

BROOK HOUSE INQUIRY

SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF MARY BRIDGET MOLYNEUX

I, Mary Bridget Molyneux, of DPA, will say as follows:

1. I make this statement at the invitation of the Inquiry to clarify and explain the steps I took in light of contact by Hindpal Singh Bhui, of HMIP, in May 2018. By way of context:
 - a. During his evidence on 24 March 2022 (day 37 of the Inquiry), Dr Singh Bhui was asked about an email which he sent to me on 4 May 2018 [HMIP000690]. I am advised that the email was disclosed by the Inquiry on 23 March 2022 within tranche 115.
 - b. The initial email within the trail, which is timed at 19.56 on 3 May 2022, explains that Mr Seago (of HMIP) had just taken a telephone call from a new member of staff at Brook House. That member of staff wanted to remain anonymous. He reported that he had just completed the initial training course and had only been given keys and a radio and placed on a wing for a week and was already having new staff shadowing him. He reported that one of the new staff (a female) had been sexually assaulted by "an inmate" (I take this and took it at the time to refer to a detained person). He complained that they were very short-staffed, unable to take breaks as a result and that the Centre was "out of control and volatile". He was concerned about the safety of staff.
 - c. Counsel to the Inquiry asked Dr Singh Bhui whether he received any further information about the issue raised within the email. He said "I don't recall whether I did or not. I mean, it would have been in the disclosure, I expect, if we did, but I don't remember" (see the transcript for 24 March 2022, page 199, lines 2-4).
 - d. The following day, when I attended to give evidence I was asked about this. The relevant exchange appears at the transcript for 25 March 2022, page 107, line 6 – page 109, line 22. I explained that I had not been able to review any

paperwork I held, but undertook to do so when I returned home. However as I remembered this incident, I provided my recollection of what happened.

2. I provide with this statement three email trails which help clarify the steps which I took in response to the contact from Dr Singh Bhui.
3. As the original email from Dr Singh Bhui suggests, on the afternoon of 4 May 2018 he telephoned me. It was a Friday and I had been visiting the Centre immediately beforehand. I received this initial call while I was on the G4S staff / visitor mini-bus from Brook House to Gatwick after finishing a rota visit. As a result of being on the bus, I could not really talk with Dr Singh Bhui at time, therefore I just listened.
4. Subsequent to that telephone call, Dr Singh Bhui sent the 17.21 email to me [IMB000209].
5. At 19.09 I replied to Dr Singh Bhui by email. I wrote:

"I'm now off public transport and had time to reflect on your note and our call. Given the serious nature of the claims, I feel that I must inform G4S and follow with them - as well as looking at it with my IMB colleagues for their views. Ideally, I would forward Stephen Seago's summary (but not your cover note to me) to Lee Hanford, the Director, and Steve Skitt, the Deputy Director, at Brook. But I want to clear that with you first."
6. I felt it was important to seek Dr Singh Bhui's consent to share this information as it had been provided anonymously and I was not clear whether the member of staff who provided the information to HMIP had consented it to being shared by me with others within the Centre and / or whether HMIP had agreed to any restrictions.
7. On 5 May 2018 Dr Singh Bhui and I spoke by telephone. I spoke with my colleagues on the IMB to inform them of the information provided to me. As I explained in my subsequent email to Dr Singh Bhui (sent on 7 May 2018 at 17.59), following our conversation I took the following steps:
 - a. I contacted and spoke with Michelle Smith at the Home Office.
 - b. I contacted and spoke with Michelle Brown, the Centre Duty Director.

- c. At 19.20 on 5 May, I followed up these contacts by emailing them, along with Lee Hanford and Steve Skitt with the details. My email appears at [IMB000210]. In addition to forwarding the initial information recorded by Mr Seago, I explained:

"I've received some information which I feel you should be aware of due to the serious nature of the allegations and what looks like a lack of confidence in notifying issues by internal processes.

Hindpal from HMIP called me late yesterday afternoon, and then sent an email from which I've cut and paste the relevant info below. I've spoken with Hindpal again this evening to clear the passing on of the information and that it comes from HMIP. I've also spoken with Michelle Smith in the last hour or so to let her know, and I understand that Hindpal was going to inform Alan Gibson, his HO contact.

At Michelle's suggestion, I've also just spoken to Michelle Brown as Duty Director today to inform her.

Finally, my IMB colleagues are also aware."

- d. At 19.37 on 5 May, Mr Hanford replied to me (copying in Mr Skitt, Ms Smith and Ms Brown). Mr Hanford said:

"I appreciate sight of the issue raised. I will ensure that this is investigated and in the meantime I will ensure that all new staff are working alongside more experienced staff.

Michelle B

Please can you review the weekend and bank holiday detail to ensure the new staff are supported by more experienced staff."

- e. At 19.45, Ms Brown also replied [IMB000211] stating:

"As discussed, we was made aware of an alleged incident that occurred the 2nd May and received by Security on the 4th May. A member of staff reported that she was supervising the dinner meal queue and a detainee put his hand on her thigh and she challenged this. CCTV footage has been viewed and does not reflect that account and no obvious distress observed.

