

Interview Summary

Person interviewed: Steve Skitt – Centre Deputy Director
Date of interview: Tuesday 29 August 2017
Place of interview: Brook House IRC
Time commenced: 09:57 hours
Time concluded: 10:15 hours
Interviewing Officer: Mrs Kim Shipp
Others present: N/A

At the beginning of the interview Mrs Shipp explained that the purpose of the interview meeting was to discuss what happened with Mr [D87]

Mrs Shipp asked if Mr Skitt if he was aware that Mr [D87] had complained. Mr Skitt advised that he was the one who had answered the complaints in relation to Michelle Brown, and provided Mr [D87] with a response.

Mrs Shipp advised that the PSU were tasked with dealing with the complaint made by Mr [D87] regarding the two allocations of assault against the staff; and she explained briefly what the two allegations were.

Mr Skitt was happy to proceed without Mrs Shipp explaining the role of the Professional Standards Unit, which he was aware of.

Mrs Shipp explained that she had interviewed Mr [D87], reviewed the CCTV and camera footage in full, and reading all the documentation regarding both incidents; she was happy that the staff had not done anything wrong, and happy with everything she witnessed; but she had additional questions, which she required answers to in order to be able to explain to Mr [D87] why he was treated the way he was treated. She explained in terms of why the staff were dressed in full PPE etc.

Mrs Shipp asked, regarding the first incident, if Mr Skitt was able to tell her who made the decision to relocate Mr [D87] on 30 June 2017 from his room on E Wing to the CSU. Mr Skitt said that his understanding of that was that Michelle Brown was the Duty Director on the initial relocation; and he thought to put a bit of context to it, Mr [D87] since his arrival had been a difficult individual, in a number of respects. He is a conditioner and a manipulator.

Mr Skitt said if he looked at it from perhaps an operational point of view a lot of his offending history was around threats to kill, around what he would probably perceive bullying, intimidation etc; and he thought that was probably how Mr [D87] had probably lived his life; and he had served a custodial sentence for some of the threats he had made. He said he thought Mr [D87] was very calculated in how he did things, and he thought that if you looked at some of the incidents, which he had a summary of, since his arrival.

Mr Skitt provided Mrs Shipp with a summary of incidents regarding Mr [D87]'s history whilst in the Centre.

Mr Skitt proceeded to read out some of the incidents, which he said were all similar regarding him making threats towards staff; and he thought that all came to a head and a decision was made to move him over to the CSU because of the threats that he posed to all staff within the Centre; and Michelle Brown was the Duty Director on that, and he was moved down to the CSU.

Mrs Shipp asked in terms of using officers in full PPE, as opposed to not. Mr Skitt explained if it was a planned removal then all planned removals staff will be in full PPE with video cameras, nurses. He said that was standard practice for all planned moves; obviously if spontaneous then people have to react as they are, but any planned removal would be in PPE.

Mrs Shipp said that the reason she was asking that question was because although Mr [D87] was initially reluctant to walk with DCM Brackenridge (she provided some background to what she had viewed on the video footage, when Mr Skitt said he had not viewed it), he did ultimately agree to do so; and it was only upon sight of the officers in their full PPE that made his demeanour change, and from there on in, he was insistent that the officers were there to fight him etc. At interview she said that he also told her that had it just have been Dean Brackenridge and Ben Shadbolt he would have walked with them, but then he saw the officers in their full PPE as provocation, which aggravated him; hence his change in demeanour.

Mr Skitt said that every planned move, unless someone is violent and refractory inside the room, and you've got to a point where you've done all the talking you can do; but normally as in this case, you would have the team there, you would go to the door, you'd explain to the detainee what you wanted them to do, and you take a response from there. Depending on the reaction you get, would depend on whether you would commit a team or not.

Mrs Shipp reiterated that she had no issue with the way that Dean had dealt with that aspect; he had given Mr [D87] plenty of opportunity to walk and clearly he did not ultimately.

