

STATEMENT PRINT

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Age: Over 18 Date of Birth:
Address: Postcode:
Occupation: DOCTOR
Telephone No.:
Statement Date: 04/05/2013
Appearance Code: Height: Build:
Hair Details: Position Style Colour
Eyes: Complexion:
Glasses: Use:
Accent Details: General Specific Qualifier
Number of Pages: 8

This statement documents my employment and observations whilst employed as a Group Leader at South Vale Assessment Centre, which was a Children's Home.

I was a temporary Group Leader initially employed to cover a two year period. I commenced employment during December 1983 and my employment terminated during January 1986. Sensitive/irrelevant

Sensitive/Irrelevant

South Vale Assessment Centre was a Lambeth Social Services establishment and a home where children in care came to be assessed and then be placed elsewhere in accordance with their

individual needs. This should have been a short-term placement but often, children would be accommodated at South Vale for a number of years.

South Vale was a fairly small Children's Home. There were about twelve to fifteen girls and twelve to fifteen boys, so the maximum of twenty four to thirty children at any one time. Children were admitted to the Centre at any age and I remember one girl who came to the Centre at age three.

Sensitive/Irrelevant

Sensitive/Irrelevant

It is important and relevant to state that there were staff there working as Social Workers and Key Workers who were completely untrained in Social Care and Child Care. This was not unusual, and a lot of what we did was made up as we went along.

Sensitive/Irrelevant

Sensitive/Irrelevant

I also recall a staff member named Les PAUL which I did report and highlight at the time and I will detail.

My concerns about the running of South Vale were basic safety procedures not being adhered to, for example, Les PAUL driving children in the school minibus when he had no driving licence or driving insurance.

There was no Safeguarding or Child Protection procedures in place. Staff regularly took children out of the home with no record being made of where they were going or why. Sometimes, staff would take children out of home for the weekend without any checks being made.

In accordance with the Behaviour Modification there was a Points System. This involved staff and children meeting towards the end of each day and discussing behaviour which merited points being awarded or removed. There was an opportunity for the system to be manipulated by staff particularly as they were untrained and there was favouritism displayed towards certain children, particularly by Les PAUL; although I cannot recall the children's names, often the children came from damaged and dysfunctional backgrounds and were clearly flattered and responded to any attention given to them by staff. Physical restraint was very common at the home with the rules and regulations in place. After washing and before supper, children would sit around in their pyjamas and I expressed concerns about physical restraint when they were sparsely dressed. Often mainly girls would verbally complain that the staff would 'cop a feel' during the restraint process. I stopped the procedure of children coming down for supper in their pyjamas and I also introduced a policy of only female members of staff being responsible for the restraint of the girls.

Any concerns raised by the children were dealt with 'in-house', often by the very people the children complained of, so there was no independent and 'outside' scrutiny. There was a culture of not believing the children and justifying this by their histories; using their past experiences against them. The children were aware that the more times they raised concerns, the less likely they would be believed in the future.

Les PAUL had favourite children though I cannot recall them now. He was a charismatic person but a bit of a rebel who didn't respect authority and regularly undermined managers in front of the other children. He liked to appear to be one of the lads and in front of the boys, he would make inappropriate suggestive comments, bordering on flattery, towards the girls. He was very tactile. He also made inappropriate racial comments in front of the children, which were very offensive. Les never talked of his sexuality or personal life and never socialised with me or the other staff at

the end of a shift. Les PAUL used to be a Police Special Constable and made a bit of a play about that. He used to sleep in at the home and took children out of the home. He also took children on camping trips. I do also recall a staff member named Glen or Glyn. He had a problem with drink and would turn up for work worse for wear. I reported my concerns about him and it took months for the Authority to do anything about it.

In the mid 1980's, I would describe Les PAUL as a white male with stocky build and thinning. He had a resemblance to the young looking 'Phil MITCHELL' of East Enders.

Sensitive/Irrelevant

Sensitive/Irrelevant The 1980's was a difficult period as it pre-dated the Children's Act but overall, from my experience, the atmosphere in that home and the lack of reporting and accountability would have facilitated an abuser to offend against children. The opportunity existed for vulnerable children to be exploited. Further to the above, I recall the following;

- 1) At some point, Les PAUL transferred from the Boy's Unit to the Girl's Unit.
- 2) When I left South Vale, I was replaced by Phil HAYES, returning from Secondment.
- 3) The Group Leader on the Girl's Unit was named Rinska.
- 4) The one holiday that South Vale did go on was the one to Oban which I had organised as Officer-in-charge at 10 The Crescent in 1986. Les PAUL did not go on it. Phil HAYES and somebody named Laurence BEATTIE took four young people from South Vale. Having no holiday budget, they paid for it in kind with a mini bus loaded with food supplies.
- 5) Head of Education Unit was Barry SMITH.
- 6) The Senior Staff Structure during the period I worked there was;

Senior position — **LA-F205**
Deputy Principal – Dave TOWN

Senior position **LA-F288** Ellen and Peter
Group Leaders – Rinska and myself.

Deputy Group Leaders – Terry MCGRATH (Girls) and Etta SCOTT (Boys)

Head of Education – Barry SMITH

Live-in Staff – [LA-F205] and [Name Redacted], Dave and Mrs TOWN and myself and my wife Liz.

7)

Sensitive/Irrelevant

8) I have drawn a layout of the ground floor of South Vale Assessment which I produce as MJL/1.

Signed: Mike LINDSAY Signature witnessed by: