, 'Is there any truth on what you heard before about leaving Man City?' ... You hear about the rumours of why he left Man City, because of child abuse. He joins Crewe and then you start to see him on the touchline with all the gear on, with the flash – his gear and giving kids gear. You see him bringing kids in from top clubs, first division clubs, giving them the gear. You then see those kids signed on for Crewe. You then see them in the first team. And so you see the whole process of what they're actually doing in their drive to recruitment, through the first team, getting through to the first team. And then the naiveté of parents allowing their kids to go with a man who obviously you've heard rumours about why he's left Man City and taking them home after training, after matches, first team matches where he would sit in the stand with them and take them home after, parents allowing their kids to do this all because of the pretence of having, 'Eventually I promise you a first team place'.”

To JH's mind, by 1986/1987, rumours about Barry Bennell and child sexual abuse were rife and “everybody” heard these rumours.

355.8. A member of the Stoke City staff (DB) in the 1980s, when asked whether he had heard any rumours or concerns about Bennell between the years 1984 and 1987, said:

“Well, yes. Each year you had the Keele Classic [a youth tournament] and he'd be there with a Crewe team and people would be saying. Especially the Cheshire people. He was what he shouldn't be ... he was a kiddy fiddler. [People were saying that] in the open ... Because of this house thing. He used to take them to this house in Chapel-en-le-Frith.”

355.9. Another individual who had been a referee in various youth games, including games involving Barry Bennell's teams, said

“You had to be careful that a lot of these rumours were kid-generated at the time. The kids were doing more rumouring than probably anybody by means of saying that, when they were playing Crewe, 'We're playing Dario Gradi's boyfriend's side' and things like that. 'And he was kiddy fiddling.' And that's where you've got have some of the kids, without foundation, so you don't know whether to believe that or not. Because kids, at that age, are making it up, a lot of them anyway.”

355.10. Joanne Smith, Hamilton Smith's daughter, who said that she had spent time at Crewe's stadium on the late 1980s (generally helping and spending time in and around the office), stated that there had been rumours about Bennell. Joanne Smith told the Review:

“The rumours weren't at the level of detail that have obviously come out, the rumours were, 'They're Barry's bum boys,' the rumours were – I mean everyone knew that he was always taking kids home, they went on holiday

together. I remember when he started bringing Andrew Woodward's sister, who was his girlfriend at the time, the general reaction was like, 'We all thought it would be Andy, not the girlfriend,' then when he got married, that was often the comment. ... There was definitely, definitely something wrong with the kids. I mean that was apparent because I remember Woody, Andrew Woodward clearly ... I can see him in his red jacket, and I can't remember ever seeing that kid smile."

355.11. Joanne Smith went on to say:

"There was always commentary about the fact that 'It's Barry and his boys, he's there'. I think he was always – it was never – this is what I still don't understand, I don't understand why that wasn't taken to any – I don't whether it wasn't taken to the next level to talk through with us because we were 16, 17. I don't know if it's because they hadn't gone there in their own mind, but the thing that was always associated with Barry was 'Barry and his boys. Barry's odd. Barry's weird. Barry's gay. Barry's ...' you know, there was a lot of 'Barry being gay, but liking young boys' and it was – there was never any mention of the word 'paedophilia' at all, but then I don't think that was the time either, looking back, I think it was a case of people were seen as being gay, but they liked young boys."

Joanne Smith also said that some of the senior players would mock the youth players and refer to them as "Barry's boys".

355.12. A member of Stoke City's staff recalled a youth game against Crewe in or about 1989 where DB (referred to above) was shouting abuse at Bennell: "Come on Stoke. We can beat the bum boys, Bennell's bum boys. You're an arse bandit.' [DB] just never stopped. Towards the end of the game, Crewe sent an official [WT] round to me saying you're a senior employee of Stoke City, you shouldn't be allowing that. I didn't know who Barry Bennell was. I'd no idea who he was. Then I said to him, my reply to him was, 'I'm here as a private individual ... You should be more concerned by what he's shouting,' and I fully expected a complaint but it didn't come."

355.13. A member of Stoke City's staff in the 1990s said:

"[When Bennell was at Crewe I heard he was having boys stay over at his house and was taking boys away on overseas tours] [T]here's no need for weekend training sessions with kids. There's no need to take kids away anywhere. There's no need to go on tours with kids, you can arrange plenty of games in your own country without taking them away to America for example. You take them away to America for a reason, you take them away from their parents ... you are the pied piper, they all follow you. ... If I'm going to be honest, I thought it was more than odd. I would have – if somebody had have asked me and demanding an answer I would have said, 'Well, you know what's going on probably'... I think a lot of people would have been reluctant to say anything about him in case they got themselves into a bit of trouble not having any ... evidence. Whereas I would be somebody that would say, 'What the fuck's going on with him? What are you taking kids to America for?' Other people ... might have the same thoughts as me but would be reluctant ... to make any accusation..."

This individual went on to say that the rumours about Bennell were not rife.

He said that “there was a reluctance to talk about it. There was definitely a reluctance”.

355.14. The rumours about Bennell were frequently mixed up with rumours about Dario Gradi, or the Club in general. A Crewe Alexandra youth player associated with the Club in the early 1990s told me:

“There was always rumours around the Club and I used to remember when we used to play football matches on a Sunday, most of the rumours surrounding Dario to be honest, the rumours weren’t directly towards Barry. Although, yeah I would say back then it was mainly they would turn up at a match and they would call your names and things as you go in. But lots of it was surrounding sort of Dario. It was things like, ‘Oh it’s the Crewe bum boys’ and things like that really.”

355.15. The Review spoke with a sports journalist who had covered the Crewe and Stoke area throughout the 1990s. He said:

“There were certainly rumours, and the rumours were based around the fact that it was known that young people spent time at his house, and stayed there, on sort of a quasi-residential basis if you like. Which was not normal, if I’m being honest. You know, we didn’t know of any other youth team coaches who did that ... that was unusual. We also knew that parents had complained about him, but we didn’t know why they’d complained, or what they complained about. Because as you know, word gets around if you like, for want of a better phrase. And it was known that parents had complained to the club, about the coach. But what we didn’t know was what the nature of those complaints were ... it could have been complaints about his coaching techniques at the time, for we all know; we don’t know.... there was no feeling that there was a sexual innuendo to all of this. It just seemed a very odd thing, – it seemed a strange way to develop a relationship between a coach and young footballers.

...

[there was plenty of innuendo but] the innuendo was not against [Bennell]. The innuendo ... was against the club in general. And some of that innuendo was aimed at more senior managers of the management staff.

...

I think the media are wrong now, to say that everybody knew about it. Well, they didn’t. What everybody – everybody heard little whispers, as we heard you know, little stories, ‘Well, that sounds a bit odd, you know, he’s having youngsters stay at his house.’”

9.2.356. A number of people, therefore, told the Review that rumours about Bennell, and rumours about Dario Gradi and/or the Club had been doing the rounds in the Crewe area during the time that Bennell was employed by the Club. I consider that the evidence I have heard from these individuals is credible. The evidence came from a variety of individuals, many of whom did not know each other. Nevertheless, not everyone was aware of or had heard the rumours.

9.2.357. I received an account from another sports journalist who had covered Crewe games in the late 1980s and early to mid-1990s and, in this role, interviewed both Dario Gradi and Bennell on a number of occasions. He said that he had been

unaware of any rumours or other concerns relating to sexual abuse of young footballers by Bennell.

9.2.358. The rumours were generally based on the fact that Bennell always had young boys around him, and that he had boys staying overnight at his house, or went on overnight trips with the boys. From this, there was innuendo that he was up to no good with the boys. However, many people did not make this inference even though they knew that Bennell had boys staying over with him.

9.2.359. An ex-girlfriend of Bennell's told the police in 1997 that:

"About 1985 I met a man called Barry Bennell...

... Some weekends the children would stay over at Barry's house, either a couple of children or at times the entire team would just crash out there. This was rare and would occur if there was football ... the next day.

...

When the children stayed they would sleep in bunk beds. I never saw them sleeping in the same room as Barry.

Barry had things in the house to keep the children entertained, there was a snooker table, jukebox, and lots of videos for them to watch. ...

It was around 1985, that I went on holiday to Magaluf in Majorca. [Two boys] came along with Barry and I. We stayed in a two roomed apartment. Barry and I shared the bedroom, while [the two boys] slept in the living room. As I recall we spent the majority of the holiday in each other's company with the exception of two occasions when Barry took the lads off to play football or visit a beach.

...During the time I knew Barry, I never saw him do anything untoward, against the children, and they never complained to me about his behaviour."

9.2.360. The parent of a boy who regularly stayed at Bennell's house was interviewed by the prosecuting authorities in Florida as follows:

"Q. You didn't think it was a little strange that Barry would have these boys stay at his home so often over the weekend?

A. ...Lots of people were there. I mean it's like lads staying at the house is quite common with football coaches, scouts, you know, football coaches. ... I heard the manager of Alexandra, he has lads staying down at his house every weekend. He just enjoyed going to the football games, used to go to professional games and then they've got their own game on a Sunday. It's not uncommon.

...

Q. Would it surprise you if some of the boys were sleeping with Barry Bennell in his bed?

A. Not really, no. Because [my son] had stayed in his bed before. They used to watch TV and videos and [my son] slept in his bed. Quite a few people, you know, have.

Q. So [your son] would sleep in his bed also when he would stay over?

A. [My son] has, yeah. He had a TV and video and they used to watch TV and video. And on the trips they went on it was to keep the holiday cheap. That's what they used to do, get the chalet with so many beds in there and it was just a cheap, you know, that's how he kept the costs down."

9.2.361. The sister of a boy who stayed over at Bennell's house also told the Florida prosecutors that she knew that "now and again there'd be somebody sleeping in" Bennell's bed, but did not read anything untoward into this.

9.2.362. One parent of a boy who was a player with the Crewe youth set up in the mid-to-late-1980s told me:

"I knew that other boys stayed [at Bennell's] because ... Bennell [said] to me 'I told Dario to get bunk beds in ... the only way to do this is to get bunk beds in and have the kids staying at your house' ... and at the time I wouldn't have thought too much of it, but I know Dario did that and got beds in..."

The same parent went on to tell me that he had spent considerable time with the parents of other players and there had been no discussion among the parents about any concerns in relation to Bennell. He went on to say that, when he was spoken with by the police following Bennell's arrest in the United States, he had said to them, "You're around the bend, there's absolutely no way. I was absolutely 100% at that time convinced that there was nothing in it, 100%."

9.2.363. In addition, a significant number of parents gave character references for Bennell in the US prosecution. Many of these were from parents of boys who had, in fact, been abused by Bennell, although it does not appear that the parents knew this at the time of giving their references. The following examples typify the references that were given:

Example 1:

"During a period of approximately four years when Barry Bennell was the Youth Development Officer for Crewe Alexandra my son had occasion to stay at Mr Bennell's house most weekends during the football season. He also travelled with Mr Bennell on trips to Northern Ireland (twice), Blackpool, Pwllheli, and Tenerife. Arrangements were such that at times [my son] and a number of other boys shared a bedroom with him.

I would like to assure anyone who may be interested that Mr Bennell's conduct at all times was exemplary and there was never a hint of impropriety. Barry Bennell is a man of the utmost integrity and had I a dozen sons I would have no hesitation in entrusting them to his care.

I have no doubt that Mr Bennell has great affection for his boys. I have no doubt either that it is a healthy fatherly affection..."

Example 2:

“We have known Barry for almost five years, where we met at Crewe Alexandra Football Club,

...

The coaching at Crewe Alexandra had deteriorated after Barry’s resignation, so [our son] asked Barry if he could join Dominoes F.C...

...

Barry is the kindest, caring and loyal man you could ever wish to meet. [Our son’s] manners were impeccable when he returned from the States despite the upset.

Barry let all the boys enjoy themselves, but discipline was always No. 1.

We would trust Barry anywhere with [our son], even now!

[Our son] still speaks about Barry every day, and is still very upset.”

9.2.364. Another parent said that:

“[Bennell] has never said, inferred or acted in a way that would lead me to believe that he would be capable of any of the acts of indecency that have led to his detainment in the USA. I have questioned my 20 years old son who stayed at Mr Bennell’s house nearly every weekend between the age of 11 and 14 and he also is astonished by the accusation and disbelieves them totally...”

9.2.365. From all the evidence I have received, I draw the following conclusions on Crewe Alexandra’s knowledge of the rumours about Bennell and his reputation:

365.1. During the period of his association with Crewe, there were, in footballing (especially youth football) circles, rumours and innuendo about Bennell’s sexual interest in children. That is not to say that everyone in youth football heard the rumours, but they were certainly there to be heard if one asked around about Bennell. It was these rumours and innuendo (as opposed to specific allegations of abuse) that led to some people calling Bennell’s teams “Barry’s bum boys” and equivalent terms of insult.

365.2. The rumours arose from the fact that Bennell constantly had boys in his company, would take them away on tours and overnight stays and would have them regularly sleep over at his house. None of these rumours or concerns involved specific allegations of abuse but there was innuendo that Bennell had a sexual interest in boys.

365.3. Similar rumours were circulating about Dario Gradi as he also often had boys in his company and staying at his house.

365.4. A number of people felt that Bennell’s behaviour (especially having boys stay over at his property) was suspicious, but had no “hard evidence” against him. The lack of such evidence made people reluctant to have an open discussion about their concerns about Bennell.

9.2.366. I received evidence from a number of officials and staff of Crewe Alexandra who denied that they had heard these rumours. For those involved in the

running of youth football at the Club, it would be very surprising to me if they had not heard such rumours. The rumours were widespread and were quite well known to those working in youth football for Stoke City, and previously for those working in youth football for Manchester City. It would be strange if they were known by these people but not those at Crewe Alexandra. As explained below, I am satisfied that some of the Club's staff did hear rumours relating to Bennell's sexual interest in children.

9.2.367. Joanne Smith, Hamilton Smith's daughter, told the Review that some of the individuals who worked in the offices at Crewe, including Gill Palin, would have heard comments about Bennell "liking young boys" as this was "the kind of conversation that was going on". Joanne Smith also said that Gill Palin and other office staff "loathed" Bennell. Joanne Smith also said, "I don't want to kind of say that they definitely knew what was going on because I don't know if they did... I know, as an adult now, that I can't imagine not knowing that something was very, very amiss, but having said that, I'm an adult in the year 2019, and it was different in 1988, I don't know on that." Gill Palin denied hearing the rumours when she spoke to the Review, as did another former member of the office staff who Joanne Smith referred to in her evidence to the Review. I cannot be satisfied that they did hear these rumours, as there is no corroborating evidence for Joanne Smith's account.

9.2.368. I have received evidence that WT, who was involved in youth coaching at Crewe, knew of the rumours about Bennell. As described above, it has been reported to me that WT complained to a Stoke City member of staff about abuse that was directed at Bennell at a game. If WT was aware of the rumours, it would be very surprising if other coaching staff – and in particular Dario Gradi – had not heard the rumours.

9.2.369. One person reported to me that in the late 1980s/early 1990s, he withdrew his son from Crewe's youth programme because of the rumours surrounding Bennell and, when Dario Gradi called him to ask why his son had been withdrawn from the programme, he said "because of the rumours about Bennell". This person reported that Dario Gradi had "laughed it off" and had said words to the effect of "the rumours are a load of rubbish". I asked Dario Gradi about this and he said that:

"[He did] not recall this conversation. I do not recall rumours regarding Barry Bennell in the context of inappropriate sexual behaviour or offending. I do not recall saying words to the effect of 'the rumours are a load of rubbish' and if the context of this remark is his sexual behaviour towards boys I would not have said it, as I was unaware at the time of any such rumours."

9.2.370. In his interview with me, Dario Gradi was asked about the rumours:

"Q. [A number of people have said that] by the late 1980s rumours were rife about Barry Bennell and the detail they'll say is that when coaches got together if his name came up people would comment and say things like, 'He's not right. He's interested in young boys.' Did you ever come across any of that sort of rumour, comment...?"

A. Nowhere near.

Q. Had you heard that other coaches operating in this area...were commenting, raising eyebrows, at the fact that Barry Bennell had kids staying at his house so often?

A. No, and nobody ever spoke to me about it... . But there might be a bit of animosity that he was able to get the kids to play for him and they couldn't maybe get the kids off him. Now, I've no reason to suspect that; nobody ever complained, in any way, shape or form, about Barry Bennell's behaviour in a sexual manner

Q. ...you never heard any rumour, banter?

A. No."

9.2.371. I asked Dario Gradi whether he had ever heard rumours relating to himself having a sexual interest in children (of which I repeat, there has been no allegation) leading to the following exchange:

"A.No, but it wouldn't surprise me if people think that [I have an attraction for kids]. That wouldn't surprise me.

Q. Why's that?

A. Well, because I spend so much time with kids, I enjoy being with kids, and I enjoy coaching the kids.

Q. Do you think people interpret it in that way; so, they could interpret ... boys are staying over at your house, you're seen taking them to and from games, you like being around them; 'Well, maybe Dario has an attraction for kids'?

A. I would think some people do think that.

Q. Has it been said to you?

A. No.

Q: That's never been said raised with you?

A. No."

9.2.372. In his interview with me, Dario Gradi said that had he heard rumours he would "have done something":

"Because what would have been worse than the rumours would be if it actually was shown to be true. So, if there's rumours about, I wouldn't want that to happen, and therefore I would deal with them there and then."

9.2.373. Based on all of the evidence that the Review has received, including the evidence relating to WT, and the fact that rumours about Bennell were heard by youth team staff at Manchester City and Stoke City, I consider it likely that Dario Gradi did hear some rumours about Bennell, even though he may have thought that the rumours were baseless. Similar rumours were circulating about Dario Gradi himself which he knew to be untrue, and he may simply have thought that, as there was nothing in the rumours about himself, there could not be anything in the rumours about Bennell.

9.2.374. I consider, however, that Dario Gradi should not have dismissed the rumours, but should have scrutinised Bennell's interaction with children more closely. Dario Gradi was aware from his time at Chelsea of the possibility of sexual abuse of

young players (see: Chelsea State of Knowledge). At the very least, I consider that Dario Gradi should have asked some questions of the boys who were regularly in the company of Bennell, if only to check on their welfare. A number of boys have said that they wanted to tell someone about what was happening to them and it is possible that, had Dario Gradi offered them an opportunity to speak, that they would have disclosed to him what was really happening with Bennell.

Other Factors to Put the Club on Notice: Overnight Stays

9.2.375. I have also considered whether there were other factors that should have put Crewe Alexandra on notice of Bennell’s conduct or prompted it to make further enquiries about him.

9.2.376. That Bennell was regularly in the company of boys was certainly seen as “odd” by some involved in youth football. However, Dario Gradi also spent considerable time with youth players (and, as I must again emphasise, there is no suggestion that anything untoward occurred between Dario Gradi and the youth players). Numerous witnesses reported that Bennell was usually accompanied by a boy or a number of boys. I asked Dario Gradi about this as follows:

“Q. Barry Bennell is described consistently as always having a boy or a group of boys with him. People often say he was a Pied Piper; he went around, he’d got a gaggle of kids with him, he was in his car and all these kids with him – is that a fair description of him?

A. Yes.

Q. Was that odd?

A. Well, I didn’t think so, because I often had kids staying with me and in my car; not to the same extent that he did. But no, I didn’t think it was odd. I don’t know. I didn’t think it was odd.”

9.2.377. During an interview with the Review, RG said that rumours were rife about Bennell when he was at Crewe, but when asked about the content of these rumours he said:

“Well I was under the impression that [Bennell] and Dario Gradi were two homosexuals. I was under the impression. And that they were having an affair themselves. The actual involvement with the young ones. I didn’t twig that.”

9.2.378. As to boys regularly staying over at Bennell’s house. Again, this was seen as “odd” by many involved in youth football. This did not seem to be the case at Crewe Alexandra itself, however.

9.2.379. A number of personnel at the Club knew that boys were regularly staying with Bennell. However, boys were also regularly staying with Dario Gradi (and, again, there is no suggestion that anything untoward occurred between Dario Gradi and the boys in his care).

9.2.380. In his witness statement for the 2003 civil proceedings, Dario Gradi stated:

“The simple fact that Barry Bennell had boys staying with him was not out of the ordinary for this Club. I had (and still have on occasions) boys staying with me and indeed all my coaches have boys staying with them from time to time. One had to appreciate the nature of this Club. We do not have endless resources and our boys are often brought through the ranks and stay with the Club out of personal loyalty...”

9.2.381. When I asked him about boys staying over at Bennell’s house, Dario Gradi stated:

“Well, I didn’t think [it was odd], because I often had kids staying with me and in my car; not to the same extent that he did. But no, I didn’t think it was odd ... his job was to recruit the kids, and so he’d have kids with him more often than I’d have kids with me, because it wasn’t my job. To me, it was an extra. See, the kids staying with me would start off with the boys that needed to stay ... so, that wouldn’t be, ‘Oh, would you like to come and stay at my house?’ It’s more, ‘If you’ve got a problem, come and stay with me.’”

9.2.382. When it was pointed out to Dario Gradi that Bennell had boys staying that did not “need” to stay (because they lived sufficiently locally that they could have gone home), Dario Gradi said, “I never gave it any real thought.”

9.2.383. There was then the following exchange with Dario Gradi:

Q. Where did you think the boys were sleeping when they were staying over at Barry Bennell’s house?

A. I never thought about it. I mean, they weren’t flocking in loads. I never gave thought to where they were sleeping. I mean, I knew they were staying, but I didn’t ever know yeah, this week, next week and – but I knew he had boys staying. I had boys staying.

Q. But did you know that boys were staying with him regularly; that is, almost every weekend and school holidays?

A. I knew boys were staying, but I didn’t particularly know who they were.

Q. Okay. Now, having spoken to youth coaches operating at that time – that is, the 1980s, the 1990s – what I have been told is that it was not the norm for coaches to have boys staying at their houses. What’s your view on that?

A. Well, I had boys staying at my house, as you know. Now, nor was it the norm for clubs like us to produce international players out of our schoolboys and to be able to hang on to them. So, when the big clubs were coming in for our kids, they didn’t go; they didn’t leave. I don’t think I ever had anybody leave me that stayed at my house.

...

Q. So, that is the rationale behind it, but is it right to say that it wasn’t the norm at that time for boys, youth players, to be staying with coaches?

A. My answer to that is what I’ve said. It’s not the norm either for an England schoolboy internationals to sign for Crewe. The attraction was that

we looked after them better than anybody else did.

Q: So, the staying over, the looking after, was almost the club's sell, part of the recruitment or the retention policy, is that fair?

A: Yeah. I've got letters of support where boys ... are saying, 'We never would've made it without Dario.' In other words, that was what they learned, with watching football matches at night on television and the whole exposure to the football. Their life was full of football when they stayed at my house, and Barry's as well, I would think.

Q: So, given it is part of the club's sell, the retention, that you stay over with the coaches, the stayingover with Barry Bennell and with yourself had, in effect, the club's seal of approval, is that fair?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Given staying over at Barry Bennell's house had the club's seal of approval, who from the club checked out what was going on? Who checked out where the kids would be sleeping and that sort of thing?

A: That wasn't something that happened in those days. The club would know that I had boys staying. It was not a secret; I don't have to ask permission. But they wouldn't see fit that they needed to go out and make any enquiries.

9.2.384. I asked Gill Palin about boys staying over at Bennell's house:

Q: So, you don't know where exactly he lives, but you know boys are staying over.

A: Yes.

Q: What did you think the sleeping arrangements were?

A: I didn't know. No, I don't know. I knew boys stayed at Dario's and I knew, I had visited Dario's. I helped him furnish the house when he went there, and I knew what the arrangements were there and I had absolutely no problems with those.

Q: And when you say you had no problems with the arrangements, what were the arrangements at Dario's?

A: Well, the boys all had proper beds. They all had proper facilities. The house was clean. They were well fed. I know that they were well looked after there.

Q: Okay. So, having got that comfort in relation to Dario's obviously, how did you take comfort in relation to Barry Bennell?

A: I can only imagine that I assumed at the time that it was the same.

...

Q: Were you aware that a boy was staying in a caravan with Barry Bennell?

A: I didn't know there was a caravan.

Q: One person who worked with Barry Bennell at Crewe and who we've

seen a report from, he says as follows: ‘Although I had no evidence of Bennell’s activities with children, I was very suspicious of a 38-year-old man alone with a nine-year-old boy in a caravan.’ So, someone who worked at Crewe, who was aware that Barry Bennell was staying alone with a nine-year-old boy in a caravan. Are you saying that you didn’t know that?

A. I didn’t know that, I didn’t know he’d got a caravan.

Q. But, did you know that he was staying alone with a nine-year-old boy?

A. No.

Q. If someone else at the club knew that, why didn’t you know that?

A. Well, I think I said right at the start, it wasn’t anything that was done through the club and Dario always had boys in multiples and I suppose we assumed Barry was doing the same.

Q. Had you known that there was a nine-year-old boy staying alone with Barry Bennell, what would you have done?

A. In those days?

Q. In those days.

A. There was no rule then – It wasn’t ever organised through the club. I mean, Dario, I knew the parents knew. Parents went to his home occasionally. It wasn’t anything that was organised through the club. I wouldn’t know at any given time who was there.

Q. Did you think that, at that time, you ought to know a bit more about what’s going on? That, actually, you know, even if parents have consented because we know through the case, parents have consented for boys of that age, that actually the club ought to know a bit more about what’s happening? That something might go wrong, you know, on all kinds of levels. I’m not talking about sexual abuse but all kinds of, anything could have happened and the club out to have, at least, investigated a little bit more?

A. I don’t remember feeling that at the time, no. You know, there’s a point where if I had let my son go to stay with anybody whether they were a scout master or a football club or whatever, I would want to know what was going on there. I wouldn’t expect at that time for anybody else to look after it for me because it didn’t happen then.”

9.2.385. In my view, the fact that Dario Gradi regularly had boys staying over at his house normalised that behaviour, such that overnight stays at Bennell’s house were not subjected to any sort of query or scrutiny by the Club. However, in circumstances where:

385.1. there were rumours circulating about Bennell;

385.2. there was no obvious reason why boys needed to stay with Bennell so regularly; and

385.3. the overnight stay had the Club’s “seal of approval”;

I consider that the Club should, at the very least, have satisfied itself that there were appropriate arrangements in place (i.e. adequate number of beds) and should have periodically spoken with boys who stayed over at Bennell's to check that they were being properly cared for. Had such steps been taken this might have led to boys making disclosures to the Club.

9.2.386. In his interview with me, John Bowler said that he had not known that boys were staying over at Bennell's house. He told me that if he had known that boys were staying over at Bennell's:

“I would have been uneasy about that ... because at the end of the day, if he's an employee of ours, we have a responsibility there ... [a responsibility] to the club, to the boys, and everybody. If there'd have been – that would have been carried on, I would have been uneasy about the level of supervision, not only for Barry but for any other coach or so forth doing it.”

9.2.387. I asked John Bowler, “What do you mean about supervision? What would be your concern?” John Bowler replied:

“First of all, that the parents were fully knowledgeable about it and whether they were being taken care of properly. If we'd got an employee who was having boys regularly staying over with him, to me that says the club has got some responsibility, because he's an employee then of the company, to making sure that they're properly catered for and looked after.”

9.2.388. I then asked, “What would you have done if it [boys staying at Bennell's house] had come to your attention?” John Bowler said, “I would have asked Dario for full details of what the arrangements were and who had authorised it and asked questions related to their care.”

9.2.389. John Bowler's evidence on this point was raised in my interview with Dario Gradi. Dario Gradi said that he did not know whether Board members were aware that Bennell had boys staying at his house. Dario Gradi said that no one raised an issue with him about boys staying at Bennell's house. With respect to John Bowler's statement of what he would have done had he known, Dario Gradi said, “That's how he would react now, but I don't think that's how he would've reacted then.”

9.2.390. I initially considered that it was possible that John Bowler had not known that boys were staying over at Bennell's, although other Directors were aware of this, including Norman Hassall and Hamilton Smith, and I was not sure why they would have known about it, while John Bowler did not. However, in light of Tony Pickerin's memorandum of March 26th 2001, and my findings that parents' concerns about Bennell (which included children staying at Bennell's home) were discussed with him, I consider it likely that John Bowler was aware that boys stayed over at Bennell's. There is no evidence, however, that John Bowler checked up on the situation with these boys.

Conclusion as to What the Crewe Knew About Bennell’s Abuse and What Should Have Been Done

9.2.391. I consider that with the knowledge that the Club had about Bennell – the rumours circulating about him; the various comments made to Dario Gradi about Bennell’s conduct; the concerns felt by Norman Rowlinson and Hamilton Smith about Bennell as discussed at the meeting with John Bowler (that I consider was likely to have taken place); and the fact that boys were, with the Club’s knowledge and approval, regularly staying at Bennell’s overnight – more should have been done by the Club to monitor the situation and check on the welfare of the boys who stayed with Bennell or were constantly in his presence and care.

9.2.392. I appreciate that at that point in history, awareness of child protection issues outside of the family framework was very limited. Furthermore, I acknowledge that the FA did not issue guidance as to what football clubs should be doing until many years later. As one member of the Club’s staff said in a witness statement served in the 2003 civil proceedings:

“With the benefit of hindsight some of Barry Bennell’s actions could have raised suspicions but at the time I certainly did not have the level of awareness that I currently have about the opportunities and potential for child sexual abuse and a need to monitor and check members of staff.”

However, in my view, there were enough warning signs for the Club to have done more.

9.2.393. I acknowledge that the Club may not have got to the truth even if it had sought to monitor the situation, and check on the welfare of the boys who were in Bennell’s company. This does not mean, however, that the Club should not have tried to do more, given what the Club knew about Bennell.

STOKE CITY’S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.2.394. In its report to me, Stoke City set out the Club’s conclusion as to what was known about Bennell. The Club stated that those who had held significant roles in youth football in the North West area in the early 1990s would have been familiar with Bennell, and that it would be surprising “if such a person was also unaware of the rumours that surrounded him”. It is different for those involved in the professional game, who would not necessarily have heard of Bennell, and even if they had, would not necessarily have heard the rumours.

9.2.395. The Club reported that it was likely that Bennell had had a part-time role in the youth department at the Club, but it appears that he was never offered a full-time role, despite having asked for such a role. This suggests to the Club that:

“Within the youth department itself and/or the first team management and coaching staff there were strong enough voices who didn’t want to be and/or the Club to be associated with Bennell. The evidence gathered suggests that

those who did not want Bennell at the Club did not want him there due to the rumours about him.”

The Club accepted, however, that there were others in the youth department who viewed the rumours about Bennell as nothing more than rumours, and enabled Bennell to have an ad hoc role at the Club.

9.2.396. The Club concluded that:

“within its youth department at least, it had personnel who were aware of Bennell and the rumours. The Club has not, however, found that any individuals within the Club had any actual knowledge, prior to Bennell’s arrest in America, of any actual incidents of child sexual abuse in relation to Barry Bennell.”

9.2.397. Having considered all of the evidence available to me, I am satisfied that the Club’s conclusion as to the extent of its knowledge in relation to Bennell’s sexual abuse is reasonable and accurate.

9.2.398. I received no evidence to indicate that anyone at Stoke City had witnessed any abuse by Bennell.

9.2.399. I received no evidence to indicate that anyone at Stoke City was aware of any specific allegations of abuse by Bennell while he was at the Club.

9.2.400. There is plenty of evidence that people associated with Stoke City were aware of rumours about Bennell, and his sexual interest in young boys. There were numerous sources for these rumours, and this ought to have led the Club to monitor and check up on Bennell’s activities with young boys. There is no evidence that the Club did so, although the witness who may have been able to answer this point was (due to ill health) unable to answer the Review’s questions.

9.2.401. A member of Stoke City staff (TT) associated with the Club during the early 1990s told the Club that he:

“was aware of rumours about Barry Bennell but nothing was substantiated ... the rumour was that it was strange that there were always young boys with him. I can remember [another member of staff] saying something along those lines. ... Many people thought that he was strange and commented including the reception staff, but it never seemed that the boys had a problem with it.”

9.2.402. During an interview with the Review, TT further explained:

“I can remember certainly being outside the office, which would have been right next to the old stadium. Barry arriving in his people carrier. ... And there would be some players getting off with him, some young boys in the vehicle with him, and he was coming in to the club. I’m going to guess that was probably school holidays but I couldn’t be certain. And I can remember being part of a conversation ... and he would be referred to as, ‘There’s something a bit weird about him. He’s not quite right...’

And there were people round there who just sort of were of the opinion that something's amiss there, it's not right, why's he got young boys with him, too, he's a paedophile, he's a kiddie fiddler or whatever ... he likes kids, he likes boys, he likes blonde haired boys. Whether the term paedophile was popular then I don't know. ... He messes with boys."

9.2.403. When asked why, despite this rumour, he thought Bennell had been allowed to be involved with Stoke City, TT said:

"It's too easy to say it [was] a different time. But it was. I think, if you got that information then, I'm not sure where you'd go with it. Imagine walking in to Stoke police station, which was less than a quarter of a mile away, and you say, 'There's a bloke who turns up at the football club surrounded by young boys. Don't look right to me, this doesn't. Doesn't feel right. There's a number of other people saying that he does stuff to them'. What would they have done? Would I have had the confidence to do it, at the time? I'm not sure."

9.2.404. TT also said that:

"I think it was probably easier to push the problem along rather than do anything about it because it was never substantiated and there was never any evidence of this is happening. So I think there'd be a little bit of nervousness of people to say, 'Well, if I actually do this, what's the repercussions for me?' There's probably a little bit of fear for people, I would have thought."

9.2.405. UR, a member of the Club's staff during the 1990s, told the Review that rumours about Bennell were "common knowledge". When asked what those rumours were, UR said: "He was a kiddie-fiddler. Young boys were always hanging around with him. He was always attending games with young boys".

9.2.406. UR said that during youth games, Bennell could be "very, very antagonistic on the touch line" and "I think I lost it once and said to him, 'Well at least I'm not a kiddie-fiddler'".

9.2.407. When asked where the rumours came from, UR said:

"In the football fraternity. In the dressing rooms of football clubs or sort of ... Even the parents of the boys. When I was at Stoke some of the parents saying, 'That doesn't seem right.'"

Rumours About Bennell Told to KF

9.2.408. Many witnesses gave evidence that rumours about Bennell had been told to KF, who headed the Club's youth function.

9.2.409. A member of Stoke City staff (AR), who had been associated with the Club from the mid-1980s through to the late 1990s, said during an interview with the Club that he had been opposed to Bennell being offered the role of Assistant Youth Development Officer because he was aware of rumours surrounding Bennell. He went on to say that those rumours were unsubstantiated with no evidence to back them up.

9.2.410. In his interview with the Review, AR said that in the mid-to-late 1980s he had heard rumours about Bennell being “a bit iffy with the boys”. AR later said that those rumours related to Bennell’s sexual interest in boys, but explained:

“I bet there’s nobody that can give you a specific example, but it was always rumour ... around the football circuit where you may be in tea rooms or having a sandwich and a cup of tea before a game, it comes up in conversation ... but all [those] years, I never heard of anybody make a specific allegation against him.”

9.2.411. The Review had the following exchange with AR:

“Q. How did it come, given that you and others had heard rumours about Barry Bennell, that he gets involved in the Stoke City Centre of Excellence?

A. Ah well, yeah, well, that’s a good question and it’s a fair one. I think and my theory is this that Stoke had always been under pressure. The general public, the press, so on and so forth, always accused Stoke of not doing as well as they should of on the youth development. Crewe picked the players up, Port Vale picked some up, Manchester City, which is only up the road. So Stoke didn’t do as well as they should. So, in all fairness, the youth development people, which by that time was ... [KF], he was always under pressure. He was being browbeaten by all the locals, ‘Well, you don’t produce any players...’

So, of course, Barry Bennell is a shortcut to success because he attracts all the best players, he gets them into your club, he’s a good coach, I don’t have any doubt about that, I think he was a good coach, he’d do all the tricks, so on, the boys were impressed, so were the parents, and the mums. So he can do all this, so he was an attractive proposition because he’d shortcut the system, he got players in that we may not normally get.

So, I think probably the suspicions, the rumour, and [KF] was in charge, so he can handle it, he can keep on top of all that, he’d make sure there was no impropriety, but Barry was a shortcut to getting the best player. That’s my opinion, it’s not a matter of fact.

Q. Would [KF] have been aware of the rumour about Bennell?

A. Yes, he would, but I would think that he thought he could handle the situation and make sure Barry was here on a proper basis to bring in the players and coach them without any sort of trickery, or what have you.”

9.2.412. ZK, who had formerly played in Crewe Alexandra’s youth setup, and had stayed at Bennell’s house, subsequently played for Stoke’s youth team. ZK had told his father that something had happened at Bennell’s house and that another boy had been upset there and been taken away by his parents. In 1992, when ZK’s father came to know that Bennell was involved with Stoke, ZK says his father told KF, who headed the Club’s youth function, about the incident that had occurred at Crewe and told him that he (ZK’s father) had been told that Bennell was a paedophile. ZK

reported that KF had been dismissive:

“[KF said,] ‘You don’t know what you’re talking about. This guy’s worked for Man City blah blah blah.’ And brushed it under the carpet. Wasn’t willing to listen to anything. And just out and out shouty and angry and accusing my Dad of maybe making things up or spreading rumours.”

9.2.413. DB also told the Review that he had informed KF, who headed the Club’s youth function, about ZK, and that he (DB) had left Crewe because “inappropriate things” had taken place at Bennell’s house. DB said that he did not think that KF had said anything in response.

9.2.414. RG, a scout associated with Stoke City from the late 1980s through to the mid-1990s, told the Club that he had informed KF that he would not be referring any more boys to the Club while Bennell was coaching there, as he was aware of the rumours that surrounded Bennell (albeit he was unable to substantiate those rumours).

9.2.415. RG told the Review that he had heard a rumour that Bennell had shown pornographic videos to some of the boys who played for him. RG said that he did not hear any rumour about Bennell having a sexual interest in children but was aware that a parent had, prior to Bennell’s involvement with Stoke, told KF about an incident that had occurred at Crewe (which incident RG thought concerned Bennell showing the parent’s son inappropriate, potentially pornographic, movies during an overnight stay at Bennell’s house – albeit RG’s understanding was actually mistaken). RG recounted that, when KF announced that Bennell would be involved in Stoke’s youth function, RG had said: “I’m not very happy about this because I don’t wish to send lads to the Barry Bennell type of people for them to be coached and looked at ... I’m a professional person. ... And that goes against the grain with me.” RG said that KF had replied: “Look, I want you to stay at the club ... But on the Barry Bennell issue nothing’s been proven. Until it has, like, then...”

9.2.416. RG said that he had subsequently had a further conversation with KF about Bennell in the presence of Lou Macari, and another member of the Stoke City staff during which RG again said that he was “in limbo until the Barry Bennell [situation] has been resolved”, to which KF replied, “Well, look... nothing’s been proven.”

9.2.417. DB also said that at the point when his involvement with the Club stopped (in 1990/1991), there was no link between the Club and Bennell: DB was adamant that such a connection “would never have happened if I’d have been there”. Indeed, DB said that in or about 1990, Bennell had called DB to ask whether there were any jobs going at Stoke, to which DB had replied, “Fuck off. Over my dead body.”

9.2.418. During an interview the Club, Lou Macari said that Joe Jordan had asked for his views on appointing Bennell, to which Lou Macari had replied, “I wouldn’t have him within 20 miles of the Club.” Lou Macari said that he had responded in this way because “I have the belief that those adults who are coaches and felt it

necessary to take young boys away from home to prepare and train (to prepare for what I might ask) would be doing it for ulterior motives and it was something I didn't think was necessary".

9.2.419. Lou Macari was asked about this in a further interview with the Review. Lou Macari said that, when he was manager at Celtic (1993-1994), he received a call from Joe Jordan (who was then manager at Stoke):

"So I get a call from Joe who ... says to me, 'We're thinking of taking onto the youth set up a fellow called Barry Bennell, do you know anything about him?' And I said, 'Joe... Don't even consider him... I'd have probably said, 'Joe, fucking forget about him. He's trouble. Just forget about him. He's got nothing to offer you, he's a bullshitter.'"

9.2.420. Lou Macari confirmed that he had thought that Bennell was someone with a sexual interest in children but that he did not expressly say this to Joe Jordan because:

"My problem with it is, and it still is a problem, I wouldn't have been able to picture, because I didn't want to picture it, how they would have dealt with the kids. That, you know, how they go about - and what they're after and what they try and achieve sexually with the kids was something I just tried to blank out of my mind, how they operated."

9.2.421. Lou Macari went on to say, "Joe didn't take him... I think Joe might even have said to the chairman, 'I don't want him here.'" Joe Jordan had no recollection of speaking with Lou Macari about Bennell.

9.2.422. Lou Macari was asked by the Review about Bennell's reputation in footballing circles, to which he said:

"I think a lot of people would have been reluctant to say anything about him in case they got themselves into a bit of trouble not having any - let's say not having any evidence. Whereas I would be somebody that would say, 'What the fuck's going on with him? What are you taking kids to America for?' Other people ... might have the same thoughts as me but would be reluctant ... to make any accusation... people wouldn't talk about it which is why we got into the mess that everyone did get into, didn't they? No one would talk about it."

9.2.423. Lou Macari told the Review that he did not know that Bennell was involved with Stoke City. He said that, had he known, he would have said: "What the fuck are you doing? What have you brought him anywhere near this football club for and why have you done it? Now get fucking rid of him."

9.2.424. Lou Macari was asked about RG's account that he (RG) had had a conversation with KF about Bennell's involvement with Stoke in the presence of Lou Macari. Lou Macari said he had no recollection of hearing any such conversation and said that he had "very little to do with [KF] and the youth team because I let him get on with it".

9.2.425. When asked whether he would be surprised to hear that KF had allowed Bennell to be involved with the Club, Lou Macari said:

“Maybe he did take the view that nothing’s proved. Maybe that’s what he was like. Benefit of the doubt. But I wasn’t like that, I’m afraid. It was too many things dropped in to place and I just didn’t fancy him. Didn’t like the fact that somebody was so involved, going abroad all the time. That was one of the main things; taking teams abroad and then boasting about what they’d done in wherever it was, America. Well that was one place. What they’d done here. I’m sorry. At that level, with that age group, what you’ve done is nothing. These are just kids.”

9.2.426. Lou Macari went on to say that it could be that KF simply had not heard the rumours about Bennell.

9.2.427. PO was a scout for Stoke City in the 1990s, who told the Review that he had introduced Bennell to KF. The Review asked whether he had ever heard rumours in relation to Bennell, to which he replied:

“What used to get me was I used to say to him, ‘Barry, don’t you get fed up of taking the kids home at the weekends?’ Because he had a caravan in the drive. He had a caravan and then his wife was a lovely person . . . And she used to go to her mother’s. She used to go to her mother’s for the weekend.

I said, ‘Don’t you get fed up, Barry, every weekend kids that, you know, are in the caravan and sleeping there at night?’ He says, ‘I’ll tell you one thing, [PO],’ he says, ‘If them kids are with me – if them kids are with me, they aren’t playing in any games that other scouts can take them.’ He says, ‘So always think of that. If I’ve got them with me, nobody else’ll pinch them kids.’ ... [He said this to me when he as at] Stoke, I don’t know what he did in Crewe.”

9.2.428. PO said that the fact that Bennell would have boys staying with him overnight had not raised any concerns with him, but:

“The first time I’d got thinking about it we were in a big tournament at Whitley Bay. And we went to Whitley Bay, [KF] was in charge of the party. ...

So what happened, 8.00 pm I said to Barry, ‘They’ve got to go to bed.’ He says, ‘Yeah, I’ll get them in. I’ll take them up and go to bed.’ Never saw Barry again after that. So the following morning, the following morning I said to one of the lads – I can’t think which lad I said it to. One of them I said, ‘Hope you’ve had a good night’s sleep because of this cup game.’ ‘No, Barry’s been telling us ghost stories all night.’ And I said, ‘Ghost stories?’ He says, ‘Yeah, he’s been –’ ...

And that’s when I started twigging on, ‘What’s happening?’ You know, but I didn’t say anything to [KF] because he’d have probably got on at me because, you know, they’ve got to be in bed and go to sleep.”

9.2.429. During an interview with the Review, a former member of staff at Port Vale, JH, said that he discussed with KF that Bennell had left Crewe and was looking for a job. JH told KF, “I’m having him nowhere near me at all,” and, “Don’t touch him.” JH went on to say “We all knew about [Bennell]. We all knew about him. ... We knew about this guy and his reputation.”

9.2.430. The Review has also seen evidence that, in 1997, a woman (BV) told the police that in or around 1992, her son had been with Stoke City and been coached by an individual, EF. BV said that EF had told her that “he knew things about Bennell and that Bennell would be in prison in 12 months. He knew things about Bennell and young boys.”

9.2.431. The Club spoke with EF who confirmed that he had coached youth players at Stoke in the early 1990s. EF stated that he had “not [been] happy with how [Bennell] was” with the youth players that he had coached and so had “started to ask ... parents and other coaches about [Bennell]. That’s where I first heard of rumours about [Bennell] and his time at Man City and Crewe.” EF then stated:

“I spoke to the Police about what I’d heard from different parents. I’d heard from some parents that [Bennell] had a bungalow in Rode Heath and that on some weekends his wife would go to Manchester and [Bennell] would then have some of the boys around. He’d show them scary movies to give him the opportunity to ‘comfort’ any that were particularly frightened.

I told this to other parents but as nothing had been proven they shrugged it off. They’re clear red flags to me but nobody would take me seriously.

I think it was probably in 1993 that I spoke to the Police, just before I left Stoke City. The Police told me that they investigated the matter but nothing was found.”

9.2.432. EF also reported that he had “told [KF] that I didn’t want to pass any of my kids on to Bennell. I was concerned about the rumours that I’d heard from the parents. I didn’t feel that anything was going to happen based on my concerns and so I left Stoke City.” EF could not specially remember the conversation with the parent BV, but did say, “I would warn anyone who mentioned [Bennell] to me about my concerns.”

9.2.433. During an interview with the Club, KF said that during his time at the Club he had never heard any complaints, concerns or rumours relating to child sexual abuse. In relation to Bennell, KF’s recollection was:

“In those days you would be looking for decent scouts, and he did that well at Crewe. I thought of getting him to work for us but I can’t really remember him and never met him.

[A former employee] from Manchester City [who is now deceased] I am sure he warned me off him. I can’t remember Bennell ever coming to Stoke to coach or scout.”

9.2.434. I asked to interview KF. Through his son, KF explained that, while he wanted to assist the Club and the Review as much as possible, his health prevented him from participating in an interview. KF did say, however, that he would attempt to answer any questions sent to him in writing. A set of questions (jointly prepared by the Review and the Club) was subsequently sent to KF. Ultimately, KF was not in a position (due to health and memory issues) to answer the questions but did provide a written statement as follows:

“I’m now 75 Years old and been retired for over a Decade, unfortunately my memory isn’t fantastic, and accurately remembering details from events approximately 30 Years ago is beyond my capabilities.

I can confirm that I was employed full time by Stoke City Football Club for around 15 Years in [Youth team] roles. ...

During my time within Stoke City’s youth department, I do recall that Barry Bennell worked for the Club. I only remember him being involved in a Scouting position, however; I am reliably informed that he also carried out Coaching.

Unfortunately I am unable to assist in terms of dates, duties, payment, or any other detail regarding Mr Bennell’s employment at Stoke City. I don’t recall how he came to the Club, or how/why he left. This leaves me feeling that I would not be a valid or reliable source regarding this investigation.

What I can say with absolute confidence is that I would never have knowingly risked the welfare of young footballers at Stoke City. Had I have known of anyone’s misconduct; I would have reported it.

Youth Players would often be recruited by Stoke City from amateur Clubs, predominantly more so from local Clubs. As a prominent local Football Club, Stone Dominoes will have no doubt had Players who went on to represent Stoke City’s Junior teams. I don’t know of any ‘connection’ other than that and have no idea if the same can be said of Coaches.

Due to the time passed, my age, and poor memory I’m very sorry that I can’t be of greater assistance than this, but this is the extent of my knowledge regarding Barry Bennell and that period of time.”

Rumours Known by Other Staff

9.2.435. There is evidence that rumours about Bennell were heard by members of staff at the Stoke City who were not involved in the coaching side of the game. ND was a senior member of the administrative staff at the Club from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. During an interview with the Review, ND stated that he had first heard of Bennell in 1991 when attending a Stoke City Academy game against Crewe. ND reported that a member of the Stoke City youth function (DB, referred to above) was shouting from the touchline, “Come on Stoke. We can beat the bum boys, Bennell’s bum boys. You’re an in-house bandit.” ND said that, the next day, he

had asked DB why he had been shouting abuse at Bennell, to which DB had replied, “You must be the only one in football that’s not heard the rumours... He’s a paedo.” DB denied these events occurred.

What Did the Board Know?

9.2.436. There is also evidence that the rumours about Bennell were raised with members of Stoke’s Board. ND referred to an occasion when he had gone into the room where the Club’s Board was about to meet. ND said:

“I looked at the agenda... I didn’t intend to stay for the board meeting. I saw the agenda and flipped. Because of what I thought I knew about Bennell. It said they were going to appoint him as youth team manager or something like that. I can’t remember the actual wording. I said, ‘You can’t appoint him. He’s a paedophile.’ [A board member, TB] said, ‘You can’t say that.’ I said, ‘Well I’ll tell you what, and I’m prepared to do it, I’ll face him and tell him to his face.’ [TB] says, ‘You can’t do that. He could sue you.’ I said, ‘Let him sue me.’ We had a disagreement.

Then [another board member, ZM] said, ‘I’ve spoken to Manchester City and somebody –’ I can’t remember his other name now. I think he was a director who told me, ‘There is absolutely nothing proved against this bloke.’ So I think the secretary had rung Man City as well and Crewe. They both said there’s been nothing proved. I said, ‘You can’t take that chance.’ As in quite a few board meetings, we had a disagreement ... it died a death. Then [another board member, NT] ... went downstairs to tell Bennell that whatever offer they were going to make, it wasn’t going to happen.”

9.2.437. ND’s account was disputed by both board members, TB and ZM. TB told the Review that he had no recollection of Bennell being in any way associated with the Club, and had no recollection of being at a Board meeting when mention was made that a coach should not be appointed because of concerns he was a paedophile.

9.2.438. ZM told the Review that he had first heard of Bennell when Bennell was associated with Crewe. Bennell was known to be good as a youth coach and at finding good young players. ZM said that he had not heard any rumours about Bennell having a sexual interest in children. ZM went on to say that he had no recollection of Bennell being in any way associated with the Club, and had no recollection of a Board meeting when appointing Bennell to a role at the Club was discussed.

9.2.439. ND was clear in his account. However, that account was directly contradicted by two individuals who were said to have played a role in the events described by ND. Both TB and ZM said that they had no recollection that Bennell was in any way associated with the Club. It is possible that they did not know of Bennell’s connection as it was only a part-time role, and Board members would not necessarily know the names and details of part-time coaching staff. Furthermore, it seems to me most unlikely that the decision as to whether to appoint Bennell was something that would have been made at Board level. It is something which might

be recorded there, but this is likely to have been a decision made by coaching or managerial staff, and not Board members.

9.2.440. In the circumstances, I accept that ND may well have been privy to some discussion about Bennell and reasons for not appointing him to a full-time role at the Club (i.e. because of the rumours about Bennell's sexual interest in children). However, I cannot be satisfied that this discussion took place at Board level, and in the manner described by ND.

Conclusion as to What Stoke City Knew About Bennell's Abuse and What Should Have Been Done

9.2.441. There is no evidence that KF was aware of allegations of abuse by Bennell. Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence that KF was made aware of rumours about Bennell's sexual interest in children, and that the rumours came from a number of different sources. Given the scale of the rumours, I consider that KF should have ensured that Bennell's activities for the Club were monitored. It is possible that KF did take steps to monitor Bennell, but KF is not in a position to assist with this matter, and the Review has received no evidence of him having done so. If KF did not take any steps to monitor or check up on Bennell's activities, then I consider that this would have been a failing by the Club.

9.2.442. It also seems to me to be clear that rumours about Bennell's sexual interest in children reached other members of the Club's staff. Indeed, these rumours appear to be the reason that Bennell was not offered a full-time role at the Club. Given those rumours, I consider that the Club should have ensured that Bennell's activities on behalf of the Club (albeit that he was not a full-time member of staff) were monitored.

Stone Dominoes

9.2.443. I consider that Stone Dominoes was not sufficiently connected to Stoke City for any knowledge that Stone Dominoes may have had about Bennell to be attributed to the Club.

9.2.444. As for what Stone Dominoes did know about Bennell, there is no evidence that any complaints of abuse were made to its founder and Chairman, LT. There is evidence that one young player for Stone Dominoes (ZZ) informed his mother that he had slept in a bed with Barry Bennell. There is no suggestion that ZZ's mother or father informed LT about this.

9.2.445. However, there is evidence that a concern in relation to Bennell was raised with LT.

9.2.446. LT gave evidence to Cheshire Constabulary in 1994. He told the police that he was not aware of any allegations against Bennell relating to Stone Dominoes' activities in the United Kingdom. However, he said that he had been alerted to an

issue that had arisen on a trip to the United States in 1993. LT had been informed by MX, one of the hosts for the Stone Dominoes team, that a young player had fallen asleep in Bennell's bedroom. She had been concerned about this, although she did not allege that there had been abuse by Bennell. The conversation between MX and LT is confirmed by the report of her evidence contained in the Florida files.

9.2.447. In a statement provided in the US proceedings, LT said that he had been called up by MX:

“She was basically asking me how much I knew about Barry ... So I said, ‘Why are you asking?’ She said, ‘It’s just something funny that my husband has got a feeling.’ ... That he’d seen, something to the effect that Barry and [ZZ] were in the same bedroom in the morning which to them appeared strange.”

9.2.448. LT was asked whether he thought this was strange, and he said:

“Not really, because I’d been on tours where there were loads of footballers. It was just like all lads together. ... So I said [to MX], ‘What have you done about it. If you’ve got an accusation, make it, then I can do something but don’t give me half a story’. ‘Well, we just don’t feel easy about it’. I said, ‘Well, what does that mean,’ and we phoned, the name of the place in Florida, Pensacola.

...

...Apparently, her investigation was that he wasn’t welcome in Pensacola. Now again, she wouldn’t give me the reason why. She said litigation was a reason not to say anything detrimental but she was just basically collecting facts. I said, ‘Well, it’s obvious to me you’ve got some fear about Barry and this boy and to me, a man shouldn’t be in the same bed as a boy and I totally agree with you on that.’ ... So I said, ‘If you’ll give me something stronger I can go to the boy’s parents, I can do something,’ I said. ... I said, ‘Look, the least we’ll do is our solicitor, our company solicitor can at least check a discreet reference again about Barry Bennell by speaking to Crewe Alexandra,’ because that’s where he’d worked, because our solicitor is the solicitor to quite a few football clubs, as a coincidence and he checked the reference out because I said to him, ‘Look ... I really can’t afford us to be in a situation where there’s the slightest danger, I’d rather just not bother at all,’ and the reference came back squeaky clean.”

9.2.449. LT went on to say that following the call from MX:

“We called Barry in and he was very plausible in his explanation that they’d just been talking and they’d fell asleep and before they knew it. They’d woken up.

...

...We said, ‘Look we’ve got no evidence and your reference has come clean so we accept your word that this is just a misunderstanding,’ I said, ‘But lets it make it categorical so that there can be no possible reason for this ever occurring again. We’ll always continue as a company to support you financially to run the Dominoes on certain very clear criteria.’

...

Number (1) that you don’t find yourself ever on a one on one situation on your own with a young person. Number (2) that you don’t have any young people at your house staying over without your wife . . . being there and the

permission of those parents,' I said, 'Because that is not a club matter, that's a personal thing between you and their family...'"

9.2.450. The following year, Bennell took a number of Stone Dominoes teams to the United States. LT informed the police that he had had some further concerns about Bennell. He had been concerned that Bennell had kept one of the boys away for seven weeks on the soccer tour. The boy was missing school, and this amount of time off was not allowed. In addition, Bennell had been away for one of the weeks with some of the boys on his own: without another adult. Furthermore, Bennell had been told that he could not share a room with the boys, but LT had heard that this had taken place. Shortly after LT arrived in the United States to join the football tour, he learned that Bennell had been arrested by Florida police.

9.2.451. It is clear, therefore, that LT had been informed of a concern about Bennell by MX, albeit he was not provided with any concrete information of wrongdoing. LT has said that he had not ignored MX's concerns, and that he had taken steps to find out whether there was further information about Bennell from his previous clubs. I have been unable to verify this.

9.2.452. LT also said that he had sought to impose some controls on how Bennell was to conduct himself. The Review has received no evidence to corroborate this.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY MANCHESTER CITY FC

9.2.453. Based on the materials I have viewed, and based on my various conversations with the Club, I consider that the investigation Manchester City carried out was a thorough one. The Club commissioned external lawyers to investigate its connection with Bennell and the extent of any knowledge, actions (or inactions) or complicity of the Club and its personnel in relation to anything known or suspected about Bennell.

9.2.454. The MCFC Review Team spoke to 28 survivors of abuse by Bennell. As part of the investigation into Bennell (and two other perpetrators of abuse: John Broome and Bill Toner), the MCFC Review Team also spoke to 11 current Manchester City staff, 37 former Manchester City staff (including five former Directors), eight ex-players, 12 parents or family members and relatives, and 11 former scouts. The MCFC Review Team was not able to speak to a number of key individuals who would have dealt with any issues at the time, as they passed away some years before their investigation commenced. As a result, the investigation cannot be totally comprehensive. Nevertheless, the investigation was as thorough as it could have been, and it is clear to me that the right questions were asked, and the correct categories of people were spoken to. I have no doubt that the conclusions reached by the MCFC Review Team were based on the evidence uncovered.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY CREWE ALEXANDRA

9.2.455. Crewe Alexandra initially adopted the position that, in view of the investigation carried out by Cheshire Constabulary and the fact that the Club had assisted the police in that investigation, there were no further enquiries that the Club could usefully undertake. Following a significant amount of correspondence between my Review and the Club, the Club agreed to conduct further enquiries, including contacting individuals associated with the Club during Bennell's tenure who had not been spoken with during the police investigation. Crewe spoke to 11 former youth players, 13 parents of former youth players, three youth coaches, nine former members of staff and six Directors or former Directors. Ultimately, I am satisfied that, when coupled with the enquiries made by the police, the Club's investigation was adequate within the meaning of my Terms of Reference.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY STOKE CITY

9.2.456. The Club identified, contacted and spoke to a significant number of individuals who had been involved with the Club during the period that Bennell was associated with the Club. In addition, the Club reviewed whether it held any relevant documentation. The Club also put out a public statement requesting that anyone with relevant information come forward. The Club then provided me with an initial report in which it summarised the evidence that had been gathered. Having considered that report and discussed the same with the Club, I asked the Club to arrange further interviews with a number of individuals. These further interviews were conducted jointly by a member of my Review Team and a representative of the Club. Following these further interviews, the Club provided me with an updated report.

9.2.457. Overall, the Club spoke to 57 people in carrying out its investigation. This included four Board members (two former, one current but who also held the position at the relevant time and one current Director), 30 members of staff (coaching and administrative) and players, as well as three former players, seven youth players/scholars. I am satisfied that the investigation carried out by Stoke was adequate within the meaning of my terms of reference. I commend the Club for the way it carried out its investigation.

9.3 Robert ‘Bob’ Higgins

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INTRODUCTION

9.3.1. Robert Francis Higgins (often referred to as Bob Higgins) (“Higgins”) is a child sex offender who, in 2018 and 2019, was convicted of 46 counts of sexual offences against children. In 2019, Higgins was sentenced to 24 years and 3 months’ imprisonment.

9.3.2. Higgins’ criminal convictions relate to offences committed against 24 individuals. In relation to 23 of these individuals, the abuse was connected with football. In addition to the individuals whose cases were progressed to trial, the police also received numerous other allegations against Higgins. In total, over 100 individuals reported to the police allegations of sexual offending by Higgins. That many of these reports of abuse were not progressed to trial should not be taken to mean that these were not considered credible. Indeed, the Review has met with and/or seen written accounts of 15 further individuals who alleged that they were sexually abused by Higgins. The Review has no reason to doubt these further accounts of abuse perpetrated by Higgins. The descriptions are consistent with the facts underlying Higgins’ convictions, and there is no reason to suggest that the individuals colluded with one another in putting forward their accounts of abuse.

9.3.3. Higgins worked as a football coach and scout from the 1970s. At various times he ran his own football “schools” or “academies”. Sometimes, these were linked to FA affiliated amateur clubs. Over the years, he was employed by or otherwise worked with several professional clubs specifically Crystal Palace, Southampton and Peterborough United. For a time, Higgins also worked for the Malta FA.

9.3.4. Higgins used football, his reputation as a “star-maker” and his links to professional clubs as way of meeting, manipulating, controlling and abusing a large number of boys. On sentencing Higgins in 2019, His Honour Judge Peter Crabtree OBE said:

“There is no doubt that you were good at spotting talent, such that many went on to be successful, some even at international level. But there was another side of you, one that came to light when you began abusing AH. This evolved into systematic abuse of the boys you coached, most of whom were carefully groomed – that process included gifts, shirts, and boots, tracksuits and taking a number of them to watch first division football matches. Many if not all of them saw you as a father figure, especially for a number of boys who had no father and were vulnerable. You would play love songs in your car and encourage boys to touch you or touch them as they came to and from training. Many of your victims stayed overnight under the guise of participating in extra training. Little did their parents know that they were also being encouraged to participate in stroking and cuddling, this became normalised and paved the way for your abuse. It escalated into more in the living room and bedroom. There were more opportunities when you would give soapy massages – you inserted a finger in a number of boys – you used your power to assert over the boys with confidence they would not share their experiences. They recognised you held the key to achieve their dreams – to become apprentices at Southampton and professional at Peterborough – they idolised you and were prepared to, and did do, anything to realise their

dreams. Those who you abused you knew it would be difficult to disclose what you'd done – the culture at the time prevented that. You took steps to avoid detections; you sustained and befriended many of the parents themselves – including going on holiday with them – encouraged them to write to you and express love.”

SUMMARY OF HIGGINS’ INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL

Overview

9.3.5. In the early 1970s, it is understood, Higgins was working for Crystal Palace as a youth coach and running evening training sessions for youngsters. He left Crystal Palace in 1973. Higgins also had a column – under the heading “Scout’s notebook” – in the *County Times and Gazette*, where he talked about his scouting role and provided “advice” to boys involved in football.

9.3.6. Higgins also set up private “soccer schools” which children would attend during the school holidays to learn football skills from former professional players.

9.3.7. Between the mid-1970s and 1989, Higgins was associated with Southampton FC. He also operated his own private “Soccer Academy”, which eventually came to be styled the “Bob Higgins Soccer Academy”.

9.3.8. In July 1989, Higgins was appointed as Youth Development Officer at the Malta Football Association (“the MFA”).

9.3.9. On January 9th 1990, Higgins was charged with a number of sexual offences against children. As a result of this, he was suspended from his role with the MFA. During the period of his suspension, Higgins continued to operate the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy in Southampton.

9.3.10. In 1991 and 1992, Higgins was acquitted of all charges. Following his acquittal, Higgins was reinstated to his role at the Malta FA. He stayed in that role until June 1994.

9.3.11. Between August 1994 and April 1996, Higgins was associated with Peterborough United. At the same time as working at Peterborough, Higgins continued to operate private soccer academies in the Southampton area.

9.3.12. As of late 1996, Higgins was continuing to operate youth coaching sessions in Hampshire. He associated himself with amateur clubs in the county, including Bashley FC. Around early 1997, he attempted to twin his soccer academy to Burridge Juniors.

9.3.13. In January 1997, Higgins was featured on the *Dispatches* documentary *Soccer’s*

Foul Play in connection with allegations of sexual abuse made by a former Southampton youth player, Dean Radford, as well as allegations that he baptised players in a bath at his home. Following the *Dispatches* programme, Hampshire Constabulary and Hampshire Social Services took steps to prevent Higgins from being involved with children. Nonetheless, Higgins continued to operate youth coaching sessions in the counties of Hampshire and Wiltshire largely through his “Soccer Academy Limited” (which was later replaced by “Football Community Limited”).

9.3.14. In October 2001, Higgins was appointed as manager of Bashley FC (having spent a short period prior as caretaker manager). In announcing his appointment, the Club said, “Bob has a proven track record with young players. ... Our plan is to bring younger players on in the future to play for Bashley Football Club.”⁵ Higgins was dismissed from his role in December 2001 following a change in Chairman at the Club.

9.3.15. By early 2002, Higgins was employed in a coaching role at Winchester City FC. Higgins resigned from this role in October 2002.

9.3.16. In the wake of Andy Woodward’s disclosure in November 2016, a number of individuals made allegations of sexual abuse against Higgins. This prompted a police investigation which culminated in a trial at Salisbury Crown Court in 2018, where Higgins faced 50 counts of sexual abuse. Higgins was convicted on one count and acquitted on one count. The jury failed to reach a verdict on the remaining 48 counts. In the ensuing retrial, which took place in 2019 at Bournemouth Crown Court, Higgins faced 51 counts of sexual abuse. Higgins was convicted on 45 counts, acquitted on five counts and the jury was unable to reach a verdict in relation to one count.

Links with Southampton FC

9.3.17. Pursuant to my Terms of Reference, I asked Southampton to investigate and report to me in relation to the Club’s connection with Higgins and what the Club knew about Higgins and his offending. Southampton confirmed that it would investigate and report as requested but said that it was unable to progress that investigation until the criminal case against Higgins had been concluded. I accepted and agreed with this approach, as the integrity of the criminal process had to be the paramount consideration. Following Higgins’ convictions in 2019, Southampton engaged the children’s charity Barnardo’s to conduct an investigation and produce a report. At the time of writing, that investigation is still ongoing. As a result, Southampton is not in a position to provide me with its final report. However, in a provisional report to me, the Club said the following of Higgins’ role:

“Higgins was employed by Southampton Football Club in a range of youth development, scouting and recruitment roles. While we have had difficulty establishing a clear start date for him. It seems that Higgins had a role at the club from around 1980 onwards. Higgins remained engaged by the club until 31 May 1989.”

9.3.18. The Club’s management was first introduced to Bob Higgins during a visit to Gillingham FC in Kent. Southampton had been invited to attend a presentation at

5. Southern Daily Echo, 5th October 2001 “Higgins is permanent fixture for Bashley” <https://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/5614358.higgins-is-permanent-fixture-for-bashley/>

Gillingham because of a link between Southampton and a first team player who had been signed from Gillingham. It is likely that this took place in or about 1974.

9.3.19. Higgins was living in London at that time and the Club saw this as an opportunity to establish a better network of youth scouting and development both in London and across the South East. Until then, the Club had scouts and youth development in the Gateshead and Bristol areas.

9.3.20. In around 1978 or 1979, Higgins started to work for the Club, running the Club's youth scouting and development in those areas. The Club's management allowed Higgins to continue to work within the network that he had built up. The Club believed in building a team that mixed experienced "older" players with younger players. This made the finding of young players particularly important.

9.3.21. A former member of the Southampton staff told me:

"Higgins would bring school kids from the southern area into ... a little gymnasium there and he would bring the kids in there two nights a week and in the school holiday time the best ones of that would join in with the best from Bristol and Gateshead.

...

[Higgins] was looking at school kids, ... bringing them in two nights a week, so although he was working for the club nobody hardly ever saw him because the full-time people ... worked during the day."

21.1. The same former member of the Southampton staff told me that the term time evening training sessions for the "school kids" had been conducted by Higgins. "I might pop [my] head in or something if I was there and one of the staff might as well but the time when the staff really saw was the school holidays when they were all out there with the ones from Newcastle and Bristol..." He also told me that, during school holidays, the training sessions would be taken by coaching staff, not by Higgins. Higgins only trained the boys whom he had personally recruited (not the boys who had come through the Gateshead and Bristol "academies"): when the players from Gateshead and Bristol "came down their people [local scouts] would come with them and so Higgins would have nothing to do with them ... he would only know the southern ones".

9.3.22. Dave Merrington, who was Southampton's Youth Team Manager from 1984/85 until 1993, told me:

22.1. When he joined the Club as Youth Team Manager, Higgins was already working there as the Youth Development Officer.

22.2. On joining the Club, he was told that he "may get a bit of resentment from Bob because he wanted the position".

22.3. In relation to schoolboys at the Club, "Bob really ruled the roost ... he had total control as the Schoolboy Development Officer. ... [Higgins] was totally independent with that department. He was totally in charge of the schoolboy area. My role was when the boys were signed [as] apprentices."

22.4. In addition to his role at the Club, Higgins ran private football schools/academies “which were separate to the football club but I had nothing to do with that at all”.

9.3.23. Dennis Rofe, who played for the Club from 1982-1984 and then took up coaching roles with the senior teams until 1991, told me:

23.1. When he (Dennis Rofe) joined the Club, Higgins was already in role as the “development coach”.

23.2. “There was a bit of a distance between obviously the first team and the schoolboy set up.”

9.3.24. In a statement given to the police in 1990, an official from Southampton stated:

“With reference to club records, I can state that Bob Higgins commenced as Youth Development Officer on a full-time basis on the 1st July 1980. For a period of about five years prior to this, he was used on a part-time coaching and scouting basis, receiving out-of-pocket expenses only.

On the 15 April 1985, the Club received formal notice from Higgins that he intended to leave the club as from the 30th June 1985. In May 1985, the Club manager, Lawrie McMenemy, resigned from the Club and was eventually replaced by the present manager, Chris Nicholl. The employment of Bob Higgins was never in fact terminated because he was willing to continue under new management.

Bob Higgins remained with the club until a letter was sent to him, dated the 14th March 1989, accepting his resignation and including settlement terms. Under these terms it was agreed to pay all monies due to him up to 3rd May 1989, being the agreed date and his employment with the club would cease. He was also granted leave of absence as from the 10th April 1989.”

9.3.25. PT, a former headmaster (whose account I consider in more detail below) said that Higgins had been associated with Southampton in or about 1974.

9.3.26. HU, a schoolboy coach at Southampton during the 1980s (whose account I consider in more detail below), told the police:

“[Higgins] was like a god to the kids. He has significant power over their career prospects of trainees until they turned 16 (from 16 onwards Dave Merrington was in charge...) as he had the sole control of signing or releasing players under 16...”

9.3.27. Those who played under Higgins during his association with Southampton have given detailed accounts of Higgins’ role. The following typify the accounts I have received:

EXAMPLE 1:

“At the age of 12 [in 1983] ... I was asked by Higgins to attend weekly session at the Dell. These sessions were taken by [Higgins] and other coaches involved with Southampton Football Club. At the age 13 years, I signed forms for the Southampton Centre of Football Excellence. This enabled me to attend further training sessions during the week. I signed Associated Schoolboy forms with the Club at 14 ½ years ... mostly the training nights were on a Thursday night and these would be at the Dell and controlled by [Higgins]. As soon as I became an Associated Schoolboy, I began to see more of [Higgins] because this was his main area of responsibility, he would look after the players signed as schoolboys.”

EXAMPLE 2:

“At the age of 14, I was approached by a scout for Southampton Football Club ... I attended a trial at Gateshead before being accepting and signing on with Southampton as a schoolboy ... [for the next two years] I was to travel to Southampton ... to attend training and courses. I had met [Higgins], the Youth Development Officer, for the Club, at the trials in Gateshead. I used to travel down with the other lads from the North East and stay with the other local lads in Southampton. On one occasion, I did stay with [Higgins] for a week. Also, on occasion, we ... would stay at the Gurney Dixon Residential Centre in Lymington for training. [The schoolboys and coaches including Higgins] would stay there at night for the full week.”

EXAMPLE 3:

“[In 1984,] I was 13 years old ... [and] was spotted by a scout from Southampton and invited to attend an overnight training camp run by Southampton Football Club in Gateshead ... the only adult that I remember being there was [Higgins]. ... I then received an invitation by way of formal letter dated 14/09/1984 written and signed by [Higgins]. The invitation was to attend a week’s training programme for trial and assessment located at the Gurney Dixon Centre near Lymington. ... When we arrived at the train station in Southampton we all got the bus to the Dell and we were met by [Higgins]. ... From there we were all taken to the Gurney Dixon Centre by bus. [Apart from Higgins] I only remember one other coach being present...”

EXAMPLE 4:

“At 14 years of age, I signed associated schoolboy forms with Southampton Football Club. ... At first I attended coaching sessions at Slough on a Monday evening and Southampton at weekend, I also attended schoolboy weeks at Tidworth. On joining the club, I met the Youth Development Officer, Bob Higgins who was in charge of all the training and coaching sessions. [Higgins] suggested that I stay at his home at weekend because it would make the travel arrangements easier as there were training sessions at 12 o’clock midday on the Sunday...”

EXAMPLE 5:

“Despite signing for Southampton [as an Associated Schoolboy], my family remained in the Bristol area, so most weekends when I trained with Southampton, I would stay with [Higgins].”

EXAMPLE 6:

“[Higgins] had a number of other coaches working under him but he was very much in charge. It was very much Bob’s decision as to who would sign the schoolboy forms ... there was an element that keeping [Higgins] on side was critical and you weren’t always measured on your football ability.”

9.3.28. The accounts received by the Review also recalled that Higgins had been involved in organising a junior football tournament known as the Sotonia Cup which attracted teams from all over the country. (There are several references to the Sotonia Cup in the minutes of the Club’s Board of Directors, but most of these references make no mention of Bob Higgins.)

9.3.29. A number of the schoolboys also reported that Higgins would drive them to and from Southampton training sessions and games. Further, I received a number of reports relating to Higgins’ taking the Southampton schoolboys on tours including overseas.

9.3.30. The information provided to me by Barnardo’s (whose review on behalf of the Club is underway) was as follows:

30.1. All of the individuals who have contributed to the Barnardo’s review so far have, without exception, commented upon the power and influence Higgins exerted during the time in which he worked for and on behalf of the Club. Descriptions given to Barnardo’s of Higgins portrayed a “controlling” and “God-like” coach who used his position to groom and abuse boys under his care. Accounts have been shared of how parents were also groomed by Higgins into believing that their sons were in safe hands while in his care. Higgins has been described as presenting as a charismatic, caring and trustworthy individual.

30.2. Training sessions took place at various sites across the UK, with Higgins often driving boys in his car and using the opportunity to groom and abuse them. Barnardo’s has heard how Higgins arranged accommodation on residential trips, deciding on sleeping arrangements and who would sleep where, again creating the opportunity to target and abuse boys. Gifts of kits, providing lifts to boys and allowing them to stay overnight in his home were presented to parents as Higgins just ‘helping out’ while boys were encouraged to see themselves as being “special”. The importance of keeping on “Bob’s side” has been mentioned several times and it is clear that Higgins’ control of and influence over the boys was indisputable. Former players have advised Barnardo’s that they could not recall Higgins ever being challenged by any of the coaches: but did recall the threat of how he could, and would, put an end to a boy’s football career if he chose to do so.

9.3.31. There are many references to Higgins in the minutes of the meetings of Southampton’s Board of Directors:

Date	Entry
April 4th 1974	Under the heading “scouts reports”, Ted Bates, a Board member and former manager of the Club “commented on the co-operation of Mr. Bob Higgins”.
September 12th 1974	<p>“Mr Bates advised that Higgins had arranged the signing of [a schoolboy].”</p> <p>“R. Higgins – approval was given for the arrangement of a London training area on an experimental basis to Christmas 1974. The hire of the ground would be £5 per week.”</p>
October 31st 1974	“Mr Bates expressed his satisfaction on the training scheme organised in London by Bob Higgins.”
December 5th 1974	The Board authorised a “Christmas gratuity” to be paid to several people including Higgins. This was recorded under the heading “scouting”.
July 1st 1976	The Board authorised “honorarium” payments to several people including Higgins. This was recorded under the heading “scouting”.
November 4th 1976	The Board authorised a payment to Higgins for assistance in signing two players. This was recorded under the heading “scouting”.
September 7th 1978	“It was reported that the cost of the London Selection Centre would be £100 per week including payments to Higgins and his coaches, the hire of facilities and expenses.” This was recorded under the heading “scouting”.
April 12th 1979	“R. Higgins: a complaint has been received about this scout and the Manager will make further enquiries.” (It has not been possible to find out what the “complaint” was.)
April 26th 1979	“This Scout has tendered his resignation and Mr McMenemy will have talks ... regarding the future of the London Selection Centre before deciding whether a meeting with Mr Higgins might be advantageous”
May 2nd 1985	“R. Higgins: the Youth Development Officer has tendered his resignation on the expiry of his contract on 30 June 1985. It was agreed that his employment may be extended for six weeks beyond this date in connection with the Sotonia International Cup.”
August 1st 1985	“Youth Development Officer: Mr R Higgins will continue with the Club for a three year period on terms to be agreed. Mr Askham [a Director of the Club] expressed reservations.”
February 6th 1986	“Youth Development – R. Higgins: Mr [Chris] Nicholl [the Manager] reported that Mr Higgins was cancelling two of the schools’ training weeks to reduce expenditure and confirmed that the North-East Centre would be phased out.”
March 5th 1987	“R. Higgins: the Youth development Officer was again admitted to hospital but released and has returned to his duties.”

October 27th 1987	“Bob Higgins: the Chairman will meet with the Youth Development Officer to discuss a further contract”
December 3rd 1987	“B. Higgins: the Youth Development Officer is absent from his duties suffering from influenza.”
February 10th 1988	“D. Merrington and B. Higgins: Agreement has been reached with the Youth/Training Manager and the Youth Development Officer to extend their contracts of employment.”
December 1st 1988	“R. Higgins: the Youth Development Officer ... a general discussion took place following Mr Higgin’s recent ill health and there is an indication that he is not entirely settled in his position within the Club at present.”
February 2nd 1989	“Football League/Bob Higgins Soccer Academy: The Football League has accepted our suggestion for a meeting to discuss this matter and the Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Youth Development Officer will make the necessary arrangements.”
March 2nd 1989	<p>“R. Higgins – Youth Development Officer: Mr Higgins had tendered his resignation which it was agreed to accept with effect from 31 May 1989. It was agreed that the Chairman and Manager meet Mr Higgins to finalise the situation and to discuss with him the running of this year’s Sotonia Cup. The former Assistant Manager, ... was agreed to be a suitable replacement...”</p> <p>“Football League/Football Associations/English Schools FA: Mr [Keith] Wiseman [the Vice-Chairman] advised in the meeting attended with the secretary and gave a full written report. It was accepted that the operation of Soccer Academies by employees of League Clubs could not continue.”</p>
June 1st 1989	<p>“<u>Bob Higgins Soccer Academy</u></p> <p>A letter from this organisation’s Solicitors was passed to the Club’s legal adviser for attention. It was accepted that the previously agreed settlement terms to the former employee, Bob Higgins, should not be increased.</p> <p><u>R.F. Higgins</u></p> <p>After serious consideration it was agreed that Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Gordon bring to the attention of the Police the Club’s concern over stories circulating about incidents involving this former member of staff.”</p>
December 7th 1989	“Mr Wiseman reported on his discussions with the Assistant Manager and the Youth Team Manager where particular concern was expressed that relations with the local schools FA and Tyro League were still suffering from the actions of the former Youth Development Officer.”
March 22nd 1990	“R. Higgins: it is understood that this former employee will appear in court on 6 April 1990.”

9.3.32. In April 1989, Southampton wrote to the Football League stating that Higgins would shortly no longer be employed by the Club and that there was no ongoing connection between the Club and the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy (a private football school that Bob Higgins was running). The Football League and the FA had previously raised concerns with the Club about its connection with the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy, which was allegedly undermining the rules relating to training for and recruitment of young players (see: FA and Higgins).

9.3.33. In an interview under caution with the police in 1991, Higgins said that he had left Southampton having “been there sixteen years”. He said that he had spoken to the manager “back in October. I said to the manager, but I weren’t happy, I fancied going abroad to work in Malta, he understood that, he asked me not to go, he wanted me to go away and think about it.”

9.3.34. The interviewing officer also referred to having seen a letter from the Southampton manager, Lawrie McMenemy, dated a “few years ago”, which said that Lawrie McMenemy was sorry to see Higgins go. Higgins was asked about the circumstances in which that letter came to be sent. Higgins replied that he had told Lawrie McMenemy that he was leaving, but that ultimately he had not left the Club. Higgins stated that the reason he had considered leaving was that he “had the choice of going to another club”.

9.3.35. From the above, I reach the following provisional conclusions:

- 35.1. By spring 1974, Higgins was associated with Southampton as a scout.
- 35.2. By autumn 1974, Higgins was operating a “local centre” in the South of England through which he recruited boys on behalf of the Club. The costs of this centre were met by the Club.
- 35.3. In 1980, Higgins was employed as the Club’s Youth Development Officer.
- 35.4. As Youth Development Officer, Higgins was in overall charge of the schoolboys including those that had been recruited through the “local centres” in Gateshead and Bristol. He had significant influence and power in relation to Southampton’s Schoolboy players.
- 35.5. Schoolboys associated with the Club would regularly stay overnight with Higgins at his home.
- 35.6. Schoolboys associated with the Club attended residential training courses with Higgins.
- 35.7. Higgins would regularly drive Southampton schoolboy players to and from training and games.
- 35.8. As part of his role with the Club, Higgins took part in the organisation of the Sotonia Cup. He also took schoolboys on a number of tours and trips including overseas.
- 35.9. Higgins left the Club in early 1989. I discuss the circumstances that led to his departure below.

The Early 1990s Prosecution

9.3.36. Many of the documents from the 1990s prosecution were no longer available. However, from the documents I have seen, I understand the following:

36.1. On January 9th 1990, Higgins was arrested and interviewed under caution in relation to allegations of sexual assault arising from Higgins' time with Southampton FC.

36.2. During his police interview, Higgins denied having committed any offences and said that the complaints were fabricated and that he had been "set up". Higgins went on to state that another member of staff at Southampton, who I understand to be Dave Merrington, "had it in for" him.

36.3. On January 9th 1990, Higgins was charged with two counts of indecent assault relating to two youth players.

36.4. On February 15th 1990, Higgins was charged with four further counts of indecent assault relating to a further four youth players.

36.5. On June 1st 1990, Higgins appeared before the Magistrates' Court and was committed for trial at the Southampton Crown Court. Higgins entered pleas of not guilty to all counts.

36.6. It appears that the prosecution intended to proceed against Higgins on a single indictment containing all counts relating to the six youth players.

36.7. However, the Court ordered that the indictment be severed, and in June 1991, Higgins stood trial on an indictment containing only two counts of indecent assault relating to two youth players.

36.8. The jury returned a not guilty verdict in relation to one of the counts and the other count was not proceeded with by the prosecution. This led to the trial judge directing the jury to enter a not guilty verdict with respect to the other count.

36.9. The Court ordered that the remaining counts relating to the further four youth players should be tried separately from one another (i.e. that there should be four separate trials).

36.10. The prosecution offered no evidence in relation to the remaining counts relating to the further four youth players, and Higgins was formally acquitted of these counts in January 1992.

9.3.37. I have had access to a number of witness statements generated during the police investigation which led to the 1991/92 prosecutions. The sexual abuse described in those statements is consistent with the sexual abuse of which Higgins was ultimately convicted in 2018/19.

Working in Malta

9.3.38. Following his departure from Southampton, Higgins worked for the MFA. He was appointed in July 1989 to a five year contract, as the MFA Youth Development Officer.

9.3.39. On September 24th 1989, it was reported in the press that "Malta ... have appointed Bob Higgins, as youth development officer." It was explained that: "Higgins wants to hear from the sons or grandsons of Maltese immigrants who already play football at district or county level. Trials will be arranged in England and the young players will be flown back to Malta to link up with the senior squad if they are good enough."⁶

6. Sunday Telegraph, 24 Sept. 1989, "Maltese poacher." p. 33

9.3.40. On December 7th 2016⁷, the MFA gave a detailed account of its dealings with Higgins:

“In January, 1990, the MFA President at the time, became aware of an article that appeared in the *Daily Mirror*, in which article it was reported that Mr Higgins was assisting the police in allegations of sexual misconduct with children. At the time of this publication, Mr Higgins was in the UK for a holiday. The article also reported that the Secretary of the English FA had, in April 1989, written to the 92 Clubs of the English Football league, asking them to contact his office if any of them were thinking of getting involved with the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy.

The allegations, which were denied by Bob Higgins, involved alleged abuse of [two] kids – between 1985 and 1987 – which abuse was alleged to have happened during Higgins’ time at Southampton.

On hearing of these allegations, [officials from the MFA] travelled to the UK, in January 1990, and visited Bob Higgins in his home. They informed Mr Higgins that, pending the outcome of the course [sic] case, they were suspending, him from his position within the MFA.

On the 16th January, 1990, on their return to Malta, a meeting was held with the parents of the children who attended Ta’ Qali at the time, informing them of the allegations that were made against Bob Higgins, and of the decision to suspend Bob Higgins, pending the outcome of the court case.

Two years later, in January, 1992, Bob Higgins was cleared of all charges brought against him – charges of [six] indecent assault on young footballers. Higgins was given a no guilty verdict based on no evidence having been provided on any of the alleged offences.

On the 9th April, 1992, i.e. [three] months after being found not guilty by the courts, the MFA again engaged Bob Higgins as its National Youth Development officer, on a [five] year contract with a [one] year probation, which contract was to commence on the 1st September, 1992.

On the 14th June, 1993, the terms of the contract were revised, under the Presidency of Dr Joe Mifsud, following a request for this revision made by Bob Higgins, on the 17th May, 1993. The new contract was for a period of 4 years, commencing on 1st September 1993.

On the 5th March, 1994, Bob Higgins submitted a letter of resignation from his post, which resignation was to take effect from 30th June, 1994.

On the 15th March, 1994, the MFA Executive Committee accepted his resignation.

On the 21st March, 1994, signed petitions were presented to the MFA by the

7. “Statement by the President Norman Darmanin Demajo” December 7th 2016 <https://www.mfa.com.mt/en/news/news/2585/statement-by-the-president-norman-darmanin-demajo.htm> (accessed 30 October 2020)

parents of the boys under the charge of Bob Higgins, asking Bob Higgins and the MFA to reconsider their position regarding the resignation of Bob Higgins.

On the 8th April, 1994, in a letter to the MFA Executive Committee, Bob Higgins informed the MFA that he ‘had decided to re-consider his Resignation and that he was willing to continue with his contractual commitments’.

On the 8th June, 1994, the MFA Executive Committee decided not to accept his re-instatement request and Bob Higgins’ contract was definitely terminated as at 31st May 1994.”

9.3.41. On April 14th 1994, the Malta Football Coaches Association (“MFCA”) asked the FA for “a full report viz a viz [sic] Mr Bob Higgins of Southampton as to his coaching/professional qualifications and any other details including a possible character evaluation on him”; noting also that he “claims to be a fully qualified coach from your Association”. The job he was applying for was described as “a post within the coaching structure of Malta”. (see: FA and Higgins).

9.3.42. On April 18th 1994, Charles Hughes wrote to the MFCA as follows:
“Mr. Bob Higgins does not possess the Advanced Coaching Licence of The Football Association. In fact, he holds the Intermediate Award which he gained in 1985. It is the opinion of our coaching staff that Mr. Higgins is not suitable for a coaching appointment carrying responsibilities for either coaching players or teachers and coaches.”

Links with Peterborough United

9.3.43. On his return to England from Malta, Bob Higgins obtained employment with Peterborough United. I asked Peterborough to investigate and report to me in relation to the Club’s connection with Higgins and what the Club knew about Higgins and his offending.

9.3.44. Peterborough has confirmed that Bob Higgins joined the Club in August 1994 as Under 16s youth manager and was a youth team manager at the Club between May 1995 and April 1996, when his employment was terminated.

9.3.45. I set out below the evidence provided to me by Peterborough. I then set out other evidence I have received and considered in reaching my conclusions in relation to Higgins’ role at Peterborough.

9.3.46. The Club told me that, due to a change in ownership, it no longer had any documentation from the period of its association with Higgins. The Club was, however, able to provide a copy of correspondence sent to them by FP, a youth player at the Club in the mid-1990s. I consider this correspondence and FP’s evidence more generally below. The Club also provided me with some correspondence from 2014 between the Club and Hampshire Constabulary relating to Higgins (and Kit Carson). The Club also spoke to two youth players who had been at the Club in the mid-1990s (EP and EZ).

9.3.47. EP, a youth player at the Club in the mid-1990s, told the Club that:

“[H]e was slightly frightened of [Higgins]. Not that anything would happen to him but because [Higgins] had his footballing career in his hands. He said that [Higgins] loved and played on the fact that the boys idolised him. He said that [Higgins] enjoyed that sense of power that it gave him.”

9.3.48. EP also told the Club that he had stayed at Higgins’ house in Southampton. There had been two other boys there. He remembered them all sitting in Higgins’ living room. Higgins had been on a big sofa, and the other two boys on the floor next to Higgins’ feet “sort of massaging his feet”. EP said that he had thought that this was “weird” and that it had made him feel uncomfortable.

9.3.49. EZ, youth player at Peterborough in the mid-1990s, told the Club that Higgins had taken over coaching the Under 15 or Under 16s, and that “[Higgins] was the most horrible man he had ever come across in football... playing for [Higgins] was not a nice experience”. EZ recounted something that Higgins called “The Den”, where young players would be made to “do things like jogging, jumping, press ups, etc. but during the course of these exercises, [Higgins] would physically hurt you, for example, he would jump on your back whilst doing press ups, that sort of thing and he would say it was what was needed to make you mentally tough.”

9.3.50. In addition to the evidence provided by the Club, I have also received the following evidence relating to Higgins’ role:

50.1. In August 1997, an officer from the Cambridgeshire Constabulary spoke with Carson in relation to Higgins. The police officer’s note records Carson as having stated:

“In August 1994, Higgins was appointed as the under sixteen youth manager at PUFC... His duties included training the boys for one night per week and to take them for a football match in the local league on a Sunday.

Higgins lived in Southampton and had just finished work as the National Youth Development Officer in Malta and was looking for part-time work.

As the Peterborough under sixteens’ came from all over the country but mainly from the South, the training took place in London.

...

Between August 1995 and 29 April 1996, Higgins was a part-time Youth Coach for PUFC, working two and a half days a week”.

50.2. An article titled “Youth team’s major coup” published in the *Peterborough Herald and Post* on May 25th 1995 reported:

“[Higgins] is the new youth team manager at Peterborough United. ... Carson, youth development officer at Posh explained: ‘We’ll be running the youth team in a slightly different manner from next season. I’ll be responsible for the non-footballing side of things, making sure the boys’ education is developed to the full, and that they’re happy in their digs – especially the ones that will be away from home. This will enable [Higgins and his assistant] to get on and run the team.’ Higgins returned from a stint as national youth development

officer in Malta last year to run Posh under 16s so his appointment is a natural progression for him...”

50.3. JA, a youth player at Peterborough in the mid-1990s, stated that he attended a residential week at, to the best of his recollection, Fairthorne Manor. Higgins was introduced to the boys as “the man in charge”. Later, Higgins became youth team manager. JA explained that he had been asked to go into an office/room with Higgins and another person where he was told to strip off so he could be “measured”. JA believes the same happened to other boys. JA also stated that Higgins would not allow the boys to visit the Club physiotherapist and recalled that he had once gone to the Club physiotherapist for something and, as a result, Higgins had refused to speak to him for a week. JA said, “If you had a problem, you had to go to [Higgins]. No matter how little or big everything went through [Higgins]. Everything.”

50.4. BG, a youth player at Peterborough in the in the mid-1990s, said that things at the Club had changed once Higgins joined:

“[I]t appeared strange how Higgins appeared to have a hold on all the younger lads in the team ... the younger lads appeared to go to him rather than the physio if they were injured ... [Higgins] would take [youth players] back to his house [in Southampton] on [the] weekend ... [Higgins] would say it’s for training and so that they could spend some time with him to get to know him better.”

50.5. BG also stated that Higgins’ “status with the club appeared to go from youth team manager to then being sat on the first team bench on matches and that was unheard of, this is why he could manipulate people. [Higgins] appeared to have a massive say in everything including what was happening with the club.” This evidence has not been corroborated, and may simply be BG’s perception. I note that when the Club spoke with OG, a senior staff member at the Club during Higgins’ tenure who was involved with the first team, he denied a close working relationship with Higgins and said that he “rarely saw him”.

50.6. TF, a parent of a youth player at the club in the mid-1990s, told me: “When Higgins arrived, I mean we were sort of sat down as parents by Kit Carson. Introduced to Higgins, but basically, he was introduced as almost an ex-messiah who was being bought in to the club. It was almost at that point as though the shutters came down. I mean the lads were discouraged from making any contact with their parents. I mean it was absolutely horrendous; the change. I mean you could see, you could almost taste, the change in the Club. And we could not work out in our minds, as parents, what on earth was going on. Because there was almost a fear factor amongst the lads and it was extremely difficult for us to look and think, ‘Well what on earth is going on?’”

9.3.51. I set out below in some detail the account given by FP, a youth player at the Club, which is relevant to the role played by Higgins at the Club, but also gives an insight into the way that Higgins used the power and access provided to him by his role at the Club to manipulate, control and abuse boys under his care. The account given by FP accords with that given by other youths who played under Higgins at the Club (as described by EP and EZ above). FP was abused by Higgins and by Carson. In a statement given to the police, FP said that:

“The under 16 squad were informed that the October [1994] half term holidays was to be a very important week and we were travelling to Fairthorne Manor for a week’s intense training taken by [Higgins] who was fairly new to the club but had come from a well-established footballing background of being Maltese National coach and had a proven track record of producing and developing quality payers at Southampton FC ...

The week at Fairthorne Manor was hard work and a lot of fitness work ... we would also have lectures ... on things like health and hygiene and attitude training. There was something called ‘the Den’ ... it was explained that everything that went on there was for us to learn self-discipline and not react to anything that may be thrown at us ... [Higgins] would have us jogging on the spot... he would shout an instruction for example right hand down ...he would walk around the group trying to wind people up calling them soft and weak, going into boys faces, insulting and intimidating them, calling them anything that would be offensive ... big nose, big ears ... telling them to quit and give up ... he would come behind you and kick your legs away ... this would be repeated over and over and over each time you go back to your feet you would be kicked back to the floor. [Higgins] would walk across your belly whilst you were doing sit-ups and I can remember him standing on my testicles ... As [Higgins] would walk past you he would point at something past you in the distance and smash you in the face with his forearm on his follow through ... [Higgins] sat everyone in a circle and he would call two people into the middle and they would have to fight each other to provide who wanted it the most ... it was a very scary time as we fought physically with friends for our dreams ... [the following year, when I was an apprentice player] ... [Higgins said] if I was serious about it, I did not have time to waste on going home to mammy and that I should be going to Southampton for the weekend to do extra training ... this is how it was that each time the lads were given time off, I would end up going to Southampton for extra training. I must only have made it home once in the first 6 months.

I began to build a great relationship with [Higgins] as we spent more and more time together ... as well as being the youth coach at PUF, [Higgins] also ran academies for children in Southampton on different evenings and school holidays ... [when travelling to and from training and games] I would try to sit in the front ... but this became quite difficult as other players would also want to be in the front seat. If this ever happened where another player managed to beat me to the seat, [Higgins] ... would say that the other people obviously wanted to spend time with him a lot more than I did...I would find myself in a daily battle for Bob’s attention and the seat and if I didn’t get it, he would ignore me as if I did not exist, not speaking to me for days ... [Higgins] would usually travel home [from the Club] on a Wednesday afternoon as we did not train on Thursday ... [Higgins] would return on Friday morning or Saturday for our morning match ... [he] said it was imperative that I spoke with him when he was away from the club and was unhappy if ever I did not manage to make contact with him and again would ignore my existence on his return ...

At Christmas 1995, I was at home with my family. [Higgins] had requested I make regular contact with him. ... I spoke to [Higgins] on Christmas day and he was off with me on the phone. He said I was getting all soft and that I should get the train to Southampton the next day and get myself focused and back on my training...I packed up and travelled to Southampton ... [Higgins] did not train me at all, not even once, in this time over Christmas when I had come away from my family. ... [Higgins] would tell me that in your lifetime, if you are lucky, you will come across and meet five people who really matter to you and you should always let these people know how much they mean to you. [Higgins] explained his own five ... he would say I was one of his and he would tell me I was special like his own son. He would look into my eyes and I would feel genuine love from him, he would give me a cuddle ... and say I was special and like a son to him ... he used to get me to sit on his knee sometimes which made me feel as if he cared for me...

[I told Higgins that [Kit] Carson had instructed me to pull my shorts down and had commented on 'my development',] [Higgins] took this matter very seriously and explained that I needed to log this ... so we wrote a statement together and saved it to his computer in case it was ever needed in the future. ... [Higgins] and I would speak about religion ... he did not attend a church but said he practised his beliefs from his home. [Higgins] said that he was able to heal people ... if ever I was injured he would lay his hands on me and pray for healing to my injury...

As we grew closer, [Higgins] told me the reasons why he had left Southampton FC and that allegations had been made against him. He said that things had gotten so bad that his house had been attacked and abuse hurled at him in the street ... [Higgins] told me he was never charged with anything [and] he had only ever showed love to these boys. He did not expand on what he meant by 'showed love'... I genuinely thought [Higgins] was my best friend ... the Youth Team was doing very well. ... [Higgins] told me that I should let others sit at the front of the bus and it would be better if I sat directly behind him ... this way he would be able to feel closer to me and we could take down the side of his seat ... and he could look right at me in the mirror. He said that he would give me a signal that he was thinking about me and this would be him removing his cap and rubbing the back of his head. ... I started to put my arm around [the driver's seat] onto his side as if to cuddle him and he would look at me in the mirror ... and smile ... [Higgins] used to say we needed to do this as people would not understand and it was like we had a code between us...

[Higgins] would pick [me and UY, another youth player, up from our digs in Peterborough] and take us to watch games on a night when he was scouting for our first team as far as Brighton. ... [Higgins] would call round to see [me and UY] ... he would come in and sit with us on the coach, him in the middle, he would put his arms around us and cuddle us and tells us how special we both were to him. ... I did feel a bit uncomfortable about [Higgins] cuddling us both like this but it was also something that made me feel as if I was going

to make it as [Higgins] kept saying we would if we listened to him ... [Higgins said] my life had not been good and I had made lots of mistakes and done bad things in my past ... he baptized me and [UY] in his bath at his home in Southampton ... we both had just shorts on...”

A copy of the statement which FP said he wrote with Higgins was found at Higgins’ home during a police search.

9.3.52. On the basis of the above evidence on links between Higgins and Peterborough United, I reach the following conclusions:

- 52.1. In August 1994, Higgins began coaching the Peterborough Under 16s team. Youth players with this team attended a residential training course with Higgins.
- 52.2. In the summer of 1995, Higgins was appointed as Peterborough’s Youth Coach. He stayed in this role until April 1996.
- 52.3. As well as coaching the youth team, Higgins also ostensibly sought to treat injuries and conducted physiotherapy on certain youth players.
- 52.4. Higgins drove players to and from training and games (including senior games that he was attending as a scout for the Club).
- 52.5. Higgins maintained a home in Southampton and had Peterborough youth players stay with him there overnight.
- 52.6. Higgins had significant power and control over the Peterborough youth team.
- 52.7. In addition to his role at Peterborough, Higgins operated a private soccer academy in Southampton.

SUMMARY OF THE ABUSE COMMITTED BY HIGGINS

9.3.53. The sexual abuse that Higgins was convicted of included sexual touching, digital penetration, forced masturbation and oral rape. The further accounts I have received refer to numerous instances of sexual touching and digital penetration. Some of the sexual touching and digital penetration offences committed by Higgins took place under the guise of “treatment for injuries” or during “soap-water massages”.

9.3.54. The abuse took place in a variety of locations including:

- 54.1. at Higgins’ house;
- 54.2. in vehicles (including on the way to/from training/games);
- 54.3. At various training centres associated with Southampton including at Tidworth and at the Gurney Dixon Centre in Lymington; and
- 54.4. during tours and trips including overseas.

9.3.55. Higgins used his reputation as a “star maker” and someone who could make or break a schoolboy’s career to control, manipulate and ultimately sexually abuse schoolboys under his tutelage.

9.3.56. Higgins employed various grooming techniques which appear to have been designed to:

- 56.1. “test the water” to see how a given boy would react to Higgins’ predatory behaviour;
- 56.2. normalise sexualised behaviour;
- 56.3. create a trust and dependency such that some of the boys thought that Higgins felt genuine affection for them and ultimately had their best interests at heart;
- 56.4. create an environment where the boys were scared of doing anything that might displease Higgins; and
- 56.5. isolate the boys from their families.

9.3.57. Examples of this grooming behaviour included:

- 57.1. giving gifts to certain boys;
- 57.2. encouraging the boys to refer to him as an “older brother” or “second dad”;
- 57.3. entering into discussion with boys about genitalia and sexual activity;
- 57.4. playing love songs in a vehicle when transporting boys;
- 57.5. insisting that boys visit him at home, write to him and tell him that they loved him;
- 57.6. telling boys that he “loved them” and that they were “special” to him;
- 57.7. getting boys to put their arms around him when he was driving;
- 57.8. getting boys to rest their head on his lap while he was driving;
- 57.9. getting boys to sit on his lap, or to come close to him or to “cuddle” with him;
- 57.10. causing boys to “strip” other boys of their clothes and then drag them outside or into a cold bath;
- 57.11. pulling towels off boys in the changing rooms;
- 57.12. holding “competitions” where he would get boys to drop their shorts and underpants and would then “judge” who had the hairiest bottom;
- 57.13. showering with the boys or taking a bath in the same room and at the same time as the boys were showering;
- 57.14. commenting on some of the boys’ genitalia;
- 57.15. giving pet names to some of the boys;
- 57.16. using physical violence or the threat of it including causing the boys to fight each other and stating that his brother was a “gangster”;
- 57.17. encouraging children to spend extended periods away from their families (and in some instances saying that they could not return to their family homes);
- 57.18. in at least one instance, “logging” concerns raised about Carson’s inappropriate behaviour;
- 57.19. telling the boys about his claimed religious beliefs and asserting that he could “heal” them by the laying of hands and that he could baptise and thereby absolve them of previous sins.

9.3.58. On numerous occasions, Higgins explicitly leveraged his power over players’ professional prospects in order to commit acts of abuse, including by threatening to or

actually refusing to play, and/or releasing, players who exhibited particularly negative reactions to his abuse or attempted abuse. By way of example, a survivor who played at Southampton under Higgins recalled how, after abusing him, Higgins had “told me how badly I had played ... how disappointed in my game he was...and he didn’t think that I would be right for Southampton. ... I was absolutely devastated by what he said”.

9.3.59. I have seen a number of cards, letters and documents written by boys coached by Higgins which demonstrate the hold he had over them. By way of example, while playing at Southampton, a youth player who was abused by Higgins wrote:

“At first I found my football coach to be stubborn and selfish but soon after meeting him I began to realise just what a good man he really is. He began to explain to me about life and what it really was about. ... He will be my greatest ever friend. ... Love is a very special word to him ... [he had] a right go at me because I said I hated someone ... and [he] ended up by saying ‘I’m not having a go at you because I don’t like you. [It’s] because I love you’. This meant everything to me. It was the first time anyone had said to my face that they loved me...”

Other players wrote addressing Higgins as “older brother” or “second dad” and signing off “your kid”.

SOUTHAMPTON’S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.3.60. As stated above, at the time of writing the investigation commissioned by the Club is yet to conclude. Accordingly, it is not possible for me to reach a definitive conclusion as to Southampton’s knowledge of Higgins’ activities. I can, however, set out some provisional views based on the accounts and material that I have had access to. In reaching my provisional views, I have considered many accounts and pieces of evidence.

Evidence of Knowledge and Information to Put the Club on Notice

9.3.61. There is evidence to suggest that the Club was aware of allegations of abuse, or of circumstances which were suspicious and merited further investigation.

9.3.62. PT, a former headmaster, told the police as follows:

62.1. In 1969, he received a phone call from someone purporting to be from Chelsea FC. That person offered the school the services of a football coach for a two week period. The school took up that offer.

62.2. Higgins turned up at the school and stated that he was a fully qualified coach.

62.3. A staff member raised concerns about Higgins’ teaching methods leading PT to call Chelsea FC. Chelsea stated that the Club had not telephoned the school and that Higgins was “always claiming links with the club which he didn’t have”. Chelsea gave PT the names of amateur clubs in Surrey that

Higgins was understood to have a connection with.

62.4. PT ordered Higgins off the school premises.

62.5. PT called the amateur clubs in Surrey and was “warned” about Higgins: “I got the impression that [Higgins] was not to be trusted with young boys.”

62.6. PT contacted the Local Education Authority “in order that they might warn other schools”.

62.7. In or about 1974, a pupil told PT that he had been selected for the Southampton youth team and that Higgins was involved.

62.8. PT advised the pupil’s parents to withdraw him from the team.

62.9. PT called Southampton and spoke with the manager Ted Bates. PT raised his concerns about Higgins. He said that “Bates was enraged and threatened to take legal action if I persisted with what he called malicious gossip”.

62.10. PT subsequently received a call from Higgins who “pleaded with me not to hound him”.

It has not been possible to verify PT’s account of his conversation with Ted Bates. Ted Bates passed away in 2003.

9.3.63. A significant number of the accounts I have received from the Southampton schoolboys recalled that “soap water massages” were a regular feature of Higgins’ regime at the Club. A number of individuals reported that other coaches had been present when these massages were being conducted by Higgins. Some individuals reported that other coaches had also conducted these massages (although there is no suggestion that these other coaches used the massages as an opportunity to commit acts of sexual abuse). Some of the former Southampton schoolboys also reported that, among themselves, the schoolboy players would freely talk about “Bob’s favourites” or “Bob’s Boys”. Others told me that, prior to staying over at Higgins’ house, where they were expected to “cuddle” him, they had already heard rumours about his behaviour.

9.3.64. The parent of one boy who played for a different club told me that when he was approached by Higgins regarding his son playing for Southampton (the city where they lived) he refused, as rumours were “rife” that Higgins was “into young boys”. This individual also recalls having conversations with a senior individual within the County FA (Hampshire) about the Higgins rumours in the early to mid-1980s. It was not possible to corroborate this.

9.3.65. HU, who assisted with schoolboy coaching at Southampton during the 1980s, told the police about rumours concerning Higgins:

“Bob Higgins took me on at Southampton FC. ... Before I joined Southampton FC, I had heard rumours about Higgins that he was strange, and a pervert. I cannot remember the source of those rumours but think it was players at [a grass roots club that he also coached at] who had experience of him from Southampton FC. When I got to know Bob, he would dismiss such rumours as jealousy from less successful coaches. I took that at face value at the time. ... I did not directly witness or hear any act of sexual abuse at any time, nor was I made aware of any that I recall. I do recall hearing about soapy massages at the club, but this was general chat and not something I saw or participated

in. I think they had occurred away from the club. Coaches including myself did perform massages on players – in my case before games, rubbing liniment into their legs (the boys would be wearing training kit). There were no physios or medics in youth football at that time, it was down to the coaches to administer things like that if they were necessary. ... Bob and I drive to Bath every Friday evening to conduct a training session with youth players who lived in the West Country. ... We held the sessions and then 2-3 players would return to Southampton with us in Bob’s car and stay at Bob’s house as there was training on Saturdays and a match on Sundays. ... Bob would normally say he was too tired to drive and ask me to drive back from Bath. Bob would sit in the middle of the back seat, with players either side of him. I do not recall anything extraordinary happening on those journeys. ... At the Dell we used to shower in the away changing rooms after training sessions. There were a few baths close to the showers, Bob would always be the first person into that room and get into the bath closest to the showers. He would stay there until all the players had showered. At the time it was usual for coaches to shower in the same block with the players, and I did this myself, therefore I thought nothing of it at the time. I saw youth players sitting very close to Bob at his house, next to him or by his feet. I recall my wife ... and I were at Bob’s house once in Southampton and we saw how the players were sat so close to Bob. We remarked to each other that there was something strange there.”

9.3.66. The father of a boy who played under Higgins for four years in the mid-1980s confronted one of the Club’s scouts in the car park of The Dell regarding Higgins’ behaviour towards his son: his son had told him that Higgins had asked him to sit on his lap. The scout told the father that he had gotten the “completely wrong side of things” and that “Bob’s not like that”, but said that he would speak to Higgins and “get things sorted”.

9.3.67. Dave Merrington was asked by the Review whether, prior to overhearing the conversation on the minibus in February 1989, he had ever heard anything about Higgins that caused him concern. He said:

“Only one thing, that I think it was just before the incident on the minibus. The guy who was working with me at the time we’d gone to Wimbledon I think it was and after the match we were having a cup of tea with the staff and they said to me, ‘How do you get on with Higgins?’ I said, ‘Fine, no problem at all.’ And they said, ‘Well what about him massaging kids naked?’ I said, ‘What are you talking about?’ He said, ‘Well he massages kids naked. They’re schoolboys.’ I said, ‘Well, I don’t know anything about that so how the hell do you know that?’ He said, ‘Well our players have told me that...’ But to be quite frank with you, when you hear something like that you’re never quite sure how to react. It sticks in the back of your mind but it concerned me, but you don’t know whether it’s jealousy from another club ... and I when we came back we discussed that and just said, ‘It doesn’t seem natural that. It doesn’t seem right.’ And of course the problem you have, could Wimbledon be just having a little dig at us as another football club? So until you’ve got the real facts and I didn’t have any facts until shortly after this incident that took place on the minibus.”

9.3.68. During an interview with the police in 1991, Higgins was asked, "...if you were that professional, why do you leave yourself wide open by inviting young boys to your house at times when your wife isn't there?" Higgins replied, "Because, as I told you, there was an agreement with the [then] Chairman, and the Chairman [at the time] brought that up at the meeting, but a certain person didn't like it either..." This suggests that the [then] Chairman of the Club was aware that young boys stayed at his home and had discussed it with Higgins, and that one other person at the Club (and it is not known who Higgins was referring to) was not happy with that arrangement.

9.3.69. During the police interview, Higgins indicated that the reason why he stopped having players stay over at his house was connected to Billy Seymour. It is not clear precisely what Higgins was referring to, but he said that the Club's manager was involved.

9.3.70. In the first criminal case against Higgins in the early 1990s, Billy Seymour had made a statement to the police which referred to staying at Higgins' house for two weeks prior to starting his two-year scholarship at the FA's National School in Lilleshall in September 1986. Billy Seymour said that he remained in contact with Higgins by phone from Lilleshall. In February 1987, however, he said, "I decided I could take no more of him and decided to leave. After a while, Bob agreed to release me from Southampton Football Club, and from the Schoolboy forms I had signed with the club."

9.3.71. For the second criminal case, Billy Seymour told police in 2016 that he got released from Southampton, and said, "I don't know how we did but we managed to get released. I had some help from a few [FA coaches] and I managed to get released."

9.3.72. It appears that someone from the FA made contact with Southampton to arrange for Billy Seymour's release from the Club (see: FA and Higgins).

9.3.73. There are also some references in the minutes of the Club's Board of Directors which might evidence awareness of concerns about Higgins: (i) the complaint made about Higgins in April 1979; and (ii) the "reservations" expressed by Guy Askham to Higgins' three year contract extension in August 1985. Guy Askham, who became Chairman of the Club in 1988, told the Review that he cannot now recall what his concerns were, but they were unlikely to have been about child welfare, and were more likely to have been about commitment, conflict of interest and personality.

9.3.74. There is also evidence from the interviews conducted by Barnardo's which suggests that the Club may have been aware of circumstances which called for further inquiry. The Barnardo's review team has informed me that:

74.1. Accounts given to Barnardo's so far have indicated that rumours about Higgins abounded over decades. Many individuals who have contributed to the Barnardo's review have been adamant that Club officials and managers must have known of the stories and rumours about him. Views have been firmly expressed that managers in the Club must have known what was being said about Higgins and should have acted on the rumours. Some views have also been expressed that Board Directors must have "chosen" not to ask too many questions.

74.2. Higgins has been described as being well-liked in the Club. The descriptions provided to Barnardo's portray a man who was confident about his own success and value to the Club, and who generated a culture in which not only boys, but also other staff, found it difficult to challenge him about his decisions or actions. Higgins' success at developing players for the first team has been repeatedly described by many of those who contributed to Barnardo's review so far, as a factor which was believed to have prevented the Board from taking any decisive action against him.

9.3.75. The Barnardo's review team has been told that the use of the term "Bob's boys" was common parlance and usually bandied about not only in local clubs but also when matches were played further afield. Individuals have recalled that other coaches often heard such "banter" but that boys were never asked anything about Higgins or the rumours, other than on the occasion described below when Dave Merrington heard the allegation on the minibus in February 1989 (see below: Allegation of Abuse in February 1989).

9.3.76. On the other hand, there is contrary evidence: that the Club was not aware of allegations of abuse, or of circumstances which was suspicious and called for further investigation.

9.3.77. Dave Merrington told me that he had had no contemporaneous knowledge that Higgins was having schoolboys stay overnight or, save for the comment made to him by the Wimbledon staff, that he was giving massages to schoolboys.

9.3.78. Keith Wiseman, who was a Director of the Club from 1987 and was Vice-Chairman from 1988, could not recall whether he knew at the time that boys were staying overnight with Higgins. He said:

"[Higgins] was the Youth Development Officer, players would come from other parts of the country sometimes just for a trial, literally for a 24 hour trial or something like that. So staying overnight with the Youth Development Officer and his family, I mean, if one had known about it, it wouldn't have meant anything. But I just cannot recollect dates or anything in relation to that sort of arrangement."

9.3.79. Another former member of staff, who was at Southampton for several years during Higgins' employment at the Club, told the Review:

79.1. He did not know at the time when he was at the Club that Higgins was giving "massages" to schoolboy players.

79.2. He did not know that Higgins had schoolboys staying over at his house.

79.3. "[If I had heard] any complaint or concern about Higgins at all I'd have done something immediately ... there was never anything like that."

79.4. "If we had had the slightest knowledge of what he was up to I mean we'd have been in court for what we did to him, you know, we'd have cut his balls off..."

9.3.80. There is evidence from some of the former players who have been interviewed by Barnardo's which suggests that personnel at the Club did not know of circumstances which may have called for further investigation into Higgins' activities. The Barnardo's review team has informed me that, in initial conversations with former Club staff, it has been suggested that other staff did not have any contact with schoolboys, and the training and welfare of the boys was left to Higgins on a day to day basis. In many accounts given to Barnardo's so far, the former youth players have explained how they only ever saw Higgins and his assistant coaches and never saw any other managers. The former youth players have described how the culture at the time was such that boys would not have been encouraged or enabled to raise concerns or complaints, and how Higgins was the only person they ever really had contact with. Higgins was described to Barnardo's as being the person who was in charge of everything related to the boys in his care, having total control over any decision making which could affect their futures.

The Allegation of Abuse in February 1989

9.3.81. There is corroborated evidence that an allegation of abuse was made to the Club in February 1989.

9.3.82. Dean Radford told the Review that in or about 1983 he attended a training session at Southampton FC. That training session was taken by Higgins. Dean Radford was then invited to attend a further training session. On that occasion, Dean Radford stayed overnight at Higgins' house. Dean Radford recalled:

“The first time I walked into the lounge where he had boys sort of draped all over him on the sofa and it was just – that was just an eye opener for me. Just to think, ‘Well, what’s going on here?’ ... I was shocked, but it didn’t take Higgins long to tell me when he was on his own with me that that is how it has to work. The trust needs to be there. ... And he basically just got straight into my head, basically telling me that they went through the relationship with him and it was all about trust. And if I wanted to be a professional footballer the first thing I need to do is trust him. That was so important otherwise, you know, I wouldn’t stand any chance basically.”

