

# Tracing the history of child abuse in youth custody

Does the archive offer current practitioners anything, beyond useless wisdom after the fact?

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# The project

Thousands of  
alleged victims

Police  
investigations

Independent  
Inquiry on  
Child Sexual  
Abuse (IICSA)

Commissioned  
by HM Prison  
& Probation  
Service  
(HMPPS)

Re: allegations of child abuse in youth custody

Main focus on  
c.1960-1990s

# Types of archival silence

'child abuse'

'child  
protection'

'safeguarding'

Terminological

Lost,  
missing or  
unavailable  
records



## Terminology relating to 'child abuse'

'the very idea of child abuse has been **in constant flux** the past thirty years [...] People do many of the same vile things to children, for sure, that they did a century ago. But we've **been [...]** **changing the very definitions of abuse** and revising our values and our moral codes accordingly.'

(Hacking 1991:253)

## Terminology about responses to 'child abuse'

(e.g. 'safeguarding',  
'child protection')

'because child sexual abuse  
[before the 1980s] was many  
things with different meanings  
and consequences, it was **almost  
impossible to frame a coherent  
policy** towards it.'

(Smart 1999:393)

# 'Child abuse' terminology in the Prison Service



## **An inherently risky environment**

Vulnerable population

Lawful staff powers:

- Physical restraint
- Forcible strip-searching
- Punishments e.g. isolation



## **No 'child protection' before c.2000**

Undifferentiated – i.e. same measures in adult and youth prisons, e.g.

- complaints procedures
- policies re: use of force
- inspections
- Boards of Visitors



## **Late introduction of 'safeguarding'**

Duty to implement child protection policies

- 1989 Children Act
- Applied in YOIs only from 2002

General duty to 'safeguard welfare'

- 2004 Children Act

# Documents we reviewed

## Secondary literature, e.g.

Child abuse literature

Abuse inquiries re:  
other settings

Academic histories of  
youth justice

## Establishments of interest

Those with historic  
allegations  
(all male)

+ female borstals/  
detention centres

## Policies/governance, e.g.

complaints

staff discipline

Boards of Visitors

Child abuse: 'any action by another person – adult or child – that  
causes significant harm to a child'

(NSPCC n.d.)

# Types of archival silence

Terminological

Lost, missing or unavailable records

i.e. records were  
never created

Never  
deposited/  
culled

Deposited but  
missing  
(lost?)

Deposited but  
closed  
(data protection  
reasons)

98% of all Home  
Office records?  
(Rock 2017:20)



# Some inaccessible files...

Number	Title	Status (as per TNA catalogue)	Outcome of FOI review request	Notes & subsequent actions
HO 391/250	Discipline at HM Borstal Feltham, Middlesex: meeting of Board of Visitors with senior staff and Prison Officers' Association	"	TNA catalogue states records with 'creating department or successor'	FOI requests made to MoJ and Home Office. Both say they do not have the files.
HO 391/259	[Medical] Examination of prisoners: policy	"	"	"
HO 391/262	Prisoners' correspondence: disclosure of information to police; review and drafting of prison rules	Closed and retained	"	"
HO 391/263	Disclosure of information: consideration given to approaching inmates for useful knowledge	"	"	"
HO 391/67	Complaint by inmate at HM Prison Styal, Wilmslow, Cheshire	"	TNA FOI team state records are with MoJ	"
HO 391/74	Arrangements for after-care following release: Children and Young Person's Act 1969	"	TNA catalogue states records with 'creating department or successor'	"
HO 391/83	Inquiry: allegations of ill treatment at New Hall Detention Centre, Wakefield, West Yorkshire by two former inmates, made to BBC Radio Teesside; Board of Visitors concluded that complaints not justifiable	Closed and FOI request refused	Refused - exempt under s.40 DPA 1998	

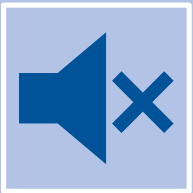


**Inaccessible  
files...**

‘[some silences are] not a  
silence at all, but the result of  
**projecting the existence of  
evidence** into a space where  
none exists.’

