



Serving People and Professionals
in Contested Allegations of Abuse

Dear Reader

Our April AGM and successful International Conference has passed in the blink of an eye. It was an extremely exciting event to be involved in but, speaking from a personal perspective, the build up to the event was peppered with trepidation about the potential for IT failures. Following many internal discussions with BFMS colleagues, the small BFMS team opted for a virtual event using Zoom backed up by external IT and family support. It was that extra support that enabled the event to run smoothly. If you were unable to log into the event, you can read a member's overview in this edition of the newsletter.

In July, I was invited to give a live radio interview for Talk Radio to discuss the false allegations against Lady Lavinia Nourse who had recently been acquitted at trial after she was the victim of untrue historical sexual abuse allegations. I have written a short piece about the case on page 3 of this newsletter. It is an appalling indictment of our criminal justice system that innocent people continue to experience the full weight of the law following false sexual allegations. I followed this case from the moment it was reported in the press and the more I read, the more I became convinced that the accuser's fantastical account bore the hallmarks of false-memory type allegations. The primary focus of the radio interview surrounded the contentious issue of lifelong anonymity for accusers who make false allegations.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, Solicitor, Claire Anderson, provides erudite advice about voluntary police interviews. This is vital reading for any accused person facing a police station interview. The word 'voluntary', as Claire demonstrates, is something of a misnomer and understanding this process is very important. I know that many of you recently listened to BBC Radio 4 Law in Action broadcast about false memory, which had three airings during the week beginning Monday 1 November. If you missed the programme, click on the link which can be accessed via the Home Page of the BFMS web

site. As a consequence of the broadcast, the help-line has experienced a significant volume of new enquiries and the last few weeks have been exceptionally busy.

Unproven allegations of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) continue to wreak havoc in the UK. An extraordinary case recently took place in Caernarfon Crown Court in North Wales culminating in the conviction and imprisonment of a Christian counsellor and her conspirators for child kidnap. It is extreme by any comparison, but it illustrates that the myth of the existence SRA has not gone away.

This edition features two articles contributed by our colleagues in False Memory Deutschland; the latter also contributed to our annual conference. It is easy to overlook the prevalence of false memory outside of the UK. Belief in traumatic repression would appear to have undergone a resurgence in Europe.

In our Member's Forum, you can read a moving account of one family's battle to deal with false-memory type allegations. I am sure that the events described will resonate with each of you.

Dr Kevin Felstead

Table of Contents

Editorial.....	1
News	2
BFMS AGM.....	4
Special Feature	6
Members' Forum.....	9
Legal Forum.....	10

IN THE NEWS

Christian counsellor jailed for child kidnap in ‘Satanic Abuse’ plot

Belief in the existence of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) continues to linger in the United Kingdom and in some parts of western Europe. On 3 October 2021, Dr Rosie Waterhouse (who is known to the BFMS), writing in the *Sunday Times*, reported about a sentencing hearing which took place in Caernarfon Crown Court, North Wales. The trial resulted in the conviction of six individuals for conspiracy to kidnap a child, at knifepoint, and in broad daylight because they believed they were saving the boy from the clutches of a Satanic Cult based on the Isle of Anglesey. The boy’s father (who cannot be named for legal reasons) was supposed to be a member of the Satanic Cult. Judge Nicola Jones presided over the trial. Janet Stevenson, a Christian counsellor who claims to specialise in treating alleged victims of SRA, Anke Hill, a client, and William Wong, a long-standing believer in the myth of SRA, snatched the child after school had ended; Wong threatened the child’s foster mother at knifepoint. They were later apprehended by armed response officers in Northamptonshire.

Hill and Stevenson planned to drive the boy from North Wales to Stevenson’s home in Crawley, Sussex, after driving to and from Wales on the M1 motorway. They planned to take the child to Europe. The evidence in the courtroom was extraordinary. During cross-examination Stevenson claimed, bizarrely, that her actions did not constitute a criminal offence because she was trying to safeguard the child:

“People during the Second World War, who were trying to smuggle children out of concentration camps in suitcases or bags, put themselves at risk that they would be shot by the Gestapo.

“It was an offence, but it was morally right because they were saving children.

“I could not bear anybody’s child being sexually abused, manipulated, tortured and potentially murdered”.

During evidence, the court heard how Stevenson and her husband, Edward, had rented a hire car to take the child out of Wales. Two other members of the group acted as lookouts from Bridges in North Wales (to detect any police activity in the

area). In a press release on 30 September 2021, the Crown Prosecution Service stated: “the facts of the case are chilling, and it must have been a terrifying experience for the child and carer”. Judge Jones imposed lengthy custodial sentences on the accused. Janet Stevenson was sentenced to 15 years and 5 years on extended licence; William Wong was sentenced to 17 years plus a further 5 years on extended licence; Anke Hill was sentenced to 14 years and 5 months and 5 years on extended licence. All six defendants were given indefinite restraining orders.

Judge Jones’ sentencing remarks were telling. Sentencing Wong, she remarked, “You purport to be an expert on satanic ritual abuse. You have interviewed vulnerable victims of abuse yet have no training or qualifications in this respect”. She ruled further that Hill’s views about SRA were entrenched.

