

Internal Audit Finance and Customer Services

Audit Investigation into the Alleged Removal of Files and Impairment of Computer Records Belonging to the Former Researcher at the Risky Business Office in the International Centre, Rotherham.

Internal Audit – Finance and Customer Services

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June 2002**

Audit Investigation into the Alleged Removal of Files and Impairment of Computer Records Belonging to the Former Researcher at the Risky Business Office in the International Centre, Rotherham

Executive Summary

1. About this audit

- 1.1 On 15 October 2014, the Home Affairs Select Committee published a report entitled '*Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming: follow-up: Sixth Report of Session 2014–15*'. In the report it stated a Home Office funded researcher had told the Committee:

“that an unknown individual subsequently gained access to her office and removed all of the data relating to the Home Office work. There were no signs of a forced entry and the action involved moving through key-coded and locked security doors”.

- 1.2 It was subsequently confirmed that the 'Home Office funded researcher' was Individual F.
- 1.3 The incident, which was (originally) alleged to have happened over the weekend of 13/14 April 2002, had been covered in the national press in August 2014, where it was referred to as a “raid”. Individual F has told Internal Audit she did not use this word. Individual F’s testimony to the Home Affairs Select Committee referred to the removal of files and impairment of computer records.
- 1.4 Additionally, it is also important to note that although it is claimed files were taken, this did not lead to the loss of the information since Individual F kept a second copy of the records. Any objective of removing the files would, therefore, not have been achieved; the data remained available to Risky Business and its partners in taking their work forward, although any person responsible for removing any files may not have known there was a duplicate copy kept.
- 1.5 When details of the allegations were published, senior management and Members at Rotherham Council stated they were unaware of any allegations of a “raid”. Former Councillor Paul Lakin (the former Leader of the Council) and Councillor Hoddinott (the former Deputy Leader) committed to an investigation into the allegations and the former Chief Executive (Martin Kimber) commissioned the investigation. It was to be carried out by Internal Audit, and was to be reviewed externally by an independent investigation bureau. Insight Investigations ^{*1} were commissioned by the Council to carry out the independent review.
- 1.6 The audit was a forensic audit. We have examined all documents available to us held by the Council, Risky Business files currently held by the National Crime Agency, and any documentation submitted to us by anyone spoken to as part of the investigation.

¹ See www.investigate.uk Insight Investigations is a private investigation service with over 30 years of experience of private, commercial and corporate investigations,

- 1.7 The report style is detailed and comprehensive in that it itemises discussions with interviewees and shows the detailed consideration and follow-up of points made by the interviewees to the auditor.
- 1.8 The audit was limited by a lack of powers available to Internal Audit to require individuals to co-operate with the investigation. Internal Audit does not have the same authority as the Police to compel witnesses to participate in its investigations. In particular, Individual G, a Council employee who worked on the Risky Business Project and may have known about the alleged incident, was asked to meet with or provide information to Internal Audit. She declined to do so.

2. Who was Who?

- 2.1 The Risky Business Project was a project first established in 1997 to look into Child Sexual Exploitation. Based in Youth Services in Rotherham Council, Risky Business provided outreach work to girls and young women who would not naturally approach services for help. In 2001, Risky Business worked in partnership with the charity CROP (Campaign for the Removal of Pimping) on Home Office funded research to support the victims of Child Sexual Exploitation and collect intelligence about perpetrators to secure convictions. CROP is now called Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE).
- 2.2 The following people have been interviewed in person or by phone. They had key roles relating to Risky Business or CROP at the time of the alleged removal of files and impairment of computer records and were, therefore, important to this investigation:
 - Individual A
 - Individual F, Researcher, (funded by the Home Office)
 - Individual D
 - Individual C
 - Individual E
 - Individual B
 - Individual J
 - Individual K
 - Individual L
 - Individual M, who was Individual F's Research Supervisor
 - Individual N; who is a qualified Employment Lawyer, who acted as Individual F's legal representative in a grievance she made against the Council
 - The former Head of Human Resources, who received the original grievance letter
 - Individual I, who dealt with the grievance in 2002.
- 2.3 We have made enquiries of the Police to assist with our investigation.

3. 15 April 2002 / 18 April 2002

- 3.1 At the start of this investigation it was alleged by Individual F and Individual A that they, Individual G and Individual E found Individual F's research files had been removed from a locked cabinet in the Risky Business Office and that records kept on a computer belonging to Risky Business had been impaired.
- 3.2 Individual F and Individual A said they each had a conversation with Individual B, where Individual B stated there had been visitors to the building over the weekend preceding the incident (i.e. Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th April 2002). It was originally deduced by Individual A that the discovery of the missing files and impaired computer files must have been on Monday 15 April 2002. This was the testimony Individual A gave to the Home Affairs Select Committee. In her testimony to the Home Affairs Select Committee, Individual F stated "... I went to [the Risky Business Office] where I was based, as normal on the following Monday morning which I believe was 18 April 2002.
- 3.3 Internal Audit has retrieved copies of documentation from Risky Business' files currently held by the National Crime Agency (NCA), which show it was unlikely any discovery was made on Monday 15 April 2002. In particular, it seems very clear from Individual E's engagement sheet and her own records that she was not in the office on Monday 15 April 2002.
- 3.4 Following a review of this new information, which Internal Audit has provided to them, Individual A stated she now believes the incident happened overnight on 17/18 April 2002, and Individual F confirmed she believed the incident was discovered Thursday 18 April 2002. There is some evidence consistent with this variation:
- Individual A's diary shows she was out of the office on Tuesday 16 April and Wednesday 17 April, which she states is probably why she felt the incident had occurred over a weekend.
 - A scheduled Key Players' Group meeting, which Individual F and Individual A stated was cancelled on the day of the discovery, and a team meeting, which Individual F and Individual A stated had taken place on the day of the discovery, were shown in Individual A's diary on 18 April 2002.
 - Individual E's engagement sheet shows she was in the building on 18 April 2002, albeit not in the Risky Business Office. She was not in the building on 15 April 2002.
- 3.5 Individual F and Individual A now accept the conversations they recall having with Individual B must have been about another occasion, and not about any activity occurring around the building immediately prior to any removal of the files. Individual B denies ever having had any conversation with Individual F or Individual A about any incident involving the removal of files.