(Thomas et al. 2017:153)

# Countering archival silences



asking what archival  
silences mean



using hindsight to  
expose risk-blindness



using non-archival  
sources against  
archival records



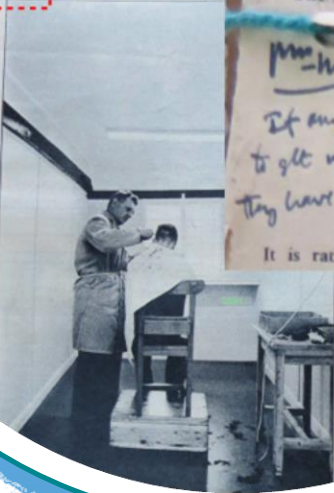
## 1. Asking what silences mean

‘[strip-searching is] one of a range of [custodial] practices which would, in any other circumstances, trigger a **child protection investigation** and could even result in **criminal charges**.’

(Carlile 2006:9)

# 1. Asking what silences mean

**COME ON THEN, LAD, THIS ISN'T A LOVE-IN'**



Home Office sees them as an internecine who don't seem likely to res out wha

course on trays moulded like the ones you get in aeroplanes - or, lunatic asylums. "Three and four," and so on up to 20 and 21, and by that time, one and two have finished. They sit to attention, arms folded and silent. Today's main course was sausage and beans, very tasty.

Now it is nearly eight and time for work parade. The dawn arrived during breakfast pushing grey through the mist. The detention centre is a low huddle of white buildings that seem to be built on a hill.

*If anyone asks why we want to get out of juvenile detention centre, they have only to read this.*  
Aldershot 30/4

It is rather like Aldershot without

"Now your clothes lad." The last traces of civilian identity are peeled off. "Legs apart lad to be searched." The last traces of civilian dignity go too and the pain far deeper than physical hurt begins. The boy stares ahead dumbly, trying perhaps not to cry. "We have to search there, it's prison regulations. Last week a lad had some pound notes on a string. It could have been drugs." He is given trousers to try for size and some unevenly matched socks. Mute and numbed he fumbles with the unfamiliar straps and buttonholes. "Into the bathroom lad. Wash all over, including your hair." The clippers and scissors are got out and nipped in anticipation of the feast

centres. That, to my mind, will defeat of Justice Parker

of beyond these four walls. I remember the one lad telling me he was going over the wire, where, when and how, every detail. I tried to dissuade him, but I told no one else. Next day he was over just as he said, and I hadn't betrayed him. That's important."

It is nearly seven and long since dark. A six-monther has arrived from the Old Bailey. He stands in the reception office approximately to attention. The reception officer checks the details of his sentence, then lists his possessions: a comb, some loose change, a handkerchief, photos of his girl friend and mother, all go into the basket not to be seen again for six months, five

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Down at the Warden's office a group of officers are discussing easy topics in preparation for Principal Officer exams. "Are we custodians or social workers?" and "Is our aim deterrence or rehabilitation?" are the subjects for debate, but they come to no certain conclusions.

7.55 p.m. Supper time is the old routine followed by "indoor recreation" from 8.15 to 8.45. There are two dartsboards and three table tennis tables, but few lads seem in the mood for parlour games.

8.45 p.m. To dormitories for positively the final change of the day.