The SRA allegations were investigated by police and found to be baseless. This case provides a telling insight into the mindset of unproven psychotherapeutic theories surrounding belief in the existence of Satanic Ritual Abuse claims. Dr Waterhouse was awarded a doctorate from City University in 2014 – entitled: *Satanic abuse, false memories and moral panics: Anatomy of a 24-year investigation*. A leading authority on the subject, she has been investigating SRA allegations for over three decades.

The allegations in North Wales are however by no means unique. In 2015, for example, Mrs Justice Pauffley presided over the case of P and Q in the Family Court sitting in the Royal Courts of Justice. In the light of the events in North Wales, it is worth highlighting key findings in her detailed judgement:

“In September 2014, lurid allegations of the most serious kind were drawn to the attention of the Metropolitan Police. In a variety of ways, it was suggested that P and Q were part of a large group of children from North London who had been sexually abused, made to abuse one and other and that they belonged to a Satanic Cult in which there was significant paedophile activity.

Specifically, it was said that babies were supplied from all over the world. They were bought, injected with drugs and then sent by TNT or DHL to London. The assertions were that babies had been abused, tortured and then sacrificed. Their throats were slit, blood was drunk and cult members would then dance wearing babies’ skulls (sometimes with blood and hair still attached) on

their bodies. All the cult members wore shoes made of baby skin produced by the owner of a specified shoe shop.

I am able to state with complete conviction that none of the allegations are true ... The claims are baseless. Those who have sought to perpetuate them are either evil/and or foolish ... These stories came about as the result of relentless emotional and psychological pressure as well as significant physical abuse. Torture is a strong word, but it is the most accurate to describe what has been done to the children ...”

The lurid and fantastical allegations of SRA in North London included child sacrifice in which babies were supposedly cooked in ovens in a McDonald’s restaurant before being eaten by cult members.

These exotic claims display all the hallmarks of Dr Valerie Sinason’s convoluted thesis set out in *Treating Survivors of Satanist Abuse* (Routledge 1994). As I have written in *Justice for Carol: the creation of a satanic myth in the United Kingdom* (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform 2014), ‘the book has the distinction of being voted in a peer review as the second worst psychiatric publication of the last hundred years.’ On nominee for the review, led by Simon Wessely, Regius Professor of Psychiatry at the Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London, described the book as: ‘credulous, superstitious, iatrogenic, illness-inducing, self-righteous incendiary garbage’.

In interview with author and investigative journalist Will Storr, Sinason denied that she uses recovered memory therapy. “I’m an analytic therapist”, she says. “The idea of that is someone showing, through their behaviour that all sorts of things might have happened to them. “If someone shudders when they enter the room, you know it’s not ordinary incest”. If a patient denies remembering being abused, “what they really mean is: “I can’t bear to say”. During Satanic rituals, “people eat faeces, menstrual blood, semen, urine. There’s cannibalism”. Doctors perform abortions: “they give the foetus to the mother and she’s made to kill the baby ... the foetuses are raw. And handed around like communion. On one major festival, the babies are barbecued. I can still remember one survivor saying how easy it is to pull apart the ribs on a baby. But adults are tougher to eat” (The *Observer Magazine*, 12 December 2011).

In the 21st century it is astonishing that the myth of Satanic Ritual Abuse continues to endure, in

spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. The background to this cultural phenomenon is laid bare in Mark Pendergrast’s brilliant and illuminating book, *Memory Warp: how the myth of repressed memory arose and refuses to die* (Upper Access Books 2017, esp. chapter 4).

Lady Nourse

In June 2021, Lady Lavinia Nourse was interviewed on BBC Radio 4’s Woman’s Hour after being acquitted in May of non-recent sexual abuse allegations at Peterborough’s Nightingale court. A jury had deliberated for less than three hours before returning unanimous not guilty verdicts on 17 counts of indecent assault and indecency with a child. The case attracted widespread media coverage, in part at least, because her husband (deceased 2017) was a leading judge who sat in the Court of Appeal.

Speaking on Radio 4, Lady Lavinia issued a clarion call about the current practice of allowing sexual abuse accusers to remain anonymous for life. She said that she would like to see a change in the law to extend this principle to the accused at least until the point of charge. Describing her accuser as “very psychologically disturbed”, she said, moreover, that if “everyone remains anonymous, that in itself would be a step forward ... I would like to ask the question, why can the complainant then not be revealed after the case?”

This is a vexed issue which rears its head time and time again after false sexual allegations have been made. As I argued in my live Radio interview with Talk Radio, it is vitally important that genuine victims are not re-victimised by having their identities revealed in the media. For centuries, female victims – very few males reported in the past – of sexual abuse have been badly let down by the criminal justice system. There is a balance to be struck however between the rights of victims and the rights of the falsely accused. Two wrongs do not make a right. In interview with the Daily Mail (23 June 2021), Lady Lavinia described the untrue allegations, which dated back to the 1980’s as “vile, disgusting, revolting”. The impact on the accused and her family will be felt for the rest of her life, recorded and easily accessed on social media. In this particular case, the accuser also ought to be identified. In the interest of justice, the law must be changed as a matter of urgency.