4. Summary of Findings and Conclusions

- 4.1 There is a considerable amount of circumstantial evidence to support an assertion that an incident occurred involving the removal of files and / or

impairment of computer records belonging to the former researcher. The circumstantial evidence includes:

- Most crucially, a grievance letter dated 28 June 2002 from Individual F to the Council (**extract copied in Appendix 1**) which included the statement “... *Data belonging to me had been taken from the filing cabinets... I formally complained about this to the Project Co-ordinators and my line manager [Individual D]*”. The letter was given to us by Individual F. We were unable to find a copy of the letter in the Council’s records or anyone now in the Council who was aware of the letter. The Council would not have kept any grievance records beyond 6 years after any grievance and, in any event, in this instance the grievance was withdrawn and so there would have been no need to keep the letter at all.
- Individual N, Individual F’s legal representative, has stated that while he couldn’t specifically recall being told about the removal of files, he is sure he must have been advised of this because of the reference to it in the grievance letter, which he helped to draft. This is because a change in legislation being implemented at around the time of the alleged incident (the Employment Act 2002) meant that it was not possible to introduce new issues at any employment tribunal that had not already been covered during an internal grievance process, and Individual N is sure he would have advised Individual F to include everything in her grievance that she might later want to include at an employment tribunal.
- A reference made to “missing files” in a handwritten note made by Individual F around the time of the alleged incident, although the note was not dated, or signed by other parties attending the meeting or discussion.
- A record of a discussion of the partners of the Coalition for the Removal of Pimping (CROP) on 3 May 2002, which stated “*Individual F discussed some of the harassment she had endured from Rotherham MBC. Data had been removed from her files, and minutes have been fabricated ...*”
- A significant number of respected organisations and individuals have said to us they believe that Individual F’s files were removed, albeit based upon a combination of them being told by Individual F and the Council’s subsequent isolation of Individual F, rather than any direct witnessing of any incident. As well as Individual F’s legal representative, these include Individual J, Individual M and local members of the CROP.
- Individual E, has said that whilst no-one had ever raised or discussed the alleged incident directly with her, she does recall a time, sometime after the incident, when Individual F made mention in the office about the removal of her files.

4.2 There is, therefore, good evidence that a significant number of people were told at the time about the removal of files and/or impairment of computer records. Our report has found some inaccuracies in the details given by Individual F and Individual A to the Home Affairs Select Committee. In our view, these inaccuracies do not lessen Individual F and Individual A’s claims that files were

removed and computer records impaired. In fact the information that has surfaced has, in our view, slightly supports their assertions.

- 4.3 Conversely, there are also a broad range of factors countering any claim that documents were removed and/or computer records impaired, including:
- There was no physical evidence of an incident taking place; it is possible of course that the removal of files by anyone with appropriate access would not have resulted in any physical evidence of any intrusion
 - There was no report of any incident or missing files to the Police. Individual F states that this is because she was told not to report the incident by Individual C, but Individual C denies having had any conversation with Individual F about any incident
 - We have found no unequivocal evidence to show that any Rotherham Council managers leading the Risky Business project were told about any incident
 - None of the Council Officers who were employed at the time of the audit investigation has corroborated any of the events contained in any of the Home Affairs Select Committee's published evidence. The Officers denied any knowledge of the alleged incident
 - Individual B, denies any knowledge of any incident and of any conversations he is claimed to have had with Individual F and Individual A about the alleged incident
 - We have found no reference within any Council records that we have reviewed, including Council records we have seen that are currently held by the Police or National Crime Agency, of any removal of files and/or any impairment of computer records.
- 4.4 To sum up, two people (Individual F and Individual A) have stated they found files missing and computer files impaired. Initially, they felt the discovery was made on Monday 15 April 2002 (see 3.2) and subsequently, after it was showed it was unlikely any incident would have been found on this date, they stated the discovery was made on Thursday 18 April 2002. A number of creditable individuals and organisations have confirmed they were told about an incident at the time and there is some contemporaneous documentary evidence to confirm they were told. There is good evidence that an incident was reported by Individual F. In particular, Individual F's grievance letter is a persuasive piece of evidence.
- 4.5 Individual F and Individual A claimed they told Individual C and Individual D about the incident. Individual F and Individual A also claimed Individual B observed and commented to them about activity around the office prior to the discovery being made, although they now accept any comments alleged to have been made by Individual B probably do not relate to this alleged incident (see 3.5). Individual B himself strongly denies having had any conversations about any incident or having any knowledge of any incident. Individual C strongly denies having had any conversations about any incident or having any knowledge of any incident, and Individual D states that she does not recollect any conversations about an alleged "raid". On this, the situation effectively amounts to 'one person's word against another's'.

