

## **SECTION 5: CONVICTED PERPETRATORS AT SOUTH VALE**

### **Introduction**

- 5.1. In this section I consider the children in the care of Lambeth that were placed at South Vale and abused by Les Paul and Patrick Grant, two members of staff at South Vale who were subsequently convicted for sexual offences against children. I discuss children who have been identified by IICSA and Lambeth's responses to their allegations of abuse.
- 5.2. Les Paul was a prolific perpetrator who was convicted of abusing a number of children at South Vale. Lambeth is now aware of at least 43 children who were abused by Les Paul; this includes those children about whom IICSA have inquired. The experiences of children who were abused by Les Paul are discussed in this section. Of these children:
- a) 39 children were in the care of Lambeth;
  - b) 1 child was in the care of Bermondsey, Camberwell and Southwark (as Southwark was known then); and
  - c) 3 children for whom it has not been possible to identify the responsible local authority.
- 5.3. Lambeth is now aware of at least 15 children, including the children considered in this section, who have made allegations of sexual abuse against Patrick Grant. Of these children:
- a) 8 children were in the care of Lambeth;
  - b) 6 children were in the care of Kingston Social Services; and
  - c) 1 child was in the care of Mid-Glamorgan Social Services.
- 5.4. Perpetrators will generally seek out environments where they can exploit the vulnerabilities of children, however, organisational conditions and cultures can increase the risk of abuse happening. At South Vale, as the previous section sought to evidence, organisational culture and practice values contributed to creating the conditions in which perpetrators could commit abuse.

- 5.20. In respect of records from children's homes, the Community Homes Regulations 1972, provided for "the person in charge of the home" to keep a record of information considered necessary for the maintenance of the assessment centre such as its state and management, and the children and their treatment. There was no specific requirement in these Regulations to retain the records for a designated period of time.
- 5.21. To the extent that any requirements existed during the period in which South Vale was in operation, there were regulatory requirements until 1989 that case records for looked after children should be retained for at least three years after a child turned 18.
- 5.22. For the time that South Vale was operational, there were no regulations and no local procedure for the separate retention of records of allegations of abuse, including retention of allegations against staff.
- 5.23. Current regulations provide that allegations against staff members working in children's homes are to be retained until the person retires or for ten years, whichever is longer.

### **Leslie Cecil Paul (also known as Les Paul)**

#### Introduction

- 5.24 Les Paul was employed in various roles within Lambeth for over 13 years between 1979 and 1992.
- 5.25 During this period Les Paul worked at South Vale as a Residential Child Care Officer (RCCO1) from 3 September 1979 until 23 April 1980 when he took over as Acting Team Leader. Following this, he worked as a Children's Residential Care Officer (CRCO) from 2 October 1980 until 18 April 1989 when he became a Team Leader. Les Paul was employed as a Team Leader from 18 April 1989 until 28 April 1991 when he became an Administrative Assistant in the Area 8 Team Office. This was a

position he held until 6 November 1992 when he was dismissed following a disciplinary hearing.

- 5.26 Les Paul was on sick leave from September 1990 and the medical advice received in February 1991 suggested that he should be redeployed to a different working environment. On 30 April 1991 he was found “*permanently unfit for post.*” [AH4-5/6; LAM001030; pgs. 1, 2] It is unclear what led to this finding.
- 5.27 Les Paul was also employed as a Metropolitan Police Special Constable and served at West End Central police station between 31 July 1978 and 11 October 1981. There is no available evidence to indicate whether or not staff at South Vale or the children placed there were aware that Les Paul was a Police Constable. If the children believed Les Paul held this additional power or authority, then it is very likely that this would have had a negative impact on their ability to come forward with allegations about harm they had experienced or witnessed.

#### Criminal Proceedings against Les Paul

- 5.28 There have been three criminal prosecutions that we are aware of against Les Paul.
- 5.29 Operation Bell, a Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) investigation into historical allegations of child sexual abuse in Lambeth children’s homes took place between 1992 and 1994.
- 5.30 As a result, in February 1994 Les Paul was convicted of four offences including offences relating to LA-A17. These four offences were as follows:
- a) Two counts of indecent assault on a male 16 or over;
  - b) One count of gross indecency with a child; and
  - c) One count of taking indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children.
- 5.31 Les Paul was sentenced on these charges to two and a half years imprisonment.