9.3.83. Dean Radford subsequently signed as an Associated Schoolboy with the Club. Despite living in Bristol, Dean Radford attended training at the Club every weekend and would, on most occasions, stay overnight at Higgins' house. Dean Radford also attended training on Wednesday nights and would catch the last train back to Bristol. Dean Radford also attended Club training in school holidays and, again, often stayed overnight at Higgins' house. Dean Radford reported that if he did not stay with Higgins and, instead, stayed with a team-mate's family, Higgins “would sort of not acknowledge me for a couple of training sessions or whatever. It would be a problem. It would be like I'd put his nose out of joint and he would then... a jealousy sort of thing I suppose.”

9.3.84. Dean Radford told the Review that Higgins had been the central youth figure at the Club: “He was the main man in control and he was the one that arranged everything.”

9.3.85. Dean Radford was abused by Higgins on numerous occasions over a prolonged period. One early instance of abuse occurred when Higgins was purportedly “massaging” Dean Radford. Dean Radford reported the abuse to his mother who wanted to raise the issue with the Club. However, Dean Radford “begged” her not to do so as he was convinced (and convinced his mother) that Higgins had merely been treating him for an injury.

9.3.86. Dean Radford told the Review that upon becoming an apprentice he had stopped staying at Higgins’ house, which marked the end of the abuse he had endured. Dean Radford eventually signed as a professional at Southampton.

9.3.87. Dean Radford told the Review that in 1986 or 1987 he had confided in a team-mate some of the abuse that he had suffered. Subsequently, that team-mate appears to have told other players about what Dean Radford had told him. In early 1989, Dean Radford was on a team bus being driven by Dave Merrington when one of the other players made reference to Dean Radford’s having been abused. Dean Radford told me:

“Dave just pulled me on the side and – I was a bit upset, said, ‘Are you okay?’ And I sort of said, ‘Well, obviously not.’ And he just said, ‘Is it ...’ – sort of looked at me and said, ‘Is it true? Is it true?’ And I just sort of nodded and I just said, ‘Yeah, it is.’ And Dave never said another thing. He just said, ‘Look, I’ll see you Monday.’

...[A few days later,] Dennis Rofe called me to the Players’ Lounge. I went to the Players’ Lounge and Dennis Rofe sat down with me and he said, ‘Look, we’ve been told some pretty harrowing stuff ... If you don’t speak out about it, it can carry on. You can do something about this.’ So, I didn’t think twice about it, to be honest with you, I just told him the truth. ... I didn’t tell him everything ... but I said, ‘Higgins abused me. Basically, yeah, what you’ve heard is true basically.’ ... Dennis said, ‘The police had been advised, would you be prepared to talk to them?’ And I just said, ‘Yes.’”

9.3.88. Dean Radford then told the Review that a short while later (he thought it was “probably ... weeks”, although this is not the time frame suggested by Dave Merrington: see below) the police came to the Club and took a statement from him. Dean Radford was one of the complainants in the early 1990s proceedings.

9.3.89. Dave Merrington told me that, in February 1989, he had overheard some of the Club’s apprentices “making sexual comments about Bob [Higgins]”. Dave Merrington said that he then took steps to investigate these comments and reported the matter to Dennis Rofe (who was on the senior coaching staff) and Chris Nicholl, the Manager, who, Dave Merrington understands, passed this information to the Board of Directors. Dave Merrington’s account was as follows:

“On the way back in the minibus there was a lot of banter going on as they do with young professionals and it turned out that as I’m driving the minibus the banter got round and it was, they were making sexual comments about Bob. ... I actually said to them, “Look I believe you’re talking about a member

of staff here.” I said, “Either put up or shut up,” and of course the boys went quiet and we drove back and then the banter went on again. I dropped them off at The Dell and the players went home. But I lived in Romsey and on the way three players lived on the way, they were in digs there and they asked for a lift home. I took them home and I dropped them off one at a time. And the last one I dropped off was a young boy called [UM] ... I said, ‘... before you get out the banter was sort of related towards you as well.’ He got himself very upset and very emotional and to be quite honest with you Clive he couldn’t really get the information out. So I knew there was a problem. ...

The next day when we got all the players together they wouldn’t say anything at all, none of them. I think there was a fear ... to be honest ... in the staff meeting that next morning. Chris Nicholl was the Manager, Dennis Rofe was the First Team Coach at the time and I reported the incident to them. And Chris Nicholl’s first reaction was, he said, ‘I’ll sack him.’ And I said, ‘Chris you can’t do that. You really need to look at the facts and investigate it.’ I said, ‘But can I give you some advice?’ I said, ‘I think you should report this incident to the Chairman and the Board of Directors.’ And he said, ‘Yes, right okay then,’ and it was left at that.

Then the next day he came back to us in the staff meeting and said, ‘Look I’ve done that. I’ve reported this to the Chairman and the Board of Directors.’ And then during the meeting he also said, ‘The thing is we’re going to have to have a word with Bob.’ ... And he said, ‘Well I think you should do it Dave.’ And I said, ‘You think I should do it?’ He said, ‘Yes. You were the one on the minibus,’ and I just felt I was put under a little bit of pressure because of that. I’d reported the incident so I felt obliged that I should be the one to have a word with him.

So I arranged to have a meeting with Bob in the Players’ Lounge ... when I spoke to Bob and I said, ‘Look we’ve been down to Portsmouth, we were coming back and I’m sorry to have to say this to you like but there were comments made on the minibus, sexual comments about you,’ and he just flew into a rage. ... He jumped up, got very aggressive and said, ‘I’ll sue anybody who says anything about me,’ and stormed out of the room and stormed out of the Players’ Lounge. I never saw him again and a week later he resigned.”

9.3.90. Dave Merrington clarified that the conversation he overheard on the minibus involved comments about Higgins including “Did he get his hand down your pants” and “What happened when you went round his house?”

9.3.91. Dave Merrington then told me:

“Some weeks [after Higgins left the Club], I don’t know it might have been about two or three months later the police came to the football ground ... I was the first one in to talk to them. And I said to them, ‘Is this is connection with what was reported to the manager and to the board?’ And he said, ‘Well, I don’t know anything about that.’ I said, ‘Well what background are you coming from?’ He said, ‘Well an incident has taken place at one of Mr

Higgins' private soccer schools.' And whatever had gone off it was either the grandmother or the mother had gone to the police, reported it and of course they had followed it up, and with them working at the football club they chased the chain of events to the football club.

So I said, 'Well this incident that you're following up now is nothing to do with what we reported?' He said, 'No.' So he said, 'Tell me about the incident,' which I did. I explained the incident. I explained that we'd spoke to the manager; the manager had reported it to the board. ... [The police] continued to interview all the young players and when all that had been done the next day I think we went round the players and said, 'How did it go? How did you manage with the police? Were you all right? You know, what happened?' And one of the boys was bold enough and strong enough and brave enough who spoke to Dennis Rofe and said, 'An incident had took place. Dennis told me about it.' I interviewed the boy. The boy was called [Dean Radford]. And I said, 'Well, [Dean Radford] what exactly has happened son?' He said, 'Well while I was at the school of excellence as a schoolboy in Bristol,' he said, 'I had a problem with my lower back and Mr Higgins said that he would treat it, it needed massage and it would internal massage.' And I said, 'Well what do you mean like?' He said, 'Well when he massaged me like he put his fingers up my bum.' ... [Dean Radford] reported that to the police so we knew then that there'd been like a problem, you know."

9.3.92. Dave Merrington went on to tell me that he had been a prosecution witness at Higgins' trial in 1992. He also stated:

"Nobody from the Board of Directors gave us support or help at all and after the trial again I expected someone, I thought someone would have at least enquired to what had gone on. No one from the board sought out information again from [Dean Radford] or myself, no support was given. Not so much for myself but for [Dean Radford] really. ... I mean he was a young man who's had an incident as a schoolboy, who's had a real major problem and we just felt that the board in a way and the chairman, none of them came to ask us any questions and investigate the situation at all."

9.3.93. Dennis Rofe recalled how, in 1989, Dave Merrington had told him about what he had overheard on the minibus. Dennis Rofe's recollection was that within a few days the youth player Dean Radford had disclosed that Higgins had sexual abused him, and it was after that that matters were reported to the Club's manager Chris Nicholl who took the issue to the Board of Directors. Dennis Rofe told me:

"Dave said [to me], 'A few of the boys back in the minibus, there's been a bit of banter between the boys,' which there always was on the minibus. 'There was something I didn't like. They've referred to Bob Higgins.' So boys being boys in the back of a minivan were saying, 'Whose turn is it tonight?' according to what Dave's told me. You know, 'Whose turn is it this weekend,' or whatever. Dave ... came to me. He said to me exactly that and we spoke to – or Dave spoke to the boys and that was when, I think, [Dean Radford] looked a little bit, should I say, sheepish. ... And Dave said, 'I think he's got something to say.'"

So we spoke to [Dean Radford], Dave Merrington and I, and he said, 'Bob gave him an internal massage.' The boy was quite distraught.

So [the next day] Dave and I went to the then manager, Chris Nicholl. Told him that. Chris's reaction was, 'If it's true, I'm going to sack him,' and then Chris went to the board, Guy Askham was chairman. Chris went to the board and, sure enough, Bob left the club."

9.3.94. Dennis Rofe's understanding was that Chris Nicholl and Guy Askham (the Club's Chairman) had spoken with Higgins about what had been reported. Guy Askham has told the Review that he did not speak to Higgins, as Higgins had left before he had the opportunity to do so.

9.3.95. Dennis Rofe also told me, "The only police involvement that I can recollect was a little while later and I can't remember the time scale again, but a policeman ... interviewed everybody. Obviously we told him [what] Dean Radford had told us. ... I'm not certain ... but I would assume that the club informed ... the police."

9.3.96. Keith Wiseman told me:

96.1. He was aware that Dave Merrington had overheard a conversation about Higgins on a team bus, but was now unable to recollect any details. He recalled, however: "that it must have been something of significance because just the whole environment would not have led to Dave even thinking twice about it if it had been anything else."

96.2. When asked whether he remembered discussing this with anyone else such as the Chairman or the other Directors:

"No, no I don't. I think that you can't separate it out really from all the other problems. I mean you can now but then Bob was on the brink. We knew he was on the brink of going because of [conflicts of interest between his work for his own private academy and his role as Youth Development Officer at the Club]. So if you like learning about a throwaway line on a bus was in that context. The context that he was almost certainly about to go anyway."

96.3. And:

"I think it would have gone from Dave [Merrington] to Chris [Nicholl], and Chris attended the board meetings. Dave didn't. So Chris would have passed it on and somewhere because of the delicacy and of course the employment issues, you know, a false accusation and so on. I mean all sorts of difficult issues would arise, but somebody would have said that Bob had to be spoken to about it."

96.4. Keith Wiseman also said:

"The board would have certainly I imagine have had discussions along the lines of, 'Well, this can't go on like this anymore. Either he's working for us or he's working for himself,' so that was running for the whole of that 18 months. This point would have come in, the point we're discussing, would have come somewhere during that 18 months. And human nature being what it is I guess that the feeling was, 'This is another reason why he's got to go then.' We wouldn't have wanted any kind of association with anything untoward. But

by itself it might have been quite difficult to deal with because it was just a throwaway line that had been reported to us. And so although it would have inevitably ended I think in Bob leaving it was so interwoven with the other thing. And I'm sure we didn't sack him."

96.5. Keith Wiseman stated that the allegation against Higgins "would not have been anything really serious because otherwise we would have had to have done something instantly".

96.6. Keith Wiseman also told me that:

"I'm as certain as I can be that there was no Board-led inquiry. Whether Dave spoke to other boys in what I guess would have been a pretty informal fashion anyway, I don't know. ... When we became aware there was a police investigation or whether we even precipitated it I don't know but we might well have said, 'Well, the police...' At some point in time we must have been able to say, 'Well, the police are dealing with this.'

What kind of time gap there might have been on that I really don't know ... We certainly, by the way, had not heard – I think I'm sure – had not heard of more than one throwaway remark. So the police investigation must have picked up the other people. We would have known very quickly that the police inquiry was taking place in relation to precisely the same point that we had heard about which may have been a reassurance that it was being looked at. Because bear in mind we would have struggled a bit, I mean he'd gone, he wouldn't tell us anything anyway, not quite sure what powers we would have. We might have been able to talk to other children but we wouldn't have had any control over Bob in any way at the time. So we may well have decided in any event there was very little of practical use that we could add to the thing."

9.3.97. Keith Wiseman was shown a copy of the Board minutes dated June 1st 1989, which read: "After serious consideration it was agreed that Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Gordon bring to the attention of the Police the Club's concern over stories circulating about incidents involving this former member of staff." Keith Wiseman explained to the Review that these minutes:

"show conclusively that, on June 1st 1989, the Board clearly had an anxious discussion about more matters that were coming to light in the weeks after Bob Higgins left in April 89 (probably as boys felt freed up to say more than as frequently happens). There must clearly have been more conversations with members of staff to provide this further information even if it would be going too far to describe this as a 'club inquiry'."

9.3.98. Keith Wiseman said:

"The Board meeting referred to may well have been the first one after this further information became available; and the clear decision was to involve the police straight away. The worst that can be said about this sequence is that we felt some more evidence was needed than the original Dave Merrington information to take the very serious step of contacting the police about an extremely litigious person."

9.3.99. To demonstrate Higgins' litigiousness, Keith Wiseman pointed to the first paragraph of the Board minutes which refers to correspondence with lawyers for the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy.

9.3.100. For Keith Wiseman, the minutes "clearly show the club was only too happy" to contact the police "once enough information became available". The minutes suggest that "in the intervening period ... other conversations were clearly taking place with some of the likely victims".

9.3.101. Keith Wiseman also explained to the Review that:

"Despite what the Minutes say about contacting the police, I know that I did not and [the other Director] Ian Gordon had no recollection of having done so either. [Ian Gordon] would have been more likely to anyway as his firm were the official Club solicitors. I think the most likely thing that happened was that we became aware that the police were already involved because of a victim complaint that had been made before that Board meeting ever took place."

Guy Askham told the Review that he was certain that Ian Gordon had referred the matter to the police, as he had been informed that this was the case at the time.

9.3.102. The allegations of abuse by Higgins were brought to Southampton's attention in February 1989, shortly before a meeting took place between representatives of the FA, the Football League, the English Schools Football Association and Southampton, to discuss a prior complaint received from Portsmouth United concerning Higgins and his activities with his Soccer Academy.

9.3.103. I asked Keith Wiseman about the meeting in 1989 with the FA and the Football League about Higgins. He said that he had no independent recollection of the meeting of February 23rd 1989. Based on the timeline of events, however, he thought that it was likely that, at the time of the meeting, he had known the reasons for Higgins' pending departure from Southampton, and that these would have included the allegations of abuse being made against Higgins. For Keith Wiseman, the main reason for Higgins' departure was a perceived conflict of interest between the work that he was doing for the Bob Higgins Soccer Academy and its young players and Higgins' formal role with Southampton as a Youth Development Officer: this was the matter which was causing the FA and the Football League concern: see FA and Bob Higgins. Keith Wiseman told the Review that he would not have informed the FA at the meeting of February 23rd 1989 about the allegations of abuse, as, at that stage, there were only allegations of abuse and nothing had been substantiated.

Provisional Conclusion as to What Southampton Knew About Higgins' Abuse and What Should Have Been Done

9.3.104. On the basis of the above, my provisional conclusion is that there are a number of pieces of evidence which suggest that, even before the disclosure of the allegation abuse to Dave Merrington in February 1989, the Club had been aware of concerns about Higgins' conduct towards the boys he was working with at Southampton, and

that there had been matters of concern which merited further investigation:

104.1. In the 1970s, the Club was contacted by PT, a headteacher, who raised concerns about Higgins.

104.2. In April 1979, a complaint was received about Higgins, and the manager was tasked with making further enquiries: see above. Within two weeks, Higgins had tendered his resignation.

104.3. There were rumours about Higgins circulating during his time at Southampton. They were heard by at least one other coach, HU, at the Club.

104.4. It was known by at least some Club staff that Higgins had boys staying overnight at his house. Indeed, Higgins suggested that the Club's then Chairman had been aware of this practice.

104.5. The fact that Higgins was conducting "soap water massages" on youth schoolboys appears to have been known by Club staff.

104.6. Someone at the Club had been spoken to by the FA to arrange for Billy Seymour to be released from his contract with the Club. There was also an issue relating to Billy Seymour which may have led to Higgins no longer having players staying over at his house.

9.3.105. Given these factors, my provisional conclusion is that the Club should have taken steps to monitor Higgins' activities.

9.3.106. In February 1989, Dave Merrington overheard youth players making troubling comments about Higgins. These comments were reported to the Board. Shortly after Dave Merrington passed on this information, Higgins left the Club. His contract of employment formally came to an end in April 1989, but he seems to have stopped working for the Club in March 1989.

9.3.107. Dave Merrington recalled that the police had not visited the Club until some time after Higgins had left the Club. Dean Radford's recollection is that the police came to the Club a few weeks after he had disclosed the abuse to Dave Merrington. Dave Merrington's recollection fits more closely with the Club's Board minutes, in that it was only at the meeting of June 1st 1989 that the Board decided to contact the police about the concerns with respect to Higgins. As at that date, therefore, it is likely that the police had not visited the Club.

9.3.108. Keith Wiseman has explained to the Review that he did not contact the police, and he reported that Ian Gordon (another Director of the Club) had not done so either. This is disputed, however, by Guy Askham. It is possible, therefore, that even though the Board had agreed to contact the police at the meeting of June 1st 1989, this did not prove to be necessary, as the police may have learned of the allegations against Higgins from another source. As for whether an investigation was carried out by the Club, Guy Askham informed the Review that he believes that he was told at the time that the apprentices were spoken to as a group, but they were all silent until after Higgins left the Club.

9.3.109. I also make the following provisional conclusions:

109.1. The Club did not carry out any sort of structured or individualised

investigation following the disclosure to Dave Merrington as to whether other boys had been abused by Higgins. The Club may have heard other “stories” about Higgins after the disclosure to Dave Merrington but this does not appear to have been as a result of concerted enquiries made by the Club. The Club could not justify failing to carry out such an investigation on the basis that it would interfere with an ongoing police investigation. The Club was not aware that the police were investigating Higgins.

109.2. The Club did not decide to report the allegation of abuse to the police until June 1989. This should have happened more quickly – the information disclosed to Dave Merrington was sufficiently serious to warrant immediate police contact.

9.3.110. It is appropriate to make it clear that my references to the Club are not references to the current management of Southampton FC, who had no involvement in the matters that are referred to in this Report.

PETERBOROUGH UNITED’S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.3.111. In its report to me, Peterborough stated that “the Club received the first allegation against [Bob Higgins] in January 2013”, and that it “immediately disclosed this allegation to the police, the Football Association, the Football League and the Local Authority. The allegation was subsequently investigated by Hampshire Police.” I understand this to be a reference to an allegation notified to the Club by ZL (see further below).

9.3.112. The Club’s report continued:

“The Club can confirm that [Higgins] was employed directly by Kit Carson, the Academy Director at the time. [Higgins] was employed by the Club after the previous allegations [at Southampton], however, that was the sole decision of Kit Carson. No one else at the Club was aware of the previous allegations and we consider that there is no reason to believe that the allegations against [Higgins] would have been known, or indeed suspected, by any persons at the Club during the period between 1993 and 2005 because thorough and detailed investigations have been undertaken and no evidence to the contrary has been uncovered.”

9.3.113. I set out below the evidence provided to me by the Club. I then set out other evidence that I have received and considered in reaching my conclusions in relation to the Club’s knowledge about Higgins.

Knowledge of Previous Allegations Against Higgins

9.3.114. The Club provided me with the following accounts which I consider relevant to the issue of the Club’s state of knowledge of the previous allegations against Higgins when he was working for Southampton:

114.1. TV, who was a youth player at the Club from 1994, said that “he heard that when [Carson] employed [Higgins], one player’s father was a policeman who was aware of the allegations against Higgins] while he was at Southampton but [Carson] vouched for [Higgins]”.

114.2. UF, a senior member of the Club’s staff in the period 1995-1997, said that he had had no knowledge of the failed prosecution of Higgins and was not aware that anyone else had known about this. When asked whether Carson had had the power to appoint a staff member such as Higgins without first clearing the appointment with others at the Club, UF stated:

“I would have thought that at that time if he had to, then it would have been to [the Club’s Chairman]. We were never involved in who was coming in. In my opinion, [the Club’s Chairman] would have had that say as he was the owner at the time. But thinking about it, I want to say that [Carson] had free rein, but I don’t know for definite and I have a feeling it was also people that he knew that he took on.”

114.3. OP, a youth player at the Club in the 1990s, stated that there were rumours about Higgins:

“It was common knowledge because Higgins had been to Court in 1990 for allegations against him when he was at Southampton...this was something that everyone knew... [Players were] told by the Club and by Higgins and Carson that it was ‘sour grapes’ by players at Southampton.”

OP later said that he could recollect Higgins’ making the “sour grapes” comment but it was so long ago now that he cannot remember who else might have said it.

114.4. IG, a Director of the Club in the 1990s, said that, until seeing recent press coverage, he had had no idea that Higgins had been unsuccessfully prosecuted in relation to sexual abuse of children.

114.5. BG, a youth team player at the Club stated that, just before Higgins took up the role of Youth Team manager, Carson:

“pulled us all into the office and informed us that [Higgins was the new Youth Team Manager and...] that the two of them [had] wanted to work together for years but they have never been in the right position to do so. [Carson] was saying that [Higgins] was the man ... [and] that he had known him for years. ... One of my close friends who was a [youth team player at the Club] ... didn’t come back after he found out [Higgins] was taking over ... his parents knew ... [Higgins] had been accused of a sex offence in Southampton when he was coaching down there. But I never knew this at the time.”

9.3.115. Other information obtained by the Review includes a note from a police officer from the Cambridgeshire Constabulary who, in August 1997, spoke with Carson in relation to Higgins. The Officer’s note records Carson as having stated:

“[Carson] was aware of the court case involving Higgins as he had heard

from his football contacts when at his previous club, Norwich. He telephoned Southampton Police and was advised that Higgins had not been convicted of any offence. He tackled Higgins about it and was told by [Higgins] in great detail that he had been framed.

[Carson] brought all the boys together who were likely to come into contact with Higgins. [Carson] told them what [Higgins] had been accused of. ... [He] told them what a paedophile was and told them to go home, tell their parents of this meeting and that if anything were to happen to them they were to tell their parents and the Club in that order.”

9.3.116. In 2008, Carson told the NSPCC (who had been asked by the FA to assess his suitability to coach youths) that there had been some early concerns about Higgins from his time at Southampton but that there had been no criminal conviction against him (which Carson said he had checked with the police in Southampton), and that Higgins had come highly recommended. Carson also told the NSPCC that Higgins was not a friend of his and they did not socialise together.

9.3.117. On the other hand, UT, the mother of a youth player at Norwich City (where Carson worked before joining Peterborough), said that her son had told her that Carson and Higgins had been “great mates” even when Higgins had still been at Southampton. UT told me that her son had been to watch games at Southampton with Carson and that Carson and Higgins “seemed to use each other’s training grounds”.

9.3.118. EI, who worked at POSH Soccer – an organisation described by him as having been “part of Peterborough United Football Club, specifically set up to help fund the youth programme at the club and to identify potential youth team players” – from 1994 to 1996, stated:

“I remember talking to [Carson] after [Higgins] left the football club, [Carson] told me there were previous allegations against [Higgins], but when the case went to court, the boys had said they had made the allegations up and that this was why it was OK to recruit him at Peterborough as the allegations were unfounded. ... I don’t know the exact reasons because they were never openly discussed, but ... [Higgins] left [Peterborough]. All I was told specifically was this was by mutual consent.”

Allegations and Concerns During Higgins’ Time at Peterborough

9.3.119. Peterborough United provided me with the following accounts which I consider relevant to the issue of what was known about Higgins during the Club’s association with him.

119.1. TV described Higgins’ behaviour towards the boys as “pretty obvious” and recalled “seeing some of the lads ‘fighting’ to be able to sit behind [Higgins] as he was driving the minibus. They would be rubbing [Higgins]’ shoulders.” TV then said that “he didn’t think other staff members had seen this and he had no reason to believe that other staff members were aware of this. ... [Higgins] was driving the van on his own.” TV said that he and

other youth players would “say to each other about how obvious it was what was going on and would generally take the ‘mick’ about it.” When asked to elaborate, TV said it was “obvious . . . that those boys were so desperate and that it was just very strange.”

119.2. UF said that he had not heard any allegations or rumours about Higgins during his time at the Club (and the first time he became aware of any issues was when the allegations recently entered the public domain). UF, whose role had been with the senior players, did say that upon reflection (and with the benefit of hindsight) the youth set up did seem to be a “very ‘closed shop’. Not secretive, but nothing was shared, it was very much a ‘them and us’ culture in relation to the youth teams and the older teams.”

119.3. OY, a youth player at the Club in the mid-1990s, recalled his first day in the club dressing rooms: “Higgins was there. Higgins said, ‘Right, come on everyone, in the showers ... this was weird. ... Higgins was just standing there staring at all the lads in the shower. Then Higgins said something like, ‘Right, that’s it, massage table now,’ ... it was weird that the boys were naked on the massage table.” OY also recounted how “Higgins would slap boys on the arse ... [and] after games Higgins would stand there and stare at the lads whilst they were getting changed.” OY also said he “remembers thinking, ‘How do these boys not know this isn’t normal,’” and said he “thinks it [was] because it was ingrained in them whereas [he had experience of being at another club]. ... He had never seen anything like it, it was madness.” OY recalled that Higgins would have pet names for some of the boys such as “Sugar” and “Star”.

119.4. EP, a youth player at Peterborough in the mid-1990s, stated that when Higgins had left the Club, Carson had told him (EP) that “that there had been allegations made by a player”. EP did not know what those allegations had been about, but recalled that Carson had said that “the child psychologist could see that [the player who had made the allegations] was lying”.

119.5. TY, a youth player at the Club in the mid-1990s, stated that he had heard rumours that Higgins was a “bit dodgy” and that Higgins “liked boys”. TY said he had been “very aware of these rumours when he was training” albeit he put the rumours down to “jealousy”. TY went on to say that “what he heard did worry him but he just wanted to be a footballer, so he just also had it at the forefront of his mind and was just always on guard when [Higgins] trained him. He was also mindful that [Higgins] had been suspected before that and had gone to Court but been found not guilty.” TY also talked about the *Dispatches* programme which had featured Higgins. TY recalled that he had been told by a member of the Club’s staff “not to talk to the press or anyone about it. ... The next day after the programme [Carson] asked in a team meeting if anyone had seen the programme. One lad said yes and [Carson] went on about how pathetic the lad was that was on the programme.”

119.6. OG, a senior staff member at the Club during Higgins’ tenure, said he did not have a close working relationship with Higgins and “hardly ever came across Higgins... didn’t really see him”.

119.7. Barry Fry, who became Manager of Peterborough after Higgins left, said that no complaints or concerns were ever received about Higgins until

FP's letter arrived.

9.3.120. The Review also obtained other information about Higgins' time at Peterborough. In the notes of the police officer who spoke with Carson in August 1997, he records Carson as having stated:

“Things were alright at the Club until December 1995 when [Carson] found out, from some of the boys, that before training and matches everybody was made to say prayers.

[Carson] had a meeting with Higgins and told him this practice was to cease. Higgins explained that he was a born again Christian but [Carson] pointed out to him that he had signed a code of conduct on his employment which covered this type of behaviour as being unacceptable. After this, prayer did stop but [Carson] noticed an atmosphere towards him from some of the youths.

It was noticeable to [Carson] over the next couple of months that the squad (some but not all) were closing ranks to outsiders.

In a one week period in January, two first-team players and a youth squad player spoke to [Carson] expressing concerns over Higgins and his motive. None of the above were specific but wanted to bring [Carson's] attention that something did not appear right. [Carson] later found out from a youth squad member that Bob Higgins had baptized him in Bob's bath in Southampton. The lad in question ... explained he has kept his shorts on for this ceremony...

[Carson] confronted Higgins over this and strongly advised him of his actions. [Carson said] in retrospect he should have sacked Higgins but at that time [Carson] still did not know the full extent of what was going on.

February and March 1996 passed without incident.

In April 1996, [Carson] discovered other baptizing had been going on. Carson had spent the last two months watching closely what was happening and although he was not happy with the situation, he did not know why. It was on Friday 26 April 1996 that [Carson] learned of the baptisms and on the following Monday, 29 April 1996, [Carson] sacked Higgins.

...Higgins was sacked for breach of code of conduct and the baptisms... [Higgins] defended his faith and left the Club within fifteen minutes.

[Carson] then told the squad members, half of whom were elated, a quarter were confused and four were devastated; these four left the Club and went home to their parents. Over the next several weeks, after speaking with management at the club three of these lads returned. Later, in talking to these youths, the Club discovered that Higgins was preaching to them to block out

everybody but himself (including the boys' parents). At no stage have these three disclosed any abuse..."

9.3.121. JA stated that some first team players would say things about Higgins and rumours from Southampton. Those first team players called Higgins a "paedophile". JA and other youth players would defend Higgins and say that they did not know the "real" Higgins. JA also stated that, even after Higgins left the Club, "no one opened up to the others about things, they were so brainwashed they all thought it was another test and that he would be back soon. It was made worse when they were told [by Carson] not to speak to anyone else about [Higgins' time at the Club]."

9.3.122. BG, a youth player at the Club stated:

"[Higgins] would have a bath in the changing room, he would often make comments about the youths' penises, there was one lad in particular... He was 16 years of age and [Higgins] used to make a big thing about the size of his penis, he used to call him 'Donkey'. [Higgins] would also talk to some of the other lads who were circumcised, Higgins would call them 'Roundhead'...

...

I don't know why [Higgins] left the club, the club came out and told us that it was religious beliefs but other said it was the accusations of abuse. [Higgins] left under a massive cloud..."

9.3.123. EI, who worked at POSH Soccer from 1994 to 1996, stated:

"I became aware of rumours about [Higgins] and that things were happening involving him. [Higgins] was a coach at Peterborough United... our roles meant we didn't see each other that often, but we would from time to time. The rumours were that [Higgins] held meetings with the youth players whilst he was in the bath and he got kids to scrub his back. If a kid's face didn't fit or they didn't go along with what he wanted, [Higgins] would ostracise them... [Higgins] seemed to have a great deal of psychological control over his players... I was quite close to some of his players and some would talk to me about him. ... Before the game in the changing rooms, I witnessed [Higgins] massaging boys with deep heat, the boys were clothed at the time wearing football kit. There was no inappropriate touching but I felt he was too hands on. When I saw the Channel 4 documentary about [Higgins], I was not surprised at all, however I always thought that his abuse was more psychological, I was never told about anything sexual."

9.3.124. OL, a staff member at Peterborough during Higgins' tenure, said that he had never heard of Higgins giving massages and pointed out that Higgins had not been trained to do so. OL recalled that once Higgins joined the Club, youth players were not able to go back to their homes as freely as had previously been the case. OL also recalled that two players had approached him and told him that Higgins had asked them to take their shirts off while doing chores. OL said that this did not worry him at the time but, with the benefit of hindsight, he does question why they approached him. OL said he had not seen anything of concern in relation to Higgins and had not heard any rumours or complaints about him.

9.3.125. In a written response to the producers of the *Dispatches* programme, the Club stated that Higgins “left by mutual consent. The Club [was] not prepared to tolerate his strong religious influence upon young players.”

9.3.126. Paul Ashworth, who replaced Higgins as the Youth Team Manager at Peterborough United, told me that Carson had had “reservations” about Higgins and that it was these reservations that had led to Higgins’ being dismissed. These reservations related to Higgins getting “too close” to the boys. Mr Ashworth also said that, during his time at the Club (1996-2000), he had heard that boys had stayed overnight at Higgins’ house and had travelled alone with Higgins, but that no disclosures of sexual abuse were ever made and that it was not until the *Dispatches* programme was broadcast that he had become aware of any concerns that Higgins had a sexual interest in children.

9.3.127. Notes of a meeting between social services and Hampshire Constabulary on September 23rd 1997 record that contact had been made by FH, a former coach at Peterborough United, with information that “we might like to follow up as soon as possible”. The Club was unable to make contact with FH to clarify this matter.

9.3.128. Notes of an earlier meeting dated August 14th 1997 stated that Hampshire Social Services had:

“contact with Mr Ed Braman [of Channel 4 Television] who re-affirmed his belief that after the Channel 4 programme ‘someone’ on the staff at Peterborough FC (PFC) revealed that a youngster did disclose sexual abuse by Higgins and that this was brought to the notice of the PFC board. However, they decided not to take it further.”

I spoke with Ed Braman who was unable to recall any contact with social services and, due to the passage of time, was only able to say that he vaguely recalled that after the *Dispatches* programme someone (whose name he had forgotten) who worked at the Club had made contact to suggest that an allegation or allegations of abuse had been made. Ed Braman was also unable to recall whether the individual who made contact was suggesting that the disclosure(s) of abuse had been made to Peterborough while Higgins was still there or whether this only occurred after he left and, potentially, after *Dispatches* had aired. It is not possible, therefore, to verify that an allegation of sexual abuse was made about Higgins before his departure.

9.3.129. FP stated that, shortly after he was abused by Higgins (which FP said was in March 1996), HC, a member of the Club’s Board of Directors, “asked me [a] question about Higgins and about my wellbeing. He said he was pleased to be able to get the chance to talk to me one on one and he wanted to make sure everything was okay and that I was not having any problems.”

9.3.130. FP also recounted that, a few days later, in the first team changing room, a first team player, TQ, had been talking about Higgins and had called him a paedophile. FP then “turned on TQ and threatened him with the sweeping brush. I told him he was out of order and told him to shut his mouth before he regretted it.” FP further stated:

“Later that day, [a senior staff member, UF] called a meeting for all the youth

team as [Higgins] was not in the club on this particular day. He made an example of me ... saying that not one of our squad had enough balls ... to stand up to TQ. ... He commented how it was unacceptable for people to be talking of staff members in that way...”

9.3.131. FP also stated how, some time later, Higgins had told the youth team that he was leaving the Club that day. FP recalled that he had been part of a small group of youth players who went to see a member of the Club’s Board “to try and see what was going on. I think we were hoping to change his mind but the response was not what we expected as [the Board member] shook all our hands and told us to fuck off.”

9.3.132. On August 1st 1997, Cambridgeshire Constabulary responded to an enquiry from Hampshire Constabulary, saying that it had spoken to Peterborough United “last year” and that “the bottom line is no concerns re sexual, more that he was a religious freak”.

9.3.133. By a detailed letter dated November 2012 (which the Club says it received in January 2013), FP gave the account summarised above to the Club. In March 2013, the Club replied to FP stating:

“Upon receipt of your complaint, I immediately spoke with the Senior Safeguarding Manager at the club and sought additional advice from the Football League Child Protection Advisor on this issue. ... Peterborough United takes all safeguarding responsibilities seriously. In light of the fact that the disclosure you made within your complaint may have constituted a criminal offence, it was felt that the most appropriate action was to refer your complaint to the police. In line with FA regulations now in place, the matter was also referred to the FA Safeguarding Case Management Team in case any of those named in the allegation still have a role in football and could still be considered a risk to children.

The police have now responded to the club stating that they can find no record of the report of crime relating to the complaint between 1994 and 1996.

The police have stated that if you wish to make a formal complaint ... you should do that directly to them.

...

Because of the historic and potential criminal nature of your complaint, dealing with a period almost twenty years ago, the club are not empowered to carry out any form of investigation on your behalf. Any further action by the club on this issue would need to be led by the appropriate statutory authorities.

The club has a safeguarding responsibility to ensure the appropriate authorities are made aware, in confidence, of the outcome of this serious allegation and will therefore be copying in the police and the FA Case Management Team. I will also be informing the PFA of the club’s response to this issue as you have copied them in to the original complaint.

The Safeguarding Children Officers at the club hope that you find the support you need in dealing with this sensitive issue.”

9.3.134. Nothing I have seen suggests that Peterborough conducted any sort of internal investigation following receipt of FP’s letter in 2012 or 2013. However, representatives of the Club were present at a multi-agency strategy meeting (involving the police and social services), in April 2013. In July 2014, the Club was informed by Hampshire Constabulary that an investigation into Higgins had been concluded “some time ago with no further action being taken against Mr Higgins”.

9.3.135. Given FP’s account, I asked the Club to make enquiries of HC, TQ, UY and UF. The Club told me that it had not managed to speak with HC, TQ or UY. The Club did speak with UF and a summary of his account is set out above. During a further conversation with the Club, UF stated that he had no recollection of the incident recounted by FP.

9.3.136. I spoke to both BG and FP, who were both sexually abused by Higgins while they were junior players at the Club. Neither of them disclosed their abuse to anyone at the Club.

9.3.137. On the basis of the above, I conclude as follows:

137.1. Higgins and Carson were known to each other prior to Higgins joining Peterborough. I cannot say for certain that they were “friends” but they were clearly acquaintances.

137.2. Carson knew that Higgins had had allegations of sexual abuse made against him from his time at Southampton and that this had led to a criminal trial in 1992 which had resulted in Higgins’ acquittal. While there is no evidence to the contrary, I do find it surprising that no other members of the Club’s staff would have known about the previous allegations and trial during Higgins’ association with the Club. If Carson’s account – that he told the boys about Higgins’ past and directed them to tell their parents – is to be accepted, it seems likely that this information would have filtered back to others at the Club.

137.3. The fact that there had been previous allegations against Higgins may have led to comments about him: e.g. a first team player calling him a “paedophile”; although it is possible that the comments were related to Higgins’ abuse while at the Club.

137.4. EI, who worked for POSH Soccer, which was associated with the Club, was aware of rumours about Higgins. Although the rumours were not explicitly about sexual abuse, they did relate to behaviours that should have raised questions. EI also felt that Higgins was too “hands on” with the boys. There is no specific evidence that other staff members or officials at the Club heard these rumours or saw Higgins as being too “hands on”, but it would be surprising if they were known about by EI but not by others who worked more closely at the Club, including Carson.

137.5. As set out in Carson’s account to Cambridgeshire Constabulary in

2007, it was Higgins' religious practices with the young players that ultimately led to Higgins' termination from the Club. Carson did not admit to knowing, or suspecting, anything else. I have received no evidence to suggest it was a concern about, or an allegation of, sexual abuse that led to Higgins leaving the Club.

Conclusion as to What Peterborough United Knew About Higgins' Abuse and What Should Have Been Done

9.3.138. Overall, there is no evidence that the Club was aware of Higgins' sexual abuse, while he was employed by the Club. There is no corroborated evidence that the Club was aware of allegations of sexual abuse, while Higgins was working for the Club.

9.3.139. However, there were certain warning signs for officials at the Club to have seen. There were a number of inappropriate behaviours (as described by EI: see above) that were likely to have been witnessed by Club officials. There was also the fact that boys would travel to Southampton to stay at Higgins' home. I consider that these behaviours ought to have led to greater monitoring of Higgins by the Club. This does not appear to have been done.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY SOUTHAMPTON

9.3.140. Southampton is continuing to investigate the circumstances of Higgins' involvement and what, if anything, was known about his abuse or allegations of abuse. As part of its investigation, I expect the Club to consider and inquire further into the matters raised in my provisional conclusions above, as well as when (if at all) the Club reported the matter to the police and whether this should have been done sooner.

9.3.141. As at the date of this Report's publication, Barnardo's had spoken to eight former Board members and former members of staff/coaches/management, and 23 survivors or other former players.

9.3.142. My dealings with the Club have been very co-operative, and I am satisfied that the Club is committed to carrying out a thorough investigation. I have no reason to doubt that it will do so.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY PETERBOROUGH UNITED

9.3.143. Peterborough United conducted initial enquiries and reported its findings to me. There then followed extensive correspondence with the Club discussing the investigative steps taken by the Club and what other lines of enquiry might be open to it. I also met with the Club to discuss its initial findings and to explore what further investigation could be undertaken. Having conducted further enquiries, the Club provided me with an updated report. I remained of the view that there were further avenues of investigation that were open to the Club and asked that further enquiries be conducted. These were carried out, and the Club has satisfied me that the investigation it has conducted was adequate within the meaning of my Terms of Reference.

9.3.144. The Club spoke to 17 people as part of the investigation: including seven former players, three former members of their Board of Directors, one current member of the Board, and six other members of staff. The Club sought to contact 68 others, but either contact details were unobtainable, letters went unanswered or people chose not to speak to the Club or had sadly passed away.

9.4 Edward ‘Ted’ Langford

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INTRODUCTION

9.4.1. Edward Langford (known as ‘Ted Langford’) (‘Langford’) was a convicted child sex offender. He pleaded guilty in 2007 to charges of indecent assault and gross indecency against four individuals, all of whom were male and under the age of 14. Langford had met each of these four individuals through his role in football. These offences spanned the period 1976 to 1990. Langford was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment for these offences. Langford died in 2012.

9.4.2. The Review has looked at the evidence from each of the four individuals who were complainants in Langford’s criminal trial. The Review has also met with or considered the written evidence of five others who alleged that they had been sexually abused by Langford. I have no reason to doubt these further accounts. A number of the individuals described a similar modus operandi whereby Langford would give quasi-medical justifications for what were, in truth, depraved acts of sexual abuse. There is no evidence of active collusion or of one individual ‘piggy-backing’ his story on another. There is also no evidence that any of the individuals whose accounts I have seen or heard have made up these stories for financial gain or otherwise. It is not my role, however, to make findings about any individual’s abuse, and I acknowledge that some Langford survivors have not had their evidence tested in a courtroom.

9.4.3. Langford had links to both Aston Villa FC and Leicester City FC. It is clear to me that Langford used these links to give himself a credibility and authority that allowed him to manipulate young players and their parents, and ultimately to commit acts of sexual abuse. As His Honour Judge Chapman, the Recorder of Birmingham, put it when sentencing Langford in 2007:

“You held the keys to their dreams. Most of them wanted and hoped to play football professionally and you were the access to one of the football clubs that may have enabled that to happen. So they would have been in awe of you, unable, in my view, to quarrel with you, reject your advances, or in any way offend you.”

9.4.4. The Langford criminal trial attracted some local media publicity: see e.g. “Aston Villa scout jailed after sex abuse of boys”, *Birmingham Post*, December 19th 2007. The Langford trial and conviction did not attract nationwide attention.

SUMMARY OF LANGFORD’S INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL

Overview

9.4.5. Langford lived in Perry Barr in Birmingham. He was a refuse collector by occupation. He also worked as a disc jockey at local pubs or clubs. Langford was also the manager of an amateur youth team that played in the Birmingham leagues. This youth team was variously known as Calthorpe Celtic, Dunlop Terriers and Fresha Juniors. (The name ‘Fresha’ Juniors is sometimes referred to in statements that I

have read as ‘Fresher’ Juniors. It is the same team.) Langford also arranged for this youth team to travel to Scandinavia. It is alleged that Langford committed some acts of abuse while on these overseas trips, and it is likely that he did so.

9.4.6. In addition to managing that youth team, Langford was:

- 6.1. in the period 1976 (or earlier) to 1980/81, a scout for Aston Villa;
- 6.2. in the period 1980/81 to 1987, a scout for Leicester City; and
- 6.3. in the period 1987 to 1989, a scout for Aston Villa.

9.4.7. The periods of Langford’s association with Aston Villa and Leicester City broadly coincided with the employment by those clubs of Dave Richardson. Dave Richardson has had a lengthy career in football and was one of the people who worked hard to introduce child protection processes into the professional game during his time at the Premier League, where he worked as its Director of Youth.

9.4.8. Dave Richardson joined Aston Villa in 1976 as the Club’s Youth Development Officer. At this point, Langford was already associated with the club. Following Dave Richardson’s move to Leicester City in 1980 (as the Youth Team Manager), he asked Langford to become a scout for Leicester City instead of Aston Villa. When Dave Richardson moved back to Aston Villa in 1987 (as Assistant Manager with special responsibility for the Club’s youth team), Langford once again began to scout for Aston Villa.

9.4.9. As was usual in relation to scouts in that era, Langford was not formally employed by either Aston Villa or Leicester City. He was, however, paid expenses and potentially a bonus if a player that he had introduced turned professional.

9.4.10. There were also significant links between Langford’s youth teams and Aston Villa and Leicester City.

Links with Aston Villa

9.4.11. Dave Richardson told the Review that when he joined Aston Villa in 1976 he initially stayed at the Club hostel, which was a large house used to accommodate apprentices (predominantly those from out of town) who were linked to the Club. Dave Richardson was told by the person then running the hostel that Langford “was in the habit of visiting the hostel”.

9.4.12. Dave Richardson described Langford’s role at Aston Villa in the following way:

12.1. Dave Richardson explained:

“He was always around the club. He appeared at the club during the day, and it was a common thing whereby he would go into the office at the club and he would be in, very likely, at 2 o’clock in the afternoon when the boys arrived ... so because of the nature of him living nearby and because he was the main scout and because of his standing, he was around the club a lot more than the other scouts would be.”

12.2. And: “[Langford] was the main man to get boys into Aston Villa. ... Quite an influence on the boys and their parents in terms of his standing

with the club.” In subsequent correspondence, Dave Richardson stated that in making this statement he had not meant to convey that he saw Langford as the “main man”, but rather that Langford saw himself in this way, and sought to present himself in this way to young players and parents.

12.3. Dave Richardson also said: “He was the main man. He wanted everybody to know that he was the main man and he had the major influence.” Dave Richardson showed me a picture of Aston Villa scouts and staff at Bodymoor Heath, and told me: “It’s not by chance that Langford’s right in the middle of the photograph.” In subsequent correspondence, Dave Richardson stated that Langford’s scouting “produced the occasional first team player but he was not especially productive or of irreplaceable importance.”

12.4. When asked whether Dunlop Terriers had been a “feeder team” for Aston Villa, Dave Richardson said: “Yes. Yes. It was connected. Everybody knew you had your links. If you got in with Ted Langford, that link would be with Aston Villa.”

12.5. Part of Langford’s role as a scout was “to make sure that his boys could get to [Villa] training”. Langford would then “be hanging around talking to parents or whatever... that was his portrayal as the main man”.

9.4.13. Langford’s role or connection with Aston Villa was described by others who spoke to the Review as follows:

13.1. One explained: “[Dunlop Terriers] would regularly be asked to play against trialists at Bodymoor Heath, Villa’s training grounds...and on club trips we would travel as Aston Villa Nursery Team.”

13.2. Another said: “[He was] the lead scout for Aston Villa working alongside the Assistant Manager Dave Richardson”.

9.4.14. There is no suggestion that Aston Villa deliberately provided Langford with authority to manipulate boys in order to commit abuse, but it is clear to me that, in practice, Aston Villa provided Langford with a cloak of credibility and authority that he would not otherwise have had and that Langford used that cloak of credibility and authority to manipulate young players and parents. To be specific, in correspondence on Aston Villa headed paper and signed by the Club’s Assistant Manager, Dave Richardson, to a youth player whom the Club had a professional interest in, Langford was described as “our representative”. He was referred to as someone who was entrusted to make arrangements on behalf of the Club. The correspondence (dated March 1st 1989) reads in relevant part:

“I would like to invite you to Aston Villa Football Club for a period of training and coaching from Tuesday 28th March – Friday 31st March, 1989.

Exact Arrangements will be given by our representative Mr T Langford...”

9.4.15. The evidence suggests that Aston Villa did not fund tours for the amateur youth team managed by Langford and that the Club did not assist in organising those tours. There is evidence, however, that Aston Villa did allow Langford to use the Aston Villa van (which was sign-written to identify it as the Club’s vehicle) for the purposes of these tours. There is also a suggestion that the Club provided Langford with football kits for use during these overseas trips, although this could not be verified.

9.4.16. When Langford’s amateur youth team was training, Dave Richardson told me that he would sometimes “go down and meet up with one or two of the players who were associate schoolboys” with Aston Villa “just to watch the training, or whatever...”

9.4.17. Aston Villa told the Review that the last record of a payment to Langford for scouting expenses was on August 22nd 1989. However, Club records also show that, between July 1989 and December 1990, the Club continued to pay Langford an allowance for providing accommodation to an apprentice player. The Review has been told that Langford did accommodate an Aston Villa apprentice at his home. The Review has been unable to speak with that apprentice player (although Dave Richardson told the Review that he had spoken with this former youth player, who said that he had been “happy staying at [Langford’s] home in the converted garage”). The payments between July 1989 and December 1990 suggest that, despite removing him as a scout following allegations of sexual abuse (see below), the Club permitted Langford to continue to accommodate this apprentice player. It is not known how this was permitted, or who was responsible for it and whether they were aware of allegations of abuse against Langford.

Links with Leicester City

9.4.18. Dave Richardson told me that in 1980, he moved from Aston Villa to Leicester City to become the latter Club’s Youth Team Manager. Dave Richardson told me that Langford did not immediately follow him to Leicester City, but moved across later in 1980 or in 1981:

“There was a year, there was a period of time whereby obviously I got settled in at Leicester City. And then eventually, because of my connections with that side of the Midlands, eventually I brought him on board as a scout. He based himself – carried on with Dunlop Terriers.”

9.4.19. Dave Richardson stated that a number of scouts also moved with him from Aston Villa to Leicester (and later, back to Aston Villa).

9.4.20. Although he was scouting for Leicester City, Langford continued to live in the Birmingham area (more than 40 miles away), and continued to manage an amateur youth team which played in the Birmingham leagues.

9.4.21. In describing Langford’s role at Leicester, Dave Richardson said, “Purely and simply, I brought [Langford] across [to Leicester City] as a scout with Dunlop Terriers to produce players.” Part of Langford’s role was to facilitate the “Birmingham boys” who had signed associated schoolboy forms for Leicester City to get across to Leicester for training during the school holidays.

9.4.22. Dave Richardson told me that, in or around 1982, the Leicester City Youth Team (managed by Dave Richardson) became known as ‘Fresha Juniors’ following a sponsorship arrangement with the Chairman of Leicester City, whose business interests included the Fresha Breads brand. At or about the same time that the Leicester City Youth Team became known as ‘Fresha Juniors’, the amateur youth team that was

managed by Langford also changed its name to 'Fresha Juniors'. As Dave Richardson put it:

"We [Leicester City Youth Team] became a Fresha Junior Club, in terms of on our shirts it was Fresha Juniors. ... And then we incorporated that with Ted's team, Dunlop Terriers. We [be]came known as Fresha Juniors in the Birmingham boys' league."

9.4.23. LL, an employee of Aston Villa, told the Review that when the Leicester City Youth Team played at home, Langford (often accompanied by LL) would go to those youth games and would afterwards watch the first team game. When asked whether he and Langford had been attending these games simply as members of the public, LL replied:

"We'd always go into Dave [Richardson]'s office which he had set up at the club, have a cup of tea, then talk probably about the youth game on the morning, ... then we'd make our way up to the stand and watch the game, and then afterwards we sometimes would go into the directors' room and just have a coffee or whatever and mill with – well, I say 'mill'; with people within there, obviously, Leicester people, old players and what have you, and that was how it was done and that's how it happened, you see.

...

[Langford] would walk through the club as though he was part of the furniture, and I would tag along. Nobody ever said, 'Whoa, whoa!' There was never none of that about it. Into the boardroom after the games; there was never any, 'And who are you?' He had that presence because he'd been around there for a number of years, obviously."

9.4.24. Dave Richardson showed me some photographs taken by LL on the May 1987 tour (which had been provided to Richardson by LL). Those photographs show:

- 24.1. Langford wearing a jumper with a Leicester City badge on it; and
- 24.2. Some of the young players wearing clothes with an emblem that has a fox on it (similar to the Leicester City emblem) along with the words "Calthorpe Celtic" and then "Leicester City FC".

9.4.25. When asked about those photographs and specifically whether Leicester had known that "the boys who were going on these trips were wearing emblems, badges, that said Leicester City FC", Dave Richardson replied:

"Yeah. The boys would know that they're linked. I mean it was obvious they're linked with Leicester City because of Langford and the fact that we loaned them the van and we loaned them equipment. There was an obvious link there, which wasn't anything to hide from their point of view. They knew that obviously this link was with Leicester".

9.4.26. Dave Richardson further stated:

"From my point of view, everybody knew that Langford was working at Leicester City and the team was linked. The kids were linked with Leicester City. ... The more that people in that junior football league could identify with pro clubs, the more attractive it was to the parents and the boys."

9.4.27. It is clear to me that the links which Leicester City had with Langford gave him credibility and authority that he would not otherwise have had. Correspondence was sent on Leicester City headed paper, and signed by its Youth Team Manager, Dave Richardson, to youth players in whom the Club had a professional interest in which Langford was described as “our Chief Midlands Representative”. Langford was also referred to as being entrusted to make arrangements on behalf of the Club. Examples of this correspondence included the following text:

“We would like to take this opportunity of inviting you for a period of training and coaching for one week commencing on Monday the 31st March 1986.

...

The exact traveling arrangements will be tied up by Mr Ted Langford.”
(June 18th 1986)

“Following your recent visit to Leicester City Football Club, we feel that you need to work at these aspects of your game. ... We will be in contact with our representative Mr T Langford, to check on your progress and development and if he feels that satisfactory progress has been made, we will invite you to the Club for further training/coaching.”

(August 15th 1986).

9.4.28. Correspondence on Leicester City headed notepaper, and signed by Dave Richardson, also made reference to overseas trips organised by Langford, and would have been likely to give the impression that those trips had the imprimatur of the Club. The following extracts from this correspondence highlight the point:

“I am sorry that that you are unable to attend our training and coaching sessions over the summer holidays due to your previous arrangements to visit Denmark with our Chief Midlands Representative Mr Ted Langford.

Naturally we understand the situation and we look forward to seeing you later in the year at the first available opportunity.

Hope that you have a good trip to Denmark.”
(July 25th 1985)

9.4.29. The Review has received no evidence that Leicester City funded tours for the amateur youth team managed by Ted Langford or assisted in organising those tours. However, the Club did allow Langford to use its van to transport youth players from his youth team on these overseas visits; and Dave Richardson has said that “it is possible that [the Club] did provide some [Club] kits for the boys to use on these overseas trips”.

SUMMARY OF THE ABUSE COMMITTED BY LANGFORD

Overview

9.4.30. Langford met those he abused through the amateur youth team he managed. Of the nine individuals whose accounts I have received, the earliest abuse took place in 1976/1977 and the latest abuse took place in 1989. That is not to say that there were no other instances of abuse outside of that date range or, indeed, other instances of abuse within that date range.

9.4.31. From the accounts I have received, abuse took place:

- 31.1. at Langford's house (where youth players were staying over on the basis that this would make it easier for them to attend training or matches);
- 31.2. in Langford's car or van (often, but not exclusively, on the way back from football training);
- 31.3. at Bodymoor Heath (Aston Villa's training ground); and
- 31.4. on overseas trips (including on the ferry).

9.4.32. Prior to the abuse, Langford would often concoct a quasi-medical pretext as an attempted justification for his actions. Langford's lies in this regard included:

- 32.1. He needed to check "development" by either masturbating the individual or watching the individual masturbate.
- 32.2. He needed to check for a certain gene that required a sperm sample.
- 32.3. There was "something" in the child's anus which could be "broken" by penetration and that this would allow a person to run faster.

9.4.33. Several people recounted:

- 33.1. Langford would give "love-bites" to youth players;
- 33.2. at training sessions Langford had a "no underpants rule";
- 33.3. Langford was sometimes in the company of another individual who took photographs of the youth team. Some of those who gave accounts thought that photographs may have been taken while the youth players were getting changed; and
- 33.4. there were rumours and comments between the players at Langford's youth team about Langford's behaviour.

9.4.34. The sentencing remarks of the Recorder of Birmingham included the following:

"There was also here not one victim but four. It went on over quite a long period of time; with Mr N it was three years, with F about two, and with S about two. All of that took place in the late 1970s and then it came back again in the 1980s – 1988 and 1989 – with M. It is also plain, as you now understand, that these boys have suffered some psychological damage as a result of what you did, not understanding completely, as teenagers, what their orientation was, and being confused. It is also, I am afraid, aggravating that they were so young – 11, 12, 13, 14. So this is a serious matter..."

Tony Brien

9.4.35. Tony Brien has said publicly that he was abused by Langford when Langford was associated with Leicester City.

9.4.36. Tony Brien told the BBC (during an interview with Victoria Derbyshire) that Langford had told him that he needed a “sperm sample” so that Leicester City doctors could examine it to see if Tony Brien had the “footballer’s gene”. Tony Brien went on to explain that “[Langford] masturbated me and was masturbating himself as well. ... It happened on several occasions where he just kept saying that the sample wasn’t correct and needed to do it again and again...”

9.4.37. During my interview with Tony Brien, he said:

37.1. Langford approached him to recruit him to play for Dunlop Terriers.

37.2. Tony Brien started playing for Dunlop Terriers in the 1981/82 season.

37.3. “[At that time,] it was renowned within the Sunday league that Ted Langford was a Leicester City scout...”

37.4. “[Langford] would come to my school, because he was a bin man, and he always used to tell me that he needed something from me. Which I would later know became a gene that he told me that the Leicester doctors had to take samples of and things like that. And it happened on, I’d say between four and six occasions. Because there were occasions where I just couldn’t do anything because I was just so ashamed.”

37.5. The abuse would take place in Langford’s car.

37.6. The abuse took place over a six to 12 month period: “[Langford] kept saying to me that the tests weren’t conclusive and that I needed to do it again. ... I did ask him if I could do it at home and he said ‘No...’, it needed to be fresh. He needed to catch whatever was there.”

37.7. Tony Brien was aged between 12 and 13 during the period he was abused.

37.8. The abuse stopped when Tony Brien told Langford that he would “chop [Langford’s] cock off” if he came near him again. (At this point, Tony Brien was aged 13.)

37.9. Tony Brien subsequently went on an overseas tour with Langford, but did not suffer any abuse there. He did recall that Langford would give other boys on those trips love bites and that, on the ferry, the team and Langford would sleep in a “big, open dormitory” and “they used to be always playing card games and always a child was in his bunk”.