- 4.6 We have been unable to find any unequivocal evidence to show files were removed and / or computer records impaired. Unsurprisingly, we have also been unable to obtain an agreed single version of events from interviewees.
- 4.7 We have met and spoken with Individual A and Individual F on a number of occasions and have found them to be very credible interviewees. Equally, Individual C has been interviewed on three occasions and Individual D twice, and they have been similarly credible in putting forward their recollections of the events. This has not made the job of reaching a conclusion any easier.
- 4.8 However, on the basis of our investigation and taking into account the circumstantial evidence available, our conclusion is that on the balance of probability it is likely files were removed from the Risky Business Office and computer records impaired.**
- 4.9 We have no information about who might have been the culprit(s), if files were removed and/or computer records impaired. We have found no evidence that would suggest any Council Officers referred to in this report were involved in the alleged incident. The work of Risky Business was gaining profile in 2002 and with what is known now about the exploitation of Children, there might well have been strong motivation for individuals to prevent the information held in Risky Business files from being reported to statutory agencies.
- 4.10 Individual F did not still have a copy of her original report to the Home Office when she was interviewed by the Home Affairs Select Committee in 2014, and it appears none of the statutory agencies could locate the report. However, on 22 October 2015 Individual A provided a copy to Internal Audit of what was claimed to be part of the report. Individual A told us she had only recently been given this document herself. She also told us the document had recently also been given to the NCA. It will be for the NCA to investigate the document, but it does include the identity of significant persons and, if this was part of the report issued at the time, it could have provided a motivation to remove records relating to Risky Business work. See also 8.15.1.
- 4.11 Individual F's grievance letter was originally sent to the former Head of Human Resources who left the Council in 2008. The former Head of Human Resources and the former HR Officer who handled the grievance case, Individual I, have told us the Council would be unlikely to follow-up the allegations if, as was the case, the grievance did not proceed after Individual F left the Council's employment. The former Head of Human Resources and Individual I both stated independently this would have been the Council's normal approach in such circumstances. By leaving Individual F's claims unaddressed, the Council missed an opportunity to confirm at the time whether any removal of documents and/or impairment of computer files had occurred or not. In view of the significance of the matter, the Council's procedures should have led the Council to look at the matter outside of the grievance. Not least, there should have been recognition of the potential loss of data, reportable under the Data Protection Act.

5. Way Forward

- 5.1 As indicated in para 1.8 we have not been able to speak with everyone we would have wanted to and therefore our knowledge is likely to be incomplete. If any more information comes to light, Internal Audit will consider re-opening its investigation.
- 5.2 Prior to our investigation, no-one had formally referred any alleged removal (theft) of information to the Police or the NCA for consideration. Both the Police and NCA have responded positively to our enquiries and we have sent a copy of our report to both organisations. The NCA has confirmed the allegations would be a matter for the local Police service and South Yorkshire Police have now registered the incident.
- 5.3 The Council failed to look into the claims of removed files in 2002 because the grievance which referred to the removal of the files was withdrawn. **The Council should amend its processes to allow for serious issues referred to in grievance cases to be assessed, even where the grievance is subsequently withdrawn through mutual agreement.**

6. External Opinion by Insight Investigations

- 6.1 Insight Investigations were commissioned by Rotherham Council to conduct a critical and independent review of Internal Audit's work. Insight Investigations reviewed Internal Audit's report following its work, examined Internal Audit's working papers and questioned Internal Audit about its work. Insight Investigations have confirmed that:
 - Internal Audit has carried out all reasonable tests available to it in relation to this matter and its work completed on these tests was comprehensive, and that
 - The conclusions reached by Internal Audit are accurate and reasonable, based on the work completed.
- 6.2 The full opinion of Insight Investigations follows.



Please reply to our Head Office

Our Ref: TS/NS/42548

24th December 2015

STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL
TO BE OPENED BY ADDRESSEE ONLY

██████████
Finance & Corporate Services
Main Street
Rotherham
S60 1AE

Dear ██████████

Review of Internal Audit Work – Alleged Removal of Files and Impairment of Computer Records at the Risky Business Premises, Rotherham, in 2002 (contract reference TTL577183)

I am writing to you in relation to Insight Investigations’ review of Internal Audit’s work into an alleged removal of files and impairment of computer records held at the Risky Business premises in Rotherham in 2002. Internal Audit was instructed by Rotherham Council to establish:

- So far as possible, whether the alleged removal of a researcher’s files and impairment of computer records held at the “Risky Business” project premises did take place. The files and computer records held details and reports on the experiences of children subject to sexual exploitation in Rotherham.

The terms of reference agreed between Rotherham Council and Insight Investigations required Insight Investigations to conduct an independent review of Internal Audit’s work:

- To determine whether the work carried out by Internal Audit was comprehensive taking into account any limitations in the authority and powers of the Internal Audit Service, or whether there was any further work that should be carried out.
- To determine whether (or not) the conclusions drawn from the work carried out were reasonable conclusions to reach (i.e. would we agree with those conclusions).

Insight Investigations have reviewed Internal Audit’s report following its work, examined Internal Audit’s working papers and questioned Internal Audit about its work. On the basis of this review, I am able to confirm Insight Investigations’ opinion, which is:

- Internal Audit has carried out all reasonable tests available to it in relation to this matter and its work completed on these tests was comprehensive, and that
- The conclusions reached by Internal Audit are accurate and reasonable, based on the work completed.

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Insight Investigations is a private investigation service with over 30 years of experience of private, commercial and corporate investigations. The company was commissioned by Rotherham Council to conduct an independent, objective review of the work of its Internal Audit Service.

Assuring you of our utmost attention at all times.

Yours/~~sincerely~~

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.


