

Witness Name: Ann James

Statement No: Six

Exhibits:

Date:

## THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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### Witness Statement of Ann James

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I, Ann James, will say as follows:

1. I am the Director of Children and Families' Services at Bristol County Council. In the course of my oral evidence to the Inquiry on 30 September 2020, I indicated that I would check information in respect of two areas of questioning by the Chair and revert to the Inquiry with the answers. The discrete issues are (a) whether at the date of my evidence any Bristol young person was in an unregulated placement; and (b) whether it is mandatory for taxi drivers in the area licensed by Bristol City Council to undergo training about the sexual exploitation of children.

#### **Unregulated and unregistered accommodation**

2. Bristol has no young people in temporary or emergency accommodation that is unregulated.
3. The Panel no doubt is aware of the differences between unregulated and unregistered provision but I hope a short explanation may be of assistance. Unregulated accommodation is allowed by law and applies when children need support to live independently rather than full-time care. They are invariably young people over 16. This provision is not regulated by Ofsted.
4. Unregistered provision describes the situation where a child who is receiving a form of 'care' lives in a setting that is not registered with Ofsted. The delivery of the care element in addition to accommodation makes it mandatory for the provider to register as a children's home.
5. Bristol City Council does make use of young people specific supported accommodation (ie not legally required to be registered). Every step is taken to ensure that the supported accommodation we use is both safe and suitable. The accommodation is commissioned by competitive tender and is subject to contract

monitoring arrangements. It must meet the quality standards of the tender for support and accommodation, including safe recruitment, skilled support and safety checks. Placement does not take place until there has been an assessment of the young person's needs.

6. We commission a wide range of young people specific supported accommodation, which is provided by registered housing providers and specialist managing agents. The accommodation includes a Foyer, Supported Lodgings and dispersed smaller homes with allied and co-located support staff.
7. Where young people require additional or specialist support, Bristol holds a framework contract of pre-qualified specialist accommodation and support providers from which we are able to purchase a bespoke accommodation and support package based on the assessed needs of a young person. It is in this way (in addition to deployment of the full range of registered care provision) that we aim to avoid the use of bed and breakfast or similar, unsuitable accommodation for our young people.
8. As at 30 September 2020:
  - (a) 10 young people aged 16-17 are accommodated in Bristol's supported youth housing sector. 3 are children in care, one of whom has been assessed as being at risk of CSE;
  - (b) further, 14 young people aged 16-17 who are children in care have tailored packages of support and accommodation, commissioned from the external supported accommodation specialist framework. 5 of those children are assessed to be at risk of sexual exploitation and all 5 have overnight support.

### **Training of taxi drivers**

9. Bristol's Gold Standard test for all new applicants for taxi or private hire licences already includes compulsory safeguarding training, encompassing CSE awareness.
10. In late July 2020, the Department of Transport's Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards were released, mandating licensing authorities to provide safeguarding advice and guidance to the trade and to require taxi and private hire vehicle drivers to undertake safeguarding training.
11. Following the Department's recommendations, Bristol's Public Safety and Protection Committee ('PSP') started work immediately to assimilate its current policies with the National Standards. Several areas require revision and the provisional timescales are as follows:
  - (a) PSP working group, comprising nominated political representatives, to advise of changes;
  - (b) a six week consultation period from the beginning of November;

(c) amended policies brought before PSP for adoption before Christmas or in early January 2021.

12. Interim arrangements have been implemented by PSP while the work identified in the preceding paragraph is undertaken, namely:

- (a) the Gold Standard safeguarding training for all new drivers continues;
- (b) all PSP staff have received training (and will continue to do so on an ongoing basis);
- (c) PSP staff have in particular received training from Avon and Somerset Police in connection with exploitation and counter-terrorism;
- (d) PSP continues to run regular features about safeguarding in trade journals;
- (e) Bristol has funded a 'taxi police officer' which has significantly improved intelligence sharing between police and the Local Authority;
- (f) PSP has well established relationships with safeguarding teams, sharing intelligence;
- (g) PSP is a participant in the Disruption Crime Panel.

13. I make this statement believing its contents to be true and understanding it will be given in evidence.

**DPA**

Signature..... (Ann James)

Dated..... 12 - 10 - 2020 .....

