

Lord Chancellor acknowledges impact of false allegations



The Lord Chancellor gave the keynote speech at the National Association of Headteachers recent annual conference.

Although the speech was primarily about human rights the Lord Chancellor tackled head on the issue of false allegations. He said "False allegations can take so many forms,

ranging from sexual or physical abuse, to equally false allegations of failing to spot a child's potential, and to allegations of negligent failure to prevent accidents to children".

Allegations Must Be Carefully Thought Through

"We all agree that serious allegations must be investigated, and children should feel safe. We know there will be cases where wrong doing is found. But the way these allegations are investigated, and the way the law deals with them needs to be very carefully thought through. The process is designed to get to the truth and to be fair to those making the allegation, and, crucially, the subject of the allegation. We have already introduced regulation for those claims farmers who unreasonably encourage people to sue when there is no basis.

Teachers Are Very Vulnerable

The police are usually careful in the way they investigate sex or physical abuse allegations but we need to focus as well on the schools setting and internal discipline. Teachers are very vulnerable to false allegations. The combination of society's

rightful concern to ensure children are properly protected, and the immense damage which allegations, even when established to be false, can do to the standing and the personal well-being of a teacher generally, means we have got to have systems in place which give children a sense they can feel safe, they can make the allegations, but as well give teachers the security they will be fairly treated when such allegations are made, and suitably vindicated if the allegations are found to be false. These allegations can come at the teacher through disciplinary proceedings, through police investigations and in serious cases trials, and through civil court actions or they can come through all three."

Right To Be Cleared

"Where allegations are made and aired like that, and the school knows of them, there needs to be a process where the clearing of the teacher is made clear and public. In most other cases where some form of disciplinary proceedings are going on, the name of the teacher should be kept anonymous. Where ever such allegations are made the teacher should be given the fullest possible opportunity to know of the allegations and rebut them. The teacher should not automatically be suspended. The school or the lea should think carefully before any suspension about whether it is necessary. They should deal with the internal cases as quickly as possible consistent with fairness. Suspensions going on years, or investigations going on years ruin lives often utterly unfairly. Your human rights demand a fair process. And that basic fairness is what any person would expect. Its common sense."

Continued on Page 3

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Falsely Accused Carers and Teachers

F.A.C.T. is a voluntary organisation which supports carers and teachers who have been falsely accused and/or wrongly convicted of child abuse, and campaigns on their behalf, for changes in investigative practice, and for reform of the criminal justice system.

Committee and Editorial Team

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FACTion

FACTion is produced at approximately 6-8 week intervals at the national committee's discretion, and is provided free of charge to F.A.C.T. members. The editorial team welcome articles for publication of about 150 to 1,500 words, and letters of not more than 200 words. These should be sent, to faction@factuk.org or by post to FACTion, P.O. Box 3074, Cardiff, CF3 3WZ. (email preferred)

The editorial team reserve the right to edit any article or letter sent for publication. All submissions must be accompanied by the contributors name and address which, on request, will be withheld from publication.

The views contained in FACTion are not necessarily those of F.A.C.T. or its national committee.

Editorial

At this time year, I wake up and ask myself whether it is going to be a Spring-like day, a Summer day, or more like Autumn or even Winter. It's a bit like that with F.A.C.T. Often I ask myself, will today yield good, bad or indifferent results?

Sometimes we take one step forward and two steps back; and at other times two steps forward and then one step back. Rarely, though, do I feel we are at a standstill. Each year we make steady progress.

Every time we move forward, however, I am quickly reminded that somewhere someone's life is being torn apart by false allegations, so it was particularly pleasing to see the Lord Chancellor nail his colours to the mast during his speech at the National Association of Headteachers' Conference.

Whilst we might not agree with every thing he said and has done, we have to recognise that Lord Chancellors are very careful only to comment on serious issues of the day. Whilst his talk was very much about human rights, his acknowledgement that teachers, in particular, are vulnerable to false allegations is a major breakthrough.

It was also very pleasing to hear Professor Zellick, Chairman of the Criminal Cases Review Commission, at a conference called to mark the tenth anniversary of the C.C.R.C. acknowledge the difficulties faced by those defending historical allegations. Both these events demonstrate the value of conferences, both as a means of supporting individuals and lobbying for change.

These past few months have seen F.A.C.T. at its busiest. The call by F.A.C.T. women, and subsequent F.A.C.T. vigils throughout the UK and for the first time in Australia, provided an excellent springboard for our Spring Conference. We are very grateful to all those who took part in the vigils, or helped organise them, and to those who attended the Conference. I think you will agree the Committee have worked very hard to make both events a success.

We had two excellent speakers at our Conference; both experts in the field of investigative practice. One a professional investigator, the other a lay advocate. What they demonstrated above all else is the need for a patient, systematic approach to investigating. Their message is our message - don't give up. With determination, perseverance and support you can win through.

With my best wishes,

Rory

Unproven allegations should not remain on file

Delegates at the NAHT's annual conference also warned that unproven allegations currently remain on teachers' files and show up in Criminal Records Bureau checks when they are applying for jobs, and that Headteachers are also obliged to note such unproven allegations when writing references. Lord Falconer stressed that this should not happen. "In cases where it is absolutely clear that the allegation is false I see no purpose in forcing that to be included," he said. "It would have a consequence for the CRB. Where it is demonstrably the case that the allegation is false there should be greater discretion as to what the school record, which is then what goes to the CRB."

Compensation Culture

Lord Falconer also criticised insurance companies who advise local authorities to pay compensation to litigious parents because it is cheaper than defending a false claim in the courts. This encourages people to "have a go" and leads to "a culture which says, 'If I haven't succeeded or something has happened to me somebody must be to blame, and even if they aren't to blame, somebody will pay'. In the medium and long run it is far more in the interests of society and I suspect insurance companies if they stand up to these claims and fight some of them to discourage others."

F.A.C.T. welcomes comments but

F.A.C.T. welcomes the comments made by the Lord Chancellor. However it remains to be seen whether or not they genuinely represent a sea change in Government thinking. We urge every F.A.C.T. member, particularly those affected by adverse comments on crb disclosures, to bring the Lord Chancellor's comments to the notice of employers, police forces, the Criminal Records Bureau and M.P.s. In doing so it is also important to make the point that teachers are not the only vulnerable cases. Care workers, health care professionals, the clergy, and foster parents are just as, and in some ways more vulnerable, to false allegations than teachers.

Legitimate Claim

Now is the time to press forward our legitimate claim that the Police and Criminal Records Bureau adopt a more rational approach to the recording of complaint histories, and that the Government introduce an independent appeals mechanism so that people affected by the disclosure of soft intelligence have the right to appeal against the inclusion of any non conviction information declared on their crb.

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and have no prior experience of the criminal justice system. Often these allegations involve uncorroborated, historic allegations.

In this complex arena specialist legal advice and representation is vital especially as recent changes in the law, designed to convict genuine offenders, also put the innocent at greater risk of injustice.

We particularly welcome carers, teachers, and health care professionals who have been accused of abuse and are likely to be subject to a criminal investigation. Where allegations have been made we would be happy to advise, whether or not criminal investigations are underway.

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Christmas Gathering and Vigil 2007

Please note we have had to change the date of our Christmas gathering which we had hoped would take place on the 1st December.

This will now take place one week earlier,
on the 24th November.

The venue remains the same, St Chad's Birmingham.

Happy Birthday

Keith - July 30th

Kevin - August 7th

Denis - August 13th

Enjoy the day as best as you can

A new word for the English dictionary?

Lonce: a noun and a verb ... has two meanings ...

Verb: To wilfully and maliciously make false allegations of child sexual abuse.

Noun: A person who wilfully and maliciously makes false allegations of child sexual abuse.

We know of the saying, from the times when capital punishment was carried out; "A liar is worse than a murderer because a liar can get you hanged." For many people then, the liar in the court was a reviled and despised person, to be compared with some of the worst criminals.

The liars still tell their heinous lies. Nowhere more so than in very many child sexual abuse cases, where the liar of old has been rehabilitated by the courts, with their criminal lies ignored, even excused, in the great witch hunt for paedophiles. Where once the liar could send innocent people to the gallows, they now send innocent people to jail for long periods by falsely accusing them of child sexual abuse.

Clearly there are very large numbers of people making false allegations of child sexual abuse. Therefore, the language requires a powerful neologism to give simple meaning to, and easy understanding of, the very nasty things they do. This would save us the difficulty of giving long, laboured descriptions, as we try to introduce a touchy subject. A succinct word like 'lonce', which reflects the essence of their vile lies, would also make it easier to bring attention to their pernicious activities. However, we must be always aware that not all those who make allegations are lying. While others sincerely believe their untrue, deluded allegations, often as a result of wrongheaded psychotherapy.

The word 'lonce' has potency as it rhymes with the dreadful word 'nonce', the person at the bottom of the pile among prison inmates. This can bring discomfort, and a dose of their own medicine, to 'lonces' who readily use the term nonce. Also, 'lonce' alliterates with 'lying' as in 'a

lying lonce'. Furthermore, its association with other words with unsavoury associations such as 'ponce' (a nasty exploiter) and 'sconce' (a Glasgow word – verb - for a bullying verbal attack) could make it very fit for purpose.

The malicious and wilful lies of the people we should begin to refer to as *lonces* are a major cause of many injustices. Given the dreadful consequences of their actions, for those who suffer from their untruths, they are among the most reprehensible people in society. Also, no doubt, heartlessly unconcerned with the plight and pain of those who have truly suffered childhood sexual abuse.

Those who make false allegations of child sexual abuse, and the child protection industry which creates favourable conditions for false allegations to be made, control the national debate on child sexual abuse. The debate is unfavourable to us because their words, such as victim and survivor, dominate the language and political discussion. We need to try to change that by having a word suited to us. Let us start by referring to 'lonces' to see what favourable responses we get.

