

Witness Statement

(CJ Act 1967, s.9 MC Act 1980, ss.5A(3)(a) and 5B; MC Rules 1981, r.70)

Statement of **Brian TOMKINS**Age if under 18 'over 18' (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation **Murder Review Officer**

This statement (consisting of: 4 pages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated: **6th February 2001**

Signature:

DPA

Up until January 1999 I was employed as a Detective Superintendent by the Metropolitan Police. I am currently employed as a civilian by the Metropolitan Police as a Murder Review Officer. Prior to my retirement I was responsible for Major Investigations and the Child Protection Teams across South West London.

During 1992 I was a Detective Superintendent attached to the Area Major Investigation Team based at Croydon Police Station. Around August or September 1992 I was tasked by the Detective Chief Superintendent, who I believe was Detective Chief Superintendent CHAPMAN (retired) to undertake a major investigation into child sexual abuse allegations at Southvale Children's Home, Linton Grove SE27. The allegations had been received that at least two children had been sexually abused whilst in the care of Lambeth Social Services and in the care of Southvale. I was the Senior Investigating Officer and set up the investigation at the Incident Room at Gypsy Hill Police Station. The investigation became known as Operation BELL. The investigation was staffed by officers drawn from the 4 Area Major Investigation Team, the local division the local child protection team and others with experience in child abuse investigation. I do not recall there being written terms of reference for the investigation and it's fair to say that at that time written terms of

ref: **DPA** provided. There was however discussion with the Detective

Cl: **DPA** scope of the enquiry.

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Continuation Statement Of Brian TOMKINS

At an early stage in the investigation I had contact with the Director of Social Services for Lambeth Mr David POPE. He proved to be co-operative and helpful during the enquiry and allocated the services of Jim CARLTON to assist the investigation and to facilitate enquiries, interviews and relevant material. If the enquiry required information held by the Social Services concerning children or members of staff, we would liase with Jim CARLTON who I believe had unrestricted access to the files, he would pass on information that we required along with anything else he believed to be relevant. As a senior manager on the area I sat on the Area Child Protection Committee along with Lambeth social services and representatives of most of the other agencies with an interest in child abuse. As a result I believe I had a good working relationship with them. Whilst it is some considerable time since this investigation I can recall some of the principles and policies on which the investigation was based. Whilst we were dealing with specific allegations in relation to **LA-A17** and **LA-A157** there were concerns about the possible abuse of other children resident at Southvale and of the activities of some of the staff and management at the home. My policy was to investigate the specific allegations and any other allegations that came to light that were supportable or allowed avenues of investigation. Whilst the policy was to concentrate on activities within Southvale Children's Home where specific allegations were made other allegations would be investigated regardless of the location. In fact the investigation did encompass an allegation of sexual assault at Angel Road Children's Home with resulted in the arrest of a member of staff, **LA-F4** who was charged with a number of rapes on a girl within his care. I recall her as **LA-A74** My recollection is that the case failed on the basis of disclosure issues concerning the confidential and personal files of the victim. Returning to the conduct of the enquiry, I recall creating a questionnaire for use by officers in their interviews. This was used to identify those witnesses that could provide

Signature

DPA

Signature Witnessed by:

Continuation Statement Of Brian TOMKINS

evidence and once identified full statements were taken. There was a reluctance by social services to provide full statements in the first instance, without reference to their union and legal representatives, and this agreed system overcame that problem. A further protocol for the investigation was that of a joint interview a member of the investigating team would link up with a member of social services staff independent from that home and where possible one would be of the same gender as the witness. Other than my contacts with senior management within the social services I did not conduct any interviews myself. I do recall visiting Southvale Children's Home at an early stage in the enquiry to familiarise myself with it's layout I cannot recall whether I was required to sign in. I have been asked whether there were press appeals during the investigation, I can state that it was not my policy to advertise for potential victims therefore the press was not used for this purpose although the press took an interest in the investigation and the prosecutions that arose from it. I cannot recall how the allegations against **LA-F4** **LA-F4** first came to be investigated by my team, I believe it would have arisen out of Southvale for example, it may well have been that **LA-A74** would have been at Southvale originally. It would not have been my policy to deal with unconnected allegations of sexual abuse occurring elsewhere as these would have been dealt with by the local child protection team.

The investigation resulted in the execution of a number of search warrants and the arrest of Leslie PAUL, **LA-F5** **LA-F4** as stated above, and I think one other member of staff **LA-F8** against whom no action was taken. The proactive element of the operation was very much led by then Detective Inspector Bob RANDALL as I was not present during the searches or the arrests. I am aware of the photographic material recovered during the searches and the enquiries made to identify

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Continuation Statement Of Brian TOMKINS

the subjects of the photographs involving children and young people. I do recall that pornographic videos were recovered and that these were examined for evidence of child involvement. It is my recollection that none was found. The enquiries led to contact with international agencies in order to establish whether the subjects were involved in international paedophile activity. No direct or current links could be proven. I cannot remember at this stage details of any correspondence or notes found during the searches.

Following the arrest and charging of the subjects the prosecutions were very much handled by the Detective Sergeants in the case as I was required to conduct a murder enquiry **Sensitive/Irrelevant** Whilst I maintained responsibility for the investigation, the prosecutions, completion of correspondence and the disposal of property was left with the team.

Sign **DPA**

Signature Witnessed by: