

BROOK HOUSE INQUIRY

Second Witness Statement of Reverend Nathan Ward

1. I provide this statement in response to a second request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 16 November 2021. I, Reverend Nathan Ward, will say as follows:
2. Further to my First Witness Statement of 10 November 2021, the Inquiry have requested that I review and provide comments on some additional disclosure. This disclosure relates to the internal investigation by G4S, prepared by Mr Stephen Cotter – a G4S Risk and Assurance Manager, in relation to the comments I made both on the Panorama documentary and in public subsequent to the documentary being broadcast. This is the first time I have seen the internal investigation report (which states it is in draft) and the underlying interviews.
3. In relation to Mr Cotter's invitation to be involved with the internal investigation, I can confirm that I set out my concerns, upon legal advice, to Peter Small - a G4S Director - on 8 September 2017 (CJS0073666) seeking further information on the investigation and some requests that I needed for them to agree on to become involved. I had sought legal advice due to the threats I had faced after the Medway STC Panorama programme aired in 2016 and while I was making statements to Kent Police.¹ I had little faith in the investigation which I did not feel was independent and wanted to protect my position. I do not believe those requests were particularly onerous on G4S or would have compromised their investigation. I did not hear anything from G4S in relation to agreeing to my requests and therefore I did not wish to take part². I am now aware from the disclosure that G4S were unwilling to provide the requested safeguards. I refer you

¹ See paragraph 49 of my First Witness Statement

² See paragraph 247 of my First Witness Statement

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to section 3 of Stephen Cotter's report which confirms that no follow up was made given that G4S were not willing to agree with my requests.

4. I would like to reiterate that I had no ulterior motive in participating in the Panorama programme, apart from seeking the truth in relation to the systemic breaches of human rights. My sole motive throughout my career has been that vulnerable people were looked after in the best possible way. I am not motivated by status or money. I have not gained anything personally from years of raising concerns about G4S. If anything, challenging these systems has put me at risk and has taken a toll on my mental health. My actions were never motivated by personal gain or in advancement of my career. I am surprised and disappointed by the assertion by Jerry Petherick that my motives were questioned by Frances Crook given my involvement with Diagrama. This is particularly surprising given that I contacted Frances Crook and met with the Head of Legal for the Howard League for Penal Reform in the early 2000's to raise concerns about the operation of Medway STC.
5. Having reviewed the investigation, I believe the most important point to take away from it is that it shows in the years building up to the abuse captured by Panorama, various complaints of bullying, mismanagement and failures at Brook House were made directly to Jerry Petherick. But these repeated complaints - whether by myself, Wayne Debnam, Stacie Dean or Michelle Brown (with the latter two in particular raising concerns about staff treatment of detainees) – clearly did not result in any sufficient changes being made by the time of the Relevant Period in 2017. This can be the only conclusion on any viewing of Panorama and the wider footage that has been provided by the BBC on the way staff treated detainees. The fact that officers such as DCO Luke Instone-Brewer and DCO Babs Fagbo, two officers accused not just of mistreating detainees but dealing spice, were still in place by the Relevant Period is damning. Stacie Dean had raised concerns about these officers to Ben Saunders and Stephen Skitt as early as 2015.³ The unused BBC footage transcripts show officers appearing to openly discuss DCO Instone-Brewer being an officer who brought drugs

³ CJS007369_0003

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into the centre.⁴ It is concerning that Dan Houghton ‘forgot’ to complete the disciplinary action in his case. (CJS0073663_0007).

