

***Eaves, Unit 2.03 Canterbury Court, 1-3 Brixton Road, London, SW9 6DE  
End Violence Against Women Coalition, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London, EC2A 3EA  
Equality Now, 1 Birdcage Walk, London, SW1H 9JJ  
Object, PO Box 63639, London, SW9 1BQ  
Rape Crisis (England and Wales), BCM Box 4444, London, WC1N 3XX***

George Entwistle  
Director General, BBC  
Broadcasting House  
Portland Place,  
London W1A 1AA

18 October 2012

Dear Mr Entwistle,

### **Re Jimmy Savile Inquiries**

We warmly welcome your announcement of independent Inquiries into matters relating to Jimmy Savile's abuse of girls and boys over a number of decades. Your response to this matter sends a clear message about the seriousness with which you regard the abuse of women and children at the BBC.

As you are aware, the continuing disclosures from women and men who were abused by Savile at the BBC are causing serious damage to the good reputation of the BBC. They are also prompting many other survivors of sexual violence to seek support from Rape Crisis Centres around the country.

Our organisations are all specialists in the field of sexual abuse or violence against women and girls more broadly. Amongst our members, we have a wealth of expertise from frontline services supporting children and adults who have been subject to sexual violence, many of whom are adult survivors of childhood abuse. We also include academics, lawyers and policy and campaigning experts in this field.

It is important to start by setting out the facts about sexual violence and harassment. These are forms of abuse that are overwhelmingly experienced by women and girls. They are committed by men and boys and are both a cause and consequence of women's inequality. It is therefore imperative that the inquiries look at gender relations within the BBC if it is to really understand what went wrong. Sexual violence and harassment are unfortunately common in the lives of women and girls. According to the Home Office, around 60,000 women a year are raped and NSPCC research in 2011 showed that almost one in 10 children aged 11-17 (9.4%) experienced sexual abuse in the past year. Teenage girls aged between 15-17 reported the highest rates of sexual abuse. Sexual harassment is extremely common. It is still routinely experienced by many women in the workplace, including the media, and is also common in public places and in schools (YouGov). While some commentators may dismiss this as minor or trivial – referring to it as 'banter' – women and girls experience it as part of a spectrum of abuse, as evidenced by the BBC female

presenters and staff members who saw their experiences of sexual harassment and Savile's behaviour as connected to a culture of sexism.

In our oral evidence to the Leveson Inquiry in January on media reporting on violence against women and girls we argued that the media has a critical democratic role to play in exposing these crimes, but that there are systemic failures across the media with the treatment of this issue, including undermining victims and minimising abuse.

We would ask that the following are considered in the establishment and work of the Inquiries:

**Inquiry into the culture and practices of the BBC during the years Jimmy Savile worked there.**

We welcome the appointment of a senior female judge, Dame Janet Smith, to lead this Inquiry. We believe that to have public confidence and credibility the Inquiry must also demonstrate that it is asking the right questions and drawing on expertise about sexual violence. To this end we make the following suggestions:

- Work closely with sexual violence experts. Professor Liz Kelly, Director of the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit of the London Metropolitan University and Co-Chair of End Violence Against Women is a leading expert on sexual violence, both domestically and internationally and would bring a considerable amount of expertise to the Inquiry. We also suggest that Dame Janet Smith works with Rape Crisis England and Wales – a frontline organisation with decades of expertise in supporting women and girls who experience sexual violence, especially adults who were sexually abused as children.
- Take an evidence-based approach to looking at the culture and practices of the BBC that allowed Savile to abuse on the scale and over the period of time that he did. There is a great deal of evidence about the connections between women's representation and employment, experiences of sexual harassment, institutional sexism and sexual abuse. We believe, as do some of your presenters and staff, that this broader context must form part of the Inquiry.
- Look at the BBC's *current* cultures and practices, this includes, but is far broader than, child protection policies.
- Work closely with police and other investigations into the failure to protect girls and boys from Savile by other institutions including schools and the NHS. It would be beneficial to look at common factors and differences between the failures by the different institutions.

