

Witness Name: Ann James
Statement No.: 4
Exhibits: AJ115 to AJ122
Date: 2 July 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 Topic List sent to Bristol in respect of the subjects I am likely to be asked about when I give oral evidence. My observations, and the updating information I provide herein, expand on written evidence I have already given and try to provide some context for the assistance of the Inquiry.

How Bristol City Council uses algorithms

2. The Think Family database is used as one of a number of sources by First Response to inform triage decisions for all referrals, ie it is not limited to Child Sexual Exploitation. It has the capacity to produce an automated cohort of children at heightened risk. However, BCC does not currently rely on the database as part of its CSE strategy for identifying victims. The algorithms have the potential to address risk and vulnerability. They can be used as an adjunct to, but not in substitution for, professional judgment. They also have a useful role in scoping resources.
3. I have tried to explain further the role of the database in response to the various articles referenced by the Inquiry. Of note is the fact that there is no existing ethics framework for big data/predictive analytics. Additional information of relevance to the subject matter of the articles includes the following:
 - (a) BCC has had extensive engagement with a range of academics involved in big data/predictive analytics;
 - (b) the government's Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation has engaged BCC in its exploration of how an ethical guidance framework can be created for big

data/predictive analytics. So far, the Centre has visited Bristol and a joint workshop took place;

- (c) Cardiff University has undertaken an academic review of Think Family;
 - (d) BCC ran a series of public seminars to enable discussion with stakeholders about the ethics of this work; understanding and countering bias; understanding concerns and the appropriate use of this work;
 - (e) Bristol is currently in discussions with the Department for Education regarding what Think Family can offer in cases of hidden harm;
 - (f) BCC has engaged with national newspapers and television to increase understanding and maintain its commitment to transparency. In particular, it supported the making of a documentary by Sky TV about the positives and negatives of the use of data versus privacy.
4. During the current pandemic, the Think Family database acted as a useful 'safety net'. Sampling against the list of children identified as being at high risk of CSE on Think Family Database did not identify any children who had otherwise been unknown to services and support.
5. I observe in respect of **INQ005323** that the 5 young people referred to were identified by the algorithms retrospectively, in 2016. They were victims of an organised crime group which was investigated in 2016 as part of Operation Barrier.
6. There are a number of documents which are shown to me marked 'AJ115-119' which I produce as relevant to the Inquiry's consideration:
- (a) data process map;
 - (b) Think Family Privacy Impact Assessment;
 - (c) How your data is used in modelling;
 - (d) BCC Internal Data Sharing Protocol;
 - (e) Early Intervention and Targeted Support Privacy Notice.
7. Think Family evolved from a Troubled Families programme which was launched in 2011 to help families struggling with issues such as debt, health, homelessness, domestic violence and parenting. The predictive modelling techniques used by Think Family have been developed over a number of years and governance policies, procedures and controls are kept under review. The documents referred to above

reflect the ongoing changes and work that continues to develop and implement the appropriate governance.

Has the decrease in CSE cases continued?

8. The BCC data suggested that the decrease has continued, but the pandemic is likely to impact on the figures. I shall provide up to date figures when I give evidence.

Common assessment framework/tool

9. BCC has expressly chosen to maintain its single assessment for all types of harm, including CSE. The assessment is informed by Signs of Safety and the CSE checklist. Partners may use our single assessment or their own, specific to CSE, tools. We believe our single assessment provides a consistent approach, to the benefit of the children and young people at risk of harm. Our decision has had regard to the 2016 review conducted by Coventry University on behalf of the Early Intervention Foundation (Brown et al).
10. At the recent Children's Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership Group meeting, the use of sector specific CSE checklists was again discussed and the decision was taken to continue with this approach. The review and monitoring process will continue.

CS-A62

11. The Inquiry has suggested there was delay in the case of this young person. Produced and shown to me marked 'AJ120' is a chronology which sets out the wide ranging work which was undertaken by professionals with the young person and their mother.

Grindr

12. This young person had felt able to tell a trusted professional about their use of Grindr and their vulnerability because of it. However, we identify a need for a national approach to this and similar internet service providers to achieve co-operation in cases of use by children and young persons.

Partnership working: missing children

13. Bristol's recently launched Protocol can be found at <https://bristolsafeguarding.org/media/skhfycub/bristol-missing-children-protocol-final-v.pdf>

14. I also produce by way of example a set of minutes from a Missing Oversight Meeting held on 16 April 2020 and attended by Becky Lewis (Strategic Safeguarding and QA, BCC), Kimberley Fuller (ROCIC Officer, BCC), Jo Ritchie (specialist CSE social worker), Beth Turpin (Avon & Somerset Misper Co-ordinator) and Tungina Alum (Missing Prevention Officer). They are marked 'AJ121'.

Placements for children at risk of or subject to CSE

15. Bristol now has a therapeutic resource available to children and young persons in residential placements within Bristol. **CS-A302** reported to professionals that she found this type of support particularly beneficial when she was placed out of area.

16. Bristol continues with its programme of creating smaller residential homes in Bristol. So far, one has been completed and this provides a residential resource for two young people. We now have two new small children's homes open, both providing specialist care to two children each.

Learning from Operation Brooke

17. One of the most important developments since Operation Brooke has been the development of, and funding for, Victim Support Services in Bristol. Services available to victims include Lighthouse Victim and Witness Care and those set out to the Inquiry through the South West Survivor Pathway including an innovative 18-25 sexual exploitation support service.

18. In my earlier statement, I referred to a Written Statement of Action which was due to be filed. It is produced and shown to me marked 'AJ120' and focuses on the promotion of inclusion agenda across education settings.

19. In terms of progressing towards a 24/7 service for CSE, funding does not yet permit this but Barnardo's BASE is funded to provide a service flexibly where required for example they are involved in plans to deliver out of hours outreach in an area of Bristol where there are current increased concerns of grooming and exploitation.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true:

Signed: **DPA**

Dated: 02 | 07 | 20.