Confidential

Independent Investigation into Brook House

Monday, 27 November 2017

Interview with
Steve Skitt
Deputy Director

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Interview with
Steve Skitt, Deputy Director

Investigators: **Mr Ed Marsden (Verita)**
Ms Kate Lampard (Verita)

1. **Mr Marsden:** [*Introductions*] Steve, thank you very much for coming to talk to us. You've had a letter, which you confirmed off the tape. What we'd like to do this afternoon is run through some questions with you, but before we do that, a bit of housekeeping. You'll have seen the terms of reference. This is obviously an opportunity for us to ask you some questions. The discussion is confidential in the sense that we don't intend to make the transcript of the conversation available to G4S, or indeed anyone else. When we finish the interview the tape recording will be typed up and Nicola will write to you in about a week's time and say it's available for you to read. When you get it, please check it and see that it's what you wanted to say, and if you want to make amendments to it, please do.

2. We're saying this to everybody, but if we were going to say anything critical of anyone we will give them the opportunity to see the extract dealing with any criticism before we make it. We have absolutely no reason to think we're going to say anything critical to you but we tell everyone that. The G4S Board have obviously commissioned this report, and I don't think they've made a decision about publication. I think they will probably have to publish something, I don't know what, but I think you should work on the basis that this report will get into the public domain, although they're not in their own minds quite clear at the moment about whether it will be published. We can stop if you need to. If you need to go off to do operational things, we can reconvene.

3. **A.** No. I've set aside the afternoon.

4. **Ms Lampard:** We also need to tell you that if we refer to you in our report as having said something, we will identify you by your job title. That means that you will be identified. However, if there is anything you want to say to us in confidence without in any way referring to the author of it, please feel free to say so. We will respect confidences. If you want to, we can turn the tape off and give you the opportunity to say something without it being recorded, but that is something you must identify. Clearly we will respect all those confidences, unless you tell us something that might amount to committing an offence or something that's going to put somebody in danger, in which case we obviously have to tell the appropriate authority. Do you have any questions about all of that?

5. **A.** No. I'm used to sitting the other side; I'm used to doing the investigating.

6. **Mr Marsden:** Probably the right place and the easiest place to start is tell us a bit about your background and your role and responsibilities here. Tell us a bit about your background first.

7. **A.** I have a 31-year custodial history, predominantly 25 years within the Prison Service. I ended up working with G4S as I was working at Birmingham at the time, which went through a competitive process and G4S were awarded the contract to run Birmingham in 2011 and I was part of the TUPE arrangement in that.

8. **Q.** Was Birmingham public sector?

9. **A.** Public sector, yes. I don't mean this in any derogatory way, I didn't ask to work for G4S, if you know what I mean. I was part of the process when G4S took over Birmingham and I was TUPE'd across, as all the staff at Birmingham were at the time. Within my time I've worked in a variety of establishments, spending about 18 years in a high security estate at Long Lartin, I've worked at Shrewsbury Prison, Stoke Heath, Brinsford, Birmingham. Since working with G4S I've had a period of secondment at Altcourse after a murder.

10. **Q.** What category are those prisoners?

11. **A.** Long Lartin's a high security Cat A prison in Worcestershire, Shrewsbury was a lovely little county local prison.

12. **Ms Lampard:** What category was that?

13. **A.** That would be a Category B. Stoke Heath was a juvenile/young offenders split site but predominantly people as young offenders weren't classified but they were treated very similar to Cat C, or all the security arrangements of the prison were. Brinsford was the same, that was a split site juveniles/young offenders. Birmingham was a Category B large inner city local. I did a period of a secondment after a murder in Altcourse, originally as part of the investigation team, and I ended up working there for about four months in the aftermath of that, putting together and assisting with the action plan.

14. **Mr Marsden:** Your prison background is operational management of an institution, effectively.

15. **A.** Yes. I was an officer for about 12 years and decided to step on the management ladder and work my way through.

16. **Q.** The rest is history.

17. **A.** The rest is history, and I ended up where I am. I came down here at the beginning of 2015. There were a number of issues, which you'll probably pick up in your investigation, about the previous deputy director and the SMT.

18. **Q.** That's Duncan.

19. **A.** Duncan Partridge, yes, and the then director, Ben Saunders.

20. **Q.** Tell us what you found when you came down here. What was your impression of Brook House?

21. **Ms Lampard:** And what did you come to do?

22. **A.** There were a number of issues prior to me coming down here. The SMT: I haven't gone into the detail, I've only listened to what people have said, Ben never really spoke about it and I picked up certain things as time goes on. When I came here the previous deputy director had just left, the senior management team, in my opinion, was quite dysfunctional and I also found quite insular. My understanding of that, and some of that I've picked up through managing certain people, it was quite a difficult period for all the

senior management team, and there were a number of individuals that had gone through various processes, putting in grievances and all kinds of issues, and people had gone off sick. I found it strange.

Mr Marsden: Just so we can put some names to posts, when you arrived Ben was here, Duncan had gone, so you were the deputy.

A. No, I wasn't. I came down initially to help out with security.

Q. Okay. Who else was here?

A. The SMT: you had Stacey Dean who was the head of Tinsley, you had Sara Edwards who was one of the managers at Tinsley, there was Michelle Brown who was then head of safeguarding, she's now Head of Security, you had Juls Williams who was one of the residential managers. From the SMT point of view that was about it.

Ms Lampard: Stacey put in a grievance, we know, and left.

A. She put in two. There was a previous grievance before I came down.

Q. What was that about?

A. About Ben, is my understanding.

Q. She put in a grievance about the Home Office getting rid of her role, that was subsequently, but before you came down she'd already put in a grievance.

A. There had already been a grievance that had gone through the procedure – do you want to know the detail? – sometimes digging up history and trying to put things together. As far as I'm concerned, the grievance had gone in against Ben, the working relationship between Ben and Stacey wasn't good, to be honest.

Q. What was that about, just to help me?

A. I think it was just personalities. Whatever happened to the first grievance.

Q. She had a difficult relationship with Ben. Sara: how did they get on? What was her position? That was alright?

A. She was a residential manager. Before I came my understanding is all of the SMT had gone through their own kind of personal difficulties.

Q. Juls Williams?

A. Juls is quite a strange character – I shouldn't say that. Juls is very much his own person, he's, I wouldn't say resilient but he's not the type of person that shows any –

Q. Is he around still?

A. Yes, Juls is.

Q. Is Sara still around?

A. Sara's still in Tinsley in the same role.

Mr Marsden: And Michelle was safeguarding.