We can use the word to express disapproval of the new widespread phenomenon of making and encouraging false allegations of child sexual abuse, and investigations and prosecutions that always err on the side of the accuser. With it we would have a shorthand way of introducing our concerns into conversations and writings and thus ease the way to dialogues more beneficial and advantageous to us. For example, saying 'Do you think there are a lot of *lonces* around these days?' could be a

smart way of introducing the word and topic and beginning a discussion in many situations. **Try this question or something similar or more suitable. It works! People have to ask you what a lonce is.**

The author of this article created the words 'lager lout' (also a description of an unpleasant individual) which found its way into the English language from 1987, with astounding effect. Can he do the same with 'lonce'?

Prison

From time to time we are asked by individuals awaiting sentence how best to cope with prison life. If you have been (or are) in prison we would welcome your advice for publication in the next FACTION.

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In my Opinion *by Leon Andre Parks*

Eleven months in the life of a vindicated teacher, the continued aftermath of fallout and the search for truth.

You think that it will never happen to you. The call to your house, allegations, false witness, attempting to prove innocence when, at the same time, all the evidence is in your favour and when the accuser has a history of fantasy or fabrication. It all adds to the surreal life and mind set that one is plunged into. The illusions of justice, balance, honesty, openness, and the pursuit of truth are but a mirage in the face of a blinkered chase by some departments of the law and Local Authority agencies.

Life Changing Experience

To confront false or malicious allegations is a life changing and, at times, damaging experience. It is my story. Compiled from contemporaneous notes, letters and the few documents that I have, finally, been allowed access. I had first to engage governmental agencies to force my employer - a well known unitary authority on the

south coast to release papers, using data protection and freedom of information legislation. I have worked in the world of special needs education for almost 30 years and started my pedagogical career in 1971.

Knock At The Door

The account begins in July 2005 when my headteacher and deputy paid me a visit at home late one afternoon - an unusual event because I live some distance from the school, but still welcomed because I am pleased to state that both are outstanding professional colleagues, friends and wonderful people. I ushered a neighbour out of my house and my wife made us all a drink. It was obvious that there was something serious to discuss and I immediately assumed that it was a major problem at school that the head was seeking an independent view on from me as a member of the senior management team of the school.

Bombshell

The head and deputy outlined events as best that they could, concluding with the bombshell that I had been accused of "adult abuse" and would be subject to a PoVA (Protection of Vulnerable Adults) investigation and procedures. To say that I was stunned is an understatement. My wife was angry and distraught. I, of course, had no defence other than to deny the allegation. At this point I was presented with no details or facts, just the view that it was serious. I was offered the opportunity to work on the main school site but this was unacceptable to me because I was running, as head of centre, a Further Education establishment for 18/19 year old people with severe and profound learning difficulties. The move suggested would have created a tremendous amount of questioning on the basis that the move would have been unplanned, unexpected and, quite correctly, would have

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generated a lot of unanswerable questions to be responded to.

Lack of Information

To say the next 3 months or so were stressful is an understatement. No information came my way for 11 weeks. I wrote to my employer - the Local Authority - on numerous occasions with no response. My headteacher, deputy, other members of the senior management team and my staff team were exemplary and outstanding. My employer (the local authority) were absolutely useless - they did not reply or respond to my weekly letters trying to find out what was going on and urging them to speed the process up. No one questioned me for 76 days - you would get a parking ticket quicker or if you had thrown a brick through someone's window the police would be round that evening. I was clearly a major threat to society!

Need for Support Not Recognised

My employer effectively saw me on three distinct occasions. To suspend me (a three minute exercise), to eventually lift the suspension, and a return to work meeting predicated on an occupational health examination. I have used the phrase before but I got as much support from my employer as a rope gives a hanging man. I was offered counselling and when I made contact the opening statement was effectively "you are entitled to six free consultations after that you have to pay"- very helpful. On the other hand *The Teacher Support Network* was outstanding, practical and extremely supportive.

Police Interview

I was instructed to attend an interview with the police with a solicitor present, organised by my professional association- the *National Union of Teachers (NUT)*. I was not prepared mentally or emotionally for what happened - cautioned, arrested, searched, locked up in a holding cell (I was given "a nice one" with baked beans on the ceiling and faeces on a wall), questioned by two officers and

recorded on audio tapes. After a few hours I was released on police bail to present myself in a few weeks time. A relief to be in the fresh air and to reflect on the process recently enjoyed. The police did accept that there was a delay in their questioning of me - they had other priorities and that evidence could be tainted over time and it was in everyone's interest to be expedient in these matters. I gather that most child protection (CP) and PoVA investigations are organised, directed and planned by a strategy team. Therefore there must be some collective responsibility for the lack of urgency, clear errors in procedure and good practice later exposed by an independent inquiry.

Lack of Communication

There was a radical lack of communication from the Local Authority to me. There was misinformation concerning the allegation and charge as well as possible conflict of interest by the initial investigating officer from social services. The investigation and resultant speed of communicating with the police may have had a personal dimension. Previously I had had a difficult professional working relationship with this particular individual who appeared to take sick leave of absence when I mounted a robust defence of my good name and situation. There was also significant confusion over what I could be told. Some 3 weeks after my arrest I had a phone call stating that there would be No Further Action (NFA) because the young person concerned had come forward and said he had made it all up and, by the way, he thinks "you are a great teacher".

Suspension

The suspension meeting with my employer was a farce in that it lasted a few seconds and there was no explanation as to the role and position taken by my employer. It was very obvious that the representative from human services (personnel to you and me) was very embarrassed by the whole situation. There was a high expectation that I

would return immediately to work with no period of consolidation or transition. This return was not possible because I was being treated for hypertension and anxiety conditions I still have, and take continued medication for, but did not have before the allegation was made. Also, the review of my conduct was concluded in seconds. It was obvious that much of the procedure and events of what happened to me were generated and directed by the Adult Learning Disability Team - a branch of social services. The Department for Education and Skills guidance effectively states that suspension should be a last resort unless there is compelling evidence of potential continued abuse - where I worked this could only have occurred with the collusion of colleagues.

Independent Review

My suspension was the result of a directive from the disability team. After the allegation my headteacher, chair of governors, professional association representative and I wrote collectively to the chief executive of my local authority questioning the application of the process, methods employed, unacceptable timescales and the role of other agencies and statutory bodies. We received a holding letter and eventually a spurious reply. This was not acceptable and after objecting, an "independent" review of my case and procedures employed was conducted by a chair from a neighbouring authority. This authority coincidentally, employed the same procedures because they shared the same jurisdiction of the police. The investigation eventually led to the publication of a report that I was not initially privy to. I was provided with "snippets" of information on a need to know basis; it was and still is obvious there was a cover up or protection of social service staff that made errors of judgement that translated procedure into a proactive attack upon me. There were some 11 main conclusions from the review.

The whole report was not presented to me and when I requested it and other documents I was presented with a refusal. The notes and minutes from the strategy meetings were lodged in the personal file of the student who had made the initial complaint and therefore, according to my employer, was privileged information and data relating to him and not me.

Role of Information Commissioner Pivotal

My view that my name and statements about me must appear "like a rash" all over the papers was denied - a totally ludicrous and unbelievable situation. In frustration at being denied access to papers I went to the Information Commissioners Office for support. Their involvement was pivotal in gaining an insight into events. Request after request was made to my employer - it was only after instructions were issued and the threat of further action by the ICO that documents were released to me. Documents that I should have had after a few days that eventually took 14 months to materialise. It appears that aspects of the investigation into my private life including my relationship with my wife should not have taken place and there were many recommendations regarding procedures and process.

Pay Cut Enforced

To add insult to injury my employer cut my pay in half after being off sick as a direct result of an unfounded allegation, suspension, arrest and lack of employer support. My illness was confirmed by my GP who had no doubt that it had a direct correlation with my unfortunate experiences. This view was in direct contrast to the occupational health doctor who came to no specific conclusion. Up to this point I had an exemplary health and attendance record. On top of this my employer wanted me to pay back money they claim they had overpaid me. The covering letter also spoke in terms of passing on the so called debt

to an agency to gain recovery if I did not cooperate. A very supportive attitude by my employer - I do not think so. I agreed to pay back the money by instalments so as not to have an adverse credit record. I also counter claimed and requested that my case be reviewed re the cut in pay and the "pay back" situation. Under some pressure it was agreed to put my salary back on track and return monies already paid. It was claimed that this repayment was to come from a discretionary fund and not from payroll. This was an interesting point because if my employer had repaid me from payroll it would have implied liability on their part for my illness and absence - a cunning move on their part.

CRB Check Awaited

I am still awaiting the results of a CRB check after 24 weeks (at the time of writing this). My experience was referred to at an interview for an alternative post - it appears allegations of this nature tend to haunt. I have not concluded with seeking the truth. I have it on good authority that the young man concerned stated he was not telling the truth a considerable period before the allegation was lifted and therefore NFA.

Life Changing Events?

Has the experience changed my life? Yes, big time. There are many things that I DO NOT undertake professionally now - because they are voluntary for a teacher. Intimate care, and some welfare matters for example. I also do not administer medication. There are, however, some situations where there has to be close physical contact - I always ensure there are other staff present and are witness to events. I have defined what "reasonable adjustments" needed to be made. Further, I have spoken at training events about my case, experiences and quality of life effects and results.