Head of Operations Department
INSIGHT INVESTIGATIONS

Audit Investigation into the Alleged Removal of Files and Impairment of Computer Records Belonging to the Former Researcher at the Risky Business Office in the International Centre, Rotherham

Detailed Work Undertaken and Findings

7. Introduction

- 7.1 The objective of the audit was to investigate the allegations reported in the press and raised at the Home Affairs Select Committee (Child Exploitation and the Response to Localised Grooming) of an alleged removal of files and impairment of computer records at the Risky Business Office at the International Centre, Rotherham. During the alleged incident, files belonging to a Researcher funded by the Home Office were allegedly removed and computer records had been amended, fabricated or deleted (impaired).
- 7.2 The audit involved:
- Examining any reports made in the media relating to the alleged incident, noting any references to it and to any person named as having knowledge of it.
 - Examining published evidence from the Home Affairs Select Committee relating to the alleged incident, noting any references to it and to any person named as having knowledge of it.
 - Contacting individuals named in the media and published evidence and attempting to corroborate, or otherwise, any comments attributed to them.
 - Contacting and interviewing any other individual or organisation named by either Individual F or Individual A as someone who might be able to assist with the investigation.
 - Pursuing any information provided by any other individual who purportedly had any knowledge of the alleged incident.
 - Liaising with colleagues in Human Resources to interview any current members of staff named in any of the published evidence, to corroborate or otherwise information included in the published evidence or any comments attributed to staff.
 - Reviewing any information held by the Council for any corroborating evidence
 - Reviewing payroll records for 2002 in respect of Individual B.
 - Reviewing information in boxes containing files belonging to Risky Business that are currently held by the National Crime Agency.
 - Reviewing the Team Manager's computer and supervision files.
- 7.3 The audit objective was to assess if there was sufficient evidence available to the Council to conclude whether there had been any removal of files or any impairment of computer records.
- 7.4 The investigation was carried out using only the limited powers available to Internal Audit. In particular, while we were able to interview and question current employees, we had no authority to insist any former employee or any other

person named in any published document etc, should answer any questions put to them. Individual G, expressed a desire not to assist the investigation. This is in spite of requests put to her on Internal Audit's behalf by Individual F and Individual A. Individual G's preference has had to be respected.

8. Work Undertaken and Findings

8.1 Follow-up of Information Provided by Individual A, to the Home Affairs Select Committee

8.1.1 Individual A is no longer an employee of Rotherham Borough Council. However, she has readily agreed to answer questions put to her via e-mail, in telephone conversations and at face to face meetings.

8.1.2 On 10 September 2014 four questions were sent to Individual A via email. These were as follows:

- What was lost in the incident? Was it ever recovered?
- What was reported to management, and what was the response?
- What was reported to the Police, if anything, and what was the response?
- Is there anyone else who might be able to provide any more information that could help?

8.1.3 With respect to what was lost Individual A stated that it was all of the data collected as part of the Home Office Pilot research and this was not recovered. We noted the Jay Report ^{*2} (Section 10.14) states "*The enquiry had access to copies of the researcher's case studies....*" Internal Audit has subsequently determined from Individual F, Individual A and CROP minutes that Individual F kept a duplicate copy of her research work at the request of CROP. This was not because problems were anticipated, but because CROP would require a copy as a joint partner in the researcher's work. See also 8.7.3.

8.1.4 With respect to reporting to management, Individual A indicated that the removal of files was immediately reported to Individual C and Individual D. According to Individual A, Individual C's response was to minimise the incident and to discourage Individual A from speaking to the Police. Individual A also stated:

"handwritten notes from a meeting with Individual C show that we were told that we needed to 'calm down and regain trust'. Further attempts to discuss the incident were met with hostility".
See Also 8.4 and 8.5.

Individual C stated she had not seen the notes and stated any such comments could not refer to any discussion with her about any removal of files as she was not aware of the allegation.

8.1.5 Internal Audit asked Individual A:

- If she had a copy of the handwritten notes of the meeting.

^{*2} Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, Alexis Jay OBE

- When did the meeting take place?
- Who else attended the meeting?
- Are the notes signed and dated?
- Who else did she try to discuss the incident with?

Individual A replied on 12 November 2014, stating:-

*“Yes, the original notes of these meetings are still in the researcher’s possession and a copy can be provided. They were made by the researcher during various meetings, for her own records, and show who was in attendance. The meetings would have taken place at either Norfolk House ^{*3} or the International Centre. As the notes were made for the researcher’s own records, they are not signed and dated, but are in a bound notebook, which includes notes of other meetings and work (and therefore shows the authenticity of the records). These records have been used as the basis of the researcher’s evidence to various inquiries.” See also 8.8.*

- 8.1.6 Individual A also stated that if she (Individual A) was not present at the meetings, then Individual F discussed them with her following the conclusion of each meeting. Individual A confirms, therefore, that the evidence Individual F has given is accurate, and that the notes provide an accurate record of what happened during each meeting. However, to be a formally accepted record of a meeting, notes have to be agreed by all parties who were involved or attended. We have found no formally agreed records of these meetings.
- 8.1.7 Individual A stated that attempts were made on several occasions to discuss concerns about the removal of information with Individual C and Individual D. She also stated attempts were also made to discuss with Individual C the way Individual F and Risky Business staff were being treated. These comments were put to Individual C and Individual D, see 8.4 and 8.5.
- 8.1.8 With respect to the reference to ‘*hostility*’ in her statement (see 8.1.4), Individual A added that it involved staff not being allowed to speak or attend meetings; restricting contact with Individual F and young people etc. Additionally, Individual F was subjected to several difficult meetings where she was put under pressure to change research findings. Individual C confirmed in a disciplinary hearing held on 4 September 2014 that these events had happened.
- 8.1.9 Individual A confirmed that she did not report anything to the Police in respect to the alleged removal of files and/or impairment of computer records.
- 8.1.10 With respect to who else might be able to provide information, Individual A gave the following names:
- **Individual B** – see 8.3.

^{*3} Norfolk House was a former Rotherham Council building

- **Individual C** – see 8.4.
- **Individual D** – see 8.5.
- **Individual E** – see 8.6.
- **Individual G.** Individual G left the Authority on 31 August 2003. At our request, both Individual A and Individual F have stated they have asked Individual G on more than one occasion whether she would be prepared to answer questions, but she has not agreed to do so. We do not have any powers to force Individual G to speak with us, and we do not know any reason why she did not wish to assist us with our enquiries.