**Inquiry into the decision by Newsnight to drop an investigation into why the police dropped a sexual abuse case**

We would urge that Nick Pollard, when carrying out his Inquiry, takes account of matters that we raised in our evidence to the Leveson Inquiry this year about the way that reporting and editorial decisions are made in relation to sexual and other violence against women and girls.

We note that Newsnight Editor Peter Rippon wrote in his blog of 2<sup>nd</sup> October:

*... If we could establish some sort of institutional failure we would have a much stronger story.*

*....Some of the factors on the other side [against continuing the investigation] were: Newsnight is not normally interested in celebrity expose. Savile was unable to defend himself. What was the public interest served by reporting it given he is dead? The nature of the allegations and the level of proof required. The fact the incidents were 40 years ago.*

Peter Rippon's reasoning appears to be that (1) the discovery of 'institutional failure' would have solid news value and was therefore worth pursuing but that perhaps (2) the exposure of a prominent BBC television presenter's rape and sexual abuse of girls over decades did not in and of itself have news value and, further, that this was perhaps considered merely 'celebrity expose'. If this is the case, we find this deeply worrying. Women have campaigned for decades to expose the nature and scale of sexual violence and the media has a critical role to play in shining a light on this hidden issue. Perpetrators like Savile rely on the secrecy, shame and, in his case celebrity status, to create the impunity which allows them to keep offending.

We believe that, as a public service broadcaster, the BBC has a duty to investigate an issue such as this from an evidence based perspective, not least as Newsnight and other BBC programmes are reporting on current sexual abuse scandals such as those in Rochdale and other British towns. Like Savile, a large number of girls were abused by highly manipulative men who relied on secrecy and targeting vulnerable victims to hide their abusive behaviour. Also, like Savile, these current cases involve systemic failures by institutions that should have protected the girls.

The ITV documentary on Savile and subsequent revelations cast serious doubt on Mr Rippon's editorial judgement as the BBC arguably missed one of the biggest stories of recent times. The context here must also include that the BBC was planning to, and did, broadcast tributes to Savile after the Newsnight investigation was dropped.

We would ask you to consider as part of this Inquiry whether prejudicial attitudes, for example that minimise violence against women, whether explicit or implicit, played any part in the editorial judgement made in this matter. We also recommend that perhaps as a consequence of this Inquiry you look into whether all those working in BBC newsrooms, from journalists through to senior editors, are acquainted with the nature, scale and law relating to all forms of violence against women. This area of policy can unfortunately be taken for granted or minimised as 'women's issues' within a culture of explicit or implicit institutional sexism. In fact these issues are as interesting and complex as any other, and we feel that many strong political and human interest stories are being missed because of a lack of insight and understanding of the prevailing forces that contribute to what might sometimes be seen as a normalisation and acceptance of the inevitability of sexual violence. This should be an issue taken seriously by society as a whole and one on which the BBC should feel an obligation to contribute better understanding.

One suggestion we would make that might restore some public confidence in the BBC would be to make specialist women's organisations who support young people and adult survivors of sexual abuse a priority funding area for Children in Need.

We appreciate your robust response to this crisis and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



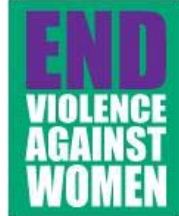
Heather Harvey  
Eaves

Holly Dustin  
End Violence  
Against Women

Jacqueline Hunt  
Equality Now

Anna van Heeswijk  
Object

Lee Eggleston  
Rape Crisis (England and Wales)



Cc Prime Minister David Cameron  
Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg  
Leader of the Opposition Ed Miliband  
Nick Pollard  
Dame Janet Smith  
Chris Patten  
John Whittingdale  
Lord Leveson