

Exposure: The Other Side of Jimmy Savile

ITV1 Wednesday 3rd October 23.10

Approximately 12 months ago I presented a report on TV about child protection and as a result of this programme I was contacted by a person who asked me if I had ever had any information or concerns about Jimmy Savile in regards to child abuse. I have worked in the area of major crime and child protection for over 20 years so I get to hear a lot of information. I had heard rumours but up till then that is all I had heard. At this stage he was still alive and even though the person who wanted to talk to me had information about someone who claimed to have been abused by Savile, I was sceptical, because for all the years Savile had been alive, no newspaper or journalist had ever found evidence to support claims of child abuse.

Sadly by the time I got to speak to this person Savile had died. I was also aware that a BBC Newsnight programme was looking into allegations of child abuse but no programme was broadcast for editorial reasons.

Shortly after his death I spoke with this person and although it was clear that what was said about being abused by Savile had real credibility - it was a lone voice.

I say a lone voice because after speaking with the first person, who was instrumental in kick-starting my investigation, it became very clear that this was going to be a difficult investigation as there was so much fear.

I teamed up at this early stage with freelance Producer/Director Lesley Gardiner. I knew just how sensitive and tight we needed to keep our investigation, and having worked with Lesley on other sensitive programmes, I knew together we could keep it confidential.

The first person very quickly led me to speak to another lady who had also claimed to have been abused. The link between the two women was their residential school, Duncroft in Surrey. I then identified a third woman, and it was clear that what they say they had suffered at the hands of Savile had had a huge impact on their lives.

I was then made aware of a possible witness to an assault by Savile which if true would be vital - because not only did it take the focus away from Duncroft, but the witness claimed they actually witnessed Savile carrying out an indecent assault on a 14 yr old girl.

I was at a point where I had three allegations of sexual assault from girls who had been to school at Duncroft and one witness to an alleged sexual assault at BBC Leeds. Two agreed not only to go on camera but also to give up their anonymity, speaking out for the first time. Given what they were talking about, and the fear they had, this decision was incredibly brave.

Continuing to look for further accounts and people who could have information resulted in me speaking to both celebrities who worked with Savile, people in the media industry who had interviewed him, as well as people who were now adults but who had met him as children.

Identifying a number of people who worked with Savile, one in particular had very interesting stories to tell. A former newspaper journalist called Alan Leeke from Manchester, he had a number of encounters, early on in his career. He painted a picture of a very energetic character, but almost constantly in the company of teenage girls.

He talked about how Savile would take young girls out in his Rolls-Royce, and about teenage girls who he knew and who had talked about Savile and things that had happened. It was such a concern for Alan that he raised the issue of Savile receiving his OBE and Knighthood with an MP. He couldn't believe he was about to be awarded such honours when people must have heard about the rumours of young girls. Alan received a response that nobody had heard or knew of any concerns.

My search continued and I spoke to lots of people whilst at the same time being very conscious that I did not want the fact that I was undertaking an investigation to get out into the media.

I had a significant development when I identified a separate group of women who got to know Savile through visiting Top of The Pops - although you were meant to be 15 years old to attend .

Two of them agreed to speak to me on camera. Again they were still both very scared and frightened to talk even after all these years and this combined with their current circumstances, meant we needed to hide their identity.

Both women talked about meeting Savile when they were 15 years old. One described Savile as having had full sexual intercourse with her aged 15 years, and the other said he had sex with her when she was 16 years old but she never consented to this and she now considers it as rape. They both gave accounts of multiple sexual assaults, and that they both contracted a sexually transmitted disease from Savile.

Having collected numerous accounts of sexual assaults and witnesses it was important to test the evidence, and for this reason I showed it to a leading Barrister, Ian Glen QC. Ian's verdict was the evidence amounted to a pattern of offending that the complainants are speaking about. There was independence between two or three groups of complainants and they are backed up to some extent by independent witnesses who observed relevant occasions of misconduct. He felt that on the evidence he had seen that it would amount to reasonable grounds for his arrest if he were alive.

We do know an investigation was carried out in 2007 by Surrey Police - but was never pursued with any prosecution. We have no idea if Savile was ever formally interviewed or arrested as a result of that allegation. Although Surrey police have stated it was a single complaint relating to Duncroft , we know that at least two women were subsequently interviewed, and statements taken by the police, as part of this enquiry.

I spoke to other people who alleged abuse and five agreed to go on camera and tell their stories. I don't believe I did anything special, I simply used all the techniques and skills I've gathered over my many years as a detective and now as an investigative reporter - to speak with people who might have information. I am very aware of the highly sensitive nature of my investigation as well as the absolute need to protect both my sources and the women involved. What I won't do is give away exactly how I tracked down the women and witnesses because this would expose the very people I said I would protect.

We were very careful not to speak with people in detail about their accounts of abuse before we interviewed them. In relation to the two women who disclosed allegations of rape I had no idea they were going to disclose such serious assaults. Although I have heard many accounts of child sexual abuse, I found these accounts particularly upsetting. So much so that the Producer and I spoke a lot over the next few days about how emotional we had found the interviews and how we would look to support everyone involved.

Those that know me will know I am dedicated to exposing wrong doing. Through the work I do around child protection I stand up and tackle issues that so many ignore or turn a blind eye to. I am sure that as a result of the programme some people will be critical and say the memory of Savile should be left alone. But should it? Does that mean that whatever has happened in the past, if it relates to someone who is dead, we should leave alone? Try telling that to a historian.

This film is the culmination of almost a year's work, which has taken Lesley and I on a rollercoaster of emotions. Hearing very shocking accounts of child sexual abuse which have clearly had a huge impact of people lives.

The great shame is that Savile is not alive to face the allegations - but I firmly believe that we are right to tackle this highly sensitive subject and allow these women to have a voice - a voice that for many was not heard whilst they were children.

I know some people will have fixed views and they won't be changed - but all I would ask is watch the programme before you make your mind up.

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