8.2 Follow-up with South Yorkshire Police

8.2.1 The Home Affairs Select Committee held a series of private meetings on 9 September 2014, including with Individual A and Individual F. The minutes from these meetings were published on 9 October 2014. It was evident from the minutes that the alleged incident had not been reported to the Police:

- It was put to Individual A by the Committee *“just to be clear, so somebody who had complete access to all of this has virtually said not to tell the Police?”*, Individual A replied “Yes”.
- Additionally, the *“Former Researcher”* in their testimony to the private hearing on the 9 September 2014 indicated that it had been *“suggested to us there was no need to do that (report it to the Police) because it hadn’t been a break in. There was no sign of forced entry”*. When asked who had suggested this, Individual F replied it was Individual C. See also section 8.4

8.2.2 At the Home Affairs Select Committee meeting, Individual O, was asked: *“... what progress had been made in investigating the disappearance of the files given that there is a witness, who apparently saw a number of people coming in and removing those files ...”*

8.2.3 The official transcript of Individual O’s response states (our underlining): *“In relation to the missing files, since this has been raised we have been going back through our records and cannot find any mention, any report or any computer printout within our records of that happening. Now, I entirely accept it has happened but you have asked what we have done. We have been going back to see if there is a report or some further information about this and at the moment we cannot find any”*

8.2.4 Internal Audit asked Individual O to comment on the response to the Select Committee’s question, and in particular the basis for the comment *“Now, I entirely accept it has happened”*. The Staff Officer to Individual O told Internal Audit that he (the Staff Officer) had reviewed the audio of the interview and that the transcript (referred to at 8.2.3) was slightly inaccurate. He stated Individual O had actually said: *“Now, I am entirely accepting that it happened.”* Internal Audit has also now reviewed the

audio and agree it is different to the transcript as stipulated by Individual O's Staff Officer.

8.2.5 The Staff Officer to Individual O made the following comments on behalf of Individual O:

"Prior to giving evidence, the HASC heard evidence from Individual A and Individual P. I was not given the opportunity to hear this evidence or challenge it and was placed in the position of having to accept it as a factual and reliable account of what happened..."

... My comment accepting it had happened was in response to the statement that it had been directly witnessed. My comments should not be interpreted as confirmation that the removal of the files actually took place".

8.3 Interviews with Individual B

8.3.1 Published evidence stated Individual F and Individual A had conversations about the alleged incident with Individual B.

8.3.2 Internal Audit contacted Individual B via telephone on 17 September 2014. Individual B explained that he was aware that confidential information was kept at the International Centre. He added that he knew confidential files were kept in locked filing cabinets, to which he did not have access - he also did not have a key to gain entry to the Risky Business Office.

8.3.3 Individual B could not recall there being an alleged incident at the Risky Business Office.

8.3.4 The minutes of the Home Office Select Committee private hearing on 9 September 2014 give more details about the Monday after the incident (15 April 2002) and Individual B's alleged knowledge. Individual A stated that when she went into work on the Monday, Individual B said to her *"You've had a lot of visitors in and out of your office this weekend. What was going on?"* In addition, Individual F stated *"I was told Individual B that it had been a very busy weekend. When I asked him what he meant he told me I should speak to the project workers"*.

8.3.5 Internal Audit contacted Individual B again by telephone on 5 November 2014 to discuss both Individual A's and Individual F's evidence, and to clarify the security arrangements at the International Centre. Individual B informed Internal Audit that the site would normally be locked at the weekend and if anyone needed the building opening they would have to contact him to open the gates, unlock the reception and unset the building alarm. He would then normally leave the site and return in the evening to lock up. In relation to the comments attributed to him by both Individual A and Individual F, Individual B denied what had been reported. He denied ever having had the conversations that had been reported with either Individual A or Individual F.

8.3.6 If Individual B was required to work during any weekend, he would receive an overtime payment for doing so. Archived pay details were examined to determine if there had been any overtime payments made to

Individual B for the period in question. No payments were found. We also looked at whether Individual B could, instead, have taken time off in lieu of any time worked, but there are no Council records available now to show whether he did.

- 8.3.7 The recent retrieval by Internal Audit of Individual A's diary records for 2002, which are currently held by the NCA, show that it is unlikely any incident was discovered on 15 April 2002 – see 3.3 and 3.4. The information in the diaries has led Individual A and Individual F to conclude the discovery was made on Thursday 18 April 2002 and that any conversations with Individual B about significant activity at the offices might have been related to other work. Individual B confirmed to us he did not ever have any conversation with Individual F or Individual A about any incident involving the removal of files.

8.4 Interviews with Individual C

- 8.4.1 Individual C was subject to investigatory interviews, which are part of the Council's disciplinary procedures, on 4 September 2014 and 18 September 2014 on a range of matters relating to Child Sexual Exploitation. The interviews were conducted by the Council's former Director of Schools and Lifelong Learning and Individual H.
- 8.4.2 During the interviews Individual C was asked about the alleged incident involving the removal of files and impairment of computer records. Individual C stated she was not aware that these events had ever occurred. She also stated the matters had never been reported to her by anyone. She was also not aware of anyone else being involved in such an incident, and felt sure that, had it occurred, she would have been told about it. This contradicts the statements made by Individual A and Individual F.
- 8.4.3 Interviews with Individual D (see 8.5) and Individual E (see 8.6) did not show that Individual C was informed about any alleged incident by, or had any discussions with either Individual A or Individual F, as has been suggested by Individual A and Individual F (see 8.1.4 and 8.2.1). Again, this contradicts the statements made by Individual A and Individual F.
- 8.4.4 In a further meeting between Individual H and Individual C, additional questions were put to Individual C specifically in respect of Individual F's grievance against the Council and supervisory meetings with Individual F and records of such. Individual C has indicated that she could not recall if she was aware that Individual F had submitted a grievance at the time, but felt that she was aware now. She had no recollection of the contents of the original grievance letter, nor of the detail of the grievance. See also 8.10.
- 8.4.5 Individual C was shown a letter from Individual F dated 28 July 2002 regarding the grievance procedure, which mentioned a supervisory meeting. The letter was marked to show Individual C was sent a courtesy copy (see also 8.10). Individual C acknowledges that she is marked as

being copied in, however, cannot remember whether or not she did actually receive the letter. Individual C stated that she was Individual F's line manager for between 3 and 4 months but could not recall any specific supervisory meetings or any notes that might have been taken at any such meetings, although it would have been normal practice to keep notes of supervisory meetings.