Return to Work

I returned to work to start employment at a new educational

establishment after seeing an occupational health consultant. I had a phased return to work last year that was problematic. My employer gave me little or no support and they should be ashamed of their conduct and embarrassed by their boast to be an exemplary employer. This unwarranted experience has scarred me for life. I even contemplated giving up teaching and my much specialised role within the profession. Why did I not do so? Simple - the encouragement of friends, the love and support of my wonderful wife, the determination on the part of my headteacher and other professionals, the brilliant team that I worked with, the involvement and direction of the NUT, my certain knowledge that no offence occurred, and my extremely strong desire to defend my good name, all motivated me to stay. But more than this - the hundreds of students and pupils I have helped to grow and mature and become independent adults are a testimony to my positive involvement in their individual and collective lives. I have one, possibly two, new jobs in me before I retire. This experience has coloured my life but I will not let it change the fundamental person that I am, though I do brood on events at times.

F.A.C.T. and the FACTion journal have helped in the adjustment process and I have assisted others when I can. My professional association (the National Union of Teachers) regional principal officer summed up my struggle and situation, including my ongoing battle, for a reckoning when he said "nothing serves injustice better than badly framed law". My case and situation is a prime example of this.

Leon Andre Parks writes under a pseudonym and currently works in a special school on the south coast in a Unitary Authority, and is involved with students aged 18 and 19 with severe and profound learning difficulties.

Spring Conference Report

The F.A.C.T. annual Spring Conference began with an Extra-ordinary General Meeting. This was called in response to a motion passed at the last AGM which called on the “national committee look into the advantages and disadvantages of F.A.C.T. becoming a registered charity, and to produce a report on this for consideration by the membership”.

Advantages

Members present were provided with a brief report on the advantages and disadvantages of F.A.C.T. becoming a registered charity. The advantages were seen mainly in terms that charity status might give F.A.C.T. more credibility with the general public, and with Government and non Government agencies. It was also suggested that, potentially at least, F.A.C.T. might be able to generate more income by being a charity.

Disadvantages

The main disadvantages were seen to be that F.A.C.T. would first have to persuade sufficient members of the benefits of becoming a charity and the need to amend its present Constitution. In addition it was felt that charity status would unnecessarily generate additional work and financial costs, including Trustee indemnity insurance, and possibly, payment for crb checks on Trustees. In addition F.A.C.T. would also have to ensure that none of the Charity's income was spent on political campaigning, and make sure that it passed the ‘public benefit’ test.

Recommendation

Having considered the matters at some length the national committee recommended that at this stage F.A.C.T. does not seek to become a registered charity. This recommendation was put to the members present and was passed unanimously with no votes recorded against the motion.

The Validity and Fairness of Child Abuse Investigations - presentation by *Des Thomas*

The Search for the Truth

Mr Thomas began his talk by suggesting that the starting point for any investigation was the need to obtain evidence which reflects the truth. With this in mind it is always necessary to look at the nature of the evidence obtained. Is it credible, and has it been obtained fairly and for the right purpose? Evidence gathering might, for example be tainted by ideological considerations - ‘victims’ do not lie, or experts are infallible. The process must be geared to searching out the truth. Why is it necessary to say this? Mr Thomas suggested five reasons. Firstly because victims *can* lie - 3% to 9% of rape allegations are found to be false. Secondly, as Franklin and Loftus (1993) have demonstrated, witnesses often suffer from the frailties of human perception. What they think happened may not have actually happened. Thirdly, informants may have their own agenda. Fourthly political considerations can obscure the search for truth, and fifthly not all investigators are competent, and experts can be wrong.

Profound Effect

The competence, courage, honesty, imagination and open-mindedness of investigators can have a profound effect on the fairness, validity and quality of an investigation. Good investigators have to be trained to a quantifiable and measurable standard and be sufficiently experienced. If you have doubts about the competence of any investigator ask them, or the police force, to confirm their qualifications and

experience. If necessary ask for their CV!

What are the hallmarks of a competent investigation ?

Mr Thomas went on to say that whether you are a police officer or not, it is important to look for evidence that, if true, would implicate or eliminate a suspect. In other words to *look for* evidence which both proves the allegation(s) and disproves them. What are the hallmarks of a good investigation? Mr Thomas suggested three important factors; quality, validity and fairness. Quality requires the investigation to be ‘fit for purpose’ whether it be for policing or other need [such as risk assessment]. Validity means that the process of investigation must be capable of independent audit and therefore trusted. Fairness means that there must be full disclosure of anything that may assist the defence or undermine the case. How can this be measured ? Quality cannot be assured and best practice maintained unless some key questions are asked. Has the investigation been carried out in accordance with the required policies and procedures, and how is compliance evidenced? Has the methodology used been validated and can it be evidenced? Did the investigator maintain a record of decision making in fraud proof policy books? Was the investigation reviewed in accordance with the required policies and procedures? Has the the senior investigating officer discharged their duty to disclose information that may assist the defence or undermine the

prosecution? If the answers to any one of these questions is no, it becomes difficult to see how any Chief Officer could claim that an investigation was 'fit for purpose', valid, or fair. Such an approach may for example help establish the purpose, validity and fairness of dip sampling policies: What is the policy? What risk is it attempting to address? How does it seek to address that risk? What safeguards have been put in place to protect people at risk of false allegations or partisan investigators? What processes have been put in place to ensure that information held on individuals is accurate?

How is policy formed?

Some policies are established by statute (primary or secondary legislation), or by legal precedent. Others are established by Government bodies (such as the Home Office, the Information Commissioner etc), or by ACPO. Policies may be absolute or conditional. They may be explicit (written down) or implicit (established by best practice). Explicit policies are normally recorded in fraud proof policy documents or books established for the purpose. Policies for the handling of major incidents are governed by the requirements of M.I.R.S.A.P. (Major Incident Room Standardised Administrative Procedures) published by the Home Office. An examination of relevant policies will often reveal whether or not the action or decision taken is valid or fair. It is through actions and decisions that policy is implemented and practice (good or bad) established so it is important that they are also examined very closely. Actions can arise in response to intelligence and information contained in statements, documents and exhibits. They should be noted, sequentially numbered, timed, dated, signed and give clear unambiguous instructions requiring an investigator to undertake a specific task in order to fill or eliminate a knowledge gap.

All information should be cross referenced to source documents.

Assessing Quality, Validity and Fairness at a Glance

How can you assess the quality, validity and fairness of an investigation at a glance?

Quality: What is the explicit purpose of the investigation. Is it to convict this wicked man/men or is it to conduct an agnostic search for the truth?

Validity: Is the policy book a clear, logical and contemporaneous record of an open search for the truth? Has there been full compliance?

Fairness: Is there a policy on disclosure? Does it include issues related to the competence of the investigators, reputation of witnesses, and the management of the investigative process?

Ensuring Compliance

A quick way to audit investigations is firstly to identify the key statements, then audit the 'actions' generated by the information contained in the statement(s). Once this is done comparisons can be made with the actual actions taken with what might reasonably expect to have happened. In the case of alleged child abuse one might, for example, expect to see the extent to which efforts were made to trace independent witnesses and locate documents. There would also need to be evidence of background checks on witnesses, the extent to which evidence might unwittingly be recycled e.g. through counselling contacts, support groups etc. Efforts should also be made to cross reference the information obtained with source documents and to examine any corroborative evidence received. When examining policy books always look for any procedural gaps or omissions in the process and in the evidence obtained.

Summary

In summary, answers to all of the above question should be found in internal policy documents. If such

documents don't exist operational standards will be compromised. In such situations dishonest or incompetent management may resort to using unsubstantiated allegations to scapegoat individuals and divert attention away from operational and organisational failure.

If best investigative practice is to be maintained and miscarriages of justice prevented, falsely or wrongly accused people must be provided with information that may help them secure justice and redress any wrongs they may have suffered. Mr Thomas' over riding message to those present was that it should not be assumed that all investigations were carried out to the required standard, and that individuals who feel they have been wronged should be able to carry out, as far as they are able, their own inquiries as to whether or not the investigation has been carried out competently, and in accordance with established procedure and best practice. The need to submit the process of inquiry to rigorous examination was just as important as the need to examine evidence obtained. Mr Thomas recognised that this might be difficult and that the police might not always want, or be able to, co-operate with such requests. The key to success was to persevere and require the investigating officers to demonstrate that quality policies and procedures were in place, that the required processes had been validated, and that a competent and fair inquiry had taken place. By asking whether or not the investigator was competent, the investigation legal, and by determining whether the process can be audited and the outcome trusted, the accused will have a better chance of securing the disclosure of information that may assist their defence.

Des Thomas is a forensic management consultant and expert witness, and formerly deputy head of Hampshire CID and its Head of Child Protection.

Responding to the Call by F.A.C.T. Women - United We Stand.



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Keeping you up to date on campaigning and lobbying news

Good Turn Out for Spring Protest Vigils But Where Were The Rest?

While we have reason to be pleased at the turn out of 150 (plus 15 in Brisbane in Australia) for the Spring Protest Vigils, there was some disappointment at the considerable numbers who felt they were unable to attend. Although, there were 1100 signatories to the Call by F.A.C.T. Women to support the prisoners by attending the Vigils, many left it to others to participate.

F.A.C.T has two main purposes. The first is to provide advice and help and emotional support. The second is to have innocent prisoners released with their convictions quashed and names removed from the sex offenders lists and, in the longer term, to bring an end to false allegations and wrongful convictions of child sexual abuse. We are very successful with the first. The second, if we are to be successful, requires a mixture of public activities and behind-the-scenes lobbying in which most members and supporters take part. Passivity and inactivity will make achieving our aims take longer.

