

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Johanna BRADY

Support person present: No

1. My name is Johanna Brady. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1952. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I have previously given a statement to the Inquiry and I have also appeared at Hearings in relation to my employment at Quarriers Village.
3. I studied maths and computer science at Stirling University before changing to psychology and sociology. I then had a period when I was unwell and I decided not to go back to University. I decided I wanted to pursue a career in social work. My uncle Alec was a social worker and he suggested that working in residential care would be a good way to get experience in that field.
4. In early 1972, I was employed as a depute house mother in Cottage 32 at Quarriers Village Bridge of Weir. That particular cottage was a hostel for sixteen to eighteen year olds,
5. I went into residential care to get experience before I did social work training. That was always known by Quarriers. While I was there, I got the chance to work in the social work department as an unqualified social worker. From 1975 to 1977 I was seconded to Robert Gordon University and study for my Certificate of Qualification in social work

(CQSW). There was a funding stream through the Scottish Government, or equivalent at that time. I did my training, got my salary and was expected to go to Quarriers afterwards.

6. I left Quarriers in the summer of 1979 when my two year secondment came to an end. Strathclyde had pulled the plug on placing children at Quarriers. A brand new assessment centre was opening in Johnstone and I applied for a job there.

Newfield Assessment Centre, Johnstone

7. I went to Newfield in July 1979. I went as an assessment officer but the centre was not open to children initially. I applied to an advert in the Glasgow Herald for the job at Newfield. I was interviewed by Chris Warbrick, Derek Bibby and Hilda McNair.
8. I had a CQSW qualification but I know other staff also had CQSW or a qualification in residential childcare. There was also another person who had previously been a teacher and had taken a career change so he didn't have either of those qualifications.
9. I did have to provide references. One was from Quarriers, the other was from a friend who I had studied and worked with. There was no police vetting then.
10. I cannot remember the name of the Senior assessment officer who my first line manager was when I started at the boys' unit. Derek Bibby was the Assistant officer in charge who had management responsibilities for the assessment units in the centre.
11. In the November of that year, I applied for a Senior assessment officer post in the short stay unit managed by David McAleer , Assistant officer in charge . I subsequently took up that post in the January 1980.
12. I have handed the Inquiry three letters. One of those letters is a letter to Sid Graham Renfrew division director of social work. In that, I refer to writing to Fred Edwards, Strathclyde Regional council director of social work informing him of my resignation. That letter is dated 16th March 1980. The other two, one of them a reference written by ^{KAB} [REDACTED] and dated 26th June 1980 was because I was applying for a post as a

lecturer on a residential childcare course. The other letter, not dated, and written by David McAleer was a reference for me to do a post qualification course at university.

13. The reference letter says the children were moved into the unit in October 1979. In all it was a very short time that I was at Newfield and I only had involvement with children for a period of three months.
14. I should add, the second post I had at Newfield was to the short stay unit and that had not opened to children by the time I left in May 1980. There were all sorts of difficulties around education. Negotiations were happening with education and social work as to who was responsible for the education of the children who were going to be staying there. There seemed to be reluctance on the part of the education department to put teachers into a centre which was run by social work. That seemed to be the main issue and it was never resolved.
15. My memories of my time in Newfield at that period are not particularly sharp. I started a new job in August 1980 and in contrast those memories are vivid. My brother in law died in January 1980 and that had a profound effect on me.
16. Newfield assessment centre was in Johnstone in Renfrewshire. It was a brand new, purpose built unit. There was another one built around the same time in Cardross, Dumbartonshire.
17. What I do recall of the building itself is that it had classrooms and a large communal area which was used for mealtimes and activities. The bedrooms were upstairs and each child had individual rooms. I think there may have been three units in total. A girls' one, boys' unit and secure unit. All three had their own social area and small kitchen. The secure unit was not in use in the time I was there.
18. In the upstairs residential area there was a central staff area with windows, giving staff sight of all three units. This was the night staff team base.

