



Dear Reader

2022 has been busy to date. In February I gave an interview for the *I* newspaper, entitled *Will Prince Andrew call a false-memory expert? Professor who testified for Ghislaine Maxwell thinks he might*. For the avoidance of doubt, the prince (who has been stripped of all royal duties) recently agreed a multi-million pounds settlement with his accuser Virginia Giuffre.

In my wide-ranging interview with journalist Poppy Wood, I was asked to discuss the subject of false memory. Perhaps inevitably, the Harvey Weinstein and Ghislaine Maxwell cases arose. From the article:

‘None of my usual alarm bells were ringing when I heard those (female) witnesses speak – whether it’s the Weinstein or Maxwell case, says Dr Felstead. A lot of these women seem very credible to me. ... but the difference with these cases is the people have always remembered it (the abuse) – not necessarily every detail – but it hasn’t suddenly sprung up following counselling. In my opinion, you’re looking at two different datasets.’

A link to the full article can be found on the home page of the BFMS website ([www.bfms.org.uk](http://www.bfms.org.uk)).

The following month, I gave my first face-to-face talk since the COVID restrictions were imposed. I happily stepped on a train from Manchester to Euston before heading to Portsmouth University, to deliver a presentation for a course entitled, *Trauma, Memory, and Law*. Following the pandemic, it did feel like business as usual. Dr Lawrence Patihis, a BFMS Advisory Board member and senior lecturer in psychology at Portsmouth University, has recently written a book (Amazon KDP, 2022) entitled *Trauma, Memory, and Law – enhanced lectures on repressed memories, memory distortions, and trauma*. The book is wide-ranging exploring the pseudoscience underpinning the myth of repressed memories, and trauma and dissociation theory. A full review of the book will follow in our next newsletter. Staying with the theme of false versus genuine

abuse allegations, *False Memories and Contested Sexual Abuse*, was the title of a talk I gave in May for Cath Brew’s blog – *Drawn to a Deeper Story*. From the blog:

‘False memory isn’t a subject you hear much about. If you haven’t heard about it, consider yourself lucky. It’s impact on the individuals involved and their families can be catastrophic. Equally, the cost to the justice system is damaging. In this episode, Kevin Felstead shares the complexities of working with false memory cases in the UK legal system. He clarifies the difference between false memory and real cases of sexual abuse. In talking about the implications of false memory, Kevin introduces listeners to the work of the British False Memory Society.’

Elsewhere in this newsletter, there is a special research feature on the impact of false memory allegations – a big thank you to all BFMS members who participated in the two studies. In the Member’s Forum, there are two short articles about coping strategies for the falsely accused. As widespread industrial action is threatened across many organisational cultures in the UK, the legal section contains a short piece about the recent barrister’s strike.

Dr Kevin Felstead

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# IN THE NEWS

## The surge in cases of gender dysphoria have much in common with Satanic abuse panics and recovered memory therapy

David Aaronovitch writing in the *Times* newspaper (22 June 2022) perceptively drew a parallel between the latest fad – the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) and Satanic abuse panics and recovered memory theory. Both are fads and both were developed and embraced by the Tavistock and Portman Foundation NHS Trust who have clinics in Bristol, London, and Leeds. The clinics have been heavily criticised for providing puberty blockers for young children and teenagers who were confused about their gender. Whilst the Trust maintains that this treatment is effective, critics remain concerned about the potential long-term damage to recipients of the programme. So concerned are the government that Sajid Javid, the health secretary, insisted that that a robust evaluation of the 9,000 recipients of the treatment must be undertaken with immediate effect.

In a wide-ranging essay published in the BFMS Newsletter (September 2020 – Catastrophic outcomes of blind affirmation, lack of scrutiny and regulation and confirmation bias in modern-day counselling and psychotherapy), Lisa Blakemore Brown pointed out the inherent dangers of gender dysphoria diagnosed by dogmatic therapists peddling their latest theory. Many people – disproportionately female – later come to bitterly regret undergoing life-changing surgery to change their biological gender through extreme medical procedures which are irreversible. Lisa quotes psychiatrist Paul McHugh (p. 12) writing about the US, where one in ten people now claim to have been born into the wrong sex:

‘These young people now regret the irreversible medical transition and consider that the psychotherapists did not explore other reasons for their expressed anxieties and difficulties, but simply believed, validated and affirmed what they were told’.

In her essay about Trans Reality: ‘I didn’t know there was another side’, Carol Tavris, writing for the *Skeptics’ Magazine* (<http://www.skeptic.com/>) noted astutely:

‘American culture is prone to psychological and medical contagions. An idea catches fire, seeming to be a plausible and important explanation of a familiar problem – depression, anxiety, eating disorders, sexual dissatisfaction. The idea outruns evidence. Experts emerge to treat people suffering from the problem, exploiting the most credulous. They open clinics. They give prestigious lectures and write books. They make fortunes. They blur the diverse possible origins of a person’s difficulties, attributing them all to the latest explanation’.