ASTON VILLA’S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.4.38. In carrying out its investigation into the allegations of abuse perpetrated by Ted Langford, Aston Villa reviewed the Club’s documentary records, Board minute books, and email records (including from around the date of Langford’s criminal trial).

Aston Villa spoke to current members of staff who worked for the Club at the same time as Langford was associated with the Club; as well as former members of staff and members of the Club's Board.

9.4.39. In a report sent to the Review, the Club explained that there had been a complaint about Langford during the period in which he was employed by the Club, which had been dealt with by Dave Richardson (and is discussed further below). The Club reported that:

“Dave Richardson asked the parents of the boys who were alleged to have been abused if they wished the matter to be reported to the police. We believe that the parents, after having discussed the matter between themselves, decided not to take the matter to the police.”

Langford was removed as a scout from the Club. The Club did not notify the police of the allegations against Langford. The Club has no record of notifying the FA or any other governing body of the allegations made against Langford: of course, at the time there was no regulatory obligation to do so. With respect to the criminal proceedings against Langford, the Club reported: “As far as we are aware and have been able to ascertain, employees of the Club were not questioned by the police regarding the criminal investigation, trial and conviction of Ted Langford in 2007.” The Club stated that it “had no involvement in the criminal trial in 2007.”

9.4.40. The Club reported: “Whilst people do recall Ted Langford being at the Club, no one appears to [have been] aware of any issues with Ted Langford until the allegations were raised and dealt with by Dave Richardson.”

9.4.41. I have received no evidence to suggest that anyone from Aston Villa witnessed any act of abuse. Nor have I received any evidence to suggest that anyone from Aston Villa saw Ted Langford behaving in a way which should have raised concerns.

9.4.42. However, it has been reported to me that at various times relevant information relating to Langford was passed to the Club. There is some evidence that the Club (through Dave Richardson) was made aware in 1988 of un-particularised allegations about Langford's behaviour with boys that he took on a foreign tour that year. This is denied by Dave Richardson.

9.4.43. It is clear (and the Club accepts) that specific allegations of abuse by Langford were brought to its attention in mid-1989, and that this led to Langford's sacking a few months later.

9.4.44. It was also reported to me, by Tony Brien, that the Club was made aware in 1987 or 1988 that Langford had perpetrated abuse against Tony Brien when Langford was associated with Leicester City. There is a fundamental dispute about this. Tony Brien insists that he discussed the abuse with Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor, the Aston Villa manager. Dave Richardson has denied speaking to Tony Brien about this, and Graham Taylor died shortly after this Review was set up, and I was unable to speak to him about the allegations.

9.4.45. I set out below the relevant evidence that I have received in this regard.

Tony Brien's Account of his Disclosure to Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor

9.4.46. Tony Brien has stated that, in the 1987/1988 football season, he told Dave Richardson that Ted Langford had sexually abused him and provided Dave Richardson with details of that abuse. Dave Richardson denies that Tony Brien ever made this disclosure to him.

TONY BRIEN

9.4.47. Tony Brien told me that Dave Richardson was a “very good coach ... like a father figure. ... As a coach and as a person ... [he was] second to none.”

9.4.48. Tony Brien also told me that, in the 1987/88 season, he had informed Dave Richardson of the abuse by Ted Langford. Tony Brien also stated that Graham Taylor had been aware of the disclosure that he had made to Dave Richardson. The relevant extract from Tony Brien's interview with me is reproduced below:

“When I was 18 I'd already broke into the first team at Leicester and I knew that what I was feeling inside was like this dirty feeling that I couldn't get rid of. So, I got in touch with Dave Richardson and I told him about what had happened and, you know, he said, ‘It's a very serious allegation.’ Which I understood. And I said, ‘Well, it happened.’ So, over the period of about four to five weeks they were looking into it.

...

And to cut a long story short the phone calls with Richardson went on for about four to five weeks and in the end himself and Graham Taylor got on the phone to me and asked me if I could [cope with] the obscenities [from the terraces]. ‘Just sweep it underneath the carpet son.’

...

It would be after I'd actually made my debut for Leicester City. It was the 1987/1988 Season when the [first] phone call was made to Dave Richardson.

...

They discouraged me from going forward with this, you know, like, and never offered me a chance to go to the police or anything like that.”

9.4.49. Tony Brien was able to place the date of his conversations with Dave Richardson because, he recalled, they occurred after his Leicester City first team debut (which was in September 1987) and before he was transferred to Chesterfield (which was in December 1988).

9.4.50. Tony Brien told me that after he had spoken with Dave Richardson on the first occasion, he had told his mother, Elizabeth Brien, about the abuse he had suffered and informed her that he had contacted Dave Richardson. He then told me that after he had received the final call from Dave Richardson (in which he says Graham Taylor also took part), he had immediately reported to his mother what Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor had said to him.

9.4.51. In his interview with the police in December 2016, Tony Brien stated:

“In the 1987/88 season I spoke to DR... it was about at the most 2 to 3 phone calls... he was the Youth Development Officer at Leicester City until 1987, then he moved to Aston Villa... the exact words I used was ‘you’ve got a kiddy fiddler in the ranks’... he just said, “What do you mean?’ and I said ‘Ted Langford is interfering with children because he’s interfering with me,’ and I’ve seen what he’s done to kids with love bites and everything like that. And he said, ‘That’s a very serious accusation, Tony.’ I said, ‘I know it’s a very serious accusation, but the fella’s interfered with me.’

[Dave Richardson said] ‘Alright okay um right...’, he didn’t know what to say – he actually didn’t know what to say. And then we had phone calls for about 2 to 3 weeks, and then on the final phone call I had... Dave Richardson spoke to me first and his words were, ‘Look Tony we’ve looked into this and what we’re really saying to you is if you want to pursue it all I have to let you know is about the circumstances. It’s going to be in newspapers it’s going to be on television and you’re only an 18 year old kid now, just making your debut, and can you really put up with any abuse from the terraces? Is that what you really want?’

And Graham Taylor got on the phone to me and Graham Taylor reiterated the same thing to me. He said, ‘Look... we’ve looked into it and we can do something if you want. But are you ready for all the abuse you’ll get from the terraces as an 18 year old boy?’

I said, ‘Yes, you sweep it underneath the carpet.’ ... It made me shit myself, absolutely shit myself. But I know I tried to do something about it and they put me off it.”

ELIZABETH BRIEN

9.4.52. Elizabeth Brien, Tony Brien’s mother, told me that one Saturday evening her son Tony came to her house and told her words to the effect of, “I’ve got something to tell you. ... I’m expecting a phone call and I will tell you after the phone call”. Elizabeth Brien went on to say:

“I didn’t actually hear the phone call but when he came off the phone he came into the kitchen and he said, ‘Mam I’ve been speaking to Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor.’ ... I knew by his face then something was wrong. I said, ‘What’s wrong?’ And he said, ‘Well I didn’t tell you as a child,’ because he tried to put it away, but he’d reported it to Dave Richardson and then he said he would speak to somebody. But I didn’t actually hear the phone call on the night. But I was aware that it was the two people, Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor at the time.

So to be honest I just brushed it out of my mind because he said, ‘I can’t tell you exactly the part of the abuse, I don’t want to but I was abused.’ I just broke down. I said, ‘When did this happen?’ So he told me all about the

incidents in the van on the way home but the fact was because they asked him did he want it coming out in public? Did he want this with his career? Do they want him, the people shouting from the terraces to him? Does he want it in the newspapers? As far as they were concerned he should just forget about it and get on with life. But I couldn't that night."

9.4.53. Elizabeth Brien told me, "I think [the call] was when he made his debut for Leicester, but he had reported it, he said, before that."

9.4.54. Tony Brien's recollection was that he had told his mother that he had reported Langford's abuse to Dave Richardson at or around the time of making the first call to him. This was some weeks before the call during which he spoke with Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor. Elizabeth Brien's recollection was different: "I think it's all the same night he told me and I can't remember Tony telling me before, a week before or days before. As far as I know that's the first I heard."

9.4.55. Elizabeth Brien's recollection of how she responded on being informed of the abuse differed in some respects to her son's recollection. Specifically, Elizabeth Brien stated that, when she found out about the abuse (which to her recollection was the same night that Tony Brien had told her he had had a conversation with Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor), she and her husband were going to go around to Langford's house to confront him, but that Tony Brien pleaded with them not to. Tony Brien on the other hand told me that when he first told his mother about the abuse (which he said was after he had the first telephone call with Dave Richardson) she was "obviously upset" and that when he told her he had had a conversation with Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor "she just stayed washing up".

BBC INTERVIEW WITH TONY BRIEN

9.4.56. During her television interview with Tony Brien, Victoria Derbyshire said, "When we first spoke to [Dave Richardson] he initially appeared to remember speaking to you several times over the phone back in 1988 but in a statement last night ... he clarified his comments and said he did not believe he had ever spoken with you about the abuse you say you suffered..."

9.4.57. I asked the BBC to share with me any notes/transcripts of the conversation with Dave Richardson. This request was refused. The BBC said that, without a Court order, it was not willing to provide to the Review any material which had not been broadcast.

DAVE RICHARDSON

9.4.58. When I interviewed Dave Richardson, I asked him about the allegations made by Tony Brien (specifically that Tony Brien had contacted him in the late 1980s and informed him of the abuse perpetrated by Langford). Dave Richardson denied ever having received any such information from Tony Brien. When it was put to Dave Richardson that the BBC had reported that, "in earlier conversations with the BBC, [Dave Richardson] appeared to agree that he held a series of conversations with [Tony Brien]", Dave Richardson said that he had been "cold called" by the BBC and his answers to the questions posed were misunderstood.

9.4.59. In summary, Dave Richardson said that he had told the BBC that he could not remember the alleged conversation with Tony Brien but was attempting to say that if any such conversation had taken place, he would not have said that the abuse should be “swept under the carpet”:

“[The BBC journalist said,] ‘Tony Brien said...’ I said, ‘Look, I can’t recall whether I’ve had a [conversation with] Tony.’ At this stage it was one of those where I said, ‘I can’t recall if I’ve had a conversation with Tony.’ But I said, ‘If I did,’ this is what I said; ‘if I did, I would have categorically said that, roughly, I was dealing with the matter, I had the matter in hand and I was dealing with it, and on no account would I have even said anything about sweeping it under the carpet.’ I said, ‘I can assure you of that. It would not be swept under the carpet if I was dealing with it.’ And I said, ‘That’s it.’”

9.4.60. In subsequent correspondence with the Review, Dave Richardson stated that the account given by Tony Brien and Elizabeth Brien needed to be “viewed with suspicion” because it was “highly unlikely that [he] would have been available at home on a Saturday evening because of his punishing schedule at the time”. However, I note that there is no suggestion by Tony Brien that Dave Richardson was at home when the call took place (indeed, Tony Brien said that Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor were in the same place during the call).

ZP: DAVE RICHARDSON’S SECRETARY

9.4.61. The Review spoke with Dave Richardson’s former secretary, ZP, who stated that she did not recognise the name “Tony Brien” and could not recall receiving any calls from someone with that name. That does not surprise me. These events took place over 30 years ago. There is no reason why ZP should now remember the name Tony Brien and whether he ever placed a call to Dave Richardson which was fielded by ZP.

INDIVIDUAL BA

9.4.62. Individual BA is the daughter of CD, who was a senior official of a youth football team. CD died in 2013. BA told the Review:

62.1. As a teenager, she would attend various social events of the youth football team.

62.2. She remembers Dave Richardson visiting her parents. When asked when that was, she said it was 1988 or 1989.

62.3. Her understanding at the time (based on what she had overheard) was that CD had spoken with Dave Richardson because someone had raised concerns about Langford’s behaviour during a trip to Sweden, and this is what led to Dave Richardson visiting her parents.

62.4. Around the time of Dave Richardson’s visit, she became aware of an allegation that Langford had sexually abused Tony Brien; specifically that “Langford had made him masturbate and take a sperm sample”.

62.5. She believes that her father told her about Langford’s abuse of Tony Brien. She had understood that CD had obtained this information from Tony Brien but could not say “for 100%”. She stated:

“Whether it was through a conversation with Dave Richardson, or with Tony, it was at that time, and I remember it, it was being spoken about. And Tony

had come forward, and it was like it was all out there now. Certainly looking back from memory, Dave Richardson was aware.”

When BA was asked what year this was, she said “1989”.

62.6. She had contacted the Review because she “remember[s] being a kid and [Tony Brien’s abuse] being discussed and talked about and the Villa – certainly Dave Richardson, was involved, and that’s why I was like ‘I’ve got to phone the FA, I need to tell them.’”

9.4.63. In light of what BA had told the review, I asked Tony Brien whether he had ever told CD about the abuse he had suffered. Tony Brien confirmed that he had known CD, and had been together with him on a long journey to Milan, but could not say for sure whether he had or had not disclosed the abuse to CD.

9.4.64. Dave Richardson denied that he had ever visited CD’s house.

CONCLUSION

9.4.65. There is conflicting evidence as to whether or not Tony Brien informed the Club (via Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor) about the sexual abuse perpetrated by Langford when he and Langford were both associated with Leicester City. I do not consider, however, that I am in a position to resolve the conflicting accounts, given that it was not possible for me to ask Graham Taylor any questions about this matter, as he died in January 2017.

9.4.66. If Tony Brien did disclose this abuse to Dave Richardson and Graham Taylor, and if one or other of them did encourage Tony Brien to “sweep it under the carpet”, this would have been a significant failure.

Subsequent Disclosures to Dave Richardson and Ted Langford’s Dismissal

9.4.67. Ted Langford’s role as a scout was terminated by Aston Villa in July 1989. This was the result of specific allegations of sexual abuse which were brought to Dave Richardson’s attention by parents of two boys who were abused by Langford.

9.4.68. There is also the suggestion that Dave Richardson was informed in the previous summer of 1988 of more generalised allegations against Langford while taking boys on a football tour to Sweden.

9.4.69. I set out the evidence that the Review has considered in some detail, and will then explain my findings and conclusions.

DAVE RICHARDSON

9.4.70. In a police statement given in connection with Ted Langford’s prosecution in 2007, Dave Richardson stated:

“Around August 1988 [there] was the first indication that something was not right with the way [Langford] was acting towards the boys he scouted and managed. I cannot recall who I heard it from but there were rumours that

during the trip to Trellaborg [sic] in Sweden that [Langford] used to take Dunlop Terriers on ... he had made some kids strip off their clothes and he had been acting inappropriately towards some boys.

...

I cannot recall the exact details but as far as I am aware I did not hear of any direct sexual activity between Ted and any of the boys. Obviously this was all just gossip at this stage and I had heard about this from a number of people who had probably heard this from other people. There was no direct allegation made against Ted. Having heard these rumours about some of the boys I decided to speak to the parents of the boys in question, having been advised by the club solicitor to do so. I remember one boy called [redacted]. I spoke to his parents and the parents of another [two] or [three] boys to try and get to the bottom of what had gone on. I believe the parents had heard rumours also but didn't want to progress this any further i.e. inform the Police. After I had met with the parents I spoke to Graham Taylor, the Manager, and Doug Ellis, the Chairman, and informed them of what had been said. There was no direct evidence to put to Ted, but we decided it would be best for the club if he didn't scout for Aston Villa any more.

One day soon after this meeting I called Ted into my office and simply said to him that we thought it best if he didn't work with us anymore. He simply said ok and walked out."

This statement suggests that there was one incident only involving Langford, following his trip to Sweden in 1988.

9.4.71. When Ted Langford was interviewed by the police on April 11th 2007, he said, "I had a meeting. I came back from Sweden ... took the keys in for the van. He [Dave Richardson] said to me that ... he'd had a problem ... with me respecting, didn't say what it was. He said your contract won't be here next year. That was full stop. That was it. And gone."

9.4.72. In a written statement sent to the BBC in response to Tony Brien's allegations, Dave Richardson denied speaking with Tony Brien (as discussed above) but did state: "During the 1987/88 pre-season, I was told of some alarming allegations about Mr Langford by a member of staff at Aston Villa. I took these extremely seriously and began making enquiries. These led me to speak to the parents of two young footballers at Aston Villa who each told me their sons had been abused by Ted Langford. I asked them if they were going to report the matter to the police or if they wanted me to. After consulting with each other, both sets of parents told me that they did not want the matter reported to the police. I respected that request and, therefore, instead I reported the allegations to Graham Taylor, Doug Ellis and [MC a Club employee] ... with my recommendation that Ted Langford be dismissed. This was accepted and Langford was duly sacked by the Club. ..."

Again, this statement suggests that there was one set of incidents in 1987/88.

9.4.73. In 2017, as part of its review into the allegations against Langford, Aston Villa's representatives interviewed Dave Richardson and summarised his account as follows:

"In or about the summer of 1988, he first received a complaint of inappropriate behaviour by Ted Langford. [LL] ...said that things were not right and he had heard stories of inappropriate behaviour towards young players. Dave said he spoke to the parents ... who had apparently raised some complaints about things going on locally and abroad in relation to abuse taking place against these boys. Dave understood that both sets of parents met with each other and said to Dave that they did not want to take this any further or involve the police.

However, Dave said that in August/September 1988 he told [MC] (Club employee), Doug Ellis (Chairman) and Graham Taylor (manager) about the issue. Dave could not recall in what manner he told them and he might have told them separately. Dave stated to them that this was not acceptable at all and he was going to get Ted Langford out of the Club and he didn't want anything to do with him."

9.4.74. In response to written questions posed by the Review, Dave Richardson replied that concerns about Ted Langford were first raised with him by LL (who had been a physiotherapist for Aston Villa) "around the late 1980s". These concerns "were only rumours [that] inappropriate behaviour had taken place on a trip to Sweden, but nothing specific". Dave Richardson said that "no other [Aston Villa] personnel were aware until a stage later in the season when I obtained more proof (season 88-89)".

9.4.75. Dave Richardson went on to say:

"I tried to find out further information of boys concerned, I cannot recall exactly when this was but believe that this was following a trip when Mr Langford took Fresher Juniors to Sweden in May 1989. Following this I consulted with Aston Villa solicitors for advice and as a result had discussions with the parents of two of the boys. To my knowledge the boys did not inform me of Mr Langford's behaviour, they informed their parents. One of the parents then had a conversation with me."

9.4.76. Dave Richardson also said that:

"After consulting with Aston Villa's solicitors and parents of boys involved and after informing the Chairman and Manager they instructed me to get him out of the Club. This series of events would be over a period of two to three months."

9.4.77. Dave Richardson's responses suggested that there were two separate incidents: the first involving Langford on a trip to Sweden in 1988, the second on a further trip to Sweden in 1989.

9.4.78. I asked Dave Richardson about this in our first interview. Dave Richardson told me that it was in the pre-season/early season of 1988/89 (so sometime between

June to September 1988) that LL told him that he had heard rumours about Ted Langford concerning “inappropriate behaviour”. Dave Richardson said “As far as I recall, I think it was something to do with the boys being stripped off and made to have a shower and – this was on one of trips to Sweden or whatever...” Dave Richardson told me that he responded something like:

“Look, with all due respect [LL], you’d have to give me some facts. You’d have to give me some – I can’t suddenly just go up to somebody and say, ‘You’ve been doing this, you’ve been doing that,’ or whatever. I’ve got to have the facts. When did it happen? Where did it happen? How did it happen?”

9.4.79. Dave Richardson said that LL replied, “Look, I’m just marking your card...” Dave Richardson went on to explain that, after LL had raised this issue, “things just carried on. There was nothing said after that. Nothing went on. I think from my point of view, it probably made me more vigilant in watching and listening, but nothing else came to me until later in the year.”

9.4.80. Dave Richardson then explained that further information had been brought to his attention following a further trip by Ted Langford’s youth team to Sweden in May 1989. Dave Richardson confirmed that, in between the “rumours” initially being conveyed to him in July/August/September 1988 and the further information in or about May 1989, Aston Villa did not conduct any investigation.

9.4.81. During his second interview with me, however, Dave Richardson stated that there had only been one incident. He stated, “The first thing that happened that was an immediate, should we say, problem for me was the ... father [of AP] ringing me. Now in addition to that, I obviously had had a conversation when that happened with LL. He had indicated that there had been whispers regarding question marks about what Langford was up to at that time. That was all in that May [1989] time.”

9.4.82. Dave Richardson also told me that he had encouraged LK, an Aston Villa associated schoolboy (who did not play for Ted Langford’s team) to go on the May 1989 trip to Sweden organised by Langford. This was because other boys who would be joining Aston Villa as apprentices were also going on the trip and Dave Richardson thought it would be a good opportunity for all the boys (who were to be apprentices together) to get to know each other. Dave Richardson contended that, had there been an earlier conversation about Langford’s conduct, he would not have encouraged the associate schoolboy to go on the May 1989 trip.

9.4.83. The Club has provided me with a copy of a witness statement signed by Dave Richardson, dated May 8th 2018, prepared in relation to civil claims brought in the High Court against the Club. In that statement, Dave Richardson stated:

“[It was] in the summer of 1989, and not 1988 (as I thought when I made my statement to the police) that I first became aware of the rumours concerning Langford. When I heard about them I decided to make some further enquiries. ... I was somehow able to find out the identities of the two boys involved. ... I then have some recollection of speaking to Aston Villa’s solicitor to see whether I should get involved and if so what I should do. After this and in his

advice, I spoke to [the parents of ones of the boys involved]. I cannot now recall whether this was over the telephone or whether I met them in person. I may also have spoken to the parents of at least one of the other boys involved, but I cannot now be sure. ... I asked [the boys' parents] what action they would like to be taken and whether they wanted me to inform the Police. ... I believe that they [subsequently] met with the parents of one of the other boys involved to discuss their option. After that they told me that they did not want to take the matter any further and that they did not want the Police involved. I felt that was a decision for the boys concerned and their parents and therefore I respected their wishes and did not notify the police.

Shortly after speaking with [the parents], I decided to dispense with Mr Langford's services as a local scout. I am pretty sure that I informed ... Graham Taylor [and] ... Doug Ellis of my intentions, although I do not now recall whether told them the details of the complaints that had been made. I then arranged to meet Mr Langford in my office where I [told him] I would no longer be using his services. He simply accepted the position and just walked out of my office."

9.4.84. Dave Richardson told me that, had he been made aware in 1987 or 1988 of an allegation of abuse, he would "undoubtedly have severed my connections with Mr Langford and in this regard I would point to the way I dealt with the rumours relating to him in 1989".

LK: AN ASTON VILLA ASSOCIATED SCHOOLBOY

9.4.85. At Dave Richardson's request, I spoke with LK, an Aston Villa Associated Schoolboy. LK was unclear as to the year (i.e. whether it was 1987, 1988 or 1989) in which he had gone on the trip to Trelleborg in Sweden. LK stated that AP had been on this trip and, as far as he understood things, it was following this trip that AP said he had been abused by Langford (which suggests it was the 1989 trip). LK stated that, during the trip to Sweden, he did not see anything to cause him concern. LK also stated that Dave Richardson is "one of the most honourable men I've ever met in football" and "would never have sent me on that trip in a million years of he thought or known for one second that [Langford] was what he ended up being". LK also said that he had had a conversation in recent years with AP and felt that AP had "changed his story".

LL: FORMER MEMBER OF STAFF AT ASTON VILLA

9.4.86. Aston Villa's representatives spoke to LL, and shared the notes of his interview with the Review. The notes recorded in relevant part: "[LL] recollected that in the summer of 1988 or 1989 (he cannot recollect which) he heard that Langford was 'messing around with lads at Freshas' [LL] cannot now recollect where he heard this from. [LL] passed this information to Dave Richardson and 'left it to him'."

9.4.87. LL also spoke to the Review and stated:

- 87.1. He accompanied Langford and his team to Sweden in May 1987. Tony Brien (who was by this point playing for Leicester City) was on this trip.
- 87.2. At some later point, he was told by someone (probably CD) that

there were “whispers about Langford messing about with lads”. LL believed (although his recollection was not altogether clear) he was told this sometime during the summer of 1988.

87.3. He spoke with Dave Richardson and said: “Dave, I’ve heard a whisper about Langford messing about with lads.”

87.4. LL said that he and Dave Richardson did not discuss the matter further but that Dave Richardson “was a bit shellshocked. ... He was, like, ‘I don’t know if I’m hearing this right.’”

87.5. At some later point in time (“I would think it was the same summer, personally. I’m thinking it could’ve been September-ish.”), Dave Richardson called LL on the telephone. Of that conversation LL said:

“Dave’s said, ‘We’ve got to get rid of Langford,’ and I’ve gone, ‘Yeah, fair enough,’ not saying, ‘Well, I think you’d better hold fire’; I just said, ‘Yeah.’ I went along with whatever Dave said, because he was the gaffer; that was how it was. He’d had a word with [Graham Taylor], from vaguely what I can recall, and to Doug Ellis, and even [MC], I believe – I think [MC] might’ve got mentioned – and that was it. I said to my missus, ‘Blimey, they’re getting rid of Langford,’ and she was shocked at the time, because he was like a setinstone guy; and that was as far as it went, to my knowledge, then.”

87.6. In relation to how long the period was between the telephone call with Dave Richardson and Langford leaving Aston Villa, LL stated:

“I can’t be 100% on this one. I would’ve thought it was around about the October, I really do, because I suppose, looking back, Dave must’ve had meetings. ... I presume it must’ve carried on a few weeks or even a month or two.”

87.7. The Review asked LL, “Would it surprise you if in fact he wasn’t got rid of until the end of the season; so, June, July 1989?” LL replied, “Very much so; it really would, really, really. I would’ve found that very strange. ... So, I’m not so sure on that one at all, really, how long it would’ve been [between the phone call from, Dave Richardson and Langford leaving Aston Villa].”

VD: CD’S FORMER WIFE

9.4.88. VD, CD’s former wife, told the Review that Dave Richardson had visited her house and that CD, in her presence, had told Dave Richardson about concerns he had in relation to Ted Langford. She thought this had happened between 1986 and 1988.

9.4.89. Dave Richardson denied any knowledge of any complaint being passed to him by CD and stated that he has no recollection of visiting CD’s house.

9.4.90. VD told the Review:

90.1. She had been married to and lived with CD. They divorced some time before CD passed away.

90.2. Sometime between 1986 and 1988, Dave Richardson visited her house because, as she understands things, CD had told Dave Richardson about concerns relating to Ted Langford (specifically that there were “kids training with no underpants on and he had them putting their legs up in the air so their private parts were sticking out”).

90.3. In her presence, CD told Dave Richardson that he had received a complaint about Langford, specifically that Langford was getting boys with no underpants on to lift their legs: “So he could see their private parts and things like that.” Dave Richardson said in response, “I’ll sort it out.”

90.4. “We said ... there’s a [youth footballer] living at [Langford’s] house and we were quite concerned what’s happening with him, if anything.” But Dave Richardson “...didn’t answer.”

90.5. “I think something was said to [LL] because he was under Ted [Langford], if you get me. But what he did about things, I don’t know.”

9.4.91. The allegation made by VD was put to Dave Richardson during his second interview with me. Dave Richardson denied the allegation. He said that no relevant information had been passed to him by CD and he had no recollection of ever visiting CD’s house. Dave Richardson could think of no reason, however, why VD would invent this account.

AP: A YOUTH PLAYER

9.4.92. In a police report that was provided to me, AP stated he was a youth player who had attended the May 1989 trip to Sweden with Langford. Prior to the trip he had been abused by Langford. AP stated that, on the way back from Sweden, he had told IK, the secretary of Fresha Juniors, that Langford had been “messing” with him and other boys. A few days later, Doug Ellis, the Chairman of Aston Villa, spoke with AP’s father, who told Doug Ellis that he did not want to take the matter any further.

9.4.93. AP stated that he had been abused by Ted Langford on a number of occasions prior to the football trip to Sweden in 1989. In a police statement, AP stated:

“[In May 1989] I had been away to Sweden with [Langford] and other players from Aston Villa and Fresha on a football tour with Fresha to FC Trelleborg [sic]. ... I heard rumours about this happening to other boys and spoke to some of the other players and said that we should do something about it.

[On the coach back from Sweden, I told] the [Fresha] club secretary, [IK] ... that Ted had been messing with me and other boys. ... [IK] said everyone kind of knew about it but they hadn’t been able to prove it.

...

The next day or day after, we had a message that the Chairman of Aston Villa, Doug Ellis wanted to contact my family. My dad spoke with him. Doug Ellis asked my dad what we wanted to do about it and my dad said that we didn’t want to do anything. I felt numb and unsupported.”

9.4.94. I spoke with AP, who affirmed the accuracy of his police statement and also told me:

94.1. He was an Associated Schoolboy at Aston Villa.

94.2. When the coach arrived back in Birmingham (either outside the main ground or at the leisure centre where the school of excellence was based), he screamed at his father and said, “We’ve got to go to the police. He’s been messing with me.” To which his father replied, “Let’s go home and let’s talk

about it. Let's go home."

94.3. Shortly after the disclosure to IK, he said:

"I remember a phone call from a Villa man and I'm pretty sure that was Dave Richardson. And him telling us that they wanted to come and meet with my parents and myself to discuss what had happened. And I'm pretty sure that happened that afternoon or evening. It was like pretty – it was a quick turnaround. And there was two representatives who came. ... And I remember listening to the conversation feeling deflated, feeling that I wasn't going to get what I wanted because the general direction of the conversation was aiming towards, 'He's been sacked. He won't be at the club ever again. It's in your best interests not to do anything more about this and leave it at this.'"

94.4. "The conversation at the house was more of a leading kind of, 'Let's go down the route of he's been sacked, we're not going to press charges, we don't think it's in your best interests to press charges either.' And it was more of a persuasive conversation and

... 'We're really sorry what happened but it's now over with and he's gone.' That's how the conversation went. ... [Langford] was sacked before they got to my house. I can say that for sure. Because that was part of their argument. 'He's gone. You'll never have to deal with him again.' ... I remember it being more leading towards what they wanted as a club. But then when Doug Ellis, when he called [after the visit from the Club officials], it was clear. It was like, 'What do you want to do?'"

9.4.95. I asked AP why he had not mentioned Dave Richardson in his police statement. He told me:

"This has come through the conversations I've had with my sister and jogging my memory and she was like adamant that it was the same. ... It was a family big deal, you know, so we were all there listening to the phone calls. There's other phone calls that I've not mentioned either which was from professionals at the club, football professionals, who were calling my family home to try to get us to go to the police as well. ... I've started having therapy so stuff comes through and new information comes out and jogging my memory of what's gone on in the past."

95.1. I asked AP why he believes that one of the Club officials who attended his house was Dave Richardson. He replied, "Based on the conversation I've had with my sister. He was the only northerner coach at Aston Villa at the time."

9.4.96. Dave Richardson told me that, in May 1989, parents of two players (one of whom was AP) who had been on a trip to Sweden (in May 1989) with Langford had contacted him in relation to Langford's "inappropriate behaviour". Dave Richardson said that this then prompted him to speak with Aston Villa's solicitors and other senior staff at the Club and ultimately led to Langford being dismissed in July 1989.

9.4.97. I have not been able to speak with IK. He is deceased.

9.4.98. In subsequent correspondence, Dave Richardson stated that, in December 2016, AP had telephoned him and said that he considered that Dave Richardson had

done everything possible at the time and that he (AP) “wishes that he had said something to [Dave Richardson] at Bodymoor Heath about Ted Langford’s activities”.

DAVE RICHARDSON

9.4.99. Dave Richardson told me that in May 1989 information had come to him from parents of two players who had been on the May 1989 trip to Sweden with Langford (one of these boys was AP). One, if not both, of those two players were Associated Schoolboys at Aston Villa. Dave Richardson explained, “As far as I recall, they got in touch with me about inappropriate behaviour by Langford on this trip to Sweden.” I asked Dave Richardson, “On the back of that phone call from the parents, did you understand it to be inappropriate behaviour in a sexual way?” Dave Richardson replied, “I think so, yes.” Dave Richardson went on:

“Because of my uncertainty about dealing with it I actually went to the Villa solicitors. I got in touch with the Villa solicitors... their advice was that the first thing is that you need to make sure that the parents are prepared to go to the police. It needs to be taken to the police. I said, ‘Right, okay.’ My question then to the parents was, were they prepared for me to take this issue to the police? ... They met as two families and decided between them they didn’t want me to do that. What I did was, I then went back and said, ‘As far as I’m concerned, if that’s your wish I won’t take it any further.’ And then that was the next step when eventually we sacked Langford.”

9.4.100. When asked whether others at Aston Villa had been aware of the issue, Dave Richardson stated:

“I think I must have at that time informed Graham [Taylor] and Doug [Ellis] that this was ongoing. ... Obviously as far as I was concerned, I was dealing with it. They weren’t dealing with it, they had no part in that other than the fact that I informed them what had happened and what I’d done.”

9.4.101. Dave Richardson also stated that it may have been MC, a Club employee, who initially advised him to discuss matters with the Club’s solicitors. Dave Richardson explained:

“[There was a] two to three month period when, having got the information from the solicitors, hold on a minute, they’re not prepared to take the thing to the police. I’ve got to do something. So when I said to Doug [Ellis] and Graham [Taylor], their retort was, ‘Get him out of the club.’ ... I can’t recall if it was either Doug [Ellis] or Graham [Taylor]. It probably would be Graham [Taylor] and Doug [Ellis] together. They would have both agreed. But I can’t say to you it was Doug [Ellis] that said it or it was Graham [Taylor] that said it. But that was the inference. Get him out of the club.”

9.4.102. When asked why, once the complaint had been received in May 1989, Langford had not been immediately suspended, Dave Richardson replied:

“I suppose it was uncovering the facts, getting the information and I suppose now, at that particular time, it was at the end of the season, bearing in mind they’d been on tour in the May, then it had gone into June so there were no activities taking place. Nothing was happening in terms of trials or groups of

kids coming in or anything. So it was at a time whereby the club had closed down and probably, from my point of view, that would be – he wouldn't have been involved in anything at that particular time, because nothing was happening. It was at the end of the season and we weren't dealing with any youngsters at that particular time. Now, obviously from my point of view, possibly with hindsight suspended, but we gleaned the facts, we'd found out about this and the retort was, 'Get him out of the club.'

9.4.103. When asked why he had not reported matters to the police, Dave Richardson stated:

"Because of the wishes of the parents wishing to remain anonymous, not be involved and not be known. Again, now with hindsight, yes, but I chose not to take it any further and just get him out of the club. He was finished as far as we were concerned. And I appreciate that some of the questions that I've been asked, and obviously he could have gone somewhere else. I understand that. But then, at that particular time, I dealt with it as I thought correct at that particular time. ... I understand now, in hindsight yes, I should have [contacted the police to put Langford on their radar]. But I didn't. Not for any reason to protect Langford in any way, shape or form, but as far as I was concerned, I didn't want anything further to do with that. He was finished as far as I'm – he was finished with that football club."

9.4.104. When asked why the matter had not been reported to the FA, Dave Richardson stated:

"There wasn't a method or a system that myself or any other youth development person had any instruction of how to deal with those situations. This situation. So although the FA were obviously in control of us as a club, I'd never had any brief as an individual football person about how do I deal with those situations. So from my point of view having been involved all those years prior to that with children and with parents and families and one thing and another, I never had any instruction on dealing with that sort of event taking place. And I was regarded as an experienced developer [of youth players]."

9.4.105. Dave Richardson further stated that:

"There were no child protection procedures in place to deal with this type of issue either in the professional game or in junior football at this time. When any other clubs contacted me when they heard of Mr Langford being removed as a scout, I informed them why. Given this was a long time ago, I cannot recall which specific clubs or individuals contacted me to ask about Mr Langford."

9.4.106. Dave Richardson told the Review that he had no knowledge that Langford had any involvement with Aston Villa after July 1989.

9.4.107. In correspondence with me, Dave Richardson queried why a certain member of the Aston Villa staff had not been spoken with about the events surrounding the

decision to dismiss Langford. For the avoidance of doubt that staff member was spoken with and stated that he had been present when Dave Richardson told Langford his services were no longer required, but does not remember ever being aware of the reasons for Langford's removal.

DOUG ELLIS

9.4.108. Aston Villa's representatives also spoke with Doug Ellis and shared the notes of his interview with me. Doug Ellis "just about" remembered the name Ted Langford. However, he denied being aware of any allegation of a sexual nature ever having been made against any Club employee or scout. Doug Ellis specifically denied ever having had a conversation with any parent about complaints in relation to Langford. Having been notified that Doug Ellis was in very poor health and that a face to face interview was not appropriate, the Review sent (via Aston Villa) a set out of written questions to Doug Ellis. Aston Villa did follow up with Doug Ellis but ultimately no reply was received to the Review's written questions. Doug Ellis died in October 2018.

MC: EMPLOYEE OF ASTON VILLA

9.4.109. The Club spoke with MC, and shared the notes of this interview with me. MC provided some information about Langford's involvement with the Club (which I have taken into account in reaching my conclusions) but said that he could not remember anything about the circumstances in which Ted Langford left the Club.

9.4.110. The Review also spoke with MC who stated:

"My recollection of Ted was very much the early days when ... I used to see him on fairly regular basis. He'd come in once a week, twice a week maybe.

After that, when I became [more senior at the Club] my dealings with him were less and less and I took no recollection of him leaving, going to Leicester, coming back. Just doesn't - I just don't remember any of that."

9.4.111. MC was specifically asked whether Dave Richardson had raised with him any complaints or rumours about Langford. MC replied "I'm not saying it didn't happen, [or that] it wouldn't happen. But no, do I recall it? No." MC later stated: "If Dave [Richardson] came to me with these allegations I'd have referred them to the chairman straightaway. I wouldn't have said to Dave, 'Look Dave, go and see the club solicitors.'" MC went on to state that, had anyone raised with him any concerns about Langford, he thought he would be able to remember it.

DA: EMPLOYEE OF ASTON VILLA

9.4.112. The Club spoke with DA (an employee of Aston Villa) and shared the notes of his interview with me. The relevant extract from the interview notes reads as follows:

"[DA] told us that he was near the Chairman's/Manager's office when he thought the decision was made to get rid of Ted Langford. [DA] believes that he was standing in front of either Doug Ellis or the Manager (who he believes would have been Graham Taylor) as they had something that they wanted him to do. Then someone from the football side came into the room talking about Ted Langford and referring to something that was written down on a piece of

paper. The response was that [a named apprentice player] should be removed from Ted Langford's care and Ted Langford's services should be dispensed with immediately. [DA] cannot remember whether that instruction was given by Doug Ellis or Graham Taylor."

CONCLUSION

9.4.113. Dave Richardson accepts that, in May 1989, he received a complaint regarding Ted Langford's conduct. Dave Richardson knew that that complaint related to sexual misconduct. Dave Richardson sought advice from Aston Villa's solicitors and spoke with Graham Taylor and Doug Ellis. Langford was then removed as a scout in July 1989.

9.4.114. As for whether there were two occasions when Dave Richardson was provided with information about Langford (initially in the summer of 1988 from LL, and secondly following the 1989 trip to Sweden), or whether there was only one occasion (with LL's observations about Langford's behaviour being closely followed by the conversations with AP and his father), Dave Richardson insists that there was only one occasion, and that his earlier account about the year in which he first heard of allegations about Langford, and as to whether there were two occasions, was wrong. I accept this account. People's recollections as to what took place twenty or thirty years previously are not always reliable, and there is no firm evidence to support the proposition that there were two occasions.

Conclusion as to What Aston Villa Knew About Langford's Abuse and What Should Have Been Done

9.4.115. Based on the above, I conclude that:

115.1. In May 1989, a complaint was made to Dave Richardson about Langford's behaviour on a trip to Sweden that had just taken place. This complaint was made by the parents of two boys concerned (one of these boys was AP). Dave Richardson understood that what was being specifically alleged was inappropriate sexual behaviour by Langford.

115.2. Dave Richardson spoke with the Club's solicitor. Dave Richardson then spoke with the parents of the boys concerned who stated that they did not want the police to be involved. This was likely to have been in June/July 1989. At this point, Dave Richardson informed Graham Taylor and Doug Ellis of the allegations, and Doug Ellis and Graham Taylor told Dave Richardson to "get rid of" Langford. This led to Dave Richardson dismissing Langford as a scout in July 1989.

115.3. Having got rid of Langford as a scout, the Club did not make contact with the police to inform the police of the Club's concerns about Langford. Nor did the Club make contact with the FA.

115.4. As for whether the Club ought to have notified the police as to what it had been told about Langford, I appreciate that the situation facing the Club was not straightforward, as the parents of the boys who had been abused by

Langford had asked the Club not to report the matter to the police. I consider, however, that, in the late 1980s, and even in the absence of any guidance from the FA as to what to do in these circumstances, it would have been reasonable to expect the Club to inform the police about Langford. The Club was aware of credible allegations of a serious crime against children, which justified removing Langford from his role at the Club, and based on the alleged conduct Langford obviously presented as a potential risk to other children with whom he may come into contact. I consider that, respecting the parents' wishes, it would have been possible to notify the police that allegations of a serious nature had been made against Langford without identifying the boys who had made those allegations. At the very least, this would have alerted the police to a potential problem with Langford, and may have led the police to monitor his activities.

115.5. I cannot say, however, that the Club ought to have notified the FA. There was no guidance from the FA at that point in time as to how a club should deal with child protection matters, and no requirement (or even encouragement) to make referrals to the FA.

LEICESTER CITY'S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.4.116. The Review has received no evidence to suggest that anyone from Leicester City saw any act of abuse. Nor has the Review received any evidence to suggest that anyone from Leicester City saw Ted Langford behaving in a way that should have raised concerns. While there were significant connections between Langford (and his youth team) and Leicester City, Langford's youth team remained a distinct and separate team over which Langford had full control and was not subject to direct supervision by Leicester City. Langford's youth team also played some distance from Leicester.

9.4.117. The Review has not received any evidence to suggest that any complaint or concern about Langford came to Leicester City's attention during his association with the Club (or during his later association with Aston Villa but related to the time when he was associated with Leicester City).

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY ASTON VILLA

9.4.118. Following an initial report to the Review by Aston Villa, the Review asked various follow up questions and requested that further matters be considered and investigated by the Club. The Club engaged with the Review (both in writing and face to face) and provided further responses. Aston Villa was also willing to (and did) facilitate initial contact between the Review and a number of individuals, including Dave Richardson. Aston Villa also passed to Doug Ellis the Review's written questions, and followed up with Doug Ellis to attempt to secure answers to those questions. I com-

mend Aston Villa for the way that it engaged with the Review.

9.4.119. The Club spoke to over 20 people in carrying out its investigation. This included a former Chairman, former members of staff (coaching and administrative), as well as former youth players.

9.4.120. I am satisfied that, in the context of the material that was available to the Review from other sources (which the Review was able to use to direct some of the follow up questions it asked of the Club), the investigation conducted by the Club was adequate.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY LEICESTER CITY

9.4.121. Following an initial report to the Review by Leicester City FC, the Review asked various follow up questions and requested that further matters be considered and investigated by the Club. The Club engaged with the Review (both in writing and face to face) and provided further responses. The Club spoke to more than 10 people as part of their investigation, including former youth players. I am satisfied that, in the context of the material that was available to the Review from other sources (which the Review was able to use to direct some of the follow up questions it asked of the Club), the investigation conducted by the Club was adequate.

9.5 Christopher Gieler

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INTRODUCTION

9.5.1. Christopher ‘Chris’ Gieler (“Gieler”) was an employee of Queen’s Park Rangers (“QPR”). He died in September 2002. Gieler was not at any point convicted of any offences relating to sexual abuse.

9.5.2. I have met with, and/or reviewed the written evidence of, 12 individuals who allege that they were sexually abused by Gieler. I have no reason to doubt these accounts. A number of the individuals described a similar modus operandi, whereby Gieler made reference to their physical development as footballers in order to provide a justification for touching them. There is no evidence to suggest that these individuals have colluded with one another to give their accounts, or that they have attempted to piggy-back on one another’s accounts. It is not my role, however, to make findings about any individual’s abuse, and I acknowledge that allegations of abuse against Gieler have not been tested in a courtroom.

9.5.3. Gieler played an important part in QPR’s youth football programme and had talent-spotted some significant names in football, including a number of players who were capped at international level. This position gave him both the opportunity and the power to sexually abuse young players that he came into contact with.

SUMMARY OF GIELER’S INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL

9.5.4. Gieler joined QPR in 1971. He was initially a schoolboy scout. Over the years he held various scouting roles for the Club until, in September 1979, he became the Head of Youth Development. In this role, Gieler was responsible for overseeing the Club’s associated schoolboys. He held this position until 2002, when he left the Club. From March 1st 1998, Gieler was also the Director of QPR’s Academy.

9.5.5. In the Club’s report to me, QPR acknowledged that although Gieler ultimately reported to the manager and the board, he had “complete control over the youth set-up at the Club, at least from 1979 onwards.” That conclusion is consistent with the evidence I have seen.

9.5.6. According to the Club:

“Gieler was responsible for spotting talented footballers and persuading them to join the Club. Gieler was responsible for scouting opposition for the first team. Gieler was known to request tickets for the directors’ box in order to impress prospective schoolboys and their parents in an attempt to persuade them to join the team. This was a typical marketing ploy used by clubs at that time. Gieler was known to lavish his schoolboys with gifts and other incentives in an attempt to ensure they signed with the Club as opposed to one of their rivals. This was considered standard practice at the time.

All of the schoolboys' dealings would go through Gieler to the extent that the then Club Secretary would not have any involvement with them. Once the schoolboys were at the Club, all aspects of their lives were overseen by Gieler. He was said to be quite protective of his empire and did not take kindly to any attempt at outside influence.

Gieler was not a coach himself but he would often be present during training sessions and he appeared to have good relationships with the various Club's coaches and managers. It was considered common practice for coaches and other staff members to give schoolboys a lift home from matches and training sessions although no one interviewed specifically recalled whether Gieler would do this.

Most interviewed recalled Gieler to be an awkward man who was quite stand-offish with other members of staff. However, it was also noted that he was extremely professional and excellent at what he did. He had a stellar reputation for spotting and developing talent. There were some rumours about his sexuality, but those interviewed said he was well liked by the players. It was noted that he wore a wig and was a bit strange, but nothing was reported to substantiate the allegations that are now being advanced against him.

On football matters the Club's manager was Gieler's ultimate supervisor but the running of the Club was performed by the Chairman, Chief Executive and Club Secretary. Any complaints would most likely have been made to the Chairman, the Chief Executive or the Club Secretary in the first instance. However, no one interviewed could recall any complaints made against Gieler.

Gieler left the Club in the early 2000s. The circumstances of his leaving are not known and there are no records that could be found relating to it."

9.5.7. In addition to these matters, during his time at the Club, I was told that Gieler:

- 7.1. watched schoolboy/youth training sessions and matches at QPR;
- 7.2. paid expenses to the young players (I was told that Gieler paid those expenses to players in person and would often call players into his office individually, and hand them an envelope with their money in it); and
- 7.3. drove certain schoolboys to and from matches or training in his own car (albeit it is unclear whether Gieler was officially tasked by QPR with the duty of driving players around).

9.5.8. VC, an official who worked at the club for most of the time that Gieler was there, described Gieler as having been "in control of the Youth Development at the Club. ... [Gieler] was responsible for finding apprentices and would look after all aspects of their time at the Club." VC said that "the apprentices [were Gieler's] own empire and ... nobody had much to do with apprentices other than [Gieler]". Gieler "wouldn't let anyone else interfere" in his "empire". The Secretary at QPR said that Gieler:

“would be forever asking for favours and tickets such as Directors’ Box tickets for big games. [If his request was not granted by me] he would go over [my] head and speak with either the Manager or the Chairman and often [I] would then receive a phone call from the Manager of Chairman saying that the tickets were necessary in order to persuade some talented youngster to sign for QPR.”

9.5.9. A former youth coach, VB, stated that “in essence [Gieler was] the Chief Scout and was responsible only to the manager. He had a team of scouts that worked underneath him. ... Once a player was identified ... [Gieler] would have been responsible for persuading him to join the Club.”

9.5.10. One of the boys abused by Gieler described him as the “god of schoolboy football at QPR. He was the one that decided whether you was going to be a professional football player... everything was down to him.”

9.5.11. It has not been possible to ascertain whether Gieler could unilaterally award ‘contracts’ (whether that be by way of schoolboy forms, apprenticeships or professional contracts). However, it is likely that his opinion about a player significantly affected whether or not that player would progress at the Club.

SUMMARY OF THE ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE COMMITTED BY GIELER

9.5.12. It is alleged that Gieler’s earliest abuse of young players took place in 1973/74 and the latest abuse took place in the mid-1980s.

9.5.13. Gieler met the boys he is alleged to have abused through his role at QPR. He had personally scouted a number of these boys to bring them to the Club. From the accounts the Review has received, it appears that the abuse mainly took place:

- 13.1. in Gieler’s office at QPR;
- 13.2. in Gieler’s car on the way back from training or matches; and
- 13.3. in the changing rooms and toilets at Loftus Road (QPR’s stadium) and QPR’s training grounds.

9.5.14. It is alleged that, prior to the abuse, Gieler would isolate the boy, for example by providing the boy with transport in his car or by calling the boy into his office (frequently with the excuse that he needed to pay expenses to the boy, or to talk to the boy about his footballing progression). Gieler would generally concoct an excuse to make the player partially undress in front of him. He typically stated that he needed to assess how the player was physically developing as a footballer. Gieler would then sexually abuse the young player. The abuse typically consisted of touching of the genital area.

9.5.15. Several people recounted:

15.1. Unlike other QPR staff, Gieler was consistently present in the changing rooms when the players changed and watched and talked to the boys when they were naked and showering or bathing. Gieler made comments about the youth players including “nice arse” or “big dick”.

15.2. Gieler rubbed the player’s muscles, normally starting on the legs, before then progressing to touching the player’s genitals.

15.3. Gieler sometimes made quasi-medical comments while touching the players.

15.4. Gieler “slapped” the player’s penis and testicles.

15.5. Gieler took boys to look in the underwear section of department stores.

9.5.16. I was also told that some boys stayed overnight at Gieler’s house. While I was not able to speak with any of the boys who stayed overnight at Gieler’s house, I did speak with a contemporary who was adamant both that these overnight stays occurred and that Gieler, in conversation with another member of QPR staff, made reference to how he had “made breakfast in bed” for a named youth player. I asked QPR to speak with this other staff member. The Club wrote to him but received no reply.

9.5.17. VB told the Club that Gieler “was always busy with his role and it is unlikely that he would ever really have been alone with youth players ... [and] does not believe [Gieler] would have given the players lifts etc. given his busy schedule and also the fact that he was devoted to his mother and wanted to get home to see her straight after work finish[ed].” VB’s account is not consistent with the other evidence I have received (as summarised above).

QUEENS PARK RANGERS’ STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.5.18. In its report to me, the Club concluded:

“The Club’s investigations did not reveal any evidence that suggested the Club was ever aware of any alleged child sexual abuse either at the time or subsequently. The Club has not found any record of receiving any complaints of sexual abuse by Gieler whilst he was employed by the Club...”

However, the Club also reported that, pursuant to pre-action correspondence for a potential civil claim against it, a prospective litigant had produced a copy of a letter from a firm of solicitors acting for Gieler. This letter referred to an allegation of abuse against Gieler and an investigation into the allegation. It expressly stated that it had been copied to David Bulstrode, the Club’s Chairman. There was no sign of this letter in the Club’s files, or any record of the Club having received it.

9.5.19. I have received no evidence to suggest that anyone from QPR saw any act of abuse. However, it has been reported to me that at various times relevant infor-

mation relating to Gieler came to the Club's attention.

Rumour and General Perception

9.5.20. I have received evidence that rumours about Gieler's sexual interest in boys were well known. GJ, a former youth football coach (associated with various English professional clubs in the late 70s/early 80s including QPR), told me that, in the late 70s/early 80s, "the tittle-tattle about [Gieler] was much rifer [than it was about Eddie Heath]. ... They talked about [Gieler] as if he was, you know, a paedophile basically. Everybody talked about him like that."

9.5.21. GJ went on to say that "It was common knowledge I think that Chris Gieler was involved with football because he liked kids not because he liked football", and "almost every other week, 'Oh, Gieler, you know,' 'Gieler this and Gieler that.' And I used to get a little bit tired of it, you know, especially when I was at QPR because people say, 'Oh, you're working with Gieler now, aren't you?'"

9.5.22. When asked about the provenance of these rumours, GJ stated:

"Other scouts – it's a bit of an old woman's business. You know, they're all after the same players. So if they can ... injure somebody by word of mouth I just get the feeling they'd want to do that. 'Oh, yeah, I expect he'll be doing such and such and such. And I expect he'll be taking him for a lunch,' you know what I mean? Innuendos."

GJ concluded by saying, "There was never any evidence that he's actually assaulted anybody or sexually abused anybody. I mean, I'm sure everybody in the game at that time if there'd been evidence we would have been up in arms."

9.5.23. An established scout operating in the London region, CB, told me that by the early to mid-1980s, rumours about Gieler's sexual interest in boys were rife in footballing circles.

9.5.24. An individual who had worked in Youth Development for a number of clubs told me:

"There was always a question mark about Chris Gieler and his behaviour with young players, I think. ... All that I know was that ... there was a question mark about how he went about his role as a youth development officer at that club. ... He didn't look a footballing type, if you like."

He did not recall that there had been rumours about Gieler behaving inappropriately with children:

"No, no. I don't think there was any... I think it was just the manner of probably about his own demeanour and the way he was didn't lend itself to what we thought would be the right sort of football person, if you like."

9.5.25. I also spoke with QQ whose evidence also suggested that there had been rumours about Gieler in footballing circles.

9.5.26. A professional player, RN, who played at QPR in the late 1980s and early 1990s, described Gieler as “odd”. He subsequently explained that this observation “may stem from my own perception of football and what the male environment was all about at the time i.e. machoism and [Gieler] didn’t display any of those traits.” He went on to say that there had been rumours about Gieler’s favouritism towards certain players but “at no stage did I think anything sinister was going on and that any younger player was being mistreated, harmed, or in any kind of danger. If that were the case something would have been said and done about it, that’s for sure!”

9.5.27. GM (a former official at QPR) stated that Gieler had been “a bit unusual and he liked to have young boys in his company that he was known to be particularly fond of, such as his favourites”. She said that she “was not aware of any inappropriate behaviour on behalf of [Gieler]”.

9.5.28. A former Club Official stated that “[Gieler] was considered to be ‘not normal’ in that he was a single man and not married and did not go out with girls. Although this did not fuel further rumours of abusing children or anything like that.”

9.5.29. VC stated that “[Gieler] was a peculiar character and ... in hindsight the allegations are not surprising”. However, VC categorically denied knowing of any concerns or complaints about Gieler at the time.

9.5.30. Ian Holloway told the Review:

30.1. He was a player at the Club between 1991 and 1996. During that time he heard no rumours about Gieler having any sort of sexual interest in boys.

30.2. During his time as a player at the Club, he never heard anyone describe Gieler as a “wrong ’un” or similar. But people did say that Gieler was “weird”. He thought that this related to the fact that others would mock Gieler for wearing a wig and yet Gieler seemed to act as if he hadn’t heard that mockery.

30.3. Some people would also say that Gieler might have been gay.

30.4. From the moment he arrived at QPR as a player, Ian Holloway never liked Gieler.

30.5. The Review asked, “In the period 1991 to 1996, if there had been suspicions that Chris Gieler had been sexually abusing boys, would the club have acted?” Ian Holloway replied:

“Absolutely, yeah. I think Gerry [Francis, the QPR manager] would have. ... If Gerry even thought somebody was doing that to young lads, he would have probably attacked them and beat them up himself, because he was a very tough, very disciplined fighting machine. ... But anybody from a bullying stage he would take on. He was very much like, my team, my lads, and he took some of the lesser players up to the higher level because he believed in them. If any of those young lads ... if any one of them would have said to him anything, he would have seen it through to the end, and he would have probably done it himself.”

30.6. Between 1996 and 2001, when Ian Holloway was at another club, he heard nothing about Gieler.

30.7. In 2001, Ian Holloway rejoined QPR as manager. Gieler “still had his empire that he was running”. When asked whether Gieler had the authority to award professional contracts, Ian Holloway replied, “Absolutely. Yes. ... I think he recommended to the board of directors, the board of directors gave young kids an awful lot of money because Chris Gieler said they were going to be brilliant.” He then went on to say that Gieler had given lucrative contracts to players who, in his opinion, had simply not been talented enough to make it in professional football.

30.8. Gieler openly flaunted the power he had at the Club in respect to his influence over the youth players. He bribed players with boots and recommendations to enhance their chances of getting into the first team.

30.9. One player said to Ian Holloway that he would have to leave the club as his chances of breaking into the first team were nil as he was not one of “Gieler’s boys”. “And he did leave, and went on to have a great career in football.”

30.10. From 2001 up until Gieler’s death, he did not hear any rumours about Gieler’s having a sexual interest in boys. Gieler was “teased for looking and acting in a way that – it wasn’t a sexual thing. It’s hard to describe. ... [He just looked] absolutely weird and dodgy. They were more teasing his appearance and the way he dressed and he’s got that stupid wig on.” However, “dodgy” in this context did not mean that they he had any concerns that Gieler was committing acts of sexual abuse.

30.11. Some players (who were in the first team but had come through the youth set up) would be teased by the first team players for being Gieler’s “favourite” and there were comments made such as “He must be groping you because you’re his little favourite.”

30.12. He added that: “If anybody would have said he had definitely [abused anyone], everyone would have gone for him, because he wasn’t liked and he wasn’t popular.”

30.13. As a Manager, Ian Holloway sacked Gieler.

30.14. After Gieler’s death a player disclosed to him that Gieler had sexually abused him when he was a boy. The player asked him not to tell anyone else or do anything with the information, so he decided to keep that confidence.

9.5.31. It was also reported to me that some first team players at QPR would refer to Gieler as a “paedo”, or “nonce”, or a “wrong ’un”. The names of two first-team players in particular were mentioned to me. I asked QPR to speak with these first-team players. The Club was able to speak with one of the players and reported to me that he had said he was “shocked to hear of the allegations and didn’t see or hear of anything concerning [Gieler] that would cause concern. He thought [Gieler] was a decent man and enjoyed his company.”

