

Jimmy Savile caused concern with behaviour on visits to Prince Charles

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Jimmy Savile, who is said to have acted as a kind of marriage counsellor between Prince Charles and Diana. Photograph: Gary Calton for the Observer

A former senior royal aide has revealed that [Jimmy Savile](#)'s behaviour when he visited [Prince Charles](#)'s official home at St James' Palace was a cause for "concern and suspicion".

Dickie Arbiter, who handled media relations for the Prince and Princess of Wales while spokesman for the Queen between 1988 and 2000, said the suspected paedophile TV presenter used to rub his lips up the arms of Prince Charles's young female assistants as a greeting.

Savile is understood to have visited Prince Charles's official London residence several times in the late 1980s when he was acting as a kind of marriage counsellor between Charles and Princess Diana. A spokesman for the Prince of Wales confirmed the prince and Savile formed a relationship in the late 1970s after coming together through their work with wheelchair sports charities. Charles led tributes to Savile when he died

a year ago.

“He would walk into the office and do the rounds of the young ladies taking their hands and rubbing his lips all the way up their arms if they were wearing short sleeves,” Arbiter said of Savile. “If it was summer [and their arms were bare] his bottom lip would curl out and he would run it up their arms. This was at St James’s Palace. The women were in their mid to late 20s doing typing and secretarial work.”

Arbiter did not raise his concerns formally and there is no suggestion Savile committed any crimes while on royal premises or when he was with Prince Charles on numerous occasions from the 1970s onwards. But the concern over his behaviour expressed by a senior aide will raise questions over how Savile, who is now under investigation in relation to child abuse involving 300 potential victims, managed to develop such a long-standing relationship with the heir to the throne.

Asked about Savile’s behaviour with the royal assistants or whether Prince Charles had taken any action to find out if anyone in his family or staff might have suffered any abuse or have any information relating to the criminal investigation into Savile’s alleged paedophilia, a spokesman for the prince said: “We have no record of anyone making a complaint.”

“The prince first met Savile through their shared interest in supporting disability charities [the prince became patron of the British Wheelchair Sports Foundation in the late 1970s] and it was primarily because of this connection that they maintained a relationship in the years that followed,” the spokesman said.

Arbiter said he thought the women might have thought Savile’s greeting was “rather funny”, but he said it was a cause for concern and he struggled to understand why Savile was granted such access to the royal family.

“I looked at him as a court jester and told him so,” said

Arbiter. "I remember calling him an old reprobate and he said 'not so much of the old'."

Concern about Savile's behaviour at the palace emerged as Sir Roger Jones, former chairman of the BBC's corporate charity Children In Need, said he had been so uncomfortable about Savile that he did not allow him to have any association with the cause. Jones, a BBC governor from 1997 to 2002, said he had "no evidence" that Savile was up to anything but "we all recognised he was a pretty creepy sort of character".

"When I was with Children In Need, we took the decision that we didn't want him anywhere near to the charity," he told the BBC.

Prince Charles met Savile on numerous occasions. In 1999 he accepted an invitation to a private meal at Savile's Glencoe home which was this week daubed with graffiti reading "Jimmy the beast". Savile asked three local women to dress up in pinafores emblazoned with the letters HRH and Charles subsequently sent the television presenter a Christmas card with the note: "Jimmy, with affectionate greetings from Charles. Give my love to your ladies in Scotland."

Charles reportedly sent him a box of cigars and a pair of gold cufflinks on his 80th birthday with a note that read: "Nobody will ever know what you have done for this country Jimmy. This is to go some way in thanking you for that."

Savile used to boast of his royal connections, made sure to be photographed with Charles on numerous occasions and ingratiated himself once telling the Daily Mail the prince was "the nicest man you will ever meet".

"Royalty are surrounded by people who don't know how to deal with it," Savile said in an interview. "I have a freshness of approach which they obviously find to their liking. I think I get invited because I have a natural, good fun way of going on and we have a laugh. They don't get too many laughs."

The day after the meal in Glencoe Savile persuaded Charles to join him for a photo opportunity at his local post office where he went to pick up his pension money.

“The post office photo opportunity was definitely [down to] him [Savile],” said Coleen Harris, Prince Charles’s press secretary. “You always think that other people are getting more out of these things [than the prince] but on the whole it is for a good reason, for the charities and it is a positive thing.”

She added: “Personally I always thought he was slightly eccentric, but beyond that I had no idea. He was a slightly odd bloke, but not in a cruel way.”

Arbiter said that despite Savile’s unusual behaviour with the royal administrative staff there was no evidence of any other cause for suspicion.

“There was a limit to what he could get away with in the royal household,” he said.

He also said palace advisers felt the prince’s charities might benefit from a connection with Savile, at the time one of the country’s most famous TV stars.

Perhaps Savile’s most unlikely role was that of personal counsel to Prince Charles in the late 1980s at a time when the royal family was in deep trouble. The marriages of Charles and Diana and Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson were disintegrating. Around new year 1990 Charles asked Savile to help the Duchess of York with what Savile later said was keeping her profile down.

Princess Diana was recorded telling James Gilbey on the so-called “squidgygate tape”: “Jimmy Savile rang me up yesterday, and he said: ‘I’m just ringing up, my girl, to tell you that His Nibs [Prince Charles] has asked me to come and help out the redhead [the Duchess of York], and I’m just letting you

know, so that you don't find out through her or him; and I hope it's all right by you.'"