

Police force under fire over Savile sex probe mistakes

[The Yorkshire Post](#) with thanks to Paul Mckenna



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WEST Yorkshire Police held virtually no information about Jimmy Savile's sex abuse before he died despite more than 40 of his victims coming from the county, a damning report reveals today.

Inspectors from a police watchdog criticised mistakes by forces nationwide in sharing information about the disgraced presenter as they expressed "serious concerns" that so many victims felt unable to come forward.

Only five allegations and two pieces of intelligence were recorded by police in the entire country though one dated back

as early as 1964, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary revealed. And although Savile lived in West Yorkshire for much of his life and had dozens of local victims, the only significant recorded information about his criminal activities were held by other forces.

Officers in West Yorkshire held no "intelligence reports" about Savile which would have prompted further investigation and only one minor "information report". This was despite newspaper reports being freely available online revealing that Savile was interviewed by West Yorkshire Police in 1958 and that he had been due to appear in court over sexual abuse allegations. The report said mistakes by officers in Surrey, London and Sussex meant no one force was able to piece together the full extent of the Leeds-born DJ's sexual abuse. And it claimed inconsistencies in the way they shared information meant there was a "distinct possibility" officers could fail to prevent another similar scandal from happening again.

HM Inspector of Constabulary, Drusilla Sharpling, said: "The findings in this report are of deep concern, and clearly there were mistakes in how the police handled the allegations made against Savile during his lifetime."

Sick Savile preyed on Leeds hospice – but police never took him seriously

JIMMY Savile was "one of the UK's most prolific known sexual predators" who abused children as young as eight across six decades, a chilling report concluded today.

The disgraced TV presenter used his celebrity to "hide in plain sight" – but now has 214 criminal offences recorded against his name in 28 police forces, including 34 rapes.

Presenting the findings of the Metropolitan Police and NSPCC, detective superintendent David Gray said: "The sheer scale and

the severity of his offending is appalling.”

And in a separate report, Britain’s top prosecutor Keir Starmer admitted Savile could have been charged for offences against at least three victims before his death in 2011.

Laying bare the full scale of his depravity, it emerged [Savile sexually abused a dying teenager at a Leeds hospice](#), one of 14 medical sites he used to prey on his victims.

His abuse spanned from 1955 to 2009, covering his entire career at the BBC, and included sexually touching a teenage girl at the final recording of Top of the Pops in 2006.

But the joint report stopped short of pinning any blame on other institutions that may have “missed past opportunities” to stop Savile.

A total of 450 people have come forward alleging sexual abuse against Savile since October – of whom 73% were children at the time of the offences.

The peak of his offending was between 1966 and 1976, when he was aged between 40 and 50, the report said.

Savile abused patients at Leeds General Infirmary, where he worked between 1965 and 1995, and committed offences at Stoke Mandeville Hospital between 1965 and 1988.

He attacked children at children’s home Duncroft School between 1970 and 1978 and also committed 14 offences at schools across the country, partly when children had written to him as part of Jim’ll Fix It.

And the report disclosed that Savile was accused of sexually touching a teenage hospice patient, aged 13 to 16.

Commander Peter Spindler, who is leading the national investigation into Savile’s abuse, said: “Savile’s offending footprint was vast, predatory and opportunistic. He cannot

face justice today, but we hope this report gives some comfort to his hundreds of victims. They have been listened to and taken seriously.”

Mr Starmer, the director of public prosecutions, said Savile could have been prosecuted in 2009 – two years before he died – had police taken victims more seriously.

He said: “I would like to take the opportunity to apologise for the shortcomings in the part played by the CPS in these cases. If this report and my apology are to serve their full purpose, then this must be seen as a watershed moment.”

Surrey Police consulted with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) about four allegations reported between 2007 and 2008 but it was decided that no prosecution could be brought because the victims would not support police action.

However Alison Levitt QC, legal adviser to the director of public prosecutions, concluded that “had the police and prosecutors taken a different approach” charges could have been brought against Savile in relation to three victims.

The police report said it would be “naive” to view the case as the isolated behaviour of a “rogue celebrity” – but the “context of the 1960s and 1970s” should be recognised.