The same dogmatic approach applies to the myth of Satanic ritual abuse which has never really gone away. Valerie Sinason, formerly of London’s Tavistock Clinic and later of the Clinic for Dissociative Studies, is still peddling pseudoscience about the widespread existence of organised cults in the UK. The lessons of the past have clearly not been learned. Why? In a nutshell, because we are talking about an unscientific belief system which displays cognitive bias and cognitive dissonance. The early SRA panics in Nottingham (1987), Rochdale (1990), the Orkney Islands (1991) emanated from therapists and social workers who obsessed about the existence of SRA. Even though the Department of Health commissioned a study (1994) by anthropologist Professor Jean La Fontaine who investigated 84 cases and concluded that the allegations were baseless, belief in SRA persists. This is evidenced by the Carol Felstead scandal (see Justice for Carol – 2014) and the widely reported case of P and Q (BFMS newsletter – September 2015).

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## BFMS AGM 2022

The 28<sup>th</sup> AGM and Annual Conference was held on Friday 1 April using Zoom. Members had voted overwhelmingly to opt for a virtual event due to concerns about the Pandemic. The advantages of a virtual event are that no travelling is required, and members can participate from the confines of their own living room. Significantly, costs are kept to a minimum. On the other hand, personal and social interaction is obviously more difficult and the friendly camaraderie and personal conversations evident in a face-to-face environment is much harder to achieve.

Kevin welcomed participants to the event before commencement of the AGM. The chair of the Trustees presented his report. Here are the highlights:

Our staffing levels remain unchanged. Madeline continues in her role as Director of the charity, working on a part time basis. Carolyn, also working part time, continues to provide administrative support for the BFMS, and Dr Kevin Felstead, our Director of Communications, continues to staff the helpline, deal with media and legal enquiries, and the ongoing development of the BFMS website working four-and-a-half days each week.

I have said it previously in my address to the AGM and I will repeat myself again today: we are here to serve our membership – you remain the lifeblood of the organisation.

We were busy throughout 2021 with two criminal trials in October and November. Sadly, one of our members was convicted and sentenced to a lengthy custodial sentence. It is an undeniable fact that miscarriages of justice are a common occurrence in the UK, especially in those cases where historic sex allegations are alleged to have taken place 10, 20, 30, 40, or 50 years ago. That said, the following month, in the North-East of England, we had a considerable breakthrough when a jury returned unanimous Not Guilty verdicts on each count. That was a tremendous relief to the accused and his family – who are now attempting to construct a meaningful life during the aftermath of the untrue allegations.

Madeline provided an up-date on the charity's financial status. As ever, without a new funding stream, we will struggle to operate going forward. Kevin gave the first presentation covering the history of the BFMS. He reiterated our stance on genuine child abuse which remains abhorrent to the organisation and its members. He discussed the so-named memory wars (Crews, 1995), the Satanic Panics and our caseload which has declined significantly over time. That said, there has been a resurgence in the myth of traumatic repression across western Europe in recent years. Kevin discussed conviction rates explaining that 52 (5%) of members were convicted in the period from 1993 – 1998, increasing to 121 convictions (20%) from 1999 – 2003), declining gradually thereafter. Since 2017, five BFMS members have been convicted (just over 1%); since 2014, over 30 cases have resulted in police no further action (NFA). There were no convictions in the four-year period from 2013 – 2016.

The next speaker was Andrew T. Austin Director of the Association of Integrated Eye Movement Therapy (EMDR). At first glance, because of the Society's experience of therapeutically driven

false memories, Andrew may not have appeared to be a natural fit for the annual conference. However, he is fully acquainted with the inherent dangers of false memory. In 2021 Kevin gave a Zoom talk to his association. Andrew explained how his approach to treat common symptoms such as anxiety and depression is largely successful. He said that therapeutic methodologies appear as fads. He used the example of therapists claiming to treat cancer to support his perspective. These people are frauds and charlatans and there is no substance to their exotic claims. Nor is there any evidence that the treatment is remotely effective. Andrew made the point that therapy is an industry where practitioners don't require formal qualifications. He was scathing about a lack of robust regulation and accountability.