A. She was Head of Safeguarding and she's now Head of Security.

Q. Was she off sick?

46. **A.** Yes. Just before I came here, I think. When I came down initially, which I think was April 2015, she'd just returned from a long period of sickness, and some of it was stress-related, some of the issues that had been ongoing.

47. **Q.** It's a place where grievances are commonplace.
48. **A.** It is. It's a strange place in that respect. Prior to coming here I had never had one grievance or one complaint put in against me, and since I've been here I've had a few.

49. **Q.** It's a way of doing business, people have got into the habit?
50. **A.** I have a different view on things. Some of the things I come across, if people have only ever worked in one place, and it's a relatively new place compared to places I've worked, where you can have years and years of history and experience. Certainly looking from prisons, you would always have a churn of staff and managers because the organisation is quite big. From my experience, if you want a promotion you tended to move on and staff could perhaps move around working in different prisons. If you have that churn of people, you have different people bringing in different experiences, new things, you had older people who were perhaps tired of the place and perhaps needed to move on, so there's always fresh ideas coming through. What I've picked up – and I found this when I went to Altcourse – I'd never worked in a place where it was new and effectively all the staff were managers, who had only ever worked here; if there'd been any promotion it had been internal. From a personal point of view I don't think it's a good mix. Sometimes it's what people can bring, different experiences working in different areas. I've certainly found it difficult trying to put my spin on it or my views or how I would operate. I've found it difficult, come up against a lot of barriers.

51. **Ms Lampard:** How many grievances do you think you've had put in against you, and what sort of things are people talking?
52. **A.** Personally there's probably four. I can sit here now and say every individual who's put a grievance in is somebody that I've challenged for either corrupt or poor behaviour, or performance behaviour.

53. **Q.** Are any of them still ongoing?
54. **A.** No. I believe they're all done. There's a long difficult one going on but the person who put the grievance in now has a grievance on other people. Processes like Speak Out are there for a reason and they're there to be used, and if somebody was talking to me about concerns they had, certainly a number of routes and advice I would talk around how you could do that. But in my personal opinion it's used as a tool by people who are a bit upset or didn't like what they'd been told. I'm a straight-talking person and if somebody's not performing the way they should be, you need to have conversations with people and sometimes people don't like that.

55. **Mr Marsden:** It's the way of the world.
56. **A.** It's the way of the world, and if you haven't had those conversations – certainly with one of them there were a number of corrupt activities that person had done. I don't know whether it's a person not accepting things themselves.

57. **Q.** I'm going back to 2015 and you arrive, there's been the issue between Duncan and Ben, there's a fairly dysfunctional SMT, you're responsible for security, and then you become the deputy?

58. **A.** Then the job was advertised. Sorry. Originally I did come down for security, then when Duncan went I was asked to be the Acting Deputy Director.

59. **Q.** And then the job was advertised.

60. **A.** The job was advertised, I think in about August 2015.

61. **Q.** In terms of day-to-day responsibilities, what does the deputy do? What do you do now?

62. **A.** At this moment in time lots of action plans!

63. **Q.** What's the day job?

64. **A.** There's a difference on what the day job should be and what the reality is.

65. **Q.** Tell us both.

66. **A.** Effectively it's Head of Brook House and Deputy Director of both sites, but I find my time is pulled around doing a lot of different elements of it.

67. **Q.** If you stuck with the job as it should be, so the job that you would want to do, what would you be doing day-by-day with respect to Tinsley and Brook House?

68. **A.** The problem I struggle against is it's clear – again, going back to when the centre opened, so I could put an analogy on this – you get a group of staff, and I'm not saying this is how it was but this is my view. You get a group of staff, x number of employees turn up, right, we've got no managers. I know this has happened in lots of new prisons when they've opened. We've got no managers, right, who have certain experience in certain areas. I know when Hewell (then Blakenhurst) opened, when that was private, they used to say 'Right, who's been in the Army?', 'I have.' 'Okay, so you can be a manager.' There weren't the processes in place that you would perhaps go through now. A number of people have noted over the years has there been development or was it the right people in the first place that could naturally develop to be managers. When I came here I found a lot of the first-line managers, from what I was used to, certainly in prisons, were managers. There'd be an expectation that I would expect a first-line manager to be able to manage the sickness, as an example, when somebody went sick, to make other contacts, do the paperwork. I just felt I had to micro-manage things like that: have you done this, have you done that. A lot of my time seemed to be spent – and still does, in some respects – having to talk to managers week in, week out, have you made contact with your sick, have you done this, have you done that, things that in a previous life I'd have expected the other way round. I would probably view it as managed from top down rather than bottom up.

69. **Ms Lampard:** Actually it's filling in the gaps because they're not up to doing what it is they really should be doing, so you're chasing them a lot, you're basically looking over their shoulder rather than being able to rely on them.

70. **A.** Some people I can rely on, but I'm just saying as a general.

71. **Q.** And you think that some of that comes from, frankly, not having trained people properly and not having identified people properly in the first place?

72. **A.** We've looked into this, and we look into this with the action plan. Sorry to keep on about prison experiences, but even in prisons there isn't that training

available as such, but what you probably did have in, say, other organisations which I would be used to, is people would have certain skills before they applied. People used to say, in other places I've worked, you've done your rip. Certainly before, although very late in a career, I had young children at the time and wasn't focused on promotion, those were my priorities at the time. But when I became a manager, because I'd worked in so many different areas, I probably worked in every area of a prison and understood it all, the movement from being an officer to a manager was a lot easier. The things you had to learn then were more around people skills, more around dealing with people as a manager rather than dealing with people within your peer group.

73. **Q.** Do you think you have the time here to be able to develop people, to spot where they're struggling, to spot when they don't have the right experience and skills and bring them on? Or has that not really been possible?

74. **A.** I do. I sit down with a lot of people. There are some very good examples here of people who, 18 months ago, in my opinion, weren't cutting in, and I've sat down and had some really frank conversations and talked through about how you should do things and how to look at it. You don't just look at one thing, you look at how it impacts on everybody, and also look at the decision that you make and how it affects everybody else. There are some really good examples here of managers – and again this is my opinion – who didn't have the ability to manage some areas, and they've really come on. I'm not saying that's because of me, but a lot of it is. Some of them have come back to me and said thanks for that, nobody's really had a conversation with me over the years, or nobody's told me that. I don't know if it's a culture with grievances that managers are frightened to have conversations or do something. I see it, and I say to people if I don't tell you that you're not where you should be, or you've missed this or missed that and I need to point you in the right direction to look at your skills, if I don't do that or if somebody else doesn't do that, it's not helping at all, and actually, you're setting them up to fail. Somebody has to have that conversation, whether people like it or not.

