

Stanhope Castle Approved School

(Note the documents referenced have been provided to the Inquiry and are listed in the Schedule of Material for Stanhope Castle Approved School).

69. The Castle Approved School (the 'School') in Stanhope, County Durham was run and operated by the Home Office from the 1940's. In the 1970s it was handed over to Cleveland County Council (which no longer exists) and continued to operate, but as a residential school till its closure in 1981.
70. Crime recording in relation to the School took place between 2013 and 2017. They were recorded on Sleuth and Red Sigma under the operational name; OPERATION MIDDAY.
71. Operation MIDDAY was set up in 2013 following a report of physical abuse by an ex-pupil of the School, [Name Redacted]. He contacted Cleveland Constabulary reporting he had been a victim of sexual abuse at another institution within the Cleveland area and that he had also suffered physical abuse whilst at the School, circa 1972-1975. This was passed to Durham Constabulary in October 2013 to investigate. DC 571 Clarke, from the Adult Abuse Investigation Team was the officer in the case (OIC).
72. Thereafter, [Name Redacted] instructed a firm of solicitors called Watson Woodhouse to make a civil claim in respect of his time at the School and they also contacted Durham police on his behalf. Durham police liaised with the firm and it was established that a number of victims had come forward to the firm and provided statements in support of [Name Redacted]'s claim. As a result of this information Operation MIDDAY was set up in anticipation of further complaints being made to police. The firm was advised to notify victims that they could report incidents by contacting police and quoting the operational name, and these matters would be followed up with the complainants. (Document 279).
73. The victim strategy was prepared to ensure crimes were properly recorded and support was offered from an early stage. Each case that was referred to "Operation MIDDAY" had a Victim Strategy and focussed on a victim centred approach. **(DO/6 refers)**
74. The Victim Strategy provided that: -
- When a victim/witness made contact with the police the details would be forwarded to the relevant safeguarding team, and within 48 hours an

investigator would re-contact the victim to obtain an initial account. During this initial account support and counsel would be offered and the contact details for the officer would be left with the victim and the agreement that they would be contacted with updates of further enquiries. The crime reports would then be completed and the relevant victim logs created.

- If the crime related to sexual abuse, the victim would be offered an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) Video recorded interview, in accordance with National Achieving Best Evidence Guidance.
https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/legal_guidance/best_evidence_in_criminal_proceedings.pdf
- A witness assessment would take place prior to the interview and an MG 2 Witness assessment form would be completed.
- National safeguarding contact numbers were also given to all victims. **(DO/6 refers)**. The victims were also given the booklet "information for victims of crime"
- The Victim Personal Statement (VPS) scheme would be explained and utilised.
- Victims would be offered a referral to an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor. (ISVA)

75. The Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) overseeing operation Midday was Detective Superintendent Goundry.

76. In January 2014 two further complainants came forward making allegations of physical abuse consistent with common assault. Later that year, towards the end of 2014 Woodhouse Watson solicitors contacted DC Clarke directly and provided details of a number of other complainants who had asked them to commence civil claims regarding the School and who had agreed to have their details passed to police.

77. In June 2015 a press release was made regarding the investigation.

78. By the end of 2016 the force had received allegations of sexual offences in respect of fourteen victims. By the end of 2017 there were three further victims identified. There have been no reports in 2018.