Following a short break, the final morning speaker was Dr Peter Naish, chair of the BFMS Scientific and Professional Advisory Board, our 2022 keynote speaker. Dr Naish gave an overview of the role and function of the brain, emphasizing the role of neurons – around 10 trillion of them. The human brain is extremely complex. He spoke about evolutionary science and development of the brain. Different regions of the brain may be affected in genuine cases of abuse; a similar pattern may be discerned in people who have been falsely accused. The hippocampus is important because of its association with memory. Peter highlighted normal and abnormal symmetry in brain function. Different parts of the brain may be activated during hypnosis. False memories do not constitute a genuine memory because they are not accurate representations of real events.

Following a break for Lunch, Brian Hudson, Falsely Accused Carers and Teachers (FACT) gave an overview of their history and caseload. FACT was formed in 1999 following a moral panic about alleged widespread sexual abuse in North-West care homes and schools. The first FACT annual conference was held the following year in St Helens. False allegations constitute a menace to society, ruining lives and wasting precious resources. They do not protect real victims of abuse and frequently result in miscarriages of justice resulting in reputational loss, wrongful imprisonment, and loss of family life. FACT hold two annual conferences each year, and a church service in London every March. BFMS members are welcome to attend.

Claire Anderson (ABV Solicitors) was the next speaker. Her talk was entitled: Historic Sex Allegations – prevention and preservation. Claire stressed that from the outset it is important to

seek specialist legal advice. These cases are extremely complex and require diligent preparation and intervention by the defence legal team. It is important to get involved in your own case, to prepare a timeline of events and to assist your solicitor by providing all relevant information. The BFMS can assist newly accused persons to try to stay focused in what is an extremely harrowing situation. An experienced solicitor will provide advice prior, and during police interview, she/he will also engage with police and the CPS throughout the whole process. A note on voluntary interviews (as opposed to an arrest interview): these must be taken seriously because in law a voluntary interview carries the same legal weight as an interview following house arrest. Last but certainly not least, the final speaker was 'Paul' whose talk was entitled A Father's Story. Paul opened his talk by thanking the BFMS for its help and support after his son was falsely accused of sexual allegations. Paul described his initial shock and bewilderment and the devastating impact the allegations had on family members. His accused son suffered from depression after he was accused, and the loving, normal, family dynamic was beginning to implode. Paul's bewilderment then turned to anger; intuitively he knew that he needed to be proactive. He contacted an excellent and experienced solicitor who guided him through the options. Paul in essence became a one-man private detective and, making relevant enquiries, he ascertained that the accuser had a history of making false allegations. He liaised with the investigating police officer who listened and acted upon Paul's findings. Police eventually declined to proceed (no further action) and the family slowly healed together. His son has a new job and a new partner.

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## **SPECIAL FEATURE ON RESEARCH**

### **Making memories: A qualitative exploration of the impact of false allegations of satanic ritual abuse**

Megan Kenny PhD (Sheffield Hallam University) and Kevin Felstead PhD (BFMS)

## **Abstract**

A wealth of literature exists in relation to the implantation of false memories but little attention has been paid to the direct lived experience of those who make and retract false allegations and those who are falsely accused. The aim of the present study was to explore the impact of false allegations of satanic ritual abuse. Data was gathered from semi-structured interviews with six participants, including three retractors, one partner of a retractor, one partner of a falsely accused individual and one falsely accused individual. This sample size was utilised as it provides a small/moderate sample that is large enough to provide a cogent composition of themes across the dataset but is compact enough to retain focus on the individual participant experiences. Data was analysed using thematic analysis through an interpretivist paradigm. Two key themes are discussed;

- (i) the impact of false allegations and
- (ii) coping techniques employed by retractors and falsely accused individuals.

Results highlight the long term, life changing impact of false memories as well as the coping strategies employed by accuser and accused. Whilst the authors make no claim to generalisability, these findings raise significant implications for practice, including greater governance for private therapeutic practice.

Keywords: false memories; satanic ritual abuse; thematic analysis

A copy of the paper is available on request via the BFMS.

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### **Life experiences and mental health of people who have been wrongly convicted**

Dr Rebecca K. Helm (Senior Lecturer in Law and Clinical Solicitor at the University of Exeter and Director of the Exeter Evidence-based Justice Lab) is conducting research into the life experiences and mental health of people who have been wrongly convicted:

Greetings,

We are researchers at the University of Exeter conducting an online survey of the life experiences and mental health of people who have been wrongfully convicted. We hope that the results of this survey can be used to better support those who have been wrongly convicted.

We're hoping that as many people as possible who have been wrongly convicted will complete the survey. We are particularly interested in experiences of people who have been acquitted by the courts but are also interested in hearing from people who have not yet been acquitted.

Everyone who completes the final 20-minute online survey will receive a £25 Amazon gift card via e-mail.