2019 BFMS AGM and International Conference

This important event was held on 30 April 2021. We met on Zoom and began with the AGM. Relevant reports were given and approved by the meeting and the uncertain financial situation was highlighted. Trustees and officials were elected, and thanks given. Kevin Felstead reported on the year. Last year's AGM had to be cancelled. Sadly, some of our members have passed away. The helpline has fielded a variety of calls. These need to be filtered, some are rejected or referred elsewhere. Kevin has had to respond carefully to items brought by the press. He has enjoyed giving talks at universities and noted that there is a Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) panic in Holland.

The International Conference followed the AGM. It, like the AGM, was well organised and ran smoothly to time. There were just over 60 screens present for most of the gathering.

Kevin Felstead spoke about the Society's history and prefaced his talk by stating that child abuse is common and under reported and this must always be acknowledged. However, the BFMS was founded in 1993 after people were stunned by accusations that they insisted were false and often made after similar psychotherapeutic methods were used to elicit them. The BFMS was founded after Roger Scotford's visit to the False Memory Syndrome Foundation in the USA. Kevin's own research into Victorian and Edwardian criminology showed him that women were not believed in those days and such disbelief continued well into the 20th Century. Since the exposure of the Jimmy Savile scandal in 2012, there has been a change the other way which means that evidence and/or corroboration are not needed to support complaints. Complainants are now 'victims' (and I could add that the accused are 'perpetrators') which is a serious problem when allegations are made after no prior memory of alleged assaults. All along the issue has been and remains predominantly a battle between psychotherapists, clinicians and their clients on the one hand and psychologists and other scientists on the other. The science around memory and suggestion is now very solid in that trauma is more likely to be remembered than forgotten. The notion that the mind represses traumatic events as a coping mechanism is not supported by the science. That said, the 'memory wars' continue and believers in

repression and dissociative amnesia are equally solid in their beliefs and Kevin thinks that they are unlikely to change their minds. This is however about belief and not science (sadly). Although belief in Satanic Ritual Abuse arguably declined over time, those who continue to believe in its existence still use the same techniques to produce 'recovered memories'. RAINS, an organisation that promotes such beliefs is still active. Kevin made the very important point that accusers may not actually be 'lying' but the 'honest liar' concept where someone sincerely believes a falsehood, is a very difficult concept for defence teams to press in the criminal justice system. In effect, the accused must prove his innocence in non-recent allegations of child sexual abuse. Media interest in the work of the BFMS and in the controversial topic of recovered memories declined after 1997, following considerable exposure in the press. Yet the problem never really went away and continues to fracture families in the UK and elsewhere in the present day, as a cursory glance at the BFMS archive illustrates. The same techniques produce stories of alien abduction.

The latter point was taken up by **Dr Lawrence Patihis** who addressed the problem of getting loved ones out of repressed memory pseudoscience. For him, the philosophy of Karl Popper and an understanding of 'falsifiability' was key. His 10 tips included presenting arguments to the accusing person but with substantial breaks between such attempts, communicating warmly and firmly but maintaining strict boundaries, trying to understand their world view, and setting rules for civil discourse. He mentioned some useful books and apart from Popper recommended *How to think straight about Psychology* by Keith Stanovich. Kevin's book was highlighted too and some others such as *My Lie* by Meredith Maran. In his opinion it is better not to abandon one's genetic kin and it is best to keep some things private so as not to embarrass an accusing child. Altogether, Dr Patihis offered many possibilities wrung out of experience and these may help but, in my opinion, this is more likely if someone is no longer in the grip of a community of 'true believers' who fend off any opposition.

The Keynote Speaker was **Professor Henry Otgaar** from Maastricht University. He had copious illustrations in his Power Point presentation to support his talk on the revival of the memory

wars. As he pointed out, the 1990s research should have sorted out the matter but since then attacks on the concept of false memory have gone hand in hand with a reinvention of repressed memory as dissociation. He exposed the inadequacy of a report by Brewin and Andrews who minimised the prevalence of susceptibility to false memories and showed that there are numerous heavyweight criticisms of that report. Some critics have argued that lab experiments do not replicate real life or that false memories of painful and repeated experiences cannot be implanted but Henry showed that such things can and have been done.

Belief in repressed memory among clinical psychologists seems to have risen from 61% in the 1990s to 76% in the 2010s. This is bad news indeed and if strange beliefs about memory proliferate in counselling organisations they may have trickled down through the supervisory hierarchy. Henry also explained that people most at risk are those in therapy, who have a disorder that makes them susceptible to techniques that work on memory and produce side effects. Apparently side effects have not been studied very much. Henry explained that correct knowledge about memory helps. A course he teaches about memory decreases students' confidence in belief of so-called Repressed Memory. Debunking RM will be helped by asking where these ideas emanate and he closed by indicating that more memory experts are needed. They certainly are and one wonders whether the British Psychological Society's 2008 Report, 'Guidelines on Memory and the Law' has been side-lined or forgotten.

