

Summary of Interview with Darren Tomsett on 29 January 2018

Start: 18:40 hrs

End: 19:31 hrs

Present on telephone:

Helen Wilkinson, Investigating Officer, Professional Standards Unit

Darren Tomsett, ex Detainee Custody Manager, Brook House

The background to the investigation was covered and he consented to the interview being digitally recorded. He was reminded of the complaints noted in his letter inviting him to interview. There are three complaints against him by Mr [D668] [D668]. The first in his room on 29 June 2017, when he was searched on 20 August 2017 and when his room was broken into on 26 or 27 September 2017.

DCM Tomsett had worked at Brook House from January 2015 to 08 January 2018. He had been a DCO until August 2017 working on B Wing, induction.

He had acted up as a DCM since August 2017 until he left. He was the residential manager on A and E Wings and on some days he was managing every wing in the centre because Brook House was short staffed. This was on quite a few occasions, on quite a lot of the shifts he worked. This would cover C & D wings. His role was to sign the diaries on A & E wing. He would have tasks on the Matrix looking that there were enough staff, the wing was clean, staff were completing check lists i.e. servery. He would deal with verbal complaints from detainees. Sometimes detainees were happy with his response, sometimes they were not if it was not the answer the detainee wanted. DCOs might escalate complaints if they needed to.

Oscar 2 would cover B Wing, but he would assist if needed signing off paperwork.

Mr [D668] was on the first floor of D Wing. Mr Tomsett said that he normally covered A and E wing. He would sign off on C and D Wing if he needed to. He could not remember Mr [D668] at all.

In response to 29 June 2017 and Mr Tomsett coming to Mr [D668]'s room and saying "take your stuff and get out and this had been very rude. He had been waiting for a female officer" Mr Tomsett said that he could not remember Mr [D668] and would not have spoken to him in that manner. Mr Tomsett said that he had been a DCO at the time and any DCO would have asked him to go down to reception after Mr [D668] had packed his things, picking up his paperwork from the office on the way and escorting him to reception. It was not necessarily a female DCO who takes the detainee to reception.

On 20 August 2017, Mr Tomsett had been on the roster as the DCM for A and B Wings but was in the visits area. He had no idea why he would have been in the visits area unless he had been looking for a detainee. He could be anywhere in the centre and did not necessary stay on the wings. He could not remember searching Mr [D668] or even who he was. In response to whether as a DCM he would search a detainee, Mr Tomsett said it was August when he had started to act up as a DCM. If he had searched a detainee it would have been because the area was short

staffed only. He was told there were five DCOs on visits that day and he was a DCM covering A and B. Mr Tomsett said he rarely worked in visits as he was a residential DCO and then DCM.

In response to Mr [D668] saying everybody knows Darren Tomsett is a racist and he had been nervous when he saw you in visits, Mr Tomsett said he had been accused of being a racist a number of times. He was told this was because he was doing his job. He had never been racist and certainly not in the centre. He was not happy Mr [D668] had accused him of being racist. He was doing his job and sometimes detainees did not like the answers he gave them. It was a stressful, tiring environment and detainees could get upset and agitated quickly. He dealt with people from different cultures and nationalities. He could not remember who had said this to him. Around the centre he could be speaking to a detainee who does not like what he is being told about rules and procedures and calls him a racist. He said "it is a loose term that is thrown around in there" by detainees against staff.

In response to Mr [D668] saying Mr Tomsett had said "come here in an aggressive way" Mr Tomsett said he could not remember the situation and was confident that he would not have said it this way. If he was in front of him he would not need to say come here. He would have been asked "excuse me, would you mind coming to me for a pat down search." A pat down search would be done every time there was a visit both to the visit and on the way back. He could not remember this or when he had done a pat down search in visits. He would still do the DCO role when a DCM to assist the DCOs.

In response to Mr Tomsett being described as being "very very rough, aggressive when he searched him and as he moved down his body he was squeezing him as Mr Tomsett moved down his body." Mr Tomsett said he would never be like that. The squeezing was described to Mr Tomsett as his fingers and thumbs push together as he moved down Mr [D668]'s body. Mr Tomsett said a pat down search would entail a run across the outline of the arms and run down the side of the torso and then the legs and when the person turns round and I used the back of my hands down the back and across the buttocks and down the back of the legs. You cover all areas not just pat certain areas. Mr Tomsett said he had never done squeezing to anybody he had searched. The level A search would start with the head turning and search around the collar and across the shoulder and then down each arm. Back of hands down the front. Palms down the side of the body. Check around the waistband and run palms down side of the legs. The back of the hand down his back and across the buttocks and the back of their legs. They would take the shoes off and these would be checked A metal detector may also have been used. He usually worked on the wings and not on visits.

In response to Mr [D668] feeling abused by how he had touched his body, Mr Tomsett said he had to touch his body to do search. He would have been told he would be searched. In response to other officers doing the search in a gentler way, Mr Tomsett did not know how to answer that. Other officers may not like to search and may do in a lighter way. He would do the usual search he would do. There would have to be some contact to check for concealed items. He had had no complaints about his searches.

In response to Mr [D668] saying he had challenged the search and Mr Tomsett had told him to shut up because he was doing his job, Mr Tomsett he would not have told him to shut up. He would have said he was doing his job but not to shut up.

Mr Tomsett could not remember the incident or a detainee called [D500]

In response to a female DCO being present and knowing what you were like had told Mr [D668] to come through for his visit to move Mr [D668] away from what was happening (the aggressive search) Mr Tomsett did not know what to say about that comment.

Mr Tomsett had been the wing manager for D Wing for 26 September 2017 (roster) and Mr [D668] had reported a room theft to the manager. Mr Tomsett could not remember this. Mr Tomsett said that thefts were not sanctioned. He said sometimes detainees would want you to check the theft other times they wouldn't. Sometimes they would ask for CCTV to be checked. Officers would ask for what items were missing and they could be very vague. He did not remember the incident or the conversation with Mr [D668]. Mr Tomsett said that a director would have to authorise the checking of CCTV. In the past he would ask the detainee for times and what had been taken and where it had happened. He said the doors are open during the day and people are in and out. There had been a number of theft allegations. Mr Tomsett said the detainees each had a lockable locker under their beds and could secure items in their property at reception. The locker is big enough to put in his legal papers.

In response to officers bringing Spice into the Wing, Mr Tomsett said it could be a possibility. It happens in prisons. He was not aware of any officers doing this.

In response to officers on D Wing being verbally and racially abusive to detainees, Mr Tomsett had not heard of officers behaving like this.

In response to officers provoking detainees so they could use force on the detainees, Mr Tomsett he had not heard about this.

In response to the adequacy of the mental health care in Brook House, Mr Tomsett said the RMNs have been very good at their jobs. He completed ACDT reviews and invited the RMNs to attend. The nurses were very helpful.

Mr Tomsett could not remember Mr [D668] or any of the allegations he had made. He had not seen the Panorama programme as he did not want to. He and the person who filmed this (Mr Tulley) had been on the same induction.

Mr Tomsett was happy with the conduct of the interview. He asked for a copy of the written summary to be sent to him. The address was written down off recorder.