

Janner abuse accusers drop damages claim

The peer's family say the collapse of the case restores his reputation

James Gillespie

A legal case accusing the late Lord Janner of child sexual abuse has collapsed after six men seeking damages from his £2m estate abandoned their claims.

The Janner family said the decision cleared their father's name and was a vindication of their decision to fight the claims. "Our father's reputation as a man who devoted his life to good has been restored and . . . justice has finally been done," they said.

The six men, who alleged they had been abused by the former Labour MP when they were children, were represented by the solicitor Slater and Gordon, which submitted documents to the High Court last week, announcing the six were discontinuing their cases.

The surprise development comes after questions were raised by The Sunday Times about the validity of the allegations and the character of the claimants, some of whom had serious criminal convictions. The withdrawal means the civil action against Janner's estate has in effect ended. Nine claimants in the High Court have now pulled out – the three others dropped their compensation claims in March – and legal sources believe it is unlikely anyone else will take action.

The development presents a serious problem for Alexis Jay, chairwoman of the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse (IICSA), which is devoting a strand of its investigations to the Janner case.

Some of the claimants in the civil case are due to give evidence to Jay, although hearings are unlikely to begin until next year.

Janner's family had made clear they would fight the accusations and that all the claimants would face detailed cross-examination during a civil case. The family believes the prospect of cross-examination led the claimants to withdraw.

In a joint statement Janner's three children, Daniel, 60, a leading QC, Laura, 53, the senior rabbi to the Movement for Reform Judaism, and Marion, 57, a mental health campaigner, said: "We want to thank all those who stood by

our family through this nightmare. The allegations against our late father were wholly unsubstantiated and an appalling injustice.

"Although our beloved father never lived to see the claimants abandon each and every one of their claims, we now have the peace of mind that our father's reputation as a man who devoted his life to good has been restored."

Daniel Janner added: "All these claims were dropped because they were based on false allegations. Criminals had tried to frame my innocent late father. They knew that their hurtful lies would not stand up to cross-examination."

Any complainant giving evidence to the Jay inquiry will not face cross-examination but the fact that some have pulled

out of the civil action could undermine any evidence they give to the IICSA.

Four of the six men were also due to give evidence in the criminal proceedings against Janner, which began before his death in December 2015. He was facing 22 charges, of which nine related to the four who have now withdrawn their claims.

The family is likely to seek the High Court's approval to wind up the estate and distribute it among the beneficiaries of Janner's will. They had already begun legal moves to challenge any complainants to file full details of their claims to the court. None had been forthcoming.

The estate was valued at around £2m after Janner's death from Alzheimer's disease at the age of 87.

Doubts had grown over many of the allegations against the late peer, although not all the alleged victims had launched legal action and few of them were specific about dates when assaults were claimed to have happened.

One said he was assaulted by Janner over a specified three-day period in 1987 but the MP's passport showed he was in Australia at the time.

Another claimed to have been assaulted by Janner while they were swimming in a pool owned by a friend of the MP. However, the friend's family denied the pair were alone in the pool and said no such offence could have taken place.

Richard Scorer, specialist abuse lawyer at Slater and Gordon, said: "Our clients have always wanted to get to the truth and to have their voices heard. With the civil cases, we knew that we would have a fight on our hands in achieving this because the civil action was launched so long after their alleged abuse.

"Our clients will focus their efforts on working with the inquiry [IICSA] to discover the truth of what really happened rather than continue to fight the civil cases against Janner's estate, which are at risk of being ruled 'out of time'."

The IICSA said: "The . . . investigation, which is entirely separate to any civil proceedings, will continue."



Janner: former Labour MP died from Alzheimer's disease in December 2015

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