9.5.32. It was also reported to me that two members of staff at the Club said things such as “be careful [of Gieler]”. It has not been possible to corroborate this. I asked the Club to contact these former staff members, but both of them are understood to be deceased.

9.5.33. It was also reported to me that Gieler would “hang around” the shower area and make sexualised comments to youth players. I was told that other named members of QPR staff knew that Gieler was hanging around the shower area, but there is no suggestion that they knew of the comments being made by Gieler to the players. As part of its investigation, the Club spoke with one of these staff members, who said that Gieler “liked to be in control and was a strange man but he never saw or heard anything suspicious and was certainly not aware that he was hanging around the boys’ showers”. The other former staff member has said he did not wish to speak with the Club or my Review Team.

9.5.34. In conclusion, the Review has received a considerable amount of evidence that, from at least the early 1980s onwards, there were rumours circulating about Gieler and his sexual interest in young boys. There is no specific evidence that these rumours reached the ears of the Club’s officials. Further, these rumours were non-specific, and if they were heard then they may well have been disregarded on the basis that they stemmed simply from the way that Gieler presented (i.e. he did not look like a ‘footballing type’).

Parent Contact with the Club (Between 1973-1975)

9.5.35. I received evidence from an individual, BC, who alleges that he was abused by Gieler sometime between 1973 and 1975. BC said that he had told his mother about the abuse, and that she had informed him that she had telephoned QPR and said, “My son has been touched up by the coach...” BC went on to say that his mother had told him that the Club had said words to the effect of, “Let’s look into this and we’ll get back to you.” When nothing further was heard from the Club, his mother had called again, but no substantive response was ever received from the Club.

9.5.36. I asked the Club to investigate what BC told me. The Club said that it had no record of this complaint.

9.5.37. I am unable to verify that BC’s mother did make a report of abuse to the Club in circumstances where:

- 37.1. BC’s mother is deceased and so I cannot speak with her about the alleged contact.
- 37.2. BC was not present when his mother made the call (rather his understanding of what his mother did comes from what she told him).
- 37.3. BC does not know the person to whom his mother spoke at the Club.
- 37.4. The Club has no record of this contact.

Allegations of Abuse Made in 1987 to 1988

9.5.38. I have seen a letter dated March 29th 1988 from a solicitor acting for Gieler. That letter was addressed to the parents of a player, JL, involved with QPR’s youth set up. The letter states that it was copied to “Mr Bulstrode, Queen’s Park Rangers”. David Bulstrode was the Chairman of the Club from 1987 to 1988.

9.5.39. The letter states that:

“We have been consulted by Mr Gieler in respect of serious allegations made by yourselves in connection with an alleged incident which you claim took place almost a year ago in the course of your son[’s] ... training programme with Queens Park Rangers. Your statements were made both to [VB] and to Mr Bulstrode of Queens Park Rangers where our client is employed.

You are no doubt well aware of Mr Gieler’s reputation in the field, and the fact that he has played a major part in talent spotting for the top names in football...

Both ourselves and our client take an extremely serious view of these allegations, and of the way that you appear to be dealing with the matter.

...

It would appear from the information that we have both from [VB], who interviewed you in some detail and asked some very specific questions, and Mr Bulstrode, that your allegations are not only groundless but are of an extremely flimsy nature.

We now write to put you on notice that should there be any repetition of any allegations against our client of any nature whatsoever to anybody, we will take immediate action in the High Court of Justice against you without further notice. As we are confident that our client will be successful, you would not only be responsible for his costs but also for our own, and the entire case would of course, have serious consequences for yourselves.

We are sending a copy of this letter to Queens Park Rangers for the attention of Mr Bulstrode to ensure that there is no repetition of your scurrilous stories.”

9.5.40. I have spoken with JL. He told me:

- 40.1. He started playing for QPR at the age of 11.
- 40.2. Between the ages of 13 and 15, he was sexually abused by Gieler on a number of occasions.
- 40.3. He eventually reported the abuse to his mother.
- 40.4. His mother called QPR and eventually spoke with David Bulstrode.
- 40.5. David Bulstrode came to JL’s house.
- 40.6. JL told David Bulstrode that Gieler had touched him on his genitals.
- 40.7. David Bulstrode was “very, very sympathetic”.
- 40.8. A short time (likely weeks) later, VB, a Youth Coach at QPR, visited JL’s house and “denied that Gieler would do anything like that... and that pretty much what we had said about Gieler was all made up because I was struggling at football, which I’d never been notified of before. ... I remember [VB] laughing as if to say, ‘Well, what you’re saying is a complete and utter joke.’”
- 40.9. In or about 1989, JL spoke with PH, who had driven David Bulstrode to JL’s parental home. PH told JL: “I know what Gieler done; know what he is.”

40.10. Shortly after the visit from VB, JL's parents received the letter from Gieler's solicitor.

40.11. He recalls his mother saying, "How are we supposed to take on QPR? We haven't got the finances."

9.5.41. I have seen a signed witness statement from JL's mother prepared for civil proceedings against the Club. In that statement she states:

41.1. Gieler would take JL to watch football games. It would just be the two of them.

41.2. On occasion, JL went to Gieler's house for tea.

41.3. "I did not think anything was untoward, except I was concerned Gieler was taking [JL] out for the day and I saw [JL] sitting in the front seat of the car, with Gieler's hand on [JL's] leg."

41.4. Her statement also includes the following relevant statement:

"At some point [JL] said that he no longer wanted to go training or playing. ... My husband and I asked what was wrong... it then came tumbling out. ... He talked of Gieler calling him into his office to check his leg muscles were up to scratch. [JL] also had to drop his trousers so Gieler could look at his thighs. I did not know if other things happened. I do not think [JL] was particularly explicit but I knew it was not right and decided to do something about it.

...

I telephoned [ChildLine]. ... The advice was to raise our concerns with Queen's Park Rangers Football Club. I therefore telephoned the Club and initially spoke to the secretary of Mr Bulstrode, the Chairman of the Club. He called me back. I cannot recall the detail of that conversation except that he sought to reassure me, said he would look into it but also said he did not think we had anything to worry about. I believe this occurred before the end of March 1988.

...

[David Bulstrode] also visited my house. ... I do not remember exactly what was said but I think he simply tried to reassure us.

...

[VB] also came to see us at home ... he also tried to reassure us. I cannot now recall which way round the men came, whether it was Bulstrode first or second but they both visited.

...

I think these visits came before we got a letter from Gieler's solicitors. ... I cannot now recall what 'serious allegations' we made but it was on the back of our concerns following [JL's] disclosure to us. This letter put the frighteners on us and we did not respond to this letter. In fact, we did very little more except for me trying to keep in contact with Mr Bulstrode, although he died in September 1988.'

...

I continued to keep in touch with [ChildLine] ... who told me to contact the new chairman of the Club. I telephoned but do not recall ever speaking to the new Chairman. As [JL] had stopped playing for [QPR] by this time. We also

stopped doing anything about Gieler.

...

I also have a handwritten note I made on the 29 March 1988 ... headed 'Journalist Phoned 9:30am'. I do not know how but journalists seemed to know something and they telephoned us. I tried to speak to David Bulstrode, the Chairman that same day, at 9:45am. I do not now recall if he called back. ... I did not talk to the papers at the time. ... I do not know where they got their information from. ... I remember a journalist ... turning up at the house. However, I did not speak to her."

9.5.42. I have been unable to speak with or see any written account from PH: the person who it is claimed drove David Bulstrode to JL's home.

9.5.43. I asked the Club some questions about the letter from Gieler's solicitor. The Club told me:

43.1. It has been unable to locate any documentation relating to the issues raised in the letter (indeed it did not have a copy of the letter other than the copy provided to it by JL as part of a pending civil claim).

43.2. It has spoken with VB. The Club said that VB "stated categorically that he was not aware of any complaints or reports in respect of [Gieler]" and "denied any recollection of the [solicitor's] letter ... and has no recollection of any investigation".

43.3. David Bulstrode is deceased.

43.4. The Club has spoken with a former Chief Executive who told the Club that he had no knowledge of any incidents or complaints in relation to Gieler. The former Chief Executive also stated that by the time he joined the club in 1988, David Bulstrode had already passed away.

43.5. It has spoken with VC who told the Club that, prior to press contact in 2017, he had "never heard any rumours of any allegations [against Gieler]", and that he did not believe that an internal investigation overseen by David Bulstrode (as referred to in the 1988 letter) could have occurred without VC's knowledge. The Club went on to tell me that VC "did concede that considering the nature of the allegations, it may well be that David Bulstrode wanted to keep the incident as quiet as possible."

43.6. The Club has spoken with a former Chairman of the Club who "confirmed he had no knowledge of any complaints relating to Gieler and only heard positive things about him".

43.7. It has been unable to contact the Club's Manager from 1985 to 1988.

9.5.44. I asked the Club to contact VB to ask him to meet with me. VB was unfortunately too unwell to speak with me.

9.5.45. I also asked the Club to contact the solicitor who had authored the March 28th 1998 letter so as to ask about the circumstances in which that letter came to be written. The Club made contact as requested but the solicitor "confirmed she holds no relevant documentation in respect of her instruction by Chris Gieler and stated she is unwilling to provide any information to the Club due to client

legal privilege.” I also sought to speak directly with Gieler’s solicitor, but I received no reply.

9.5.46. Taking all of the above into account, I am satisfied of the following:

- 46.1. In late 1987/early 1988, JL’s mother contacted the Club;
- 46.2. In 1987/early 1988, David Bulstrode, QPR’s Chairman, visited JL’s house;
- 46.3. JL told David Bulstrode that Gieler had sexually assaulted him;
- 46.4. David Bulstrode and VB conducted some sort of “investigation” into what JL had reported (although I am unable to say what that “investigation” consisted of); and
- 46.5. VB visited JL’s house and said, in effect, that Gieler had no case to answer.

9.5.47. It is clear from the solicitor’s letter that some form of investigation was conducted by the Club. The investigation is likely to be the one which was reported by the BBC to have involved “four youth players [who] were individually questioned by senior members of management at the club before Mr Bulstrode’s death in September 1988”.⁸ I have been unable to verify the news story, and do not know, therefore, what the investigation consisted of and who was spoken to. The BBC journalist involved with this story assisted the Review in asking the former youth players to contact the Review: however, they did not wish to provide evidence to the Review.

9.5.48. The BBC quoted a former player as saying:

“Mr Gieler’s behaviour had not changed after the investigation and he would still transport boys in his car to and from games without any other adults present. He said that even if the club didn’t find any evidence of abuse, it should have monitored Chris Gieler more closely to stop him behaving inappropriately towards young boys. ‘For me the club were complicit after that point and didn’t act on it,’ the player claimed. ‘They should have put a safeguarding policy in place.’”

9.5.49. It seems most likely that the conclusion reached by the Club, following the investigation that it carried out, was that JL’s allegations were not accepted; that he was not believed. I doubt that Gieler’s solicitor would have written a letter to JL’s parents, copied into the Chairman of QPR, if it did not reflect the conclusion reached by the Club. Otherwise, the solicitor’s letter would amount to a deliberate lie about her client, which she was happy to share with the Club’s Chairman. I have received no evidence to suggest that David Bulstrode, the Club’s Chairman, was likely to have been complicit in such a lie. The impression that David Bulstrode had given to JL was that he was “very sympathetic” to JL.

9.5.50. JL’s description of how he perceived VB’s attitude towards him is of concern. I cannot say that this is what actually happened as VB does not appear to recall the investigation, and I have not had the opportunity of speaking to VB due to his illness. If VB did behave in this way, it may be that this was on the basis that

8. BBC, 15 December 2016, “QPR coach Chris Gieler ‘kept on after 1980s investigation’” <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38315212> (accessed 31 October 2020)

he did not believe the allegation (as reflected in the solicitor's letter).

Concerns in 1987/88

9.5.51. The Review spoke with a former police officer, QQ, who, in the mid-to-late 1980s, was involved with an amateur youth team based in London. In 1987 or 1988, QQ said, he was told by another person, CJ, who had been involved in running that team, that "Chris Gieler was certainly a person to avoid at QPR. And that [QPR] were covering up his misdeeds on a grandiose scale." QQ told the Review that CJ was a teacher and that his "knowledge came from the fact that boys who went to his school ... had information about what was going on at QPR." QQ told the Review that he had raised the matter with the local child protection unit, but that the unit had not been interested in investigating the matter. It has not been possible to verify this.

9.5.52. QQ provided the Review with contact details for CJ. The Review made a number of attempts to contact CJ but ultimately did not manage to speak with him.

9.5.53. I have no reason not to accept QQ's account of what he was told by CJ. That does not, of course, mean that what he was told (that QPR was covering up Gieler's misdeeds) was correct. Without knowing the basis for CJ's comment in that regard, I am unable to say that there was any such "covering up". However, the fact that QQ was, in 1987/88, aware of concerns surrounding Gieler gives support to the assertions made by others (see above) that rumours about Gieler's interest in underage boys were rife.

Concerns Expressed in 2001

9.5.54. David Davies (the Club's Chief Executive Officer from 2000 to 2004) stated that Gieler became ill during 2001 and that, as the illness became more serious, the Club had to put arrangements in place to cover his absence. He explained that Gieler's reporting line was to the team manager. David Davies said, "I did not receive complaints regarding his behaviour regarding his relationships with the club's players. However, I subsequently became aware of rumours regarding his relationship with two players at a Christmas [event] in 2001." He explained:

"A group of employees ... raised the issue of [Gieler] and his management of the academy. Furthermore, they expressed their general disgust at the atmosphere within the academy and in particular their disappointment in his relationship with two of the players. ... Although I raised the matter at subsequent team meetings nothing further was claimed and there were no accusations or complaints made."

9.5.55. The Club employees who were said to have discussed Gieler at the Christmas event in 2001 were GM and HZ.

9.5.56. David Davies said that part of the discussion at the Christmas event may have related to Gieler driving youth players around his car. However, given that

no specific complaint had been made (despite David Davies' raising the matter at a subsequent team meeting) and given that Gieler was absent from the Club as a result of his illness, David Davies considered that there was no need to carry out any further enquiry into the matters raised at the Christmas event. David Davies also stated that, save for the conversation at the Christmas event, he did not receive any complaints or hear any rumours or concerns which would have caused him to suspect that Gieler had any sort of inappropriate interest in the young players.

9.5.57. David Davies joined the Club in 2000 and had, prior to that date, not been involved in the world of professional football, and had not heard of Gieler or rumours about him. David Davies also told the Review that he had not been aware that Gieler had been or was driving youth players around in his car or that players had stayed over at Gieler's house. David Davies told the Review that, had he been aware of this, he would have investigated these issues further as they flagged potential safeguarding issues. David Davies had been involved with a safeguarding matter in his previous employment and was not afraid to investigate where safeguarding issues arose.

9.5.58. Neither HZ nor GM has any recollection of any conversation with David Davies where Gieler was discussed. HZ further stated that she was "not aware of any allegations that were made against [Gieler]". GM further stated that there were "no allegations" about Gieler during her time at the Club (i.e. until 2008).

9.5.59. Gieler died in 2002. The Club does not appear to have "marked" his death in any way despite his many years of service. When asked about this, the Club responded that there was nothing unusual about failing to mark a former staff member's death and that there was no record of any conscious decision having been taken not to mark Gieler's death. David Davies told the Review that there had been occasions on which long-serving staff members had been commemorated on death but that, to the best of his recollection, there had been no conscious decision not to mark Gieler's death. I accept this evidence.

Communication with the FA in 2002

9.5.60. There is correspondence in the FA archives dated September 12th 2002, which refers to a member of the FA staff receiving a telephone call from someone who used to work for QPR. The correspondence states that "certain unspecified players (past and present) have made allegations to the police regarding the behaviour of Chris Gieler during his many years at QPR when he held a number of positions including Youth Development Officer and Academy Director". The former QPR worker said that he had been "contacted by the police and made a statement". The correspondence went on to say, "Chris Gieler who has left the employment of QPR is now terminally ill and ... unlikely to live more than a couple of months – a year at the outside."

9.5.61. The Club sought to locate the former worker for the purposes of its investigation, but was unable to do so.

9.5.62. The police could not find information relating to any investigation into Gieler in 2002. It is not possible, therefore, to know what the allegations against Gieler were, and whether the statements of the players, or that of the former worker, provided further evidence of what the Club knew about Gieler during his period of employment at the Club.

Conclusion as to What Queens Park Rangers Knew About Gieler's Alleged Abuse and What Should Have Been Done

9.5.63. A number of people told me that rumours about Gieler's "odd" character and his interest in young boys were constant and widespread. I have not received any specific evidence that these rumours reached the ears of any Club officials.

9.5.64. The Club did receive one complaint about Gieler, and an investigation was carried out. I do not know how thorough the investigation was. There is no evidence to suggest that the Club took any advice from third party experts in child protection to make sure that it had acted appropriately in its investigation of the complaint. It is likely that the Club concluded that there was no merit to the allegation that Gieler had abused a young player. There is no evidence to suggest that the Club took any steps after the investigation to monitor Gieler's behaviour and conduct with the young players with whom he had dealings. Nowadays, the Club would probably "keep an eye" on the situation and subject the accused to more scrutiny. In the late 1980s, this was not the practice and would not have been expected.

9.5.65. There is no evidence to suggest that the Club mentioned the allegation to the police or to the FA. On the assumption that the conclusion of the investigation was that there was no merit to the allegation, I do not consider that the Club ought to have notified the police or the FA of the allegation. This would not have been expected in the late 1980s.

9.5.66. I am aware that some individuals who knew or worked with Gieler have been unwilling to speak to the Club or the Review Team, and some others who may have information are unwell, and others are deceased. It is possible, therefore, that more was known about Gieler and the allegations against him than I have been able to describe.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY QUEENS PARK RANGERS

9.5.67. In preparing its initial report to the Review, QPR had made contact with a significant number of individuals who were involved with the Club at the same time as Gieler. Following production of that initial report, the Review asked a number of follow up questions/for further matters to be considered/investigated by the Club. The Club carried out these requests and sought to make contact with and ask questions of further individuals. The Club also engaged with the Review (both in

writing and face to face) and provided further responses. Overall, the Club spoke to more than 20 people as part of its review, including former Board members, members of staff (coaching and administrative) and former youth players.

9.5.68. I am satisfied that the investigation conducted by the Club was adequate.

9.6 Edward ‘Eddie’ Heath

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INTRODUCTION

9.6.1. Edward Heath (more often referred to as “Eddie Heath”) (“Heath”) was born on February 1st 1929. He died on December 27th 1983 from a heart attack which occurred while he was setting up the pitch for a Charlton Athletic FC schoolboy game. He was 54 years old. Heath is alleged to have abused young players throughout his time in youth football, which spanned five professional football clubs from the mid-1950s until 1983. He was never investigated or prosecuted for the offences he is alleged to have committed.

9.6.2. I have received accounts from a number of individuals who allege that they were abused by Heath. I have no reason to doubt those accounts, which I found credible not least because of the number of unconnected individuals recounting a similar pattern of grooming and behaviour by Heath. It is not my role, however, to make findings about any individual’s abuse, and I acknowledge that allegations of abuse against Heath have not been tested in a courtroom.

9.6.3. Heath was associated with five clubs over the course of his 21-year involvement with youth football:

Dates	Club
1960 to 1967	Leyton Orient FC
March 1967 to June 1968	Tottenham Hotspur FC
June 1st 1968 to November 30th 1979	Chelsea FC
Four months in 1980 or early 1981	Millwall FC
September 1981 to December 27th 1983	Charlton Athletic FC

9.6.4. I asked each of the Clubs associated with Heath to investigate and produce a report into its connection to Heath and what, if anything, it knew about any abuse.

9.6.5. In the case of Chelsea, by the time the FA asked me to conduct this Review, the Club had already commissioned an independent investigation led by Charles Geekie QC. Mr Geekie QC and his team fully engaged with my Review at all times and were willing to answer my queries, let me review material and pursue lines of enquiry/questioning which I considered necessary. In my Report, I refer to the report produced by Mr Geekie QC as the “Geekie Report”.

9.6.6. In the cases of Millwall and Charlton, my Review entered into extensive correspondence with both of these Clubs with a view to encouraging them to pursue what I considered to be appropriate lines of enquiry. I also met with the Clubs to discuss their investigations and explore what other avenues of enquiry were open to them. Both Clubs ultimately provided me with reports, the details of which I consider further below.

9.6.7. In the case of Tottenham Hotspur, I asked the Club to investigate its connection with Heath. It did so and reported to me its finding that there had been a connection for a relatively short period in the late 1960s (sometime between March 1967

and June 1968). While the period of Heath's connection with the Club was outside the dates (1970-2005) set out in my Terms of Reference, I nonetheless asked the Club to provide me with further information as I considered it was likely to assist me in conducting my Review. The Club engaged with me and provided me with the assistance I sought from them.

9.6.8. In the case of Leyton Orient, the Club's connection with Heath was outside the dates set out in my Terms of Reference. However, as with Tottenham, I nonetheless asked the Club to provide me with further information, as I considered it was likely to assist me in conducting my Review. The Club provided me with some information which did indeed assist me with the Review.

SUMMARY OF HEATH'S INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL

Overview

9.6.9. Heath built a strong reputation within youth football development from the 1960s to the 1980s. He was well respected as a scout, and had little difficulty securing employment at prominent and well-established clubs.

9.6.10. Players at the clubs where Heath worked recall that he was present in the youth development set-up at each of the clubs. He was not always the head or main coach and at some clubs he did not coach at all. He assisted with various jobs for the youth team, from scouting, to training, to setting up the pitch, to transporting players to and from the club in question. This afforded him significant exposure to youth players. It also often gave him the opportunity to meet the players' families. Heath would frequently ingratiate himself with these families. He dined at players' homes. He gained parents' trust to take out their sons, either for special-treat trips (such as dinners out) or to provide transport to games and training sessions. Heath was perceived by youth players as an important figure at the clubs where he worked, and as someone with a considerable degree of power over their future careers.

9.6.11. Heath was a physically large man. He presented as a friendly, jovial character while he was working. This enabled him to "joke" around with players. Heath's "joking" regularly involved innuendo and comments of a sexual nature. It also regularly extended into physical contact while players were wearing towels in club changing rooms.

9.6.12. From the 1960s, Heath lived in a flat near to Leyton Orient's stadium. Players from the Club frequently attended Heath's home. When Heath left Leyton Orient, this practice appears to have continued. I have received evidence that players from Chelsea also attended Heath's home.

9.6.13. In addition to his roles at the five clubs under consideration, Heath was in-

volved with coaching for other youth football teams. These connections appear to have been used to solidify his access to, and increase his status with, youth players.

9.6.14. Heath coached unofficially at a youth team named “Senrab”, while he was at Chelsea. Dario Gradi told me that two of Chelsea’s coaches had been coaches of Senrab, and that Chelsea had recruited players from Senrab. Players at Chelsea and their parents also recalled Heath being a “frequent presence” at Senrab and that he was “well-liked”. The Geekie Report concluded that, while there was no formal link (such as legal or financial association) between Chelsea and Senrab, Heath was during his time at Chelsea “a significant presence at Senrab” and “perhaps arising from the presence of Mr Heath and the fact that some players did graduate to [Chelsea], a perception developed that Senrab did have some form of association with the Club at about the time of the Heath era”. From the evidence I have seen, I agree with that assessment.

9.6.15. Later on in his career, when Heath was involved with Millwall and Charlton Athletic, he also coached at a Sunday team in London called “Riverside”. At least one of the youth players who was coached and abused by Heath at Millwall and Charlton Athletic played for Riverside as well.

Links with Leyton Orient FC: 1960 - 1967

9.6.16. Leyton Orient provided me with a limited amount of information about Heath and his connection with the Club from 1960 to 1967. This was based on a report which the Club’s lawyers had compiled after receiving a letter from a man claiming to have been abused by Heath while he was involved with the Club. Based on this information, as well as information gathered through interviews conducted by the Review Team and from some reports in the media, I am able to say the following about Heath’s link with the Club.

9.6.17. Heath was a scout and coach at Leyton Orient from the early 1960s (possibly even the 1950s) until 1966 or 1967. He also occasionally coached the Club’s reserve team. The uncertainty as to the exact dates of Heath’s involvement with Leyton Orient arises because the Club itself has no records relating to staff from this period and accounts are, understandably given the passage of time, sometimes vague as to dates. That said, a number of survivor accounts I have seen refer to abuse by Heath at the Club in the period from 1960 to 1966. Some media reports place Heath’s involvement with the Club as beginning in the 1950s. Tottenham Hotspur told me that, to the best of its knowledge, Heath commenced working for the Club in March 1967. Therefore, I find that, at a minimum, Heath’s tenure at Leyton Orient included the six years from 1960 to 1966. It is, however, possible that he began working at the Club in the 1950s, and that he remained at the Club later until the early months of 1967.

9.6.18. The Review spoke with SP, a former Leyton Orient youth player, who said that in the mid-1960s Heath had been the “Head Coach [at Leyton Orient] for the junior and youth squad”. SP said:

- 18.1. The youth players trained two nights per week.
- 18.2. “[SP] never actually saw [Heath] take a training session, but he was

the man who, having reports back from the other trainers, would make the team sheet up for the weekend... so [he] was quite a power. ... [Heath] was very much the eminence there in terms of the power...”

18.3. “You could hear [Heath] coming down the concrete corridor. ... [Heath’s] appearance then through the dressing room door was always perfectly timed for the very moment we had all our jockstraps off and everything like that and made our way to the bath. ... [Heath] wouldn’t get in the bath, but he’d sit... on the edge of the bath and always in a good humour... he was the Head Coach and he was giving... a de-briefing of the training session.”

18.4. After coming into the changing rooms, Heath would “retire to his office and we’d all troop up there ... to get our expenses and ... on the Thursday find out if we were in ... the junior team for Saturday’s game...”.

18.5. He also stated that “[Heath] was always hanging around and he seemed to live in that office”.

9.6.19. A former Leyton Orient Schoolboy player who, at the age of 13, played under Heath told the Review that Heath would “change in the dressing room with the boys.”

9.6.20. Another former youth player has stated that there were not many other adults present at youth events during Heath’s tenure at the Club.

9.6.21. The Club’s lawyers spoke with an individual, NW, who had worked at the Club in a backroom capacity. NW stated that Heath had been in charge of youth arrangements at the Club. His understanding was that Heath had been assisted by an informal network of scouts and coaches.

9.6.22. RT, a former professional player at Leyton Orient, told the Club’s lawyers that there had been other adults involved with the Club’s youth team, but that he considered that they had held volunteer positions and had not held any formal role at the Club.

9.6.23. In my view it is likely, therefore, that Heath was the official figure at the Club who ran its youth team. This position would have given Heath power over youth players’ development and careers.

9.6.24. I have received a number of reports that Heath lived in a flat close to the Club’s training ground, and there are several people who have said that Heath regularly had youth players, as well as others from the Club, visit him at his flat. NW, the backroom staff member, said he had personally been to Heath’s flat on a number of occasions. RT also said that he had had dinner at Heath’s flat at least a dozen times, but never alone. RT also stated that he knew that “many” youth players had attended Heath’s home. He considered this mainly to have been in order to get information for games and football administration. Reports from youth player survivors are that they regularly attended Heath’s flat while they were at the Club.

9.6.25. Former players at the Club have said publicly that they attended Heath’s flat.

They reported that this would sometimes be with other boys, and that these visits were considered to be social visits to watch movies and/or spend time with Heath. I have also seen the account of a survivor who contacted the Club and explained that, in his experience, Heath had used pretexts relating to football (such as collecting team photos) to coax him to visit.

9.6.26. Although Heath gave a reason linked to football for visiting his flat, this was often a pretence: Heath had other reasons for wanting boys to visit his home. RT made clear that Heath did *not* in fact have control over team photos, and that few team photos were ever taken. Accordingly, there was no real need for players to attend Heath's home to collect team photos.

9.6.27. Both RT and NW recalled that a youth team player had lived with Heath at his flat for "a period" of time. RT recalled picking up that player from Heath's home to take him to training and thought that the youth team player may have lived with Heath for up to two years. The Club and its lawyers sought to make contact with this youth team player, but they were unable to speak with him, and he has not come forward to the Review. On its face, this appears to be an unusual arrangement. I cannot say, however, that it was formally arranged or sanctioned by the Club, although it does appear that people at the Club were aware of this living arrangement.

9.6.28. During Heath's tenure, the youth team at Leyton Orient trained at least twice a week. There were changing rooms on the Club's grounds, with a communal bath. RT said that there had been no requirement to bathe after training. RT did not recall any adults from the Club ever using the bath when youth players were present. However, RT was not in the youth team and so could not provide a comprehensive account of the practices of the youth team under Heath.

9.6.29. The recollection of former youth team members who are survivors of Heath's abuse is different to that of RT. One survivor, who contacted the Club directly to give his account, recalled that Heath would be present in the changing rooms and would encourage boys to bathe with him in the communal bath. This survivor recalled that Heath would grab towels away from naked boys, before flicking their genitals with towels. The latter behaviour was consistent with that described by former players at other clubs where Heath worked.

9.6.30. It is likely, therefore, that Heath was often present in the changing room while the youth team changed, and that he engaged in sexually inappropriate behaviour there.

9.6.31. RT recalled that there was a physiotherapy and treatment room between the two changing rooms at the Club and that these doubled up as offices for coaches at the Club. He considered these rooms to have been a revolving door of activity, with players and coaches leaving and entering them after training and matches. RT was aware that Heath had carried out massages and undertook physiotherapy on players. He perceived this to have been part of Heath's role in doing "a bit of everything at the Club".

9.6.32. A former youth player gave his account to the BBC of a massage performed by Heath while he (the player) was at the Club. I consider his account in further detail below. Another former youth player explained to the Club that he had been assaulted by Heath during a massage carried out in one of the treatment rooms.

9.6.33. The reason for Heath's departure from Leyton Orient is not known to the Club nor to the individuals interviewed by the Club. There is a suggestion, however, from one former youth player who was abused by Heath that Heath had been forced out of the Club as a result of his abuse. This could not be verified.

Links with Tottenham Hotspur FC: March 1967 – June 1968

9.6.34. Heath was employed by Tottenham Hotspur for a short period after he left Leyton Orient. The Club reported to me that Heath had been an employee between March 1967 and June 1968. The Club reached this view by assessing information on Heath's dates of employment at other clubs and through witness evidence from former players who were at the Club at the same time as Heath. The dates given by Tottenham Hotspur accord broadly with Heath's dates of employment at Leyton Orient and Chelsea, and are likely to be reasonably accurate.

9.6.35. The Club has reported that Heath was both a youth team coach and a scout. One survivor of abuse interviewed by the Club recalled Heath having been in charge of the youth team. This has not been corroborated. However, it was consistently reported by former players interviewed by the Club that Heath had held significant power over the youth team. There is evidence from former players that Heath was involved in running youth football training.

Links with Chelsea FC: June 1968 – November 1979

9.6.36. After Heath left Tottenham Hotspur, he moved to Chelsea. He was employed by the Club from June 1st 1968 until November 30th 1979.

9.6.37. In response to the historical abuse allegations made against Heath, the Club commissioned an external review into its association with Heath and what, if anything, the Club knew about his abuse. This review was led by Charles Geekie QC, who has produced a thorough report setting out his findings ("the Geekie Report"). I have had the benefit of reading and considering that report. A specialist safeguarding expert who was part of the Geekie Review Team met with 23 survivors of abuse who were former players of the Club. The Geekie Review Team also met with a variety of officials involved with the Club at the material time. In this report, I do not set out in full the evidence and findings contained in the Geekie Report. (I recommend referring to the Geekie Report directly to gain a full picture of Heath's involvement with Chelsea⁹.) Rather, in this section, I give an overview of Heath's role at the Club based on the Geekie Report and information provided to me directly. I also consider the findings produced by the Club's external review as set out in the Geekie Report.

9.6.38. Heath was initially Chelsea's "London Representative". This role gave him re-

9. <https://www.chelseafc.com/en/about-chelsea/safeguarding-review>

sponsibility for developing the Club's youth teams (for players aged 14 to 16 years old). Later, on a date which the Club has not been able to determine precisely, he became the Chief Scout.

9.6.39. The accounts of players who were at Chelsea during Heath's tenure demonstrate that Heath had a high profile at the Club. He was described by them, variously, as a very "powerful" man, a "very big man" who was "imposing", "as Chief Scout he was an important man" and as "the man of dreams". Heath was considered by the players as exerting a substantial influence over their football careers.

9.6.40. Heath was involved in training youth players. Players have given evidence as to where they interacted with Heath. Heath would be present at matches and training sessions, as well as in the changing rooms. One player summarised the position: "Heath would be in the changing rooms and everywhere you looked at Mitcham" (the Club's training ground at the time).

9.6.41. I interviewed Dario Gradi, who had been a coach at Chelsea. He told me that Heath had been present at the Mitcham training ground "more often than not" even when the youth team was absent. The youth team did not train during the day on weekdays, due to school hours, but Heath would be present at the Club regardless. Outside of official training sessions with the youth team, Heath sometimes organised activities which involved the youth players, such as doing work on the training ground.

9.6.42. Just as was the case with Leyton Orient, many youth players reported that Heath would engage in sexualised behaviour with them, by grabbing their towels away from them in the changing room and flicking their genitals with a towel. Further, many youth players stated that Heath made jokes related to sex and genitals openly when he was at the Club.

9.6.43. Many players also said that Heath had provided them with transport to and from training and games for the Club. One stated that, on the first day he met Heath, Heath had been tasked with driving him home. One stated that Heath would always be "giving lifts and ferrying us around". At least four players described how they had been abused by Heath during or after he had transported them, either in the Club van or in a saloon car.

9.6.44. The Club was unable to say whether or not it had been formally part of Heath's role to drive the minibus and transport players. Having reviewed the evidence, given the number of former players who recall that Heath had driven them in the Club's van, there is a sound basis for concluding that this was part of his role at the Club. This would also appear to accord with the scope of his role in relation to the youth team, as youth players would often need assistance with transportation.

9.6.45. Several of the players interviewed by the Club stated that they had either attended Heath's home or that they were aware that other boys had done so. The boys who were brought to Heath's flat were described by others as his "favourites". It appears that the flat they went to was the same one Heath had lived in when he was em-

ployed by Leyton Orient.

9.6.46. One player who attended Heath's home reported that Heath would have groups "back to his flat to watch big matches on TV. He would put on a spread." Another stated that Heath would watch pornography with groups of players. Some players stated that they had attended Heath's flat alone after a trial or training session. Heath also had at least one player stay overnight at his flat after a football trial. He gained permission from the player's parents first. It appears unlikely that that player was the only one who did so: other players reported that Heath had suggested to them that they stay overnight at his home too.

9.6.47. Heath was summarily dismissed by the Club on November 30th 1979. The Geekie Report records that the reason given by the Club for Heath's dismissal was that Sir Geoff Hurst, who had become the Club's Chief Coach, considered that Heath was not doing a good job in recruiting the right players.

9.6.48. After his dismissal, there was a negotiation between Heath and the Club, resulting in the Club making an *ex gratia* payment to Heath of £7,500. In 1980, Heath brought, and subsequently succeeded in, a complaint in the Industrial Tribunal against the Club. No allegations in relation to sexual abuse of players by Heath were raised in those proceedings. Sir Geoff Hurst gave evidence that he considered that Heath had been scouting at too few matches and selecting insufficiently skilled players to train at the Club. The Industrial Tribunal accepted that evidence in its findings.

9.6.49. After his employment with the Club had ended, there is evidence that Heath may still have had access to the Club grounds and facilities. One survivor recalled being taken there by Heath in the 1980s. He recalled that Heath "was never challenged" as he walked around the Club, and had been able to go wherever he wanted. I cannot verify this account.

Links with Millwall FC: 1980 or 1981

9.6.50. In its report to me, Millwall concluded:

"Heath may have worked in the capacity of a youth scout for the Club for a period of anywhere between 6 weeks and 4 months at some stage between 30 November 1979 (when he left Chelsea) and September 1981 (when he joined Charlton). However, we have no documentary evidence to confirm this."

9.6.51. On the basis of evidence received by the Review, and despite there being no documentary evidence, I am satisfied that after his departure from Chelsea in 1979, Heath did provide part-time scouting services to Millwall. The evidence I have seen suggests that Heath's role with the Club was relatively short-lived – between six weeks and four months – in either 1980 or 1981. I set out below the basis for this conclusion.

9.6.52. Millwall initially told me that Heath had been "associated" with the Club, but that the Club had no official records of Heath's "association" as most documents and records had been lost when the Club went into administration in 1997. The Club also

provided me with a referral form which it had provided to the FA in December 2016, in which it was stated that Heath had approached the Club for work but had been turned down, “as budget restrictions did not allow Millwall to employ another senior scout”. In the same form, the Club noted a report from a Director of the Club that Heath had helped to scout several players for the Club. This second statement suggests that Heath was involved as a scout for the Club, although the status of that involvement (whether by contract for services or of employment, or on a less formal basis) is not clear from the referral form.

9.6.53. At my request, the Club conducted further investigation of its association with Heath. As part of this further investigation, the Club spoke with an individual, SZ, who had been involved in scouting for the Club at the relevant time, and recalled that Heath had worked part-time as a scout for Millwall for a period of “3 to 4 months before going to Charlton”. SZ originally knew Heath from his previous scouting roles at Leyton Orient and Chelsea. He said that he had thought that Heath had left Chelsea due to financial irregularities. SZ recalled that a Director at the Club had recommended that Heath be offered a job.

9.6.54. QH, a former Director of the Club (in the mid-to-late 1980s), recalled Heath’s involvement. QH said that Heath had looked after the youth side with SZ. QH said he was unsure whether Heath had been an official/paid member of staff. QH recalled that Heath had driven boys to and from the Club’s youth training sessions.

9.6.55. PE, another former Director of the Club in the mid-to-late 1980s, thought that SZ had been keen to recruit Heath, but that Heath had not actually taken up any role with the Club. This Director said that, if Heath had been involved with the Club, it was only for a short period: six weeks at most.

9.6.56. Several youth players at the Club during the mid to late 1980s also remembered Heath having been involved with the Club.

9.6.57. A Charlton Athletic match programme from September 1981, which announced that Heath had joined the Charlton staff, refers to Heath having previously been involved with Millwall.

9.6.58. I consider, therefore, that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that Heath worked as a part-time scout for the Club for a short period.

9.6.59. Heath left Millwall and moved to work for Charlton as a full-time scout. It appears likely that this move was occasioned by the opportunity for a full-time, rather than a part-time, position. However, there is no documentary evidence relating to this matter and no one interviewed by the Club was aware of the reason for Heath’s departure. It has been suggested that Heath was made to leave Millwall after officials at the Club were told of abuse by a youth player. This is disputed by one of the officials who is said to have been made aware of the abuse. There is no evidence to corroborate this matter, and so I am unable to conclude that Heath left because the Club became aware of allegations of abuse.

Links with Charlton Athletic FC: 1981 - 1983

9.6.60. Heath was employed by Charlton from September 1981 until December 27th 1983, the day he died.

9.6.61. Due to a number of ground moves since 1980, the documentary material available to the Club was limited. However, the following written records were available in relation to Heath's role:

61.1. In a match day programme for September 5th 1981, Heath's appointment as the Club's Youth Development Officer was announced.

61.2. Match day programmes from later in 1981 and 1982 refer to Heath simply as a "scout" and reference another individual as the Youth Development Officer who was said to be "working with scout Eddie Heath on the development of young players".

61.3. In Board minutes from February 1982, Heath is described as the "assistant chief scout".

61.4. In a 1983 match day programme announcing his death, Heath was described as "our Youth Development Officer".

9.6.62. Regardless of any change in job title, it appears that the substance of Heath's role did not change significantly during his tenure at the Club. QH, a Club official during Heath's tenure at the Club, stated that Heath's role had been both scouting and coaching and that he believed this had been on a fixed-term contract basis. Heath's reporting line would have been to the Club's Head Scout.

9.6.63. The Review interviewed an individual who had been a coach at the Club at the relevant time (referred to as GJ). GJ stated that Heath had been a "youth development officer" and that he had been brought in due to his extensive "network" to expand the Club's scouting of youth players. GJ considered that Heath's role had differed from a regular scout in that Heath had been recruited to work full-time at the Club.

9.6.64. Heath's employment with the Club ended when he died. This was announced in the Club's match day programme. GJ attended Heath's funeral. He recalled that so many people had attended Heath's funeral from the Club and elsewhere that "there were more people outside the Church than there were inside".

9.6.65. Heath's role had been to scout boys at football games outside of the Club and then liaise with their parents in order to recruit the boys. According to GJ, Heath was considered to be "good" at this. QH said that Heath had used the Club's official van to transport players to and from their homes and games or training. The van could fit up to 10 boys. QH said that this arrangement had been "fully endorsed" by the Club. GJ also recalled that Heath had spent "a lot of the time ... collecting kids".

9.6.66. GJ told the Review that he was not aware of what Heath's other responsibilities had been as he had not worked with him directly. However, he recalled that even though Heath "didn't need to be [at the Club] in the daytime ... he was very busy. ... Eddie would come and he'd just be there ... to support the staff basically ... making cups

of tea.” GJ recalled that one summer Heath had organised for drainage to be built into the pitch with the help of the apprentices, which had been a “need” for the Club at the time. GJ was clear that Heath had not been involved in delivering the training of the youth team at the Club.

SUMMARY OF THE ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE COMMITTED BY HEATH

Overview

9.6.67. Heath performed a variety of roles over his career in football: he served as a kind of groundskeeper; he scouted players; he worked in youth development jobs; and he coached players. Heath was perceived to have been “always there” in the background. His presence, role and stature at the Clubs appears to have provided him with a number of opportunities to abuse youth players including in vehicles when transporting players, in changing rooms, on the physiotherapy treatment table and at his own flat. At times, Heath appears to have been opportunistic. At other times, he appears to have enacted a longer campaign of grooming. With some players, the abuse lasted for years, with one player even being transferred between clubs by Heath.

9.6.68. Heath’s *modus operandi* remained broadly consistent throughout his career in youth football. The main distinction between the early and late years of abuse, however, is that in the later years Heath no longer took players to his home.

Allegations of Abuse at Leyton Orient FC

9.6.69. I am aware of a number of cases of abuse alleged to have been committed by Heath against players at Leyton Orient. Two accounts have been reported in the media, and one individual has given his account to the Club.

9.6.70. While Heath was at the Club, the evidence is that he was generally “touchy-feely” with the players. Those he is alleged to have groomed and abused recalled that he would touch their bottoms as they ran on and off the pitch. In the changing rooms, he ripped towels away from players in order to play-fight with them while they were naked, by flicking their genitals with their towel.

9.6.71. Heath is alleged to have perpetrated the abuse both at the Club and at his flat nearby. At the Club, Heath assaulted boys by touching them during tasks which were ostensibly related to football, such as physiotherapy treatments. The abuse took place when Heath was alone in a room where the player was isolated. Heath also frequently had boys over to his home. He did so on the pretext either of football administration or of watching films. In some of these cases, he sexually assaulted a player when he was alone with him.

9.6.72. Those alleging abuse by Heath recalled feeling that he had great power over

their careers, and that they could not protest against the way he treated them.

XP

9.6.73. One individual (XP) is reported in the press to have said that he was a youth player at the Club in the early 1960s.

9.6.74. XP said that he had been invited by Heath to visit his house. XP explained that he had not known any different, and went to Heath's house on multiple occasions. During these visits, Heath supplied him with magazines and a drink, and Heath would potter around.

9.6.75. The last time that XP visited Heath's home, the abuse took place. XP was on the sofa and Heath pressed him against the arm of the sofa so that he could not move. XP could not tell whether Heath had touched his genitals or not, but remembers that it was a horrible experience. After that experience, XP felt that he could not play football anymore.

UG

9.6.76. UG was another youth team player during Heath's involvement at the Club. I do not know the precise dates of his involvement at the Club. In an interview with the media, UG has described behaviour by Heath which was inappropriate and indicative of sexual abuse.

9.6.77. According to UG, Heath conducted a physiotherapy session on him. During the purported therapy, Heath's hands were close to UG's genitals. When he felt this, UG told Heath to take his hand away. It appears that Heath did not move his hand any further towards UG's genitals. However, the touching was inappropriate. Heath was not a trained physiotherapist. He should not have been conducting the purported physiotherapy on UG. Heath's action was consistent with the tactics he used to perpetrate abuse on players at other clubs in later years, and at least one other youth player at Leyton Orient.

OTHERS

9.6.78. In an interview with a newspaper, LN (who played professionally for Leyton Orient) recounted that Heath would invite players back to his flat, where he would show them pornographic films and make advances towards them. LN recalled that Heath had tried to touch him on one occasion. LN did not state what had happened in the run up to this but he described generally that Heath would have the films on and then he would talk about how attractive the actors were. When Heath began to touch him, LN threatened to punch him if he ever did it again.

9.6.79. It appears from LN's account that he had been aware of other cases (or suspected cases) due to players' talking about it with each other. LN stated that it felt as though everybody knew what was going on with Heath, and that most players gave Heath a wide berth.

Allegations of Abuse at Tottenham Hotspur FC

9.6.80. Initially, Tottenham had no information about any allegations of abuse committed by Heath during his tenure at the Club. Subsequently, the Club informed me that it had received correspondence from a survivor in which he alleged that he had been “sexually abused on a number of occasions by an employee of” the Club. There was no further detail provided as to what this abuse had comprised, or when or where it had taken place. I asked the Club to take steps to investigate and to report to me.

9.6.81. The Club contacted a number of former players, and spoke with five of them. One of these former players had been in the youth team at the time, and three recalled Heath having been at the Club. None recalled any particular incidents involving Heath. However, they did report that Heath had been a bit “iffy” and that there had been questions around his sexuality. One youth player recalled another having told Heath to “fuck off away from me” during training; this was unusual because of the potential power Heath had to affect the player’s career. In retrospect, this youth player considered that the other player may have known something but had been too scared to speak out.

9.6.82. An individual, GL, who has initiated a civil claim, provided the Club with a statement he had given to the police. In his statement, GL said that Heath had been “touchy feely” with him, particularly on his buttocks, and that Heath had unnecessarily touched his body on the field while ostensibly administering treatments (but that this did not include touching his genitals). GL explained that he had felt that Heath was always near him when at the Club: whenever he turned around, Heath was there. GL did not allege that anyone in particular at the Club was or had been aware of Heath’s conduct. GL’s account is consistent with Heath’s actions in the same time period at other clubs.

9.6.83. Tottenham said that, other than this single allegation, the Club had not been made aware of any other allegations of abuse by Heath while he was at the Club. The Review has received no evidence of any other allegations of abuse by Heath at the Club.

9.6.84. One former player recounted that Heath would walk around the players as they were doing sit ups and flick a boy a sweet from a packet if he said the boy was doing well. The player described this behaviour, in retrospect, as grooming.

9.6.85. There is evidence that Heath conducted some medical or physiotherapy treatments on players on the field during training sessions or matches.

9.6.86. The Club does not know the reason why Heath ultimately left. There are no records relating to Heath’s employment at the Club. The former players who provided evidence also do not appear to have known the reason for Heath’s departure. The Club reported to me that the individuals who may have known the reason are now deceased. I am therefore unable to make any findings in this respect.

Allegations of Abuse at Chelsea FC

9.6.87. The full details of the abuse committed by Heath while he was at Chelsea is contained in the Geekie Report. In that report, the Club describes Heath as a “prolific, manipulative and sophisticated sexual abuser”. I agree with that description.

9.6.88. The Geekie Report found that Heath had assaulted at least 22 boys. 14 of these boys experienced abuse falling into what the Club has identified as the most serious category (where force was used, digital penetration, masturbation or there was attempted rape). Three of the boys were assaulted in the presence of other boys. It is clear from these 22 survivor accounts that Heath committed extensive abuse, and that his actions had a significant effect on each survivor’s life.

9.6.89. In the lead up to the actual abuse, and sometimes alongside it, Heath groomed the players. Multiple survivors explained to the Club that Heath bought them presents or gave them spare change with which to treat themselves, to make them feel special. He also made a concerted effort with, and ultimately groomed, their families. This provided Heath with a cloak of respectability in his interactions with the players, and made the players more fearful of speaking out.

9.6.90. Heath perpetrated abuse at Chelsea in a variety of ways:

90.1. He assaulted youth players in the showers and in the changing rooms at the Club. There are multiple accounts of him grabbing towels away from players so that they would be naked before he assaulted them. This was an escalation from the towel-flicking behaviour which Heath engaged in openly in the Club changing rooms. On one occasion, Heath paid a player a sum of money to procure the player to touch him in the changing room.

90.2. Heath conducted “soap massages” on players, which he used as an excuse to lean in and kiss players or to massage their genitals while they were lying down on the massage table. These were sometimes conducted one-player-at-a-time after training.

90.3. When Heath drove players to games or training, as part of his formal role at the Club, on occasion he touched their genitals. This occurred while he was driving or as the players got in and out of the bus.

9.6.91. Heath also purposefully isolated boys at locations away from the Club, or took advantage of occasions when they were isolated. One survivor recalled that Heath had attempted to assault him in a hotel in London, where he had been accommodated for trials at the Club. Others recalled that Heath had taken them back to his home after watching a game with him. Sometimes players stayed overnight at his home (either alone or in a group). On these occasions, Heath perpetrated various forms of abuse on the players. Sometimes this was preceded by Heath giving the player treats or putting on pornographic films.

9.6.92. In one case, Heath repeatedly abused the same survivor over a long period of time, such that the survivor came to expect that he would be forced to engage in masturbation and oral sex with Heath whenever they were alone. In the vast majority

of cases it appears that Heath pushed opportunistically as far as he could with players within the Club setting: in the changing rooms, physiotherapy room and when driving players. For instance, players recalled that Heath would not lock the door to the changing rooms during his attacks. He also forced players to perform sex acts on each other. Many players described having developed coping mechanisms and preventative tactics to avoid Heath's advances.

9.6.93. In addition to targeting players directly, Heath groomed their families. Ten of the survivors spoken to by the Geekie Review Team detailed how Heath had made an effort to get to know their parents or members of their family. They said that their parents had variously considered Heath to be “charming”, “courteous”, and “thought the world” of him. One described Heath as a “family friend” due to the relationship he had developed with the family. Two players stated that their mothers would invite Heath into their home for tea or a meal after training. Another set of parents were given lifts to trips with the youth team. In each case, Heath used his relationship with the parents to get closer access to the player. Heath arranged with parents that their child would stay over at his home after certain training sessions. It appears that the parents felt comfortable doing so, due to their own relationship with Heath.

9.6.94. Moreover, several players reported that they and/or their families perceived Heath to be an important person at the Club, who held their or their son's future in his hands. I consider that this perception provided Heath with an ability to gain increased and more isolated access to players. Families wanted to please and cooperate with Heath to help their sons.

9.6.95. Some players cited Heath's influence over their parents and their careers at the Club generally as the reasons why they had felt they could not disclose the abuse to anyone at the time. One noted that Heath “had a good relationship with my parents and I was aware that there would be consequences if I said anything”. Most survivors reported that they had been primarily concerned with the impact on their career and/or the embarrassment it would cause.

Allegations of Abuse at Millwall FC

PAUL COLLINS

9.6.96. Paul Collins has spoken publicly about the abuse that he alleges he suffered at the Club.

9.6.97. Paul Collins says that he was abused by Heath when he was a youth player at Millwall. He has described this to the national press.¹⁰ In addition, the Club has interviewed Paul Collins as part of its investigation, and he has been interviewed by my Review.

9.6.98. The newspaper articles place Paul Collins' involvement with youth football in the 1980s. Paul Collins first came into contact with Heath when he played for a local youth team in London which Heath coached, called “Riverside”. Heath recruited Paul Collins first to Millwall and then took him to Charlton Athletic when he moved to a

10. Mirror, 10 December 2016 “Football abuse victim reveals how he was groomed with the promise of free boots and holidays” <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/football-abuse-victim-reveals-how-9433202> (accessed 25 October 2020); MailOnline, 11 December 2016 “He groomed me with new boots. He knew I didn't have a dad': Former Charlton youth star says abuse at hands of paedophile coach made him want to kill himself” <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4021952/Former-Charlton-youth-star-says-abuse-hands-alleged-paedophile-coach-led-contemplating-suicide.html> (accessed 25 October 2020); BBC News, 19 December 2016, “Football abuse victim: Telling mum ‘broke her heart’” <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-38370789/football-abuse-victim-telling-mum-broke-her-heart> (accessed 25 October 2020)

scouting role there in 1981.

9.6.99. Paul Collins told the *Daily Mirror* that Heath had taken him on an all-expenses paid holiday to Great Yarmouth. He explained that he came from a single-parent family as his father had died when he was young. In his interview to the *Daily Mail*, Paul Collins explained that Heath had groomed him by presenting him with gifts, such as “holidays and new football boots”. He told BBC 5 Live radio that Heath had bought him items “because my Mum couldn’t afford things”. When the family had “no money”, Heath would pick up Paul Collins and other players and take them “out for dinner”. This was part of Heath’s grooming routine. It is not clear whether all of this behaviour occurred while Paul Collins was at Millwall.

9.6.100. The *Daily Mirror* reported that the abuse began slowly, with Heath touching Paul Collins’ leg. It soon escalated, with Heath transporting Paul Collins to the Club an “hour before anyone else... He told me to take my clothes off as he needed to rub sun cream all over me...”

9.6.101. When Paul Collins was interviewed by the Club, he said:

101.1. He originally played for “South London” (which I understand to be the FA South London team). While playing there, he recalled being watched by a couple of scouts who recruited him to the Club.

101.2. Through the scouting process, Paul Collins met another of the Club’s scouts who introduced him to Heath. Paul Collins understood that Heath was also a scout for the Club.

101.3. After this introduction, Paul Collins began to play for Heath’s Riverside team. He described this as a “Sunday team”. It appears that Paul Collins did so alongside training and playing for Millwall.

101.4. The abuse began while Paul Collins played for Riverside.

101.5. Heath massaged youth players at the Club, but Paul Collins did not think Heath was qualified to do so.

101.6. Paul Collins was also aware of another person who he believed had been sexually abused by Heath at the Club; that individual had not spoken with anyone else about the abuse he endured.

101.7. Paul Collins signed with Charlton Athletic in 1984 when he was 16 years old.

9.6.102. There are slight variations between the accounts as reported in each of those newspapers. These variations include whether there was a massage table and whether the abuse took place in a hut by the pitch or in Heath’s office – or whether this was something that occurred at Charlton Athletic, instead, later on. However, the accounts set out in the press articles are broadly consistent.

9.6.103. The evidence indicates that Paul Collins met Heath through Millwall, in that he was scouted by the Club and was then introduced by one of the Club’s scouts to Heath. Heath encouraged Paul Collins to join his Sunday team, Riverside. This meant that Paul Collins was exposed to Heath at both Millwall and Riverside. It is alleged that Heath began to abuse Paul Collins in the mid-1980s, and that the abuse consisted of

massages during which Paul Collins was touched sexually. These massages were administered either in a private office or in a hut by the training ground. The abuse took place over a number of years.

9.6.104. A former youth player interviewed by the Club reported that three of his friends had told him that they had been sexually abused by Heath during their time at the Club. I have not spoken with these individuals directly or been able to see a written account from them, and so have no details of the alleged abuse.

Allegations of Abuse at Charlton Athletic FC

9.6.105. It is alleged that Heath continued to perpetrate abuse against players when he arrived at Charlton. As set out above, Heath brought Paul Collins to Charlton from Millwall. There is evidence to support allegations that Heath also abused other players on the Club's Youth Training Scheme.

9.6.106. I have received copies of the accounts of two further survivors through correspondence sent to the Club by those survivors. I am also aware that the Club has received a third letter before action in a proposed civil claim against the Club.

9.6.107. Heath's alleged offending at Charlton was consistent with that at other clubs. Heath's actions at the Club are alleged to have included:

107.1. Cornering players while they were alone in the showers, or in changing rooms, and then assaulting them or forcing them to touch him. On at least one occasion, Heath called off a training session leaving a player alone with him in circumstances where he could force the player to shower.

107.2. Forcing players to receive naked massages in his private office at the Club, ostensibly for physiotherapy, during which Heath also sometimes touched himself.

107.3. Touching players while, or after, transporting them to training or matches.

9.6.108. The Club has concluded that Heath must have begun to abuse players "almost immediately" upon joining in September 1981 if the allegations and dates of abuse in the correspondence are correct.

RUSSELL DAVY

9.6.109. Russell Davy was a youth player with the Club from 1981 until summer 1983. He has waived his right to anonymity and given several accounts of the abuse he suffered at the hands of Heath to the *Sunday Mirror*.¹¹ I also interviewed Russell Davy.

9.6.110. In his press interviews, Russell Davy explained that Heath had initially targeted him for abuse while he was driven to and from the Club's training ground at Eltham in the Club's van. Heath waited until he was alone in the vehicle with Russell Davy, and then started to touch his leg and tried to kiss him. Russell Davy rejected these advances and Heath laughed off the behaviour. Heath continued to target Russell Davy. Later, Heath found Russell Davy alone in the Club's showers and sexually assaulted him. The

11. ITV News, 7 December 2016, "Football abuse scandal: Former Charlton player alleges the FA ignored his complaints" <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2016-12-07/football-abuse-scandal-former-charlton-player-alleges-the-fa-ignored-his-complaints/> (accessed 25 October 2020); Mirror, 14 January 2017, "FA discovers file documenting football paedophile Eddie Heath's 'trail of terror' between clubs" <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/fa-discovers-file-documenting-football-9625115> (accessed 25 October 2020); The Mirror, 3 December 2016 "I warned FA about football paedophile 30 YEARS ago, says former youth player" <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/warned-fa-football-paedophile-30-9388930> (accessed 25 October 2020); The Sun, 5 December 2016, "Charlton Athletic to probe historic sex abuse claims by ex-player over paedophile scout Eddie Heath" <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2327971/charlton-athletic-probe-historic-sex-abuse-claims-player-paedo-scout-eddie-heath/> (accessed 25 October 2020)

abuse then continued for a period of around 18 months.