75. **Mr Marsden:** Would Duncan have done that?

76. **A.** I don't know, I never met him. I heard of him. The Prison Service is a small family and you do hear a lot about people, and from what I was told his reputation wasn't that great. As I say, I never met him as a person but I've heard what people said, and there again I haven't dug into that, I've no reason to.

77. **Ms Lampard:** Then there was Neil.

78. **A.** Yes, Neil Davis.

79. **Q.** Tell us about Neil.

80. **A.** When I came here they'd already done the interviews and just waiting for clearance to come through. Neil came in, quite a confident brush kind of character.

81. **Mr Marsden:** Was his a prison background?

82. **A.** Yes, prison background. It's strange how you find things out afterwards, but that's by-the-by so I'll use my terminology. He came in, talked a good talk about security. I'd been a Head of Security for about 12 years in four different establishments, although I'd done other roles as well but predominantly Head of Security. I was very conscious that there's a new Head of Security coming

in, and I stepped back because I didn't want to cramp his style. Basically you need somebody to develop and come in and do that. As time went on there were a few bits that I pointed him in the right direction, particularly around corruption prevention because that was one of my strong areas.

83. **Q.** When you talk about corruption, what do you mean?

84. **A.** Anything to do about wrongdoing: anything that would come down the corruption prevention route. A lot of it starts off with very little intelligence. I certainly had a good system at Birmingham, working closely with the police and working through that stuff. That could be anything. Corruption can be a number of things, predominantly it's around people, certainly from a prison background, bringing items in. I think there were a couple of areas where people were co-directors of dodgy companies and one thing and another. Predominantly corruption would be around drugs, that kind of thing.

85. **Q.** I'll bring something in and you pay me for it.

86. **A.** Yes. There's certainly a lot of that in prisons, and I don't think it was until later on the Prison Service were professional enough to deal with that. It's when you start dealing with the police and you start bringing some of their methods in. I always said you can't expect somebody who's come up a generic route as a governor or a manager to all of a sudden be somebody to manage something so difficult and potentially a criminal offence. You did a course but, as I learnt over the years, there's more to this that you need.

87. **Q.** Was Neil not spotting? Is the story that he came in as Head of Security and you then began to think he didn't have the skill to do the job?

88. **A.** Yes. Initially I talked to him about where were you Head of Security, and he talked a good story about when he was at Portland, I believe, and then he was at Dorchester as Head of Security. Initially he gave me his view, and I thought that sounds okay, let him get on. But after a bit of the honeymoon period I started seeing through the cracks, so I was talking particularly around corruption prevention, around some of the policies, around some of the work that was going on, and I was finding myself having to sit on my hands, so to speak, and get involved and do a few pointers in the right direction. Once that challenge started to come in and the deeper I delved, the more I realised that he'd blagged it. He knew something but he couldn't come in as Head of Security and hit the ground running. There were a number of meetings that we'd had, because he reported to me through the process, then there were a number of other issues about other members of the SMT getting involved, and at the time Stacey Dean was quite vocal. There were a number of bits around bullying that started to rise to the surface, a number of concerns particularly about one manager who was Matt Hyde. I liked Matt, we did a lot of work together particularly around corruption prevention. He was a good thinker and a good person who could sit down and work through intelligence quite intensely and spend hours pulling it all together. That's not me. When you build a team you build different people who have different skills. I would find it very difficult to sit down for days and days upon end looking at CCTV and building trails of what was going on. Matt was ideal for that, and that's how you build a team.

89. **Ms Lampard:** What's Matt's surname?

90. **A.** Hyde.

91. **Q.** Still here?

92. **A.** No. Matt had a real passion for working with intelligence and he's now working with the police as an intelligence officer, so that was a natural progression for him.

93. **Q.** That was in relation to him and Neil.

94. **A.** Initially I'd had a few whispers that Matt wasn't happy and I sat down and spoke with him, and there was certainly an impression from some people that I protected Neil. I don't operate that way, I treat everybody the same. I sat down with Matt and he said he was finding it difficult. I then sat down with Neil and said what do you want to do with it, and he said I just want things to be a lot easier. I said I can deal with it in a number of ways: advise you what you can and can't do in regard to grievances, if you want to go down that route, I'll fully support that. But I thought at the time it was just something that was building up and potentially could have been dealt with at a lower level. I sat down with Neil and talked through this. He's one of these people that when he came in and saw you he'd give it all a big smiley, smiley, everything's rosy in the garden. I blame myself in some respects that I didn't pick up where it was going out, and it was directed straight at his staff and upset a lot of people. Then I sat down with him and said Matt's concerned the way you are with him. They did both meet and worked through it, and I checked in with Matt and he said something will never be the same, but it appeared to be okay. Then there were a number of complaints that went in about Neil through the Speak Out. I think it was 14 staff in the end.

95. **Q.** Did any of the other staff come to you about Neil?

96. **A.** No. They all thought that I protected him, because somebody said to me once he's always in your office, and I said he would be, he's Head of Security, we talk about a lot of things security-related. I wouldn't say he was always in my office, but I think there was a perception that I protected him. I said that from experience I would tend to speak with the Head of Security more than I perhaps would with anybody else because security's daily. Every day you come in there's something happened, something changed, and certainly that one wasn't the case.

97. **Q.** The only time they came to you and said I want to make a complaint about him, or I'm not getting on with him, was Matt.

98. **A.** No. It was mentioned by a third party and what they said was Matt's a bit upset, and I called Matt in.

99. **Q.** Nobody else came to you and said I'm sorry but we can't work with Neil, or he's bullying us or something. It all came through the Speaking Out.

100. **A.** As I recall, yes.

101. **Mr Marsden:** Carry on, or had you come to the end?

102. **A.** I don't know. Is there anything?

103. **Q.** You were telling us about your early time here, what you found, and we then got on to the question of Neil. I was asking you about what the job is and what the job should be.

104. **A.** Sorry. The difference from what the job is to what it should be, it certainly wouldn't be my experience of working in a number of establishments, and I personally find, and I've had a number of conversations with Ben over a period of time, I would have been used to different areas being managed by functional heads, having managers that would manage their areas. On a

daily basis things would come up around there's not enough staff in visits. There's a morning briefing and if I'm on duty I'll always attend the morning brief.

105. **Q.** That's the 8am meeting?
106. **A.** The quarter to eight meeting. I'll always attend that. I say to staff if you feel you're not being listened to, come and talk to me.