- 8.4.6 Individual C was interviewed by Individual H again on 14 May 2015 for clarification of some of her earlier answers, and to explain how she became Manager. This additional interview did not change the responses to questions that she had given earlier. Individual C also emphasised once again that she had never been aware of any alleged incident.
- 8.4.7 As a result of the change of date of the alleged incident and discovery of the missing files from Risky Business' offices, Internal Audit wrote to Individual C on 15 October 2015. The correspondence asked Individual C to confirm, or otherwise, if she was in Risky Business' offices on Thursday 18 April 2002 and if she was, was she informed of any incident involving the removal of files over the previous evening. Individual C replied by email on 22 January 2016, stating that could not confirm whether she was at the Risky Business Office on Thursday 18 April 2002 as she does not have any diary records covering the period. Individual C restated that she was not told about the alleged break in / data removal on that day or at any time.
- 8.4.8 Individual C's awareness and / or recollection of the incident and subsequent grievance are unclear and contradicted by others people's versions of events. However, our investigation has been unable to either prove or disprove Individual C's account.
- 8.4.9 The investigatory interviews conducted by the Council found no basis on which to proceed with any disciplinary action against Individual C.

8.5 Interviews with Individual D

- 8.5.1 Individual D was the Service Manager who the Risky Business Project reported to.
- 8.5.2 Individual D was subject to an investigatory interview, which is part of the Council's disciplinary procedures, on 7 November 2014. The interview was conducted by the Council's former Director of Schools and Lifelong Learning and Individual H. She was asked a number of questions and specifically about the alleged raid at the Risky Business office. Individual D indicated that she was unaware of any such incident taking place or of anyone ever discussing it with her.
- 8.5.3 Individual D was asked if Individual E had ever discussed concerns surrounding the incident involving missing files (as was alleged by Individual F –see 8.8.2). Individual D stated that she had no recollection of this happening and believed that if this had been the case (i.e. there had been an incident) she would have remembered as there would have

been a fuss about it. This contradicts the statement made by Individual F (see 4.2).

- 8.5.4 Individual D was interviewed by Individual H again on 14 May 2015 for clarification of some of her earlier answers. This additional interview did not change the responses to questions that she had given earlier. Individual D also emphasised once again that she was not aware of an alleged incident having taken place.
- 8.5.5 As a result of the change of date of the alleged incident and discovery of the missing files from Risky Business' offices, Internal Audit e-mailed Individual D on 14 October 2015. The correspondence asked Individual D if she recalled being in Risky Business' office on Thursday 18 April 2002, at which time Individual F and Individual A had said that they had made Individual D aware that Individual F's files had been removed from the filing cabinet. Individual D informed Internal Audit on 14 October 2015 that she did not recall this happening.
- 8.5.6 The investigatory interview conducted by the Council found no basis on which to proceed with any disciplinary action against Individual D.

8.6 Interview Individual E

- 8.6.1 Individual E was a Project Worker. It was claimed by Individual A and Individual F that Individual E was in the Risky Business Office on the morning of 15 April 2002, when the alleged incident was discovered.
- 8.6.2 Individual E was interviewed by Internal Audit on 18 November 2014, when she was asked a number of questions about the alleged incident at the Risky Business office. Individual E indicated that she was unaware of anything taking place or of anyone ever discussing it with her. However, Individual E did say that she recalled sometime after the alleged incident a throwaway comment from the Individual F who, whilst looking for something, said something to the effect that whatever she was looking for "would have probably have gone missing with her files".
- 8.6.3 Individual E was also asked if she had ever told Individual F that she had complained to Individual D about the alleged incident. Individual E indicated that she could not recall ever having had a conversation with Individual D or Individual F about this. This contradicts the statement made by Individual F – See also 8.8.2 and 8.13.17.

8.7 Examination of the Home Affairs Committee – Child Exploitation and the Response to Localised Grooming - Published Information

- 8.7.1 Internal Audit examined all of the various published statements in respect of the Home Affairs Select Committee enquiry. There were only two other references in respect of the removal of files in any of the submissions; these were both from Pace (Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation), who were at the time named CROP (Coalition for the Removal of Pimping).

8.7.2 Pace's submission makes reference to a "*Confidential note of an informal discussion between the Directors (of CROP) and the Researcher on 3rd May 2002*" and within this note is a reference to the removal of files and fabrication of minutes.

8.7.3 A second submission of written evidence by Pace entitled "Child Sexual Exploitation – Rotherham", Section 6 – "The Course of Events", includes the following:

"Attempts were made to suppress, change and manage the Researchers research findings. Her research data was removed from her Rotherham Council office without her knowledge or consent and made unavailable to her. Unknown to the Council, Individual M had suggested the Researcher keep a duplicate copy of the research and that all meeting papers should be kept in a separate location. This was done. This suggestion was not because problems were anticipated, but because CROP was a joint partner". See also 8.3.3.