9.6.111. Russell Davy said that Heath had groomed him by telling him about his potential to be England’s “number one goalkeeper”. Heath held out the prospect of footballing success as part of his grooming of Russell Davy.

9.6.112. Russell Davy has also said that Heath met his parents and “won [them] over ... conned them basically. ... At the time my parents thought ... what a lovely guy.” He said that they remember Heath to this day.

9.6.113. Russell Davy has said that, after the last incident of abuse, he punched Heath, and left him with two black eyes. Heath explained his injuries to others as having been the result of a fall when cleaning. Heath never assaulted Russell Davy again after the shower incident, but Russell Davy has told the Review that he now suspects that Heath had started to abuse other youth players. Shortly after this, Russell Davy left the Club as a result of the mental anguish he was experiencing because of the abuse.

PAUL COLLINS

9.6.114. In his interview with the *Daily Mail*, Paul Collins stated that Heath “brought” him from Millwall to Charlton Athletic. Paul Collins told me that he had gone to Charlton in 1982, and that an employee of Millwall had advised him to go with Heath to Charlton because Charlton was the better club. It has not been possible to verify this account. It seems plausible, however, as Heath was a scout, and it would have been part of his role to bring players into the Club. It seems likely therefore that Heath was involved in recruiting Paul Collins to the Club when Heath moved to the Club himself.

9.6.115. This meant that Heath had continued access to Paul Collins and had further opportunity to abuse him. Paul Collins has said that the grooming, including buying him presents and taking him for dinners and on holiday, continued for at least some of the period during which they were both at Charlton.

9.6.116. In his interview with the *Daily Mirror*, Paul Collins said that Heath “had his own room at the training ground with a masseuse table. ... He would make me lay down, start rubbing me and groping my private parts before touching himself.” This is echoed in the *Daily Mail* article. This is consistent with the kind of abuse Heath perpetrated against Paul Collins at Millwall. In his interview with me, Paul Collins confirmed that the abuse occurred in the “physio room” which he described as Heath’s “private room” for which Heath had a key.

LEYTON ORIENT'S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.6.117. Leyton Orient has said that the Club was first made aware of allegations of abuse by Heath through media reports in late 2016 and early 2017. I have received no evidence to dispute that assertion: nobody has come forward to say that any complaint relating to sexual abuse by Heath was made to the Club during Heath's association (or at a time prior to 2016).

9.6.118. However, although no complaints of abuse appear to have been made to the Club, it seems that some people associated with the Club did have concerns about Heath based on what they saw and heard. Others, however, held no such concerns and did not see or hear anything to raise suspicion.

9.6.119. LN is reported as saying that players knew what Heath was up to and that most of them would tell Heath to get lost. LN stated that players would make comments about Heath, such as asking each other whether he had tried it on with them, or had been touching them up.

9.6.120. LN is also reported as saying that he had thought about speaking to the Club about Heath's conduct but had not done so because he did not want to cause any trouble.

9.6.121. One person who has alleged abuse by Heath during his time at the Club said that players would call Heath "Queer Eddie" behind his back.

9.6.122. SP, a former Leyton Orient youth player, told me that Heath would come into the changing room while the boys were naked and would sit on the edge of the bath while boys were in there. SP went on to say that "me and one other lad [would say], 'Oh, here comes Eddie'... in those days this was [before] the law liberalising homosexuality and so you didn't really talk, particularly, out loud. But it just occurred to us, both of us, that this was perfectly synchronised for our being naked."

9.6.123. SP was adamant that he had had no knowledge of Heath committing any acts of abuse at the Club and, when asked whether there were rumours or chatter about Heath at the Club, said:

"I remember absolutely no conversation, particularly, about [Heath] and his fascination for boys ... if people were going to talk about that kind of things, as I say, homosexuality being illegal ... especially ... you know, working class culture ... you wouldn't talk particularly loudly about it because you're basically accusing somebody of an actual crime with him being gay. ... I hadn't heard the word paedophilia until many years later. No I don't remember anybody talking about that in the dressing room at all."

9.6.124. When asked whether other adults at the Club knew that Heath would sit on the edge of the bath talking to the boys, SP said, "Yeah, our other coaches, themselves, would have come in for a shower ... [or] come into the dressing room and say, 'Great

training session tonight, lads, well done.’ ...” SP also said that it was considered “perfectly normal” for young players (aged 15 to 18) to stand around naked in the presence of their coaches. SP went on to say:

“I have a feeling in my mind that ... Heath was hanging around the dressing room much more than the other coaches ... partly because he hadn’t been out on the pitch itself – you know, out on the training pitch, which is just around the corner from the main stadium. ... He was now coming in and enquiring as to, you know, how things had gone, then he’d retire back to his office. ... I do have the feeling he was more around the dressing room at the time of our showers or baths. ... But, you know, it was perfectly legitimate for him to walk into the dressing room and say, ‘Hello lads ... nice to see you all.’”

9.6.125. SP also said that he had never witnessed any sort of “grabby-ness” nor seen Heath engage in any sort of sexual innuendo.

9.6.126. Another former schoolboy player who played at the Club under Heath told me that at no point had he ever heard any rumours or comments about Heath nor had he seen Heath engaging in sexual innuendo.

9.6.127. RT, the former professional player who spoke to the Club’s lawyers, said that he had never seen any inappropriate touching, cuddling or contact with the players by Heath, nor did he ever have any suspicions about what was taking place. RT was not aware that Heath had used the communal bath while players were present or in it.

9.6.128. RT said that he was aware that Heath administered physiotherapy treatments and massages to players, but was not aware that anything untoward had happened during these sessions. RT said players could be sent to a full-time trainer, employed by the Club, for medical or fitness matters. The fact that there were others with responsibility for physiotherapy or training issues could have been a “red flag” for the Club that Heath’s actions were inappropriate. However, RT’s impression was that the Club’s youth training structure was comparatively informal at that time, and his perception was that Heath did a “little bit of everything” at the Club. It would not therefore have been unusual or suspicious that Heath carried out treatments on players.

9.6.129. RT was aware that players had attended Heath’s flat while he worked at Leyton Orient. He understood this to have been in relation to football tasks, such as getting information in relation to training and games that they had missed. He appears to have understood this to be a legitimate reason for their attendance. He himself also attended Heath’s house regularly for social reasons, although never alone with Heath.

9.6.130. RT said that he had picked up a youth player from Heath’s home, who he was aware lived with Heath. In retrospect, this may be considered to be a “red flag” in relation to Heath. However, RT did not indicate that this had been a cause for concern to him at the time.

9.6.131. NW, the member of backroom staff who was interviewed by the Club’s lawyers, said that he did not recall ever having had any suspicions about Heath. He stated

that he had been “surprised” when he heard the recent allegations against Heath.

9.6.132. From the above, it is clear that some at the Club held concerns about Heath. However, this was at a time when homosexuality was still a criminal offence and it may be that some of the comments made in relation to Heath arose because of a perception that he was gay as opposed to any knowledge about the abuse he was perpetrating.

9.6.133. It also seems clear that adults at the Club were aware that Heath had “many” players regularly attending his home. It may be argued that this was sufficient to put officials on notice that something was not quite right. Even more so, given that there was a young player living at Heath’s flat. However, the two individuals interviewed by the Club who were aware of these matters did not consider that there was anything suspicious about these matters and I cannot say that others would have been suspicious either.

9.6.134. It appears to me, therefore, that from the evidence that is now available it is not possible to say that the Club had knowledge of Heath’s alleged abuse or was aware of sufficient material, in the context of the time (the 1960s), to put the Club on notice, or to give rise to suspicion, that abuse was taking place.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR’S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.6.135. The first time that Tottenham Hotspur became aware of abuse allegations against Heath at the Club was when correspondence was received from a former youth player in August 2017.

9.6.136. I have not seen or heard any evidence that the Club or any of their officials were aware of any abuse perpetrated by Heath. Several players have noted their concerns about Heath in their interviews, but all have said that they did not at the time suspect that Heath was engaged in sexual abuse.

CHELSEA’S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

General Level of Knowledge at Chelsea

9.6.137. Five survivors spoken to by the Geekie Review Team said that they had not known that other players were abused, until the recent disclosures, and/or doubted that “anyone was aware of the extent of [Heath’s] sexually abusive behaviour”. This was a minority view among survivors. Most survivors said that adults at the Club “must have been aware” of, or “suspected”, Heath’s abusive actions towards them. One survivor commented, “I believe everyone knew what he was like but nobody had any proof.” The basis for this view that the Club and its officials must have known about Heath’s actions appears to be their reports that Heath openly engaged in “sexualised

joking”, “crude sexual language”, “banter” and “messaging about” in front of, to, and with other boys. In a few cases, players reported that this had happened in front of adults too, although there is a lack of detail as to which jokes and which adults. The kind of jokes made by Heath appear to have included jokes about players’ genitals.

9.6.138. I spoke to a former professional at the Club during Heath’s tenure (QV) who told me that he thought at the time, “What does this fellow do here and why is he always around when the kids are showering?” QV also said that Heath was “always joking and fun loving with the kids ... and it just didn’t seem right”. When I asked whether any other adults had been around when Heath was going into the shower area, QV replied, “No, I can’t say there were.” QV repeated that “everyone knew” and that it had been “common knowledge” but beyond saying that “they must have known” was unable to support that assertion with any specifics. QV also confirmed that he had never discussed Heath with any of the Club’s staff or heard them talking about Heath.

9.6.139. The Geekie Report states that Heath had displayed openly “lewd” behaviour and that other adults at the Club would have been aware of this.

9.6.140. In the Geekie Report, it is said that the mere fact that adults would have seen lewd behaviour from Heath and not acted to prevent it does not in and of itself indicate that they had had knowledge of Heath’s actual abuse. This conclusion seems to me to be a reasonable one. There was no obvious reason to suspect that that lewd behaviour was linked to sexual abuse.

9.6.141. In the Geekie Report, there is reference to one former youth player who recalled with a greater level of particularity the reaction of a member of staff at the Club to Heath. The former youth player explained to the Geekie Review Team that there had been a particular youth team coach he had seen “laughing at [Heath’s] language”. The former youth player went on to say that the youth coach had “looked uncomfortable as if he did not like the way Eddie Heath was behaving”. He also said that he himself had “witnessed sexual banter and groping”. It is unclear from his account whether the former youth player was suggesting that the coach had seen the latter, or only the former, type of joking. The former youth player was of the view that the youth coach had had concerns about Heath. The basis for this view was that the former youth player had perceived a particular facial expression made by the coach to indicate knowledge of and disapproval of Heath’s behaviour.

9.6.142. The former youth coach was interviewed as part of the Geekie Review. He stated that he did not recall ever having had any problems with or suspicions about Heath’s behaviour. Facial expressions can be difficult to read and are liable to different interpretations. The former youth player himself was aware of Heath’s abuse. Therefore he may have been more likely to read knowledge of the same into the facial expression of the coach. In these circumstances, I do not think there is a basis upon which it could properly be concluded that this youth coach had knowledge of Heath’s abuse and/or concerns about Heath’s behaviour.

Dario Gradi's Knowledge of Abuse

9.6.143. One survivor, VS, has stated that, when he was in the pavilion at the Mitcham training ground, Heath grabbed him from behind and “ran his hands all over, caressing my chest under my shirt”. VS recalled Heath telling him, “Close your eyes and you wouldn’t know if this was a man or a woman.” VS was 15 or 16 at the time.

9.6.144. VS has twice given his account to the Geekie Review Team as part of its investigation. VS also spoke with the Review. His account was consistent across those interviews.

VS'S FIRST INTERVIEW WITH THE GEEKIE REVIEW

9.6.145. In the first interview, VS said that he had told his parents about what Heath had done to him, and his father had telephoned the Club and “complained” about the incident. VS said that his father could not recall whom he had spoken to, but that shortly afterwards Dario Gradi had attended the family’s home. VS dated the disclosure and the visit by Dario Gradi as having occurred late 1975.

9.6.146. Dario Gradi was an assistant coach at the Club from January 1971. He was responsible for the Club’s reserve team. He subsequently also coached the first team for a short period from October 1974, before returning to the reserve team. He left the Club in late 1975 or 1976 (VS’s recollection was that it was 1976).

9.6.147. VS recalled that, when Dario Gradi attended their house, VS’s father had asked Dario Gradi about Heath’s actions and Dario Gradi had said, “Football, the club, the boys, are his life. He got carried away. I will have a word with him.” VS recalled that this was said “casually” and “was not the formal response I was expecting”. VS reported that his father recalled asking more about Heath’s behaviour to which Dario Gradi responded, “There’s been talk about him but there’s nothing in it.”

9.6.148. VS went on to state that, a few weeks after Dario Gradi attended VS’s home, VS saw Heath at the Club’s training ground. Heath immediately approached VS and said, “Do you still love me?” Subsequently Heath “publicly tore into” VS on two occasions about the quality of his game. Prior to Dario Gradi visiting VS’s house, Heath had never before acted in this way towards VS or, to VS’s knowledge, anyone else. VS recalled that another player who had been present during Heath’s tirade had said, “I can’t believe how he spoke to you like that.” VS felt humiliated and isolated.

VS'S SECOND INTERVIEW WITH THE GEEKIE REVIEW

9.6.149. In VS’s second interview with the Geekie Review, he recalled “crystal clear” that when Dario Gradi had been responding to the disclosure of abuse he had said, “I’ll have a word with him [i.e. Heath].” VS stated that his father had not said to Dario Gradi that they did not want to get Heath into trouble.

9.6.150. VS said that, at the first training session that he attended after the meeting with Dario Gradi, Heath strode towards him in a purposeful manner, and stopped very close before saying, “Do you still love me?” VS explained that subsequently Heath pub-

licly humiliated him on two occasions.

THE GEEKIE REVIEW TEAM'S INITIAL INTERACTION WITH DARIO GRADI

9.6.151. The Geekie Review Team sought to interview Dario Gradi to obtain his full account as part of its Review. After extensive chasing, Dario Gradi's legal representative sent the Geekie Review a short, unsigned statement. This stated that Dario Gradi had attended the house of a player at the father's request and taken details of "inappropriate behaviour in respect of Eddy Heath". It further stated that Dario Gradi had reported the meeting to the Club's Acting Manager the following day. Dario Gradi stated that he had had no further involvement in dealing with the matter. He denied smoothing over the matter, as he considered that he had reported it onwards.

MY INTERVIEW WITH DARIO GRADI

9.6.152. Dario Gradi agreed to be interviewed directly by me. Dario Gradi's account was broadly consistent with what he had sent to the Geekie Review.

9.6.153. Dario Gradi told me that he had not been told of any allegations before attending VS's home. His recollection was that he had been asked to come to the house directly by VS's father at a training session, and not over the phone, but that he had not known why he had been asked to come. Dario Gradi said that he had not attended on behalf of the Club in the sense that he had been instructed to attend by any other official. Dario Gradi did not consider that VS's father had made any allegations at the point at which he was asked to come to his home.

9.6.154. In relation to events once he was in VS's house, Dario Gradi recalled that VS's father had said repeatedly to him that he did not want to get Heath into trouble. Dario Gradi considered that this "set the tone ... that [VS' father] wasn't going to take it any further". Dario Gradi could not recall the exact words used to describe what had happened to VS. He understood it to have been "inappropriate". He explained that he had believed the allegation made by VS, but not "100%". When discussing the scope of allegations of abuse generally, Dario Gradi explained that he did not consider a person putting their hands down another's trousers to be an assault. I informed him that it was and he then accepted that. Dario Gradi considered that the essential element of the accusations against Heath was "petty touching".

9.6.155. Dario Gradi did not recall the words he had used in his conversation with VS's family.

9.6.156. Dario Gradi explained that he had decided to report the disclosure on his way home when he was in his car. He said that the following day he had spoken with the Club's Acting Manager. He described this process as seeing "sense", as at the meeting his impression had been that VS's father had not wanted the disclosure to be acted upon to "get ... Heath into trouble". However, Dario Gradi claimed that he had subsequently realised in his car that the allegation *was* serious enough to report in any event.

9.6.157. I questioned Dario Gradi as to why he had not reported the matter to others in

the Club, who had had direct management responsibility for Heath at the time. Dario Gradi explained that he had simply not considered reporting the allegation to anyone else. He had considered that he should go to the individual who had the power in the Club to make a decision, which was the Acting Manager.

9.6.158. Dario Gradi thought that the meeting and onwards report had occurred in 1974.

9.6.159. Dario Gradi could not recall the Acting Manager's precise reaction to the report, beyond that he had made an "ugh" noise. Dario Gradi understood this to mean something to the effect of, "Oh, that's all I need." Dario Gradi considered that there had been no further involvement needed from him. He said that he had looked out for VS while he remained at the Club. However, this does not appear to have involved taking any particular substantive steps to safeguard VS (or other boys) from Heath.

9.6.160. The Acting Manager is now deceased and, accordingly, could not be interviewed as part of the Review to address Dario Gradi's account. I asked Dario Gradi whether he had made up his account of reporting the disclosure to the Acting Manager as he would have been aware that the Acting Manager was deceased when he first gave his account. Dario Gradi denied that his account was in any way fabricated.

THE GEEKIE REVIEW TEAM'S INTERVIEW WITH DARIO GRADI

9.6.161. After I interviewed Dario Gradi, I provided the Club with a transcript of the interview and facilitated a meeting between the Geekie Review Team and Dario Gradi. The Geekie Review Team then interviewed Dario Gradi, during which he said:

161.1. He had "no recollection at all" of any sexual innuendo in Heath's jokes.

161.2. He did not know that Heath had had boys to his flat "but it wouldn't have been of any significance" if he had known.

161.3. VS's father asked Dario Gradi to see him, but he could not recall if he had provided any details of abuse when making that request. If any abuse had been disclosed, Dario Gradi "would have spoken to somebody" before he went, which he did not. The request to visit "didn't seem surprising to" him.

161.4. In the conversation with VS's father, "the most significant thing, and he said it more than once, was that he didn't want to get Eddie Heath into trouble ... he didn't want it to go any further. ... I remember vividly, I was actually in the car driving home when I thought that's not right, I've actually got to report this." But immediately when he left the house he "wasn't going to report it".

161.5. In relation to the abuse he understood to have been disclosed, "it wasn't anything that horrified me" but he understood that it was sexual "touching" of VS's "privates" or "of that level". He accepted a description of it as "sexual touching the boy was not happy with", but stated that he did not "use the word abuse".

161.6. He did not have any recollection of the exact actions communicated by VS's father beyond that it was sexual behaviour. Nonetheless he stated: "If they had been saying he has put his hand down his pants, that doesn't ring true with me saying you know, he is a joking kind of guy. That would be,

putting his hands down his pants would be a serious offence as far as I was concerned then. So I can't match the two up. But I must have thought it was fairly serious to have made up my mind to report it before I got home."

Dario Gradi accepted that "I think I probably would have tried to stand up for Eddie Heath a bit. Don't forget at this stage, or up until a few minutes ago, I had thought Eddie Heath had a great relationship with kids."

161.7. It was put to Dario Gradi that VS recalled him saying "football, the Club, the boys are his life, he's got carried away, I'll have a word with him" as a response to the disclosure. Dario Gradi accepted that he "could" have said this and that was the "tone of the meeting".

161.8. Dario Gradi told VS's father that he would "look out for the boy ... so that Eddie Heath couldn't take him aside for anything."

161.9. The next day, or the day after, he spoke with the Acting Manager, but "I don't remember the details, whether I got involved in any detail or what". In response, the Acting Manager "just made a noise as far as I can remember ... something like [urgh]. And I don't think we discussed it any further. I don't think there was, I don't remember any words that he used at all."

161.10. He "definitely [did] not" tell Heath about the complaint. He was not friends with Heath and had "no reason whatsoever" to give him a warning.

161.11. Reflecting on his actions, Dario Gradi asked:

"What else could I have done? I have listened to an accusation, I have passed that accusation on to a higher level, I was a reserve team coach. I'd got no, I wasn't the manager, if I'd had been the manager, I obviously would have seen it through but who was I to accuse. I think you said I could have said I'd have reported it, but I did report it, that was as much as I felt I could do."

161.12. Dario Gradi did not know whether the Acting Manager had done anything about the matter. He said that "it didn't seem to matter too much because the boy seemed to be quite happy with the way things were going ... [and he] saw no reason to take it any further". Dario Gradi stated that he had had a "little bit of doubt" over the subsequent handling of the matter by the Club but, he considered, he had been "the reserve team coach. If I had been the assistant manager, I would have probably accepted more responsibility. I didn't think it was my business as a reserve team coach to accuse" or follow up in an investigation.

VS'S FATHER'S INTERVIEW WITH THE GEEKIE REVIEW TEAM

9.6.162. The Geekie Review Team also interviewed VS's father. The Geekie Report summarised VS's father's account as follows (VS is referred to in the Geekie Report as AV and VS's father as AVV):

"AVV explained to me that he had no particular interest in football, but he had been very happy to support his son's interest. The son of a neighbour also trained with the Club and so the neighbour would take AV training together with his own son. AVV told me how one morning his son seemed upset. AV explained to him that there was someone at the Club who was coming into the shower rooms and touching up the boys. When he questioned his son further he clammed up. AVV told me that he was not happy that this should be happening and so he decided to write to the Club. He did not tell his son that

he was doing so. He wrote a letter of complaint and gave it to his neighbour to deliver. He could not recall precisely what he had put in the letter but it did 'express extreme concern that something was happening which I deemed to be inappropriate' and said something about 'the showers' and 'the touchings on the bottom'. The letter was addressed to the 'Personnel Officer'. The neighbour came back and told AVV that a Mr Gradi would like to visit him on a particular date. AVV knew no more about what had happened to the letter than that it had led to a visit by Mr Gradi. Between delivery of the letter and the arrival of Mr Gradi for the meeting, AVV had no communication with the Club. The neighbour is now deceased.

AVV said that when Mr Gradi visited he got the impression that Mr Gradi 'was defending what happened'. AVV asked him whether other parents had complained and Mr Gradi said, 'no, no, no, no, some of the parents, you know, have, made some noises messing about, but there's no harm in them'. Mr Gradi told him that he would be 'going back be sure I will be speaking with this individual and it will not ever happen again ... he gave me the undertaking he would return and speak with this individual and assured me that [AV] would not be troubled again'. I asked AVV whether he had repeated any of the content of his letter at the meeting. He said that he was quite open and what he said was a 'replica of what I had said in that I as a father was quite concerned that my son had told me what he told me'.

Towards the end of the meeting with AVV, I put to him some of what Mr Gradi told me. I told him Mr Gradi had said that he, AVV, had said that he did not want Mr Heath to get into any trouble AVV told me that it was possible that he had said this. I told him that Mr Gradi had said that he, AVV, had said that he did not want it to go any further. AVV gasped, looked shocked and exclaimed: 'Why did I send the letter?' He said that if that were the case there would have been no point in complaining or having Mr Gradi to his house. I explained to AVV that Mr Gradi had told me that it was only when driving away from the meeting that he decided to go against what AVV said to him and report the matter. AVV responded, 'Oh good gracious no ... he gave me the assurance at the meeting ... that he would ensure that the person responsible would be spoken to and that there would be no repeat of the actions which I complained about'. AVV explained to me, 'I was only out to protect my boy I was not on a crusade.'

THE FINDINGS IN THE GEEKIE REPORT

9.6.163. The Geekie Report concluded that Dario Gradi had received a disclosure and had failed to report it. The evidence of VS and his father was preferred to that of Dario Gradi. In particular, the Geekie Report found:

- 163.1. Dario Gradi was aware of the content of the disclosure of sexual misconduct in relation to Heath prior to attending VS's home.
- 163.2. Dario Gradi informed VS and his father that he would talk to Heath about the disclosure.
- 163.3. VS's father had wanted action taken on the disclosure with the Club,

but Dario Gradi did not consider that he did.

163.4. Dario Gradi did not report the disclosure to any other official at the Club.

163.5. Dario Gradi did inform Heath that a disclosure of abuse had been made by VS, and this prompted Heath to ask VS whether he still loved Heath.

9.6.164. The conclusion that Dario Gradi did not make an onward report of the disclosure to anyone else at the Club, and that it was Dario Gradi who informed Heath that a disclosure of abuse had been made, necessarily involves a rejection of Dario Gradi's account. In rejecting Dario Gradi's account, the Geekie Report at paragraph 276 comments that "there are a number of aspects that strike me as somewhat unlikely and unconvincing" before listing a number of matters which the Club considers "challenge [Dario Gradi's] credibility" and assessing the account given by Dario Gradi against the accounts given by VS and his father.

9.6.165. The Geekie Report then goes on to state:

"I am satisfied that Mr Gradi set off for the meeting with [VS] and his father well aware that it was to deal with a complaint about the sexual conduct of Mr Heath. I do not accept that Mr Gradi was asked not to report the matter. At the meeting he sought to defend Mr Heath. He gave an assurance that he would, himself, speak to Mr Heath. In light of my appraisal of the whole of Mr Gradi's account as set out above, I do not accept that he reported the matter to [the Acting Manager]. I am satisfied that he did speak to Mr Heath. By telling Mr Heath alone, Mr Gradi exposed [VS] to bullying and intimidating behaviour by Mr Heath."

9.6.166. I agree with the conclusion reached in the Geekie Report that Dario Gradi most likely spoke with Heath about the disclosure of abuse made by VS. However, I do not feel able, as the Geekie Report has done, to dismiss completely Dario Gradi's contention that he informed the Acting Manager of the disclosure by VS. It seems to me possible that Dario Gradi did mention the disclosure to the Acting Manager (Dario Gradi's own account was that "it was more of a passing comment than a meeting").

9.6.167. I do consider, however, that more could and should have been done by the Club to confront Heath about his abuse of VS, and that steps should have been taken to protect VS and other boys from Heath's sexual advances and misconduct. If Dario Gradi did not forward the information about Heath to others within the Club, then this was a failing by him. If Dario Gradi did forward the information about Heath to the Acting Manager, and the Acting Manager did not act on that information to confront Heath and to protect VS and other boys, then this would also have been a failing by the Acting Manager. Heath's abuse of young players at Chelsea continued after Dario Gradi was informed by VS of what had happened.

Sir Geoff Hurst

9.6.168. Sir Geoff Hurst was the Chief Coach of Chelsea in 1979. He was responsible for dismissing Heath from the Club. It was suggested by one survivor that Geoff Hurst

had dismissed Heath because of the abuse. Yet the survivor merely said that he “assumed” this: he did not have direct knowledge of whether this was the case.

9.6.169. The Geekie Review Team contacted Geoff Hurst with a view to finding out whether he had had any knowledge of Heath’s alleged offences and, if so, whether this had played any part in the decision to dismiss. The Geekie Review Team was not able to carry out an interview with Geoff Hurst as he did not want to be interviewed. However, he informed the Club that Heath had been dismissed because he “did not think that he was doing a good enough job and had absolutely nothing to do with any of the allegations which have been made against him” and that he was “categorically ... not aware of any inappropriate behaviour”.

9.6.170. It is noted in the Geekie Report that “there remains an unsatisfactory gap in the evidence that has been made available to the Review”. I agree with that statement.

Conclusion

9.6.171. It is clear, therefore, that Chelsea was aware of at least one disclosure of abuse committed by Heath, in that this was specifically drawn to the attention of Dario Gradi, who was an assistant coach at the Club. It is possible that others at the Club knew or suspected abuse, but there is no corroborated evidence of this.

MILLWALL’S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.6.172. I have not seen or heard any evidence to suggest that anyone at the Club saw any act of abuse by Heath. Further, the Club has told me that it has no reason to believe that any allegation or complaint of abuse by Heath was ever made to it.

9.6.173. QH, a former Director of the Club, said that he had not been aware of any allegations or rumours of abuse. In fact, his personal opinion of Heath at the time was that he was a “decent” character, and he was “totally surprised” at the allegations made in recent years against Heath. As to Heath’s departure from the Club, QH said that there had been “no grey cloud” and that he had simply assumed that Heath had decided to move on. QH was confident that, had there been any incident or rumour of abuse, there would have been a full investigation initiated by the Board.

9.6.174. SZ, who had been involved in scouting for the Club, said that, while he had known that Heath was living with another man, he had not known of any complaints regarding Heath.

9.6.175. The Club interviewed a number of former players (youth and/or professional) who said that they had never heard any complaint about or had any concern in relation to Heath. One former professional player at the Club, HP, did describe Heath as “a weirdo”. While HP said that he had not heard any allegations or rumours of abuse, he did say that in his view the way in which Heath had spoken to and acted towards the young players “was not right” in that he would make overly familiar comments to

them. HP went on to say that Heath had seemed “too close” to the younger players. HP also recalled that Heath’s behaviour was never discussed in detail but that there would be “banter” in the dressing room. HP was unable to recall the names of players who took part in this “banter”.

Paul Collins

9.6.176. Paul Collins was interviewed both by Millwall and, separately, by the Review. In his interview with the Review, Paul Collins confirmed that he personally had not been able to tell anyone about the abuse he had suffered. However, in both interviews he expressed a belief that professional players at the Club in the 1980s had been aware of Heath’s abuse. Paul Collins believed that they had had knowledge about Heath, as he said to the Club that “they would joke to the boys don’t drop the soap in the shower”. He also said that he thought that “many other” people at the Club knew.

9.6.177. The Club interviewed two of the three individuals whom Paul Collins had referred to. The first individual denied having been aware of any abuse during his time at the Club. He said that “perhaps [there was] verbal” abuse, but he was “not sure” about that. The second individual appears not to have been at the Club during Heath’s involvement.

9.6.178. In his interview with the Review, Paul Collins said that he believed that a parent of a player had had suspicions about Heath’s behaviour. He recalled the parent saying to him, “Paul. He’s a bit fresh Eddie, isn’t he, round you?” This parent did not have any formal role with the Club and Paul Collins did not suggest that this parent had gone on to report his concerns to the Club. As such, even if this parent did have suspicions, it would not impute knowledge to the Club.

9.6.179. Also in his interview with the Review, Paul Collins referred to a conversation he had had with a youth player at Riverside who had said that employees of Millwall knew about Heath. Paul Collins’ view is that this knowledge of Heath’s behaviour is the reason Paul Collins was encouraged to move with Heath to Charlton. This allegation could not be verified.

9.6.180. I do not consider that there is sufficient evidence to find that the Club had knowledge of the allegations about Heath’s abuse in the early 1980s. Paul Collins does not allege that he made a disclosure to any particular person. Two of the three players who Paul Collins identified as having hinted that they knew about the abuse have denied it. It was not possible to make contact with the third.

9.6.181. Paul Collins’ allegation that a youth player was let go from the Club because the player had disclosed “what was happening” with Heath has not been corroborated. One of the individuals who was alleged to have been told about the abuse has been interviewed by the Club and has said that he did not know anything about Heath’s abusive behaviour.

9.6.182. Accordingly, from the available evidence, I consider that it is not possible to

say that Millwall was aware of, or had suspicions about, Heath's alleged abuse at the time he was involved with the Club. The consistent account of officials and players, other than Paul Collins, is that no one had any suspicions relating to Heath. Heath was considered throughout his short tenure with the Club to be a top-class scout.

CHARLTON'S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.6.183. I have not seen or heard any evidence that officials at Charlton were made aware of Heath's alleged abuse prior to December 2016, when stories emerged in the national press. Of the three survivors who have come forward to detail their abuse, all have done so directly to the media from December 2016 onwards and/or to the Club in correspondence in January 2017 onwards. None of them alleges that they made a disclosure of abuse while they were at the Club.

9.6.184. As part of its investigation, the Club spoke with a number of former professional players and staff, all of whom denied ever having heard any allegations or concerns about Heath.

9.6.185. I interviewed Russell Davy, who said, "All the older pros and apprentices that I was working with, knew that ... [Heath] had a reputation for getting hold of young kids ... it was just hushed up at the time." He thought that the players and apprentices knew about Heath's actions because "when [he] was [in] training a couple of the older pros and apprentices used to wind Heath up ... one of the older apprentices offer[ed] his penis to Heath". Russell Davy considered that knowledge that Heath was a "paedophile" was "in the atmosphere". However, Russell Davy did not suggest that any officials at the Club had participated in the same joking in relation to Heath. He also did not identify any specific officials as having been aware of the abuse.

9.6.186. In my interview with RT, a youth team coach at the Club, he informed me that he had heard comments outside of the Club, while Heath was its employee, about Heath to the effect that "you want to be careful of him" and "he likes kids". He could not recall who had made these comments or the exact words used. He thought that these comments had been made by other scouts on the youth football circuit. RT was clear that he had never heard comparable comments made within the Club about Heath. He explained that the comments from outside of the Club had put him on "red alert" with Heath whenever he heard them, but that his experience of Heath at the Club had given him no cause for concern as he did not "see or hear anything". RT said that he had been close with the players' parents and had never heard any complaints. He also stated that in general there would be lots of talk about a range of officials at various clubs which was derogatory. There is no evidence that any of the scouts made a formal report to any club that Heath worked for, or that they explicitly referred to a particular case of abuse.

9.6.187. In conclusion, there is no evidence that anyone at the Club was aware of, or suspected, abuse by Heath. Although RT said that he had heard rumours about Heath outside the Club, there is no evidence that others at the Club heard them. RT's evidence

is that he kept an eye on things with Heath, and so to that extent he did some monitoring of Heath's activities. I do not consider that the Club ought to have done any more.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY LEYTON ORIENT

9.6.188. Leyton Orient was able to make contact with a small number of ex-players who were with the Club during the period of time referred to in media reports when Heath was alleged to have been involved with the Club. Subsequently, the Club conducted some further enquiries as a result of a letter before action in a proposed civil claim being sent to the Club from a former associated schoolboy. I asked the Club on a number of further occasions for additional information relating to Heath, and identified a number of lines of enquiry that I considered reasonable for the Club to follow up. To my disappointment, the Club did not provide that further information or, to my knowledge, carry out further enquiries. The assistance provided by the Club was, unfortunately, less than I had hoped for.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY TOTTENHAM

9.6.189. Tottenham provided an initial response to the Review on March 15th 2017. At that stage, the Club did not report any connection with Heath. After receiving a letter before claim, the Club had investigated the matter further by speaking with five former players. It was not possible to speak with former officials as they were deceased. I asked the Club to provide further information and clarification in relation to certain aspects of its previous response. The Club met this request. The dates of Heath's connection with the Club fall outside my Terms of Reference but, as stated above, I nonetheless considered that the Club could provide information that would be relevant to my Review. The Club engaged with me in a way that I consider to have been appropriate in all the circumstances.

THE REVIEW CONDUCTED BY CHARLES GEEKIE QC ON BEHALF OF CHELSEA

9.6.190. Chelsea retained an external law firm to carry out an investigation concerning Heath's activities. That review also considered child sexual abuse more widely at the Club. It was led by Charles Geekie QC, and was completed in the summer of 2019.

9.6.191. The Geekie Review Team identified in excess of 200 people who they wished to speak to. The Geekie Review Team was able to interview 23 survivors, one former member of the Board of Directors, one parent of a survivor, and 54 former members of

staff, including 12 former players, 17 former members of the Club's coaching staff, and 25 former members of the Club's administrative staff. In addition the Geekie Review Team interviewed 21 former youth players and 13 Company Directors/Company Secretaries.

9.6.192. I consider the Geekie Report to be thorough. The Club's efforts to investigate the matters under review was highly commendable.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY MILLWALL

9.6.193. Millwall conducted initial enquiries and reported its findings to me. There then followed extensive correspondence with the Club discussing the investigative steps taken by the Club and what other lines of enquiry might be open to it. I also met with the Club to discuss its initial findings and to explore what further investigation could be undertaken. Having conducted further enquiries, the Club provided me with an updated report. The Club spoke to seven people as part of its investigation: four former players, one former Director, and two other former members of staff. I am satisfied that the investigation conducted by the Club was adequate within the meaning of my Terms of Reference.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY CHARLTON

9.6.194. Charlton Athletic conducted initial enquiries and reported its findings to me. As with Millwall, there then followed extensive correspondence with the Club discussing the investigative steps taken by the Club and what other lines of enquiry might be open to it. I also met with the Club to discuss its initial findings and to explore what further investigation could be undertaken. After some delay, the Club conducted further enquiries, and provided me with an updated report. The Club spoke to 17 individuals: 13 former first team players, one former manager, one former coach, and two former members of staff. I am satisfied that the investigation conducted by the Club was adequate within the meaning of my Terms of Reference.

9.7 George Ormond

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INTRODUCTION

9.7.1. George Ormond is a convicted child sex offender. He was found guilty in 2002 of sexual offences against five boys. In 2018, he was found guilty of 35 counts of indecent assault and one count of indecency. The offending for which Ormond was convicted related to the period from 1973 to 1998. He received jail sentences of six years and 20 years, respectively, for his crimes.

9.7.2. In his sentencing remarks at the conclusion of the 2002 trial, His Honour Judge Esmond Faulks said that Ormond was “wholly preoccupied with sex”. The Judge also observed that:

“The evidence demonstrates you were a predatory abuser of young boys. You used your position as a football coach to target vulnerable young children. You ingratiated yourself with their parents and prevented disclosure by the power you wielded over them as their coach.”

9.7.3. Following Ormond’s 2018 trial, His Honour Judge Bindloss made the following sentencing remarks:

“Some victims you do not even remember - what was for your momentary sexual gratification was for your victims a lifetime of difficulty... No-one observing this trial could have failed to have been moved by the complainants and other witnesses over the six weeks of evidence.... [They were] largely men in their 50s, largely from working class and sporting backgrounds, speaking with calm and quiet dignity about how they failed to understand what was happening to them... over a 25 year period, George Ormond was a man wholly preoccupied with sex, who used his position as a respected football coach to target boys and young men in his care, to whom he was in a position of trust, to groom and manipulate and sexually assault.”

9.7.4. The Review received daily reports from the 2018 criminal trial and was provided with all of the statements provided to the police in respect of that trial. The Review was also provided with a considerable quantity of material relating to the 2002 trial.

9.7.5. Further, the Review has met with two of the individuals who Ormond abused through his association with football, including Derek Bell, whose account is discussed in more detail below.

SUMMARY OF ORMOND’S INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL

9.7.6. Ormond lived in the Newcastle area. His primary career was as a printer for a local printing company. However, Ormond had extensive links with youth football from the 1970s onwards. Ormond was a manager at a prominent youth football team, Montagu and Fenham Boys Football Club, which was known locally as “Monty’s” (I

shall refer to it in this report as “Monty’s”). Players remember Ormond being a large presence at Monty’s, with some describing him as the “face” of Monty’s. Ormond coached young players, and also helped out with other functions such as performing first aid on players.

9.7.7. A number of Monty’s players trialled for apprenticeships and youth team positions at Newcastle United FC, some with success. The Review was told that, from the 1980s onwards, Monty’s also provided players to play directly against the Club’s schoolboy and youth teams during weekly training sessions.

9.7.8. Ormond was also the manager of a Northumberland County FA youth team in the mid-1990s. In this role he had contact with players: both on his side and on opposing County FA sides, who were playing in the local youth teams.

Links Between Ormond and Newcastle

9.7.9. According to Newcastle, Ormond was linked to its youth team in an informal capacity during the 1980s and 1990s. The Club has said that:

“Ormond assisted the youth team on an informal basis by getting drinks, driving youth players to and from training sessions and helping with trivial coaching tasks such as collecting balls. Ormond did not coach players. He was regarded as a ‘gopher’, someone who did odd jobs around the training ground. His involvement was limited to the youth team and he had no involvement with the first team.

The Club has not found any evidence that Ormond was ever formally employed by the Club. Specifically, no employment contract or any evidence that he received a regular salary has been found. The Club has been provided with evidence suggesting three payments were made to Ormond between 1995 and 1998. However, based on its enquiries the Club believes it is likely that these payments were for expenses rather than salary.”

9.7.10. Ormond initially had contact with Newcastle through his coaching role at Monty’s. In his capacity as coach, he supplied “spare” players to the Club (to assist the Club’s youth team with training), and transported to the Club those Monty’s players who were signed to the Club as Associated Schoolboys. Ormond’s involvement with the Club deepened as a result of his long-standing friendship with John Carver, who became the Director of the Club’s Centre of Excellence in 1991. The Centre of Excellence was responsible for the development of players within the Club aged eight to 16 years old.

9.7.11. John Carver told the Review that he knew and was friendly with Ormond from Monty’s, where John Carver had initially been a youth player (during the period in which Ormond was a coach), and had subsequently been a coach alongside Ormond after John Carver’s retirement as a professional footballer. Due to the size of the new Centre of Excellence at the Club, John Carver required assistance. He relied on Ormond, who was already providing some volunteering services to the Club, to provide

such help. Assistance was also provided by various scouts who had pre-existing links to the Club. After 1993, John Carver was encouraged to use Ormond to provide extra capacity.

9.7.12. Based on the evidence presented at the criminal trial, as well as the Club's response to the Review, and the Review's own interviews with witnesses who were familiar with Ormond, it is clear that Ormond was involved with the Club in a number of different ways:

12.1. Ormond assisted with the provision of refreshments when parents came to visit the players at matches or training sessions.

12.2. Ormond was the "sponge man", and assisted with first aid, both on and off the pitch. The Club has explained that Ormond assisted with physiotherapy, even though he was not a trained physiotherapist.

12.3. Ormond transported players to and from their accommodation at the Grove and the Brighton Grove Hotels, and to and from the airport. These hotels housed youth team players between the ages of 16 and 18 years of age. Ormond transported the players both in Club minibuses and his own van.

12.4. Ormond transported players to tournaments.

12.5. Ormond attended football tournaments as a member of the Club's staff delegation. This included the Milk Cup tournament in Northern Ireland in 1994, and in 1997. (I have seen a programme for the 1994 Milk Cup, which has Ormond's name down as one of the Club Officials. I have not seen written confirmation that Ormond attended the 1997 Milk Cup, but it is clear from the accounts provided to the Review from several members of staff who were on that trip that Ormond did attend the Milk Cup in 1997, and participated with authorisation from the Club.)

12.6. Ormond was a "gopher": helping out at coaching sessions, although he did not do any direct coaching and was not a member of the coaching staff.

9.7.13. During the course of the 2018 prosecution of Ormond, the police identified HMRC records which showed that Ormond had been paid sums of money by the Club, and that these were declared for tax purposes by the Club to HMRC. The amounts paid for three tax years were:

13.1. 1995/96: £560;

13.2. 1996/97: £2025; and

13.3. 1997/98: £765.

These were not large sums. The Club has concluded that they were probably the reimbursement of expenses incurred by Ormond during each period. I consider that that is most likely.

9.7.14. Ormond did not give evidence at the 2018 trial, but a summary of his interviews with the police was read to the Court. In his interviews, Ormond stated that:

14.1. He was employed part-time on a rolling monthly basis.

14.2. He worked at the Club for 5 years.

14.3. His degree of involvement varied over time: he was involved in a number of training sessions each week (varying from one to nine sessions),

and his role was to “bring players on to suitable standard”. Ormond therefore suggested that he had a larger coaching role than that represented by the witnesses from the Club.

14.4. He predominantly worked with the under-16 players and, within that age group, mainly the 14-16 year olds.

14.5. In relation to the Grove Hotel, Ormond accepted that he would transport players to and from games to the hotel. He said that he normally dropped the players off but sometimes he would go into the hotel.

9.7.15. It is clear from all the information received by the Review that Ormond was closely associated with Newcastle. To the youth players training at the Club, Ormond would have appeared as an official of the Club, with involvement in its youth programme. That is how parents would have viewed him as well.

SUMMARY OF THE ABUSE COMMITTED BY ORMOND

Overview

9.7.16. Ormond used football to gain access to boys whom he could abuse. In the 1980s, Ormond’s involvement with running and coaching Monty’s enabled him to get close to numerous boys. He also pursued access to young players at the Club. At the Club, Ormond used his general “gopher” role, and particularly the transportation he provided to players to and from the Grove Hotel to gain access to boys and socialise with them, thereby creating further opportunities to commit abuse.

9.7.17. I have met with and/or reviewed accounts of 11 individuals who allege that they were abused by Ormond at the Club. From these accounts, it can be said that the abuse by Ormond took place:

- 17.1. at the Grove Hotel, in individual players’ rooms;
- 17.2. another hotel used by the Club, again in individual players’ rooms;
- 17.3. in Ormond’s hotel room on a Club trip to the Milk Cup; and
- 17.4. in Ormond’s car.

The Abuse at Monty’s (and its Connection to Newcastle)

9.7.18. I have reviewed the evidence given by five survivors during the 2018 prosecution who were abused by Ormond while they were at Monty’s.

9.7.19. Monty’s was seen by its players as “the most esteemed team in the North East”. There were strong informal links between Monty’s and Newcastle. Players reported that Ormond represented to them that he worked for Newcastle and made them think that “if we played well he could get a scout to come and watch us and we could progress up there”. As such, I consider that players expected that if they impressed their coaches at Monty’s (including Ormond) they would have the opportunity to

progress to professional football with Newcastle and other clubs. Ormond used this dream to silence survivors. After he had committed abuse against one player, Ormond told him “not to tell anyone”. The player explained that “He used to say I’ve got your dreams in my hand and if you tell anyone none of that will happen and I’ll crush your dreams”.

9.7.20. The evidence from ex-players at the 2018 trial was that Ormond engaged in inappropriate and sexually abusive behaviour at Monty’s. They said that Ormond:

20.1. Operated and enforced an “unwritten rule” that players could not wear boxer shorts or underpants when playing football.

20.2. Regularly engaged in physical horseplay, grabbed their backsides or genitals, and made comments about the same. At the time, players understood this to be a joke although they could not recall any other adult interacting with them in this way at the Club.

20.3. Massaged players with liniment, up to their groins. The ostensible justification given for this rubbing was that it was sports-related. However, multiple players reported that this massage included Ormond touching their genitals. Sometimes this took place when they were alone in a physio-room, at other times it was in front of the other players. Ormond sometimes forced players to undress to receive massages.

20.4. On a training trip to Billsmoor, he threatened players that if they did not eat their meal it would be “put down our shorts and rubbed in”. He carried through this threat by rubbing semolina onto one boy’s penis.

20.5. Used foreign trips, transport to training and matches, and one-to-one coaching sessions, to isolate players and sexually assault them.

20.6. Built close relationships with player’s parents in order to socialise in their home, and then forced the player to perform sex acts while the family slept.

Derek Bell

9.7.21. Derek Bell was a player at Monty’s who Ormond abused extensively. This abuse took place from 1975 to 1979.

9.7.22. Derek Bell told me that Ormond made a great effort to ingratiate himself into his family in order to groom him and those around him. Ormond was highly effective at this, and was soon transporting Derek Bell to various places, and socialising with Derek Bell’s family at his home in the evenings. The abuse began at Monty’s itself, with abusive massages in a physiotherapy room. However, Ormond was soon confident enough to perpetrate abuse in Derek Bell’s own home, in Derek Bell’s bedroom, and to do so over a number of years.

9.7.23. The abuse stopped when Derek Bell went to play as an apprentice for Newcastle in 1979. Derek Bell remained in contact with Ormond. Later, in the 1990s Derek Bell was part of the same social circle in Newcastle as both Ormond and John Carver. Such was the hold that Ormond had over Derek Bell that he did not tell anyone about the abuse for many years. However, Derek Bell eventually made a disclosure in 1997 to

officials at the Club (which I consider further below).

9.7.24. Derek Bell was instrumental in uncovering Ormond's abuse, which led to the successful prosecution in 2002. Derek Bell confronted Ormond about the abuse he had committed against him as a child, and secretly recorded the conversation. In that conversation, Ormond accepted that he committed the acts alleged against him.

The Abuse at Newcastle

9.7.25. I have reviewed the accounts of 11 players who were abused by Ormond through his association with the youth development programme at Newcastle. The evidence from players' accounts shows that the earliest abuse at the Club was in mid-1994 and the latest in 1998. There may have been abuse outside of that date range and there may have been further abuse within this date range about which I am not aware.

The Grove Hotel

9.7.26. Ormond primarily committed abuse at the accommodation provided, by Newcastle, to its youth development players (aged 16 to 18 years old). Overwhelmingly, such abuse took place at the Grove Hotel ("the Grove").

9.7.27. Ormond picked up and dropped off players from their accommodation as part of his duties for the Club. The witness accounts are consistent in stating that Ormond spent considerable time at the Grove, including on weekends when there was no official business for him to do there.

9.7.28. The evidence from the young players was that Ormond took them out on the weekends to party in Newcastle, and encouraged them to do the same at the Grove itself. He brought alcohol to the Grove to supply to them. He spent time socialising and drinking inside players' rooms. There are accounts that Ormond would bring pornographic magazines to the Grove to pass around and discuss. There are further accounts that sometimes Ormond would strip down and dance around naked in front of the young players.

9.7.29. Ormond would regularly stay at the Grove for two to three hours. One young player recalled that Ormond was typically there six to seven times per week. After some of these evenings, Ormond stayed over in the Grove. He would stay in spare beds, when young players were away or there was a vacancy, or on occasion would attempt to stay in the same bed as a young player.

9.7.30. Ormond's pattern of abuse at the Grove tended to involve walking into young players' rooms while they were asleep or falling asleep. He would climb into bed with a young player and attempt to touch them or force them to touch him. Young players engaged in various strategies in response to this behaviour. Some "played dead" or "froze" and hoped Ormond would leave, or they would roll over in their sleep to move away from him. Some young players woke to realise that Ormond was in the room (before any abuse had taken place) and told him to leave the room. Some pushed back on

contact with Ormond, after which Ormond did leave the room.

9.7.31. In addition to perpetrating abuse at the Grove in the evenings in young players' rooms, Ormond perpetrated abuse in the daytime in the lobby area of the hotel. He initiated a physical check of a young player's injury on the pretence of tending to it, and then indecently touched the young player.

9.7.32. It is clear that Ormond was able to access the young players at the time and in the place that he did by virtue of his position at the Club. He was only able to gain access to the young players because they knew him to be associated with the Club, and (initially, at least) trusted him because of this.

At the Club

9.7.33. Through discharging his normal duties at Newcastle, Ormond engaged in further inappropriate and/or abusive behaviour:

33.1. Young players recalled that Ormond was present when they were getting changed or bathing and that he watched and made comments about the size of their genitals.

33.2. Ormond was tasked with providing transport for an induction weekend for new players and asked one young player's father if he could stay in the same room as his son, on the basis that he had been drinking and did not want to drive home. The father agreed. In the middle of the night, the player awoke to find Ormond standing over his bed, masturbating.

33.3. Ormond delivered massages to players as part of a purported physiotherapy treatment. These were not objected to by John Carver, who understood this to be within Ormond's role in helping young players, and had himself grown up with Ormond fulfilling that role at Monty's and the Northumberland County U18's team. There is no suggestion (or evidence) that John Carver was aware of, or witnessed, inappropriate behaviour by Ormond when he was at Monty's. John Carver was also not aware of where Ormond conducted some of the massages: such as in his room on foreign trips, or in the Club's gym at night. I do not consider that John Carver had any suspicions that Ormond assisting with massages was inappropriate at the time (until this was raised as an issue in 1997 by Paul Ferris – see below). However, this activity did provide Ormond with the opportunity to touch players inappropriately.

Foreign Trips, and the Milk Cup

9.7.34. Ormond went on a number of trips with the Club. One of these trips was to the Milk Cup tournament in Northern Ireland. I have received an account of abuse from a young player, BD, who alleged that Ormond abused him in his hotel room on the Milk Cup trip in 1994. BD alleged that Ormond made him go to his room, where Ormond gave him a massage (ostensibly on a sports and health basis). During the massage, Ormond indecently touched BD. BD described this as "knocking over" his penis.

9.7.35. BD did not proceed to trial with the allegation, so it has not been assessed by a criminal court. However, I note that the allegation against Ormond is largely consistent with that in other cases, where Ormond has been found guilty, and is consistent with other accounts of Ormond's behaviour.

NEWCASTLE'S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.7.36. Newcastle has reported to me that:

"It is generally accepted that nothing was known about Ormond's activities until the late 1990s, when Derek Bell made an allegation to Paul Ferris. However, the timing of this disclosure is disputed by witnesses and there are conflicting accounts of the chronology of events between the time of Bell's disclosure and Ormond's departure.

There are also discrepancies in accounts of the knowledge the Club had in respect of Ormond's activities. It seems to be generally accepted that Paul Ferris, John Carver, [GG, a member of the Club's backroom staff], [EC, another member of the Club's backroom staff] and John Murray had knowledge of a complaint relating to Ormond made by Bell and an incident involving another unnamed youth player at some point in the late 1990s. However, it is not clear whether this information was passed on to anyone else at the Club. Carver says he passed information to [a former senior Club official, FB] at some point in 1998/99 and Bell says the Club was involved in the police investigation into Ormond in 2002. However, [FB] denies any knowledge of either a complaint being passed to him by Carver or a police investigation and no other witness recalls contact with the police in 2002. Unfortunately, others who may have assisted in this regard are no longer available.

Quite simply, it is impossible to be certain as to what the Club knew about Ormond's alleged activities, or when the Club acquired any knowledge, save for the following:

- Paul Ferris, John Carver and John Murray had knowledge of a complaint relating to Ormond by Derek Bell at some point in the late 1990s;
- John Carver removed Ormond from the Club on the pretence of him having insufficient coaching badges to remain at the Club. Carver believes this was within a few months after he had been informed of the complaint by Ferris; others believe it could have been as much as two years later."

General Awareness

9.7.37. I have seen no evidence that staff or other officials at Newcastle witnessed actual abuse committed by Ormond.

9.7.38. In particular, I consider the following evidence to be significant:

38.1. None of the players allege that any other Club staff members were present during Ormond's visits to the Grove or on nights out.

38.2. Although towards the end of Ormond's time at the Club in late 1997 it appears that players began to talk or "joke" among themselves about Ormond, this was not relayed to Club staff members.

38.3. None of my interviews with former staff members indicate that Ormond was instructed or expected to spend time with the players outside of training sessions and transport, nor were they aware that he did so. I have interviewed John Carver, John Murray (who was a Youth Development Officer for the Club and senior to John Carver at the Club) and Paul Ferris (who was a physiotherapist for the Club in the 1990s). I have also read the accounts of a number of other officials who gave evidence during the 2018 trial, as well as the accounts of those who were interviewed by the Club as part of its investigation.

38.4. John Carver explained that there was one occasion when he noticed an odd occurrence. He could not recall the precise year in which this took place, but it appears to have been before the disclosures which I address below (in or around early 1997). John Carver drove past the Grove in a taxi around 7.00pm on a Saturday night. He saw Ormond's red van parked outside the hotel. This was a "red flag" to John Carver. He was aware that training that day would have finished two hours earlier at 5.00pm. He did not understand why Ormond would still be at the Grove so long after dropping off players. When John Carver arrived at the pub he called Ormond and asked him what he was doing at the Grove. Ormond told him that he was dropping off pizzas for the players. John Carver did not have any suspicions about Ormond, and considered Ormond's explanation to be a sufficient reason for his presence at the hotel, but instructed Ormond to leave now that the pizzas were delivered. John Carver was clear in his account to me that he did not think it was appropriate for Ormond to be there at that time, but I do not consider that this incident alone was sufficient to raise suspicion that Ormond may have been abusing the young players.

9.7.39. Two players gave accounts to the police for the 2018 Ormond trial in which they stated that staff at the Club made comments to them which indicated that they had concerns about Ormond. One player, IT, recalled being driven to training by John Carver after June 1997, and being asked whether Ormond had attended the Grove Hotel the previous weekend. The player stated that he told John Carver "no", and that in response John Carver stated, "be careful". The second player, WM, stated that "someone" at the Club asked him if anything strange had happened with Ormond and said that he should tell that person if so. WM could not recall who said this to him, and did not give a date for when it took place.

9.7.40. A former professional player, SF, has also informed the Review that he recalled an interaction which took place in 1996 or 1997 where players said “Oh, we went out at the weekend. Oh my God George Ormond got in bed with - you know, he’s fucking crazy George Ormond” in front of John Carver. SF alleges that John Carver then responded with words to the effect of “I know what he’s like”, in reference to Ormond. This conversation was not referred to by SF in his police statement, or at the 2018 Ormond trial.

9.7.41. John Carver denies that any of these conversations took place. He explained to me that he did not speak with any players about Ormond. I consider that it is most unlikely that John Carver said, “I know what he’s like”, in reaction to it being said that Ormond got in bed with one of the boys. There is no evidence that John Carver did know that Ormond was “like” that. It would also be an odd comment to make to, or in front of, a number of young players. In addition, although SF told me about this conversation, he did not put it in his police statement or mention it at the 2018 Ormond trial, which means that I should place less weight on its accuracy. I do not consider there is sufficient evidence to conclude that it took place.

9.7.42. With respect to the alleged conversation referred to by IT, this was denied by John Carver. However, I note that it fits in with the chronology. By June 1997, John Carver had been informed by Paul Ferris of the allegations made by Derek Bell (see below). It is likely that these allegations caused John Carver some concern, and raised his suspicions about Ormond. If John Carver did make this comment, this would have been on the basis that he wanted to know more about what Ormond was up to, and by saying “be careful” to IT, this would have been a way of expressing his concern.

9.7.43. With respect to the alleged conversation described by WM, this is consistent with John Carver wanting to know more about what Ormond was up to at the Grove. However, the allegation is undated and John Carver was not specifically referred to by WM as being a party to that conversation, and so I cannot say that it took place.

9.7.44. Two players have also stated that they thought Paul Ferris, a physiotherapist at the Club, became aware of allegations of misconduct against Ormond. One, PK, stated that he “believed” that someone told Paul Ferris about Ormond having been in the Grove Hotel with no clothes on. Another, DE, stated that a rumour went around the players that Ormond had got into a player’s bed and this player had said that Ormond had “done something similar” to him. This information was then discussed by other players in front of Paul Ferris. It is alleged that Paul Ferris subsequently asked DE about it and DE denied having any issues.

