

Confidential

Independent Investigation into Brook House

Wednesday, 11 April 2018

**Interview with
Owen Syred
Welfare Officer**

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

1. **Mr Marsden:** This is an interview with Owen Syred, who is a Welfare Officer here at Brook House. It's part of the independent investigation and it's 11 April 2018.
[Introductions]
2. **Ms Lampard:** Owen, thanks very much indeed. Let's begin by just asking you about your experience of working at Brook House - how long you've been here, what roles you've had and what your current role and responsibilities are?
3. **A.** I started here in 2009, shortly after the building opened. I worked on the wings, C Wing mainly, and I was here for four years. I went to work in the family suite at Tinsley for a short spell. I left the company four years after because I was doing fostering and needed to be home more and not do shifts. I went to go and work for GEO who do prison transport and court duties. Then because of my accident, I missed working here.
4. **Q.** How long were you off for?
5. **A.** Two years. I missed working, I missed the interaction; you don't get that so much working in the court and the transport. I missed the interaction with detainees and applied to come back and have been back here now for four years.
6. **Mr Marsden:** You came in 2009 and then how long were you -
7. **A.** It was about 2014 that I left.
8. **Ms Lampard:** Then you came back here about two years ago?
9. **A.** Two years after that. I've been back here four years now.
10. **Ms Lampard:** Okay. How did the job in Welfare come about?
11. **A.** I always wanted to be a Welfare Officer. I put in for it a few times and wasn't successful. I think we had established that Welfare was quite an important part of the structure of the regime. I've been in Welfare now for probably just over a year, about a year and a half. It's very different than working on the wings, you have to be quite knowledgeable. New staff can't normally do it because you have to be knowledgeable about how the Home Office proceedings work and all the court proceedings as well.
12. **Q.** What sort of training did they give you for that role?
13. **A.** Training as an officer you have the basics of what detainees have to go through. I've had some training in Immigration law about a year ago.
14. **Q.** Who gave you that?

15. A. It was addressed by Amnesty International in London. It was a two-day course, it was quite helpful, although it was more geared up with teaching people it could be ages for people to get visas. It was the other side of the story if you see what I mean but it was still very helpful about how people get visas, how people can be in breach of a Visa and things like that. A lot about European law.
16. Q. Are there any things on which you think actually you could do with some more training now?
17. A. Yes, most definitely.
18. Q. What sort of things do you think you might want to be trained in?
19. A. Home Office procedures - I was working with the Home Office last year for four or five months.
20. **Mr Marsden:** On voluntary returns?
21. A. Yes, on voluntary returns. I learned a hell of a lot there, I did learn from the staff, I probably learned more than I've ever learned since really. It was giving me the ability to talk to detainees and give them answers to stuff. For instance 'why am I in detention', 'okay, where are you from', 'European', 'this is the reason why you're in detention', 'this is the reason why they aim to remove you'.
22. **Ms Lampard:** We know from our experience that Yarl's Wood that the Home Office are extremely sensitive about officers being trained, in any way, in relation to Home Office stuff, because they're fearful that they're going to start giving people the wrong advice, or get involved in individual cases.
23. Ed and I made a recommendation on the previous occasion that we've done one of these reviews, that actually there was a place for staff to be able to answer basic questions, about basic issues because that's what's on detainees' minds. Do you feel that the staff here have enough basic knowledge to help them to answer things?
24. A. It's very difficult when you work on the wings. I worked on the wings for quite a few years and when you work on the wings you have to keep people calm. You do like a routine of working on the wings. You don't always want to fall into that position. You sometimes think actually you're telling them the things they want to hear. Always being truthful, it's not being truthful, it's not lying but to keep them calm you're telling them things they want to hear.
25. What I believe in is I believe in telling the truth and telling them - they're grown men. They might be vulnerable but I believe in actually this is what's happening. Whereas, I will never, ever say to a detainee that I hadn't run it past the Home Office. If a detainee says to me 'this is my paperwork' I will say to them 'do you understand what the Home Office are telling you', 'no', 'this is what they're telling you'. I'll put it in layman's terms and I might say, for instance, if someone gained asylum and they had the asylum taken away from them because they caused a crime.
26. I will say if you had a house and you had a family, your family there, and you invited somebody in who was struggling, in trouble and that person decides to steal off you, or hurt a member of your family, you want them out your house. Those sorts of things - do you see what I mean - and they get it. I'm afraid detainees don't get it from the Home Office because that's an official line but

when you're with them all day, every day you see them. I was going around in their rooms, having a cup of coffee with them, talking about these things, about going back to their country.