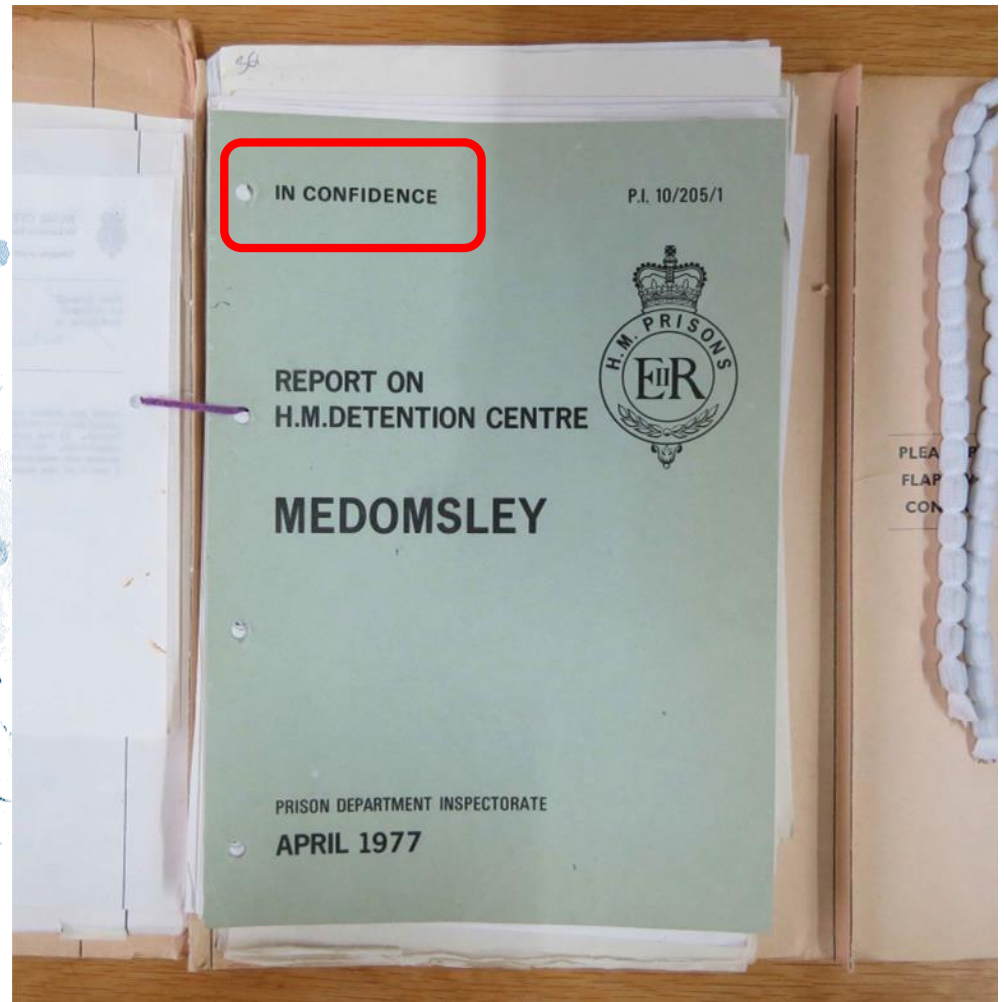
8.55 p.m. Roll check; 94 lads present and accounted for.

9.30 p.m. Lights out.

The Warden walks home through the darkness. "I can't claim to know all the answers, not even some of them. Heaven, I wish someone would tell me. What causes delinquency? What cures it? It's all too complex for simple solutions. All I know for sure is that half the lads who come here never get into trouble again, and as for the other half, well, we've offered them a chance to take stock and they leave here stronger and healthier than they've ever been before. And that surely can't be a bad thing, can it?"



## 2. Using hindsight to expose risk-blindness



## 2. Using hindsight to expose risk-blindness

(TNA, HO 383/329)

01.01 Medomsley initially presents itself as it originally was, a gaunt nineteenth century orphanage now encased within a 17 ft fence, standing some 800 ft above sea level on the outskirts of a former colliery village. The re-landscaped surrounding countryside is not all that unattractive and looking westwards there is a fine panoramic view of rolling country, but the inevitable winds blowing from either the Pennines or the North Sea are a stark reminder of the Dickensian situation.

01.02 The detention centre has never hit the headlines and within the Prison Department has apparently been accepted as a place where nothing of any import ever occurs and one which is unlikely to cause any problems.

11.01 The catering staff consists of an Officer Caterer and a Relief Officer Caterer. Functional group working is employed, the kitchen being manned from 06.45 to 18.00 weekdays and from 07.00 to 17.30 weekends. A call-in on rest days occurs during leave and sick periods.

