

Witness Name: Liz Reason, Chair of Green Party Executive
(GPEX)
Statement No.: 2
Exhibits: 1
Dated: 21 March 2019

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Witness Statement of Liz Reason, Chair of the Executive of the Green Party of England and Wales

I, Liz Reason, will say as follows:-

Further to my appearance before the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) on 14 March 2019, IICSA have requested that I provide a supplemental written statement on behalf of the Green Party.

I provide this requested supplemental written statement below and hope that this information is helpful. Please don't hesitate to let me know if the Green Party can assist the Inquiry in any further way.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed:

DPA

Dated: 21 March 2019

Witness Name: Liz Reason, Chair of Green Party Executive (GPEx)
Statement No.: 2
Exhibits: 1
Dated: 21 March 2019

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

EXHIBIT [] / 1 – Supplemental written statement

Further to my appearance before the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) on 14 March 2019, IICSA have requested that I provide a supplemental written statement on behalf of the Green Party.

I provide this requested supplemental written statement below, providing further information on a number of points of interest to IICSA. The statement, as requested, does not reflect the order of the questions posed by IICSA prescriptively, and instead covers the points of interest in a free-flowing statement.

IICSA have requested further information concerning the Green Party response to an email dated 17 December 2014 (GNP000016), containing a serious allegation of child sexual abuse against a Green Party member.

For ease of comprehension, I would like to divide the Green Party's response into two parts. The first part concerns our response when the email was originally received in December 2014; the second part our response from November 2018, when IICSA provided us with a copy of the email. Different staff, governance members, safeguarding and disciplinary processes were in place at each time.

First response – 2014

Our investigation into how the Green Party responded to the email when it was received in December 2014 is ongoing. From the information ascertained so far it appears that key officers spoke to the member accused of child sexual abuse in the email and established that no child sexual abuse charges had been brought against them. Our current safeguarding team's investigation into the detail of this initial response, and the reasoning behind it, continues.

In August 2015 IICSA wrote to the Green Party, requesting the Party provide all material in its possession pertaining to child sexual abuse

In October 2015 Lyuba Herbert, then Governance Administrator for the Green Party, asked Party colleagues for any information they possessed on their email systems pertaining to child

sexual abuse. Adam Stacey, then Membership Officer for the Green Party, sent the GNP000016 email he had received to Lyuba. Lyuba then sent it onto IICSA, along with other material pertaining in any way to child sexual abuse found on Green Party email systems, in response to their request.

Over the course of late 2015 and 2016 Lyuba Herbert, Adam Stacey (Membership Officer) and Chris Luffingham (Executive Director, to whom Adam forwarded the GNP000016 email) left the employ of the Green Party. Their email accounts were archived and not passed onto new staff so internal knowledge of the GNP000016 knowledge was lost.

Second response – 2018 & 2019

On 8 November 2018 the Inquiry sent a Rule 9 letter to the Green Party, which included a copy of the GNP000016 email.

This copy was the first time any current officers and staff in the Party had seen the GNP000016 email. The copy was seen by myself (in post as GPEx Chair from September 2018), Nick Martin (in post as CEO since December 2015) and Matt Browne (in post as Governance Officer since August 2017). None of us had been in Green Party Governance or staff positions in autumn 2015, and this was the first time any of us had seen the GNP000016 email.

Nick Martin and Matt Browne commenced initial internal inquiries into the email. They established that the person accused in the email no longer held any Green Party position (at a local, regional or national level) and had not since 2015. This meant that the accused had no access to Green Party data, and no position of authority in the Party, or authority in the community conferred by Party activities.

These internal enquiries established that any safeguarding risk was lower than it had been when the email was sent in December 2014, when the accused had held positions in their local Party.

Nick Martin and Matt Browne had to wait for the Green Party's new Safeguarding Policy to be approved before commencing more in-depth inquiries. The new Safeguarding Policy was approved by GPEx on 9 March 2019 and appointed Nick and Matt as Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Assistant respectively. The new Policy gave them the authority to mount safeguarding investigations.

On 13 March Nick Martin and Matt Browne used their new authority to commence a safeguarding investigation into the GNP000016 email. The accused was suspended (on a no-fault basis) by the Green Party Regional Council from Green Party membership on 18 March, for the duration of the investigation. On 20 March the suspended member resigned from the Green Party.

The safeguarding investigation will continue, to establish the facts of the 2014 response and to learn lessons from it.

Apology

On 14 March, at the Green Party hearing, I told IICSA that I had only seen the GNP000016 email the day before.

This was incorrect, as I was copied into the email on 8 November 2018 by Nick Martin and Matt Browne when it was sent to the Green Party by IICSA. I understood it was their responsibility to follow it up and they then made the initial internal inquiries described above.

I forgot that I had seen the email in November 2018. I apologise to IICSA for this memory lapse.

Additional clarification

During the hearing on 14 March, I was asked about whether the Green Party had received complaints about the Challenor affair.

I misunderstood the question as relating to the period before David Challenor's conviction. I can now clarify that four formal complaints were received by the Green Party in August and early September 2018 over the Challenor affair. They were complaints about Name Redacted behaviour.

Name Redacted resigned from the Green Party in September 2018, meaning that our complaints system no longer had jurisdiction over her. The four complaints were then placed on hold. They were however passed to the Verita investigative team in September 2018, to consider as part of their investigation. There were also a number of informal complaints about the way that the party was handling the situation.

I apologise for any mis-information given to the hearing on this point and would like to take this opportunity to put the record straight.

Concluding thoughts

I acknowledge, on the behalf of the Green Party, the failures in our response to the GNP000016 email when received in December 2014.

The Green Party apologises for these failures.

I can assure IICSA that we are working hard to ensure that they will not be repeated.

We are a larger, more professional party than was the case in 2014.

As of this month we have a new safeguarding policy, drawn up with professional input from child protection professionals, which specifically addresses the causes of previous safeguarding failure. The new safeguarding policy has created a professional safeguarding team to mount detailed safeguarding investigations. The Policy will be publically available on our website (www.greenparty.org.uk) from April. A training programme is to be instigated to ensure that the safeguarding policy is applied at all levels of the Party.

A safeguarding investigation into the GNP000016 email was launched days after the new safeguarding policy was approved in March 2019 and is now well underway.