We are currently asking anyone who might be interested in taking part to confirm their eligibility and provide their e-mail address at the following link:

[https://exeterssis.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_319VvC2tbbGOG](https://exeterssis.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_319VvC2tbbGOG).

If you are interested in taking part, please click on the link for more information and to tell us you're interested. All information that you provide will remain strictly anonymous and confidential.

If you know of other exonerees who may be interested, please feel free to share this e-mail with them. If you have any questions, please e-mail us at [b.growns@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:b.growns@exeter.ac.uk).

Thank you in advance for your consideration, and we wish you all the best.

Rebecca and Beth.

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## Glasgow Caledonian University Study

### Summary Report

#### Background

False allegations of sexual offences are a common and highly concerning issue with serious psychological and social repercussions for the accused (De Zutter et al., 2018), however little research has been conducted on the topic. Of the research that has been conducted, the focus tends

to be on the prevalence of false allegations or the impact of those accused in a professional manner, or those never convicted of the allegation.

As part of their MSc Forensic Psychology programmes, two students from Glasgow Caledonian University, Eva and Bruce, conducted a study examining the psychological and emotional impact of being falsely accused of sexual abuse, as well as the impact on familial and interpersonal relationships, and the coping strategies employed by the accused to combat distress.

#### Method

Ten participants (8 males, 2 females) were recruited, all of whom were over the age of 18 and members of the BFMS. Seven participants were the accused and three were family members of the accused. False accusations were made by a family member for seven participants, one participant was accused by his ex-partner and one participant by an acquaintance. Three participants were convicted and seven were charged but did not proceed to trial. Participants were interviewed by Eva or Bruce between March and April, 2020 and asked a number of questions relating to their experiences following the false accusations. The interviews were transcribed and then coded to identify themes across all participants.

#### Results

Overall, the study found that the impacts of being falsely accused of sexual abuse were severe, long-lasting, and extended to the accused's loved ones. Six common themes across participants were identified that related to the impact of the false accusations and coping strategies employed. These were: feelings of loss, long-term impacts, emotional disconnection from family and friends, personal support, implicit coping mechanisms, and explicit coping mechanisms following the allegations. Each of these themes will be described and analysed in turn.

#### Psychological Impact

##### *Feelings of Loss*

The biggest theme to emerge from the interviews was the various feelings of loss described by participants. Many lost their sense of ownership and autonomy over their circumstances. They felt helpless, frightened, and were paralysed with a lack of knowing what to do. Most were aware of the severe consequences that the allegations could have, which they had no control over. Some experienced a loss of normality in their day-to-day lives while the vast majority of participants ex-

pressed their total loss of faith in the criminal justice system, which they believed to be corrupt and biased. This made them feel marginalised and disenfranchised. A few participants also lost their faith in conventional therapeutic avenues, such as counselling. Many became a lot more guarded and vigilant of others' intentions.

### ***Long-Term Impacts***

The second main theme identified was the significant long-term, and often permanent, effects that the allegations had on participants. For some, their whole outlook on life and behaviour patterns had been altered. They described being "broken", downtrodden, and overwhelmed, preferring to withdraw from the world rather than to engage. The experience dominated their thinking and permeated every aspect of their lives.

*The need to help others in a similar situation and ensure that something positive came out of the negative situation of being falsely accused was also common amongst participants.*

Most experienced persistent changes to their mental health, with some reporting clear symptoms of depression, including weariness, numbness, and a lack of energy. Hyper-alertness and anxiety were also common. This included general paranoia as well as fear of falling victim to the system or to false allegations again. A number of participants described feelings of grief, having lost loved ones to prison or to death. Grief was also mentioned figuratively because the accused had changed and were no longer the same person. Many felt the impacts of stigma, perceiving that the world was against them and that they were somehow 'tainted' or 'dirty'. This resulted in damage to self-esteem and feelings of self-loathing as they internalised what people said about them.

In many cases, the effects extended to participants' physical wellbeing, with some suffering serious conditions such as cancer or strokes. Other major long-term impacts included financial difficulties, brought on in some cases by the participant losing their job or struggling to find work due to police checks or employers no longer wishing to associate with them, and in others by

the sheer cost of fighting against the state to clear their name. Other logistical problems included travel restrictions due to bail conditions, having a criminal record, and the social and literal label of being a "sex offender". This added to their feelings of being ostracised and loss of freedom.

### **Impact on Familial and Interpersonal Relationships**

Two contrasting themes emerged in relation to the impact on the participants' familial and interpersonal relationship; these were feeling either disconnected or supported from their inner and social circle.