107. **Q.** I don't want to put words in your mouth, but there's a sense that managers here weren't managing and your job was, in a way, supporting them to do their job properly, and that was unusual in the sense that you would expect people to be a bit more capable.
108. **A.** Be a bit more capable, effectively.

109. **Q.** If there wasn't enough staff in visits, you wouldn't expect as a deputy director to have to sort that out.
110. **A.** I'd have to look at the detail every morning and then pinpoint what about this, what about this. An example of something on Friday: I'd been doing a bit of work about a detainee coming in – I can't give too much detail for this because it was a document I had to sign for. I gave specific instructions on Friday morning where this person was to be located when they came in and where they were to go. I only found out by chance this morning that the person wasn't where I'd said.

111. **Ms Lampard:** So Ben takes over in this environment. Tell me about Ben's style. Was he concerned about the staff like you?
112. **A.** Ben had been here a couple of years by the time I came in. I like Ben, he's a very decent, good bloke. We have completely different backgrounds.

113. **Q.** I can't remember what Ben's background was.
114. **A.** He's a social worker and it would probably be fair to say operationally we wouldn't have the same views of doing things. I did call him Ben the politician once.

115. **Mr Marsden:** Facilitative.
116. **A.** Yes. He was more of a thinker than a doer, and there were some things that we probably didn't agree on, there were some things that I felt would have perhaps needed to be taken forward in a different way. I was quite talkative with him about the SMT and my views, and effectively that he should take more control and direction as to what the SMT does. I'd worked as part of the SMT – I counted it once – for 13 governing governors and they all come out of the same mould. I was used to working with operationally-focused governors, so there was a bit of a difference for me. As an example, it was clear we weren't all working together. It's very strange for me because I've worked with lots of SMTs, and I've worked with lots of SMTs with people that I wouldn't particularly like. Professionally you work together as an SMT, personally you may not like that person, that's part of life, but you all work together as a team, and he was different. There's a lot of individuals, strong individuals who could be quite vocal in the way they saw things, for various reasons, and need to be pulled together.

117. **Q.** Ben wasn't a builder of a team?
118. **A.** Not in my opinion.

119. Q. Was he the kind of person who would walk around the place? Would he go out and walk down the visits and find out what's going on here?

120. A. Not on a regular basis.

121. Q. Did you do that?

122. A. I'll go round every day if I can, if time prevails. It's a good combination sometimes to have two different people, but ultimately there needs to be somebody to grasp things and pull things together. From his point of view, in fairness, as I said he was a very nice bloke, and I think the Duncan business probably affected him to a great extent. I know that the Stacey Dean business did because we were talking about it once. We would talk quite often and, I wouldn't say frightened, that's probably not the right word, but it was always in the back of his mind that all this business had gone on. Everybody went through a horrid time during that process, to be honest, and I don't think some people would have recovered so robustly as perhaps other people.

123. Ms Lampard: This leaves you: you're the deputy and you have a very nice and thoughtful and decent bloke but he's not, however, doing quite enough. You have a lot of frontline managers who are not quite up to being frontline managers and perhaps quite inexperienced, a lot of staff have been here too long so they're not getting quite enough of an exposure to what good looks like. And you're wandering around, you're the first person who's going to get it in the ear for a bit because you're out there listening to some of that. That's quite a pressurised environment, and also quite a heavy workload. How did you respond to that? Did that make you quite stressed out?

124. A. I don't do stress. I'm very clear. People say this to me and I've always had the ability. The last few months have been quite difficult but I always say to people you have to take time out. People say you seem quite resilient or you seem quite whatever, and I say you tell your managers. I say I've spent a long time working in different environments, and when you walk out of the gate you have to walk out of the gate, and you have to leave whatever's in your head at the gate. Some people might say in the position you're in you're walking out, and I say we have to, it's self-preservation. I've watched too many people over the years, I've been to too many funerals of people over the years who've died before their time. Sometimes you focus on certain things and it's how you do things, and I've always done it. I've always walked out and, in a lot of respects, just think I've left work now.

125. Mr Marsden: You've done what you can.

126. A. Yes, let me do my other bit. You get frustrated. Somebody summed me up once, many years ago, and said 'Steve's the type of person who'll kind of lose it, he'll have a rant for about five minutes, dust himself down and just carry on', but you have to. You have to have certain mechanisms in place because these environments can be all-consuming.

127. Ms Lampard: On top of all this comes the Neil incident. Tell us about that.

128. A. I found that one quite difficult, to be quite honest because he was a guy who could talk a good story, clearly he was blowing smoke in places and, as I say, I started seeing through some of the cracks. I became more challenging on certain areas, more demanding on what I wanted, because there were lots of things coming up, like policies that needed reviewing and things like that. The policies at the ?Dehatch Centre I need to go through them, I need to do some re-work on them, etc. We started to build that up through the performance

Commented [NS1]: SS: not sure what the word is supposed to mean .

issues, and I think on the day that he left I'd had a meeting planned for that day, which was going to be effectively on poor performance because it got to such a stage. There were all the complaints from staff, and I saw that and I was quite shocked, more at myself because I'd missed it, that all these people could put in all these complaints and I wasn't seeing it.

129. I found out afterwards – and people always tell you things after something happens – that he was the same in the Prison Service, and people said that he had to leave the Prison Service under a process called Vents, where there was a number of redundancy money made available. Stacey was the same, so I've had two people, both TUPE'd out of the Prison Service and I could never understand why. Both of them used to talk to me because I was ex-Prison Service and they would say what it was like in the Prison Service, we used to do this, it was a lot better. I would say you're not in the Prison Service, we're a different organisation, it's for the Home Office, not the Prison Service. When they talk to you, you ask why did they leave. If you think something was that good, why did you both leave? I found out about the Neil one but I never got to the bottom of why Stacey left.

130. Q. Let's talk through what the staff might have seen in all of this. I don't want to put words into your mouth – I'm quite good at doing that, I must be careful. The staff see, inevitably, a slightly dysfunctional senior management team, then they see you coming in trying to give a bit of order, and you getting out there a bit more.

131. A. I don't think they got me originally.

132. Q. They wouldn't, but what they had was a dysfunctional team. They had them all squabbling over there while they were just getting on with it over here, and you turn up and you suddenly think there's nobody here who seems terribly capable, and there are all those people sitting over there who don't seem to be getting on with it very well, and anyway I have a security officer who I'm not sure about – a description I'm not sure you're not that comfortable with. You can sort of see why the staff might slightly think I don't know what they're all up to but we'll slightly go our own way. How did you find the staff?