We then watched two videos from **False Memory Deutschland (FMD)**. **Dr Hans Delf**, the founder, explained that he was accused 23 years ago, and it took many years to recover. He read an article by Loftus in *Scientific American* and read a lot from the FMSF etc. FMD began in 2012. There are dangerous books in German but few on FM. Hans wrote a short book in 2013 and FMD has a website. Large and powerful victim support organisations and trauma therapists oppose them. He is now in the background because of age and deafness and the work has been taken over by **Federico Avellan Borgmeyer** who presented the next video. He is the chair of FMD and was accused 5 years ago and he contacted FMD

who explained what may have happened. They have as many as 6-8 cases a week with contacts also in Austria, German speaking Switzerland, Namibia and other German speaking places. They have had a particularly good online meeting and hope to meet in person next year. 20,000 psychotherapists were invited to a conference but only five came. The Lutheran church took on publishing the conference papers but took it off after objections from believers in repressed memories. Federico finds that false memory is very difficult for them to discuss generally without being accused of sheltering perpetrators.

After a half hour lunch break there were two harrowing testimonies. **Michael** (a pseudonym) described how he was accused two years ago and how the BFMS had helped him after the police had been in touch. He described in detail his daughter's history of fragile physical and mental health and how the allegations eventually arose. BFMS and a helpful solicitor helped him to put together a timeline and go through a two-hour police interview. The police did not even take the complaint to the Crown Prosecution Service and took no further action. However, reconciliation with their daughter remains to be achieved. It was a moving account that many of those present could understand from their own sad experiences. The other testimony was from **Sonja** who from 1995 to 2004 believed that she was a victim of Satanic Ritual abuse. She was born in 1960 and became a Christian at 18 and after marrying in 1987 had two children. She had various problems, did a lot of automatic writing, and had the idea that she had been abused. At a mission event organised by YWAM (Youth with a Mission) a Christian psychotherapist, L, gave her half hour hypnotic prayer sessions in which she told accounts of Child Sexual Abuse. He said these had to be true because they came with prayer and she did not make them up. L believed that she would get better and identified 37 alters and more and more perpetrators. However, by May 1996 she was very ill and suicidal. She was diagnosed with MPD which L said was a blessing but really he was very manipulative. A friend gave her a magazine on SRA, CSA and MPD which confirmed these things to her. In 1996 an evangelist from the USA came to exorcise demons and claimed to have removed 1.2 million from her! SRA was further confirmed by a psychotherapist and theologian and group therapy. Sonja was said to have

had nine babies including twins. By 2002 she started doubting the claims as some things simply did not add up and the whole house of cards started to fall apart. Around 2005 she was reconciled with her mother but through the episode had lost some old friends and through her retraction lost some new ones. She wrote to therapists, but L did not seem to realise what it was about. She found others who had been deceived, read more (*Second Thoughts* by Paul Simpson) and found that although many Christian therapists advised badly there were also Christians, theologians too, who opposed recovered memory therapy and she realised that it was not in the Bible either. She has since joined a more orthodox Lutheran Church. Sonja thought that her therapists and advisors were sincere and caring but mistaken. She thinks that the best chance to get someone out of the delusion is when they have come out of therapy and away from the therapists (I agree). Although her brother-in-law mentioned false memories nobody offered substantial criticisms of what was happening. She believes that real stories of her childhood would have helped her but at the same time the brainwashing was very severe.

A Question and Answer Session followed. The legal system continues to be a concern with its inability to distinguish shades of grey in witness testimony or see beyond the persuasive power of a vivid and sincerely expressed untruthful narrative. Another contributor emphasized the danger of Dissociative Identity Disorder as a DSM diagnosis and the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation. The conference closed just after 3.15 p.m.

The conference was well organised, and the presentations were excellent. More could have been said about BFMS publications and the Newsletter and other resources. No doubt other participants also missed the personal interaction at the meal and interest tables as well as the informal times on gathering and leaving. Breakout groups are possible in the online format but maybe that would be a Zoom too far. Altogether well-done team!

W. John Young

Special Feature

False Memory Deutschland

A brief description

Federico Avellán Borgmeyer, Chairman

False Memory Deutschland e. V. (FMD), a non-profit incorporated society, was founded in 2012 as a spin-off from a growing working group embedded in a public agency combating religious sects issues. Our statutes define our purpose, namely, to provide the general and affected public with information about the phenomena of false memories leading to untrue allegations of past sexual abuse and helping people affected by such 'memories'.

Currently, FMD has slightly over one hundred active members, a board of three official directors, further three assessing board members and four members who act as honorary counsellors covering North, South, East and Central Germany, as well as German speaking Switzerland and Austria, when required. In addition, we count on the honorary work from our members as well as people who consider our work worthwhile supporting, whether via active participation and/or funding any of our multiple initiatives.

Over the last eight years of work, FMD has been contacted by numerous individuals and accumulated a total number of 460 cases, all digitally recorded under German, i.e. EU-GDPR. We have been seeing an increase of some 20% p.a. of new contacts over the last four years, an increase that may arise from an absolute growing number of people affected by false memories of sexual abuse or, more likely, from an increased awareness about the subject of FM topic resulting from our work in providing public information about the subject of false/recovered memory.

Our telephone helpline receives two to three new contacts per week. We organize and convene two annual events, one in Spring and one in Fall, where members and newly affected FM families come together to speak out about their cases in a supportive environment. During a normal gathering we host around 50 participants. These gatherings are extremely emotional and show all the drama false-memory type sexual abuse allegations can produce, independently of age or gender, independently of whether one has been

affected 20 years or 2 months ago or whether re-encounters have been possible or failed completely. During the gatherings, we also bring in external speakers to educate all of us on false memories from different perspectives, whether forensic, legal, scientific, psychological, ecclesiastical, philosophical, and discuss coping mechanisms following false allegations.