“It was an age of different social attitudes and the workings of the criminal justice system at the time would have reflected this,” it said.

It said institutions involved must do “all they can to make their procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults as robust and rigorous as possible”.

David Cameron’s official spokesman said the Prime Minister believes it “is absolutely right that every institution involved gets to the bottom of what has gone on”.

The BBC said it was “appalled” that Jimmy Savile preyed on

victims on its premises and again apologised to those affected.

A spokesman said: "The police report into Jimmy Savile contains shocking revelations. As we have made clear, the BBC is appalled that some of the offences were committed on its premises."

Peter Watt, director of child protection advice and awareness at NSPCC, said Savile was one of the most prolific sex offenders the NSPCC has dealt with in its 129-year history.

He said: "It's clear Savile cunningly built his entire life into gaining access to vulnerable children.

"The sheer scale of Savile's abuse over six decades simply beggars belief."

Savile accusations 'censored'

Detailed accusations about Jimmy Savile's sex crimes were censored after viewers tried to post them on a BBC tribute web page.

The comments, which included one person who wrote "One of my best friends in 1972 was molested by this creep Savile. He was never the same again. Killed himself in 1985. How's About That Then?", were stopped from being published by a team of moderators employed by the corporation.

The details were included in thousands of pages of evidence gathered during an inquiry by former journalist Nick Pollard into Newsnight's decision to drop its Savile investigation which were published today by the BBC.

A transcript of an interview between Mr Pollard and former director general George Entwistle refers to examples of the

comments, including one person who wrote: "He was a paedophile. You may not like the truth but he was. It will all tumble out now."

Another wrote: "Sorry to rain on the parade of all the well-wishers, but he was infamous in Scarborough. I would not have been letting my son sit on his knee."

During his interview, Mr Entwistle said he thought moderators may have been affected by "anxiety" after details of a hoax, which claimed Savile had been challenged about his crimes on an episode of Have I Got News For You, were published online.

He told Mr Pollard: "I have seen an email where moderators are put on alert about not publishing stuff that is to do with this hoax, I think that might be part of the story about the pre-conditioning of their minds about how to treat critical material."

Some 3,000 pages of emails, interviews and submissions from BBC executives and journalists, including Newsnight presenter Jeremy Paxman, were made available online in what the BBC said was a bid to be "open and transparent".

The amount of traffic to the website crashed it this morning shortly after publication.

Acting director-general Tim Davie said : "The BBC has been open and transparent in its handling of this unhappy chapter in our history. It has not been an entirely comfortable process for us to go through but it is right that we did it this way.

"It is important that the BBC now moves forward with the lessons learned and continues to regain the public's trust."

BBC Trust chairman Lord Patten pledged at the time of the report's publication that all the evidence would be released, apart from some redactions for "legal reasons". Legal teams

are said to have been sorting through the evidence for several weeks, deciding what should be made public.

The BBC said today that roughly 3% had been redacted.

Pollard – a former Sky News executive – was appointed to head the review late last year to look into whether management failings were behind the decision to cancel a six week investigation into abuse claims against Savile in December 2011, weeks before a Christmas tribute was broadcast.

The scandal last year claimed the scalp of Mr Entwistle little over 50 days into the job.

A separate Newsnight investigation last summer led to Lord McAlpine being wrongly accused of child abuse.

BBC Trust chairman Lord Patten said: “These documents paint a very unhappy picture, but the BBC needs to be open – more open than others would be – in confronting the facts that lie behind Nick Pollard’s report.

“A limited amount of text has been blacked out for legal reasons, but no-one could say that the effect has been to sanitise this material, which again puts a spotlight on some of our failings.

“We need to acknowledge these shortcomings and learn from them.”

In one email headed “Jimmy Savile – paedophile”, producer Meirion Jones, who was involved in establishing the axed Newsnight report, flagged up the idea of an investigation just hours after the presenter’s death was announced.

He proposed the suggestion, possibly for Panorama, because he said some of the girls who had been molested by Savile were ready to talk about their experiences.

He wrote: “Some of the girls are now prepared to talk about

this which might make a core to a film about what Jimmy Savile really got up to – and of course he's dead so he can't sue."

