

From the Chairman

The Rt Hon Maria Miller MP  
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
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18 October 2012



I was grateful for the opportunity of a talk yesterday evening about the independent inquiries which the BBC has set in hand in the light of allegations surrounding Jimmy Savile. It may help to set out for you how the BBC Trust will exercise its leadership of this work.

Alongside the rest of the BBC, the Trust shares the public revulsion at the allegations surrounding Jimmy Savile. We are determined to ensure that all aspects of this issue as they relate to the BBC – in the past, currently and in terms of future conduct and practice – should be fully and independently examined.

The Trust is sovereign body of the BBC, constitutionally separate from the Executive Board and responsible for representing the public interest in our oversight of the Executive Board. In this role we recognise the wider issues of public trust which these allegations raise for the BBC, and we will spare no effort in pursuing and acting on the concerns which have been raised.

In line with our Charter duties, we have taken responsibility for overseeing the establishment of the two independent inquiries which the Director-General announced on 16 October. So we approved the detailed terms of reference for each inquiry, and the appointment of Dame Janet Smith and Nick Pollard as leaders of the Savile and Newsnight inquiries respectively. I have spoken direct to each of them to reinforce the Trust's expectation that they will conduct their work with the fullest rigour and act wholly independently of the BBC. We have informed the Executive both that there must be resources available so that each inquiry is supported by an independent secretariat and that the Executive must provide access to all relevant BBC staff, information and records. With our agreement, in order to ensure no actual or perceived conflicts in the BBC's engagement with the inquiries, Dame Fiona Reynolds rather than George Entwistle will act as Chair of the Executive Board for any relevant discussion; and George and any other Executive Directors personally affected will recuse themselves from relevant discussion and decisions.

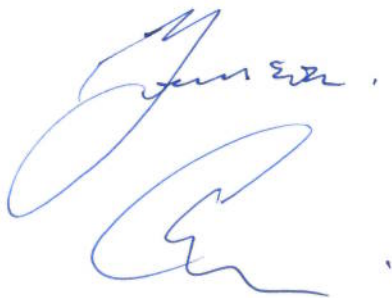
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The inquiries must reach their conclusions independently of the Trust as well as the BBC Executive. However, the Trust will keep in regular contact with the review teams, not least to ensure that the Executive is providing the resources and co-operation that is required. The reports of both inquiries will be presented initially to the Executive Board; and the Executive Board will consider them in the first instance against its Charter responsibilities for complying with legal and regulatory requirements, for editorial and other output issues and for operational management. The Executive Board will pass the inquiry reports to the Trust in full and without amendment, alongside its own assessment of the reports.

At the final stage the Trust will consider each inquiry report and Executive assessment for itself, and will take its own independent professional advice as necessary. We will consider whether the Executive's response is adequate or sufficient, and reach our own conclusions on any different or additional actions to be taken. When we have done this, we will publish each report, together with the Executive's assessment and our own action plan.

Separately, the Trust has asked the Director-General to check that the BBC's current child protection policies, processes, guidance and training are fit for purpose, alongside those on sexual harassment, bullying and whistle-blowing. This audit will be assisted by the work that the BBC Executive will conduct to assess all claims of sexual harassment from the 1970's to the present day and to identify the lessons from any past mistakes. The Trust has agreed that this assessment should involve expert independent input, and that the outcomes will also be reported to the Trust.

I hope that you can take confidence from this summary both as to the rigour and transparency of the process and as to the Trust's strategic leadership of the BBC's response. I will be taking steps to make sure all these points are fully understood in the days ahead, including through a letter to the Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, so that the public can be assured of the comprehensiveness and independence of the work in hand. I shall also make sure that you are kept fully informed of developments.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Patten', with a large, stylized flourish below it.

Lord Patten of Barnes CH  
Chairman, BBC Trust