# Lucy Powell faces backlash over dog whistle comment on grooming gangs



Lucy Powell, the leader of the House of Commons, has become embroiled in controversy following her comments about grooming gangs, which have sparked outrage among survivors and political opponents alike. During a recent appearance on BBC Radio 4’s *Any Questions*, when a fellow panellist mentioned a Channel 4 documentary that shared the harrowing experiences of five victims, Powell responded with a phrase that many interpreted as dismissive: “Oh, we want to blow that little trumpet now, do we? Let’s get that dog whistle out, shall we?” This reaction has been described by critics as “dog whistle politics”, suggesting a coded language that downplays the severity of the issue.

Steph, a victim of grooming gangs who chose to speak publicly, expressed her anger towards Powell's remarks, feeling that they betray a fundamental misunderstanding of the ongoing struggles faced by survivors. “It makes me angry, especially the comment of the dog whistler and stuff like that,” she said in an interview with the BBC. Victims like Steph contend that comments made by politicians can perpetuate a narrative that neglects the profound impacts of their experiences. “She’s not been through nothing herself, has she? She doesn’t know how we actually feel. We’ve got a constant reminder of it every day and it’s still going on,” she added.

The backlash against Powell’s comments has been swift and multifaceted, with calls for her resignation flooding in from various corners, including political opponents and advocacy groups. Survivors of grooming gangs have voiced a strong desire for political leaders to engage with these issues more sensitively, arguing that the historical failure to address such abuse needs urgent scrutiny. Critics charge that dismissive language can dilute the severity of the conversations surrounding grooming, especially given the alarming statistics associated with these cases. Reports have highlighted that in recent years, instances of grooming gang-related abuse have attracted increased media attention, prompting discussions about accountability and systemic failings within law enforcement.

Following the public uproar, Powell issued an apology, stating that her comments lacked the care necessary for such a sensitive topic. However, this apology has not quelled the outrage entirely; survivors and their advocates remain skeptical, insisting that the political establishment must do more than simply issue apologies. Number 10 has provided support to Powell, arguing that context matters and urging the public to consider the entirety of her comments rather than a single phrase.

Political analysts note that this incident reflects broader societal tensions regarding race, class, and crime in the UK. The discourse around grooming gangs has often become entangled with debates about immigration and community cohesion, exacerbating divisions. The intricate dynamics of public perception and media portrayal can easily lead to polarising narratives, further complicating the path toward effective policies for victim support and prevention.

In a political environment where soundbites frequently overshadow substantive discussion, it remains crucial for leaders to engage with sensitive issues such as grooming gangs thoughtfully. Survivors have made it clear that it is not just about what is said, but also how it reflects a larger understanding of trauma and accountability. As the conversation progresses, it is imperative that the voices of survivors are not rendered background noise but instead become central to the nation's discourse on such a painful and pervasive issue.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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