27. **Ms Lampard:** You've had a lot of experience and you've been a foster parent, you've done a bit of life really.
28. **A.** Yes.
29. **Q.** To what extent do you think those chaps on the floor have an adequate grasp of some of that and the capacity to do that, or do detainees tend to bottle it up until they come and see you?
30. **A.** Some of them do, yes. I'm afraid you get officers who are well-meaning but they don't know and it's experience. You learn confidence in this job but you have to know when your confidence can stop. If you're overconfident you can be seen as being a bully and all that. It's a simple thing of treating people like you would treat anyone else. I've learned to say hello in about 16 different languages.
31. **Q.** Do you think the Home Office should be doing more to train your staff here to at least be able to answer the basic questions?
32. **A.** Yes. To answer the basic questions, yes. To explain things like what a judicial review is, what the bail conditions are - things like that.
33. **Mr Marsden:** Factual things?
34. **A.** Yes, just the factual things and telling them what not to say and what to say to them. I always had to tell staff when I was feeding back to staff in the briefings, 'this is what the Home Office want from us, this is what you shouldn't be telling them', or 'you should be selling them'. In some ways I was almost like a liaison between the Home Office and G4S.
35. **Ms Lampard:** When was that or you are still doing that?
36. **A.** I started in December, not last December the December before that, and I did it for about five months, it was part of the pilot scheme.
37. **Q.** This was the voluntary return scheme?
38. **A.** Yes.
39. **Mr Marsden:** This was dealt with Debbie?
40. **A.** Yes, certainly. I was non-uniform, they accepted that and they would come to me because they would see me as somebody -
41. **Ms Lampard:** The staff this is?
42. **A.** No, the detainees and staff really. They come to see you 'actually you may be able to help me'. I put posters up everywhere so detainees could phone me and it wasn't just about persuading - it was supporting them. If they decided they wanted to go, or they were going it was supporting them through that move 'what's going to happen in my country, how can I access any help in my country if there is any'. Just simple things, talking and being honest with them and giving them some hope that life does carry on outside the UK.
43. **Q.** What training did you get for that because that was a very different role you found yourself in?
44. **A.** I didn't get any training for that.

45. Q. The Home Office should have been training you for that or was that a G4S pilot?
46. A. No, it was a Home Office pilot. I'm one of these people who learn by aesthetic learning - I learn by doing. My son is the same and you learn by doing and you pick it up. Even Welfare, we've got someone shadowing at the moment in the office. She's worked here for quite a while, you can't just teach someone 'this is what you do in Welfare', you have to be doing it and you pick it up.
47. I did that with the Home Office last year. I picked up a lot when I went to the meetings with them as well and I was supporting their engagement officers. If they needed to speak to a detainee who wasn't happy to speak, they would send me and I would speak to them. With some quite difficult cases, I managed to give the guys support back in Jamaica, to persuade them to go peacefully.
48. Mr Marsden: How many people did you help go back to their countries?
49. A. In that time I think it was about 370.
50. Ms Lampard: 370 voluntary returns?
51. A. Yes.
52. Q. How does that compare with an ordinary period?
53. A. I don't have the Home Office figures but I collated my figures and in the first month I had about 50. Another month I had about 80, I was running about 50 to 80 and building up from there because it was being established.
54. Mr Marsden: What was, in your view, the key to looking at - was it sitting down and talking to people in plain terms?
55. A. Yes, it's being honest, being approachable, just a friendly way of doing it because the Home Office line - you know they have their job to do. The Home Office thing is official and when they see that official they clam up, they don't want to talk about certain things. Some people I was talking to, I would say 'this is what the benefits would be for you, you've got to remember the Home Office have got you, you might get bail but they can bring you back, you can't access services' - things like that.
56. Ms Lampard: Did you do that on the floor in their rooms or did you do that in the Welfare room?
57. A. No, all over, all over.
58. Q. You just went to find somebody who the Home Office had identified as potential for -
59. A. Yes, or when I do inductions on B wing, you know part of the induction for me, I did the Welfare one, but part of it, for me, was saying 'guys, if you want to go back to your country they have some voluntary return schemes that will get you back sooner, there might be some financial assistance if you go back, there might not be but come and speak to me'.
60. I had cards drawn up and I'd give them my card. Some would see me there and then, or people would phone you or be recommended by other officers to come and see me. It was snowballing - it was going thick and fast.
61. Q. What's happened to that whole system?

62. A. The pilot scheme finished, it was successful, it was for a certain term but it was seen as a success. I think we had more voluntary returns from this centre than all the other centres put together at one time.
63. Mr Marsden: Why has it stopped? Why pilot something that works and then not continue with it?
64. A. I think it may be something to do with the fact that you have private sector or public sector - who is going to pay for that DCO to do the job. That's what I was led to believe, who was going to pay for a DCO because it wasn't part of the contract doing that. I was taken away from my duties to do that.
65. Q. You think it was an argument about money?
66. Ms Lampard: Voluntary returns still go on, don't they?
67. A. Yes. I think it was about money. It's if the Home Office want you to do this, they have to pay due price to actually employ me to do it. I think it was about that and everyone from the Home Office I spoke to said it was successful, they were really happy with it, it went quite high up as well, that it had been voted.
68. Q. Do you think your doing it in any way prejudiced some other detainees, into thinking you were too close to the Home Office?
69. A. No, no, I didn't because even though I've got 'Home Office' on there I actually had people telling me stuff. I had one guy telling me all about a bogus marriage, a massive thing, he sent me loads of emails. I had another bloke telling me where the drugs were coming from. I'd literally say to them 'I'm not Home Office, I work for G4S but this is what I can do for you'.
70. Q. If you get information like that presumably you had to report it to the security?
71. A. Yes. You see they were seeing me as a slightly different role as a DCO. I don't know but I never had any issue. I could go to anyone's room and chat to them.
72. Q. Do you think they still see you as slightly different because you do Welfare?
73. A. Yes, they do, because they see you in the building and they follow you around, they wait to see you and also, I had this right from the beginning when I worked here if you work on the wing, they would come into the office and see you.
74. They would come straight to the same officers every time. I used to have it all the time. There could be three officers down there and they will come to me and, you know why, because you think 'well, actually he's the only one who will probably do it'. You do have that and sometimes it can actually be a bit of a bugbear with you because you end up doing loads of it.
75. Q. Tell us about the resources of the Welfare Team you have now; there's you and who else?
76. A. Terisha, Octavia, who is going to Tinsley actually, Sunil and Terry - there are four officers.
77. Q. Four Welfare offices?
78. A. Yes.
79. Q. You work on different sides of the shift?