9.7.45. Paul Ferris denies ever having received any allegations of abuse, aside from the one raised by Derek Bell in early 1997. There is no contemporaneous documentary evidence to support the players’ allegations, and there is some reason to doubt their correctness. In particular, there is clear evidence that when an allegation about Ormond was brought to Paul Ferris’ attention, he acted on it: raising it with the police, and also with officials at the Club. In the circumstances, I cannot say that these conversations did take place as alleged.

Potential Disclosure in 1994 (BD)

9.7.46. BD (whose allegation of abuse is detailed above in relation to the Milk Cup trips) told the police that in the pre-season to the 1994-1995 footballing year, he reported abuse that he had sustained at the Milk Cup that year to John Murray, while they were at the Club's Benwell ground. BD alleges that John Murray then brought John Carver into the conversation on the basis that John Carver was the manager. John Murray asked John Carver if he was aware of the abuse. John Carver said he was not but that they would investigate it and that it was best that BD did not return to the Club until they had carried out an investigation. After Christmas, BD was asked to come back and play again. BD says that nothing was said about the incident and Ormond was still at the Club.

9.7.47. I have spoken to BD, who told me that he informed John Murray about the incident twice. The first time was directly after he returned from the Milk Cup. This was the end of July or early August 1994. BD says that he told John Murray that he had been "knocked over" by Ormond (that is, Ormond had touched his penis). He says that John Murray responded by saying "Oh well we'll need to speak to George" and then turned the conversation to the player's general fitness. John Murray is said to have instructed BD to go away and focus on his fitness.

9.7.48. The second time was in the pre-season to the 1994 to 1995 footballing year. BD said that he informed John Murray again, who replied "Oh, you need to speak to John Carver, and look into it". John Murray then pulled John Carver into the conversation and indicated that John Carver would investigate the allegation. BD was never informed of the outcome of the investigation and did not know whether one was even conducted.

9.7.49. John Murray denies that he received either disclosure. He told me that he had never heard the "story before now", and that had there been such a disclosure he would not have made John Carver investigate it as John Murray would have been able to "do something" himself.

9.7.50. John Carver also denied having received the disclosure, stating "100% I don't recall that", and that he had never been asked to investigate Ormond. I have not found any evidence that there was such an investigation at the Club.

9.7.51. I accept that BD may well have suffered abuse by Ormond, although I note that this has not been tested in the Courts, and it is not my role to find that abuse was suffered by any particular individual. I cannot conclude, however, that he told John Carver and John Murray about it. I note that BD's account of what took place changed between his interview with the police and my interview with him: he told the Review that there were two conversations with the Club staff, rather than one.

9.7.52. There is also no corroboration to BD's account, and John Carver and John Murray have in separate conversations with the Review denied it. I have no reason to believe that John Carver and John Murray have spoken to each other about this allegation.

Awareness of Inappropriate Massaging in 1996-7 (EC)

9.7.53. EC, a former member of staff, told Newcastle (as part of its investigation) that he walked into a gym at the Club at around 7 pm, and witnessed Ormond massaging the groin of a player. He told Ormond something like “you shouldn’t be doing that, it’s not your job”. EC then informed John Murray and John Carver the following day about what he had seen. EC further recalled that he informed Paul Ferris that “something needed to be done about Ormond” and, in response, Paul Ferris then informed him that he had spoken with a senior police officer about Ormond (see below).

9.7.54. In speaking to the Club, EC originally stated that this incident occurred between 1994 and 1996. Subsequently, he stated, that it occurred “some months” before he had a conversation about Ormond with Paul Ferris (which I am confident occurred in mid-1997). Therefore, I consider that the correct date for consideration of this incident is between late 1996 and early 1997.

9.7.55. There is one possible piece of corroborating evidence for EC’s account that he passed on the information to others at the Club, in that John Murray recalls that Paul Ferris (when telling him about the Derek Bell disclosure, discussed below) suggested that somebody else had spoken to him about abuse, but he could not remember the details of this.

9.7.56. Other than this, the evidence contradicts EC’s account:

56.1. John Murray’s response to the allegation was that he had no recollection of being informed by EC about such an event. He said that if he had been told this, he would have considered it inappropriate for Ormond to be in the building at 7.00pm and to be massaging the player. John Murray did not consider that Ormond was “qualified” to do massages or first aid, and that it would be first team physiotherapists who would take that role.

56.2. John Carver also did not recall receiving any information from EC about Ormond. He said that it would not be appropriate to do massaging in the gym as it was not a medical facility, but that he considered it was appropriate for Ormond to do first aid and physiotherapy and to massage players (for the reasons explained above). John Carver had witnessed Ormond conducting this kind of treatment from his time at Monty’s onwards, including at the Club’s former training ground at Benwell; and

56.3. Paul Ferris did not recall EC making a comment to him about Ormond. He said that it was he who had raised concerns about Ormond with EC; it was not the other way around.

9.7.57. I am unable to reach a conclusion as to whether or not EC raised this with Paul Ferris, John Carver and John Murray, as they all deny this account and there is no other evidence to support EC’s account.

Potential Disclosure: Anonymous and Undated (1997/98)

9.7.58. Several players interviewed by the police stated that they considered that a player at the Club had informed staff about Ormond's abuse in late 1997. One stated that he thought another player had "grassed up" Ormond. The account does not make clear which player was said to have informed the Club about Ormond, or the content of any disclosure made. None of the officials at the Club whose accounts I have seen or heard recall any disclosure of abuse in this respect. Both John Carver and John Murray were clear that the reason Ormond left was because of the chain of events set in motion by Derek Bell's disclosure of abuse in early 1997 (see below), and not any allegation in relation to a player at the Club.

9.7.59. In light of the vague information available on this point, I do not make any findings in relation to it. I note that it would be consistent with the findings I make in this report that players may have thought Ormond left because of something a current player allegedly said, even if in fact no player informed staff at the Club about Ormond during this period. Players were not given a reason for Ormond's departure from the Club.

Derek Bell: 1997

9.7.60. Derek Bell disclosed to officials at Newcastle information about the abuse that had been committed by Ormond when he was a young boy and was associated with Monty's. There are various accounts of how Derek Bell made the Club aware of the abuse and how the Club reacted. I set out the different versions below, and then explain my conclusions.

PAUL FERRIS' ACCOUNT

9.7.61. Paul Ferris was a physiotherapist at the Club in 1997. He told the Review that, in the 1990s, the Club did not have a dedicated physiotherapist for the youth team. Injured youth players requiring treatment were sometimes seen by the Club's main physiotherapists. Paul Ferris explained that he was a former professional player at the Club, from the same period as Derek Bell. The two lost touch after Derek Bell had left the Club with an injury. In the spring of 1997, Derek Bell called up Paul Ferris and asked him to meet up for a drink. Derek Bell came to visit Paul Ferris at his house. From there, they went to a local pub. At the pub, Derek Bell disclosed an allegation of sexual abuse by Ormond. He was very upset, so they returned to Paul Ferris's home, where Derek Bell became increasingly agitated. Paul Ferris asked him what he wanted to do and Derek Bell said he did not want to do anything about it.

9.7.62. Paul Ferris said that he passed on this disclosure to the Club:

62.1. Paul Ferris says that he first discussed the matter with GG, another member of the Club's backroom staff, in the days immediately after he had received the disclosure from Derek Bell. Paul Ferris says that GG told him not to do anything. GG has been asked about this by the Club, and denies that Paul Ferris spoke to him about the abuse and that he told him not to do anything. (Given the conflicting accounts, and no corroboration of either

account, I am unable to conclude either way as to whether this conversation did take place.)

62.2. Paul Ferris says that he remained concerned and therefore the weekend immediately following his conversation with Derek Bell he asked the police officer who stood in the dug-out at matches what to do about an allegation of abuse against a member of staff at the Club. The police officer said to “leave the issue with him”. Two weeks later, the police officer informed Paul Ferris that the police could not do anything if the victim did not want to make a complaint but that the Club needed to get the abuser out. The police officer who Paul Ferris said he had spoken to was subsequently interviewed by the Club. He denied that he had these discussions with Paul Ferris and says that he would have been retired at that time. His successor, who worked at the Newcastle ground, is deceased. (Given the conflicting accounts, and no corroboration of either account, I am unable to conclude that Paul Ferris spoke to the particular police officer whom he had identified to me. However, there is corroboration that Paul Ferris spoke to a police officer as EC recalled Paul Ferris telling him that; and John Carver recalled that Paul Ferris mentioned to him that he had taken advice from the police: see below.)

62.3. Paul Ferris went to see John Carver and John Murray, in their office and informed them that Derek Bell had made an allegation against Ormond, that Derek Bell did not want to go to the police, but that Paul Ferris had taken advice from the police and they had said that the Club needed to get Ormond out of the Club. John Carver’s response was to the effect that they would monitor the matter or sort it out.

9.7.63. Paul Ferris recalled that in July 1997, he formed part of the Club’s delegation, along with John Carver, John Murray and Ormond, for the trip to the Milk Cup in Ireland. Paul Ferris believes that he expressed an objection to Ormond going on the trip prior to the trip taking place, but he is not sure of precisely when he did so.

9.7.64. Once on the trip, Paul Ferris stood up in front of the delegation and announced that only he could apply medical care to the players. This, he told me, was designed to ensure that Ormond would not have an excuse to touch players. In spite of this, Paul Ferris discovered Ormond in one boy’s chalet on two occasions. Paul Ferris reprimanded Ormond for this and reminded him that only he, Paul Ferris, would apply medical care. Paul Ferris considered it “inconceivable” that he would not have alerted John Carver or John Murray to Ormond’s actions at the time, although he could not recall whether or when he did so.

9.7.65. Months later, and during the course of the 1997/1998 season, Paul Ferris said that John Carver informed him that he had recently heard the allegation of abuse by Ormond directly from Derek Bell. Paul Ferris was not sure whether Ormond had left the Club by the time this conversation took place, but he was sure that the conversation between John Carver and Derek Bell was the catalyst for John Carver removing Ormond from the Club. The removal happened either then or soon afterwards. Until that point, Paul Ferris was “almost certain” that Ormond, John Carver and Derek Bell were still socialising together on Sundays.

9.7.66. It was roughly two years later, in 2000, that Derek Bell obtained a recording of a conversation between himself and Ormond and then went to the police. Paul Ferris was aware of this through news coverage of the first Ormond trial.

9.7.67. Paul Ferris provided a statement to the police, and gave evidence at Ormond's criminal trial in 2018. The Review has considered his statement and the evidence that he gave at the trial. This evidence was consistent with what Paul Ferris told the Review directly.

DEREK BELL'S ACCOUNT

9.7.68. I spoke to Derek Bell on two occasions. Derek Bell considered that the disclosures he made to the Club were not in 1997, but rather a year or so later. This is around the same time that he went to the police with the dictaphone recording of Ormond's confession.

9.7.69. In the first interview, Derek Bell stated that:

- 69.1. the timing of the disclosure was around the time that John Carver had just been assigned as a coach at the Club's Academy. The Academy was established in 1998;
- 69.2. he first informed John Carver of the abuse at around Easter, and that he then subsequently told Paul Ferris; and
- 69.3. he considered that it was not until later that John Murray (who was informed about the abuse by John Carver) went to FB, a senior official in the Club, and the Club acted to remove Ormond.

9.7.70. In his second interview, Derek Bell recounted the timeline as follows. He maintained that the disclosure took place in a year later than 1997:

- 70.1. Within the year that Derek Bell says he disclosed the abuse, he recalls that it was in Spring that he told Paul Ferris about the abuse in Paul Ferris' local pub. He did not recall going to Paul Ferris' house that day.
- 70.2. At a later, but undefined point, John Carver stayed at Derek Bell's house and Derek Bell said to John Carver "John, you need to get him out of the Club. He can't be working with any kids". In response, John Carver kept asking Derek Bell the question, "Why?" Derek Bell responded and said, "Listen. Trust me. You have to get George Ormond out of the Club".
- 70.3. Soon after this had occurred, John Carver told John Murray about it and John Murray raised the issue with the Club. The Club then removed Ormond.
- 70.4. Some months after Ormond had left the Club, Derek Bell gave a dictaphone recording, of his confrontation with Ormond, to a mutual friend of his and John Carver's. The mutual friend then took the dictaphone to John Carver at the Club and played it for him.

JOHN MURRAY'S ACCOUNT

9.7.71. John Murray told me that:

- 71.1. Paul Ferris came to him and John Carver and said that Derek Bell had been abused, and that Derek Bell had made a complaint to the police.

71.2. Paul Ferris also suggested that somebody else had spoken to him about abuse, but John Murray could not recall any details of this.

71.3. John Carver and John Murray spoke and agreed that they had to get Ormond “out of here”. John Carver came up with using the excuse of there being “big changes” at the Academy, that all coaches needed to be FA-approved and explained this to Ormond the following week. When Ormond was told this, he said “I’m leaving the Club anyway”; and

71.4. Ormond was not subsequently taken on the trip to the Milk Cup as he was gone before then and “there’s no way in hell that he was taken to Ireland on a trip with us on the Club after we heard what was going on”.

JOHN CARVER’S ACCOUNT

9.7.72. I also interviewed John Carver in relation to these events. His account was that he learned about the abuse from Paul Ferris:

72.1. In May or June 1997, Paul Ferris came into the stadium at St James’ Park, where John Carver was with John Murray in their office. Paul Ferris informed them that Derek Bell had made an allegation against Ormond. John Carver understood that this was an allegation of indecent behaviour, although it was not explicitly phrased as such.

72.2. Paul Ferris also told John Carver that he had taken advice from the police officer, and that he said that there “was nothing the police could do if the victim did not want to come forward but that the Club should get Ormond out”.

72.3. John Carver thought he had to protect Derek Bell as Derek Bell had told Paul Ferris in confidence, and did not expect this matter to be passed to the Club.

9.7.73. In July 1997, John Carver took Ormond, John Murray and Paul Ferris to the Milk Cup in Ireland. He did so because he considered that the allegation was “still an allegation”, and nothing had yet been proven against Ormond. However, he explained that at the Milk Cup they “all kept an eye on” Ormond. However, no specific measures or monitoring regimes were put in place which John Carver could recall and Ormond fulfilled his usual duties with players.

9.7.74. “Reasonably soon” after, in July or August 1997, John Carver says that he got rid of Ormond from the Club. In my first interview with John Carver he stated that this was within one month of the Milk Cup. In my second interview I informed him that others, including Paul Ferris, recalled Ormond being at the Club until later in 1997. John Carver maintained that this was not the case, although he accepted that it was “possible”.

9.7.75. John Carver denies that he was informed directly by Derek Bell of abuse in 1997. John Carver could not precisely date when Derek Bell approached him directly, but believed it was in or after the 1998-1999 season. Derek Bell had a mutual friend come to him at the Club with a dictaphone, and played the conversation Derek Bell had taped between himself and Ormond and that he was going to the police to report the matter. Upon hearing that tape, John Carver went to FB to report what had happened.

He felt that it was appropriate to make the disclosure to officials higher up in the Club at that stage, because Derek Bell was going to the police, so John Carver no longer needed to protect him or Paul Ferris. He decided to report it as he thought it was important that the information was addressed.

9.7.76. John Carver was not aware whether any further investigation occurred at the Club thereafter. He did not have any further conversations with FB about the matter. When John Carver told FB about the information, he says that FB “just received” it and “was like ‘Okay’”. He could not recall any other reaction or conversation about the allegation.

9.7.77. John Carver pointed out that he had received no training as to what to do when there were allegations of abuse. He said that the FA had not produced any process for how to deal with these matters at that time.

9.7.78. John Carver has explained to the Review:

“I was not dealing with a normal set of circumstances. At that time I was dealing with an allegation that one friend had sexually abused another friend, both of whom were also at that time still friends and socialising with each other. At that time I couldn’t comprehend what had actually taken place. When I was told the full story from Derek Bell in person I was then in a position to act and did so with the football club. George Ormond was no longer at the club at that time.”

9.7.79. John Carver also said that his decisions should be viewed in the context of the advice that Paul Ferris had said he had received from a police officer. He considers that although the advice was to remove Ormond from the Club, the police officer did not himself take any follow up steps. In the absence of concrete evidence to share with senior officials at the Club, John Carver believed it necessary to wait for an appropriate time to move Ormond out of the Club without breaching Derek Bell’s confidence. He further explained:

“In hindsight things could have been done differently. However with the information I had at the time I thought the most common-sense approach was to get the truth from Derek Bell... for me to use common sense to put some procedures in place I would have to have had the information from Derek Bell and to have had an understanding of what I was dealing with”.

FB’S ACCOUNT

9.7.80. FB denies ever having been presented with information about Ormond. FB has said that he had no recollection of Ormond’s name being mentioned to him in any context during his entire period of employment with the Club (including by way of any disclosure from John Carver). He critiqued John Carver’s version of events as lacking detail and therefore plausibility, and explained that had he received information of this nature it would have been shocking, and he would have responded to ask about it, rather than just “receiving” it. FB said that had he received a disclosure from John Carver he would have “viewed it with deep concern, and quickly reported” it to the person responsible at that time for all football matters, “for urgent action”.

Conclusion as to What Newcastle Knew About Ormond's Abuse and What Should Have Been Done

9.7.81. There are conflicting accounts as to when the conversation between Derek Bell and Paul Ferris took place. There are also conflicting accounts as to when John Carver and John Murray acted on the disclosure made by Derek Bell and whether there was any onwards report inside the Club.

9.7.82. I consider that Paul Ferris' recollection of the date when Derek Bell made the disclosure to him is more likely to be accurate. He had a clear memory of the conversation and its timing, and he located the conversation very close to the trip to the Milk Cup, which took place in 1997. John Carver agrees with this timing.

9.7.83. As for when the disclosure was acted on, I deal with this below. In summary, there is considerable evidence that Ormond continued at the Club until late 1997 or early 1998. This was many months after the trip to the Milk Cup in the Spring of 1997.

9.7.84. I consider that the likely course of events was as follows:

84.1. A disclosure was made by Derek Bell to Paul Ferris in Spring 1997, about the abuse that Derek Bell had suffered by Ormond. This disclosure was made "in confidence".

84.2. Paul Ferris mentioned this to a police officer associated with the Club. That officer advised Paul Ferris that Ormond should be removed from the Club and explained that the police could not do anything unless the victim made a direct report.

84.3. Paul Ferris made the same disclosure to John Murray and John Carver in about May 1997, and made clear that police advice was to get Ormond out of the Club. Paul Ferris told John Carver and John Murray that Derek Bell had made the disclosure in confidence.

84.4. Both John Carver's and Paul Ferris' view was to tend towards believing in the truth of the allegation. However, John Carver was comparatively more sceptical because he had not heard the allegation directly from Derek Bell, and he was confused by the fact that Derek Bell (his good friend) had not told him directly and had continued to socialise with Ormond weekly in their friendship group and had been on holiday with Ormond as an adult. This, combined with the belief in the need to maintain confidentiality (of Derek Bell's disclosure to Paul Ferris), led him to act slowly. John Murray also acted slowly and only with John Carver.

84.5. John Murray and John Carver took Paul Ferris and Ormond on the Milk Cup trip in 1997. In light of what was known by John Carver and John Murray, I consider that Ormond should not have been allowed to go on that trip. They had possession of information that Ormond may pose a risk to young boys.

84.6. On the Milk Cup trip in 1997, Ormond was allowed to access boys as if he was any other staff member. Paul Ferris tried to confine that access by making a speech at the beginning of the trip that only he would administer physiotherapy among the coaching staff. This was designed to prevent

Ormond having an excuse to touch boys.

84.7. Neither John Murray nor John Carver put in place any extra safeguards on the trip, or, if they did, they took no proper steps to monitor or enforce them, and did not keep a consistent eye on Ormond. John Carver stated that they kept an eye on Ormond, but he was not able to say how this materialised and the clear account from Paul Ferris is that he often found Ormond away from the adults, or with the players unsupervised.

84.8. Ormond was twice caught by Paul Ferris alone with boys in their chalet. Paul Ferris did not directly witness any abuse against the boys, and no players have alleged abuse specifically in relation to this trip. I cannot say, therefore, that any abuse was actually perpetrated by Ormond on this trip, but there was clearly a risk of abuse being committed by Ormond, and John Carver and John Murray were aware of this risk as a result of what Paul Ferris had told them.

84.9. It was into the latter part of 1997, or early 1998 that Ormond left the Club. He was present for the pre-season. I reach this conclusion because:

84.9.1. first, there was no reason for John Carver, on his account, to consider there to be a greater need to remove Ormond after the Milk Cup than before. Given that John Carver was comfortable taking Ormond on the Milk Cup, there is no good reason why he would suddenly feel uncomfortable working with Ormond immediately thereafter;

84.9.2. second, multiple complainants in the 2018 trial made allegations against Ormond, or gave evidence on their interactions with Ormond, that could only have taken place after June 1997. This is when players who were recruited for the preseason and the 1997/1998 season stated that they joined the Club. Accordingly, Ormond must have been present for that period; and

84.9.3. third, if Ormond remained at the Club for the start of the 1997/8 season then there is no clear reason why he would be removed quickly thereafter. Again, nothing had changed to make the removal necessary in John Carver's or John Murray's mind, when it had not been before.

84.10. I consider it likely that a conversation between Derek Bell and John Carver did occur in which Derek Bell indicated that he had been abused by Ormond. It is likely that John Carver would have been probing with questions at the time to see if Derek Bell would reveal the abuse to him, as he had received the background disclosure from Paul Ferris and they were all good friends.

84.11. I consider that it was only once John Carver had an indication from Derek Bell himself that John Carver became certain that the abuse had happened, and that this was the catalyst to remove Ormond.

84.12. In late 1997, or early 1998, Ormond finally left the Club.

84.13. John Carver and John Murray did not confront Ormond directly with the allegation of abuse. They used a different tactic to get Ormond to leave the Club. They asked Ormond whether he was going to obtain the new FA coaching qualifications. Ormond said he was not going to, and John Carver said that he would not be able to stay at the Club. After that, Ormond walked out and never returned to the Club. John Carver considered this reaction from Ormond to be further confirmation that the accusations were true.

84.14. During the period between the complaint being made and Ormond leaving the Club, he was allowed normal access to players and continued in his usual duties, including transporting players to the Grove Hotel, even though John Carver was concerned enough about Ormond that he told a player, IT, to be “careful”.

84.15. Neither John Murray nor John Carver took steps to inform Club officials as to the allegations against Ormond at the time that they first learned of them. I consider that this was a material failing on their part and address this further below.

9.7.85. Before Ormond left the Club, but after the Milk Cup in 1997, a number of incidents of abuse appear to have taken place:

85.1. One player, WM, who moved to the Club in summer 1997 awoke to find Ormond had climbed on top of him in his bed, over the covers. The player fought Ormond off.

85.2. One player, who signed to play for the Club between late June and early July 1997 awoke in a hotel room in the middle of the night after an induction event, to find Ormond standing over him masturbating.

9.7.86. There was, therefore, a period of several months (if not more) after John Carver and John Murray had become aware of the allegations of abuse during which Ormond was allowed access to young players. In addition to the actual complaints of assault and/or indecency which occurred during this period, other players gave evidence to the police that Ormond was at the Grove during the 1997/1998 season and continued to behave as inappropriately as he had done in the past.

9.7.87. In my view, these are material failings. Ormond’s continued presence at the Club was a great risk to the safety of the young players. John Carver has explained to me that he did not have any training as to what to do and there were no formal child protection reporting procedures in place: it was not until a few years later that the FA introduced safeguarding training. I am also aware that it was only in the summer of 1998 that the FA and the Premier League provided a template of Child Protection Policies for the Directors of the Academies and Centres of Excellence (see: FA Child Protection Policy and Programme: 1998). I consider that this left John Carver without clear official guidance as how to respond. However, the fact that there was no formal child protection training, and no formal process for reporting concerns or allegations of abuse does not mean that preventative measures to protect the young players with whom Ormond was likely to come into contact could not have been taken. A discreet conversation could have been had, for instance, with the staff at the Grove, or other surveillance measures could have been put in place. These did not require formal training or education, but even at the time would have been seen as matters of common-sense.

9.7.88. As set out above, John Carver has also told me that he needed to hear the information from Derek Bell to “have an understanding” of the situation. However, the disclosure by Paul Ferris ought to have been sufficient to raise reasonable concern, and should have done so. Clear advice had been given by the police officer to Paul Ferris

and this was passed on. The fact that the police officer did not then take any further action personally did not undermine his advice.

9.7.89. It was also a failing for John Murray and John Carver not to report the disclosure to more senior officials at the Club as soon as they learned of it. Although the disclosure did not relate to abuse that had taken place at the Club, it was information which indicated that a member of staff had sexually abused a child. This should have been sufficient to raise safeguarding concerns as to whether Ormond may have done the same at the Club (or may do so at a different club after his departure). I consider that it should have been reported up the internal hierarchy, so that the Club could consider formally informing the police or social services about the allegations against Ormond. I do not consider that maintaining the confidence of Derek Bell is a consideration which should have outweighed the need to report the risk Ormond posed; and, in any event, Derek Bell's account could have been anonymised.

9.7.90. I do not consider, however, that John Carver or John Murray, or anyone else at the Club, were aware of allegations of abuse by George Ormond prior to the Derek Bell disclosure.

9.7.91. I am unable to reach a conclusion, however, as to whether some time after Ormond's departure from the Club, John Carver raised with a senior official at the Club the allegations that Ormond had abused Derek Bell at Monty's. John Carver's account is disputed by FB, and there is not sufficient corroboration of John Carver's account.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY NEWCASTLE FC

9.7.92. In preparing its initial report to the Review, Newcastle had made contact with a number of individuals who were involved with the Club at the same time as Ormond and conducted a search of its paper and electronic records for relevant material. Following production of that initial report, the Review asked a number of follow up questions and for further matters to be considered and investigated by the Club. The Club carried out these requests and sought to make contact with and ask questions of further individuals. Following the Ormond trial, the Club was able to do further work on its investigation of what had taken place, and worked closely with the Review Team. The Review commends the Club for the way that it engaged with the Review. I am satisfied that the investigation conducted by the Club was adequate.

9.8 James Francis ‘Frank’ Roper

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INTRODUCTION

9.8.1. James Francis Roper (known as ‘Frank Roper’) was a convicted child sex offender. Court records show that in 1960 and 1961 Roper was convicted of indecent assault on a male under the age of 16. Roper was also convicted of indecent assault on a male under the age of 14 in 1965 and 1984.

May 23rd 1960 - Indecent assault on a male under 16 - Stockport Magistrates’ Court - Fined £18.

November 15th 1961 - Indecent assault on a male under 16 – Stockport Magistrates’ Court - Fined £30 and imprisoned for three months (default).

August 24th 1965 - Indecent assault on a male under 14 - Stockport Magistrates’ Court - Fined £50 and imprisoned for three months (default).

March 6th 1984 - Indecent assault on a male under 14 - Stockport Magistrates’ Court - Probation order.

9.8.2. The Review was unable to identify (and therefore meet with) the individuals against whom Roper had perpetrated the abuse that led to his convictions. Nor has the Review been able to ascertain whether the abuse was committed in a football-related context. The Review has seen no evidence to indicate that anyone at Blackpool FC was aware of Roper’s convictions at the time that he was associated with the Club.

9.8.3. Roper died in 2005. Since his death a number of other individuals have come forward to say that when they were children they were sexually abused by Roper in the football-related context. Most of these individuals came forward after the Andy Woodward disclosures in November 2016. The Review has met with and/or seen the written accounts of 27 of these further individuals. The Review has no reason to doubt these accounts of Roper’s abuse. The accounts are consistent with one another, and I have seen no evidence of active collusion or of one individual ‘piggy-backing’ his story on another. I have also not received any evidence that any of the individuals whose accounts we have seen or heard have invented these stories for financial gain or otherwise. It is not my role, however, to make findings about any individual’s abuse, and I acknowledge that some Roper survivors have not had their evidence tested in a courtroom.

9.8.4. As I set out below, Roper had close links to Blackpool FC from the late 1960s until the late 1980s (and possibly the early 1990s), although he was not formally employed by the Club. It is clear to me that Roper used these links to give himself credibility and authority that allowed him to manipulate young players and their parents, and ultimately to commit acts of sexual abuse. Roper also used the professional footballing success of Paul Stewart, whom he had scouted to the Club, as a tool to gain the trust of others whom he would go on to abuse. Given that Roper had sexually abused Paul Stewart, his use of Paul Stewart’s success in this way was even more despicable.

SUMMARY OF ROPER'S INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL

Overview

9.8.5. In the 1970s, Roper lived in Stockport. He was a freelance photographer. He also sold sports clothing: both on market stores and through the parents of the boys that played for football teams that he managed. Roper later opened a sports shop in Manchester, and one in Blackpool. Roper also had a warehouse in Manchester where he would store sports merchandise.

9.8.6. I received some evidence that in the early to mid-1970s, Roper was involved with Barry Bennell in running a team called Senrab. I consider this in more detail in the Connection Between Abusers section of this Report. The majority of the accounts I received related to Roper's involvement with a team known as "Nova" or "Nova Juniors": in this text, I shall refer to the team as Nova.

9.8.7. Roper was not the only manager at Nova. Rather he would manage one intake of players playing under the Nova banner. He would continue to manage that intake for a number of years until the players moved on to play more senior football. Roper would then "start again" with a fresh intake of younger players that would again play under the Nova banner.

9.8.8. Roper's Nova team was initially based in Greater Manchester, but in or around 1987 appears to have relocated to Blackpool and played its 'home' games at Squires Gate, Blackpool's training ground.

9.8.9. Roper arranged for Nova to travel and play games overseas. The Review received evidence that Roper would often not ask players/their parents to pay towards the costs of the overseas trips. On some occasions, Roper asked parents to sell a certain amount of sports clothing or other items (such as towels) to help fund a trip. There is also a suggestion that Roper would use the boys as a 'cover' to bring counterfeit garments into the country, with one former player explaining:

"Frank would often take lads from the under 13 and 14 teams for 3/5 week football tours in Los Angeles, San Diego and New Zealand Frank would take large 3 ft x 3 ft containers out with the team... On the way home he would fill these containers with the fake fashion sportswear he had bought. Frank would travel home with us on the flight. He would place large football trophies on top of the crates and we would go through customs with the containers and trophies without Frank. I think he did this so HM Customs would not stop and search a group of young lads on a football trip."

9.8.10. These overseas trips were not official Blackpool tours. However, on some occasions, the trips had associations with the Club and its personnel, which would have given an impression to some parents that the Club endorsed the trips.

9.8.11. In addition to managing Nova, Roper was, from the late 1960s, until the late 1980s (and possibly the early 1990s), a scout for Blackpool. As was commonly the practice in relation to scouts in that era, Roper was not formally employed by the Club. It is unclear what remuneration, if any, he was paid by the Club. However, Roper was regularly to be seen both at Squires Gate and Bloomfield Road (the Club's ground), and was given a level of access to and recognition by the Club that went significantly beyond that which an ordinary member of the public would enjoy. It was this 'link' with Blackpool that Roper was able to exploit to perpetrate his abuse.

Links with Blackpool FC

9.8.12. I asked the Club to take steps to investigate its connection with Roper and what, if anything, it knew about the abuse perpetrated by him. The Club provided me with a report setting out the steps it had taken to investigate and the conclusions reached.

9.8.13. In carrying out the investigation into the allegations of abuse perpetrated by Roper, the Club conducted extensive searches of its archives. No documentation relating to Roper was found. The Club also spoke to a number of individuals who played youth football for Roper, former members of staff (who worked for the Club at the time that Roper was associated with the Club), as well as former members of the Club's Board.

9.8.14. The Club concluded that "Roper was informally associated with the Club from 1971 until the late 1980s. There is no evidence that Roper was ever formally employed by the Club." This conclusion (albeit with some difference in dates) is supported by the evidence seen and heard by the Review showing links between Roper and the Club. Different witnesses have recalled slightly different information about Roper's relationship with the Club. Overall, however, the evidence presents a picture of a close association between Roper and the Club, although not a formal employment relationship.

9.8.15. The Review spoke with a former youth player/apprentice, KK, who stated that by the late 1960s, Roper was scouting for Blackpool and was in regular attendance at the evening training sessions of the Club's Associated Schoolboys. He said that training took place at Squires Gate and was coached by Blackpool staff. Roper would bring boys from Greater Manchester to these training sessions. He would take them back to their homes when training was over. At these training sessions, Roper would assist the coaching staff – sorting out kit, marking out areas for training exercises – but did not carry out any of the training himself. KK told the Review that, in the early 1970s, Roper went on tour to Germany with the Blackpool youth team (apprentices). He was introduced to the youth team as the official photographer.

9.8.16. The involvement of Roper in the Club's tour to Germany was confirmed by a former Club official, AN. AN recalled that the tour took place in 1971, and that Roper was the tour photographer but was not employed by the Club. AN provided the Club with a number of photographs taken by Roper during the trip.

9.8.17. AN also stated that while Roper would recommend players to Blackpool, Nova was not a feeder team for the Club. AN recalled that Roper had an involvement with or an association with the Club. AN specifically recalled that Roper had access to the Club's directors' lounge on match days.

9.8.18. The Review received accounts from a number of individuals who played for Nova in the 1970s and 80s. Roper took them to Blackpool's training ground where they attended coaching sessions. He also took them to the Club's first team games where they would sit in an executive box, and he arranged for them to meet with Blackpool first team players, including in the players' lounge after first team games. A number of these individuals have said that they were abused by Roper.

9.8.19. The Review also heard that Associated Schoolboys who did not live in the Blackpool area would be accommodated by the Club in a guesthouse in the school holidays. Roper stayed in the same guesthouse. It was said that the Club's Youth Team Coach, Jack Chapman, regularly visited the guesthouse to meet with Roper and spent time with him there.

9.8.20. OI, a former member of the Club's coaching staff employed during the 1980s, said that Roper brought a number of players to the Club, Roper was always involved with the Club, and would help Jack Chapman and assist him with his jobs. OI stated that Roper would often be around the ground and the training pitches as his shop was very local. OI also said that Roper supplied the youth team with kit and equipment that Roper paid for himself: leading to the observation that the youth team was actually better supplied than the first team. OI stated that he was aware that Roper would organise overseas trips, but commented that these were not on behalf of, or funded by, the Club. OI recalled Roper giving gifts (football kits) to youth players and taking them out (with members of the Club's youth team staff) for meals and drinks. He stated that he did not consider this to be suspicious at the time as Roper was often around the Club and was very keen on football.

9.8.21. The Review spoke with UL, an apprentice at the Club in the mid-1980s, who said that:

“[He] always thought [Roper] was a staff member of the Club. Jack Chapman was the coach but Roper was always there. He would always attend training and loiter on the touchlines...Jack Chapman was in charge but Roper was always around helping. Roper had the run of the club and was integral to the set up.”

UL was sexually abused by Roper, including at Blackpool's training ground. UL's experience shows that Roper's 'use' of Blackpool was not limited to using it to give himself a 'credibility', that he would not otherwise have, but also extended to using the Club as a route through which he would meet boys that he would ultimately go on to abuse.

9.8.22. Sam Ellis, the Club's Manager from 1982-1989, stated that Roper ran Nova which was a feeder team for Blackpool. Sam Ellis explained that: “We got kids from other parts but that was the one that was connected to the football club”. Sam Ellis

went on to say that “I don’t know if [Roper] got paid. I don’t know if he got expenses. I don’t know what happened on that side of it. I haven’t got a clue”. Sam Ellis said that Roper was overseen by Jack Chapman. When asked whether Roper was regularly at the Club, Sam Ellis confirmed that he was and said “he had the run of the place and that he could pop in anywhere. Everybody knew him and everybody welcomed him”. Sam Ellis said he had no knowledge of Roper taking players out to restaurants but was clear that he had never been out for dinner with Roper.

9.8.23. Sam Ellis recalled that there were at least two trips to New Zealand (believed to be 1987 and 1988): both of which his son went on. The Club did not contribute towards the costs of the trips, rather Roper funded them himself. The New Zealand trips were not just for Nova players (Sam Ellis’ own son was not playing for Nova at that time). Sam Ellis said that the New Zealand tour was not a Blackpool youth team tour but he could understand that parents might have believed that there was a connection with the Club. Sam Ellis recalls attending a meeting relating to the New Zealand trip. This was held at the Tangerine Club: a social club owned by Blackpool and located near the Club’s ground. Sam Ellis said that he attended both in his capacity as the Club’s manager and in his capacity as a parent. Sam Ellis repeated that the tours were not arranged by Club and the Directors would have had no interest in them. Sam Ellis did not recall exactly when Roper’s association with the Club came to an end, but was confident it had ended by March 1989.

9.8.24. The tour to New Zealand was considered by the High Court in the recent civil trial of *DSN* (who is referred to in this Report as *AB*). At paragraph 170 of the Court’s judgment, the trial judge (Mr Justice Griffiths), stated he was satisfied that:

“[H]ad Ellis not endorsed the trip, the parents would not have allowed their boys to go to the other side of the world with Roper, a man they did not know, accompanied by no other adult. They were concerned, but they were reassured and persuaded by the connection with Blackpool FC. It was not an official trip, but it had the backing of the Blackpool FC manager and, had it not been for that, Roper would not have persuaded the parents to entrust the boys to his care”.¹²

9.8.25. In his judgment, Mr Justice Griffiths recorded Sam Ellis as having told him:

“The youth system was dependant on Roper without a doubt...Frank preferred to bring them to be a big fish in a small pool. As far as I was concerned he brought all the best players to Blackpool and that’s why he was treated as he was. He was treated as a big fish.”

9.8.26. CU, a former member of the Club’s coaching staff employed during the 1980s, stated that Roper referred players from Nova (which CU said was based in Stockport) to Blackpool FC and was involved in getting those players to and from training and games at the Club. CU said that Roper was not involved in coaching the boys. CU stated that he did not consider Roper to have been a part of the Club, and that he only knew Roper from Saturdays. He could not recall Roper being at Tuesday and Thursday training sessions, although Roper could have been there to drop players off. CU stated that the overseas trips organised by Roper were nothing to do with the Blackpool youth set up.

12. I note that the Club is seeking to appeal against decision of the High Court.

9.8.27. QM, a former Club official employed by the Club in the 1980s, recalled that Jack Chapman left the Club for a short period in the mid-1980s to run Roper's sports shop in Blackpool: Nova Sports. QM stated that there was no relationship or contract between the Club and Nova Sports. QM believed it to be likely that Roper would have referred players to other clubs and does not believe there was any bias towards the Club. QM stated that, as far as he was aware, Nova was only ever based in Manchester. QM recalled that in the 1980s, the Club's Board was asked to approve a small donation (in the region of £500) for an overseas trip being arranged by Roper, and did so. QM acknowledged that he only met Roper once or twice.

9.8.28. A match day programme at the end of the 1986-87 season advertised Roper's sports clothing shop "Nova Sports and Leisure" in Blackpool, and said "Call and see JACK CHAPMAN (Formerly Youth Manager with Blackpool F.C.)". A match day programme in the following season was identically worded save that it dropped the qualification "Formerly", and said "Call and see JACK CHAPMAN (Youth Manager with Blackpool F.C.)".

9.8.29. RZ, a former Nova Juniors player, told the Review that Roper invited him to join a 1987 trip to New Zealand. He recalled that the trip was funded by Roper and the players' families. On tour, the players did not play in Blackpool kits but Roper did bring along Club apprentices to help look after the younger kids. After the 1987 New Zealand trip, he recalls that Nova played its home games at Squires Gate, but did not play in the Club's kit. RZ stated that it was known that if you played well for Nova then you would get signed by Blackpool because of links Roper had with Jack Chapman. RZ stated that he recalls watching games at Bloomfield Road with Roper: they would sit in the directors' box.

9.8.30. The Review also met with AB, an individual who did not play for Nova, but was part of Blackpool's Centre of Excellence. AB recalls that Roper was often around the Club, and would take him and other boys associated with the Club out for dinner. Blackpool staff also attended these dinners: all of which would be paid for by Roper.

9.8.31. In 1987, while AB was part of Blackpool's Centre of Excellence, Roper approached his parents and asked them if AB wanted to join a month long trip to New Zealand. AB recalled that a meeting about the New Zealand trip was held at the Tangerine Club. AB recalls that Roper, Sam Ellis (the Blackpool manager) and Jack Chapman were all in attendance. AB stated that at that meeting parents were "given assurances about the trip". As far as he understood the situation, Roper paid for the tour. AB had understood that the tour was not an official Blackpool tour, but that "the club were backing the trip". AB also said that there were four Blackpool youth team players on the trip. They were not part of the touring team but rather "were just on the tour". AB was sexually abused by Roper while on this New Zealand trip.

9.8.32. AB's experience again shows Roper using the Club as a route through which to meet boys that he would go on to abuse.

9.8.33. The Review spoke with JP, whose son played for Nova and attended overseas trips with Roper. JP told the Review that in 1987 he was approached by Roper while his son was playing a youth team game. Standing behind Roper were Blackpool staff: Jack Chapman and CU. JP recounted Roper’s approach as follows:

“[Roper] never said he was from Blackpool Football Club. He ... introduced himself and he said, ‘And you know [CU] and Jack Chapman from Blackpool Football Club?’ So he used them as an intro.”

9.8.34. Roper told JP that “he was taking a select team to New Zealand in the summer at the end of that season... and wanted to take four boys...” At the later meeting with parents at the Tangerine Club, JP learned that there would be no cost to the boys for attending the tour, with the estimated £26,000 cost to be met by Roper. JP then said that he spoke with an ex-Blackpool professional footballer about Roper’s approach. The ex-professional said he would call Sam Ellis to discuss the trip. JP said that the ex-professional called him back to say “it’s kosher. Sam Ellis’ son is going on the trip too. They know all about it, Blackpool Football Club.” JP told the Review that there were meetings relating to the New Zealand trip held at the Tangerine Club. He said that various Blackpool apprentices were present, as well as Sam Ellis.

9.8.35. JP said that after the 1987 trip (which ended up being both to New Zealand and Thailand), “Nova Juniors were formed’. JP said that Nova “didn’t play in a league, they just played prearranged games. Some of the games were arranged direct by Blackpool.” And that Nova:

“[U]sed the [Blackpool FC] training facility, they used the [Blackpool FC] minibus, they used the club Tangerine ... They also had an area down in the corner of Bloomfield Road, little – probably an area of about 30 or 40 seats, which he – his boys, his team, you know, Nova Juniors, and invited guests like the parents or whoever, to go sit in and watch the game.”

9.8.36. From the above information, it is clear to me that Roper had substantial links to the Club, and that he used those links to give himself a credibility and authority that he would otherwise not have had. The credibility that this association lent Roper allowed him to manipulate parents and young players and ultimately facilitated his acts of abuse.

9.8.37. At the civil trial, Mr Justice Griffiths concluded that the relationship between Roper and the Club was one capable of giving rise to “vicarious liability”: that is, the Club could be legally liable for Roper’s assaults. The Judge observed at paragraph 159-161 of his judgment that:

“Roper was an unpaid volunteer, but the Club’s dire financial state meant that almost all the non-playing staff were in the same position, Ellis (the manager) and Chapman (the youth manager) being the exceptions. Chapman could not and did not do his job alone. He depended on people like Roper and [CU] to help him, and in doing what he did, Roper was very much doing the work of the Club. There was no more important task for the Club than spotting and capturing young players and bringing them into a position when they

were willing to sign up for a lower division side with limited resources. This is the task that Roper did better than anyone else, and everyone knew that he was doing it. He was a Blackpool scout, and his Nova Juniors side was a Blackpool feeder team. Its sole purpose was to take boys, so far as possible, into a closed environment in which Blackpool had a better chance than any other club of securing their signatures when they were old enough to sign (if not before). There was evidence that some boys did not take the bait.... Roper was very effective, and both the number and the quality of the young players he brought to Blackpool was exceptionally high.

Blackpool gave Roper credibility by lavishing tickets and access on him and his protégés. These were talented boys and there were other clubs. Roper was not a footballer. The only currency he had to offer was his connection with Blackpool FC, and Blackpool FC kept him supplied with everything that it could, short of money, to confirm that connection and provide that currency to Roper for its own benefit. Roper's activity was not only on behalf of Blackpool, it was exclusively on Blackpool's behalf, and the fact that he was not paid made it all the more striking. Roper's activity was part of Blackpool's business activity. Blackpool, by giving Roper the 'aura' (as it was put in evidence) he had there, and his own room, and a special place in the stand, and free tickets, and access to the private areas, and association with the older players including first team players, and what was described as 'the run of the place', as well as by the track record it gave Roper of taking on his boys time after time, created the trust in Roper that allowed him to abuse the boys. None of the boys, and none of the parents of the boys, that I heard about, knew anything at all about Roper except that he was a Blackpool scout who ran a Blackpool feeder team at Nova Juniors from which a professional career at Blackpool might, if Roper rated them, develop. It was on that basis that the boys were placed in his power, and that is how he was able to abuse them.... The football and the abuse were symbiotic, and all the football was directed to recruitment for Blackpool FC.

[Roper] depended on Blackpool FC, even though he was not employed by them under a contract. He could not do what he did without them. They gave him the tools to do his work for them, the credibility to make promises about them, the perks to buy allegiance to them and the association to build loyalty to them.... He was as dependent on Blackpool's favour and on his integration into Blackpool FC as an employee would have been: he was working for them, and they could have fired him at any time. Truly, the relationship between Roper and Blackpool FC was akin to that between employers and employees between whom there is vicarious liability. Roper was, in reality, part of Blackpool FC's workforce in the youth set up. He was at least as important as Chapman in that respect. Chapman coached the youth but, without Roper, and without the likes of [Paul] Stewart and [David] Bardsley and the other talented boys Roper found and brought in, Chapman would not have had the youth he was coaching. Even the money men on the board, who did not involve themselves in the footballing side, knew that Roper's recruitment

of Stewart and Bardsley had saved the Club. Conversely, Nova Juniors was not an independent club. It was a Blackpool feeder club. That is how it was promoted, that is how it was known, that is how it operated, and that is how it maintained its reputation and thrived.”

9.8.38. As stated above, the Club is seeking to appeal the judgment of Mr Justice Griffiths, and as part of that appeal the Club seeks to challenge the observations made by Mr Justice Griffiths set out in these paragraphs.

THE ABUSE COMMITTED BY ROPER

Overview

9.8.39. From the 27 accounts of abuse by Roper that the Review has received, I can say that the abuse took place from 1965, to 1990/91. That is not to say that there were no other instances of abuse outside of that date range (indeed, Roper was convicted of child sex offences in 1960 and 1961) or, indeed, no other instances of abuse within that date range.

9.8.40. Roper used football to gain access to the boys that he would go on to abuse. Some were approached to play for his Nova team, others were asked to join overseas trips (which in many cases led to those boys later playing for Nova), others were invited by Roper to trials at Blackpool, and others were already involved with Blackpool and met Roper at the Club. Roper’s ‘credentials’, which he used to gain the trust of those he would abuse, were his links to Blackpool and, the success of Paul Stewart which Roper appears to have sought to claim credit for.

9.8.41. From the accounts received by the Review, the abuse took place:

- 41.1. at Roper’s house;
- 41.2. at the flat above Roper’s sports shop;
- 41.3. in Roper’s car;
- 41.4. at Blackpool’s training ground;
- 41.5. in guest houses in Blackpool (including one where Blackpool would accommodate Associated Schoolboys/youth players);
- 41.6. at houses where Roper was staying over;
- 41.7. during visits to, or when staying over at, a young player’s house (when the player’s parents were in another room);
- 41.8. in amusement arcades;
- 41.9. on overseas trips; and
- 41.10. in the stands at football matches.

9.8.42. The abuse ranged from sexual touching and masturbation through to rape (both oral and anal).

9.8.43. It was explained to the Review that Roper:

- 43.1. gave gifts (primarily sporting goods) to the boys he was associated

with, gave the boys relatively significant sums of money (often for use at the Blackpool amusement arcades), paid for dinners for the boys and Blackpool members of staff, and would generally “flash around” money;

43.2. ingratiated himself with parents including by buying them drinks, visiting their houses (sometimes with takeaway meals he had purchased for them or with other gifts), and by giving them employment;

43.3. suggested that boys needed extra training (after which Roper would commit acts of sexual abuse);

43.4. intimidated boys with aggressive behaviour, threats (including in relation to family members) and physical violence;

43.5. boasted that he could make the boys’ dreams of playing professional football a reality;

43.6. allowed boys to “drive” his car by sitting on his knee (during which Roper would then inappropriately touch the boys);

43.7. engaged in inappropriate discussion with the boys about sexual development and activities;

43.8. encouraged groups of boys (often during car journeys) to expose themselves or masturbate;

43.9. inflicted sexual abuse on one boy while another boy was in the same bed and would sometimes attempt to press boys into sexual activity by saying things such as “[the other boy] lets me do this” or “[the other boy] likes this”; and

43.10. got one boy to engage in sexual activity with another while Roper was in the same bed.

9.8.44. It was reported to me that the boys would talk about Roper between themselves, calling him a “paedo” and commenting that they did not want to be the last one to be dropped off, or to have to be the one to have to share a room with Roper on tour. Some boys would also tease other boys (calling them “Chummer”: a slang term for a gay male) if they were thought to have spent time alone with Roper or had been given gifts by him. However, the boys did not discuss the actual abuse with one another.

Paul Stewart

9.8.45. In November 2016, Paul Stewart was interviewed by the *Daily Mirror*³ and gave the following account of the abuse he had suffered at the hands of Roper:

45.1. Roper befriended his parents and promised to “help make him a star”.

45.2. When Paul Stewart was 11 (1975), Roper asked him if he wanted to drive a car. Paul Stewart explained:

“I sat with a leg on one side by the steering wheel... he started to touch me. It frightened me to death, did not know what to do, I tried to tell my parents not to let him in, but I was only 11. From then, it progressed to sexually abusing me. He said he would kill my mother, my father, my two brothers if I breathed a word about it. And at 11 years old, you believe that”.

45.3. Roper told Paul Stewart’s parents that their son needed to work on

a certain aspect of the game, such as control or passing, or used trips to go bowling, as an excuse to take him out and abuse him.

45.4. Paul Stewart's brothers were also taken on trips away by Roper. Paul Stewart stated that Roper "abused me there [on these trips] and told me he would kill them if I told anybody".

45.5. As the abuse escalated, Paul Stewart explained that "one lad in the team, he made him and I perform sexual acts on him... Another lad who was four years older than me told me he was abused. He told me that later when we met as adults".

45.6. Paul Stewart also explained that: "I was always under threat, if I was not playing well, he would threaten me with violence as well as sexual abuse. He was a monster".

45.7. And that: "The mental scars led me into other problems with drink and drugs. I know now it was a grooming process. The level of abuse got worse and worse".

45.8. The sexual abuse went on for four years.

9.8.46. I had read Paul Stewart's interview with the *Daily Mirror* prior to meeting with him and did not ask him to repeat what he had already said there. He also told me that:

"I played for a Sunday League team, called Nova Juniors. And my abuser was the coach.

...

[I played] from 11 to under 15 years of age, which was how I ended up joining Blackpool Football Club. I came there with the coach, who was - I would use the word, 'associated', but if you will, in those days, a scout, or whatever, so he brought me through to Blackpool on a number of occasions, to play against teams from Blackpool Football Club, selected by the club.

[The abuse happened] in his car, at... [a] park in Manchester, at Manchester University playing fields car parks, at his home in Cheadle Stockport, away on tours - because he used to make sure that I would be in the same room as him. So, you know, anywhere and everywhere, really. He manufactured that I would be alone with him on every occasion, and if that meant that we were out with the team, then I would be dropped off last, for obvious reasons. It also happened in the house, because he was well in with the family, and was allowed to sleep in my bedroom. So, you know, in the main, four or five places, plus on trips abroad.

....

He would bring round gifts [to my family home], in terms of electrical, sportswear, bring round takeaway meals to the house, stay at the house.

...

He would beat me if he thought that I wasn't obeying, or doing what he wished. So, I would be physically abused, as well as sexually abused, depending on his mood, and how he perceived I was acting.

...

Frank Roper only took us to Blackpool FC as he was associated with the club.

...

13. Daily Mirror, November 27th 2016, "Paul Stewart: I was sexually abused by coach who threatened to kill my family if I told anyone" <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/paul-stewart-sexually-abused-coach-9313094> (accessed 12 November 2020)

For all the time I was with him, which is four - just over four years - I thought it was just me.

...

I have no doubt that [the abuse affected my career]... because I ended up addicted to Class A drugs, and drink was an issue, so in terms of - you know, from that alone, it had a major impact, at certain points in my career... My take on this is that, it never, ever goes away. It's something that you have to manage. Now unfortunately, through my life, I haven't managed it well."

DISCLOSURES AND OTHER CONCERNS ABOUT ROPER

9.8.47. It was reported to me that other adults allowed Roper to share a bed with young boys. One former player reported that:

"On one particular Saturday night... I was staying [at] this lad's house... as we had a match on the Sunday morning...when we were due to go to bed we slept in the living room. The lad slept on the settee and just next to the settee a 'put you up' had had been made out of settee cushions. I slept in this bed with Frank Roper who was also staying over. I do not recall why he was staying over the night but I remember that he was friendly with the lad's parents..."

This player told his father that Roper had "tried to touch me and that I had bent his fingers back to stop him." His father moved him to a different team. This was in 1978 or 1979.

9.8.48. It was also reported to me that Roper regularly stayed at (or, on some accounts, "lived at") the parental home of one of the boys who played for his team, WQ, and shared a bed with WQ. I have tried to make contact with WQ, but this has not been possible. Given the number of people that have described this relationship, I think that it is likely to have occurred.

9.8.49. In 1983, a 13 year old boy who played for Nova, AE, told his sister that Roper had sexually abused another boy. She informed their parents of this. The boy's father went to Roper's house and threatened him. The boy never played for Roper's team after that. It has not been possible to confirm this with AE's father as AE did not want him to be involved with the Review. The account was corroborated by another parent (NF) who recalls the incident.

9.8.50. NF told the Review that in 1984, parents at the sidelines of a football game in Manchester discussed the incident of a boy's parent threatening Roper. They also shared with one another that Roper may have had a criminal record relating to sexual abuse of children. NF had not previously had any concerns about Roper, but when he got home he asked his son whether Roper had ever sexually abused him. His son AF confirmed that he had: during an overseas trip a few months earlier.

9.8.51. On the afternoon of this disclosure, Roper came to AF's house for a pre-arranged dinner, accompanied by another young boy. NF and his wife took the decision not to confront Roper and not to tell anyone (including the police) about the abuse. When asked about this decision, NF told the Review that the decision was based on the fear of "stigma" and whether his son would be believed. When asked whether it was any part of his thinking that his son wanted to be a football player and this was his chance, NF said, "You've hit the nail on the head, yeah...Certainly, yes. 100 per cent yes." NF and his wife later allowed their son to go on a further overseas tour with Roper. NF explained that their son was now older and could "look after himself" should Roper try anything further. This whole incident evidences the power that Roper had over young boys and their families. As the Review has seen with other abusers, the most prolific abusers also groom the families of their victims.

9.8.52. The discussion among parents in 1984 about Roper's potential criminal record coincided with Roper's conviction by the Stockport Magistrates Court in March 1984. The Review has examined local newspapers from this time, and from the time of Roper's earlier convictions, and has found no record of any of Roper's convictions being reported even though information about local criminal proceedings was often reported in the local press. It is possible that there was a reporting somewhere of his convictions as one individual informed the Review that he "recall[ed] reading a newspaper article in either the late 1960's or early 1970's in which it mentioned that Roper had been convicted of offences against children". However, the Review also heard from one witness that he had been told that, on one occasion at least, Roper paid a sum of money to a reporter to ensure that his court appearance was not publicised. This could not be verified.

9.8.53. The Review has received no evidence to suggest that Blackpool was aware of Roper's convictions. At that time, football clubs did not routinely obtain criminal record checks of their direct staff, let alone of those whose relationship with the clubs was more distant, such as scouts. There was no formal process by which checks could have been made at this point in time – the Criminal Records Bureau was not set up until the early 2000s – although informal requests to local constabularies were sometimes made by clubs.

BLACKPOOL'S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Club's Report

9.8.54. The Club reported to me that:

"The Club's investigations did not reveal any evidence that suggested the Club was ever aware of any alleged child sex abuse either at the time or subsequently. The Club has not found any record of receiving any complaints of sexual abuse by Roper, or indeed in respect of anyone else. The Club was not aware of any such allegations made in the press prior to November 2016."

9.8.55. I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that anyone from Blackpool saw any act of abuse.

9.8.56. I have received evidence, however, that during Roper's association with Blackpool, information relating to Roper's abuse was brought to the attention of Jack Chapman.

Individual QN's Alleged Disclosure to Jack Chapman (1984/85)

9.8.57. The Review heard from a former Nova player, QN, who described, in some detail, the serious abuse that had been committed by Roper. He also informed the Review that in 1984/1985, when he was an apprentice at Blackpool FC, he reported to Jack Chapman that Roper had masturbated him and that Roper "does it with the other boys". He told Jack Chapman that he did not want to be driven home by Roper anymore: "I can't – I'm not going with Roper anymore. He touched me. He touched me. He's a pervert. He's a sick." Jack Chapman's reaction was described as being "caring and supportive". Jack Chapman told QN: "Leave it with me. I'll have a word with him. We'll get it sorted out."

9.8.58. QN told the Review that some days later Jack Chapman told him: "I spoke to Frank. He's very, very sorry and it'll never happen again." QN did not suffer any abuse from Roper after he had spoken to Jack Chapman about it.

9.8.59. Given that Jack Chapman died several years ago (meaning I could not put this allegation to him) and there is no evidence to corroborate QN's account, I am unable to make a positive finding in relation to this issue.

Parent NF's Alleged Disclosure to Jack Chapman (1986-1989)

9.8.60. Parent NF (referred to above) told me that at some time between 1986 and 1989, another parent EK had said to him: "Do you know about Frank... [I've been told] all about Frank", to which NF said "yes". EK told NF that he had spoken to Jack Chapman about Roper's abuse, and asked NF to speak with Jack Chapman to confirm it.