Mr Skitt said he thought on the back of that, Mr [D87] originally went down the CSU from the Wing and he had walked with two officers. Mrs Shipp said that was why he was so aggrieved by it; he could not understand why on that occasion he had been allowed to just walk with the two officers, and then on this occasion the full team were there in PPE; he was not clear on what made the difference. Mr Skitt said it was the specific threats that he posed.

Mrs Shipp said that in addition, Mr [D87] said that DCM Brackenridge and DCM Shadbolt held a personal grudge against him, in his opinion, which was why he was treated in the manner he was. Mrs Shipp said he was blaming, along with Michelle Brown, which she made clear she was not talking to him about that as she was only going to be talking to him about what happened on that particular day, albeit Mr [D87] pointed all the blame towards Michelle Brown.

Mr Skitt said it was him after Mr [D87] had left; he said there was a Police Log put in from the Tascor staff that he had made threats to come back. Mrs Shipp said she had read that.

Mrs Shipp said Mr [D87] also alleged that for several hours that same afternoon he was in the office 'chatting' to both Sean Sayers and Aaron Stokes, and there was no anger coming from in. He therefore questioned why an hour or so later he was being relocated for the reasons stated, when there had been no issues all afternoon. Mr Skitt said that during that day he had gone down onto E Wing and Mr [D87] was in the office and he was talking to him, but as the day went on he was making more and more threats.

Mrs Shipp said what Mr Skitt had already said, and from what she knew already this has been disproved, but Mr [D87] stated at interview that he had always complied with officers, he had a 100% record of zero non violence, and that he had never been violent towards any member of staff. In response Mr Skitt gave an example of an incident that took place in the Healthcare Department, which was based around Mr [D87]'s medication. He said Mr [D87] was quite abusive towards the Healthcare staff and he then picked up a set of scales and threw them around the room.

Mr Skitt looked through the Annex A document he had brought with him, and referred to the 18 June 2017, when Mr [D87] was asked to attend Healthcare for his blood pressure check. When it was checked and it was high, he became annoyed that Healthcare were not providing him with medication, and said they were the reason why it was high. Healthcare tried to explain that he needed to be more proactive regarding his health, and Mr [D87] became aggressive, hitting the table with his hand, making threats to mess up the Wing, and as he walked out he picked up the scales, smashing them onto the wall damaging a canvas; he then smashed the clock. Oscar 1 was called to attend; that made Healthcare staff fearful.

Mr Skitt said Mrs Shipp could have the Annex A, but advised it could not go into the Report in its entirety. Mrs Shipp said all she may do was use extracts to demonstrate examples of Mr [D87]'s behaviour, if she deemed it relevant. Mr Skitt agreed that would be fine, as he was sure it had been redacted.

Mrs Shipp said in terms of the second incident, from what she had seen and from what she had read, again she had no problems with the way the staff went in etc, but from Mr [D87]'s perspective, he deemed that he was allegedly trying to kill himself, and therefore the actions were heavy handed. He was a) concerned about the length of time, which she thought was about one hour from when he had looked as though he was trying to hang himself, to the point where the officers entered his room; and b) the manner in which they entered, from his perspective was just very heavy handed; and if he was trying to kill himself why would they have rushed straight in like that, with the shield etc.

Mr Skitt said his understanding was that for any person that goes into the CSU under use of force, they go on a constant supervision for the minimum of

one hour, to check on their welfare etc. He said from his understanding of the incident, and he was not there, was that staff were engaging with him and they were getting some kind of response; then he covered his observation panel, and then he went quite, which was when staff would go in.

Mrs Shipp said they did not for about one hour, which was why she was questioning it. She explained that Mr [D87] said he said it looked like he was playing dead, but she said from what she had read, they could see that he was breathing, so knew he wasn't. She said they were therefore watching him, albeit from the outside window by now because he had covered up the front.