His emails also contain vivid transcripts of the sexual activities in which girls at Duncroft approved school – where Savile was a regular visitor – were encouraged to take part.

In another email, which had already been made public, BBC executive Nick Vaughan-Barratt said he felt uncomfortable about preparing a BBC obituary for Savile.

He wrote: "I'd feel v queasy about obit. I saw the real truth."

Newsnight presenter Jeremy Paxman told the inquiry "the important question" was how Savile had been allowed to rise to prominence within the BBC.

He said: "What was the BBC doing promoting this absurd figure, this absurd and malign figure? And I think that has to do with the fact of the BBC having been aloof from popular culture for so long.

"Suddenly pirate radio comes along and all these people in metaphorical cardigans suddenly have to deal with an influx – once pirate radio, once pop radio is legalised, they suddenly have to deal with an influx of people from a very, very different culture and they never got control of them and I'm not sure even now they have."

Former director general Mark Thompson told the inquiry he had been approached about the Newsnight investigation by BBC journalist Caroline Hawley during a Christmas drinks party in 2011.

He said: "I remember seeing Caroline at the party because I had seen her in Tripoli, in Libya some period shortly before. But the phrase that stuck in my mind is, 'You must be worried about the Newsnight investigation into Jimmy Savile'."

Mr Thompson said the “casual remark” had not worried him because “at this point the name Jimmy Savile doesn’t ring alarm bells”.

He said: “The editor-in-chief role, it is a little bit like the Lord Chief Justice meeting someone at a cocktail party who says, ‘You must be worried about this murder trial that is going on in Liverpool’.

“There isn’t a way of engaging with it which is going to be helpful. The right thing to do is to take away the thought and to check it out, as it were, with the relevant part of the organisation, rather than sort of sailing into a ‘Really do tell me more’ sort of thing.”

Mr Thompson said he did not regard Savile as “a kind of BBC person particularly” and said he would have been more worried if the investigation had been into a current member of staff.

He said: “I mean he was someone who, you know, had not broadcast regularly for many. many years. So there was no kind of corporate alarm bell going about, you know, this”.

The emails show that at one stage a date – December 7 2011 – had been pencilled in for the screening of the Newsnight investigation, until programme editor Peter Rippon decided the report needed to focus on whether the Crown Prosecution Service had dropped a probe into Savile’s activities.

A lengthy “treatment” for the item is also among the items released today, going into detail about all the elements of the report.

Meirion Jones warned just days before the planned broadcast that it should go ahead because otherwise the BBC would be accused of a “cover-up” and a scandal could blow up.

He wrote: “I think if we go ahead with TX next week there will be minor embarrassment to the BBC. If we cancel or delay till

after Christmas there is a risk of another BBC scandal on the scale of the Queen or Jonathan Ross and similar damage to our core value of trust.”

He urged the broadcast to go ahead because he said it would come out eventually, adding: “We know News International are all over this story.

“Some of the victims were called by Sky.”

On the proposed day of transmission, editor Peter Rippon was still unsatisfied with progress on the report, saying in one email to a news publicist: “We have been looking at the story but it is far from clear that it will ever be strong enough for us even to run it. I am not satisfied that it is.”

By December 9, the decision was taken to not pursue the story any further when the CPS said its investigation had been curtailed due to a lack of evidence.

In another email Mr Rippon suggested that ITV’s decision to commission a documentary into Savile’s abuse would make the commercial broadcaster less rigorous than the BBC.

“The danger for ITN here is that what this really shows is that the rigour and standards of proof we apply to our journalism is much higher than their own. Someone needs to make that clear to them,” he wrote.

A now discredited blog posted by Mr Rippon to clarify the decisions behind the Newsnight decision-making prompted an exchange of emails with the show’s presenter Jeremy Paxman, who pointed out it failed to address many of the issues.

But Mr Paxman went on to express his sympathies for the way the programme editor seemed to be carrying the can.

He wrote: “Just for the record I think it is very unfair (and sadly not at all untypical) that the BBC has dumped all this on one individual. It will pass. But I think the BBC’s

behaviour now is almost as contemptible as it was then.”