#### ***Emotional Disconnection***

Most participants reported feeling disconnected from family or friends at some point whilst dealing with the false accusations because they did not share the allegations filed against them. Some reported contemplating whether to confide in their close friends with the allegations. Even though they shared the allegations against them with friends at a later stage as they needed a source of emotional support, they kept them private in the first place due to fear of rejection and abandonment. This period of secrecy resulted in a temporary emotional distance from their social circle, whereby feelings of seclusion and loneliness were inevitable.

#### ***Emotional Support***

Despite the initial secrecy and resistance to disclose the allegations, half of the participants eventually chose to share the accusations with friends and family. An unexpected common response was that this disclosure did not have any negative impact on the accused's familial or interpersonal relationships. In particular, participants reported that if anything, family members and friends felt closer. For some, these allegations helped participants recognise who their true and supportive friends were.

Others described the experience of being falsely accused actually allowed them to form new friendships with people who shared the same experiences. Befriending people in the same situation allowed participants to feel a sense of validation, empowerment and belonging, which can be moral boosting and provide the accused with the inner strength to face the impact of the allegations. It was believed that these friendships were strong and would not diminish with time because participants found a real connection with others in the same situation.

## **Coping Strategies**

### ***Implicit Coping Strategies***

Participants employed a number of different implicit strategies to reduce stress, which refer to the subconscious ways in which they coped with the allegations. Half of the participants reported that the negative series of events that followed after the false accusations helped them reconsider what was truly important in life. This led to them expressing gratitude and appreciation of the supportive people in their inner and social circle. A number of participants also acknowledged that their situation could be worse and other people have suffered more greatly than themselves, assisting them to cope with the allegations in a functional manner. That is, they made a conscious effort to avoid feeling negative about their circumstances.

The need to help others in a similar situation and ensure that something positive came out of the negative situation of being falsely accused was also common amongst participants. Some participants reported raising awareness of the prevalence and severity of false accusations and making their voices and those of their fellow sufferers heard. Other participants provided guidance and support to others who had been accused through social media, forums, conferences or volunteered for charitable organisations that had initially sought help regarding their own false accusation. However, while the strategy of helping others was described as being beneficial and rewarding by increasing feelings of social usefulness, it was also appeared to be detrimental to their mental health. Participants described their roles of providing help to others as being a constant reminder of their own personal painful experiences. Maladaptive coping strategies, such as distraction and avoidance, were also reported by a small number of participants. Some coped with the allegations by distracting themselves and keeping busy with work, or tirelessly working on their case. Facebook also constituted a form of distraction for two sufferers by diverting their attention from their own problems which they did not feel ready coping with.

### **Explicit Coping Strategies**

As well as implicit coping strategies, participants described a number of explicit coping strategies that they employed after being falsely accused. These refer to strategies the participants used after they recognised that the allegations had an impact on their mental health and decided to actively do something to change it. Physical activities were reported in half of the accounts as

coping strategies. This included meditation, yoga, golf, walking and getting out in nature. These activities not only served as a stress release but also gave participants space for self-reflection. This helped them become aware of their internal feelings, let go of past painful experiences and proceed with inner strength to face the impact of the allegations.

One unexpected coping strategy which was reported by half of the participants was the process of being methodical. For some, this took the form of creating a timeline of the past events leading up to the false allegations which provided the participants with an understanding of what made their accusers proceed with the false allegations. Others kept a diary in order to record events taking place to ensure they do not forget any important details that could assist them with their case during police interviews, while one participant described doing her own investigation on her case on a daily basis to give structure to her everyday life. Considering the overwhelming events that follow after the allegations such as police interviews or judicial processes, chaotic thoughts and feelings of losing control are inevitable. For these participants, giving structure to their day and being organised in a way that they deemed most helpful meant regaining some form of control over their lives.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study show the severe psychological, emotional and (for some) social impact on the falsely accused. It found that the impacts were long-lasting and extended to the accused's loved ones. For participants whose allegations emerged many years ago, the profound effects on their mental health, relationships, and economic stability remained to this day.

The findings suggest that those who have been falsely accused may benefit from being able to share their stories on a larger, more mainstream scale. Being given the platform to be listened to can be hugely therapeutic to victims of psychological trauma. It reinstates their feelings of control over their situation, helps them to make their own decisions, and fosters trust between them and the person listening to their story.

The findings also imply a number of ways in which the falsely accused may be better supported by institutions and wider society. Given the substantial mental health impact, those falsely accused should be readily given access to counselling services. Falsely accused should be recognised as 'victims' in their own right, and should

be offered similar kinds of support to other types of victims.

It is expected that the research findings will be beneficial for professionals conducting interventions with this population, as they provide an insight into how stress is dealt with by the wrongly accused. The findings are also insightful for support groups and organisations supporting victims of wrongful allegations as well as sufferers who are currently coping with false allegations.

