

Much has been reported and written already about inappropriate sexual behaviour and harassment in Parliament over these past two weeks. I thought long and hard about whether to write this column on it but then decided it would be considered odd if I didn't.

I think it is important to start by saying that some of what is being reported is rumour but some is not and it is a shame that the list that was published contained details of consensual relationships between adults alongside allegations of inappropriate or even illegal behaviour. It blurs the serious allegations and the gossip into one, which they absolutely should not be. I also think it is important to say that contrary to the media reports I don't think poor behaviour is rife within Westminster. I know everyone has a poor view of politicians but we are not all bad! I have worked in and out of Westminster as both a researcher, a senior staffer and an MP on and off since 1996 and have never been a victim of sexual harassment.

But what this whole sorry affair reveals is that there is no proper complaints procedure for those who are a victim. We have no HR function as such. We all employ our own staff (two of mine have been with me since day one). They have a hotline to call but from the feedback from parliamentary staffers it isn't that great. Complaints to whips or other functions within Parliament have apparently fallen on deaf ears. This is not a good system and although saddened it has taken a dossier like the one released to prompt reform I am pleased that a better system of support will be put in place.

No-one should be a victim of sexual harassment in the workplace and Parliament is not immune for that and so the sooner we have protections in place the better.