



NEWS RELEASE

Date Issued Friday 22 May 2015

PUBLICATION OF STARMER REVIEW

An independent review of the prosecution of three interlinked cases involving sex abuse and terrorist-related charges has found no improper motivation in the decisions or actions taken by the team involved and that they were concerned to fulfil their professional duties.

The detailed Review, carried out by Sir Keir Starmer QC also found that there were shortfalls in the service provided by particular team members and Counsel. These mainly involve individual failures around strategic planning; management of the cases and in the communication and consultation with victims and witnesses. It concludes that in these key areas the PPS and Counsel let the victims down.

Publishing the report today (Friday May 22, 2015) at Belfast Chambers, the Director of Public Prosecutions Barra McGrory QC said: "I commissioned this independent review so that all concerns could be openly and objectively explored. I commend Sir Keir for the rigour of his approach and accept without reservation all of his recommendations.

"I take very seriously the failings identified particularly in the quality and timeliness of the decision-making at key points by senior members of this prosecution team.

"I want to take this opportunity to express as Director of Public Prosecutions a sincere apology to the three victims in these cases. It is clear that our service to them fell far short of the standard that they – and indeed the PPS – would expect. And I also want to say, to them and all other victims of sex abuse offences, that I am committed to ensuring that what happened in these cases will not be allowed to happen again."

Reflecting on the key recommendations of the report, the Director commented: "I agree with Sir Keir that these were difficult and complicated cases.

"I commissioned this review to ensure both the identification of issues in the handling and the prosecution of these cases and also any recommendations for

improvement. This was to ensure that our service is consistently of the highest quality.

“Acknowledging the recommendations, I have already put in place a programme of changes to ensure compliance with the high standards we expect in the prosecution of all cases.

“This includes new requirements on the deployment of case management strategies; consultations with victims and witnesses and improved service level agreements with Counsel, all of which will be supported by intensive training for relevant staff.

“I also consider that these cases have demonstrated the importance of a formalised strategic case management approach. This acknowledges that while such practices exist informally, a new system is required to ensure a consistency of approach.

“I have also decided to bring forward plans for a new centralised unit of senior prosecutors that will have a single focus on such serious prosecutions. I intend that this unit will be fully operational in a number of months.”

Concluding his remarks on the report the Director added: “I believe Sir Keir makes an important point at the opening of the report when he states that the outcomes of the cases may not have been different if particular decisions had been taken differently.

“I would like to add that while the outcome of any case is outside of the PPS’ control, the conduct of the prosecution is where we are fully answerable.

“I hope that our actions in commissioning a robust review and in our swift and determined response to its recommendations will assure the victims in these cases, and the wider public, that the PPS is committed to providing a high quality prosecutorial service to everyone in Northern Ireland.”

ENDS

Note to Editors

1. The full report can be accessed [here](#) at 1pm Friday 22 May 2015
2. The Terms of Reference for the Review were:
 - Consideration of all aspects of the handling and conduct of the prosecutions by the PPS
 - Consideration of all relevant files relating to the prosecutions
 - Conduct of all relevant interviews with whomsoever the Reviewer requires
 - Identification of any recommendations to improve the services of the PPS
3. The Review began in November 2014 with a scoping review of all files. A series of consultations with the three complainants commenced in December

2014. The Review was submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions on May 6, 2015

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