

**Mr Martin Smith**

**Solicitor to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse**

**By Email only:** [solicitors@iicsa.org.uk](mailto:solicitors@iicsa.org.uk)

**CC:** Mark Pack, President of the Liberal Democrats

Damian Pitts, Steeles Law

**15 June 2020**

Dear Mr Smith

I am writing to you on behalf of the Liberal Democrats (the “**Party**”), in my role as a member of the Federal Board of the Party. Please find below a response to your letter dated 5th June 2020 requesting details of the steps the Party have taken to implement the recommendations in the final report published on 25 February 2020 by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (“**IICSA**”).

***Background***

This response covers the steps taken to implement not only Recommendation 3 (as referred to in your letter) but also Recommendation 5. For ease of references, these recommendations were:

- **Recommendation 3** - “Government, **political parties** and other Westminster institutions must have whistleblowing policies and procedures which cover child sexual abuse and exploitation. Every employee must be aware that they can raise any concerns using these policies and that the policies are not limited to concerns specific to a person’s employment”.
- **Recommendation 5:** “All political parties registered with the Electoral Commission in England and Wales must ensure that they have a comprehensive safeguarding policy. All political parties must also ensure that they have procedures to accompany their policies, in order that politicians, prospective politicians, staff and volunteers know how to enact their party’s policy, which must be published online. All political parties must

update their policies and procedures regularly, and obtain expert safeguarding advice when doing this.”

### ***Steps taken to implement the Recommendations***

In discussion between Amanda Curtin (the Party’s Pastoral Care Officer, who is a trained social worker), Mark Pack (as President of the Party) and me (as a member of the Federal Board, with responsibility for disciplinary matters) it was agreed that the following steps should be taken to implement the recommendations:

1. Review and, if necessary, amend the Party’s whistleblowing policy and procedures to ensure it covers child sexual abuse and exploitation.
2. Review and, if necessary, amend the Party’s safeguarding policies to ensure they are comprehensive.
3. Review and, if necessary, amend the safeguarding procedure in order that politicians, prospective politicians, staff and volunteers know how to enact their party’s policy.
4. Obtain expert safeguarding advice when undertaking the reviews described above.
5. Ensure every employee is aware that they can raise any concerns using these policies and that the policies are not limited to concerns specific to a person’s employment.
6. Ensure the amended policies and procedures are published online.

### ***Reviewing the Party’s policies and procedures***

Amanda and I reviewed and amended the Party’s safeguarding policy and code of conduct for working with children and vulnerable adults. We amended it to:

- reflect the expert safeguarding advice we obtained (as described below);
- clarify and expand on the procedure for whistleblowing in relation to sexual abuse allegations (see pages 10-12 of the policy [here](#)); and
- ensure the safeguarding policy and code of conduct is comprehensive, including by adding a new section on safeguarding at Party events, and including more detailed guidance on appropriate and inappropriate behaviours when working with young people and vulnerable adults.

### ***Obtaining expert safeguarding advice***

On 25 March 2020, Amanda Curtin and I spoke with Professor June Thoburn (Emeritus Professor of Social Work at the University of East Anglia) who was the expert who reviewed the Party's policies and procedures on behalf of IICSA, to understand and implement her recommendations for best practice in whistleblowing and safeguarding policies and procedures.

She had had a chance to review the Party's policies and procedures again ahead of the call and confirmed that she thought the Party's existing policies were already generally in line with what she considers best practice. She was pleased to see that we had a separate policy on safeguarding (as opposed to purely disciplinary issues).

However, she did have three key recommendations which have now been implemented:

Subject	Recommendation	Response
Differentiating between safeguarding and working with children	Make it clear that safeguarding is a responsibility for all members of the party at all time but provide additional detailed guidance for members and employees working directly with children or vulnerable adults on a regular basis including DBS checks.	The Party did already have a separate code of conduct for working with children but this has now been strengthened and referred to in the safeguarding policy.
Publication	Make the policies more prominent and accessible on the party's website both to non-members and members (as they were previously only accessible through the members' area).	The safeguarding policy/code of conduct are now available on the main website here: <a href="https://www.libdems.org.uk/complaints-compliments">https://www.libdems.org.uk/complaints-compliments</a> .  Copies have been sent to all local party chairs along with an introduction to safeguarding document ('Steps to Safeguarding').
Consider a policy for specific events	Review and, where appropriate, implement best practice from other parties' policies on specific events. This policy should be proportionate to the size and nature of the event	Additional advice on when safeguarding may be needed at Party events has been added to the code of conduct.

	(e.g. a safeguarding lead and policy for conference or at a drinks event where under18s are invited may be necessary, but not at local party AGMs).	
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### ***Training employees and Party volunteers***

The Party's safeguarding policy and code of conduct were already clear that they applied to all persons acting on behalf of the Party at all times, whether as an employee, trustee, candidate, volunteer or otherwise.

To ensure wide awareness, Amanda has designed training to be delivered to Party employees and volunteers to ensure (i) that politicians, prospective politicians, staff and volunteers know how to enact their party's policy and (ii) every employee is aware that they can raise any concerns using these policies and that the policies are not limited to concerns specific to a person's employment. This training is being rolled out to the Party membership over the course of the next few months, will be presented at the next Party conference, and will be available as a recording for future reference.

### ***Ensure the amended policies and procedures are published online***

The relevant policies and procedures were published online on 22 April 2020 at - <https://www.libdems.org.uk/complaints-compliments>

I hope that this response addresses your request but if you have any further questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Alice Thomas

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