### Future Research

It is recommended that future studies could investigate whether coping strategies of the falsely accused change over time. Following the allegations, the emotional and practical needs of the accused might change with time which can have implications for therapists or organisations and the kind of support they are providing to this group. Future studies could also expand on the current findings by employing a larger sample size, or could focus on particular types of false allegations, such as those which arise through 'false memory syndrome'. False memory cases often involve allegations of child abuse and/or power dynamics, and relate to events from long ago, and so may involve more intense and complex emotions as well as increased stigma. Finally, future studies could explore the psychological and emotional impacts of being falsely convicted and imprisoned and compare these with the effects of being accused but not found guilty. It is hoped that research will continue to shed light on the harmful consequences to the victims of false allegations of sexual abuse and that it will not prevent victims of sexual offences from continuing to come forward.

*Bruce and Eva, along with their supervisor Dr Mairi Fleming, would like to express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to all of the BFMS members who participated in the study outlined above, as well as to Dr Kevin Felstead for all of his help and support throughout the project.*

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**Get your copy now!**

**Just £5 from BFMS**

Abused by Therapy: How Searching for Childhood Trauma Can Damage Adult Lives  
by Katharine Mair (2013, Matador).

## MEMBERS' FORUM

*The following extract was originally published in a BFMS newsletter in August 1999. The writer adopts a long-term perspective for dealing with false memory-type allegations. The article may divide opinion, and the coping mechanism described below certainly wouldn't apply (as the author acknowledges) to the falsely accused currently embroiled in legal proceedings.*

### Victim is as Victim Does

It takes more than a false memory to produce a case of false memory syndrome (a term no longer in general use – editor). FMS involves not just recovering supposed memories but making them the central feature in one's life, the basis of a new identity. The rewards can be substantial: attention and sympathy; status as a survivor (very fashionable in some circles); the companionship of fellow-sufferers; above all, the comfort of knowing that whatever one's past or present problems, somebody else was to blame.

We have seen our accusing children reject anyone who doubts their allegations, rush to join support groups, pore over the self-help literature – in short, turn themselves into full-blown, single-minded victims of child abuse. We, for our part, regard them as victims of irresponsible therapy, often allied to a dubious ideology. From either point of view, it's a self-reinforcing process that offers no way out. On the contrary, it usually intensifies and prolongs their suffering.

But what about us, the accused parents? Are we not also victims? My concern is that we face exactly the same temptations as our children. When the blow falls, we feel shock, horror, perhaps bewilderment. We want to make sense of what has happened to us, so we read books about false memory, we go to BFMS meetings and we talk to others in the same situation.

Then what? Does being an accused parent become a full-time occupation? Do we even take the offensive, launching lawsuits or battling with therapists and health authorities? Of course, we all develop our ways of coping. But what if the effect is to intensify and prolong our suffering?

Some accused parents are forced into action – I think of those threatened with court proceedings. For most of us, though, there is a choice. We are not bound to mirror the behaviour of our children.

We do not need to identify with our status as accused or to insist on victimhood. After all, there are other roles for us to perform and more productive uses for our energy. We may be husbands, wives, grandparents. We may be active in our local community or a voluntary organisation. We may have a sport we enjoy playing or a hobby that gives us satisfaction. We may even have to work for a living!

Isn't there a tightrope to be walked? A balance to be struck between equipping ourselves to contend with false accusations and allowing them to dominate our lives? We cannot forget what has taken place, nor do we wish to do so. But by putting it into some kind of perspective we can diminish its power over us. Obsession is never a healthy state. How sad it would be to create an accused parent syndrome and fall victim to that too!

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## Coping with False Memory Allegations

Morning Kevin,

I have been thinking about what you said last time we spoke briefly about other BFMS members who are not sleeping because they are struggling to cope with false memory allegations, and I wanted to help.

Below is a list of the things I do to keep me positive.

Get up each day – don't lie in bed!

Go out each day, take a walk – even for 10 minutes – and try to add to it.

When out walking – breathe in through your nose and hold for a count of four and then breathe out through the mouth to a count of six.

If like me you have been forced to give up work (**Editor's note: the writer is currently listed for trial; she lost her professional job as a direct result of false-memory type allegations – which remain fiercely contested by the accused and her legal team**), make the home your work; have set days to change the bedding, clean the bathrooms etc – a clean home helps make you feel positive and in control.

If you like to read – read all you can about the subject of false memory. Knowledge is powerful; power equates to strength.

Surround yourself with the people that sup-

port you – if they ask you out for a meal, do accept; if they invite you to go away overnight, do go because it does help to 'push it aside.'

Be kind to each other; if you have a partner, do take time to communicate and listen when they need to talk. He/she may have different 'fears' from you and you just might be able to help each other.