9.8.61. NF told me that he spoke to Jack Chapman on the telephone and confirmed that he was aware of Roper's abuse. NF said:

"So, I spoke to Jack Chapman, and he says to me, 'How do you know?' Now, then, what do you say to him? So, I says, 'Well, I do know'; so, he says, 'Well, what you are letting your fucking son play football for him for?' I wasn't clever enough or had the thing to say to him; I just said, 'Well, he wanted to be a footballer'.

But he kept coming back with that, and, really, the guy was right [and I didn't want to tell him that my son had actually told me that he had been abused]... so, I [just] said, 'I know', and he said, 'I think you're a fucking liar'; I said, 'I'm not a liar, I'm telling you'. With that, that's when the conversation ended."

9.8.62. I have not been able to corroborate NF’s account with EK as it has not been possible to locate him. I have also not been able to put NF’s account to Jack Chapman, as he is deceased. In the circumstances, while there is some corroboration of NF’s account, as his son AF recalls being told by his father that the conversation had happened, I am unable make a positive finding that this conversation did take place.

9.8.63. If, however, Jack Chapman was informed of the allegations of abuse against Roper (whether from NF, QN or EK), there is no evidence that he conveyed any information about Roper to others at the Club, or took any steps to reduce Roper’s opportunity to have access to young players associated with Blackpool.

QN’s Alleged Disclosure to OI

9.8.64. QN, a Nova player, also told the Review that one day he was opening up the lock on the gate to Squires Gate, while Roper was waiting to get into the training ground. QN stated that he became upset and OI, a former member of the Club’s coaching staff, asked “What’s up with you?” to which QN replied: “No, I’m fine, I’m fine. But it’s him there. He’s just a pervert.” QN said that OI then asked “What do you mean? What do you mean?” to which he replied “He’s just a pervert. Just a pervert. I hate him. He’s a fucking perv”. QN said of OI’s response “I can’t remember what he said. I think he just laughed it off I think”.

9.8.65. OI was asked whether he had any recollection of anyone telling him that Roper was a “pervert”. OI said he has no recollection of this. I consider that OI would have no real reason to recall the conversation. On QN’s own account, he did not make an allegation of abuse to OI, nor did he give any other level of detail that might be likely to stick in someone’s mind.

9.8.66. There is no corroborative evidence to support QN’s account. In the circumstances, I am unable to reach a conclusion on this issue. If it did occur, there is no evidence that OI conveyed the remarks made by QN to anyone else at the Club.

Other General Allegations

9.8.67. I am satisfied that Club staff were aware that Roper gave gifts and money to some of the young players. Club staff were also aware that Roper would take young players on trips abroad that he would fund.

9.8.68. There is plenty of evidence that there existed some rumour, “chatter” and innuendo about Roper’s sexual interest in young players (both among young players and some parents). I have not seen or heard any evidence suggesting that this rumour or chatter or innuendo reached the ears of Club staff. I note that Sam Ellis was reported in the press as having stated that: “The only time rumours started was when Frank disappeared (a few years later). I heard rumours. We still had no complaints.” The Review spoke with Sam Ellis and asked him about this press report. He said that the rumours he heard after Roper disappeared from the Club related to Roper’s finances and business dealings. He did not hear any allegation or rumours about Roper’s sexual

interest in children until Paul Stewart made his public disclosure. Sam Ellis stated that, had he heard such rumours, he would not have allowed his son to go on the tour to New Zealand and would have taken steps to remove Roper from the Club.

Conclusion as to What Blackpool Knew About Roper's Abuse and What Should Have Been Done

9.8.69. Based on the above, I conclude that:

69.1. The Club was aware that Roper gave gifts and money to some of the boys, and would take young players on trips abroad that Roper funded.

69.2. It is possible that allegations of abuse were made to Jack Chapman, but this could not be verified. I am unable to conclude, therefore, that Roper's abuse was brought to his attention.

69.3. If, however, Jack Chapman was aware of allegations of abuse by Roper, there is no evidence that he acted on these allegations (such as by investigating further, or by monitoring Roper's activities), or that he forwarded this information to others at the Club. There is no evidence that any of the Club's Board of Directors were aware of this information.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY BLACKPOOL

9.8.70. Following an initial report to the Review by Blackpool, the Review asked various follow up questions, and asked for further matters to be considered and investigated by the Club. The Club sought to obtain the further information that had been asked, and provided further responses. The Club engaged constructively with the Review, both in writing and in a face-to-face meeting.

9.8.71. As part of the review, the Club spoke to 16 people. This included former members of staff (coaching and administrative), as well as former youth players.

9.8.72. I am satisfied that, in the context of the material that was available to the Review from other sources (which the Review was able to use to direct some of the follow up questions it asked of the Club), the investigation conducted by the Club was adequate.

9.9 Michael Sean ‘Kit’ Carson

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INTRODUCTION

9.9.1. Michael Sean Carson (known as “Kit Carson”) was involved in youth football for more than 30 years. In the professional game, Carson worked with the youth teams at Norwich City FC, Peterborough United FC and Cambridge United FC.

9.9.2. On January 7th 2019, Carson was due to stand trial at Cambridge Crown Court. He faced allegations of child sexual abuse against boys aged between 11 and 15 years old, taking place between 1978 and 2009. Carson died in a car crash on the first day of the trial. The Coroner concluded that Carson’s death was by suicide.

9.9.3. I have spoken to a number of survivors directly about their experiences with Carson. I have also read the statements of those who had intended to give evidence at his trial, as well as some other survivors who complained about his conduct. I have no reason to doubt these accounts. A number of the survivors described very similar conduct by Carson. There is no evidence to suggest that these survivors have colluded with one another to give their accounts, or that they have attempted to piggy-back on one another’s accounts. It is not my role, however, to make findings about any individual’s abuse, and I acknowledge that the allegations have not been tested in a courtroom.

9.9.4. Specific allegations against Carson first came to light in early 2007. Allegations were initially made to staff at a professional club in London which had no connection to Carson: a boy who had trained with Carson at Cambridge United told staff at the London club that he had been abused by Carson. The allegations were forwarded to the police and to the FA.

9.9.5. The boy alleged that, on a youth football trip to Denmark, Carson made the boys shower naked while he was in the changing rooms; made the boys stand in a line and massage themselves and each other; made the boys dive naked in snow outside in order to “show their physique and muscular development”; and made “injured” players sleep upstairs with him in the tour accommodation. None of the boys were allowed any contact with their parents during these tournaments.

9.9.6. The allegations were investigated by the police, but no further action was taken against Carson at the time.

9.9.7. On February 7th 2007, following the referral of the allegations to the FA, Carson was suspended on an interim basis from all football activity involving children under 18. Carson was subsequently referred to the NSPCC to have his suitability to continue working with children assessed. In May 2008, on the advice of the NSPCC, the FA determined that Carson’s suspension from youth football should remain in place until he had completed a series of FA mentoring sessions. Carson was also required to give a written undertaking that he would not take charge of football tours abroad; that if he attended such tours, he would not be responsible for the supervision of players during or after games or tournaments; that he would not have one-to-one contact with children under the age of 16 in any situation; and he would operate in an administra-

tive (non-coaching) role only at Histon FC (whose Academy he had run since 2006). Carson completed his mentoring sessions in August 2008, and signed a Supervision Agreement incorporating the undertakings on October 10th 2008.

9.9.8. In 2013, allegations against Carson were made directly to Peterborough United by an individual who had attended a youth training football scheme at the Club in 1994. These were investigated by the police, but no further action was taken.

9.9.9. Following the disclosures of abuse made by Andy Woodward and other former youth players in November 2016, allegations started to be made about Carson. These allegations were investigated by the police and, in 2018, Carson was charged with 13 counts of inappropriate sexual behaviour with children under the age of 16.

9.9.10. In his Defence Statement for the criminal trial, Carson denied any sexual motivations and said his actions related merely to the physical assessment and training of those under his supervision. Carson admitted to examining children naked, including in hotel rooms, in order to “assess their physical development”. This included examining their “pubic hair growth”, “abdominals” and “musculature” as well as physically assessing them for injury (although he denied “massaging” per se). Carson said that in doing this, he was “following the teachings” of the growth and maturation experts James Tanner and Robert Malina “in the development of adolescents”.

SUMMARY OF CARSON’S INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL

Carson’s Links with Norwich City FC

9.9.11. In Norwich City FC’s report to me, the Club stated that Carson was employed by the Club from 1983 until he resigned in May 1993 to take up a post with Peterborough United. The Club told me that during his tenure, Carson served as a Youth Coach, a Youth Manager and a Junior Football Promotions Manager.

9.9.12. The Club reported that during his time there, Carson formed a friendship with a Finnish youth team and their leader, and started taking boys to Finland to play in the Kokkola Cup. Finnish boys would also come over to England to play in the Canary Cup, a tournament organised by Carson.

9.9.13. Carson is also reported to have run a separate youth football club called Canary Rangers FC while he was at Norwich. Canary Rangers was not directly affiliated to Norwich but a number of players advanced from this club into Norwich’s youth development scheme.

9.9.14. The circumstances surrounding Carson’s departure from Norwich in 1993 are not entirely clear. The Club has said that Carson simply resigned to take up a post at Peterborough United. When Norfolk Constabulary spoke to some ex-Club members in

2007 they said Carson left after some money had gone missing from the Club in connection with the Canary Cup. Carson denied this account when he gave an interview to the police in June 2007. Carson was clear that he left Norwich on very good terms and strenuously denied the allegation that any money had gone missing in connection with the Canary Cup or that he had had anything to do with this.

9.9.15. Carson told the police that the youth department at the Club was being re-organised by the Club's Youth Development Officer, with whom he did not see eye-to-eye. Carson also told the FA that the youth programme at the Club operated in a five-year cycle and, after two programmes, he felt it was time for a new challenge.

9.9.16. When Cambridgeshire Constabulary spoke to a Director of Youth Development at another club, he told them that Carson had been kicked out of Norwich because of his "activity with kids". When interviewed by the Review, this individual said that this was just "rumour, very strong rumours". These rumours were also heard by the father of the boy who disclosed abuse in 2007 to a London club. When interviewed by the police, the father said that he had been told that Carson had been kicked out of Norwich City for "messing around with kids". These rumours have not been verified: the Club denied that this was the reason why Carson left, and I have been provided with no other evidence to support this.

Carson's Links with Peterborough United FC

9.9.17. Carson became the Director of Peterborough United FC's youth football activities in 1993, and he remained with the Club until 2001. During his time at Peterborough, Carson also ran another football company for one year (in 1998) called "SOCCER 2000", which offered residential football camps.

9.9.18. During his time at the Club, Carson took young players on numerous foreign trips. Foreign trips featured in the Club's recruitment strategy, which stated that: "Every player will go to Europe at least twice a year...This can happen because of the wide network of European contacts built up by Kit Carson".

9.9.19. In the Club's application to the FA for Academy status, Carson highlighted the international trips as follows:

"P.U.F.C. have in the past 5 years regularly sent their squads abroad to widen their experiences both educationally, socially and technically. I do not think another club in England have exposed their young players to such a wide international education.

Every player will go to Europe at least twice a year. We have a training base in Denmark that we use regularly (in 5 years we have visited it 40 times with squads aged U 10 to youth level).

This can happen because of the wide network of European contacts built up by Kit Carson. Every tour has a specific aim in developing the young player.

One example is that every year our U.13 and U.14 squads go to a training camp with the Danish U.13 and U.14 squads of Brøndby.

The players live together, train together and hold meetings and discussions

about their respective footballing lives and experiences.”

Some of the abuse carried out by Carson was on boys who went on these international trips.

9.9.20. Carson worked with Bob Higgins at Peterborough United for more than twenty months. Carson was instrumental in hiring Higgins and in terminating his contract of employment. When Higgins joined the Club, Carson took on a more pastoral role and left Higgins to the football.

9.9.21. One former member of staff who worked at the Club at the same time as Carson has said that Carson liked having familiar people around him who had played for him previously. He felt that Carson created a culture of people he trusted and could manipulate. He described this as “*cliquey*”.

9.9.22. When I spoke to Deborah Davies, the reporter on the *Dispatches* programme, she told me that:

“I have no direct evidence of any linkage between Higgins and Bennell but we were always suspicious of Kit Carson. We knew that he tried to rubbish the allegations against Higgins and tell boys that it was just sour grapes, that he was hugely instrumental in getting Higgins the job at Peterborough despite the fact that he knew all about what had happened at Southampton. So, we always had this sense that there were connections. We never felt that there was an organised national ring operating in football but we did think that like-minded coaches were aware of each other.”

9.9.23. While at Peterborough United, Carson authored a Coaches’ Code of Conduct. This appears to have been provided to the FA in 1998 as part of the Club’s application for Academy status. A copy of the Code of Conduct was found in the FA archives, and it is said to have originally been written on September 1st 1994, and then updated on March 25th 1998. It contained the following introductory remarks:

“We live in a society where thankfully, in recent years, the rights of children have been considered important. I strongly believe that children have rights and the coaching staff at this club have similar views to my own. However, unfortunately there has also grown up in society in recent years a climate of mistrust and envy which clouds people’s perception. We have to ensure that in order to observe a ‘proper’ code of conduct we don’t distance ourselves from our young players so much as to become aloof and unapproachable. Our young players should feel that they can rely on us and trust us totally. In this way we can really help them not only in their football careers but in their actual growing up. I like to think that they can look back on their football life with us and feel that they were treated fairly and honestly and that we played a part in helping them to become good all round citizens.”

Carson was clearly aware, therefore, of the power relationship between coaches and young players. The allegations against Carson are that he took advantage of that power relationship in his dealings with many of the boys that he coached.

9.9.24. Carson's Code of Conduct contained ten provisions. They included the following:

"Every child is important. A coach should not obviously favour individuals in one to one relationships with players the coach should ensure that his actions are not misunderstood or that a child feels uncomfortable. This can be achieved as follows:"

"[A child] should only stay at your home if your own family are home. You should ensure that his family know where he is. There should be a good reason for it e.g. he missed a train/bus and that there are not alternatives. It is wrong to have a child stay regularly."

"If a child has a problem that he needs to discuss alone with you and about which he might be very upset, it would be wrong not to do this. However, being alone with a child can be misunderstood. Realise this and act sensibly."

"A coach should not have 'secrets' with a child. If such a situation arises talk to another colleague and also me."

"[In relation to injuries] If a child has an injury you have a duty to deal with it. Don't treat certain injuries alone, particularly injuries below the waist and above the quads. Deal with them in a crowded changing room or ask another child to stay with you while you treat it."

"Children should not be embarrassed about their bodies. [while coaches should not get changed with the children or shower with them] They should be in the changing rooms and make the preparation for matches and the discussion and relaxation after an important part of the day."

"Coaches should be careful about touching children. The comforting arm, the friendly push can, in the sick mind, be misunderstood. What is needed is common sense by the coach."

The allegations against Carson are that he did not always practice what he preached. It is alleged that Carson regularly touched children's bodies, including when they were naked.

9.9.25. Carson's work on the Code of Conduct was part of his efforts to obtain formal Academy status for the Club's youth operation. The FA granted Peterborough Academy status, but this status was subsequently downgraded to a Centre of Excellence due to financial constraints. Barry Fry has explained that the decision to downgrade from an Academy to a Centre of Excellence was made by the Club's owner who was not willing to spend the necessary money on a new indoor training facility. Barry Fry said that Carson resigned as a result, and also de-registered all the Club's youth players and took them with him to Cambridge United FC.

Carson's Links with Cambridge United FC

9.9.26. Carson joined Cambridge United in November 2001. The Club has told the Review that Carson served as its Head of Talent Development until 2004, when he was appointed Director of Youth. Carson continued in this role until October 2005.

9.9.27. The Club informed the Review that Carson was hired and line managed by its Centre of Excellence Manager.

9.9.28. The publication “Flown from the Nest” records that Carson left Cambridge United at the end of the 2004/5 season following the Club’s relegation to the Conference and as part of an associated cost-cutting exercise. Carson told the FA in 2007 that he had been made redundant by Cambridge United.

9.9.29. The Club told the Review that Carson left with a number of players in October 2005, in order to set up his own Academy and that the Club’s Centre of Excellence closed shortly afterwards.

SUMMARY OF THE ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE COMMITTED BY CARSON

9.9.30. I have met with a number of survivors who reported that, when they were children, Carson subjected them to behaviour amounting to sexual abuse. I have also reviewed the witness statements of a large number of survivors who were intending to give evidence in Carson’s trial in 2019, as well as Carson’s own Defence Statement. Some former players whose statements I have reviewed had only good things to say about Carson.

Overview

9.9.31. The accounts that I have received concerning Carson’s behaviour span a large part of his career. Most of the allegations relate to Carson’s time at Peterborough United.

9.9.32. The evidence I have received alleges that Carson carried out his abusive behaviour:

- 32.1. at club training grounds;
- 32.2. in club changing rooms and showers (boys who came from far away would often stay overnight in the changing rooms on camp beds, and Carson would stay with them);
- 32.3. on trips abroad, including during stays overnight in accommodation;
- 32.4. at schools; and
- 32.5. on occasion, in his home.

9.9.33. Carson’s abuse consisted of behaviour which he told the survivors was important for their coaching and development. Carson encouraged the survivors to strip naked, either alone or in the presence of other children, for the alleged purpose of identifying their physical stage of development. In the process of doing this, he sometimes touched their bodies. Carson also subjected survivors to rigorous training regimes when naked or partially naked, ostensibly for the purposes of “assessing” them. In addition, despite having no medical qualifications, Carson touched children’s bodies ostensibly so as to assess them for physical injury.

9.9.34. Many of the individuals who alleged abuse by Carson discussed their experiences with each other prior to reporting their concerns, and a closed Facebook group was set up for this purpose. This may have had an effect on the reliability of some of the accounts of Carson's behaviour. However, many of the survivors who gave statements to the police claim to have not been involved in the Facebook group, or said that they had not spoken about their experiences with anybody prior to contacting the authorities. The accounts provided are very similar to one another, and were generally not disputed by Carson himself.

9.9.35. Carson admitted much of the alleged behaviour in his Defence Statement for the criminal trial. He contended, however, that what he did was for training and development purposes and was therefore not inappropriate. It may well be the case that some of Carson's behaviour was, in part, motivated by a desire to understand and improve the training and development of the young players with whom he worked. However, the allegations against Carson strongly suggest that there was for him also a sexual element in what he did.

NORWICH CITY FC'S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.9.36. I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that anyone from Norwich City saw any act of abuse by Carson.

9.9.37. In the Club's report to me it said that, based on its investigations, the Club was not aware of any complaint or concern about Carson. I have received written accounts from five individuals in connection with abuse at Norwich City. By their accounts, the abuse consisted of Carson forcing them to sleep naked; and naked examinations where they were called individually into Carson's office, told to strip and perform different poses. Carson also forced boys to run in and out of a sauna and a cold lake during a trip abroad to Finland. None of these individuals allege that the Club was aware of any of their concerns about Carson.

9.9.38. Barry Fry, the Chairman-Manager at Peterborough United provided information to the Review that someone (YN) who had worked with Carson at Norwich City had told him that Carson had been "let go" as he had had problems there: there had been a complaint, although YN did not know what the complaint was about. Barry Fry has said that the individual told him that he did not like Carson's methods or his youth set-up. Barry Fry says that was told that Carson's methods were "weird": he would get the kids up at 4am and ask them to strip off and hose them down or make them take cold showers. Barry Fry says that he thought that this was odd, but he never heard that the boys were alone when these things happened, and he was not aware of any sexual abuse. Barry Fry says that he discussed this with the Chairman of Peterborough United who told him that the stories about Carson were nonsense and that Carson had done a brilliant job at Norwich. YN denied these allegations.

9.9.39. As set out above, there were rumours that Carson left the Club because he had been “messing around” with kids. There is, however, no evidence that the Club has been able to locate, or that the Review has received, which corroborates this. I have not seen or heard any evidence that leads me to a different conclusion to that reached by the Club.

PETERBOROUGH UNITED FC’S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.9.40. I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that anyone from Peterborough United saw any act of abuse by Carson.

9.9.41. Paul Ashworth, who worked with Carson, from 1996, when he became the Youth Team Manager at Peterborough United (taking over from Bob Higgins), told the Review that he was not aware that Carson asked boys to take their shorts off, or that he told them that he was checking them for maturity. None of the young players reported to Paul Ashworth that this had taken place. Paul Ashworth told the Review that he did not hear any rumours about Carson.

9.9.42. One former youth player, EP, who says that he was seen naked by Carson at least 100 times, says that he did not believe any of the other coaches were aware of what Carson did, and “whenever [he] had been naked training or Carson had checked [his] development, [Carson] had been alone”. EP added that, among youth players, however, Carson’s conduct was “like an open joke and as part of this when [he] turned 18 they bought [him] a pot of Vaseline, in reference to Carson training [him], hinting at a possible sexual motive for his actions.”

9.9.43. Another former youth player, DF, told the Club that he had been asked by Carson to get naked on numerous occasions, but he was never touched by Carson and did not feel like Carson was doing this for sexual pleasure. DF did not tell anyone about what Carson did as he thought it was normal and part of being a footballer.

9.9.44. There is evidence that the Club was aware that Carson was very interested in tracking children’s physical development. According to one coach who worked alongside Carson, he “came across as very knowledgeable, very factual, very ahead of his time” in this regard. The coach told the Review that whether “what [Carson] was saying in them days was right, wrong, or indifferent, everyone believed it”.

9.9.45. Another former coach has said that he was not aware of any allegations against Carson, but, looking back, he said that the youth operation at the Club was something of a “closed shop”. He said that:

“[It was not] secretive but nothing was shared, it was very much a ‘them and us’ culture in relation to the youth teams and the older teams. There were never any meetings like you would have now to discuss what each team were doing, to talk about development ... it was as though there was no interest in

the relationship between the youth and the older teams.”

9.9.46. There is evidence, however, that complaints about Carson were made to Higgins while he was working for Peterborough United . An individual, FP, told Higgins that he had been indecently assaulted by Carson. Higgins told FP to write down what had happened “in case it was ever needed in the future”. A copy of FP’s document was found at Higgins’ home during a police search. Higgins said in evidence at his criminal trial in 2019 that he raised the matter with Carson, but not with anyone else at the Club. Higgins said at his criminal trial that he told his solicitor about it, who said that he would deal with it. There is no evidence that anything was done with this information by Higgins’ solicitor (if indeed Higgins did tell his solicitor about it).

9.9.47. Another former youth player at Peterborough United FC, PG, says that he met with Higgins in 1995, and Higgins told him he had heard that PG was concerned about what Carson had done in the changing rooms. Carson had told PG to pull his shorts down and, while PG was standing naked, Carson put his hands on PG’s stomach and told him that he was checking his abdomen, and referred to his abductors while staring at his groin/waist area. PG mentioned this conduct to the other boys. Higgins assured PG that it would not happen again. PG said that he carried on at the Club but had minimal contact with Carson after this. There is no evidence that this concern was raised by Higgins with the Club.

9.9.48. Another former youth player at Peterborough, MZ, said that he wrote a letter about his experiences with Carson and either sent it to Higgins or wrote it at Higgins’ house. Again, there is no evidence that this was raised with the Club.

9.9.49. A former coach at the Club told Cambridgeshire Constabulary that he recalled an instance where he saw one boy with his top off and thought it was strange. The coach told the Review that he cannot remember the exact year when he saw this, but it was probably 2000. It took place at Uffington Road, Stamford. He did not discuss the matter with anyone else at the Club. He said that there was “no reason to discuss it”. He was not aware of any other similar incidents being witnessed by others at the Club, and he told the Review that the allegations against Carson came as a surprise to him.

9.9.50. The Club spoke to Barry Fry. He recalled that Carson was already at the Club when he joined as Manager in 1996. He did not work closely with Carson. The Academy was completely separate from the first team, and was run with a different budget. Barry Fry says that he had been at the Club for quite a while when he found out about the arrangements whereby boys slept over in the Club’s changing rooms. He brought the matter up with the Club’s Chairman, who told him that this was normal as the boys came from all over the country, as well as Wales and Ireland.

9.9.51. Another individual told the Club that he did recall that some players would travel down and stay at the stadium and play the next day. He said that this was just “what happened” at the time.

9.9.52. As set out above, Barry Fry has said that he discussed comments about Carson from his time at Norwich with the Chairman of Peterborough, but was told by the Chairman that the stories about Carson were nonsense.

9.9.53. In the Club's report for the Review, the Club said that there was no reason to believe that the allegations against Carson were known, or indeed suspected, by any persons at the Club during the period between 1993 and 2001. Other than Higgins – who was notified of allegations of abuse – the Review has not received evidence to the contrary. It is not known why Higgins did not share his knowledge with anyone else at the Club. Had he done so, it may have been possible to bring Carson's abuse to an end.

9.9.54. The evidence that I have received was that officials at the Club were not generally aware that Carson required boys to train naked, or that he would get them to strip off all their clothes so that he could examine them. Had they known this, they may well have questioned Carson about what he was doing, and kept a closer eye on his conduct.

CAMBRIDGE UNITED FC'S STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

9.9.55. I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that anyone from Cambridge United saw any act of abuse by Carson.

9.9.56. The Club has investigated whether staff who worked with Carson were aware of his training techniques: whether they were aware that Carson asked boys to take off their clothing, or for them to be naked so that Carson could check for their maturation or development. The members of staff who were contacted by the Club replied that they were not aware of these matters.

9.9.57. However, there is evidence that some information about Carson's activities was passed on to the Club, although this could not be verified.

9.9.58. The mother of a boy who trained under Carson at Cambridge said that her son told her that he and other boys were required to train naked and that she raised this with a coach at the Club who was very dismissive. She could not remember the coach's name. It was not possible, therefore, for the Review to take this matter forward to verify the account.

9.9.59. There is also evidence that some other parents were aware of Carson's activities, although there is no suggestion that they raised this with the Club. When the police interviewed one boy who had attended a trip to Denmark with Carson in 2004, his father said that another parent had made a comment a couple of years previously that Carson had a history of "interfering with boys". This comment could not be verified.

9.9.60. One survivor spoken to by the Review said that he heard that Carson had been “done” in 2002 or 2003 because of his training techniques at Cambridge United, following a complaint by a parent. This could not be verified.

9.9.61. A member of the coaching team who worked with Carson said that he confronted Carson about a collage of photos he had on the wall outside his office in the main corridor under the title “Tours”. The collage showed players sat around in various places – including bedrooms and communal rooms – sometimes without their tops on. He questioned Carson about why there were no football action shots, and Carson responded that the photos reflected the players’ skills off the pitch and showed the fun side of a tour.

9.9.62. Another member of the coaching team said that no player or parent ever came to him to say that Carson had acted in an unprofessional way, but he had heard rumours in the football world that Carson liked to work on his own with the most gifted players, doing extra sessions. He also remembered hearing about the conversation referred to in the previous paragraph. He said that when there was discussion about employing Carson, he had raised concerns about him with the Club’s Board. He said that he had:

“[N]o hard evidence of misbehaviour, just concerns on what I had heard about how he would only deal direct with the player and not a parent and again liked to work with the most gifted players on his own. This was not received too well and the meeting was moved on quickly.”

9.9.63. The Club has informed the Review that there is no reference to this discussion in the Board minutes. There is also no other evidence to corroborate the coach’s account of having raised concerns.

9.9.64. I do not conclude, therefore, that the Club was aware of any matter which ought to have raised suspicions about Carson or which the Club should have investigated.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY NORWICH CITY FC

9.9.65. Norwich City carried out an extensive investigation. The Club spoke to a wide range of people who were involved with the Club at the same time as Carson: including four former Directors of the Club and five current Directors, thirteen staff members (including Club Secretaries, Chief Executive Officers and Managers), and three former junior players.

9.9.66. The Club no longer had any personnel records relating to Carson’s employment, but was able to establish some details about him by contacting the Norwich City Historical Trust, as well as through conversations with two longstanding members of staff. I consider that the Club’s investigation was adequate and met the standard expected by the Review.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY PETERBOROUGH UNITED FC

9.9.67. Peterborough United interviewed a number of individuals who had dealings with Carson when he worked at the Club. This included six former members of staff, three Directors two former Directors and one current) and nine former youth players. The Club asked a series of questions to elicit information about what they knew about Carson and his training techniques, and whether they were aware of allegations or rumours about Carson.

9.9.68. The Club also sought to locate documents that might be relevant. Since Carson's tenure, there had been a sale of the Club. Documents were obtained from previous solicitors who acted on the sale. There were, however, very limited documents available that related to Carson.

9.9.69. I consider that the Club's investigation was adequate and met the standard expected by the Review.

THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY CAMBRIDGE UNITED FC

9.9.70. Cambridge United made contact with former members of the Club's Board, as well as other staff who had worked with Carson during his tenure at the Club. The Club asked a series of questions to elicit information about what was known about Carson and his training techniques, and whether anyone was aware of allegations or rumours about Carson. I consider that the Club's investigation was adequate and met the standard expected by the Review.

9.10 Connections Between Abusers and Alleged Abusers

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INTRODUCTION

9.10.1. I have looked at the connections between certain perpetrators. It is clear that several of the perpetrators knew each other. I do not consider, however, that there was a “paedophile ring” in football: that is, I do not consider that perpetrators shared boys with one another for sexual purposes, or shared information with one another that would have facilitated child sexual abuse.

BENNELL AND ROPER

9.10.2. Bennell and Roper were known to each other. By the early 1970s they were clearly acquainted. Bennell was running the Manchester-based Senrab team and Roper appears to have had some involvement with that team.

9.10.3. The Review received evidence that Roper attended at least one overnight football tournament with Bennell and his Senrab team. I heard an account that Roper sexually abused boys during that trip. I have also heard an account that, on the return journey from the tournament, Bennell sexually abused a boy in the back seat of a car being driven by a man called “Frank”: the survivor says that he was asleep and when he woke up “Bennell had his finger inside [his] zip and was fiddling around with [his] penis”. The survivor did not say that Frank, who I assume was a reference to Roper (as a result of other references to Roper being present on that trip), was specifically aware of the abuse that was taking place in his car. There is clearly a possibility that he was.

9.10.4. A number of survivors recalled Bennell visiting Roper’s premises to buy sports clothing. One survivor (ID) told me:

“[T]he warehouse we went to in Manchester, was a good friend of Barry’s. ... Frank Roper. ... Well, obviously he was a - sorry, good friend, he was an acquaintance, a friend, whatever. He knew him. ... Because on numerous occasions, we would drive to his warehouse in Manchester, I would be left in the passenger seat, and the bloke, who I now know as Frank Roper, would come out, I’d be sat in the passenger seat, and he would lean in the window, going, “Oh, are you with Benny? Are you with Benny?” Because he used to call him Benny. And he’d like literally lean in, and touch me chest. And again, I’ve heard myself say this on numerous occasions -- I used to think that was odd, even though what was happening to me, off Barry Bennell, I used to think, “God, who’s this weirdo, touching my chest?””

9.10.5. I also received an account from a parent (AX) of a former player (FX) who recalled: “Bennell and I would go to Frank Roper’s warehouse to look at his kit or tops. Bennell and Roper always seemed very friendly. I never saw any animosity between them and Bennell and I would sometimes go to watch Nova”.

9.10.6. However, I also received reports that Bennell and Roper came to dislike each other, although I have not heard any explanation as to what led to this “fall out”.

9.10.7. GB, an individual who was coached by Bennell in the early 1980s stated:
“Whilst I was playing for Pegasus or Midas, which is another name we were known as, I remember another local team called Nova Juniors. Nova were our rivals as they were a team which were affiliated to Blackpool FC and were coached by a man I later met called Frank Roper. Frank wanted me to play for Nova and one day I went to his house with my dad and nephew.

...

Barry Bennell had heard I'd been to Frank Roper's house and had been to watch a five a side tournament with him. At our next home game, which we played at Platt Lane training complex he approached my dad and told him to watch Frank Roper as he molests boys. He said this in front of me and so my dad said I wasn't going back there and I was having nothing more to do with him” (emphasis added).

The reference to Roper molesting boys is capable of different interpretations. One interpretation is that Bennell was aware that Roper was an abuser. Another interpretation is that Bennell said that Roper molests boys as a way of denigrating Roper (and distancing himself from such activity), without Bennell knowing that Roper was in fact an abuser.

9.10.8. The Review has also heard from one survivor, KH, who has provided his account that he was sexually abused by Bennell when he was in Blackpool, and that he may have been introduced to Roper during this visit. He did not say that Roper sexually abused him. KH has also said that he was taken to Majorca by the manager of a football team and was abused there by Bennell. KH thinks that Roper may also have been present during this abuse, although he could not say for certain. The Review has not been able to verify KH's account.

BENNELL AND HIGGINS

9.10.9. Bennell and Higgins were also known to each other. They clearly attended some of the same tournaments. The Review was provided with a video of the Sotonia Cup in Southampton. The video was produced by Bennell who took a team to the tournament and contains footage of Higgins.

9.10.10. I have also seen a photograph of Bennell and Higgins together, along with a number of other adults and 35 boys. Bennell and a number of the boys are wearing T shirts which have printed on them “Skillful Way ‘86”: leading to me to believe that the photograph dates to that year.

9.10.11. It is possible that their relationship was more than a mere acquaintanceship. A parent who accompanied Bennell's Crewe team to the Sotonia Cup in Southampton recalled that:

“Bennell and [Higgins] seemed to be really pally, chatting together quite a lot... [Bennell] looked the part...whereas Higgins...you looked at him and thought “what on earth?”...you'd rarely see Bennell talking to an adult, he was

very uncomfortable with adults, extremely uncomfortable”.

9.10.12. The Review has received no evidence, however, that Bennell and Higgins were aware of each other’s abuse of young boys.

BENNELL AND HEATH

9.10.13. I have seen a number of press articles that assert that Bennell and Heath were known to each other. Some of the articles suggest that Bennell played youth football at Chelsea FC during Heath’s tenure there. The Geekie Report found no evidence that Bennell was ever a player at Chelsea, whether during Heath’s tenure or otherwise.

9.10.14. An individual who played in the early 1970s for Bennell’s Manchester Senrab team recalled how the team was taken by Bennell to Chelsea’s football ground. This individual stated that Bennell was friends with the Chelsea chief scout. The individual could not, however recall the chief scout’s name. It is possible that this was a reference to Heath, but whether or not Bennell and Heath were friends could not be verified.

HIGGINS AND CARSON

9.10.15. Higgins and Carson were well known to each other. They worked together at Peterborough United for almost two years. The Review received evidence that they were acquainted for some years prior to that, and had wanted to work together for some time.

9.10.16. Carson was aware that allegations of sexual abuse had been made against Higgins when he was at Southampton and that this had led to a criminal trial in 1992. Carson was also aware that Higgins was acquitted at this trial. According to an account provided by Carson, he was told by Higgins that he had been “framed” (see: Peterborough State of Knowledge).

9.10.17. As set out above, the Review has received evidence that complaints about Carson were made to Higgins while he was working for Peterborough United. One young player told Higgins that he had been indecently assaulted by Carson. Higgins told the player to write down what had happened “in case it was ever needed in the future”. Another young player spoke to Higgins about the fact that Carson had directed him to pull his shorts down and proceeded to “check” his body. Yet another player wrote to Higgins about Carson’s behaviour towards him. In those circumstances I am satisfied that Higgins would, at the very least, have suspected that Carson had a sexual interest in children (see: 9.9 Michael Sean ‘Kit’ Carson).

9.10.18. There is no evidence, however, that Carson and Higgins shared boys with one another for sexual purposes, or shared information with one another that would have facilitated child sexual abuse.

9.11 Further Information About Abuse at Clubs

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INTRODUCTION

9.11.1. The Review wrote to all football clubs affiliated with the FA. They were asked to inform the Review of the following matters:

- “1. An outline of the complaint(s)/concern(s) including the nature of the underlying alleged incident(s), names of those involved and relevant dates. (If you feel unable at this stage to provide names, please use a letter (e.g. ‘Mr. A’) to refer to relevant individuals).
2. The date when the complaint(s)/concern(s) first came to the attention of the club.
3. What action the club took on learning of the complaint(s)/concern(s), or at any later stage (e.g. did the club carry out an investigation or any other form of fact finding exercise, did the club conduct disciplinary proceedings, or did the club address the matter whether formally or informally with the relevant parties).
4. Whether there was any contact with the FA in relation to the complaint(s) concern(s) (and, if so, by what means, who at the FA was contacted and when). If you made contact with the FA in writing, please provide a copy of the relevant communication(s).
5. What response the club received from the FA and what steps were taken by the FA to deal with the matter.
6. Whether there was any contact with any other body (e.g. the relevant League association, the police or local authority) in relation to the complaint(s)/concern(s) (and, if so, by what means, who at the body was contacted and when).”

9.11.2. All of the 92 clubs in the Premier League and the English Football League were required to respond, and they all did. Non-league clubs were not obligated to respond but a number did.

9.11.3. The vast majority of the clubs in the Premier and English Football Leagues informed the Review that they had nothing to report. Some reported on incidents that were totally unconnected with the Club, but the individual concerned may have had some form of connection with the Club. Others reported on allegations that first came to their attention after November 2016 when they were notified of them by the police. In many cases, these allegations were investigated by the police and by the relevant leagues, and no further action was taken in respect of them by the police or the leagues as they could not be substantiated.

9.11.4. Of those that did have something to report, it was clear that some of them had carried out extensive investigations of former staff and records.

9.11.5. A summary of the key responses that were relevant to the period of the Review is as follows.

LIVERPOOL FC

9.11.6. The Club disclosed to the Review that it had been contacted by a member of the press in 2016 about a former scout, Harry Dunn, who it was alleged had tried to rape a 16 year old boy in the 1990s. It was suggested that the Club had been informed of this by someone at a Scottish junior boys team: Hutchinson Vale. The Club was unable to establish what (if any) role Dunn had had at the Club, but assisted the police. There is no suggestion that a complaint had been made to the Club before this.

9.11.7. The Club looked at its payroll and Human Resources documents, and spoke with former staff, but was unable to establish with any certainty that Dunn was employed or engaged by the Club. The Club explained that Dunn may have been associated with the Club as part of a loose scouting arrangement and that this ceased when there were some changes in Club personnel, in the mid to late 1980s, prior to the alleged incident in question. (Harry Dunn died in 2017, before he was due to face trial in Scotland on a number of charges of sexual abuse.)

MANCHESTER UNITED

9.11.8. Manchester United interviewed people covering the entirety of the relevant period and undertook a comprehensive review of documents. They disclosed a number of relevant matters.

9.11.9. One matter involved a coach who, in 2003, had an inappropriate relationship with a 16 year old female youth player. This was discovered by the player's parents when they found texts from him to her, and they reported this to the Club. The Club investigated and suspended the coach during the period of the investigation. The coach said it was a non-sexual relationship but there was banter between them and he gave her lifts home (of which her parents were aware). He said that after her 16th birthday the texts became more intimate and sexual in nature and that he left a voicemail telling her he loved her. The investigator appears to have previously "warned" the coach that it was clear that the player had a crush on him. The parents/player insisted that the coach had booked her into a hotel with him (after she was 16) but the coach denied this. The coach was due to go through a disciplinary procedure but he resigned before the hearing and the case was closed with the consent of the parents.

9.11.10. A second matter concerned someone working with the Club's 'Football in the Community' project in the early 2000s. Numerous disclosures were made to the Club about inappropriate behaviour by the individual towards female players: kissing and hugging players as they came on or off the pitch or were hurt, encouraging or permitting underage drinking on trips, and texting players and work experience students in which he said "I love you/I miss you". Many of the players were under 16. The Club investigated, and interviewed many employees, players

and their parents. There are multiple reports from players, some of whom stated that they feared they would hurt their chances in the team if they did anything about the behaviour. The individual was subsequently dismissed for gross misconduct at a hearing. The Club made contact with the Manchester CFA to discuss the appropriate approach to take with this matter.

9.11.11. A third matter concerned a Family Accommodation Provider: that is, someone who hosts young players who are associated with the Club. Rumours of inappropriate behaviour by a female accommodation provider with some of the Club's scholars were reported. These were investigated by the Club, and the scholar who was staying with the female was removed pending the outcome of the investigation. One scholar alleged that the female had "stuck her lips on me". Another said that she had sent text messages of a "titillating, rather than sexual, nature". The Club's investigation was unable to establish conclusive evidence of inappropriate behaviour, but terminated the female's services as a Family Accommodation Provider. The matter was also referred to social services and to the Premier League.

9.11.12. A fourth matter concerned a caretaker at the Club, who is now deceased. The Club was made aware in 2016 of allegations that in the 1980s the caretaker had made inappropriate comments of a sexual nature, physically pulled an individual into an office against his will, followed an individual into a sauna at the training ground and wrestled with him. There was also an allegation that the caretaker had tried to touch another individual inappropriately in the showers; that the caretaker was referred to by youth team players as a 'pervert'. There was a further allegation that the caretaker had tried to touch another boy, and when confronted had said that "I'm only messing, shut up." The Club referred the matter to the FA in 2016. The Club has discovered that there was an investigation into the caretaker in the 1980s (not related to these particular allegations), and he was re-deployed from the Club's training ground to the Club's stadium. It is not known what the reason was for his re-deployment though it is known that he left the Club within a number of months following his re-deployment.

9.11.13. The Club also informed the Review that it had investigated an allegation that Barry Bennell had an association with the Club. This investigation was prompted by a suggestion from a parent of a former apprentice at the Club who may have had contact with Bennell. The Club concluded that there was no evidence that Bennell had any connection or interaction with the apprentice during the apprentice's time at the Club. Furthermore: (a) there was no evidence that Bennell had any contact at all with apprentices at the Club or (as had been suggested by the parent) was given any sort of "free rein" to roam around the Club's training ground or any of its premises; and (b) as part of its investigation the Club contacted relevant police forces which confirmed that they have no records connecting Bennell with the Club.

OXFORD UNITED

9.11.14. Oxford United disclosed an incident involving a professional player and a first year scholar at a training session in 2004. The player was unhappy that the scholar had refused to get another player's car keys, and subsequently attacked the scholar, ripping off his shorts and slip. The player threatened to rape the scholar with a banana, and unsuccessfully attempted to force the banana up his back passage. After a further struggle, the player removed the scholar's shirt and dragged him outside. The scholar was naked apart from his socks. The matter was drawn to the attention of the Club's management, and the player was asked to leave the premises. A disciplinary hearing was held, and the player was summarily dismissed for gross misconduct. The Club kept the Oxfordshire County FA, and the FA informed of the matter. The player was disciplined by the FA, and given a six month suspension from the game.

PRESTON NORTH END

9.11.15. Preston North End wrote to 246 employees and former employees requesting any information relevant to the Review. One matter that was referred to in three replies received by the Club concerned an individual who had been a volunteer at the Club and apparently engaged in "inappropriate behaviour" in the 1980s, unrelated to his activities at the Club. It is not clear how this came to the Club's attention at the time, but the individual was initially suspended and then dismissed. It is believed that the individual was subsequently convicted of child sex offences relating to his time as a teacher in a school.

9.11.16. The Club has no knowledge of whether the matter was referred to the FA.

LARKSPUR ROVERS, NORTHOLT, MIDDLESEX

9.11.17. Larkspur Rovers disclosed one relevant matter to the Review. In 2003/2004, the Club was contacted by the police in relation to "historic" allegations made against a team manager by one of his former players. The Club was apparently advised by the police only to release information on a "need to know" basis. The Club allowed the individual to continue coaching, on the principle that he was "innocent until proven guilty", but he was not allowed to deal with children on his own. Further allegations were then made by members of the junior team then being coached. At this point the individual agreed to step down (albeit while maintaining his innocence). The Club believes that the FA was aware of the police investigation but the Club received no contact at all from either the FA or the County FA until after he was convicted.

VALE RECREATION FC

9.11.18. Vale Recreation disclosed one relevant matter to the Review. A youth coach was arrested in November 1993 following an allegation of gross indecency with two boys and the Club became aware of this the following day. The Board addressed this and suspended the individual in question from football activities with immediate effect. The individual was prosecuted and sentenced to prison. There is a record of Guernsey FA being informed.

STOKE CITY

9.11.19. An apprentice player at Stoke City in the 1980s, whom I shall call ZC, made an allegation that while playing for the Club, he was sexually assaulted by a member of staff, CR, on many occasions. The Club informed the Review that a civil claim had been brought by ZC. The Club had not previously been aware of the matter. ZC told the Review that he did not tell anyone about these incidents at the time out of shame and embarrassment, and he does not have any reason to believe that the Club knew about them.

9.11.20. CR was due to face a criminal trial in 2015 in relation to the allegations. The CPS offered no evidence against CR. ZC informed the Review that he later received a call to ask what he thought about CR being offered a conditional caution if he admitted the offence and says that he agreed to this, thinking that that was the best outcome he could hope for in the circumstances. ZC informed the Review that CR was placed on the sex offenders register for two years and he was provided with a signed copy of the conditional caution.

WATFORD

9.11.21. In June 2019, Phil Edwards, a physiotherapist who had previously worked at Watford FC, was arrested in relation to an allegation of child sexual abuse. In July 2019, it was widely reported in the press that Edwards had been found dead.

9.11.22. In July 2019, the Head of Safeguarding at the Club contacted the Review. The Head of Safeguarding is a former police officer with experience of investigating historic sexual abuse. She explained that in the previous few days a number of people had contacted the Club and made disclosures of abuse by Edwards, and she made clear that she was committed to ensuring that the Club fully investigated Edwards' conduct during the period that he was associated with the Club, and to this end was liaising with the police.

9.11.23. The Review continued to liaise with the Head of Safeguarding over the summer of 2019. In early October 2019, she provided the Review with a detailed "Investigation Strategy" document. That document set out the objectives of the

Club's Investigation (which she was to lead) as follows:

- 23.1. to ensure a thorough and impartial investigation into non-recent abuse allegations which have been made by individuals connected with the Club's historic footballing activities who have contacted the Club, the police or other regulatory authorities (such as the FA, Premier League, Local Authority);
- 23.2. to understand the extent of any criminal behaviour by Edwards;
- 23.3. to identify whether individuals with positions of responsibility within the Club knew of the allegations (or whether there were objective factors that should have put them on notice as to potential child sexual abuse or factors which should have caused them to make further enquiries);
- 23.4. to ascertain the response by individuals with positions of responsibility to any knowledge or concerns related to the allegations and whether they, or any of them, failed to report onwards and/or failed to respond properly to allegations or concerns made during the period of abuse or subsequently; and
- 23.5. to learn lessons which could be of relevance to the Club's safeguarding procedures and practices today and in the future.

9.11.24. The investigation plan went on to set out the methodology and approach to be employed and contained specific reference to the provision that was to be made to provide support to survivors.

9.11.25. The Club (through the Head of Safeguarding) provided the Review with periodic updates. In June 2020, the Club informed the Review that 21 survivors had contacted the Club. At least 12 survivors have said that they were abused by Edwards while associated with Watford.

9.11.26. The Club has stated that there are no Human Resources or Personnel or payroll records regarding Edwards. However, he is mentioned in some Club match programmes from the 1984/85 season. A press clipping from the 1989/90 season includes a reference to Edwards leaving the Club as he could not commit to working full-time.

9.11.27. During the Club's investigation, the following matters have been alleged:

- 27.1. Edwards' abuse included asking players to remove all clothing during "treatment", requiring players to squat while naked while Edwards lay on the floor, conducting unnecessary groin "examinations", touching a boy's penis, and potentially digital penetration (Edwards "put his fingers where he shouldn't");
- 27.2. Edwards was referred to by some in and around the Club as "Paedo Phil";
- 27.3. Edwards "hosted" boys at his home on behalf of the Club;
- 27.4. Edwards would have boys over to his house and would give them alcohol and get them to perform sexual acts with an adapted stuffed toy;
- 27.5. Boys would talk in the changing rooms about Edwards' conduct;
- 27.6. Some of the Club's then staff knew that Edwards would make boys remove their clothing for treatment;
- 27.7. Abuse by Edwards was disclosed by a survivor to members of the

Club's then staff, and to his "host" mother where he lodged, but the survivor says that the abuse continued after the disclosure.

9.11.28. I am satisfied that the Club is diligently investigating both its connection with Edwards and what was known by the Club about Edwards' conduct. The progress of the investigation has been hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has made it difficult to make contact and interview various individuals who may be able to assist. I am confident that the Head of Safeguarding will follow up all relevant lines of enquiry (including, where possible, speaking to those former members of staff who are said to have relevant knowledge). Once the Club has finalised its investigation, if requested to do so by the FA, I will issue an addendum to this Report setting out the conclusions of the Club's investigation, and evaluating the adequacy of that investigation.

MANCHESTER CITY

John Broome

9.11.29. John Broome, who died on October 17th 2010, was a convicted child sex offender. He was convicted of sexual offences against children on two occasions: in 1971 and 2000. In addition, many others have come forward and given accounts of sexual abuse that he committed against them when they were children in the 1960s and 1970s, through his role as a manager and coach at Whitehill FC. Whitehill FC had links to Manchester City as an informal youth 'feeder' or 'nursery' team. The exact date of his departure from Whitehill FC is not clear, but it appears to be in the early 1970s.

PROSECUTION HISTORY

9.11.30. Broome was convicted of sexual offences against children on two occasions: 1971 and 2000.

9.11.31. The first conviction was for indecent assault of a male under the age of 16 on November 8th 1970. Broome put his hands down the underpants of a player, and touched his "private parts", in the changing rooms at Manchester City's training ground at Park Road in Cheadle. The case was heard at the Cheshire Quarter Sessions on February 16th 1971. Broome pleaded guilty and was fined £50 and ordered to pay prosecution costs of £50.

9.11.32. Three decades later, Broome was convicted of five indecent assaults on a male under the age of 14, between August 1st 1998 and September 8th 1999. The case was heard at Manchester Crown Court on January 21st 2000. It does not appear that the abuse was connected to football.

MANCHESTER CITY'S REVIEW (BROOME)

9.11.33. Manchester City instructed the law firm Pinsent Masons and Jane Mulcahy QC to investigate the Club's links with Broome and what, if any, knowledge the

Club had of his abuse (I shall refer to those who worked on this investigation as the MCFC Review Team).

9.11.34. There were no documents relating to Broome in the Manchester City archives. Nevertheless, the MCFC Review Team found references to Broome in a number of other documentary sources. The MCFC Review Team also gained access to Broome's court and probation file from his 1970/71 prosecution, and other documents from Greater Manchester Police. The MCFC Review Team spoke to 34 survivors of abuse by Broome, plus one other youth player who was not abused. They also spoke to 23 former/current Manchester City staff about Broome, including two former Directors.

9.11.35. The MCFC Review Team has stated that:

35.1. Broome was a coach and team manager for Whitehill Boys (also known as Whitehill and Whitehill Juniors) in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Broome's involvement with Whitehill Boys having commenced in the early 1960s. (The view of the MCFC Review Team is that this was not the same team as the "Whitehill" team which Barry Bennell subsequently ran from 1976).

35.2. Broome's association with Manchester City began in 1964 when Whitehill Boys was invited to play in trial games at Manchester City's then training ground (Shawe View in Urmston). Whitehill Boys subsequently became well known as a nursery or feeder side for Manchester City. The team wore Manchester City kit, the team was watched by Manchester City staff, and players were occasionally taken to the Manchester City stadium, Maine Road, for matches or to assist groundsmen.

35.3. Broome was described as a "scout" for Manchester City in a club programme from 1967.

35.4. It is likely that Broome was not an employee of Manchester City: he had other full-time jobs. The only reference to Manchester City in the 1971 police report is that he was a "talent scout" for the club, and there is no suggestion that he received payment for this role.

35.5. Broome's association with Manchester City ended in early 1971, following Broome's conviction for child sex offences against boys in his Whitehill Boys team.

35.6. Broome continued to be involved with the younger age group of players for Whitehill Boys, at the request of parents.

35.7. In the mid-1970s, Broome was a referee in the Greater Manchester area. He was the Secretary of the referees to the Reddish League (in 1976 and 1977) and, in the early 1980s, was seen in and around Manchester FA. During this period, Broome continued to abuse young boys, including young referees.

9.11.36. The MCFC Review Team heard evidence that Broome's abuse included: sexual touching while rubbing liniment on boys' legs before matches, and sexually touching and attempting to masturbate boys while performing "massages" for injuries. There were also incidents of rape or attempted rape. Broome's abuse took place between 1962 and 1979. The abuse took place at the various training grounds

used by Whitehill Boys and at Broome's home. In the more serious instances, the MCFC Review Team heard that Broome would seek to isolate the boys and abuse them when no-one else was present.

9.11.37. In 1971, Broome pleaded guilty to two charges of indecent assault. Broome had been arrested following a complaint made by a Whitehill Boys player to his mother about a "rub-down" in November 1970. The police were informed, and they obtained corroborating statements from other boys in the team.

9.11.38. The MCFC Review Team consider it almost certain that Manchester City was made aware of Broome's arrest and the nature of the allegations against him. The MCFC Review Team conclude that the Club's response fell below the required standard, and was wholly inadequate. The MCFC Review Team state that in its view:

- 38.1. Manchester City should have stood Broome down from working with Whitehill Boys, following his arrest and pending the conclusion of the criminal case. Instead, he was allowed to continue coaching during the four months between his arrest and conviction, and it is understood that he continued to abuse boys during this period;
- 38.2. Manchester City should have notified the players in the Whitehill Boys team as to the reason why Broome was no longer involved with the team.

I agree with the conclusions of the MCFC Review Team.

9.11.39. The MCFC Review Team was also informed of an attempt to inform Manchester City of Broome's abuse in around 1966. This information came from a former player, towards whom Broome had made sexual advances and who subsequently told his father. The former player's father told him that he had telephoned Manchester City about this, but the Club "did not want to know" and he was "fobbed off". As the former player's father died some time ago and the former player did not know either (i) the details of the conversation, or (ii) who his father spoke to (if he spoke to anyone at all), it was not possible for the MCFC Review Team to obtain more information or corroborate this account.

9.11.40. My Review Team also received a number of written accounts from those who complained of abuse by Broome, and interviewed one individual, YY, who reported that he was sexually abused by Broome in the late 1960s and early 1970s. YY's account is as follows:

- 40.1. In about 1969, YY's mother saw an advertisement for Whitehill Boys in the Manchester Evening News and made contact with the Club. Subsequently YY attended a trial and there met Broome, who was the manager of the team. YY was 11 years old.
- 40.2. YY was selected to play for Whitehill Boys. YY told me that Whitehill played in Manchester City kits and the trials took place at Park Road Stadium which he understood to be Manchester City's training ground. YY understood that Whitehill was a "nursery" club for Manchester City.
- 40.3. It was arranged that YY would go to Broome's house on Whitehill

match days and would then travel with Broome to the game. After YY had played for the under 13s team, he would assist Broome with other tasks such as sweeping up and putting the kit away. YY said this made him feel “part of the set up”.

40.4. Subsequently Broome asked YY to help out with washing football kits so YY started going to Broome’s house after school two nights per week. Shortly thereafter, Broome started to sexually abuse YY. This was in 1970 or 1971.

40.5. Broome abused YY on a regular basis for approximately eight months.

40.6. YY thinks he tried to raise the abuse with another coach at Whitehill by saying something like “why did he touch me?” but the coach “just got off the subject. Sort of dismissed it...Changed the subject”. YY did not disclose the abuse to anyone else until many years later.

40.7. The abuse ended when YY’s father (who was not otherwise engaged with YY’s footballing) came home one day and said to YY “You’re not playing for that club anymore”. YY now wonders whether his father had heard something about Broome.

40.8. A few years after he stopped playing for Whitehill (so likely sometime between 1972 and 1974), YY was playing in a youth football match and found that Broome was the referee. A short while after that match, YY was playing in a youth tournament and, again, Broome was acting as a referee. YY confronted Broome afterward and pinned him to the wall.

Bill Toner

9.11.41. The report provided to me by the MCFC Review contained a section relating to William (“Bill”) Toner.

9.11.42. Toner is a convicted child sex offender having been convicted of sexual offences against children in 1992, 2001 and in 2018 (he also has a conviction from 1983 relating to a sexual offence against an adult).

9.11.43. The 2018 convictions related to the serious and prolonged sexual abuse of a young footballer who Toner had offered to give extra coaching, having introduced himself as a coach at Manchester City. There is no evidence to suggest that the coaching or abuse took place at any Manchester City facility or was otherwise connected to the Club.

9.11.44. In relation to Toner’s association with the Club, the MCFC Review Team concluded that:

44.1. Toner was not employed by the Club.

44.2. He was associated with the Club in the capacity of an unpaid, part-time scout.

44.3. Toner’s association with the Club began in or around 1994 and ended in or around 1995.

9.11.45. On the basis of the material I have seen, that conclusion is a reasonable one.

9.11.46. In relation to what the Club knew about Toner's behaviour, the MCFC Review Team concluded:

46.1. By the time Toner first became associated with the Club, he had previous convictions for sexual offences (including in 1992, against a child). However, there is no evidence to suggest that the Club knew or could reasonably have been expected to know about those convictions. The offences took place in Cambridge and there was not, at that time, a Sex Offenders register.

46.2. There is no evidence of any direct report to the Club in relation to Toner.

46.3. A member of the Club's staff, YQ, recollected attending a match being played by a boys' team and seeing the coach, who was also a City scout, inappropriately touch an injured player. YQ told the scout to come into the Club on the following Monday. When the scout attended at the Club, YQ told him that he had seen what he had done and that he was no longer welcome at the Club and ripped up his scout's pass. While YQ cannot recollect the name of the scout, the MCFC Review Team is satisfied that it was Toner and that this incident occurred around 1995. This marked the end of Toner's association with the Club.

46.4. There is no evidence that YQ reported the incident to anyone else at the Club or to the police. Given that he witnessed a boy being inappropriately touched, that was not an adequate response. The incident should have been reported internally and to the police, who would have had the ability to check Toner's criminal history.

9.11.47. On the basis of the material I have received, that conclusion by the MCFC Team is a reasonable one, and one with which I agree.