Those who campaign against false allegations of child **physical** abuse and the injustices caused in the criminal and family courts, among them the cot death cases, have achieved much more success than campaigners against the injustices in child **sexual** abuse cases. One

reason is that the former have had high profile demonstrations and are much more involved in behind-the-scenes lobbying of the

Operation Release



The Right to be Cleared

relevant authorities. In addition, they have received massive publicity through their exposure of the professional incompetence and prejudices of Professor Roy Meadow and Professor David Southall. We have to try to match that. In the meantime, we call on all supporters to attend our **ANNUAL PROTEST VIGIL** at the **Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) AGM** at GMEX (now known as MANCHESTER CENTRAL) Windmill Street (behind Midland Hotel) Manchester on **Tuesday 19th June 2007 from 11.30 till 2.00**. For further details contact

Gail on 02920 513016 or by email gail@wellwood.fsnet.co.uk

This particular action is focused on the police who were not a focus of the Vigils on March 27th. On the same day, for those in the south who cannot get to Manchester, there will also be a Vigil outside the **ACPO Office at 10 Victoria Street (the Parliament Square end) in London**. This is being organised by various U-CAIR groups including F.A.C.T. For more information *contact Trevor on 07985 700662 or by email trevorandcats@yahoo.co.uk* Other groups may also be holding Vigils on the same day at an ACPO or other Police location closer to them. *However it is emphasised that the Manchester and London locations are the primary events that day.*

Compensation Awards Greatly Exaggerate Numbers Abused in Care Homes

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of former care home residents, encouraged by child abuse compensation lawyers, have made claims alleging having been abused in care which have resulted in huge compensation awards. The vast majority of these allegations have never been tested in the criminal courts. Of those that have, many have received compensation even though the person or persons they

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accused were acquitted, while others received compensation after convictions, many of which are unsafe or were later quashed.

The result is that when the media reports these huge settlement sums and large numbers of successful claimants paid out by a particular local authority's insurers, the public are given the misleading impression that just about everyone who was in care, in that local authority at the time, was abused. They are unaware that many of these claims for compensation are

unchallenged by the local authorities and other agencies against whom the claims are brought, who may instruct their insurers to pay up without a fight. Compensation paid out in this way, while sometimes it may not even require accusing a named individual, has horrendous publicity consequences for wrongly convicted F.A.C.T. members who worked in care homes in the local authorities named in the press coverage. The assumption that the press invites their readers to make is that they committed even

more abuse than they were wrongly convicted for.

Compare and Contrast: Two Aspects of a Witchhunt

There is considerable public sympathy for the, mostly, women who are falsely accused by, mainly, male health professionals in the cot death cases. However there is little public sympathy for the, mostly, men who are subjected to generalised false allegations of child sexual abuse by, mainly, women in the child protection industry.

Operation Release - *The Right to be Cleared*

Primary Objectives

- **release** of innocent prisoners wrongly convicted of child abuse with their convictions quashed
- **quashing** of the convictions of innocent, former prisoners wrongly convicted of child abuse
- **clearing** the names of innocent people falsely accused of child abuse, whether charged or not
- **clearing** the names of innocent people cleared of child abuse by criminal investigation but affected by civil actions or action by child protection agencies or employers
- **removal** of the names of innocent people from the sex offenders register and other lists
- **stopping** more innocent people being falsely accused of child abuse in the future

Theme and Message of OPERATION RELEASE

The theme and message, **OPERATION RELEASE: The Right Of The Innocent To Be Cleared**, is at the centre of our campaigning work. It is to be used by the F.A.C.T. Committee and our supporters in lobbying and publicity material - letters, publications, leaflets, media statements, posters, banners and conferences. The purpose is to unify F.A.C.T. around a cogent 'idea' and relevant 'slogan' related to our Core Objectives. It is a form of PR to give F.A.C.T. internal cohesion and external credibility.

Strategy of OPERATION RELEASE

The strategy is to base our lobbying on a ***Call for A Royal Commission to be set up to enquire into the methods and practices used in child abuse investigations.*** Regulation and reform of child abuse investigation is our intention. The outcome we seek is the exposure of the flawed practices, the reassessment of the many wrongful convictions we believe have occurred, and the stopping of further wrongful convictions in the future. As part of the process we are asking that people who represent and reflect our concerns are given parity with child protection campaigners by being invited to advise the child protection agencies on reforming policy and regulating procedures in child abuse investigation and prosecution. The measures we want put in place are aimed at 'gate keeping'; that is sifting out false allegations, thus preventing such cases going in front of the juries to decide. We are drawing up terms of reference for the Royal Commission. Consultation with the politicians and the authorities responsible for child protection is the way forward alongside protest action. We cannot just be against something. We must also engage in problem solving by being for something. This is why we ask supporters to write letters to the relevant agencies to elicit meaningful responses from them.

Values of OPERATION RELEASE

Equality and indivisibility of justice – for those who suffer child abuse and those who are falsely accused of child abuse.

Dissociative Identity Disorder: The Stuff Of Nightmares (*Part Two*)

This is the second part of an article from the British False Memory Society's Newsletter (Vol. 14. No. 1 – September 2006) by Katherine Mair, a retired consultant clinical psychologist. We are grateful to BFMS for allowing F.A.C.T. to publish it.

The Influence of Sybil

The belief that DID is caused by severe early childhood abuse has clearly not arisen from studies of children or adults who are known to have experienced this abuse. So where does it come from? The source of this belief appears, amazingly, to be a single case study written by a journalist and published as a book in 1973; it was made into a film in 1976. 'Sybil' describes an 11 year treatment for MPD. This gradually enabled an unhappy 32 year old woman to become aware for the first time of her 17 alternative personalities. Through them she was also to learn of the prolonged physical, emotional and sexual abuse she had suffered as a child at the hands of her mother.

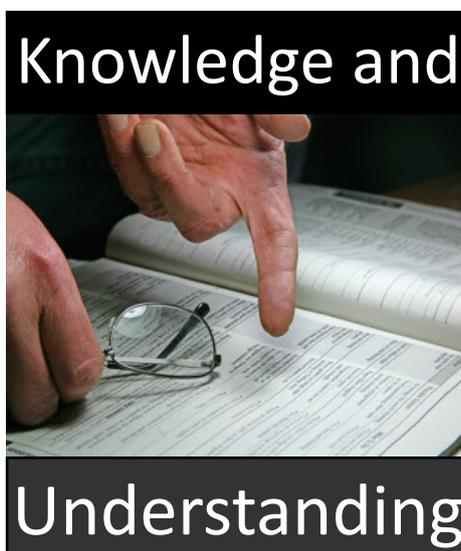
We are told that Sybil's psychiatrist, Dr Wilbur, had welcomed the opportunity of undertaking the first ever psychoanalysis of a multiple personality, and that she theorised from the start about what might have caused her condition: *"Dr Wilbur didn't actually know, but she surmised that Sybil's first dissociation had taken place during childhood.... The doctor believed that Sybil's condition stemmed from some childhood trauma, though at this stage she couldn't be certain"* (Schreiber 1973, pp74-75).

Treatment involved encouraging the emergence of alternative personalities, often through hypnosis, and it was the information supplied by these personalities that was apparently sufficient to turn theory into fact. Without mentioning any attempts at corroboration, Schreiber tells us what the infant Sybil experienced:

"Normal at birth, Sybil had fought back until she was about two and a half, by which time

the fight had been literally beaten out of hershe resorted to finding rescue within. First there was the rescue of creating a pretend world....but being a multiple personality was the ultimate rescue" (p185).

Wilbur herself gives no account of how she was able to reconstruct Sybil's early years with such confidence, yet Schreiber's colourful second-hand version has been treated as a factual description of Sybil's childhood. Experienced therapists have repeatedly used it as evidence of the role of severe early trauma in the development of



multiple personalities. This led to a marked change in the presentation of MPD patients, so that from 1980 onwards there have been more of them, they have had more alternative personalities, they have been more likely to be depressed or suicidal women, and they have been far more likely to report all types of childhood trauma (Goff and Sims 1993). There has also been an interesting escalation in the severity of the reported abuse. In reviewing this change, Ross noted in 1997 that an earlier writer had, in 1980, failed to appreciate its extreme nature: *"Greaves seems to imply that the abuse suffered by Sybil was severe even for a DID patient. Anyone working with DID patients today....has heard patients tell equally horrific stories. Some patients have experienced trauma far beyond that in-*

flicted on Sybil. In 1980 even leading experts in the field had not yet grasped the frequency or the severity of the abuse suffered by DID patients" (Ross 1997, p45).

Escalating horrors

Belief in the importance of severe childhood trauma has certainly led DID therapists to discover it in ever increasing numbers of patients. When we look at the nature of the therapy we can understand how this has come about. It is usually both intensive and lengthy, and its aim is initially to encourage the dissociation that is the main symptom of the disorder. Hypnosis is often deliberately used, but even when it is not, the dissociated patient, acting out a completely different identity, would appear to be in some sort of trance state. It is while she is in this state that she provides the 'evidence' that confirms what her therapist already believes.

The readiness of DID patients to come up with increasingly horrific reports sometimes goes too far. When tales are told of alien abduction, cannibalism, widespread torture and murder, with the involvement of many famous people, the absence of any corroborative evidence does become rather embarrassing. Much of the information about 'ritual' abuse comes from people undergoing treatment for DID (Victor 1993). It is interesting that Ross, in a revision of his 1989 textbook, has deleted a passage relating to patients' experience of ritual abuse, and has added an admission that false memories do present a problem (Ross 1997). Other experts are now in the uncomfortable position of having to combine an emphasis on the importance of early trauma with an acceptance that memories of it can be false: *"It often seems necessary to work through traumatic material that appears likely to be historically inaccurate....there is virtually no way*

to avoid the risk of investigating inaccurate recall" (Kluft 1996, p105).