Mrs Shipp said she did not have any issues with it, it was more how she explained to Mr [D87] if she felt it necessary, why there was a delay. She said maybe DCM Shadbolt would be able to answer the question for her. Mr Skitt agreed.

Mrs Shipp asked if Mr Skitt thought it likely, and she explained that she had asked for statements from both DCO Stokes and DCO Sayers on this point because as much as she believed it had been taken out of context...

Mr Skitt advised that Aaron Stokes had left the job; and Sean Sayers was currently suspended. Mrs Shipp advised that she had already received Aaron's, but as she was on leave last week, she was unsure if in the interim she had received a reply from Sean.

She advised that Mr [D87] was alleging that they were his mates because they got on really well, which she accepted they do have to be friendly to a certain point. She explained that Mr [D87] was saying that after the incident they both went to him and apologised for the way he had been treated. Mrs Shipp said again that they could have gone to do that but said it was their job etc; but Mr [D87] had alleged that they told him if they had not done it they were threatened with disciplinary action.

Mrs Shipp asked Mr Skitt if he thought that was likely. In response he said from a personal point of view, no. He accepted he was not there and he did not know; but they agreed that it seemed an extreme statement to make. Mrs Shipp explained that from Mr [D87]'s perspective because they had done that and apologised it was accepting that the Centre had done something wrong.

Mr Skitt said that he found all his interactions with Mr [D87] and he dealt with him, a lot when he was on continuous Rule 40, because Michelle Brown could not, and he had made threats to one or two others, so he carried out a few of the reviews. He said he thought Mr [D87] was the type of person who only wanted to hear what he wanted to hear, and he only wanted to say what he wanted to say, and when you talk in any detail about the incident, he cannot recall, or he would say it did not happen. He said a classic one was when he started quoting Prison Rules, and stating that he knew rich people in Nigeria. Mr Skitt said the Prison Rules he quoted were about Segregation, and he had spent nearly 30 years working in prisons, so he knew the Prison Rules inside

out, as he was an adjudicator etc; he said once Mr [D87] realised that Mr Skitt had that knowledge he changed his story to suit himself. He said again that Mr [D87] only wanted to hear what he wanted to hear, and he would not accept anything anyone said unless he agreed with it. He said to him it shows that Mr [D87] was a conditioner and a manipulator.

Mrs Shipp asked if there was anything else Mr Skitt thought he could add that may help with her investigation, in terms of anything else relevant to his background whilst in the Centre, apart from what he had already said. Mr Skitt said he thought if they looked at his offending history there was a story to tell, which runs very similar to his threats made at the Centre. He said he thought Mr [D87] had served 2.5 years for threats to kill, so to him when he looks at an individual, he was not saying that what you read is how they are going to be, as people do change, but you had to take into account when dealing with individuals like Mr [D87] of their offending history and of their history, and it was not just one or two reports, it was a continued picture of the same.

Mrs Shipp asked Mr Skitt if he believed that during either of the incidents that anything could or should have been done any differently from his understanding of them. Mr Skitt said no he thought in fairness, he had been there a few months before this happened and he thought he had been quite challenging and he thought staff had been very good in dealing with him; he said he remained on normal location for a long period of time, even given the outburst, so he thought staff dealt with him well; but they had got to the point where the Healthcare issues, the continued threats, and he thought once you looked at an individual threatening to take a hostage, and looked at their background, and you have to make a balanced decision on if that person could follow through on their threats. He said he thought Mr [D87]'s kind of behaviour was escalating.

Mr Skitt advised that Mr [D87] was released 2-3 days after he left Brook House IRC. Mrs Shipp advised that she would have looked prior to sending Mr [D87] his reply letter as she would need to know where to send it to.

Mr Skitt had no questions for Mrs Shipp, and nothing else to add; so Mrs Shipp advised of the target date, and ended the interview at 10:15 hours.