

ORGANISATIONAL MODULES 2024

**MUCKAMORE ABBEY HOSPITAL INQUIRY
WITNESS STATEMENT**

**Statement of Tracy Hawthorne
Date: 18th September 2024**

I, Tracy Hawthorne, make the following statement for the purpose of the Muckamore Abbey Hospital (MAH) Inquiry.

The statement is made on behalf of the Police Service of Northern Ireland in response to a request for evidence by the Inquiry Panel.

This is my second statement to the Inquiry. In my first statement I made reference to, and included 5 exhibits.

In a letter dated 22 February 2024, MAHI wrote


“The Inquiry is aware that PSNI provided a report(s) to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) recommending prosecution of individual MAH staff members for offences arising from PSNI’s investigation into incidents which took place in Ennis ward in and around November 2012. Please ensure that such report(s) are exhibited to this statement.”

I now attach a copy of the “Outline of Case” for the Ennis prosecution file that was submitted to the PPS. (Exhibit 6)

If there are any further documents or evidence required by the Inquiry, PSNI will provide same.

Declaration of Truth

The contents of this witness statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I have produced all the documents which I have access to and which I believe are necessary to address the matters on which the Inquiry Panel has requested me to give evidence.

Signed: 
Date: 18/09/24

List of Exhibits (Tracy Hawthorne)

Exhibit 6: Ennis Outline of Case

Outline of case

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Printed: 02/02/2015 16:18 by PW2299

Case file: C13011914: CC2012110800900; H159 / H197

Author: #PW2299 HAWTHORNE, T.

Report time: 13/03/2013 14:29

Entered by: #PW2299 HAWTHORNE, T.

Entered time: 13/03/2013 14:29

Remarks: OUTLINE OF CASE

BACKGROUND

Muckamore Abbey Hospital is a Belfast Health Care Trust facility which provides care for Learning Disabled Adults from Trust areas throughout the province. Muckamore Abbey Hospital is currently in the process of resettling long-term patients, placing them in accommodation in the community. One such facility receiving some of the hospital's patients is Bohill House Care Home, Coleraine. As part of the Resettlement Programme, an arrangement was made between Bohill House Care Home and Muckamore Abbey Hospital whereby Care Staff from Bohill House would attend for full shifts at Muckamore Abbey Hospital and shadow staff caring for those patients due to be resettled in Bohill Care Home. This was designed to enable Bohill House staff familiarise themselves with these patients and gain an understanding of their particular needs and how these are catered for.

Ennis Ward, Muckamore Abbey Hospital cares for adult females with varying degrees of vulnerability, some of whom display behaviour which challenges. The ward is split into two areas, separating more capable patients from those requiring more support and care. Patients from this ward were also being prepared for resettlement to Bohill House Care Home, including P39, P43, P40, and P41.

P39 is a 42 year old female who has been in Muckamore Abbey Hospital since the age of 3 years. She has a diagnosis of severe learning disability, microcephaly and challenging behaviour. She can, at times be disruptive, pulling down curtains and being impatient at meal times. She would remove her clothes, pull her hair and seek attention from staff. P39 has limited verbal communication. P39 is to be supervised at ALL TIMES by staff while she is outside the ward, as she has no concept of road safety.

P41 is a 30 year old female who is diagnosed as having a Severe Learning Disability, Epilepsy and Bi-polar Affective Disorder as well as other physical health problems. P41 also has an unsteady gait and would require the use of a wheelchair outside of the ward.

P40 is a 54 year old female who was admitted to Muckamore Abbey Hospital at the age of 10. P40 can be witty and chatty with familiar people, otherwise she can be quite shy. She can be difficult on occasions and very vocal. P40 can mobilise independently and can become frightened and disorientated in new surroundings. P40 will seek out staff that she is familiar with.

P43 is a 41 year old female, who has been in Muckamore Abbey Hospital since 1989. She has a severe learning disability and her communication is limited and difficult. She has complex epilepsy and can have 'drop attacks' which are unpredictable and can at times result in injury. P43 has a history of hyperactive and agitated behaviour. She tends to seek to be on her own. She likes to sit outside, and this is facilitated by staff, providing her with protective clothing in wet weather. She requires very significant nursing input. She can be self injurious at times.

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P22 [REDACTED] P22 is a 61 year old female who has resided in Muckamore since the age of 18. She has a history of PICA and as a result is required to be on Level 3 observations during waking hours (within eyesight at all times). She refuses to leave the ward.