133. A. I found the staff okay. It's always difficult when you come into a new environment. It would have been my sixth move, taking into account Altcourse. When you go into a new place and you have to learn all the staff and find that level, find out where people are at. You have to say the centre two-and-a-half years ago was quite different to what it is now.

134. Q. In what way?

135. A. Less troublesome detainees or less troubles. I think it was a different population. The turnaround in the type of resident that comes in now is different, and that's across the estate. I don't think that's just unique to here.

136. Mr Marsden: Is the length of stay lower as well?

137. A. We get a few long-term people but people perhaps are more accepting to the predicament they find themselves in. Very rarely, if I recall, problems with charters, very rarely problems with that. The whole detention estate has certainly changed. When I first came in I spoke to staff around NPS, so I'd just gone through a couple of years of pain as security in prisons around the way NPS have taken hold of prisons and some of the violence and some of the changes that that had taken place. There were some really difficult incidents around that and I was trying to say we need to be careful around

PS, because what happens in prisons, eventually it changes the culture in somewhere like this.

138. Q. PS being psychoactive substances.
139. A. Yes. We've had some glitch, but some of the elements within the detention estate have changed. There are more problematic people, and you only need a couple to make things more difficult.

140. Q. Also a more demanding Home Office, as in the policy has shifted, more aggressive? That's a question, not a statement.
141. A. I don't think the policy has changed. There's certainly more issues raised by residents around casework. I struggle to get my head around the Home Office, the way they operate. Sorry to keep going on about prisons, but if you go to a prison it's different. It's very difficult operating centres where all you're doing is, for want of a better word, locking people up and looking after their needs. You have no input whatsoever into their cases, you have no access to any information about their cases. In a prison you would. The offender management supervises all the work around a prisoner, it's all there, all accessed, and we deal with it.

142. Ms Lampard: And you're working towards something: get them out.
143. A. You are. There is an endgame.

144. Q. And you know everything about them, you know what the triggers are for their behaviour, and have sanctions.
145. A. Yes. I can get Joe Bloggs, it's a five-year sentence, and we know for the next five years, or two-and-a-half years, there's going to be a plan for this individual, where he's going to go, what he's going to do, what he needs to achieve; are there any offending behaviour targets or any courses or anything that we need to do, any interventions for that individual? And we know at the end of that period of time, if there are no particular problems, he'll go out on licence. Here you get somebody come in, the majority of people we know will be short stayers, we know people are coming in for charters, etc., but there's no endgame as such. And you won't know a lot about that person other than what you glean from any previous intelligence or information that comes through. None of the systems works together. The system we operate here will be a different system to the one operated in another centre.

146. Q. Tell me about the business of maintaining discipline and controlling people within this environment. What are the keys to that? Are there any keys to that? Have you any levers at all?
147. A. This is what I try and instil in the staff. It's about what you do with this, it's about talking to people, about engaging with people and about forming relationships to help somebody through how they are. It's fair to say that everybody that comes in here doesn't want to be here. Everybody that comes in here we know at some stage it's planned that they're going to go on a flight and they're going to be removed either back to their own country they came from or to a country, in some cases, where they've probably never even lived, so there are difficulties within that. It's probably fair to say that if you did a poll of detainees not one of them would say they want to be here, because they all don't. That's a fact of life. Some bits that staff can do, one is form relationships, and I talk about this. There are very few consequences for poor behaviour, in my opinion, in an IRC, and detainees know that. They know we have Rule 40, they know they can probably display poor behaviour, do

whatever. They know I'm going to go on Rule 40, but they know there's a good chance, if they sit in the CSU overnight and conform to whatever's going on, they know they'll probably be signed out the next day.

148. Q. It's a change of scene too.

149. A. I'm trying to instil the staff that we do have some tools that we can use, and part of it is around how you engage, it's about how you're visible on the wings. If you're going to lock yourselves in offices people will see that, and I can tell you now that if people see that they will act accordingly. If somebody is disruptive or verbally abusive to you, if you don't challenge that and have a meaningful conversation – and I'm not asking for people to go out – and sometimes if somebody's argumentative towards you, if you want my advice, if it was me, and you can clearly tell that person didn't want to talk to you, then leave it, walk away. It's not about showing that you're not going to deal with this, and 20 minutes later you go back to the person, and you probably do it in your environment. You call them into the office, you have a conversation with somebody and say what's all that about. I guarantee that nine times out of ten the person will probably turn round to you and say I'm sorry about that, I was a bit frustrated because of this, and you gain more by that. Some people won't, there are some people who are perhaps a bit nasty, but it is about the interactions that staff have, and I try and instil that in people.

150. Q. The staff themselves, were you surprised by what you saw in the *Panorama* programme? We all know what *Panorama* can do, we all know about cutting and slicing and dicing film, and we all know about truncating the period. Frankly, who knows what the sequence of any of those events was, but we did see staff using quite aggressive and unacceptable language, and we saw them physically abusing detainees. What's your take on that?

151. A. I thought it was horrendous.

152. Q. But what was your take on why they felt they could, and why no challenge of each other?

153. A. That's a question I ask. I sat there with the investigation team at a hotel to watch the programme, and I was absolutely –

154. Q. Comments?

155. A. I've dealt with comments before. Over my period here I've probably dismissed a number of people through derogatory behaviour and not dealing appropriately with detainees. It's something I would not tolerate and there is no need for it, in my book. The actual bit that we saw in the room was absolutely horrendous. I am absolutely shocked that not one member of staff intervened.

156. Mr Marsden: With the app?

157. A. I have something to say afterwards. Here was a person who'd come from prison, and I think I'm a pretty good judge of character, to be honest. I can usually tell if somebody's wrong or right. He came here, he was on his ITC when I got here and, as I do with all the ITCs, sit down and talk and there were two people from Wandsworth that introduced themselves, him and another officer. I asked him outside, I said why did you leave the Prison Service to come here, and he said I live closer to here and he was quite plausible. He said I've been working at Wandsworth, it's an absolute nightmare there, there's no staff, there's no this, and everything that he told

me I could think I know that's the case, because at that particular time that was the case in a lot of prisons. They would go through a lot of turmoil around staffing, around other things, and he seemed quite plausible, and on the outset he seemed a good officer. I'd had no CP logs, no other things about him. I guess when you look back in hindsight, he came to see me a couple of times and we always used to chat, there was nothing coming out of there, nothing raising attention. Then he came to see me and said his Sensitive/Irrelevant was Sensitive/Irrelevant and he sat there in tears. There were a couple of conversations and I think the next time he asked me if there was anything I could do with regard to his shifts because, from what he was saying, he needed to take a lot of unpaid leave. I agreed to be flexible on some of the days he could work and some that he couldn't if he did it in advance with the detail, so there was all that. Then he came to see me and said 'if I was to leave would there be any problems with me coming back', and I said there are certain rules around time limits and stuff like that, because he was saying 'I need to finish work, I need to care for my wife because I have children'. I said okay. There is a flexible working policy where people can take up to six months out of the business. I said 'I'm not sure if you fit the criteria but you can certainly have a look at it, I would have discretion on any application and submit that'. And he didn't. Then he finished, which I thought strange, and the next thing I know is all the *Panorama* stuff, and I realised.