19. The short stay unit was located at the right hand side of the main building. It was an experimental unit that was to be used for working with children in the community and have them there for short residential stays for a contracted period. The unit never opened while I was there, but I did work there latterly.
20. The main entrance of the assessment unit was secured but kids managed to get out.
21. I cannot remember what I did for the first couple of months at the centre when there were no children there. I do not recall any structured in service or induction. Not all of the staff took up post on the same day so it was some time before the full staff team was established.
22. There were practical things that I remember doing in relation to bedrooms, making beds and getting stuff ready for the children arriving.
23. I do remember going to see the boy I had been allocated as a key worker to. I went to see him at Houston Childrens home for a couple of pretransfer meetings with him and the house mother there.
24. On the day he was to transfer over. I had always assumed he was only ever going to the assessment centre for assessment. On the day I collected him all his worldly goods had been packed up and put in my car. I remember thinking 'this is not what it's supposed to be about'. So even at that early stage I was thinking 'what have I moved to '. I thought his place at the original home would have been kept for his return, but no.
25. I always thought assessment was about short term care, say six to eight weeks for the purpose of assessment. Following that there would be recommendations about whether the child would return home with extra support or referred onto another establishment.

26. I applied for the vacant post in the short stay unit in November 1979. I applied because I had some respect for David McAleer who was the assistant officer in charge and for KAB who was the senior assessment officer in there.

Structure and recruitment of staff

27. The management structure of Newfield assessment centre consisted of an officer in charge and three assistant officers in charge with delegated responsibility for aspects of the centre. I believe the officer in charge, Chris Warbrick, had come from an assessment centre down south. Derek Bibby, assistant OIC with responsibility for the assessment units had previously worked with Chris Warbrick. Hilda McNair was assistant OIC with responsibility for liaison with external agencies such as social work, health and education. She had previously worked in the social work department of Barlinnie prison. David McAleer was assistant OIC with responsibility for the short stay unit. He had previously been a social worker in an area team in Greenock.
28. I had respect for Derek Bibby, I had meetings with him about my line manager at the centre, whose name I cannot remember, as I wasn't happy with the way he worked in that short time I was there. Derek listened but didn't do anything. I cannot recall what I raised at that time other than I know I wasn't happy with the line manager.
29. Chris Warbrick was very distant. I would describe his leadership style as chaotic. Since I have had experience of setting up new services during my career, I appreciate how difficult it can be. You need to be present and responsive to developing situations and problems but he certainly didn't do that. I can also appreciate that that divide at the time between social work and education and getting things sorted, to work together, would be difficult. That said, I can't remember any of that being explained or communicated to us.
30. In addition, Chris Warbrick was not approachable. This was, why, in the end when I sent my letter of resignation I bypassed him completely and went right to the top because I was so concerned about him and the centre .

31. An example of what Chris was like is that I remember ^{KAB} Dave and I had been working on proposals for the short stay unit. We had prepared a paper and were having a meeting with Chris Warbrick. He came to the meeting and he hadn't even read what we had prepared. It wasn't just the three of us at the meeting it was all the staff from the unit who were there to hear about it. We were so angry because he devalued what we were trying to do. That was awful trying to pull that team together after that. It was so disrespectful of him. That was the type of leader he was.
32. I was not involved with recruitment at the centre.

Staff

33. When I first met my colleagues I was impressed by the wealth and range of expertise. There were highly committed professionals who had come from a range of backgrounds. I had come from Quarriers and there were others who had come from other local authority social work teams. Some who had come from residential units and there were a couple who had come from existing assessment units. There was one chap who came from an assessment centre in Fife. The staff were pulled from all over Scotland because it was one of the first purpose built units. However, it was a brand new group of staff who had no proper induction or team building.
34. I recall there was one woman called Janet who came from a senior social work post in Aberdeen city because she was so motivated to come to the centre. Most of us who were employed had come from local authority social work teams or had some experience of existing assessment centres and were excited about the concept of the centre. Particularly the way in which it was sold through the advert and in interview, about looking at new ways of working. In my head it was about assessment of the child and then they would move on. A lot of us had experience of Larchgrove and children just ended up being stuck there.
35. In terms of staff numbers and ratios I think there were three members of staff on at any one time on a shift while I was at the boys' unit. There was an early, late and night shift. I remember I worked with a guy called ^{zHJZ} who had come from a residential

background and a woman but I cannot remember her name. She was a social worker from Greenock but she left pretty quickly. She had family in Liverpool and so went back there I believe. I think she too had high hopes for the centre but they all fell through.

36. Myself and other colleagues were initially very excited and enthusiastic at being involved in this new venture but with the arrival of the first children, confidence decreased and staff were struggling. I would put that down to lack of leadership and perhaps some of the issues around the education aspect. Looking back on it, no one was solving the various problems and they just kept generating. The impact then was on the children. In addition, the children we were admitting, we were, in good faith, telling them about a centre and a way of life that we thought was going to happen and it didn't. Staff in particular were demoralised very quickly.