6. The investigation shows that complaints and grievances were consistently made against Ben Saunders in respect of his leadership of Brook House including allegations of bullying.⁵ Wayne Debnam raised a grievance of bullying by Ben Saunders and Duncan Partridge, but Jerry Petherick dismissed the grievance in March 2014. I raised serious concerns about Ben Saunders in my exit interview in April 2014 – the notes of which are appended to the investigation (CJS0073666_0003) but which I also discuss in detail at paragraph 329 of my first witness statement. Some specific concerns were also raised about Duncan Partridge and Juls Williams. Duncan Partridge raised a grievance against Ben Saunders to Jerry Petherick in September 2014 regarding bullying of Duncan and others. Stacie Dean raised a grievance against Ben Saunders in October 2014, which was later withdrawn after a grievance hearing with Lee Hanford on the basis that Ben would be “dealt with”. Her later grievance in November 2016 again included complaints about Ben Saunders. Michelle Brown also raised concerns to Jerry Petherick about Ben Saunders in an in October 2014 noting exhaustion from an excessive workload and “interactions with Ben Saunders and thinking about ‘injustices and wrongdoings both historical and recent’.”
7. Despite these repeated concerns about Ben Saunders’ management and bullying from multiple members of the Senior Management Team (SMT), including his own Deputy Director, Jerry Petherick allowed Ben Saunders to stay in his role. He also chose Ben Saunders as the individual to take over Medway in 2016 after the Panorama documentary into that centre despite full knowledge of all these concerns raised by the SMT. Mr Cotter’s interview with Jerry Petherick on 17 October 2017 confirms in 2014 that Mr Petherick did not believe Ben Saunders when he said did not have a ‘hit list’ to get rid of various staff, stating that Ben could “make unwise comments”. It confirms Mr Petherick was aware that Ben was not ensuring staff were getting lawful clearance

⁴ TRN0000023 (KENCOV1013) pg12

⁵ CJS0073663_0005-0009

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to undertake Duty Director duties in 2014, something I raised in my exit interview.⁶ He also accepted my concerns that there was “weakness in their leadership approach” in Ben and Duncan Partridge not undertaking Duty Director responsibilities.

8. I would like to point to specific parts of the disclosure I have been asked to comment on that I find particularly concerning:

- a. It is notable that senior managers who raised grievances (Stacie Dean, Wayne Debnam and Duncan Partridge) were ultimately paid off with compromise arrangements (CJS0073664_0002) as opposed to their complaints being adequately dealt with. I would like to note that I did not request or receive any additional financial benefit from my exit from G4S;
- b. The disclosure shows that numerous complaints were made against Ben Saunders but none were upheld;
- c. I am concerned that my HR file was lost, referred to in the disclosure as a ‘P’ file;
- d. Individuals who participated in the investigation seem to be unable to recall incidents;
- e. Duncan Partridge was found to have failed a drugs test. I am concerned that he was able to continue in his role as a Deputy Director of an IRC in those circumstances;
- f. I am concerned that Jerry Petherick was unable to find the email from Stacie Dean following their meeting of 3 January 2017, which was later found by Name Irrelevant (CJS0073663_0008). I refer you to paragraph 336 of my First Witness Statement which summarises this email.

9. I have the following specific concerns in relation to my exit interview with Jerry Petherick and Alison Ashcroft:

⁶ CJS0073663_0018

- a. I am concerned by the language used by Jerry Petherick that I was *“unloading on a range of issues, justifying to himself why he was leaving us”* (my emphasis). This suggests my complaints were not taken seriously and that Jerry Petherick did not fully appreciate the seriousness of my complaints – that I was somehow just venting to get it out of my system;
- b. I can confirm that I went through every point on my list of ‘points to raise’ in my exit interview;
- c. I am extremely surprised that Jerry Petherick cannot find any contemporaneous notes of the meeting and cannot remember any specific conversations on the concerns raised. I recall both Alison Ashcroft and Jerry Petherick taking notes during the meeting. The assertion that no notes were taken at an exit interview is categorically false. Mr Cotter notes that it is ‘normal management practice’ to take notes, which would have been known to both Jerry Petherick and Alison Ashcroft;
- d. I am concerned that no other follow up actions are recalled by Jerry Petherick apart from providing feedback to Ben Saunders;
- e. I am concerned that Alison Ashcroft did not perceive the meeting and allegations against Ben Saunders to be formal; and
- f. I am concerned that Alison Ashcroft and Jerry Petherick subsequently spoke to Ben Saunders about my concerns over a dinner in Cambridge. A restaurant is clearly an inappropriate and unprofessional setting for a business meeting about concerns raised by staff. It certainly would make it much more unlikely that formal notes would be made at the meeting too.