Endurance of a harmful myth

One might expect that once the therapists start disbelieving the testimony of their patients, the whole concept of DID must fall apart. In the United States and Canada, it does now appear to be in decline. Several dissociative disorder units have closed down, and *Dissociation*, the main journal in this field, ceased publication in 1998. Some prominent DID therapists have been successfully sued by patients who felt that they had been harmed rather than helped by their lengthy and often very expensive therapy (Piper and Merskey 2004). However, belief remains remarkably robust in some quarters and it has been exported from North America. Despite having been sued, Ross continues to promote the 'trauma model' of DID worldwide through The Timberlawn Trauma Institute website. There are even plans to remake the film of the book which started it all (Hollywood Reporter). Thus a new version of 'Sybil' will be able, once again, to fascinate audiences with its portrayal of multiple personalities, and to tell them that these are definite signs of severe child abuse. It is unlikely that it will point out the dangers of undergoing hypnosis during prolonged and intensive therapy, but that is really what the story of Sybil is all about.

There are still many enthusiastic promoters of treatment throughout the world, and because the notion of DID as a serious illness *and* an indicator of severe child abuse has been around for almost 30 years, it has stealthily acquired credibility. Familiarity can breed acceptance. When we turn to the internet, a trawl through the first 50 of Google's DID references reveals several trenchant critiques. However, these are outnumbered by the many sites offering support to anyone who might unknowingly be suffering from DID or, more vaguely, 'a dissociative disorder'. The Sidran Institute, whose

aims include: 'promoting trauma related advocacy and informing the public' tells us that the dissociative disorders are 'one of the major health problems today' and gives a list of 11 possible symptoms. These turn out to include the most common expressions of distress, such as depression, sleep disorders, panic attacks and alcohol and drug misuse. A similar range of symptoms, 13 this time, is provided by Wikipedia. The prevalence of DID is usually given as 1% of the population, but 'previously undiagnosed' DID is said to be several times more common among psychiatric patients. Recommended treatments usually include hypnosis (The Merck manual; Wikipedia; Sidran Institute).

There has never been a shortage of people sceptical about many of the manifestations of multiple personality, and ready to point out how readily it can be induced in imaginative and vulnerable individuals. Sceptics may have little impact on the true believers, but it is important that their voices are heard. Dissociative identity disorder is a condition in which the nightmare world of the therapist, in which almost any psychological symptom may be the result of suppressed childhood sexual abuse, is projected

onto the hapless patient. The diagnosis of DID can have devastating effects on the patient: robbing her of the childhood she previously thought she had experienced, alienating her from her family and encouraging long term dependence on therapy. Dissociative identity disorder is the perfect medium for false memories because it owes its very existence to them.

Thinking of You

Just a little note to say that those of you who have been released from Prison in recent weeks remain in our thoughts.

We very much hope that your release will enable you to start afresh and make up for lost time.

Please do contact us if you think we can be of any help

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Conference: Advocacy in Action

An account of one man's determination to secure justice

In 2006 the Local Government Ombudsman for Wales published a report into a case (Report Number B2003/0845/W/151) of maladministration by Wrexham County Borough Social Services Department (see FACTion Vol. 3-3 September 2006).

The case concerned allegations which had been made by the estranged daughter against a care worker and his new wife who was a social worker employed by Wrexham County Borough Council (Wrexham C.B.C.)

Background

My involvement in this case began some five years earlier when by chance a mutual friend introduced me to the accused father and his family. So began a long and arduous association with the accused which culminated in the Ombudsman exonerating the father and his wife, and recommending that Wrexham C.B.C. pay them substantial compensation.

My client's estranged daughter from his first marriage had made a number of historical allegations of sexual misconduct against him. These claims only surfaced when she had been in hospital for some time with a life threatening illness, and several years after all contact with her father had ceased. The circumstances in which those first allegations were made, however were highly unorthodox and highly questionable, and therefore extremely unreliable. They were also wilfully misrepresented.

My enquiries revealed that the daughter's allegations had been the result of clinical malpractice which the authorities were anxious to cover up, as well as various forms of suggestion, coercion and, at a later stage, financial inducement. As a result of these revelations I quickly

learnt that it was essential to seek out and challenge the antecedents or circumstances of disclosure, especially where the disclosures were a secondary issue or were artificially provoked.

Accounts did not correspond with reality

I was soon to discover that the accounts by the complainant did not correspond with the reality. The daughter had not only invented an untenable surreal relationship with her father based on fantasy but also fictional and illicit contact for three years or more when the relationship

had broken down, and all contact had verifiably ceased. With the help of a colleague, a retired detective inspector we were able to comprehensively demonstrate that the allegations made were complete myths.

However it soon became clear to us that this position was not accepted by any of the agencies involved so we were left with no alternative but to undertake our own investigations. However a complicating feature of this case was the daughter's unwillingness to permit the authorities to investigate any of her claims, or indeed to let her father know that she had accused him - indeed it was five years before he was made aware of them.

Delay

This highly improper and incomprehensible delay in disclosing the allegation was severely criticised by the Ombudsman. It had not even occurred to the authorities that it is almost impossible to adequately defend oneself against allegations made years previously. More importantly however was the fact that the delay in this case masked an

"It is almost impossible to adequately defend oneself against allegations made years previously"

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obvious fact that the father was being scapegoated for somebody else's wrongdoing. The fictional abuse perpetrated by the father became an allegory of the abuse perpetrated by someone else. Why did it take so long to establish the truth and obtain justice? Firstly, key players were so convinced of the authenticity of the allegations that they were blinded by prejudice and emotion. Secondly, there was a reluctance to share information crucial to the father's defence which denied him a fair hearing. Thirdly, both the father and his courageous second wife were the victims of a parallel process in which the professionals seemed more

interested in preserving their reputations than in seeking out the truth.

Presumption of Guilt

The case against the father was entirely theoretical and rested upon unchallenged assumptions. There

was a presumption of guilt evidenced by the retort “why would your daughter say these things if they are not true?” It didn’t seem to occur to the investigators that such beliefs employed circular logic and that they were unable to

distinguish between cause and effect. As far as they were concerned the allegation had to be true because her distress when recounting the ordeal was very real. The same circular thinking was seen in statements to the effect that the allegations must be true because they have been expressed repeatedly and over time. The professionals persistent failure to distinguish between validity and reliability was just one of a number of *basic* theoretical errors.

N.S.P.C.C.

Wrexham C.B.C. decided to commission the N.S.P.C.C. to undertake an independent Section 47 risk assessment. Their report was trial by inference. If x happened then it is probable y followed and z was the result. Often their thought processes were entirely speculative, fallacious and disturbing. It was thought *probable* that the father had raped his teenage daughter in London on the strength that he had *probably* made threatening phone calls to her because his second wife *might* have abused her position as a social worker and accessed confidential contact information from the files. In fact his wife had been on maternity leave during the relevant period and the files were located elsewhere and did not contain any contact information. The safeguarding

arrangements that had been in force at that time proved that the daughter’s claims to have been contacted by her father on the day of the alleged rape were demonstrably false. Furthermore the accused was on an operating table 200 miles away

having surgery! Despite this the N.S.P.C.C. persisted in their belief that the allegations were true. They were able to do so partly because of the complacent investigation, and partly because of

dishonest practice. Crucial data was with-held or sampled improperly. A further complicating factor was that Wrexham County Borough had deceived its therapeutic partners into thinking that there had been a prior child protection investigation when there had been

none. This shameless deceit, which could not have taken place without some data manipulation, persuaded some people that the father’s genuine ignorance of what was going on was disingenuous and untruthful!

Misuse of Probability Theory

Throughout the investigation there was striking misuse of probability theory. A judgement can only be made when there is one ‘unknown’ and the other parameters

are certain. In this case there was no certainty that a crime had even been committed, no certainty that the accused was anywhere near the crime scene, and no certainty that the complainant was where she said she was either. Computing probability of an event from such vague elements is nonsense yet all the participants in a conference subscribed to a belief that a judgement could be made on the balance of probability by setting up absurd propositions and then linking them together even more absurdly. In their eyes the probability that father raped his daughter was established despite the *fact* he was on an operating table at the time, and that he assaulted her in his own home when she was verifiably at hospital accompanied by her mother having outpatient treatment. Professional people who ought to have known better seemingly went along with ridiculous ideas because of the status of the opinion givers and the force with which their opinions

“... Computing probability of an event from such vague elements is nonsense yet all the participants in a conference subscribed to a belief that a judgement could be made on the balance of probability...”

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were expressed. Intellectual rigour counted for nothing. In my opinion the work of the N.S.P.C.C. was so poor that it should be subject to rigorous scrutiny, and that all cases in which their special investigations unit had been involved with should be reviewed for possible miscarriages of justice - a view which I know others in North Wales would echo. The methodology they used was often incorrect and dishonest. Evidence which undermined their case was withheld, and they claimed that crucial inquiries were made when they had not been. When challenged, their response was to threaten further action and invoke creeping and unjust penalties. No doubt other draconian measures would have followed if it hadn't been for the father's courage, his wife's full support, and for our strong and effective resistance.

Case Conference Bias

A child protection case conference is meant to be convened in the best interests of the children. In this case the father's daughter *and* his children by his new wife. These interests were not served by persecuting the father and disabling him from taking care of them on the basis of an untested beliefs - without a shred of supporting evidence. The whole process made me very aware how society has shifted from formal and open approaches to justice to very worrying informal and closed approaches. These approaches may on occasion be needed but they are especially vulnerable to abuse. Yet they enjoy a degree of protection under the law which does a disservice to the community and the service itself. There is a view that the authorities owe no duty of care to people caught up in child abuse inquiries. It is sometimes argued that such an imposition would inhibit them in the execution of their duty to protect children. This however assumes, quite wrongly in this case, that the authorities go about their duties properly. In this case it was argued that the authorities had a

duty of care *in law* to the father's children for whom the process was meant to benefit, and that there had been significant maladministration: the Ombudsman agreed.