- 5.32 Following Operation Middleton, an MPS investigation on 7 November 2002 Les Paul was convicted at the Central Criminal Court of 5 counts of indecent assault on a male under 16, which resulted in him being sentenced to 18 months imprisonment and a 10-year Sexual Offenders Notice. Les Paul was charged with indecency offences against six victims. His known victims were [LA-A41] [LA-A10] [LA-A42] [LA-A11] [LA-A14] and [LA-A18]. All six children were in the care of Lambeth at the time they were abused. [AH4-5/7; LAM001011; pg. 1] Les Paul was convicted of five charges. It is not clear which charges resulted in convictions and it is unknown why there is a discrepancy in the numbers of known victims and the convictions.
- 5.33 Following Operation Trinity, an MPS investigation, in January 2016 at Blackfriars Crown Court Les Paul was convicted of:
- Twelve counts of indecent assault on a male under 14;
  - Three counts of indecent assault on a male under 16;
  - One count of aiding and abetting indecent assault on a male under 14;
  - One count of indecency with a child (boy) under 14); and
  - One count of taking indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children.
- 5.34 Amongst the complainants were LA-A17, [LA-A1] [LA-A11] [LA-A7] [LA-A7] LA-A19, LA-A12 and [LA-A6], all of whom were abused while in the care of Lambeth. Les Paul pleaded guilty to only three charges but was convicted of 18 offences and was sentenced to 13 years imprisonment.
- 5.35 Lambeth does not hold any additional information in relation to Les Paul distributing videos and indecent images of children whilst he worked at South Vale and any connections to Eastern Europe and or any countries outside the United Kingdom. The only information that Lambeth has in relation to the distribution of such material has come from the accounts of the children that were abused by Les Paul and information from the MPS in relation to Operation Bell.

- 5.94 LA-A19 made the disclosures in three police interviews on 29 October 2014, 30 October 2014 and 6 November 2014. At an identity (ID) parade on 4 November 2015 LA-A19 identified Patrick Grant as the *“guy who took him to his house, which was decorated with elephant figurines, and sexually abused him.”* LA-A19 was 10 years old at the time of this incident.
- 5.95 LA-A19 also disclosed in an interview in October 2014 that he had told John Stanton (social worker) at an unknown time, but whilst he was in care, that he had been abused by Les Paul and said that *“I told him that we’d been to his house and that he touches us up and asked why nothing was happening.”* John Stanton was a social worker employed by Lambeth between 1969 and 1997. He was LA-A19’s allocated social worker at the time he was placed at South Vale and it appears those complaints were not escalated for senior managers to investigate further. John Stanton stated to police in 2015 that he did not take any steps in respect of these allegations *“to respect LA-A19’s wishes.”* He also stated that *“notes would’ve been written down and stored in his social services file.”* This is of significant concern given requirements for social workers to report allegations and concerns about child abuse to the police.
- 5.96 In a further statement to the police on 23 May 2016 LA-A19 confirmed that he had been sexually abused by Patrick Grant at his home on one occasion although he had been to the house *“two or three times”*.
- 5.97 LA-A19’s mother gave a witness statement to police on 13 February 2015 confirming that LA-A19 had told her that he and his brother [LA-A463] had been sexually abused whilst in a children’s home.
- 5.98 LA-A19 was a witness in Les Paul’s trial at Blackfriars Crown Court in 2015. Les Paul was convicted on 21 December 2015 and received a custodial sentence on 14 January 2016. There were five charges of indecent assault relating to LA-A19, and Les Paul was convicted on all of these charges.

made by LA-A30 and LA-A31, or indeed the disclosure made by the child about having become pregnant and that LA F-14 was the father.

6.69 LA-F14 continued to be employed for a further two years after the first of those allegations. The response of the Council to the allegations is unclear, however a CHILE file records that LA-F14 was removed from 'direct work' with children at South Vale following allegations being made against him. This probably indicates that he was restricted to administrative work, as it is known that he was moved to an administrative role at [DPA] in 1992. If there was insufficient evidence to dismiss a member of staff, moving them to duties that did not involve direct contact with children was seen at that time as a safer alternative. However, in LA-F14's case he was quickly allowed to return to a position where he had direct contact with children through his role as a Residential social worker at [Care Home]. This was clearly extremely inappropriate and a profound failure by the Council to understand and execute its responsibilities to protect and safeguard children.

## LA-F8

### Introduction

6.70 LA-F8 was directly employed by [LA-F205] to work at South Vale. Staff there witnessed concerning behaviour between LA-F8 and the child, LA-A71, at the home. This led to a disciplinary and police investigation in 1992/3 which I discuss further below.

### Employment

6.71 LA-F8 was a Children's Residential Care Officer at [Care Home] from [DPA] 1987 to [DPA] 1988. Following the closure of [Care Home], on 29 September 1988 he was redeployed to South Vale. He then worked as a Team Leader from [DPA] 1989 until [DPA] 1991. LA-F8 then worked as a social worker in the Adoption and Fostering Team. [AH4-6/7; LAM000162; pg. 2]