80. A. Yes, although we've had short numbers of staff, we've been running one for quite a while, or because another staff member would be taken off to do other duties.
81. **Mr Marsden:** Usually one in Welfare then?
82. A. We are supposed to have two. We have started to have two again because the staffing is getting a bit better.
83. **Ms Lampard:** Just give me an indication of when it started getting noticeably bad that you usually one down?
84. A. Since about October, November.
85. Q. When you say it's got a bit better when did it start getting a bit better?
86. A. It started about two weeks ago funnily enough. It would be one officer, in the office and the other one will be sent off to one of the wings or something else.
87. Q. You say it's got a bit better, I've just looked at the detail for today and it doesn't look very good, does it?
88. A. Okay.
89. Q. Do you have two?
90. A. Yes, there are two of us today.
91. Q. Good, that's encouraging.
92. A. Yes, we were emailing the SMT to say we need to have two officers in there; we're struggling otherwise.
93. Q. When did you do that?
94. A. That was sent off about a month ago, we sent the email. My colleagues did it - Terisha sent one off actually, sent to the SMT in charge of Welfare.
95. **Mr Marsden:** Who did you send that to?
96. A. Mark Demian.
97. Q. Okay. In his capacity as Head of Residential?
98. A. Yes, and I think James Begg as well.
99. Q. Did he reply to you by the way?
100. A. Yes, he did actually, because of the operating numbers and things like that, it may not always be possible to have two officers at one time.
101. **Ms Lampard:** Just tell me about the system, we've seen detainees sitting outside your office. You moved office, didn't you?
102. A. Yes, we had an office further down the corridor, which they used to just come in, which was a bit of a nightmare.
103. Now they have a ticket, they've worked it so they have a ticket and we will try to see one at a time. I don't particularly like to have a room full of people because there may be somebody who wants to talk confidentially, and you can't hear when there's loads of people and their.
104. Q. Do you have access to a private room because there's you two sitting there, the two officers, and you're each talking to somebody and you're on the phone or whatever?

105. A. Yes, we do use Room 10, which is the same corridor.
106. Q. Do you have enough access to that?
107. A. Normally. Or any of the interview rooms that are not being used we can do that. Yes, it's not always easy if you're on your own obviously. I'm an ACDT assessor as well so sometimes someone might come in and I have to use that as the assessment.
108. I have had a few people who want to speak to you in confidence, or even in the building. I believe Welfare shouldn't just be in the office, I like being around and about like I'm doing today.
109. Q. What are you doing today - tell us about that?
110. A. I've done the inductions.
111. Q. Are inductions now happening more regularly?
112. A. Yes, they are.
113. Q. There was a period when they weren't?
114. A. Yes, exactly.
115. Q. When did they stop do you think?
116. A. They started again, probably about a month ago I think it is, yes.
117. **Mr Marsden:** When I spoke to Stewart he was very keen to get that because it's the wing, isn't it and he was very keen to get it all running.
118. A. Yes. When I was doing the voluntary return scheme that was really important for me doing that duty, doing the inductions. I've done the inductions this morning - about 25 guys I did this morning. Then I will go to Echo Wing. I do it personally myself, I always think it helps the people on the Rule 40s when they have the directors around, Home Office rounds, I go with them if they want. Then, if anyone has any issues, the reason why they're down, whatever, to get them and de-escalate them, if I can sort those issues out there and then.
119. **Ms Lampard:** You usually go and do the Rule 40s?
120. A. Yes.
121. Q. Reviews?
122. A. Yes, I do that myself actually.
123. Q. Go in there and see them anyway?
124. A. Yes, I go there with the directors and I will say 'have you got a Welfare Officer' and it helps them.
125. Q. It's part of the procedure, you're meant to be there but I'm glad to hear you do that.
126. A. Yes, I do that. I get a lot from it to tell the truth because you think the reason this guy's got issues is because of this. It may be something quite big to him but something you can sort out.
127. **Mr Marsden:** Yes, 'my property's missing'?
128. A. Yes, exactly.