My husband has found the strength to go back to work whilst this has been ongoing for over two years and counting. He has also taken up assembling jigsaw puzzles; he says this clears his mind and keeps him positive. He glues them as a permanent reminder and plans to frame them in the future, if – and when – we do get our lives back. So, watch out Kevin some may make their way to you!

This has given me the strength to do all these things I have mentioned. It might not seem a lot but, put them together and it gives you focus and that's what gets you through each day to be able to fight the next day!

I hope that this resonates with just one person. Trust me, positivity does work and it does spread, but you need to be firm with yourself.

I always think that if we do manage to get through this and we are able to get on with our lives (however that may look), we want to be physically and emotionally ready for it and not waste another precious day.

Even if you try even one of these things it just might help you to sleep a bit better.

A BFMS Member

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## OBITUARIES

### March 2022 Katharine Mair

It is with great sadness that we inform members that Katharine Mair passed away recently following the shock diagnoses of a serious illness at the beginning of the year.

Katharine joined the BFMS Scientific and Professional Advisory Board in 1996 as a consultant forensic psychologist and was an active member frequently writing to the press about inaccurate coverage of putative DID and false memory. She challenged universities similarly. Following her

brave attendance at a weekend conference on working with complex trauma she wrote a chapter for *Miscarriages of Memory* published by the BFMS in 2010, entitled: *Creating nightmares: a short history of belief in ritual belief*:

*No traces of these crimes have ever been found, and none of the (putative – editor) perpetrators have ever been brought to justice. We know of these crimes only through the testimony of alleged victims. Their testimony is nearly always produced after they have been in therapy, and this therapy will usually have followed a diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder (DID), a new name for what used to be called multiple personality disorder (MPD). People suffering from this disorder will spontaneously adopt different personalities, called alters, and speak as though they were completely different people. In therapy the client will talk, through the alters, to a therapist who understands this (supposed – editor) condition. ‘This is long term psychotherapy; it takes years, probably a minimum of five years ... It often takes two or more years to establish enough trust for the client to be able to disclose and important information (Miller, 2008).’*

I feel it is a futile exercise to comment further on this preposterous psychobabble.

Katharine went on to write her book, *Abused by Therapy: How Searching for Childhood Trauma Can Damage Adult Lives* (2013, Matador). ‘*Abused by Therapy* debunks an enduring myth dating back to Freud, that certain conditions are diagnostic of early sexual abuse. These include dissociative disorders, such as multiple personality disorder. Therapists who hold this view use recovered memory therapy to search for forgotten childhood trauma and do succeed in evoking new memories, which often involve alleged sexual abuse by members of the client’s family. This book shows that these memories may be entirely false yet they may shatter the lives of all concerned, as loving parents are now seen as abusers who must be rejected. It documents the damage caused by this so-called ‘therapy’, which is not based on any scientific principles. What’s more there is no evidence that it benefits the unfortunate clients.’ (Copies of *Abused by Therapy* are available from the BFMS at a reduced rate of £5.00).

Katharine continued to generously volunteer her time on the Friday helpline up until shortly before her death. She will be sorely missed by her husband and children and by all of her friends and colleagues at the BFMS.

## **Martin Conway 1952-2022 – A Tribute**

Professor Martin Conway was a distinguished member of the BFFMS Scientific and Professional Advisory Board; Martin passed away on 30 March 2022. We spoke on two occasions shortly before his death, after I had contacted him regarding an old case for which he wrote an expert report. The following tribute was posted on the web site at City University (editor).

Colleagues and BPS members will be saddened to learn that Professor Martin Anthony Conway passed away on Wednesday 30 March 2022. He died peacefully in Newcastle in the company of his wife Judith and his children.

Martin Conway is best known for his work on autobiographical memory, for which he received the British Psychological Society (BPS) **Lifetime Achievement Award** in 2018. He also played a major role in shaping British Psychology more broadly, with periods as the chair of the Association of Heads of Psychology Departments, and as chair of the BPS Research Board. Martin also served on the panel assessing UK research in psychology, neuroscience, and psychiatry as part of the Research Evaluation Framework. Martin was a keen poet and had long term collaborations in art which was justly reflected in his fellowship of the Royal College of Arts. He featured regularly in *The Psychologist*, and the one-on-one article with him published in 2012 led him to being contacted by Judith, an old friend from his undergraduate days, a story which Martin told with delight at their wedding in 2016.