158. Q. He left before the film was shown?
159. A. Yes. I was more shocked when the programme came out, or was it before?

160. Ms Lampard: How long before was it that he came to talk to you?
161. A. Quite a bit ago.

162. Q. I wonder if he'd had the letter.
163. A. No, no. It was months before that. It had been going on for months.

164. Mr Marsden: Do you think he'd got wind of it?
165. A. Knowing what I know now, I would have thought he was looking round his shoulder.

166. Ms Lampard: He thought people were going to be talking about what he'd done.
167. A. I don't think it was just about here either with regard to that. He probably got wind that something was going on.

168. Q. He was the one who was filmed, obviously they were the ones that were filmed, but I assume there must be other staff that you might have your doubts about who might know about that.
169. A. To be honest, not in what we saw on TV, and you couldn't re-edit that any other way. We know TV programmes will edit and re-edit to make something look different, but you couldn't make that look any different to what it was, and I thought it was shocking.

170. Q. Can we ask you a number of other things because I'd like to get you up to the same place in the evidence that got everybody else up to, because I'm afraid you're coming back for some more of this because we've asked so many questions, not just you but your colleagues. I'd like to ask about the issue of the mix of people you have here, the complexity of the mix of people.
171. A. Staff or detainees?

172. Q. Detainees, and the time set for foreign national offenders and how many of them you have. You talked about very few levers you have to manage them. I wanted to ask your view on whether or not you think they've become more difficult to manage, whether the population as a whole is more complicated over the time that you've been here.

173. A. There are two things. One is it's a complicated population. If you look at people that come through the door, as I said, not one person that comes through this door wants to be here, and people will have their own journeys and what they've been through in life they will bring with lots of complications. Sometimes when I sit down and do any case reviews and ACDTs, you listen to some of the things people tell you, and I have to say for a family or anybody to make their way from somewhere like Syria or Iraq or wherever overland to end up here, it's some tenacity in having to get that far anyway. I wouldn't imagine it's an easy journey for people. There are lots of people with different needs, everybody will have their own story, they're individuals, and that can change. With the churn that you have in place, there's lots of churn going through, and the estate has changed. Some of the things that happen: one person displays poor behaviour and doesn't end up with any consequences, and you bring in the mix of different types of substances coming in, you bring in the mix of age groups. We can probably track our different populations, so we know exactly what the Albanians are like. They come from Albania and if you get 50 or 60 Albanians in the centre the dynamics will change. We got ready for a Jamaican charter.

174. Mr Marsden: In what way with the Albanians?

175. A. They have no respect, the way culturally they are. In their own country they work in clans, depending on which family you're from, etc. If you take one Albanian on you take them all on, very similar to my experiences from Vietnamese in prisons, a population like that. Then you get the Nigerian Ghanaians who, in my opinion, are historically quite litigate. They've probably been here in the country quite a number of years, will fight every avenue not to go, will be difficult on charters, etc. The Jamaican population is another difficult population. If you look at the Jamaican population, if they've come in here for charter removes, you find a lot of Jamaicans haven't lived in Jamaica perhaps since they were a child or, in some cases, have never lived in Jamaica. It's just that the parents didn't get a British passport when they were younger, etc. There are those dynamics. Eastern Europeans will throw in a different mix to that.

176. Ms Lampard: On top of this we also have now the business of corralling all of the people of one nationality, because you're going to have a no-notice –

177. A. Limited notice charter.

178. Q. Tell us about that and what that does for the dynamics of the place.

179. A. Besides asking our staff to lie, effectively, or being disingenuous, should I say? I think this all stemmed from a protest at Stansted Airport last year where a number of protestors got into the airport and stopped the plane from taking off through various routes. This is my understanding of it. The Home Office are very limited in what airports they can fly from anyway, or find it difficult to find an airport which will do charters, because my understanding is they don't really need the business.

180. Mr Marsden: Why would you want it?

181. A. There was that. Then it was decided that they would do no-notice charters so people who were on a charter would get what you call a red letter, so they would be given a letter to say you are going to be removed from the country.

182. Ms Lampard: Not less than five days' time, I think it says.

183. A. Yes. Within a set time period. If somebody's sat in a prison or if somebody's sat in Campsfield or The Verne or wherever, and all of a sudden they've had that letter and they come to Brook, they know they're going on a charter, effectively. We get people coming here from prison and they know they're going, they've been told the time and date of the flight. It's a strange one to risk assess that. What we'd normally have done before when people knew the charter times, we would engage with everybody: you know you're going on a flight, how do you feel about that, what are the issues. We would then make a decision based on if somebody had a history of saying there's no way on this earth you're going to put me on that plane, I shall do this, this and this, then we could manage that appropriately, whether that meant moving somebody on to Eden Wing or even onto Ward 14, to get the charter. Of course, now I'm still asking my staff to go out and say we know you've had this letter, how do you feel about being removed. When am I going? I don't know. Well, we do know because we're told in advance, so that's the bit about asking staff to be a bit disingenuous. Then we ask them to walk down.

184. There was a funny story about this once. One of the managers had some difficulty with a group of detainees about charters, and I think it was a Pakistan charter went out the night before. They were saying to the centre manager everybody goes, nobody ever comes back, really giving them a bit of a hard time, and just as it happened, and you couldn't have timed it better, the person who went on the charter the night before walked under the wing – there you go! It's a difficult thing for staff.

185. Q. Your charter, I don't know, 20 or 30 people.

186. A. They are getting bigger.

187. Q. Are your staff doing all the walking down to reception? There must be times when that's almost unmanageable, isn't it?