129. Q. Or 'I haven't spoken to my wife'.
130. A. Yes, things like that, I can help them with things like that.
131. **Ms Lampard:** You mentioned 'Big Word' - is that effective? Do you find it useful and effective?
132. A. Yes, we do use it quite a bit, probably about two or three times a day, not massively really.
133. Q. When I was watching you and Terisha one day, I asked you then what you thought the big issues were for detainees. Actually one of the issues was property and you mentioned, both of you, the fact that, frankly, other centres and the police don't seem to be very respectful of getting people's property here. Would you say that property and the detainees' immigration status are the two big things?
134. A. Yes, I think really and truly people will come in and their expectation of what Welfare is, and I do say this in induction, the expectation of what Welfare is and what we do are two different things. They will come in and say 'I've been told this is where I can be freed'. You know this isn't, this is nothing to do with us. This is to do with Home Office, your solicitor explains that. We don't do your legal documents and we don't do your bail request forms.
135. **Mr Marsden:** There is a belief that you can –
136. A. Pull strings.
137. Q. Yes.
138. A. Yes, and people come in and claim asylum for instance. They will come in and just say 'I want to claim asylum'. First of all, I don't know what the other officers do, they may not do what I do but I think it helps. I say to them 'do you know what asylum is', and most of them go 'no I don't'. You tell them what the definitions of asylum are.
139. I explain what the definitions of asylum are. Now 'do you think you fall under that category', 'yes', 'well maybe you want to -'. If they want to write it, people say they can write it. If they can't write it I then write it out for them and explain to them they need evidence. The Home Office will ask me 'can you help this fellow fill out a Request for Asylum'.
140. **Ms Lampard:** You and Terisha are working quite closely together so you bounce off each other the whole time. Do all four of you ever get together?
141. A. Yes.
142. Q. You probably need to occasionally, don't you, compare notes?
143. A. Yes. I worked mainly with Octavia but he's moved to Tinsley and I've been working with Terry now. Terisha and Sunil work on the same lines but we do get together and, obviously, when we're not in we email each other. We have people's property that hasn't been sorted we will email and cc it to each of us so we know what's happening with it.
144. Q. Is it your sense that they are all working, in a sense, to the same brief as you? That they have the same approach and that they are quite clear with people about what their chances are in relation to immigration? That they explain things to them?
145. A. I think they may not want to have the discussions about going back to their country. I don't think that they feel that it's their place, or they may feel

uncomfortable with it. I'm a realist, sometimes if someone comes in and I'll say to someone 'listen if you're honest with me I'll be honest with you'. Most people will tell you what they want you to hear. They want you to say 'oh no you're a good lad, you'll be alright, you'll be released'. I will say to someone 'actually you've committed a crime. For that you went to prison and you are going to be deported and that is the situation'.

146. Q. You've had the opportunity to work closely with the Home Office and you probably have picked up, therefore, a bit more of some of that?

147. A. Yes.

148. Q. Do you think some of your colleagues in Welfare could probably do with a bit more training on some of that?

149. A. I don't think it's about training. I think it's about how you perceive –

150. Q. Do you think they would benefit from having the experience you had, working a bit more closely with the Home Office?

151. A. I don't think they'd like to do it.

152. Q. No.

153. A. They wouldn't like to do it. I know.

154. Q. Okay.

155. Mr Marsden: It's sort of too –

156. Ms Lampard: Sensitive.

157. A. To direct, yes.

158. Mr Marsden: To mixed up with –

159. A. I've said to the guys 'listen', whether they see me as some sort of right wing, misogynist dude who just wants to get everyone out - that's not me. That's not the way I am. I've got a real human heart and I believe also that people are responsible for their own actions and you're an adult, you're a grown-up. I had a guy come in the other day and he was like 'I'm a victim of this, I'm a victim of that, victim, victim, victim' and I said to him 'you went to prison, yeah, so who is the victim'.

160. Ms Lampard: What was his response?

161. A. 'I'll kill myself'. He's one of those that just keeps wanting to kill himself and I said 'listen, you're a Muslim, what does it say in the Koran, you take one life you take all humanity. Greatest sin you could ever do', 'oh yeah'.

162. Q. Mr Marsden: Yes, and there's a sort of confidence that you have and a directness and life experience that makes it easier to have those conversations.

163. A. Yes. Don't get me wrong, I'm never rude.

164. Ms Lampard: I've seen you do it, don't worry.

165. Mr Marsden: You're appropriately challenging.

166. A. Yes, good.

167. Q. I bumped into you when people were coming out the Servery and you were doing a search and that was the first time we met. You managed to turn the search into a sort of joke.
168. A. Yes, I probably said to you before I don't like tense atmospheres. When I first worked here it was very tense. In my life anywhere I don't like that atmosphere. I like to see people smile and to have a laugh at someone, as long as you're not being rude or disrespectful, it makes the whole place feel very different.
169. Ms Lampard: You've alluded to the fact that they get a ticket and they queue up outside?
170. A. Yes.
171. Q. You have an orderly, haven't you, who gives people a ticket?
172. A. Yes, yes, I do.
173. Q. Do you manage to get through everybody, or is there a need for some more resourcing?
174. A. We did manage to get through. We haven't been at full capacity so it has been less so - things like the computers, printers, scanners are so old. The computers are slow, the scanner is just a home scanner. I know that when I went to Hollingsworth they've got these big scanners and can do multiple scanning of pages. With ours if you scan more than 10 documents it takes ages. We need the resources like that in Welfare definitely.
175. Q. You need some more technology?
176. A. Yes.
177. Q. Let's talk about the relationship with the Home Office, if you get somebody in front of you, who appears to have been overlooked, somebody hasn't booked their bail because they get automatic bail, don't they?
178. A. Yes.
179. Q. Or who has a meeting that hasn't happened, or whatever it might be and you want to speak to the Home Office. How good is that relationship? Are you able to unlock some of that?
180. A. I worked with them last year, I've probably got a bit more of an inroad. What I was trying to do, with this job last year, detainees would go to see every officer they can to get the answer they want. I'll say to them don't keep phoning the Home Office because basically you're asking the same question for the same person multiple times and it's slowing them down. Either run it through me and I will speak to the Home Office, or do a request form. I was actually going to the Home Office quite a bit and saying, because I was working with them, 'can I have the update on this guy'.
181. Q. That would be the local staff here?
182. A. Yes.
183. Q. What about caseworkers - can you approach the caseworkers?
184. A. I was told to do that quite a bit actually, if people wanted to desperately go back and I would say to the caseworker 'you get back without escorting even though we we're putting in a case'. I was actually managing to change their decision to get them back because, they don't know and I would be with them.