His outstanding scientific work is exemplified by two standout articles: *Memory and the Self*, published in 2005, and the construction of autobiographical memories in the self memory system in 2000. In these seminal pieces Martin set out the dynamic processes and mechanisms by which specific memories are shaped in an organisational hierarchy which has at its core, the self. Two decades later, his insights continue to frame research in autobiographical memory with a richness and clarity of insight unmatched in what is now an immense field of research. His view, expressed with characteristic panache in an article published in *The Psychologist* in 2006 was that “... memories are not some sort of mental wallpaper that merely provide a backdrop for the self. They are alive, free, sometimes alien, occasionally dangerous mental representations, that can overwhelm as easily as they fulfil.”

<https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/martin-conway-1952-2022>

# LEGAL

## Barristers on Strike

Barristers are planning a series of coordinated strikes to the end of July. The impact may prove to be disastrous for falsely accused persons awaiting trial and, in equal measure, for victims of crime. On Monday 27 June criminal barristers, many of them wearing wig and gowns went on strike in a longstanding dispute about pay and funding cuts to the criminal justice budget. According to the Criminal Bar Association (CBA), over 80% of its members voted for strike action. Striking barristers are refusing to accept new briefs or handovers (returns) from colleagues in cases which have overrun. According to data from HM Courts and Tribunals Service, there is a backlog of 58,271 criminal cases and over 1,000 daily cases are likely to be impacted due to a series of planned strike action. The situation is no better in Magistrates' Courts where there are 357,076 outstanding cases.

The criminal justice system has been on its knees for decades; this trend was exacerbated by the government's austerity cuts in 2009 which resulted in a massive cut to the criminal justice budget. These latest developments followed a number of nationwide IT meltdowns resulting in major disruption to the criminal justice system. For example, in January 2019 thousands of judges and criminal lawyers were unable to access e-mail resulting in trials being delayed and adjourned. This was compounded by the fact that during the last decade, the number of criminal solicitors and barristers practicing criminal law has declined on a scale unprecedented in modern legal history. Jo Sidhu QC and Kirsty Brimelow QC, chair and vice chair of the CBA issued the following joint statement:

“Without immediate action to halt the exodus of criminal barristers from our ranks, the record backlog that has crippled our courts will continue to inflict misery upon victims and defendants alike, and the public will be betrayed. Right now, we are engulfed in a crisis of epic proportions that had never afflicted this country previously, which has brought almost to a standstill the system that we all love.”

Barristers gathered outside courts all over the country including the Royal Courts of Justice, Bristol, Leeds, and Manchester Crown Courts. 300 barristers walked out of the Old Bailey. The

number of barristers protesting outside the Bailey ironically resulted in a large presence of City of London Police whose police vans blockaded the roads.

The CBA insisted that a minimum 25% pay increase is needed to stop more barristers turning their backs on criminal law in droves. 300 criminal barristers left the profession in 2021. The average salary of a junior barrister during the first three years of practice is £12,000. Much of the preparation for criminal trials – reading and analysing the Schedule of Unused Material, for example, – is unpaid. Failure to do so diligently can have a catastrophic impact on the wrongly accused.

In an astonishing – and unprecedented – intervention, Lord Burnett of Maldon, the lord chief justice, sent an e-mail to crown court judges stipulating trials should remain listed even after counsel inform the court of their intention to strike. The chief's intervention appears to be based on a convoluted perspective because quite how this could possibly work in practice remains something of a mystery. Lord Burnett suggested that striking barristers ought to be referred for disciplinary hearings. His remarks provoked anger at the Criminal Bar. In an open letter to the Times newspaper head by Caroline Goodwin QC and Chris Henley QC, over 70 leading criminal barristers put their names to the letter.

From the letter:

Sir, the lord chief justice has issued a warning shot to the Criminal Bar by raising the prospect of severe disciplinary sanctions against any barrister who strikes ('Top Judge wants striking barristers to face misconduct charges' June 23). Although he says in his latest memo sent to all judges that “the judiciary is not a party to the dispute ...” he has instructed them to report the name of any barrister who takes action.

The guidance is being read by many of us who prosecute and defend as an attempt to intimidate us. We are concerned that the independent office of the lord chief justice risks been seen as a partisan enforcer for a government whose degrading of the justice system has been draining of the very professionals on which it relies: barristers to prosecute, defend and to provide judges.

Perhaps, and as legal commentator and practising defence barrister Matthew Scott has suggested on *Barrister's Blog*, it might have been prudent for the lord chief justice to opt for “no comment.”

## 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

### NEW ZEALAND

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

### FRANCE

Psychothérapies, faux souvenirs induits et fausse  
mémoire  
[www.psyfmfrance.fr](http://www.psyfmfrance.fr)

### USA

Archive of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation  
[www.fmsfonline.org](http://www.fmsfonline.org)

### GERMANY

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C/O Hans Delfs, Heimstraße 10a 82131 Stockdorf,  
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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.

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