

Witness Name: Clive BLACKFORD
Statement No.: 1
Exhibits:
Dated: 31 December 2018

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Witness Statement of Clive William BLACKFORD

I, Clive William BLACKFORD, will say as follows:-

1.1 Between November 2008 and September 2016 I was employed by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) as a member of police staff in the Insider Threat and Operational Security Unit within the National Counter Terrorism Policing Headquarters (NCTPHQ), having previously worked in the Counter-Terrorism Command as a Detective Inspector before retiring in October 2008. As part of my role and, in order to protect the MPS's operational integrity, I was tasked to carry out sensitive personnel enquiries in a counter-terrorist or security context. This also included assisting other parts of the MPS in the development and resolution of sensitive enquiries which might involve interaction with other sensitive agencies and in providing advice where appropriate on the protection of sensitive information, covert assets and correct use of the Government Protective Marking Scheme (GPMS).

1.2 Prior to my employment with the MPS as a member of police staff I had been a police officer and for 24 of 30 years I had served in posts, at different levels, where I had been directly involved in the acquisition, retention, assessment, processing, exploitation and dissemination of evidence or intelligence which was regarded as sensitive or would have been protected by the GPMS. For the last 8 years of my service with firstly the Metropolitan Police Special Branch (MPSB) and then more recently the Counter-terrorism Command my service involved routine liaison and work with the Security Service (MI5), the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and I was responsible for a team of police officers and police staff that handled, processed and protected intelligence material attracting the highest GPMS markings. I have also worked with other sensitive intelligence Branches within the MPS, with other Government departments and foreign law enforcement agencies and foreign security services in a counter-terrorist capacity.

1.3 It was as part of my role with the Insider Threat and Operational Security Unit that I became an initial point of contact and source of advice for the MPS enquiry teams that were formed to deal with a number of different operations including Operations Hydrant, Winter Key and Hawthorn.

1.4 One enquiry that I was asked to undertake, although I cannot remember the date thereof, concerned the alleged search carried out at the office of a journalist called Don Hale in 1984. I was asked to research MPSB records to see whether those records held any information relevant to that search. The result of that research was negative in that MPSB records held no information. I also contacted Greater Manchester Police Special Branch (GMPSB) as the alleged search had happened within their Force area and I felt there might be some record held within Greater Manchester Police. GMPSB contacted me later to say they held no information relevant to my enquiry. The results of those searches were then passed back to the originating officer.

1.5 I have been asked to comment on the significance of there being no trace of the search in either MPSB or GMPSB records. The fact that there was no trace of the search in records does not necessarily mean that the search did not take place. Given the passage of time, there are a number of possibilities which might arise therefrom and I set these out but not in any order of preference.

1.6 Firstly, the search took place but details of it were never passed to MPSB for whatever reason and were only recorded in GMPSB records. Secondly, the search took place and for whatever reason details were passed to MPSB but those details have subsequently been deleted or weeded out in accordance with the then record-keeping guidelines in force. Thirdly, details were recorded in GMPSB records but again have been weeded out or deleted in accordance with the then record-keeping guidelines in force. Fourthly, the search by GMPSB or MPSB officers took place but details of it were never recorded in GMPSB or MPSB records. Lastly, the search took place but it was not carried out by either MPSB or GMPSB officers. Another conclusion that could be drawn in isolation (and without knowing whether there is any corroborating material) is that the search actually never took place and therefore there is no record.

1.7 In February 2015 I had a meeting with officers from Operation Hawthorn and we discussed a number of wide-ranging issues relating to MPSB. I have seen the record of that meeting provided by Mr. Smith, Solicitor to the Inquiry, and I confirm that it is an accurate record with which I am content. I have nothing to add to it.

1.8 During that meeting I did refer to the existence of 400 highly sensitive hard copy files held within secure storage within the Counter-Terrorism Command, those files being subject to review by myself over a number of months. That review subsequently concluded that those files held no information relevant to matters presently being considered by the Inquiry. I was very attuned to the interest being shown in MPSB records by different MPS teams and had anything been discovered, I would have taken the necessary action to disseminate such material appropriately.

1.9 I have considered whether there are any further matters that I need to include relating to the Inquiry's Westminster investigation which have not already been covered elsewhere and I cannot think of any.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

DPA

Signed: Clive BLACKFORD

Dated: 31 December 2018