Training

37. I did not get any induction. I have no recollection of receiving any training at Newfield.
38. I know when I moved over to the short stay unit, ^{KAB} my colleague there, could see the difficulties that staff in the units were facing. She was very motivated and so ^{KAB} and I took it upon ourselves to do in service training with the assessment centre staff, including the night staff.
39. We did a lot of child development training, introducing them to the basic principles of childcare practice. It was a skills based approach. It was training on helping children deal with the reality for them. We did that between January and March. We instigated it because we could see there were gaps.

Supervision/appraisal

40. I didn't undertake appraisals in the centre itself but when I moved to the short stay unit, because I was in a more senior role, I did undertake regular supervision sessions with staff. It was difficult because we didn't have children in the unit. What ^{KAB} and I were

trying to do through the supervision sessions was give the staff support for the role they were about to undertake.

41. I cannot recall how often I met with staff. Nor can I recall having an appraisal myself.

Children

42. The children who were allocated to the centre had either come through the children's hearing system or children who were currently in other residential homes and there were issues with them there.
43. There was a key worker system. I was initially allocated a boy who had been in a residential home since an early age and was creating some difficulties in that home. That was why he had been referred to Newfield. It really was a mix, but that meant we were dealing with children who had quite different experiences.
44. The children were visited by the key worker on about three occasions before they moved to the unit. On arrival they were given a medical by a local GP in the medical room in the centre.
45. The first children who came into Newfield were very difficult. It included a nine year old girl from Aberdeen who had been accused of murdering another child. They wanted that girl out of the Grampian area, hence why she came to the centre. I believe we were given minimal information about her. I didn't however have any dealings with her as I was in the boys' unit.
46. In terms of how long children were there, I cannot recall any child leaving while I was there.
47. I did notice in ^{KAB} reference letter about me she indicates the centre was meant for forty six children between the ages of eight and sixteen. It was certainly never full while I was there.

48. She also indicates that the short stay unit was for twelve adolescents. That was detail I couldn't remember but noticed it in her letter. In that same letter KAB talks about having a close working relationship with me and that she had the utmost regard for my commitment to childcare and development of good practice.
49. In terms of the education of the children in the main unit I cannot recall how they were educated. I don't know if some children went out to schools. I know there were two teachers there who had previously been at Thornley Park List D school. Alistair McMorrine and Steve Davidson. Alistair was an art teacher but I'm not sure what he did when he was there. I ask myself were they employed to do something with the children during the day? Maybe not even a teaching role, but I honestly don't know. None of us were really sure what anyone was doing.
50. The children had their own single rooms. The doors had glass panels on them.
51. The centre had two floors. The ground floor consisted of reception area, admin offices, meeting rooms, medical room and children's communal areas for dining , recreation and education. These communal areas were used during the day and for organised evening activities. Childrens bedrooms were on the first floor with each unit having its own social area and kitchen for snacks and supper. The short stay unit was a self contained unit with social areas and bedrooms independent of the assessment units.
52. I remember there was table tennis for the children to play and there was a television.
53. The children ate their meals altogether in the dining area. I don't have any real memories of mealtimes but I think we ate our meals with the children. They would have their supper of toast, cereal and fruit upstairs in their individual units.
54. Bathing was done in the units. I don't remember the detail about that at all.
55. There was no nurse within the centre but there was the medical room and the local GP would visit if there was an issue. I don't recall of any child being ill.

56. There was a lot of unsettled behaviour in the centre with the children and I put that down to a lack of structure, bored children and staff just having to fill the days. There was one evening when the children punched their way through the roof of the centre and ended up on the roof. The police and fire brigade were there. I wasn't on duty but from where I was staying in the grounds I was aware of it. The night that they were on the roof, Chris Warbrick, the manager, did not attend.
57. The children were very fond of getting out of the centre alone, when they shouldn't have been. They would go to the Playtex bra factory which was just a twenty five minute walk down the road. Many of the children had a history of glue sniffing and were able to access glue down there. There were things like that going on and Chris Warbrick didn't have a handle on it all.

Living arrangements

58. I lived on one of the houses on site. There were a terrace of staff houses and I shared one with another two assessment officers. The houses had been built when the centre was built. When I worked at Quarriers I lived at Quarriers village and so when I left and moved to Newfield I decided to do the same. Not all staff lived on site, there were only about six houses. Those houses had a clear view of the centre.
59. It did seem like you were never off duty as you could see things going on from the houses.
60. David McAleer, assistant OIC lived in one of the staff houses.

Record keeping

61. I have no recollection of record keeping. I can't even remember if the child I was allocated came with records.

62. There was a logbook called a communication book which was kept in the staff area. This was used for items of note that may have happened during the shift for the information of the staff coming on in the next shift. Things like if a child was sick.

Discipline and punishment

63. I don't remember discipline of children. I also do not recall any policy on discipline.

Restraint

64. I am not aware of any policy on restraint, nor of any training. I can't say how often restraint was used.
65. I have two memories of restraint at the centre. One in particular which I referred to in my first statement when I said, 'I saw children being restrained in ways they shouldn't have been'. That incident was in a minibus on the way back from a trip. I was qualified and experienced in driving minibuses. I can't remember where the trip was to, maybe the Magnum in Irvine, which was a swimming pool we went to often. I believe there were three staff including me and there would have been likely twelve children.
66. I was driving that day and something kicked off behind. There was a child, a boy, which had to be restrained because he had kicked off and was putting himself and others at risk. He was restrained on the floor of the van with a member of staff over him and holding him down on the floor. I don't know if he was face down or not. I cannot recall who the member of staff was that had the child pinned to the floor but it was a male. The child was thrashing out.
67. Hindsight is great but what we should have done was head to a police station for the safety of everyone. We didn't do that and he was held like that until we got back to the centre. It happened on the way back, it could have been a good thirty minutes if it was Irvine to Johnstone but I cannot recall if it was Irvine. I cannot remember what

happened once we arrived back. It was the days before mobile phones so we couldn't phone ahead in advance. I cannot remember any member of staff talking to us afterwards about that incident.

68. I have another memory which illustrates the difficulties facing both children and staff . I am unable to date the incident but it may have taken place after some of the children had broken through the roof of the building and may have been a catalyst. All staff and children were instructed to gather in the main hall. Chris Warbrick attempted to outline to children and staff what was acceptable/unacceptable behaviour. The children did not react favourably to this 'telling off' and were disruptive both vocally and physically to the point where children had to leave one at a time to be taken back to their unit. Two staff accompanied each child . I escorted a young boy who was about eleven or twelve years old with a male colleague. In the corridor outside of the main hall he tried to kick and punch both of us. At that point we were concerned for the safety of the child and ourselves. He was clearly distressed and out of control. We took him to a small room off the corridor where it was necessary for me to hold him until he calmed down. It was an unpleasant experience for all three of us as it necessitated us getting him onto the floor and holding him there until calmer. This was for his safety and for myself and my colleague. I cannot remember any debriefing or support taking place after this.
69. It was horrendous that afternoon. Chris Warbrick didn't have a relationship with the staff or the children so whatever he did was unlikely to work. Looking back, perhaps a unit based approach may have been better. The staff should have dealt with the children as they had a relationship with them. I think that particular incident was probably a catalyst for other people looking for other jobs as well.

Abuse

70. I did not see any behaviour which I would say was abuse. There was no definition, discussion or training at the centre that was spoken about in relation to abuse.

71. I cannot be reassured that if any abuse was taking place I would not be confident that it would come to light. Abuse may have gone undetected.

Child protection arrangements

72. There were no child protection arrangements but Newfield would not have been any different to other establishments at that time.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

73. I cannot remember any complaints process.

Trusted adult/confidante

74. If children had a concern I guess they could have gone to their key worker. However, it would depend on the relationship they had and the circumstances. That said, the ethos of the place would be a barrier for a child. I couldn't even go to my manager about the way the place was being run and had to go to the top. What would a child do?

Investigation into abuse – personal involvement

75. I have not been involved in any investigations and nor am I aware of any that were going on into any staff there.

Concerns about the institution

76. There was lots of chat internally about concerns about Newfield and people applied for other jobs and left without giving reasons. I am unaware of any concerns externally.