8.7.4 These submissions indicate others were made aware of the alleged removal of data.

8.8 Examination of Handwritten Notes Provided to Internal Audit by Individual F

8.8.1 Internal Audit asked Individual F for copies of the hand written notes that she maintained and which she had used to compile her evidence to various inquiries (see also 8.1.5). It was hoped that they might provide additional lines of enquiry for the Internal Audit investigation. The original notes were subsequently seen by Internal Audit on 29 January 2016, as some details on the copied versions were not easy to distinguish.

8.8.2 The salient points to note from examination of the copies are as follows:

- At times notes were abbreviated.
- There was only the occasional reference to a date and it was not possible to be certain what date the notes were referring to.
- There is no specific reference to Risky Business, although Individual F has explained that this is because the note-books relate solely to her work at Risky Business (i.e. there was no need to make specific references).
- There is reference to a discussion which is not dated re "*concern re data going missing*" under a heading "*Individual C Supplementary notes*"
- There is also a reference to a meeting with Individual E on 25 April 2002 with reference to "*concerns over missing items, who did it, who can we trust?*" and "*I have complained to Individual C; she has complained to Individual D*". Individual E and Individual C deny having had any discussions about missing files

8.8.3 The notes potentially provide some contemporaneous evidence of discussions about missing files / items. The notes were considered to be

credible because there were references to other events within them that Internal Audit were able to verify happened independently.

8.9 Discussion with Individual A -15 January 2015

- 8.9.1 After meeting her obligations with regard to the Government Select Committees' enquiries into Child Sexual Exploitation, Individual A, was able to meet with Internal Audit to assist with this investigation. Individual A agreed to give a personal version of events surrounding the allegations, and to assist in the Council's investigation of this by possibly providing further lines of enquiry.
- 8.9.2 Individual A met with Internal Audit on 15 January 2015 and gave a detailed narrative of the events of the allegations, which were contained in her written evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee (summarised in 3.1 and 3.2).
- 8.9.3 Individual A attempted to assist by contacting Individual G, (the one project officer who Internal Audit had not been able to speak to), to ask if the project officer would contribute to the investigation. Unfortunately the former project officer declined.
- 8.9.4 Individual A indicated that she had also spoken to Individual F and stated that Individual F had agreed to speak to Internal Audit. In addition, she added that Individual F had made a grievance complaint against the Council and that this might provide additional information to the audit investigation.
- 8.9.5 A further telephone call was held with Individual A on 5 May 2015 for clarification of some of her earlier information. This additional conversation did not change the details she had provided earlier. It did, however, highlight areas for checking with Individual B – see 8.3.4, which we have been unable to clarify.

8.10 Follow-up of Information Regarding Individual F's Grievance Against the Council

- 8.10.1 Following discussions with Individual A, Internal Audit contacted Rotherham Council's Human Resources Service to request the grievance file in respect to Individual F. The Council's Human Resources Officer indicated that he had conducted a search of the archive files and had located the archive box containing grievances from around the period 2002. The box contained a list of names and files of formal grievances but there was no reference to Individual F.
- 8.10.2 The Human Resources Officer explained that when a formal grievance meeting is held, there is a requirement to keep files for 6 years in case there is a challenge to any decisions made at any grievance meeting. However, in this instance where there had been no formal grievance hearing (the situation had been resolved prior to the meeting - see 8.11.4), the Human Resources Officer advised there would not have been any requirement to keep a file.

- 8.10.3 Individual F's personnel file was retrieved and a copy of a letter dated 28 July 2002 from Individual F to the Council referring to the grievance was located. This was the only reference to the grievance on the file. However, Internal Audit subsequently obtained a copy of an original grievance letter which was sent by Individual F (dated 28 June 2002 - see 8.11.3) addressed to the Council's former Head of Human Resources, who left the authority in August 2008. We did not find a copy of this letter anywhere in the Council's records.
- 8.10.4 The original grievance letter dated 28 June 2002 makes specific reference to "*data belonging to me had been taken from the filing cabinets.*" The second letter dated 28 July 2002 does not make reference to missing data, but does make reference to the grievance against the Council. Individual F has indicated that a copy of the 28 July 2002 letter was sent to Individual C and the letter does show "*cc. Individual C*".
- 8.10.5 Individual C has indicated that she did not receive a copy of the letter and she was not interviewed in 2002 in respect to Individual F's grievance. See also 8.4.
- 8.10.6 The original grievance letter dated 28 June 2002 was sent to the former Head of Human Resources, and the second letter dated 28 July 2002 was sent to Individual I. We contacted both the former Head of Human Resources and Individual I. Individual I has advised us he could not recall this specific grievance. However, he stated that the normal procedure would have been for any grievance letter to be passed from the former Head of Human Resources down to the relevant HR Officer. The relevant HR Officer would then arrange a grievance meeting with the employee, at which time details of the specific points in the grievance letter would be discussed and clarified. After the initial meeting HR would then start to investigate any allegation(s) made.
- 8.10.7 A meeting had been set up with Individual F to take place on 2 August 2002. However, as the meeting was cancelled by Individual F after various issues of concern had been resolved in a meeting between Individual F and Individual C on 11 July 2002, there would not have been any investigations into any of the allegations in her original letter. The former Head of Human Resources has confirmed these would have been the normal procedures followed. He also had no recollection of this specific grievance.
- 8.10.8 The original grievance letter is a record that the Council was made aware of the alleged removal of data. If an investigation into the grievance had been conducted, the question of whether or not files had been removed could have been answered at the time. The Council's practice with regard the handling of grievances was commenced in this case, but ceased when Individual F withdrew the grievance. It remains the case, however, that Individual F had made serious claims about the removal of files. By leaving the claims unaddressed, the Council missed an opportunity to confirm at the time whether any removal of documents and/or impairment of computer files had occurred or not. In view of the

significance of the matter, the Council's procedures should have led the Council to look at the matter outside of the grievance. Not least, there should have been recognition of the potential loss of data, reportable under the Data Protection Act.