185. Q. I think what you're telling me is what you were able to do was say to them 'look this person doesn't actually need an escort, we don't need to wait for that, let's get them out'?
186. A. Yes, and you could actually set the flight with escorts for them, if they decided they didn't want to go but if they wanted to go, you could actually have that in the background.
187. Q. You felt able to ring up caseworkers and talk to them?
188. A. Yes, some caseworkers were really good and some were absolutely dreadful, you could never get a thing from them. Their hands are tied because it's just like a big bottleneck. I always told the caseworkers who I was, if I was phoning the Home Office, I'll tell the Home Office staff what my role was.
189. Mr Marsden: How did they respond to you? Do they think 'thank God'?
190. A. No, they were fine. They knew about the pilot scheme.
191. Q. They thought it was helpful when you got on the phone and said 'look I've had a conversation with so and so and they are happy to leave'?
192. A. Yes, and I was working with the engagement officers as a team. We were getting people moved and people wanted to move desperately as well. We were getting them to go quicker.
193. Q. Was it ever evaluated formally? Was it written up?
194. A. As far as the Home Office is probably, yes, but I was seen as the Welfare Officer assigned to them. That's what they saw me as. I was called a Re-integration Officer at the time.
195. Ms Lampard: You've mentioned some of the resources you need. Overall, have managers here been responsive to things you need and the way you work and are supportive of your work?
196. A. They are probably better now but, that has a tie. They've only got to fill spaces in places they need, they've got to do that - if they have to take the Welfare Officer. Things like resources, we've been told until the contract's been finalised I don't think there's going to be any sort of technology and resources coming our way. We just have to do what we can at the moment.
197. Q. Tell us about managers here generally and senior managers. You've been here a long time - are managers here visible, approachable and as accessible as they ought to be?
198. A. Some are, some aren't, we have one senior manager I used to work with on the wing, James Begg. James will come down to the wing and will still help you. He will help you do your thing on the wing - he's still in touch.
199. Q. Tell us about other managers - we'll turn it off if you want to?
200. A. I used to have an issue with a senior manager here.
201. Q. Is that Juls?
202. A. When I worked on the wing I wouldn't just stay in the office I would be around and about the wing. I'd be checking on people, just getting to know people and he put in my review that officers say I go wandering - I had an issue with that. Of course I had an issue with him and he spoke to me really badly in front of staff and detainees on the wing. I called up to Ben Saunders and said that I don't expect to be spoken to like that.

203. Q. What was Ben's response to that?
204. A. Ben had a word with him. Juls came to apologise but I said - I think they were trying to dissuade me from making an official grievance. I wasn't happy with the way I was spoken to, and the staff I was working with weren't happy.
205. Q. You touch on something that is quite obvious to us here that staff have, in the past, always had a slight tendency to put in grievances for things here to escalate to the point that, actually, it is about grievances, investigations and quite a disciplinary culture. You are absolutely not alone in this tale you're telling us.
206. Mr Marsden: No, absolutely not.
207. Ms Lampard: Is that your observation that, by and large, it's a place that doesn't deal well with staff, in terms of making sure that people feel comfortable - that conversations I had at an early stage? You're shaking your head in a sense that I think you're agreeing with what I'm saying?
208. A. Yes, I do. We have shadowing, new staff, sometimes these new staff will just be down there and not shown. Not all of them so I will go. I went up to a new one 'how are you doing, how are you going, where have you worked before, what do you think this job is' - just chat to them. Some people leave very quickly because they think 'oh this job is not for me'. I say to them 'guys, give this job a little time, I was like that, give it a little time, get yourself settled in and you'll find that this job is different to when you first started, if you give it a bit of time'. Just have a little chat with them.
209. Q. Where is the blockage on that? It is just total common sense what you're telling us.
210. A. Yes.
211. Q. What is the issue? Is it because DCMs don't have the time, don't have the inclination, or is it because senior managers don't expect it?
212. A. DCMs feel like their hands are tied. You see, in this place if you come here from day one as an officer, if you work really hard, if you're dedicated, if you get on well you find that you'll get really busy. If you start to struggle let them know. If you come here from day one and you just have no expectations, you don't want to do anything you just want to open and shut the door, you don't really want to be involved, you don't want to do this and you shirk away from your duties, then I'm going to have to pull you up on it. It was worse before. It was really bad at one time.
213. Mr Marsden: The *Panorama* thing, in a way that can happen in that kind of environment. It might be really excessive but if you have people who just don't want to do their job and no one challenges them, how much easier is it for them to become 'I want to do something bad' - that might be challenged?
214. A. I study history about the way people turn nasty and what makes people like that. People aren't born to actually be cruel to other people and I've noticed when staff have left here, I look on Facebook and see they belong to these right wing groups, Britain First, Knights Templar and these are the people I work with.
215. I had an issue with one guy who was just anti-Muslim about them and I thought 'is this because you've worked here it's made you -' because when

you work here you see people from all over the world. You see mainly the same sort of nationalities. From a national point you don't always see the best of those people, or that country. You see a snapshot of those people and you may think 'they're all like that' and you're stereotyping the whole nation's population on a group of people that you've had issues with.