Due to the nature of the allegation, this has been reported to the police and the member of staff has been referred to the Care Team . The detainee has since [words omitted from the original email]

A number of staff have been identified as being present on camera.

DCO James Bracher and DCO Jason Gilham were also present.

The lunch break issue was referred to Head Of Residential, Mark Demian, to investigate.”

8. I can now see that I did revert to Dr Singh Bhui by email at 17.59 on 7 May explaining the action I had taken. I explained:

“After our call yesterday evening, I spoke with Michelle Smith at Home Office and then Brook House G4S Duty Director Michelle Brown. Plus emailed both of them and Lee Hanford and Steve Skitt of G4S with the details.

In particular, it was useful being able to talk with Michelle Brown: fyi, G4S were already aware of the alleged assault, which had been reported internally by the affected officer as inappropriate touching and language. They had commenced investigation very quickly, and the investigation is ongoing so we await the outcome on that.”

9. Dr Singh Bhui acknowledged receipt of this email the following day.

10. I do not know the outcome of the investigation into the allegation that the female member of staff had been assaulted. However, I can see from my rota report for the week commencing 30 April 2018 [IMB000207], that I noted under ‘Points to be discussed at the next IMB meeting’ that I wished to raise with G4S the level of experienced support for new DCOs.

11. At the May 2018 monthly board meeting (held on 16 May 2018), I did raise this with Mr Hanford and Mr Demian who were in attendance from G4S. At section 5 of the minutes [IMB000208], it is recorded:

“**MM** Raised an issue about the level of experienced support for new DCOs, particularly with the roll count as there had been problems recently.

Lee Stated he has now asked DCMs when the second call has come out to be present on the wings to offer additional support. Personal view is that you need management on all levels of the wing. Current situation of detainees not getting

that support is an issue that needs addressing. But recruiting is ongoing, and there is still a problem with staff retention."

12. At section 7 of the minutes, it is recorded:

"MM updated the Board on recent contact from HMIP concerning an anonymous call to them from a G4S employee with allegations about staff safety, lack of support for new staff and the general control of the Centre. MM informed the Board that she and GJ and JC had had a number of calls on the matter, MM then spoke again to HMIP including to ensure no confidentiality issues/get clearance to talk with G4S as felt the possibility of G4S staff safety issues should be acted on; and then spoke to Michelle Smith at HO and Michelle Brown as G4S duty director at Brook at the time, and then emailed the above plus Lee and Steve Skitt.

Board agreed no further contact needed with HMIP on the issue at this time."

13. In respect of the concerns that members of staff were short-staffed, this was something that the IMB was monitoring particularly post-*Panorama*. Indeed, in section 7.7 of our annual report for 2018 [IMB000156_0014-0015] the Board reported that:

"Staffing levels remained an issue throughout 2018. Staff shortages resulted in a failure to provide a full range of purposeful activities for detainees (section 9) and, in some cases, missed hospital appointments (section 8.4). From the Board's own observations, more staff generally means more meaningful interaction with detainees, more time to assist with their issues and a general improvement of atmosphere in the Centre. It also means less stress on staff.

The Home Office agreed to increased staffing levels under G4S's interim contract extension - allowing for one DCM and three DCOs on each Wing, plus enough other staff to allow all yards to be open and a range of activities for detainees. The Wing DCOs are to be deployed on landings to encourage more engagement with detainees.

As in the past two years, recruiting and training programmes ran throughout 2018. As well, changes were made to address the ongoing retention problem, with reduced hours and a new shift pattern being agreed with the relevant union.

The Board welcomes the agreement to have a higher number of staff and acknowledges efforts made by G4S to recruit more staff and improve retention. However, at the time of writing, the recruiting target had not been met and the new deployment levels on Wings in effect from January 2019 were being made up through a short-term overtime and incentive scheme for existing staff.

It will be some time before it can be seen if the changes have fixed the staff shortage and retention problems of recent years and the Board continues to monitor the impact of staffing levels on detainees.

Early in 2019, the Home Office informed us that, as a general rule, IRCs would operate at no more than 80% capacity (358 men for Brook House). The Board welcomes this recognition of the benefits of a higher staff to detainee ratio."

14. Within the Executive Summary of that annual report [IMB000156_0004-0005], relevantly the Board identified as areas for improvement:

- a. To the Home Office that it ensure that staffing levels in the next contract continue the increased presence of operational staff on wings and support a full range of purposeful activities for detained persons; and
- b. To the Centre director that staff recruitment and retention be kept as a priority.

15. Whilst referrals such as that received from Dr Singh Bhui in May 2018 are not a common occurrence, I believe the above illustrates the seriousness with which the IMB takes them.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

I am content for this witness statement to form part of the evidence before the Brook House Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.

Name: Mary Molyneux

Signature:

Signature

Date: 30 March 2022