Our communication is directed especially to individuals who are or have been in psychotherapy while suddenly 'recovering' buried 'memories' of sexual abuse sometimes spanning back decades, after putatively having no cognitive recall, prior to commencing therapy, of these alleged events. We thus aim to prevent the situation from deteriorating further and 'recovering' more 'memories', at an early stage and to consult an independent, different therapist for reassertion or rejection. Unfortunately, this scenario is achievable in a minority – about 5% – of all our cases.

The collateral damage caused by such a recovered memory on one person does normally involve a whole family, close relatives, friends, employers, public institutions, etc. The collateral damage is thus immense, emotionally, psychologically, financially and sometimes, even existentially. We therefore focus a high attention on those who have been wrongly accused; they make up some 95% of all our cases. Due to the increase in awareness about our society and work, we also get increased call-for-help from prisoners maintaining innocence, an issue new to us, but an issue which we are exploring in two cases right now. Our society and members from our society have written publications about false memories and given interviews to the press, either via public TV, different print media and brand new, recently on podcasts. False-Memory Deutschland is about to broadcast a professionally produced audio play about false memories of sexual abuse. In addition, we organise national conferences on the subject matter of false memories and recently became part of a *National Roundtable for Patient Safety in Psychotherapy*.

What sounds much though is actually very little in comparison to believers and followers of (satanic) ritual sexual abuse theories or dogmatic trauma therapists who continue to insist that many adult problems originate from past childhood sexual abuse. This belief system – which is not supported by the vast body of scientific literature from memory scientists – continues to influence public opinion and even government and academic institutions. Nonetheless, our society stays firm, grounded by data and science to con-

tinue to provide help and support to individuals and families who have fallen prey to false-memory type allegations.

Need more information about FMD? Don't hesitate to contact us over www.false-memory.de or kontakt@false-memory.de

Counselling Activities at False Memory Deutschland e.V

Dr Hans Delfs, Oliver Völckers

*Editor's note: Madeline and I have been speaking this year with our European colleagues to share ideas and experience about false-memory type issues on the continent. As Henry Otgaar and his colleagues have demonstrated, the 'memory wars' are far from over and belief in repressed memories may in fact be on the increase (Otgaar et al, *The Return of the Repressed: The Persistent and Problematic Claims of Long-Forgotten Trauma*, 2019).*

Helping people is part of our statutes

At the time of its foundation, one of its co-founders, Heide-Marie Cammans, had already more than 20 years of experience counselling people as the head of a public agency against problems of religious sects. During the 1980s and 1990s there was an increasing number of cases where people claimed to be sexually abused by people organised in satanic and/or ritual groups, frequently including the parents of the person affected. Investigation into such cases showed without exception that no religious sects were involved and no evidence neither for sexual abuse nor for the existence of such organisations could be found, but in all cases the claims could be traced to psychotherapies. At the same time, more and more cases came up where parents reported that their children had cut off all contact without explanation and following untrue allegations involving a religious sect. In fact, the allegations were therapeutically driven following psychotherapy to recover alleged repressed memories of childhood sexual abuse.

Heide-Marie is still very active in our counselling activities, though we have a few more counsellors who have professional experience from an assortment of backgrounds.

Who approaches FMD for help?

Among our requests for counselling services, the most frequent cases are from parents who are accused of non-recent sexual abuse allegations. (NRSA). No memory nor suspicion of SA existed before the adult accuser entered psychotherapy. In most cases, the parents are traumatised about their children cutting off contact; in even worse cases they are already charged with NRSA and face a criminal trial.

In many cases, a written discussion of their situation based on memory science helps them. A minority of cases, however, require very sensitive advice due to mental health vulnerabilities. Some accusers are still in contact with their psychotherapist who will try to bring them back to her/his track.

Another minority are people – mostly fathers – who are in the process of separation or divorce from their partner and try to reclaim the visitation rights to their children. Then suddenly and mostly out of the blue the abuse allegations rear their ugly head. As these cases do not appear to involve false memory, the only help we can provide is information about attorneys who have experience with such conflicts.

Most people approaching FMD for help have found us through our homepage on the internet. An increasing number are word-of-mouth recommendations from attorneys, social agencies or psychotherapists.

How do we ensure that the person seeking advice is not in fact a perpetrator?

One of our principles is never ever to counsel persons who are in fact guilty of sexual abuse. The crucial question is: How can we find out? One thing is for sure: unless we find substantial evidence that no abuse happened, we can only achieve high probability but never certainty. Firstly, the person must be willing to have an extensive interview with us. The interview is held preferably as a personal meeting. But conditions of large distance (and presently corona restrictions) often limit the interview to telephone contact. The interview extends to all aspects of the case, so far as known to the person. If more persons can contribute to the case (partners, siblings ...) these are interviewed separately. And we are very sensitive to contradictive information about facts.