216. **Ms Lampard:** Was this somebody who has been employed here recently who has been a member of far right side?
217. **A.** I don't know.
218. **Q.** Alright, that's fine.
219. **A.** I don't know. I know for a fact, I started in 2009 and had a guy working with me and when I left to come back he changed. He, apparently, belonged to some sort of right wing Nordic sort of thing and I heard him make a racist comment in the wing office and I reported it. I had about a year of post-its, calling me a 'grass' and whatever.
220. **Q.** From him?
221. **A.** Not from him, maybe from his people. I had people following me around with a camera, I had people putting in reports about me and I did speak to Ben Saunders quite a lot about this and he was supporting me on that. I had to go off for stress again because I had my picture on the wing office about something. Someone put it up there.
222. **Q.** When was this?
223. **A.** Probably about three years ago.
224. **Q.** Do you think that might still go on occasionally, if somebody else was to report something like that?
225. **A.** Yes, I think that would be happening yes. There was bit of a clip about four years ago, of a young guy who was predominately quite lazy, works in security and they were very cliquey with each other. Fortunately that lot have gone.
226. **Q.** Were they people who were removed as a result of *Panorama*?
227. **A.** No, these people have left but I've noticed people who have left, people I worked with and you think 'oh, I didn't know you felt that way'. Whether or not this place changes them into that, or they felt like that when they first came here but I think people realise I'm not tolerant of racism.
228. **Q.** You've touched on a very interesting point, which is that organisations that don't have enough of a permanent culture of reinforcing good behaviour and don't have good management you need to stamp on this stuff. It needs to be repeated. You can develop cliques of people and bad behaviour and all of that sort of thing.
229. **A.** Yes, I think that's it yes.
230. **Q.** You are old enough, wise enough, experienced enough and self-confident enough, not to be drawn into that sort of thing.
231. **A.** No.
232. **Q.** Do you think there is more of a danger at the moment of that sort of behaviour being resurrected because we have lots of younger people? We have an overstretched management team?

233. A. I think it could happen at any time. The fact that ordinary people turned into killers in Nazi Germany. I know it's not to the extreme but it's a similar sort of thing - it gives some of them a bit of power.
234. Q. Do you think there are still, within this centre, a few officers, perhaps a few managers as well, who are a bit macho and cliquey. We know some of those people who left under *Panorama*. Do you think there are still some?
235. A. At the moment I don't think there are. I go down to E Wing quite a bit and I went there this morning and the guys around there I've worked with a long time. I know them, I know their character and I know they've all got good hearts. The guys who worked down there before I didn't go down there that much.
236. Q. E Wing?
237. A. Yes. Most of those guys apart from one, Charlie, I knew well - he was always very good with detainees. One of them I actually had issue with and I said to him myself 'you're out of line' about an incident that happened. Of course I wasn't too surprised but you can understand when they're working in that environment down there they become quite close. What goes on there stays there - that's their sort of attitude. I've worked down there myself -
238. Q. You don't see an evident clique at the moment?
239. A. I don't see an evident clique.
240. Q. You see, possibly, some still macho behaviour or not?
241. A. No, it's not as bad as it was. I used to be called 'Cuddly Care Bear' by certain officers and actually the officer he used to call me that got the sack.
242. Mr Marsden: Was it an officer or a manager?
243. A. It was a manager, yes.
244. Q. Was it Nathan?
245. A. Yes. I was seen as being -
246. Ms Lampard: Not in the group?
247. A. Yes. I wasn't part of that clique. I wasn't part of the macho group. I'd overhear talk in the staff room about stuff - people talk about whatever.
248. Q. You don't hear stuff in the staff room, which would suggests to you that there is still that clique and that bad behaviour?
249. A. No, no.
250. Q. You think *Panorama* cleared it out?
251. A. I think it did and I think it's probably rebooted the place. It's made officers more aware of what they can't say and what they can say. Officers that they feel comfortable talking to me - 'he's a bit of a pain in the ass today'. There was an officer a while back, had all his tattoos, into all his body building and he was in reception talking to another officer about smashing someone with a shield. Now there's a detainee with me and I said 'guys, there's a detainee with me', 'yeah, so?', 'you don't talk like this'. This guy said 'is that what you're like', the detainee said that. Detainees know.
252. Q. What happened to that officer?
253. A. He left.

254. Q. Did you report him?
255. A. I did report that, yes.
256. **Mr Marsden:** If someone like James Begg or Mark Demian heard inappropriate language, would they challenge that?
257. A. James I know for a fact would.
258. Q. Would he?
259. A. Yes. I know James. I don't know Mark but I assume he would, Mark's quite new.
260. Q. Yes, so you don't know.
261. A. I've known James for the last nine years.
262. Q. James would?
263. A. Yes, he would challenge that.
264. Q. He would stop that.
265. A. James would challenge that.
266. **Ms Lampard:** We have heard about charities outside here and NGOs who are able to support people going back to their countries or, indeed, to offer support in this country. What sort of connections do you have with any other charitable organisations, NGOs to help you with your work with detainees?
267. A. We use Gatwick Welfare Group who supports the detainees with financial things, money for their phones and if they go back to their country they give them some money.
268. Q. You are in contact with the Gatwick detainees?
269. A. Yes, we are in contact with them quite a lot.
270. Q. Who do you speak to there?
271. A. Naomi.
272. Q. Okay, yes.
273. A. We will send a fax to them 'this guy needs credit for his phone' and they've been really good and come into visit as well. We've got the Red Cross coming in to see us soon. They're going to have a meeting with us and come in hopefully next month some time, so that they can help us with things like missing family and trying to help a bit more. They want to get involved a bit more like that.
274. **Mr Marsden:** Was that their initiative?
275. A. Yes. Well we've always had dealings with them, worked with them, but I think they just want to come and see us face to face and have a little bit more engagement with what's going on. When I was doing this pilot scheme, an organisation in Jamaica, for instance, helped support detainees when they came back. I can't remember what it's called now and it's also the organisation to take migrants, I forget what it's called now - it's an international one.
276. Very few countries have any support for people going back. I think Jamaica is one, Holland, the Dutch Embassy is helpful. Other countries very much if

someone turns up that's it, they turn up. They don't get any support. What I was trying to do is just use the Internet to get any organisation, or charity, I can find that can actually just give someone –