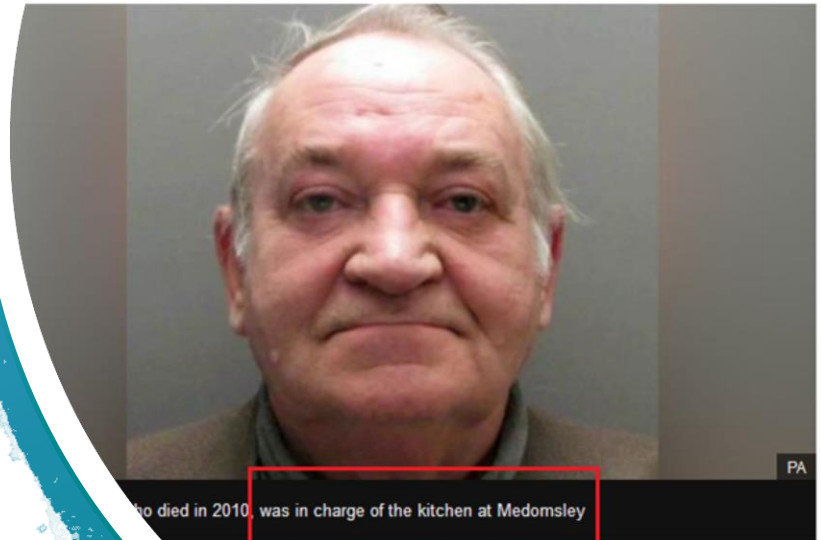
11.02 A labour force of 13 trainees cover the daily requirements from 06.45 to 18.00 weekdays and from 07.00 to 17.00 weekends. Four trainees on a rota basis remain in the kitchen to 19.30 weekdays to clean the kitchen, prepare the supper beverage and issue the supper meal, and at weekends return from recreation to perform the same task. The kitchen party is on duty every day week, although provision is made for one hour's PE each week for voluntary sports at weekends and where necessary trainees are required to attend educational classes Monday to Friday. Trainees who are selected to work in the kitchen are selected by the Officer Caterer. The same amount, approximately 60p per week, is paid to them.

## 2. Using hindsight to expose risk-blindness

### Medomsley detention centre saw hundreds sexually abused

March 2019

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who died in 2010, was in charge of the kitchen at Medomsley

with detention centre sexually assaulted hundreds of



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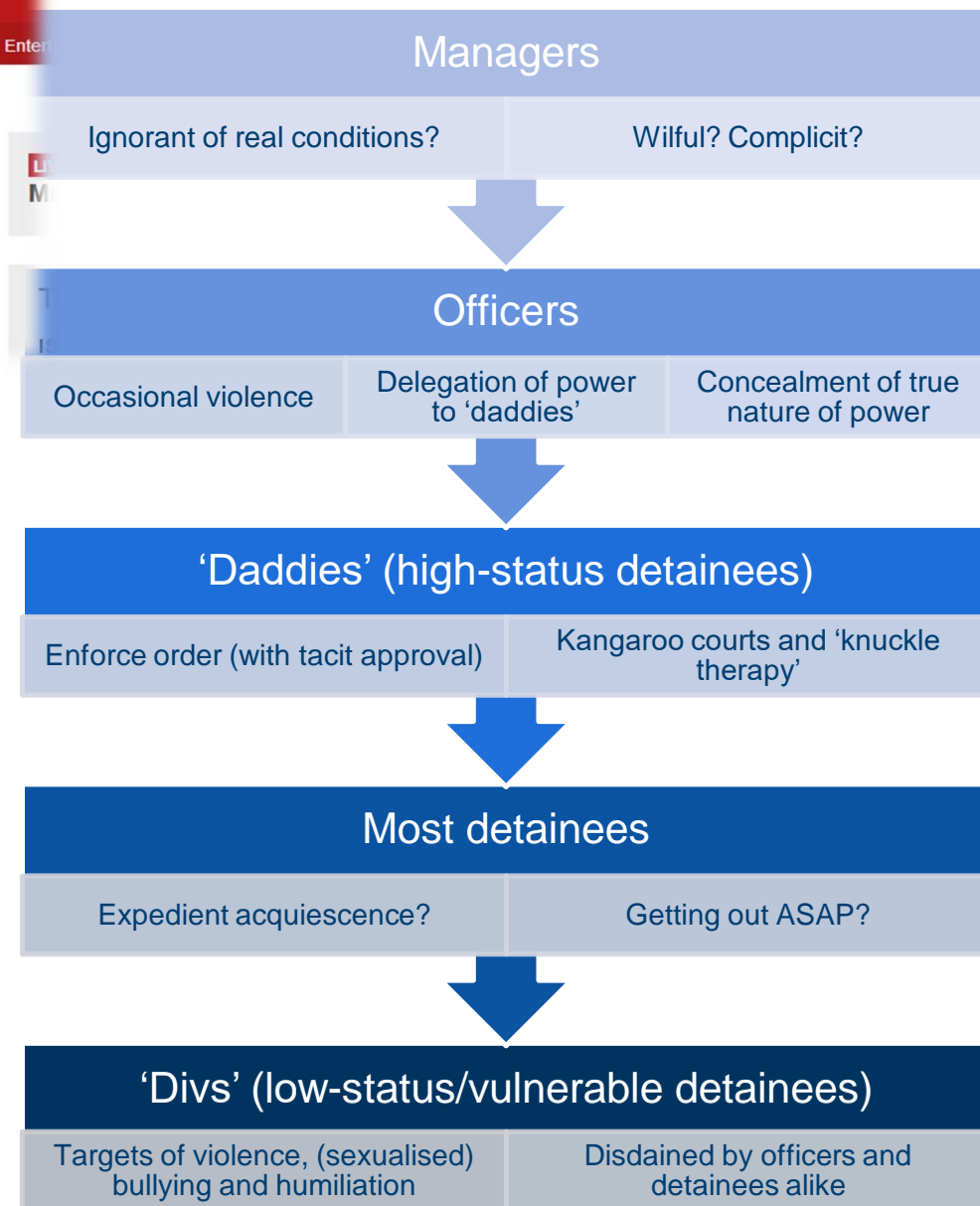
## Whatton historical sex abuse claims made by former detainee