Such interviews already give a personal impression. What is the central concern? Is it to demonstrate innocence? Or is it the worry about the children living in a false reality and the grief of

lost contact? Innocent people speak openly and do not defend themselves or insist on their interpretation of the case. Instead, they have a lot of questions, including what, if anything, they might have contributed to these problems. How personally affected is the person? It would need a very good actor to falsely pretend real concern, despair, or grief.

Another point of the interview is to find out what is known about the development of the memories. Did memories or suspicion of NRSA exist from youth up or did they pop up later, perhaps under some known influence? If we can get information about the development of memories, we apply the criteria of forensic psychologists.

Nevertheless, there are cases where we cannot persuade ourselves sufficiently to rate them as cases of false memory. In such cases we do not continue the counselling. Instead, we provide information about attorneys who are experienced in this field.

Possible counselling outcomes?

If we decide to rate the case as one of false memory, what can we do for the person?

Initially, we can provide an array of information.

Many people approaching us have no idea what happened to them. We can tell them what science informs us about cases like theirs. We tell them where on the internet or in printed books they can read more. In many cases, it helps them a lot to understand what might have happened.

Depending on the details of the case we develop plans regarding how to proceed. What can they do to get more information? Writing to their children? Trying to make contact with the psychotherapist? How to inform or not to inform the rest of the family? Enter psychotherapy themselves in order to grapple with the case? Consult with a specialised attorney?

FMD organises regular workshops and seminars for those affected by false memories. Such one- or two-day events give the opportunity of personal contact to persons sharing the same fate and to speak to a limited and understanding audience. Mostly we include an expert's presentation on a related subject. People find these events particularly helpful. Presently, such events suffer from corona restrictions and are limited to online events.

We find that the task of counselling victims of false memory may sometimes seem to be a work of Sisyphus, but the results we are able to achieve in many cases make it worth doing.

MEMBERS' FORUM

Dealing with Accusations of Historic Child Sexual Abuse

September 2021

On 27 March 2021 my wife, then aged 71, suffered a 3-hour verbal onslaught by our two adult children, in which they accused me of abusing them throughout their childhoods and sexually abusing them when they were infants and young children. My wife, their Mum, was alleged to be present on occasions but supposedly did nothing to stop me.

To this day they have not discussed these allegations with me or offered any opportunity for us to defend ourselves. We have exchanged a few emails and have been explicitly denied any contact with our grandchildren. My wife and I were totally shocked and distraught by these accusations. Our eldest son has insisted that I should undergo psychotherapy to help me recover these memories and acknowledge my crimes. Our family is destroyed - probably forever. Our children are convinced that their memories are accurate. We are totally convinced that our memories also are accurate and that these untrue allegations never happened.

I've learned that we are not alone and that thousands of other parents in the UK have been victims of the same false-memory type accusations and consequent family destruction.

In consequence, to pinpoint the issue of false/distorted memory, I've undertaken research into relevant aspects of brain development, memory science, psychology practices and our legal system to derive a rational, scientifically credible explanation.

Having been hit by a bombshell just a few months ago, I've learned a lot about memory and how easily we can remember, in great detail, events that never actually happened. These memories can occur spontaneously at any time, but memories of childhood sexual abuse that are only recalled during adulthood most often follow a series of psychotherapy sessions. In most cases a parent and/or close relative is accused of the alleged abuse.

Whilst the majority of false-memory type allega-

tions induced through bad therapy do not enter the criminal justice system, hundreds have endured the worst legal nightmares and some have been imprisoned for crimes they did not commit. For every one of these parents there remains a devastated family even long after their wrongful accusations and miscarriages of justice have been acknowledged. Our older son's path over the last 20 years or so has followed the same general path followed by so many other accusers and their families. And our younger son seems to be following in his footsteps.

We lived on a housing estate, had health visitors and both sons went to play groups and infant school - yet no alerts from carers, teachers, neighbours. We are totally innocent of these false claims. I can hear our son cry "Repression and dissociation!", after all he is a Clinical Psychologist and self-proclaimed expert in memory. Yet, despite my best efforts, I haven't found a scrap of evidence of adult abusers forgetting their abuses - just as there seems to be no evidence for memory repression in children! Yet there is plenty of evidence, for example from children who have actually been abused, that traumatic and highly emotional memories are difficult, even impossible, to forget even when these victims want to forget them.

My research has taught me why our son's memory of "*inappropriate touching when I was around 3 months old and continued until I was 4 years old, in which time there was apparently an escalation in the severity of the abuse until it covered the full spectrum of abusive acts.*" cannot be real and how his false memories have been created and nurtured over the last 20 years. Yet, as with all false memories, they are as true to him as any real memories of his childhood.

I've learned that it's not our sons' fault. They are as much victims as we are. It's difficult to see how 20 years of a mixed bag of psychotherapies administered by numerous "psychotherapists" could lead to anything but a trail of false memories. Psychotherapists still don't seem to understand that their therapies are as capable of doing harm as they are of doing good despite the horrors of our recent past (I refer to the thousands of victims who received Electroconvulsive therapies (ECT) and lobotomies in the UK over a period of more than 40 years despite the patently obvious risks). Many of the psychotherapies of today are touted as 'evidence-based' even though they are supported by very little evidence of their efficacy and practically no evidence of their safety, even though some of these therapies are "approved" by

NICE and many are administered by the NHS. Contrast this with the stringent requirement for safety testing of pharmaceuticals and the MHRA's Yellow Card early warning scheme to report issues relating to the safety of medicines and medical devices!