Independent Appeal

As soon as the decision of the case conference was made when it was decided to place the children an 'at risk' register, I appealed against the decision hoping that the independent



David Athol, Lay Advocate

appeal process would recognise the inadequacy of the case. This was wishful thinking on my part. The local authority sought to limit the basis of my appeal. The panel would not review any evidence and sent away witnesses who had been improperly neglected at the original hearing. Their bias was self evident. I was later to discover that two members of the panel had a prior association with the case, and that the Chair thought I was too adversarial for her taste. Not surprisingly the appeal panel refused to overturn the senseless decision of the original case conference on the absurd basis that the conference had the authority to make its decision! Doctors may be licensed to prescribe drugs but they don't have authority to administer an overdose. They did however agree to make seven recommendations.

Effective Complaints Strategy

My predictions proved correct. The Council's intransigence and arrogance however provided the basis for a formal complaint. It also encouraged us to make formal complaints concerning all the agencies involved; Wrexham C.B.C., North Wales Police, the N.S.P.C.C., a regional hospital, and a consultant psychiatrist. The use of complaint procedures as a tool for case building is a route which solicitors are often reluctant to go down because of the cost of undertaking painstaking research which may not come to anything. This is where advocacy services and researchers with specialist knowledge have a role to play, and not least because it is a less expensive option than paying legal fees. There were so many features of the case that were a complete mystery to us that we viewed the complaints process as a vehicle for investigating the facts as well as the conduct of each agency. By diversifying the complaint process we were to seed, cross reference, and check stories being given to us by the different agencies. Another strategy which we tried to adopt was to force Wrexham C.B.C. into the Courts by refusing to cooperate with the child protection process. This was a bold and combative strategy but we were confident Wrexham would be unwilling to go down this road, and in the end their procrastination provided another reason to go to the Ombudsman. The complaint against the N.S.P.C.C. was particularly revealing. We complained about the lack of investigation and the lack of proper theoretical basis for the judgements they had made, and about the integrity of the social worker who undertook the task. Despite the strength of the evidence the Head of the N.S.P.C.C. Special Investigation Service declined to withdraw his support for the report, or to withdraw the advice which they had

given Wrexham C.B.C. They also withdrew an offer of investigating the clinical malpractice we had identified, and claimed to have been reassured by the regional hospital in question that the poor practice identified had been remedied years earlier. Their illogical and frankly amoral position was reinforced by the hierarchy within the N.S.P.C.C. who disallowed our wish to take the complaint to higher level, and by withdrawing the offer of a case review which had been tabled.

The case against the Police centred upon the failure to undertake appropriate investigations and concerns about the conduct of the interviews held with the father. Had they been investigated by the *Independent Police Complaints Commission* they would have found differently. We still don't know why Police officers with-held information which contradicted the advice given by the N.S.P.C.C. or why a senior police officer saw fit to advise, in private, that the case was a hot potato and perhaps compensation might be considered to mitigate the harm which had been done.

The complaints against the hospital were stymied by issues of confidentiality but by this time other information had emerged which helped the cause. The family still has the option of re-opening their complaint and a member of the Ombudsman staff has indicated grounds for complaint exist. The psychiatrist's defence with the GMC was difficult to challenge as he revealed he had been misled into thinking that there had been prior a investigation, and that his clinical judgement had been based on this false premise. Despite this we were able to feed his defence into the complaint against Wrexham C.B.C. thereby demonstrating that the family had also been victims of a parallel process. The complaint against Wrexham C.B.C. was always our main focus. Their eventual decision to appoint an independent investigator proved beneficial. He narrowed the issue down to eleven

key areas. Happily for us the the investigator upheld important issues in part, or in full. There were some matters he didn't feel competent to adjudicate upon and others which he considered to be out of his remit but in general we were delighted with his findings. He accepted that the risk assessments were deeply flawed and inadequate; that Wrexham C.B.C. had failed to supervise the work of the N.S.P.C.C. properly, had failed to exercise a duty of care towards the children of the family, and that procedures, timescales and guidelines had been improperly disregarded over many years. The report wasn't well received by Wrexham C.B.C.'s Head of Social Services who decided to challenge several of the findings. His high handed behaviour was perhaps rather typical but also a strategic error in that it gave us a fresh opportunity to gather even more supportive opinion which helped progress matters when they reached the Ombudsman.

Landmark Award

We now had a considerable body of independent opinion to present to the Ombudsman and we satisfied the criteria for intervention by his department several times over. The independent opinion we had gathered paid dividends and he adjudicated in favour of the family with a landmark award. The Ombudsman found there had been

repeated, prolonged and serious maladministration which had clearly caused severe stress to the family. He also found that had the initial allegation been promptly and effectively investigated it would not have been substantiated and the subsequent course of events would have been very different. His report is well worth reading particularly in relation to his comments about the buck passing that went on between senior personnel in social services. On a personal level it was distressing to discover incompetent and at times dishonest conduct by the agencies concerned. A nation which prides itself of fairness and justice should not condone or collude with such behaviour. Innocent Individuals and their families should not be persecuted. In many ways this case was a triumph of perseverance; the outcome might have been different had it not been for the courage shown by father's and his wife, and for the support of family and friends. My message is don't give up!

David Athol spent most of his career in education and child therapy as a teacher, counsellor, and university lecturer. He had a special interest in the assessment and treatment of pupils with a range of emotional and behavioural disorders. We are grateful to David for sharing his experience. We congratulate those involved on their achievement, and pass on our very wishes those who story he told.

STOP PRESS - 8th June

See item on the FACT website page 23

A man who falsely alleged he was bugged by a priest giving him prayer tuition for his First Holy Communion has been remanded in custody for sentence at Dublin Circuit Criminal Court.

The 34-year-old man was found guilty by a jury of making a false statement to Det. Garda Brian Kavanagh at Kevin Street Garda station, Dublin on June 18th, 2003, that acts of indecent assault and buggery were committed on him by the priest in the period February to May 1981.

In his evidence the man admitted he had never been sexually abused by any Brother. It was established in evidence that neither the priest's accuser nor any other pupil from his school had ever been sent to the priest for Holy Communion prayer tuition.

Head of Criminal Courts calls for witnesses to be filmed whilst giving evidence

Speaking at a conference to mark the 10th anniversary of the Criminal Cases Review Commission, which investigates suspected miscarriages of justice, the head of criminal justice for the judiciary in England and Wales has called for witnesses to be filmed when they testify in court. Sir Igor Judge said courts would be better placed to determine appeals if it could see what the jury had seen.

Although transcripts of the evidence given were already available, Sir Igor said they did not reveal the witnesses' physical expressions - whether they unexpectedly hesitated or struggled through difficult pieces of evidence. Sir Igor Judge added "What transcripts don't show is this. They don't show hesitation at times when hesitation is rather surprising. They don't show gabbling in order to get over a difficult bit of evidence and get past it. But if what we want to do is to have a more profound examination of the way in which a jury has returned a verdict, there's absolutely no reason why rather than just having a transcript we shouldn't have a complete video."

Tom Magner, from the Society of Expert Witnesses, said Sir Igor's idea should be taken further, with the whole court, including barristers and judges filmed too. Mr Magner said: "I can understand the thinking behind it and I can understand very much if you're in a courtroom in the live situation, a judge is looking at how the witness is behaving, looking at the whole picture."

Sir Igor also raised concern over Government plans to prevent convicted criminals winning appeals because of legal problems during the trial process. Ministers have not

announced if the proposals will become law.

A F.A.C.T. spokesman said Sir Igor Judge has raised a very important issue. Non verbal behaviour can be very illuminating. At present Appeal Court judges are denied an opportunity to assess this. However there is a risk that some witnesses might play to the gallery, simply because they are being filmed. For similar reasons we would, however, much prefer that primary complainants are routinely filmed when making complaints of child abuse. This would make the investigative process much more open and transparent, and reduce the risk of any evidence being contaminated by investigative malpractice.

Please let have us have your view on Sir Igor's comments. Would filming witnesses have made a difference in your appeal? Do the suggestions go far enough? Please send your comments in letter form or as an article to FACTion

F.A.C.T. supporters are asked to join our ANNUAL PROTEST VIGIL

outside the
Association of Chief Police Officers
(ACPO)
CONFERENCE

at
MANCHESTER CENTRAL
(formerly known as GMEX)
Windmill Street (behind
Midland Hotel) Manchester

on
Tuesday 19th June 2007
from 11.30 till 2.00

Contact Gail on 02920 513016
or gail@wellwood.fsnet.co.uk

On the same day
19th June
and at the same time
(11.30 till 2.00) a
PROTEST VIGIL
has also been arranged
for F.A.C.T. supporters in
the south who cannot get
to Manchester
outside the
ACPO HQ OFFICE
at
10 Victoria Street
(Parliament Square end),
London

This is organised by various U-CAIR groups including F.A.C.T.

Contact Trevor on 07985 700662
or trevorandcats@yahoo.co.uk

Also on the same day (19th June)
and at the same time (11:30 to
2:00pm) for supporters in Scotland
there will be a

PROTEST VIGIL
outside the
ACPO SCOTLAND
SECRETARIAT
At Strathclyde Police HQ,
173 Pitt Street,
Glasgow

This is organised by
various U-CAIR groups
Contact Peter on 07951 522040
or petermenellis@tiscali.co.uk

*Other groups may also
hold Vigils on the same day
at another ACPO or Police
location closer to them.
However it is emphasised that
Manchester, Glasgow
and London are the main
locations that day.*



Dear FACTion

Innocent until proven guilty is a luxury only bestowed upon those who, in their chosen profession, are considered not in a position of trust. If you are, for example, a teacher and accused of any inappropriate behaviour you can guarantee you will be bound by the allegations for life, even if acquitted.