13 January 2015

f Share

### 3. Using unofficial records

(Ericson 1975, describing HMDC Whatton)



### 3. Using unofficial records

(Ericson 1975: 96)

This is what the officer quoted earlier was referring to in describing divs as 'cry babies who never show anything': they put on an inadequate social performance and then appeal for protection by 'crying' to their official superiors. For Blake, this was summarised in a discharge report written by a senior officer.

This blubbering giant needed an above average amount of staff support at first. . . . He must be made to face up to reality and be less of a cry baby. . . . A poor prospect indeed.

To be weak-willed, like being strong-willed, is to be cast in a negative light by officers as well as inmates.

For those inmates who are neither at the top nor at the bottom, the overall effect of officers' actions is to maintain the childlike identity

## Conclusions

- 7) Are there, historically and in the present day, gaps between policy and implementation with regards to safeguarding children against CSA? [...]
  - a. Is CSA in the secure estate a systemic issue, or just 'a few bad apples'?

# Conclusions

**“All I asked you to do was  
clean this fucking door  
and you aint!”**

G4S officer to boy, aged 14  
Medway Secure Training Centre  
BBC Panorama



## Conclusions

- 7) Are there, historically and in the present day, **gaps between policy and implementation** with regards to safeguarding children against CSA? [...]
  - a. Is CSA in the secure estate a systemic issue, or just '**a few bad apples**'?



## Reflection on archival silences...

‘pits conventional forms of  
knowledge about the past  
[...] against the claims of  
groups who have typically  
been disenfranchised by  
dominant regimes of truth’

(Burton 2006:2)



# References (and project publications...)

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## Publications

### Full project report

- Jarman, Ben, Lucy Delap, Louise Jackson, Caroline Lanskey, Hannah Marshall, and Loraine Gelsthorpe. 2018. 'Safeguarding Children in the Secure Estate, 1960-2016'. Apollo - University of Cambridge Repository. [DOI: 10/c4kh](https://doi.org/10.1017/c4kh).

### Brief summary of report

- Jarman, Ben. 2018. 'Scandal and Reform, 1960-2016: Can Better Policies Guarantee Child Welfare in Secure Custody?' History & Policy. Retrieved 18 October 2018 (<http://bit.ly/2Vyx0jO>).

### Peer-reviewed article based on report

- Jarman, Ben, and Caroline Lanskey. 2019. "A Poor Prospect Indeed": The State's Disavowal of Child Abuse Victims in Youth Custody, 1960–1990'. *Societies* 9 (2): 27. [DOI: 10/gf2m87](https://doi.org/10.3390/s9020027).