We have no idea how this will pan out and feel the same sense of helplessness felt by the many parents and relatives who have gone through or are going through similar catastrophes. Our sons really believe their memories are true and their accusations valid. We still love them and empathise with them. But that empathy doesn't fix a family torn apart: a family built over 40 years and destroyed in a day.

But my wife and I know that our sons' accusations are not true and can only hope that, over time, they will come to realise the truth. How we deal with the fallout of any such revelation will be another, hopefully happier, chapter in our lives.

A note about BFMS Subscriptions and Donations

To all our supporters we thank you for continuing to show your commitment to the work of the Society. Our stalwarts will know that our Subscriptions have been collected annually on 1st January. Banking has become more challenging for us now that for the first time our bank has introduced charges including taking 40p for every cheque we bank. In addition, as we are probably all experiencing, finding over the counter service is more and more difficult as our local branches are closed.

We are very grateful to many of our members for taking up our invitation to spread their subscriptions and donations over the year by paying us by monthly or annual Standing Order. This is a great help to us and we hope all of you will choose this option, if you can, when renewal notices reach you.

We can, of course, still take payment by card.

If you have any questions about making your subscription or donations please email me so that we can sort out the most suitable option for you.

Madeline Greenhalgh
madeline@bfms.org.uk

LEGAL FORUM

Voluntary Interviews - what you should know

'Your client has to attend the Voluntary Interview, Miss Anderson' the officer told me, without a hint of irony.

'Actually he doesn't, hence it's called 'voluntary' 'I replied, 'and until you can provide me with the appropriate disclosure to demonstrate any evidence that he may have committed an offence worthy of investigation, he will not be 'volunteering' to be interviewed.

I should say that in that particular case, I am still waiting for such evidence. I doubt it will come. A voluntary interview (VI) is a very useful process for suspects, solicitors, and indeed the Police and in appropriate cases, it is regularly offered by police to avoid the need for an arrest. Nobody wants to be arrested at home or elsewhere if this can be avoided. It's a humiliating experience and can be very traumatic for those who live with the suspect. Who would want their parents or young children to witness them being carted off by 5 police officers, in handcuffs, in the early hours of the morning?

In a large proportion of cases however, such an arrest is the only option. This is because It gives the police the power to search premises, seize items for examination, including mobile phones, and it also gives them the power to take DNA and fingerprints from the suspect, even without charge. It allows police to release the suspect on bail, often with inconvenient or onerous conditions. Most significantly, it allows police to lock up a suspect in a police cell, for an initial 24-hour period, subject to extensions. Lying on a hard bed in a small cell, under a scratchy blanket, is an experience to be avoided if at all possible.

An arrest takes up an enormous amount of police time and money, not to mention cell space, and so if an officer can opt for the 'voluntary' route, they will. Cases where this process applies includes a broad spectrum of offences and as someone who specialises in historic offences of a sexual nature, the vast majority of my clients attend 'voluntary interviews'.

A common mistake is to believe that because you are invited to attend 'voluntarily', it is just a chat, and nothing to really worry about. Wrong!

Although none of the powers described above apply to VI's, the interview will be conducted under police caution, just like an arrest interview, and what you say or do not say in either interview can have a major impact on any future proceedings, if charged. It is therefore extremely important that you arrange legal representation. The police can arrange for the duty solicitor to attend but you can also identify and instruct a solicitor of your choice to attend with you, whether you take advantage of the free duty solicitor scheme or opt for private instruction.

Another huge advantage of Voluntary Interviews is our ability to obtain details of the allegation prior to the arranged interview date so we and the client can discuss this and prepare. A lot of the groundwork can therefore be done in advance, which is very reassuring for the client. The VI is arranged for a date and time convenient to all parties. The police are generally very flexible in this respect.

One thing that is very important in the VI process is that the relevant lawyer properly establishes the reason for the VI request by obtaining as full disclosure as possible from the police. Given this is their day job, some Police do forget the enormity of being the subject of a formal police interview, voluntarily or otherwise. This is why it is critical to engage an experienced solicitor who should establish the evidential basis for the request to attend.

If there is none, then I would not advise a client to attend at all. In some cases, challenging the officer about the reasons for the request can result in the reconsideration of its necessity. This month alone, I have persuaded 2 police officers to rescind their request that my clients attend VI's. In both cases it was conceded, after my written representations, that there was no evidential foundation to support the request. Great relief for my clients and enormous job satisfaction for me.

One caveat here is that a refusal to attend a VI could lead to the police making an arrest instead. It would be very unwise to refuse to attend a VI without proper advice from an experienced lawyer.

In the majority of cases, where police invite a suspect to a Voluntary Interview, there will be sufficient evidence to make an arrest if that invitation is declined. In some however, this is simply not the case. This is for your legal advisor to establish prior to any attendance. Proactive representation is very important in all criminal cases, if the best outcome is to be achieved.

Always take advice before agreeing to attend a VI. It is a convenient and much better option than an arrest interview, but it has exactly the same weight as the latter in any court proceedings. Ensure you are informed and prepared.

