

Decision 145 – Identification Strategy – 19th August 2013

At this stage of my investigation the priority is to trace and interview all persons named by the victims in 'Phase 3' as either being an ex-resident or former member of staff. I will confine this approach initially to potential witnesses (named ex-residents/staff) for offences that are under investigation at Beechwood Children's home.

I will personally provide a briefing to the team as to my expectations during these interviews as follows:

- 1) Interviews will always be conducted in pairs
- 2) Officers/staff will not divulge any details regarding the offences as reported or the victims.
- 3) Officers/staff will explain to the potential witness the nature of the enquiry i.e. that we are investigating 'non-recent' abuse in the home during the late 60's/70's and that their name has been provided by an ex-resident. The latter is not essential for former staff/employees.
- 4) Officers/staff conducting the interviews will be expected to research the information that has been provided by the victim to date and identify any cross-over to other complainants.
- 5) Clarity will be sought at the outset of the interview as to whether the interviewee is either an ex-resident or former member of staff/connected to BCH and if so, the relevant date(s).
- 6) Where possible, the interviewee/witness will be asked to provide details of all former staff that they recall as being at the home and in what capacity, including, but not limited to the descriptions, nicknames and copies of any documentary items for example photographs or other means of identification.
- 7) Staff/ex-residents will not be asked to recall or provide the details of any former residents.
- 8) Officers/staff must ensure that they are always in possession of an accurate and up to date list of all the outstanding suspects and descriptions before commencement of an interview.
- 9) Where the identity of the suspects remains unknown, including part names, full details of all information known about the suspect in terms of their descriptions and vehicles etc will be supplied to the ex-resident/employee. The potential witness will be asked whether they can identify any of the person(s) or to provide any further information to assist identifying these individuals.
- 10) In the case of any ex-residents, if the witness has not already introduced the name of the victim the interviewer will and will then clarify how/if they know each other, whether they were in the home together and any association or contact afterwards and the reasons why.

Any subsequent contact with the witness will be documented on a contact sheet and where they disclose any abuse then officers/staff will revert to the witness management strategy and inform the SIO or deputy immediately.

In terms of prioritisation of tasks and witness order this will be as follows:

- 1) Having compiled a list of all the victims of abuse for phase 3, check whether there is any overlap with the other victims and potentially any outstanding suspect(s).
- 2) Compile a list of 'other' persons named by the victim as being resident and/or working in the home and therefore a potential witness.
- 3) Compile a list of staff working in the home and where possible start and end dates.

I will prioritise the named witnesses as at (2), and the enquiry team will focus on a maximum of 2 victims at a time. Having exhausted the enquiries, I will decide when it is permissible to move onto another victim.

Following completion of the enquiries at (2) and further liaison with the local authority to ensure that I am in possession of all available information I will seek to trace and interview former staff that were working in the home at the relevant times of the abuse. I will prioritise the female and continually review the situation.

As SIO I will reserve the right to amend/expand the criterion and incorporate contact with other witnesses, provided that there is clear justification in doing so and reason(s) given for any detour.

Reason

To identify the outstanding suspect(s)

To secure and preserve evidence in the most transparent ways and avoid any subsequent criticism

To ensure a consistent approach to potential witnesses

The only detail available at this time on the suspect(s) is descriptive.

None of the offenders, to date are female.

The above represents the most efficient and effective way of identifying the suspects at this time.