Today's legal system protects children from harms way, nobody can dispute it is a necessity, but what when these children are given so much power as to destroy an adult to the point where their freedom and family are taken from them. What when these children are paid by the media for doing so. It is a tempting offer for any fourteen year old, a few lies - they are practised at this as they sneak out the house to binge drink on a Friday night. If they are incredibly unlucky a court appearance where they speak only to a video camera, a jury cannot therefore read their body language as their palms sweat and they fidget in their chairs, or as in many cases that the innocent darlings are pregnant, more often than not the consequence of a Friday nights binge.

The frightening fact of this is that in the current system we are powerless to stop them. Accusations of 2, 5 or 10 years previous are expected to be remembered by the defendant as if it were yesterday. Even when the prosecution cannot provide specific dates or times the defence are required to disprove events that could have occurred anywhere in a period of years at any time and any place. In the unlikely event that an element could be disproved the

prosecution can then change their mind at any point to "it's a possibility I got it wrong" or the classic "I can't remember".

In many cases there is no physical evidence. It is not required for a conviction; only one friend to be offered a cut of the media payouts to back up their fabrication. Even when the accomplice's versions do not match the "innocent victims" allowances are made for everyone witnessing events differently, no such leniency for the defendant or their supporting witnesses. School yard gossip and rumours are used as evidence in court; the "well I heard Mr. Bloggs was snogging two dinner ladies behind the vending machine" is evidence against you. The background and criminal records of the accusers are not disclosed in court. The accusers appear studious, well behaved individuals who, because of your behaviour have had their dreams dashed and will now work for a potato peeling factory. The Jury know nothing of their exclusions from primary school at eleven, their pregnancies at twelve and their drug addiction at thirteen, way before they met you and had the opportunity to make a quick buck.

You can be the best in your profession with no previous convictions, people queuing to defend you to clear your name and it will all be twisted against you. You will be made to appear a master of deception, fooling everyone you know even your wife of twenty years. Your religion or moral standing matter not, you could've taken a vow of celibacy at sixteen, it only adds to the fantastic lie that is your life. To top it all you can even be given a longer sentence because your family support you so you have obviously deceived them and are more likely to re-offend.

Once you are scooped into the system you are forced to "admit your guilt", to write in detail what you have done and sympathise with your "victims"; A psychological mind game to break your spirit and make you "accept the truth". There is no justice and the truth is long buried. When

you protest to this you will be denied visits from your loving family, all that is keeping you going.

A rabbit caught in the headlights of a moving car. You can see it coming; at first you are startled, confused and unprepared. You freeze and don't realise that your life and reputation you've worked so hard for are about to be questioned. You hear warnings from all sides and alarm bells ring. As the system speeds towards your life you will find it engulfs your whole being. You breathe it every second. The car is almost on top of your insignificant existence, you're a potential conviction for the police, you're road kill; a statistic. You feel the tyres begin to crush your family, your friends; your soul. Your accusers are at the wheel, they are laughing as the media offers pour in, ten, fifteen, twenty thousand pounds of your flesh. You are now caught in the system; it will roll over and over your frame and try to take your dignity, passion and belief. You hang on to your last breath of fresh air. This isn't a particular case, this isn't uncommon; it is our British legal system and it is failing us every day
Yours sincerely,

Name withheld

HAAP

We have recently been advised by HAAP that they are shortly hoping to receive the Cambridge University research report, jointly funded by HAAP and F.A.C.T. Unfortunately the project has been delayed beyond HAAP's or F.A.C.T.'s control. As soon as the report is received we will let you know.

South Wales Police

You may recall that F.A.C.T. made a formal complaint to South Wales Police regarding their decision to send people on the sex offenders register a rather cynical and tasteless Christmas card. Although the officer responsible for this decision has replied to our concerns the matter is still being pursued as an official complaint. We will keep you informed of developments.

Dear FACT,

Thank you for sending me FACTION during the past year. I was falsely accused in 2004 and subsequently charged in Nov 05 on 13 accounts including buggery and rape. These allegations came from 3 men who had been in my care in 1982, 1984 and 1986 and were the result of an extensive police trawl by officers engaged in 'Operation Camassia' in the West Midlands. The trial commenced in Birmingham Crown Court on Feb 8th. At the half way point on March 7th (so much for the scheduled 10 days !!) 4 of the most serious charges from one complainant were 'permanently laid' so he went back to prison, not collecting on the way his expected £35,000 compensation which his compensation lawyers had estimated he might get. The jury was discharged at that point and the trial adjourned until yesterday at which point the prosecution conceded, albeit with bad grace, and the judge directed 'not guilty' verdicts on the remaining 9 matters. So, after 32 months of living nightmare, the thing is over. I was very well represented by Clayton Williams of Thompson's in Cardiff and my leading counsel, Brian Dean of St Phillip's chambers in Birmingham, was spectacular. FACTion has made me aware of how lucky I have been to have had such an experienced and committed defence team who emphasised that in such cases the defendant has to prove his or her innocence. I had some 14 witnesses of fact and character who would have assisted if necessary but we were able to effectively destroy the prosecution case in cross examination. (Name withheld)

Some of the letters printed above were held over from our last edition. We welcome letters on any subject of interest. Please send them by email (preferred) to sec@factuk.org or to
FACTion, PO Box 3074,
Cardiff CF3 3WZ

Desperate Dan Muddles Megan's Law

Dear MP,

Re: Megan's Law - Pilot Scheme

The news today that the government is proposing to pilot this scheme in three areas of the country gives me cause for great concern. Putting aside my ongoing fight to clear my name, the proposals concern me greatly for several reasons:

1. I was under the impression that Gerry Sutcliffe MP, the Minister in the Home Office, had already told Parliament that his conclusion, after his visit to the USA and discussions in this country, was that there was nothing to be gained from such a law being introduced.
2. The announcement seems to have been made by the MP for Somerset Wansdyke, Dan Norris MP, and not by a Government Minister.
3. The announcement was made whilst Parliament is in recess, and also in a period leading up to important national elections, when I thought there was an embargo on new policies being announced.
4. The announcement was made, according to *BBC World at One* without the support of the *Association of Chief Police Officers* and the *National Association of Probation Officers*, both of which see nothing to be gained from its introduction, and probably a lot to be lost. Even Martin Neary (former *Director of the Prison Service*) and now *Director of Barnardos* said it will do more harm than good.

I have to wonder whether such an announcement is purely for political purposes. It certainly deflects from the controversy over the fact that the M.O.D. gave permission for the 15 Iranian hostages to publish their story, and aren't they trying to climb down over that at the moment? Perhaps it is that Megan's Law will appease voters in the lead up to the local government elections; it certainly appeals to the tabloid press and its readers, but then so does anything connected with sex! Then we could speculate that some

news is required to justify the fragmentation of the Home Office (will this then become a matter for the new Department of Justice, and hence a new Minister, and yet another change of policy?). May be it has something to do with a potential leadership election in the Labour Party; maybe a potential candidate – such, perhaps, as Dr John Reid - needs to gain some voter support. Problems that occur to me are:

- a). What address will be released? A road name may not give much away when there are two hundred houses in the road, but if there are only four.....
- b). A long road or the area in which I live will leave every single person, especially males, vulnerable to attack. I have had a brick through my window late at night, and you simply cannot imagine the trauma of that.
- c). What about the sex offender who lives in a small rural hamlet of three or four houses? The police already have powers to monitor sex offenders, and to caution schools with any concerns they may have. The police don't want this law; it will complicate their already difficult task. Sex offenders will go to ground, eventually be caught again after a large waste of police time, and returned to our already over-crowded jails. History shows that a large proportion of the public don't even know the difference between paedophile and paediatrician, they are simply motivated by the word "paedo" as trumpeted by the tabloid press. Many people have no understanding of the issues involved, but then does the government? The evidence suggests that repeat sex offenders are but a minute problem. The tragic murder of Sarah Payne in 2000 is very rare sort of case. The biggest risk to children from sex offenders comes from within their own family circle and from sex offenders whose behaviour has not been identified soon enough.

Parents (and indeed all adults) need to be taught the signs to look out for, and what to do if there is any concern. Parents need to take the responsibility of parenthood seriously; too many absolve themselves of parental responsibilities. Children need to be taught what to do if they feel at risk, and where they should go for help. I am also concerned at the philosophy that a punishment, set by the Court can then be changed in retrospect. On that basis it would seem reasonable for every one convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol to have their details posted in all public houses and off-licenses or for convicted shop-lifters to have to wear handcuffs when in a shopping precinct. Crazy ideas, but we have a crazy, obsessed government at the moment, dare I suggest, behaving like the proverbial "headless chicken".

When Parliament resumes session after the Easter break, please will you pursue the government relentlessly over this issue by letter and if necessary on the floor of the house.

Yours sincerely,

*An Innocent Constituent
(Published with permission)*

Scottish Parliament Call for Inquiry.

Motion: Tabled by **Campbell Martin**

Kerelaw Residential School

"That the Parliament notes with concern the ongoing situation in relation to Kerelaw Residential School in North Ayrshire; recognises the devastating effect that allegations and subsequent investigations and suspensions can have on individuals and their families; believes that a public enquiry should be held to determine exactly what happened at the school, and expresses concern over the conviction of ex-Kerelaw worker, John Muldoon."

30th March 2007 S2M-5802

Dear Faction

The article regarding polygraph testing in the April edition of *FACTION* is a subject that should be fought vehemently, as the Home Office has already shown its willingness to use discredited tools or methods such as the SOTP programmes, so the fact that lie detectors do not work will not hold them back. It is already clear that many police officers do not wish to see their introduction, as it is widely accepted in law enforcement circles that their use can misdirect an investigation, and have been demonstrated to do so in many FBI cases. The problem is that if they get used by the probation service it will be the thin edge of the wedge, and only a matter of time before their use becomes widespread during investigations - but only for the accused - who will be told "it is purely voluntary" (as it is the the United States). Any refusal will be used to influence the Jury. The accuser will not be required to undertake the same test.