ALLEGATIONS

On Thursday the 8th of November 2012 police received a referral from the Social Work Department in Muckamore Abbey Hospital in accordance with the Joint Protocol for Investigation of Alleged and Suspected Cases of Abuse of Vulnerable Adults. The reported that they had received a report from a Care Assistant that she had observed incidents of abuse of several patients within Ennis Ward, Muckamore Abbey Hospital. These were alleged to have occurred on Wednesday the 7th of November 2012 when Care Worker B2 [REDACTED] from Bohill House Care Home was performing duties on Ennis Ward. A police FMO and Photographer was tasked to attend and examine the relevant patients remaining on the ward.

Witness - B2 [REDACTED] - Care Assistant

On Friday the 9th of November 2012 police attended Bohill House Care Home and met with Care Assistant B2 [REDACTED]

She alleged that she had arrived on the ward at 11am on Wednesday the 7th of November 2012 and went to find the charge nurse, H198 [REDACTED] who brought her to the dayroom after about 10 minutes. She stated that she was in the dayroom along with another staff member who had been brought in from another ward and did not know the patients. She could not recall this staff member's name, but stated that she was pleasant (no allegations made against this staff member).

She stated that she had not been given an induction or made aware of the patients and their needs/behaviour management plans. She had not been provided with a key or a personal alarm. On her way into the dayroom she met H197 [REDACTED], who said she was going to the toilet and would be back soon. B2 [REDACTED] stated that she was left with the patients for approximately 20 minutes and patients became agitated and she herself was assaulted and had no means of obtaining assistance.

P39 [REDACTED] had got faeces on her hand and B2 [REDACTED] had no means of cleaning this or gaining access to the bathroom and had to sit holding P39 [REDACTED]'s wrist to prevent her from putting her hand near her mouth. When H197 [REDACTED] returned after approximately 20 minutes, B2 [REDACTED] asked if she could change P39 [REDACTED]. She was given a key. She asked where the pads were kept and was informed they were in a cupboard. P39 [REDACTED] clothes had also been soiled. B2 [REDACTED] did not know where P39 [REDACTED] bedroom was and stood at the door of the bathroom shouting for assistance and asking for help for about 10 minutes before the other care assistant came and fetched clothes for P39 [REDACTED].

B2 [REDACTED] returned to the ward with P39 [REDACTED] and stated that H197 [REDACTED] was being rough with P39 [REDACTED] grabbing the band of her trousers, turning her and pushing her away, pulling her back by the band of her trousers on a few occasions when P39 [REDACTED] stumbled. H197 [REDACTED] told P39 [REDACTED] that if she did not stop stripping, she would not be allowed any lunch. H208 [REDACTED] tried to put P39 [REDACTED]'s clothes back on. H197 [REDACTED] had told her that if she continued doing that, she would do it all day and advised B2 [REDACTED] not to be face on to P39 [REDACTED] and to turn her away by the band of her trousers.

B2 [REDACTED] took time to read care plans in the Nursing Office and on her return, the Nurse in Charge asked B2 [REDACTED] if she minded putting laundry away and getting the patients ready for bed. B2 [REDACTED] was left to supervise in the dayroom while H197 [REDACTED] H159 [REDACTED] and a student nurse were down towards the bathroom area (which cannot be seen from the dayroom). B2 [REDACTED] then heard shouting and walked to the top of the dayroom and saw P40 [REDACTED] running from the direction of the bathroom naked. She hit two patients as she passed them and kicked and thumped patients in the dayroom, while shouting, "I hate H159 [REDACTED] She hit me." There was blood in her mouth across her teeth and the blood started to dribble down her chin. No staff came out after P40 [REDACTED] and B2 [REDACTED] tried to settle her. She asked her if she would

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get dressed for her and she said 'No' and kept repeating that H159 had hit her.

B2 then went down to the bathroom, where H197 and the student nurse were with two patients. She asked if they could help her settle P40. She stated that they both ignored her. She then said P40 was hitting other patients and they said, "Okay we'll come now." The student nurse came down and spoke with P40. H197 then came in with a mitt used for personal hygiene crumpled up in her hand and roughly wiped P40's mouth, as P40 tried pulling her head away and repeating that she hated H159 and that she had hit her.