10. I would like to refute, in the strongest of terms, any allegations of bullying. This is the first time I have been informed that any or part of any allegation against me was ‘substantiated’. I can confirm that no remedial action was taken against me in relation to these allegations. This only highlights to me a lack of proper process. I can remember DCM Adam Clayton raised a complaint against me as Mr Cotter’s investigation confirms. I recall being interviewed by Sarah Newlands. I did not have a personal problem with Adam Clayton, but at times I had concerns about his

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performance particularly when acting as an Oscar. A specific example I can remember was when he failed to wear correct PPE kit during a planned C&R incident. I believe there was also an incident in which he was caught on a smoking break by Michelle Brown when he was supposed to be in a meeting with the Home Office – I believe he was suspended as a result of that incident. Adam Clayton was also the DCM involved when multiple members of staff were found to have mistreated a suicidal detainee, D4289, who was in their care on E-wing under constant supervision. Michelle Brown found that Adam Clayton failed in his duties as an officer under Rule 41 of the Detention Centre Rules.⁷ I discuss this incident in more detail at paragraphs 165 to 167 of my First Witness Statement. I would also refer to Annex 9 of my First Witness Statement, a Facebook message by DCM Adam Clayton to me on 11 May 2018 after he had watched the Panorama documentary and in which he appeared to apologise to me: *“I wanted to write as I watched the panorama documentary. I will be honest I never really understood you or what you was about. Having watched the documentary, I kinda do now.”* I believe Adam Clayton did not like my management style, perceiving that I was too sympathetic in my approach to detainees. It’s clear from the Facebook message that he later understood why I conducted myself in the way I did.

11. I would also like to comment on the opinion of Mr Cotter that I had a ‘close relationship’ with Stacie Dean. I recruited Stacie Dean as Residential Manager of Tinsley House and understand G4S promoted her as my replacement as Head of Tinsley House after I left. I do not have a personal relationship with Stacie Dean and can confirm that I have never socialised with her outside a professional context. I was contacted by Stacie Dean after she saw me in the Panorama programme and she provided me with emails which I have annexed in my First Witness Statement and summarise from paragraphs 334 to 337 of that statement. This explains the overlap in our complaints. The information in the subsequent disclosure confirms to me that her concerns were not investigated in a sufficient manner.

⁷ CJS005900

12. Finally, I would just like to make a comment in respect of Mr Cotter's interview with Michelle Brown and specifically her comments about staff involvement in drugs culture and bringing in drugs to the centre (CJS0073671_0004). I have set out in my First Witness Statement at paragraphs 126 and 296-297 my concerns about staff, including senior management, being inappropriately involved in a drugs culture at the centre. At paragraph 168 of my First Witness Statement I also set out concerns that Residential Manager Juls Williams was inappropriately close to the DCOs and would protect those in his inner circle. I have now had sight of Michelle Brown's interview with Kate Lampard for the Verita report which was not previously available to me at the time of my First Witness Statement (VER000221). Her interview supports my concerns both about Juls Williams and the drugs culture at Brook House that included not only officers but senior management too. She sets out serious concerns at paragraphs 162 – 191 and 266 – 274 that Juls Williams inappropriately attended Steve Loughton's stag do in Magaluf with 15 or 16 of the detention centre managers. Michelle confirms that she believed that both at the stag do and the wedding, drugs were being taken, and she even went so far as to ask police to set up a drugs test at Brook House the day after the wedding (a request that was turned down).

<u>Statement of Truth</u>	
I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.	
I am content for this witness statement to form part of the evidence before the Brook House Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.	
Name	Reverend Nathan Ward
Signature	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> Signature </div>

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