Claire Anderson , Senior Solicitor
ABV Solicitors

Law in Action

On Tuesday 2nd November 2021, BBC Radio 4 Law in Action broadcast a programme on false memory. The broadcast was repeated on Thursday 4th of November, and it featured as pick of the week on 6th of November. Here is the blurb: *Joshua Rozenberg examines the phenomenon of false memories and the impact they can have on courtroom testimony. Can our recollections ever be trusted fully? And, if not, how profound are the implications for the criminal justice system?*

The first interviewee was Dr Julia Shaw, a member of the BFMS Scientific and Professional Advisory Board. Julia spoke about the fallibility of memory and how leading or suggestive interview practices can result in false memories. Julia also talked about her own work in the laboratory in Canada where students were persuaded that they had participated in an event which did not happen – including committing a serious crime. “In the real world”, she opined, “the problem is that once those memories are there, it is really difficult to undo the damage”. This was endorsed by ‘Helen’ who is known to the BFMS and movingly related the devastating impact of false-memory type allegations on her family.

In the courtroom “where witnesses can be completely honest, entirely confident, but completely wrong”, the consequences can be catastrophic. Retired barrister, Anthony Heaton-Armstrong, argued cogently that members of the legal profession ought to have greater cognizance regarding the inherent dangers of false memory and memory confabulation. Armstrong and his colleagues recently published a multi-authored study on confabulation in Issue 10 of the Criminal Law Review (2021).

Without the benefit of expert testimony, juries are forced to choose between believing the accuser or believing the accused. Personally, I am not sure if I can stomach another Prosecutors opening and closing speech. In fact, I could script those scientifically flawed speeches.

A copy of the Podcast can be downloaded from the BFMS website (bfms.org.uk).
Dr Kevin Felstead

Overseas False Memory Societies

AUSTRALIA

Australian False Memory Association Inc., AFMA,
PO Box 74, Campbelltown, South Australia 5074,
Australia Tel: 00 61 300 88 88 77 ·
Email: false.memory@bigpond.com; www.afma.asn.au

FRANCE

Psychothérapies, faux souvenirs induits et fausse
mémoire
www.psyfmfrance.fr

GERMANY

False Memory Deutschland e.V.
C/O Hans Delfs, Heimstraßeloa 82131 Stockdorf,
Germany Tel: 002983 972277
<https://false-memory.de/>
Email: kontakt@false-memory.de
www.false-memory.de

NEW ZEALAND

Archive of Casualties of False Sexual Allegations
(COSA)
New Zealand
<http://menz.org.nz/cosa/>

NORDIC COUNTRIES

Åke Möller – Fax: 00 46 431 21096 ·
Email: jim351d@tninet.se

USA

Archive of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation
www.fmsfonline.org

The Scientific and Professional Advisory Board provides BFMS with guidance and advice concerning future scientific, legal and professional enquiry into all aspects of false accusations of abuse. Whilst the members of the board support the purposes of BFMS as set out in its brochure, the views expressed in this newsletter might not necessarily be held by some or all of the board members. Equally, BFMS may not always agree with the views expressed by members of the board.

SCIENTIFIC & PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY BOARD: **Professor R J Audley** – Professor Emeritus of Psychology, University College London. **Dr J Boakes** – Consultant Psychiatrist (retired). **Dr H Cameron** – Consultant Child Psychiatrist (Retired). **Professor M Conway** – Centre for Memory and Law, City University, London. **Dr M. Fleming** – Psychologist, Glasgow Caledonia University. **Professor C C French** – Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Goldsmiths, University of London. **Dr F Gabbert** – Professor of Psychology and Director of Goldsmiths' Forensic Psychology, Goldsmiths, University of London. **Dr M Kenny** – Lecturer in Forensic Psychology, Sheffield Hallam University. **Dr C Laney** – Associate Professor of Psychology, The College of Idaho. **Mrs K Mair** – Consultant Clinical Psychologist (Retired). **Professor G Mazzoni** - Professor Emeritus in Psychology and Neuroscience, University La Sapienza, Rome. **Mr D Morgan** – Forensic and Educational Psychologist, London. **Dr P L N Naish (Chair)** – Professor of Psychology, Open University. **Professor Dr H Otgaar** – Criminal and Experimental Legal Psychology Lab, Maastricht University. **Professor G Oxburgh** – Professor of Police Science and Head of Policing Studies, Northumbria University. **Dr L Patihis** – Senior Lecturer in Psychology, University of Portsmouth. **Dr Julia Shaw** – Psychological Scientist, University College London. **Dr B Tully** – Community Psychologist, Humanist Celebrant and Pastoral Support Worker, London. **Dr K Wade** – Reader in Psychology, University of Warwick. **Professor D B Wright** – Professor of Psychology, Florida International University.

BFMS · PO Box 172, Stockport SK6 9BP
Tel: 0161 285 2583
Email: bfms@bfms.org.uk
Website: www.bfms.org.uk
Registered Charity Number: 1040683

Management and Administration

Madeline Greenhalgh, *Director*
Dr Kevin Felstead, *Director of Communications*
Carolyn Dutch, *Administrator*