At approximately 19:00 H159 asked B2 if she wanted to go out for a smoke. As they walked into the dayroom P39 was lying sleeping on the sofa, facing the back of the chair and in the foetal position. There were no other staff in the room. Without speaking to P39, H159 put her two hands into the waistband of P39's trousers and pulled her off the sofa. P39 landed on the floor on her back and was startled awake. Then H159 said to B2 'sort of laughing' "I wouldn't like to be wakened from my sleep." She then walked out, leaving P39 lying on the floor and did not stop to check her.

After getting P39 her supper and ready for bed, B2 returned to the dayroom. H197 was there along with other patients. P41 became agitated and was hitting out at residents and staff. She was 'going' for H197, who protected herself with her forearm. P41 kicked a patient and hit another on the head. P22 had been lying on the sofa and P41 then sat on top of P22's hip, crossing her legs and bouncing up and down. P22 indicated that she was upset. H197 told her to 'stop being a big softie and hit her back.'

H197 then pulled P41 into a standing position and 'shoved, nudge and pushed' P41 towards her chair at the other end of the dayroom. H197 then shoved P41 into her chair, pushing her around the shoulder area and B2 heard an audible 'thud' where P41 head hit the back of the chair. P41 got up immediately and started hitting out again at H197. P41 went to another patient and hit her and that patient kicked P41 kicked her back. H197 remarked that the other patient wouldn't be soft with P41.

B2 did not feel comfortable about approaching any of the staff about her concerns and phoned her team leader on her way back from Muckamore to Coleraine.

Following the allegations made by B2 Belfast Health and Social Care Trust conducted further enquiries with other members of staff from Bohill House Care Home in relation to their experience at Muckamore Abbey Hospital. As a result, staff members came forward with further allegations of abuse.

Witness - B6 - Staff Nurse, Bohill House Care Home

Staff Nurse B6 stated that she had attended Ennis Ward for a 12 hour duty on Monday the 5th of November 2012. During this shift after approximately 8pm P39 approached her. Another patient, whose name she did not know, was walking behind P39 and Staff Nurse B6 observed the 'night nurse' pushing the unnamed patient onto a chair. Roster checks showed that Bank Nurse H197 was on duty at this time and the description provided by Staff Nurse B6 resembled that of H197.

Witnesses - B4 and B3 - Care Assistants, Bohill House Care Home

On Tuesday the 9th of October 2012, Care Assistants B4 and B3 were both on duty in Ennis Ward, with a Bank Nurse, identified by B4 as being named H197 and a Care

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Assistant named H159 Both witnessed allege that P39 was undressing and approaching B4 and B3 to ask them to put her clothes back on. After about 15 minutes H197 got up and approached P39 and grabbed her by the clothes at her chest area. B4 alleges that H197 told P39 "Get the fuck out of my face." B3 alleges she said either, "This is doing my head in." Or, "She's fucking doing my head in." Both witnesses allege that P39 was then pulled across the room and pushed onto a sofa.

P39 then got up and lay on the floor, attempting to remove her trousers. H197 and H159 both approached P39 and fastened her belt tightly. They then lifted her up and taking an arm each, walked P39 to the fire doors on the ward and put P39 outside in the rain, closed the doors and walked away, leaving P39 outside, unable to allow herself back in.

B4 and B3 became aware that patient P43 was outside and it was raining. She was not wearing protective clothing. Both Care Assistants approached H197 and H159 and pointed out that P43 was sitting outside in the rain. The care assistants were then told that this was 'normal', and P43 had protective wear if it got wetter.

Witnesses - relatives of P40 - Brother and Sister-in-Law of P40

On Thursday the 8th of November 2012, relative of P40 was contacted by trust staff, who advised him that his sister had been allegedly assaulted by a staff member and there was an on-going investigation. He had been advised that his sister, P40 had a swollen cheek and blood coming from her mouth, however when checked by the dentist, it was found that this may have been due to an abscess.

relative of P40 and his wife attended Ennis Ward on Friday the 9th of November 2012 and spoke with P40 asking her what had happened and if anyone had hit her. relative of P40 recalled that P40 had said, "H159 hit me." And, "She hit me on the face and I hit her back." relative of P40 alleged that when asked what had happened, P40 had stated, "She hit me, she hit me." And when asked who, she replied, H159 "Relative of P40 could not recall the surname of the person.