Leaving the institution

77. I had concerns about the centre and in the January of 1980 when I'd been there for six or seven months, my sister's husband was killed in an accident at work. It made me take a step back and think 'What am I doing here?' I can remember it vividly. I must have had a bad week and was going away with some friends for the weekend. I was being collected from Newfield by them and somebody asked me how my week had been. I told them it had been terrible, that I wasn't going to talk about it and that I was going to hand in my letter of resignation when we got back on the Monday. The decision was made then. I wrote my resignation letter to Fred Edwards, the director of social work, who I had some regard for, rather than Chris Warbrick.
78. I was angry with the way the centre was being run and the way in which the children were being treated. It was bad and bad enough and it just wasn't getting any better. The more contact and the more I saw of Chris Warbrick, he was the weakest link in the whole place because he couldn't manage the staff, the children, nor deal with all of these negotiations with other agencies to get the place up and running.
79. My resignation letter, though I don't have a copy would have been about what I saw happening with children and the lack of structure and guidance for the staff. I probably would have said in that letter that I didn't feel it was appropriate to go to Chris Warbrick with these complaints as I wouldn't have felt he was competent enough to deal with it.
80. Meanwhile, I had also written to Sid Graham on 16th March 1980, informing him about my intention to resign. I make reference in the letter, to, 'our discussion'. From that I can only assume I must have spoken to him prior to writing the letter. It would have been about the short stay unit and may have been a meeting with KAB Dave and me. I cannot recall that though.

81. On the back of the letter, I was subsequently called into a meeting with Sid Graham. And a senior manager Murray Haddow. Graham went through all my points. He told me at that meeting that I would need to leave it with him and he would come back to me. I was told that he would need to speak to Chris Warbrick about it as well. It was strange because Chris Warbrick never acknowledged or mentioned anything, ever, to me about it. I was still in my position while all of this was happening.
82. About a week later I was called in again and they said they had had a look at my concerns, that they had had a meeting with Chris Warbrick. I can't remember exactly what they said but it was along the lines of at that point in time he needed to stay in post and they couldn't take any further action. I was asked if I was prepared to stay on in my position. I told them 'no.' I was then informed that Fred Edwards had instructed them to offer me a post of a similar grade within the division but out of Newfield. That was saying to me, everything you have said, we accept, but we can't do anything about it. That to me was their acknowledgment that there was something wrong. At twenty eight years old and with no responsibilities, no mortgage, no children I told them no I didn't want another job. I did my months' notice and left in May 1980. I was out of work for a few months before I started at a nursery in Perth in August 1980.
83. Interestingly, when I had left and went for the post in Perth at a nursery, I found out afterwards that when I was interviewed and told them about the complaints I made about Newfield and that that was why I had left the job, the panel didn't believe me. One of the panel members on that interview, John Belshaw, who was an assistant director of social work in Tayside region, telephoned Sid Graham and Graham confirmed everything I had told them. I was then offered the job. I found out all of this about six months after I started at the Perth nursery.
84. I did keep in touch with KAB for a short while after I left but she then left shortly afterwards too.
85. I wanted nothing else to do with Newfield after I left. I did hear sometime after that Chris Warbrick was moved from there into some kind of management post at the council. After that he was gone. Some kind of charge of financial irregularities.

86. I don't know if any action was taken at Newfield to improve it.


Lessons to be learned

87. There didn't seem to be any assessment of children in Newfield. It seemed that children were admitted and remained there until they could be transferred to a residential unit with a vacancy. I had hoped there would be a full assessment of the child and family circumstances.
88. This is hindsight but none of those children should have been admitted there without the systems being in place. With a brand new staff team, it was always going to be hard, but with poor leadership as well, that compounded everything.

Other information

89. I note that in KAB reference letter, dated 26th June 1980, which was me applying for a post as a lecturer, she comments 'Johannas departure from Newfield was in the light of such problems (delays in taking in children) and the view that basic standards of professional practice had been grossly compromised'. For someone to put that in a reference to another organisation is pretty damning.
90. I was contacted around 2019 by a male on Facebook who told me he had been a resident at Newfield and that I had saved his life. I was a little alarmed by this. Not threatened, as he did not know where I lived. I just could not think of anyone that would regard me in such a way. Nor can I remember doing anything that would merit that description of saving someone's life. I blocked him on Facebook and did not engage with him. Being recontacted by the Inquiry has brought it back to me and I am a little concerned that should I appear at the hearings again and my name being out there again, it may prompt this male to try to contact me.

91. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..........

Dated.....13 March 2024.....