188. A. It depends what time the charter is. Some charters go at different times. Usually the Albanian charters are okay because the first coach arrives at half-past two in the morning. It's not right for some people, you're getting people out of bed at two or three o'clock in the morning to go out on a flight, but operationally it's easier because everybody's locked down. The TCTU charter, which is the third country charter, that's the same. The other charters are different, because sometimes the Nigeria charter, for example, the flight time is usually 10.30-ish at night and it usually goes from Brize Norton, which is an RAF camp, so they're pretty tight on the times getting them in. They're difficult but you have people on association, so that's where staff need to do the work, a lot of running around, but that's what we do, that's what we're effectively here to do, that's our role.

189. Q. Right in the middle of an association, you'll see somebody kicking off and all that all day, and you're doing that 'use of force', dragging somebody through the centre.

190. A. We tend to do the work beforehand and we tend to move the more difficult ones. We've had a few times when people have jumped on the net because they know we can't go on to the netting to take people off because it's an

incident at height. Touch wood, luckily we haven't had that many difficulties. We've tended to know who the difficult people are going to be and located them either on Eden Wing, which is a smaller discrete unit, or in the CSU and manage it from that. We do gauge that beforehand. People will say 'I don't want to go but I'll walk down and see the escorts. We do say, and it does happen, and we talk to people, and this is about engagement, this is about having relationships, you talk to them. The people have the opportunity up until you literally walk on the plane. We have had quite a few people come back from charters who, for want of a better word, got to the steps of the plane and then called back because they've had a stay or something's happened around their case in court.

191. Q. The other thing that we've explored with others is this business of the physical environment of this place, which is also challenging.

192. A. Yes, it's prison. There's no other way you can flour it up.

193. Q. I'm thinking more in terms of the size of it and the size of the population you're trying to manage.

194. A. My understanding is it's a centre that was built, it has a very small footprint, it has very small facilities, and my understanding, whether this is right or not, is that it was originally designed that you would only hold people here for 72 hours as a removal centre. If you look at it in that context and you're only going to get people coming in here for their last 72 hours, it's probably a centre that would fit that purpose. If you have somebody coming in for a day or two, fine, you put them in a room and you know within a day or two they're going to be gone.

195. Q. When they put in the 60 extra they put in bunk beds. Your experience of this will be interesting. Lee said that the cells are a bit bigger than they are in a standard prison. Is that right?

196. A. Yes.

197. Q. We must go and have a look at them. But it's still quite tight, isn't it? Does that worry you?

198. A. Tinsley worries me more.

199. Q. Because?

200. A. There are six beds in some of the rooms. Yes, it is tight, three. Ideally I'd like people to have a single cell, certainly, in my view, in prisons. I understand the sentiments of what people say. I always say to people alright, look at something and then put yourselves there. I spent eight years in the Army and I lived in all kinds of conditions. I lived in dirt trenches for a few days and stuff like that. Would you want to put two or three people in a room? No, you wouldn't.

201. Q. I'm thinking there must be other issues about that too, which is about managing. It is very complicated, room-sharing resident assessments become more complicated, and you also have this issue of trying to get people out. If you're trying to get a third person out it will be much more complicated than two.

202. A. I can talk from previous experiences. I've been in prisons where there are three beds in a cell and some of the things I've talked about here, most prisons I've worked in have had bunk beds and, to be honest, I can't recall ever having a problem with somebody on the top bunk. You would remove

people in prisons, particularly in a big local, you have to move people out to training prisons and a lot of them didn't want to move there, but I've never come across a problem with a bunk bed, to be honest.

203. Q. But here you have, or not?
204. A. Up until *Panorama*, and there are a number of ongoing cases in the High Court now around three-bedded rooms, about ventilation and around other things, that's ongoing.

205. Q. And you think that's been inspired by the *Panorama* programme.
206. A. Yes, because up to then we hadn't had any problems with the three-person rooms. They didn't like them, but what we tended to find was that people from their own nationalities or people that were friends, the Chinese, as an example, are quite happy to have three people in a room because that's the way they are, they keep within themselves as a group. We thought it might be a massive issue, to be honest, or a particularly difficult issue, but the reality was that we didn't have that many problems. It's become more of an issue post-*Panorama*. You might get the odd complaint about a three-person room, but certainly post-*Panorama* it's more evident now. How that's being driven I don't know and people are being quite specific about the complaints that they're putting in, they all seem to be very similar.

207. Q. And?
208. A. They seem to be more specific.

209. Q. Do you mean by that more detailed?
210. A. Yes. There's a lot more talk about going down human rights, and it's more of a technical response to it in some respects. I have seen some of the legal correspondence and some of the challenges that have been put in, and a lot of them seem to be using *Panorama* as part of the response, but we give the information. It would be nice, in a perfect world, to say to everyone 'there you go, there's your room'. That's not what we have, we have rooms with two people, we have rooms with three people. We have a room-share risk assessment process which we go through and then we allocate appropriately.

211. Q. For you, what would be the one thing you'd like to sort out in terms of the physical environment?
212. A. I'd like to see more activity space because they are big wings, there are a lot of people on those wings. It would be nice, from my point of view, to see more activity and a more varied one.

213. Q. Is there anywhere on this site that you could build or expand anything? Could you literally put another roof on?
214. A. The only thing I could potentially look at, the only spare capacity outside of the living accommodation, is the exercise yards. We have four exercise yards.

215. Q. But they're not big enough, are they?
216. A. I would look at perhaps doing something different with a number of the exercise yards, and you could look at some kind of Portakabin element to bring some more activity.

217. Mr Marsden: By dropping something into the centre.
218. A. Yes. It's not the ideal solution, I know.

219. Q. It takes out outside space.

220. A. It takes out other space. The other thing, if I had a bit of a wish list for the centre, would be things like bigger gymnasium facilities because it's a small area for the size, but some of the activity could be looked at. Some of the things I've identified would be using more peer support and having a better welfare facility for detainees which is more self-helping rather than providing. Some of the things I have a bit of an argument here with some is around cleaning. I have a big issue about cleaning and I keep banging the drum, and I seem to be banging my head against a brick wall.

221. Q. As in it's not good enough?

222. A. No, it's not good enough. I do understand the elements of that.

223. Q. It was a big issue in Yarl's Wood.

224. A. People will say if you're in a prison the places are spotless, and I say if you're in a prison there's a whole different regime. In a prison you'll get everybody up in the morning, you'll send the majority of your prisoners to workshops and education, and you're left with a few people on the wing, most of them cleaners who want to be there because they can get the extra gym on the wing, etc., and they'll do a good job because they know if they don't –

225. Q. They'll lose their job.

226. A. Yes.

227. Ms Lampard: As I understand it, detainees are responsible for cleaning their own cells.

228. A. Yes.

229. Q. And then Aramark do common parts. Is that right?

230. A. The contract's just changed and we have a meeting next week. Predominantly before, Aramark didn't do the wings. The contract before was a bit of a hybrid. If you look at when the contract started, there were lots of things that have changed over the years. With the Aramark one there were lots of things that I couldn't find they were contracted to do. We now have a new contract. We're having a meeting next week and some of the things are going to be –

231. Mr Marsden: Do G4S contract them?

232. A. Yes. Before, there wasn't a contract as such; there is now, they've gone through that tendering process and they've been awarded the contract.