*Yours Sincerely, (name withheld)
Albany,*

Extract from HANSARD

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines his department issues on action to be taken to against people who make unfounded allegations against driving examiners.

Dr Ladyman: The Driving Standards Agency investigates all complaints made against driving examiners. There are no formal guidelines on action to be taken against people who make unfounded complaints or allegations. However, DSA would support appropriate action by examiners against persons considered to be victimising, harrasing, or behaving in malicious fashion against them.

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what support is available to to driving examiners who have experienced trauma as a result of unfounded allegations being made against them [112759] →

From Noble Cause to Nightmare - Australia Supports Vigil

Letter from Michael Cox

Dear Readers

In Australia a small but dedicated group set up their vigil outside the State Law Building which houses the Attorney General's office. We obtained our permit. Two folding tables were set out. We had miles of literature, handed out leaflets for three hours, had a petition which a few people signed and a donation box which attracted a few donations - there was no abuse. One of our people reported seeing a small group of women photographing us from across the street. We assume it was a group representing 'the true believers'. However, they didn't approach us. We had a large banner across the front of the tables which read,"

"HISTORIC ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE - FROM NOBLE CAUSE TO NIGHTMARE".

This was augmented by well worded placards. We also had 50 balloons filled with gas on which we wrote the Christian name of a falsely accused person before releasing it. We had two TV cameras present for quite some time. I don't think it made the TV news but was probably archived for future reference. We did five radio interviews. I am very proud of the fifteen or so people who stood with me, especially my family. We will participate in the June vigil and we hope for even greater support next time round.

Thank you all over there for taking the initiative. We must build a momentum which will be such that we cannot be ignored.

*All the very best,
Michael Cox*

Continued from Col 2

Dr Ladyman: Driving examiners who have experienced trauma have the full support of their line management, human resources, and the counselling and support service.

Ref: Hansard 8th Jan 2007 Col 214W
We are grateful to Velma for bringing this to our attention.



The May news items on the F.A.C.T. web site begin with news that Sir Roger Singleton, has been appointed as chair of the new Independent Barring Board (IBB). Sir Roger who is currently an advisor to the Government on child protection and former Director of Barnardos, will oversee the development of the scheme in preparation for its launch in 2008. F.A.C.T. is monitoring developments and will keep you informed of progress. May also saw various local and national elections take place throughout the UK so it is perhaps fitting that one of the articles highlights the advice given by FASSIT for raising awareness of relevant issues with new politicians. FASSIT (Families Anti Social Services Inquiry Team) also have an excellent website www.fassit.co.uk which will be of particular interest for those falsely accused of familial abuse.

Not surprisingly, considerable space is given to coverage of relevant trade union conferences which take place at this time of the year. Among the issues covered are concerns that no win no fee solicitors are driving up false allegations, and that local authorities are not challenging claims for reason of financial expediency. It is better to accept guilt than to risk having to pay more should the case not be won. In one report it is suggested that compensation claims have risen to over £200 million pounds a year - enough to pay for 8,000 new teachers. Perhaps it was not surprising that the Press should give so much coverage to the Lord Chancellor's remarks regarding teacher's vulnerability to false allegations - see front page. Another story making the headlines is news that hundreds of people have been wrongly accused of downloading child porn on their computers. Ross Anderson, professor of security engineering at Cambridge University, told the BBC he believed hundreds of those investigated had been innocent

victims of fraud. These disclosures are causing F.A.C.T. some anxiety, not least of which because we have made it a rule that people found with child pornography on their computer will not be admitted into membership. Given the extent of identity fraud and the clear evidence that people are being wrongly accused of downloading, the F.A.C.T. national committee may have to carefully review its position.

Following our recent article on the use of polygraph test/lie detectors one of the news items which caught our eye concerned a report that Channel Four is to trial the use new lie-detecting technology on individuals accused of serious offences but claim they are innocent. Channel Four will televise four case studies. Individuals will answer key questions and Channel Four will then show the results afterwards.

In a similar vein there are several reports regarding a suggestion that witnesses in Court cases should be video'd whilst giving their evidence. The F.A.C.T. web site also provides a useful sign post to a number of other web sites that have started on-line petitions, including those by SAFARI which is leading the way in capitalising on this newly created form of democracy in action. SAFARI makes use of the E-line petition to the Prime Minister. If enough people sign them the Government undertake to respond. Subjects so far covered by SAFARI include the need for defendants to be given anonymity up to the point of **conviction**, the need to restrict compensation awards to cases where there is proof, and the need for defendants to be able to sit with their legal team during trial.

One of the more disturbing reports on the F.A.C.T. website is news that in Suffolk referrals to child protection agencies have increased by almost five fold in the last seven years. Both Suffolk police and Suffolk Social Services state that the increase does not mean more children are abused - just that the agencies are more likely to flag up early warning signs. What doesn't seem to have occurred to them is that if no more children are

being abused than was the case say seven years ago then it must follow that more individuals are being wrongly accused of child abuse. There is also news that in Scotland foster parents have warned they will not take on any new children following growing concerns about the way they are treated when allegations, including false claims, are made against them. On a similar theme there is also a report from New Zealand that research is needed as to why men are shying away from jobs with children. Perhaps we should tell them? Just a few days later, after this item was published on the F.A.C.T. website the same theme was taken up by children's charities in the U.K. However they went one step further by suggesting the reason was because men were reluctant to undertake crb checks and did not wish to be labelled as paedophiles. Whilst this may be true a more honest approach would have been to acknowledge that many men will no longer work with children for fear of being wrongly accused of child abuse. The fear is not just of being labelled but one of being falsely accused. The remedy is not simply to give reassuring messages that the crb process is "painless" but to face 'head on' the fact that so long as men are falsely accused they will not wish to work with children.

To finish the month there is a report that the metropolitan police are taking a stronger line against those making false allegations, and that a man in Ireland is on trial for falsely accusing a priest of sexual abuse. However just to make sure we don't get too excited by these developments there is also a report that the Government have secret plans to require staff to inform police if they believe a colleague might pose a risk of violent crime. To finish with some better news the latest report on the web site (6th June) concerns the appeal court decision that prisoners can claim thousands of pounds in compensation if they are kept in prison beyond the date on which they become eligible for parole. Expect some further developments as the case is being appealed to the House of Lords.

Personalia

We begin our round up of local gossip with the news that all regions were actively involved in supporting our Spring Awakening day vigil. We are grateful to all who took part. There has been some encouraging feedback. The London events proved very successful. The group were especially pleased, in view of his subsequent speech, that the Lord Chancellor noted the vigil when he passed close by. There was an excellent turnout outside Wakefield prison which we know was brought to the attention of inmates by prison officers. There was also an excellent turnout in Scotland and strong media interest. In Wales, F.A.C.T. South Wales managed to secure an apology from the police for having to impose some strict conditions on the day - they were not allowed to tie their banner to crowd barriers! Despite this, and some competition from a rather loud 'professional' protestor, the event passed off successfully and in good humour. F.A.C.T. North Wales also reported a very successful day and managed to secure a meeting with a senior police officer and a probation officer to discuss a range of issues. They, together with friends from F.A.C.T. North West, also have plans to leaflet the International Eisteddfod in Llangollen later this month.. F.A.C.T. North Wales will be holding their AGM on the 25th June in Wrexham commencing at mid-day. Any F.A.C.T. member wishing to

attend should contact the North Wales secretary (for contact details see page 2) F.A.C.T. members might also like to note that George and Iris have recently sold their house. As they are currently living in temporary accommodation before moving to South Wales it is not possible to pass on their new address. We were also sorry to hear that George's brother is gravely ill. We wish George and Iris every success in their move. We are sorry to report that Laurie, the F.A.C.T. Northwest Chairman remains very unwell. Our thoughts go out to him, his wife Pauline, and their family.

In the Midlands the JfK (Justice for Kevin) group had a very successful vigil. "We were unable to hold the intended vigil outside the offices of the C.C.R.C. In the end this proved a blessing. We chose Chamberlain Square, placing the stand in the stream of visitors entering and leaving the Birmingham Central Library and nearby premises. We devised our own theme "It could be You" and produced our own leaflet. Only a small proportion of passers-by accepted our leaflets or engaged in conversation, but we distributed 1,000 leaflets and were gratified to find, that only one leaflet had been discarded in the street! A few people took the trouble to visit the stand and discuss our concerns, only one person was antagonistic: 'you're the people who defend paedophiles, aren't you?'"

The group also produced their own press release, taking advice from an experienced media professional. "Our stand was manned by members of the JfK Committee and supporters together with a number of F.A.C.T. members who travelled to Birmingham to be with us. It was a pleasure to meet them. After our initial trepidation, the pressure of learning from scratch how to organise such an event, we enjoyed ourselves and felt, with some reservations, that the experience had been worthwhile and similar events should be held again, but planned with a clearer objective. We were very disappointed at the lack of media reaction to our press release. Bernadette, our Press Officer, was approached by one TV company which expressed interest but when told we would not have for interview anyone supported by F.A.C.T. who had successfully appealed against conviction they lost interest. Steve, our spokesperson for the day, was interviewed for a local radio station and this was broadcast. Would we do it again - Yes."

Vigils are an important part of what we do. They enable us to show some solidarity and provide an opportunity to get our message across way.

F.A.C.T. is very grateful to all those who took part and made the day very worthwhile and enjoyable. Thankyou.

F.A.C.T. Helpline 02920 777 499

The F.A.C.T. helpline is normally open from 9:30am to 12:30pm and 6:30pm to 9:30pm Mondays to Fridays, and on occasional Saturday mornings. It is not open Bank Holidays.