277. Q. Does Hibiscus put people in touch?

278. A. Yes, I think they do.

279. Q. Do you work closely with them?

280. A. We don't really. It's one of the things I wanted to try and do is get some more organisations to help people.

281. Ms Lampard: Hibiscus do have some sophisticated relationships with a lot of countries and you probably ought to get in touch with them.

282. A. Yes.

283. Mr Marsden: They are for women, aren't they?

284. Ms Lampard: They are for women but they might introduce you to people.

285. A. Yes, I think they work at Harmsworth and Holbrook as well? Do they work out of there quite a bit?

286. Q. Holbrook at Tinsley -

287. Mr Marsden: They're down at Tinsley but they don't work –

288. Ms Lampard: Only in the family arch.

289. Mr Marsden: Yes, they don't work with them.

290. A. No.

291. Q. What they do have is good links with some charities, for example, when we were at Yarl's Wood they were telling us about their links with charities for resettlement.

292. A. Yes.

293. Q. They probably do and it would be worth talking to them.

294. A. Yes, that's what I need really.

295. Ms Lampard: I know that Migrant Help used to be here. Do you remember Migrant Help being here?

296. A. Yes.

297. Q. Tell me about Migrant Help and why they stopped being here.

298. A. I think what they would do is give almost like semi legal advice to them.

299. Q. Do you know that for certain, or is that what you were being told?

300. A. No, that's for certain. They were giving legal advice and things like that. I think we could do that for them as well, so there's no need to have them here. Sometimes if you had a detainee in, and they were there as well there was almost a conflict but we had Home Office coming to our office as well at the same time.

301. Q. There was a parallel.

302. A. Yes.
303. Q. Do you think there with things they could do, Migrant Help, that you couldn't do? Are they missed in a way?
304. A. Not really, no.
305. Q. Okay.
306. A. Not really - nobody mentioned them.
307. Q. It's quite clear from Minutes of meetings I've seen that actually it was a cost-cutting measure as well.
308. A. Yes.
309. Q. Is that what you know?
310. A. That was it actually.
311. Q. That's right. I want to ask you just a more general question. Sorry, Social Services - what sort of contact do you have with Social Services?
312. A. We can contact West Sussex Social Services to settle an age dispute.
313. Q. Have you ever done that on an age dispute?
314. A. I have, yes. It usually goes up to the Home Office. If you have someone with an age dispute you will notify the Home Office straightaway.
315. Q. What made you do it?
316. A. There was a reason for doing that, I think it was something to do with my experience with fostering, was the fact that I did that.
317. Q. Do you think people here normally pick up on age dispute cases, most of the staff - do you think people do?
318. A. Yes, I think they do actually.
319. Q. Do you think that they deal with it appropriately - tell the right people?
320. A. As far as I know there's never been a formal procedure of what you do if you think there's an age dispute, you think 'I'll just leave it to the next person to deal with'. Maybe if someone has an age dispute they can bring it to Welfare and we can maybe start the ball rolling.
321. Q. Do you think there needs to be a bit more explicit education here about age disputes?
322. A. About age disputes yes.
323. Q. How it is everybody's responsibility to identify that?
324. A. Exactly yes. Not just one person. I emphasise on the Welfare training package I do, I emphasise that, although we are Welfare Officers, all staff are Welfare officers and we all have responsibility - don't just shrug it off.
325. Q. That goes hand in hand with another issue about safeguarding, because it is a safeguarding issue, isn't it?
326. A. Yes.
327. Q. I get a strong sense that people understand safeguarding so long as the child is actually in the centre. They don't understand that actually children out there, about whom they hear things, as in 'I've left my children with'

