

Arnold was placed with us just a few days before his 16th birthday, on remand for the rape of 2 little girls aged 7 and 9. Arnold had learning difficulties, looked shocked and confused, under nourished, unhealthy and unhygienic. Arnold was also considered to be a high risk to any young child if he was ever left in an unsupervised capacity. As with many of the young people referred to Pear Tree although Arnold presented such a high risk he was a manageable young man willing to please and do as he was told. Our action plan immediately addressed his health needs and we literally fed Arnold as much as we could. He was later to develop successful culinary skills and the whole process of eating healthy food was to become an important regular pleasure for Arnold, and his household developed a regular theme night around cooking from different nations which usually came back to the good old curry, of which he was not only infamous for being able to stand particularly spicy curries but able to cook a good one himself.

Initially Arnold was placed with another young man from a neighbouring local authority. It soon became apparent that these two young people were speaking about knowing the same people back home. It became clear that the chances of knowing the same people from opposite ends of the same city were somewhat remote, but if you then consider the dimension that both these young people were referred to us for sexually abusive behaviour, if they had been involved in similar circles then the chances of probability were significantly increased. We notified authorities that consideration should be given to the fact that these young men could have been involved in the same pedophile ring. Over a three month period both of these two young men continued to give this impression until on one occasion it became necessary to speak to both of them separately regarding their recent behaviour and also concerns that were being raised. In these discussions both young men disclosed the same story identifying three people back home of sexual abuse. The matter was reported, these people were arrested and were to suffer serious consequences themselves. A further two people were then implicated resulting in 5 peoples lives being completely disrupted.

It was later to become apparent when the evidence was tested by a very skilled child protection police officer that these young men had manipulated this story to their own ends. One young man wanted to get one of these people into trouble because he had reprimanded him for kicking a football through his garage window. They were both familiar with sexual abuse, they were both familiar with dealing with allegations of sexual abuse and they simply used this process in the same way that other children get their friends into trouble over pinching sweets. However as a direct result of this investigation Arnold was to disclose that his father had sexually abused him from 4 years of age. His father was to admit this and received an 8-year prison sentence. This evidence was used to support Arnold in his pending court case, which was to result in him being convicted of the rape of the two girls and in him being sectioned under the Mental Health Act under mental impairment. He was to remain at Pear Tree for the foreseeable future. Arnold was 16 when he was admitted, we were to celebrate his 18th Birthday, thinking his time with us must surely be limited, none of us would have expected to be celebrating his 21st birthday 3 years later. Arnold was eventually 23 years old when he left Pear Tree and this must have been the most settled period of time in his life. He came to visit us about 18months after he had been discharged and what he had to tell us was as important for us learn by as much as it is for himself.

If Arnold is believed, and we have no reason to think not, at the point of him visiting he had not reoffended despite being admitted to us initially as a high risk of reoffending. This in itself must be a significant achievement for all concerned. He had his own flat, that he had managed to maintain to a good standard, he was working full time as a painter and decorator, the credit for this must go to our painting and decorating instructor, whom he

had spent a number of years with basically serving an old fashioned apprenticeship scheme. This started off with simple menial tasks and easy projects, developing to whole houses. By the time Arnold was to leave us he was to be accomplished in many trades to do with the building industry. It was always felt that these two would go together because even an unemployed painter and decorator can have a tidy home. He also had a relationship with a girl that he had met at church and despite explaining the difficulties that he was encompassing as a result of his long victimization, his girlfriend wanted to settle down into a steady relationship. He was able to recognize the importance of this progressing at his own pace. The church had become an important part of his social network. He attended many groups as a result of going to church and had visited a number of places up and down the country. Going to church was a regular thing that he had done during his time at Pear Tree. We had specifically, for this reason, encouraged him to attend churches of a number of different denominations and therefore when he left us, he felt comfortable in approaching the local church of his choice. At the same time he demonstrated all of the necessary social skills to be accepted by the church group, as one would expect, but also other groups. The contrast between the original perceived prognosis for Arnold and the actual outcome many years later could not be greater, and whilst we must always give credit to the young people who make such progress, the help Arnold was to receive was specific, structured and quantifiable. These elements are very much present in his current life many years on.