233. Ms Lampard: What are you going to hope that you're going to persuade them to do?

234. A. Not persuade them, I'm going to tell them, because that's what the contract says! Politely, of course.

235. Q. What are you going to tell them to do?

236. A. What are you cleaning?

237. Q. Where, on the wings?

238. A. On the wings.

239. Q. You're going to say they are responsible for the wings?

240. A. It doesn't say they're not, and this is the bit about the contract.

241. Q. They've not been doing the wings but you're now wanting them to do the wings.

242. A. Yes, because the contract now states that the detainees are only responsible for cleaning their own rooms, and I've not had that before.

243. Q. That's what the contract says.

244. A. That's what the contract says.

245. Q. And that's been renegotiated recently.

246. A. And that's been retendered for, and a number of other things within that. We have a meeting next week, on the 5th, I think, just to go through that, and the contract states that it will be that Aramark will clean the centre with the help of detainee labour.

247. Q. Overall responsibility will be theirs.

248. A. Technically, yes. The way I would envisage it, certainly I want to introduce some more of the deep cleans. We're going through a period of refurbishment at the moment, as you're probably aware, so every wing is going to be decanted, inundation points are going to be put in the doors. We've taken this as an opportunity, all the rooms are going to be painted out, some of the wing areas are going to be painted; outside, all the stairwells are going to be painted. There's a professional cleaning company coming in who are literally going to strip the floor down and re-polish it. We're having all the sanitary ware polished, because it's horrible.

249. Q. That's been the stuff that the detainees themselves have been doing in their own cells, not very well, or at all.

250. A. It's immaterial. When you look at it, it's a white – I don't know what it is, to be honest. It's like a very hard acrylic plastic, it's porous, so attracts the stains.

251. Q. So they couldn't have kept it clean even if they'd wanted to.

252. A. Probably not. The last time the wings were shut down, which was before the extra beds, we sanded all the toilets. We tried every chemical you could think of to clean the toilets. It's been a constant criticism on HMIP and other reports and investigations, but some of it is down to the material, it just stains and you can't get it out without sanding. This company's come in and they have – I've seen one and it looks quite good – this polishing equipment, so not only does it clean it but it polishes and seals it. It looks good. The only other way we could do it was to have all the toilets taken out, re-done and sealed, but it's a horrible plasticky thing and it doesn't look good. You test yourself with the same question.

253. Mr Marsden: Steve, can I ask you a question about the longer-term? The population's changed, the nature of some of the interventions by the Home Office have changed, it's a complex population. With the introduction of psychoactive substances and the like, is your impression – I don't know what the answer to this is if the answer's yes – is that it's on a downward trend? Is it getting more and more complicated?

254. A. No. What hasn't happened is that we haven't adjusted quick enough, and that's both us and probably the Home Office, to the needs of the population, because the population in any environment like this you work in will always change. There will be a number of factors over a period of time which will

change the dynamics of centres, and from a personal point of view, you then have to process things. You have the detainee coming in, which we manage with and there are a number of issues there that obviously need to be looked into, and then you have the Home Office part, so I still struggle to get my head around it. Each individual will have a case worker, and that case worker is somebody who sits in an office somewhere, and it could be anywhere – Liverpool, Glasgow, Birmingham or wherever – who has probably never walked into a centre. I find that difficult. I'm not saying it's wrong, that's what the process is, but with case workers it's about that interaction. You have to have people on site who are dealing with the people. Detainees need an avenue where they can get an answer.

255. **Q.** I have to say it's a big issue in Yarl's Wood as well. The remoteness of the case working, the remoteness of the decision-making, the fact that people couldn't speak to their case worker easily, if at all.

256. **A.** The short-term population is probably not too bad, but if you have people who've been here for a long period of time, and don't get me wrong, some of the people that have been here a long period of time have been fighting against the removal anyway, hence the reason why they've been in detention a long period of time, so each case has to be individual. And we can help. Post-*Panorama* I do weekly forums every week, so on Thursday and Friday I do C and D Wings, on Friday I do A and B Wing. There was some uptake after *Panorama*.

257. **Ms Lampard:** This is with the detainees?

258. **A.** With the Home Office, yes. We set out a stall, we said we will hold forums. A detainee will put an application in in the morning, we'll take a maximum of ten. We've done lots of forums and lots of surveys over the time, but what tends to happen is you can get a group of detainees in a room and, no matter how many times you say, it becomes personal about their case.

259. **Mr Marsden:** That's all that matters to them.

260. **A.** That's all that matters to them. And then everybody starts, and the emphasis of why you want these forums, so we've changed it. We do a maximum of ten, so I go down, and if I'm not available one of my managers goes down, and a member of the Home Office team, and we meet with people and talk through various things. What we do is give them the option of applying, so in a morning they can put an application in. If it's case specific, they can write the details about their case that they'd like somebody to look at, and the Home Office pick them up first thing with their applications. It may or may not give the Home Office an opportunity to look into their case details, and when we have the meetings at quarter to ten or quarter to 11 there may be a chance we can give somebody an answer; there may not. After a few weeks they died down and Debbie Weston, who works at Tinsley, and she was up here on a period of secondment –

261. **Ms Lampard:** She's familiar, Debbie Weston. Was she at Yarl's Wood?

262. **A.** No. Debbie's been here a long time. Debbie's very good. If you meet Debbie you'll understand what I'm saying. We used to then walk round the wings and take lots of applications on books and then she'd go back to the detainees and give them answers. It works quite well, so we do those every week. A lot of it is people would get a monthly review letter, which probably tells them the same thing they were told the month before. Going back, there's such a churn that things can change. At the moment I'm finding more

of the difficult nationalities are the Congolese, Somalians, particularly young Somalians who've lived here quite a bit, they have a gun culture, certainly in London and areas, and they bring a whole different dynamic because of the way they operate. They can be quite loud, quite challenging to detainees as well, not just to staff.

263. Q. Steve, I'm very conscious of the fact that we've now kept you for an hour-and-a-half, and I know you want to tell us something else so I'll turn the recorder off.

[*Interview concluded*]