

Witness Name: Ann James

Statement No.: 5

Exhibits:

Date: 7 August 2020

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Witness Statement of Ann James

I, Ann James, will say as follows:

1. I am the Director of Children and Families' Services at Bristol County Council. I make this statement in response to the Rule 9 Request from the Inquiry, dated 21st July 2020. My observations, and the updating information I provide herein, expand on written evidence I have already given.

The proposed multi-agency thematic audit

2. The multi-agency thematic audit due to be conducted in Quarter 1 of 2020-2021 **(BSC000284_30)** has been delayed by the overriding need for the multi-agency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Inquiry will appreciate there has been a significant impact on the delivery and functioning of multi-agency services, with health services and adult social care particularly impacted by the need to prioritise their response to this critical incident. The Inquiry will recognise the importance of adult social care and health being involved in a quality assurance review of this nature. All agencies remain committed to undertaking this piece of work and aim to do so by the end of September 2020.
3. An important component of the multi-agency thematic audit will be transitional safeguarding for young people affected by child sexual exploitation who are turning 18. Transitional Safeguarding is a strategic priority for the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership in the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan and so the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership Executive will maintain oversight of the completion of this action.

Internal thematic audit

4. Whilst multi-agency auditing has been challenging during the incident response phase of the pandemic, we have continued with our internal quality assurance cycle and on 9th June 2020, BCC undertook an internal thematic audit into the service's response to extra-familial harm, including CSE. The findings of this appear in the Deep Dive Finding report, which is produced and shown to me marked 'AJ123'.
5. We have also undertaken an audit of children who were supported jointly by our Strengthening Families Team and Social Care Team. The audit report for this is produced, as exhibit 'AJ124'.

Missing children

6. Our missing oversight meetings have continued at least fortnightly but often weekly. Minutes from the meetings held since inception are produced marked 'AJ125'. . There are two gaps.. Missing oversight meetings on 23rd June and 7th July were led by an Advanced Practitioner in Becky Lewis' absence. For these discussions, each practitioner captured their own action points so there are no formal minutes.
7. On 1st July, a meeting was held with Support Accommodation providers to progress strategic concerns about their response to missing children, particularly in respect of 4 young people at risk of CCE and CSE. Action points of this discussion were captured and circulated by email which is produced in evidence marked 'AJ126'.. A follow up meeting with a wider group was held on 4th August. This work continues to progress with the support of the NWG who have requested national colleagues submit examples of good practice in this area.

Cardiff University Research

8. The full report of the research undertaken by Cardiff is exhibited as 'AJ127' and the Bristol specific report as "AJ128'.

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 of its truth.

Signed:

DPA

Dated: 10th August 2020