- somebody who is evidently unsuitable, is also a safeguarding issue and needs to be escalated.
328. A. Yes. I actually had a case last year where, I think it was a Bulgarian, he was going to go for bail and I think he would have got bail but I picked up on the fact when I spoke to him that Social Services needed to speak to his family. He said 'I don't want them speaking to my family or my wife', he was very controlling. I phoned up Social Services and said I thought this guy could get bail and they were like 'oh dear', this guy had a number of sexual offences with children.
329. Q. That's what rang alarm bells with you?
330. A. It rang alarm bells with me so I phoned his case worker. I was in between liaising with his caseworker and Social Services.
331. Q. Do you think the rest of the staff are as astute as you are about that?
332. A. No. They probably wouldn't know what to do. Just alarm bells ringing. You know when you sort of know someone is being controlling. I know it sounds a really awful thing to say and I don't like to stereotype. I've got quite good detectors if someone is lying to me and not telling me the full facts. If someone says something I pick up on it - it's like a little blow under my ribs.
333. Q. Thank you very much that's very helpful. My final question is about G4S and valuing staff. A lot of what we hear is people not feeling that valued, particularly staff who have been here a long time tell us about being given a ballpoint pen but no - you know.
334. Mr Marsden: You have to write in black.
335. Ms Lampard: No sense of caring for staff - how would you reflect that?
336. A. I've been here a while and the incentive for you to stay is the fact that you enjoy your job, that's my perks basically. Your pay is the same as someone who has just started on day one. Your experience counts for nothing but it counts for a lot of the work if they need something. Feeling valued - I probably felt more valued last year when I was working with the Home Office to tell you the truth.
337. Q. Was that the Home Office valuing you?
338. A. I felt like G4S were valuing me as well, I just felt it was this is going to be part of the bid, having a returns officer, because they knew that's what the Home Office were pushing towards, it's almost like I was being valued a bit more.
339. Mr Marsden: When did someone last say to you that you've done a good job?
340. A. I don't remember. I think Mark Demian said something to me the other day. I said hello to a guy in Somali and he said 'do you know Somali', and I said 'well I can say that', 'that's good', but apart from that you don't really get anyone saying well done. I've done assessments on people.
341. Q. Do you say well done to people?
342. A. Yes.
343. Q. I imagine you would.
344. A. I do yes. Even with some of the new staff I say 'well done for that'. I've never been one of these when someone's done C&R and they're 'yeah'; I've never been like that. I don't enjoy doing that, I don't relish doing it.

345. **Ms Lampard:** Do you think that's valued here a bit too much - C&R?
346. **A.** It used to be because it's seemed to have ebbed off a bit. Being an assessor I would be pulled off the wing to do an assessment. I'd have staff members saying 'you took your time, where have you been'. No one ever said if someone did a C&R that came back and said 'oh yeah, mate, well done'.
347. **Mr Marsden:** Is that still the culture?
348. **A.** I haven't heard that for a long time.
349. **Q.** Okay, there was a sort of group of people?
350. **A.** There used to be. If I was called to do an assessment this assessment is done and I'll see it as being really important obviously. I'd do the training for assessors as well so it's seen as being really important. C&R used to be seen as being more important than anything in this building by certain staff.
351. **Ms Lampard:** You think that culture has gone?
352. **A.** I haven't heard that culture for quite a while and I'm happy with that because I can't stand to hear that, if you don't like the job you shouldn't be doing this job.
353. **Mr Marsden:** Do you have to do C&R refresher?
354. **A.** Yes, .
355. **Q.** Was taught in that way? Was that very much the training?
356. **A.** It used to be. It was very much 'this is exactly what you do, this is what you do and then it got to a thing where there would be more de-escalation involved. I do think the culture now is if you can actually get someone to talk to someone to de-escalate, that's better than going putting hands on. Before it used to be just go straight in. I had an issue a couple of years ago with a manager because he just wanted to go straight in, wouldn't let me talk to the guy.
357. I knew I could have got him to move but he didn't want me to go because that's that type of person. I had an issue with that because they broke his arm. I didn't raise that but, obviously, if you have to go because someone is a danger to themselves, or other people, I understand. If someone is being moved, or being sent back to their country or something you actually get someone to talk to them.
358. **Mr Marsden:** Have the confidence?
359. **A.** With the Home Office, Yes, I was doing that quite a bit. They were even sending me to people to have a chat with them. I used to go through the whole procedure of giving them out to the escorts. You can have that, it's a lot better than having - being physical with someone. I don't like to see that myself. I haven't heard any of the culture of getting kitted up -
360. **Q.** I imagine James Begg, for example, would value talking to someone before C&R, James Begg?
361. **A.** Yes.
362. **Q.** I imagine he would. You would think that relationship for detaining.

363. A. Yes, James would want to use every little bit of negotiation, to actually try and get the person to comply or he would use someone else, maybe that detainee might be a bit more inclined to want to talk to him you know.
364. Q. Can I just ask you about something that we observed -
365. Ms Lampard: I'm just pointing out we're on our allotted time but go on.
366. Mr Marsden: Activities - what's it like at the moment in terms of does it happen, is it working, is there enough to do in the centre?
367. A. I don't think there's enough to do. The class which Sebastian puts on is brilliant - they really love that. The art class is not as busy as it used to be but because the numbers are down, I'm not sure. The IT room seems to be working okay at the moment. The library seems to be a bit - they want to go play games. The cinema room - I've just go round the building 'guys, I've got a film on, come and watch a film tonight'. Round about 35 people turn up. I'll go around and have a chat, I'm a bit of a one for 'come on do something, don't just sit around'.
368. Q. I suppose is there a daily activities programme - does it work?
369. A. Yes. It works to a point but they still get quite bored. It's not that they want to access. I said to them this morning on the induction 'guys, don't sit around and do nothing, work on your case, go to the gym, do some activities, do something. Don't sit around because that's when your mind starts thinking wrong things. You need to get out and do stuff'. It's quite important. For instance after lunch, they'll head for the doors, 'alright guys, are you leaving, what are you going to do now'. I go in and ask them, just say go and do something don't sit around.
370. Ms Lampard: Owen, thank you very much. We know we've kept you a long time but that's very good.
371. A. That's alright. Thank you very much.
372. Mr Marsden: We'll send you a transcript. It will be password protected and when you get it, if you ring the office, Nicola will give you the password and then you can amend it if you want to or just say 'I'm happy with it'.
373. A. Yes, okay, thank you very much.

[Interview concluded]