Forensic Medical Officer - Dr Hugh Gallagher

Dr Gallagher was tasked by police to attend Ennis Ward and examine P40, P41, P39 and P22. Dr Gallagher noted a number of marks and bruises to all 4 patients. However due to their individual behaviours and the behaviours of their peers, it was not possible to attribute any of these injuries directly to the alleged assaults.

Injured Party - P40

Police liaised with a Hospital Consultant Psychiatrist, SHO, Speech and Language Therapist and ward Sister in relation to the possibility of interviewing the patients named as victims. Of all the patients, P40 was the only one deemed to have sufficient communication skills and understanding to possibly engage in a police interview. An Achieving Best Evidence trained Social Worker and Police Officer met with P40 however she appeared to have no recollection of the incident where her mouth was bleeding and would not engage

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in conversation about this.

SUSPECT INTERVIEWS

H159

On Wednesday the 20th February 2013 **H159** attended Antrim PSNI station on a voluntary basis, accompanied by her solicitor, to be interviewed in relation to the following offences, which allegedly occurred in Ennis Ward, Muckamore Abbey Hospital:

- Common Assault and Ill Treatment of a Patient with a Mental Disorder on 09/10/12 - **P39** - belt fastened tightly, walked to the door and put outside the fire door by both suspects.
- Ill treatment of a patient with a Mental Disorder on 09/10/12 - **P43** left to sit outside without appropriate protective clothing on. (Both suspects)
- Common Assault and Ill Treatment of a Patient with a Mental Disorder on 07/11/12 - **P39** pulled from the sofa and onto the floor.
- Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm and Ill treatment of a Patient with a Mental Disorder on 07/11/12 - **P40** alleged that she had been hit by **H159** and was seen to have blood coming from her mouth.

During the interview **H159** denied all of the allegations, stating that she was very fond of the patients.

H197

On Thursday the 28th of February 2013 **H197** attended Antrim PSNI Station on a voluntary basis, accompanied by her solicitor, to be interviewed in relation to the following offences, which allegedly occurred in Ennis Ward, Muckamore Abbey Hospital:

- Common Assault and Ill Treatment of a Patient with a Mental Disorder on 09/10/12 - **P39** - belt fastened tightly, walked to the door and put outside the fire door.
- Common Assault and Ill Treatment of a Patient with a Mental Disorder on 09/10/12 - **P39** - grabbed by the jumper at the chest and told, "Get the fuck out of my face." And/or either, "This is doing my head in." Or, "She's fucking doing my head in." Then pulled across the room and pushed onto a sofa.
- Ill treatment of a patient with a Mental Disorder on 09/10/12 - **P43** left to sit outside without appropriate protective clothing on. (Both suspects)
- Common Assault and Ill Treatment of a Patient with a Mental Disorder on 05/11/12 - **IP Unknown** - Staff Nurse **B6** witnessed patient

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being pushed onto a chair by the 'night nurse'.

- Common Assault and Ill Treatment of a Patient with a Mental Disorder on 07/11/12 - P40 - blood wiped roughly from her mouth using a personal hygiene mitt.
- Ill Treatment of a Patient with a Mental Disorder on 07/11/12 - P22 - failed to intervene when P22 was being assaulted by fellow patient P41 and encouraged her to hit back.
- Common Assault and Ill Treatment of a Patient with a Mental Disorder on 07/11/12 - P41 - pushed into a chair, causing her to hit her head off the back of the chair.

During the interview H197 denied all of the allegations, stating that staff would not do those things. For some of the offences, she denied that she was the staff member involved, despite the descriptions given matching hers and staff rota confirming she was on duty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This investigation has been conducted as a Joint Protocol Investigation. There have been poor care practices highlighted and incidents of a non-criminal nature identified involving some other staff members, however, through the investigation, the two suspects in this case, H197 and H159 were repeatedly identified as being responsible for incidents of Ill Treatment and rough handling of the patients on the ward. The patients in this ward are some of the most vulnerable in the hospital, as they are not able to verbalise or communicate. Although there was only one witness to several of the incidents, the description of the actions, particularly that of H197 show consistent rough handling and aggression by a staff member who has worked at Muckamore Abbey Hospital for 32 years. The disregard for carrying out these actions in the presence of independent staff raises concern.

In relation to H159 and the allegations made by P40 the allegation cannot be corroborated and the presence of an abscess in her mouth may account for the blood.

In view of the nature of these allegations and the accounts provided by independent witnesses, I feel that it is in the public interest to pursue a prosecution in relation to both suspects and I respectfully recommend Prosecution.