8.11 Conference Call with Individual F 27 February 2015

- 8.11.1 After meeting her obligations with regard to the Government Select Committees' enquiries into Child Sexual Exploitation, Individual F was able to give Internal Audit a personal version of events surrounding the alleged incident of her files being removed and computer records impaired, and to assist in Internal Audit's investigation by possibly providing further lines of enquiry. This was done via conference call on 27 February 2015.
- 8.11.2 Individual F gave a detailed narrative of the events which were contained in her written evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee (summarised in 3.1 and 3.2). As Internal Audit already had access to Select Committee material, the narrative did not produce any additional lines of enquiry for Internal Audit to pursue.
- 8.11.3 Individual F's grievance against the Council was also discussed during the conference call. Individual F did not have a copy of her letter dated 28 July 2002. She did, however, have a grievance letter dated 28 June 2002, which she had sent to the Head of Human Resources and copied to her line manager at the time, who was Individual C. Individual F provided Internal Audit with a copy of the letter dated 28 June 2002. The letter does not show that Individual C was sent a copy of it (i.e. it was not cc'd to her). See also 8.4 and 8.10.
- 8.11.4 In the event, the grievance process did not proceed because Individual F had decided to leave the Authority and because various issues of concern had been resolved in a meeting between Individual F and Individual C on 11 July 2002.
- 8.11.5 Individual F was advised that Internal Audit had been unable to contact Individual G (referred to also in 8.9.3). Individual F attempted to assist the investigation by approaching the project officer to ask if the project officer would discuss the alleged incident with Internal Audit. Unfortunately, this again failed to secure any engagement with the former project Individual.
- 8.11.6 Individual F was contacted further on 5 May 2015 and she replied via e-mail on 14 May 2015, in response to a request for clarification of some of her earlier answers, and to ask for some additional information. The clarification of earlier replies and the additional information provided did not change the responses to questions that Individual F had given earlier.

8.12 Discussions with Contacts Provided By Individual F

- 8.12.1 Individual F, in an e-mail sent on 17 June 2015, suggested that Internal Audit should speak to two further individuals as follows:

Individual M

8.12.2 Internal Audit spoke to Individual M on 19 June 2015. Individual M explained that she met regularly with Individual F to discuss her progress and any issues she might have.

8.12.3 Individual M stated that she was certain that Individual F's files had been removed, although she acknowledged this was based on conversations with Individual F. Individual M confirmed she did not have any documentary evidence, for example minutes of meetings where it was formally discussed, but she stated that there were many events following the incident that added credence to the assertion it had happened. Individual M quoted harassment of Individual F, the Council's non-cooperation with the Risky Business Project and the requests to Individual F to amend her report findings as examples of incidents that would suggest the events had taken place. The Council has acknowledged a lack of co-operation and requests to revise report details. Individual M's recollection of the events is corroboration that they were discussed outside of the Council.

Individual J

8.12.4 Internal Audit spoke to Individual J on 24 June 2015. Individual J explained that she had extensive experience in working in child sexual exploitation and it was through this that she was involved with the Risky Business Project.

8.12.5 Individual J was certain that the alleged incident had taken place, although she acknowledged she did not have any firm evidence to support this view. Individual J stated that she went into Risky Business Office for a "get together", at which time people were being turned away and there was a lot of distress around. We believe the 'get together' was a reference to the Key Players' meeting scheduled for 18 April 2002 – see Section 3. Neither Individual F nor Individual A indicated that Individual J was at the office following the alleged incident, but Individual J insists that she was.

8.12.6 Individual J also stated that there were lots of events (for example the Council's lack of co-operation with the project and the treatment of Individual F) following the alleged incident that supported a claim that it had happened. Individual J also cited the change in management structure immediately following. The change in management structure had already been subject to review by Individual H, which had found the reasons for the changes were reasonable. Whilst the changes were seen as reasonable from the Council's perspective, it was seen as problematic by others.

8.13 Meeting Held on 8 July 2015 with Individual F and Individual A and Subsequent Follow-up Actions with Additional Contact Names Provided

8.13.1 Individual F and Individual A requested a meeting with Internal Audit to discuss the investigation. Their desire was to try to help to get to a

position where it could be established on the balance of probability that Individual F's files had been removed. The meeting was held on 8 July 2015.

8.13.2 Individual F and Individual A suggested Internal Audit should consider contacting two further individuals; Individual N and Individual K, and consider obtaining copies of Risky Business Steering Group minutes, Risky Business supervision notes and Risky Business diaries, all of which were held by the National Crime Agency as part of its ongoing investigations into Child Sexual Exploitation.

8.13.3 Internal Audit followed up these lines of enquiry as below:

Individual N

8.13.4 Internal Audit spoke with Individual N by telephone on 14 July 2015. Individual N explained that he had represented Individual F at an investigatory / disciplinary hearing set up by the Council on 22 April 2002 and subsequently as her advisor in her grievance against the Council.

8.13.5 The investigatory / disciplinary meeting was set up to explore claims by the Council that Individual F had sent research findings into the Home Office without the Council's or her line manager's permission. Individual F was able to show she did have the agreement of her line manager (Individual D), following which the claims were withdrawn and the process ended immediately.

8.13.6 Individual N stated he was satisfied that Individual F would have informed him about the removal of files at the time. Changes to Employment Law, which were being implemented at around the time of the alleged incident, meant that it was not possible to introduce new items at any employment tribunal that had not already been covered during an internal grievance process, and so Individual N stated he would have advised Individual F to include everything in her grievance that she might later want to include at an employment tribunal. Individual N was satisfied that Individual F had raised the incident with him because of its inclusion in the 28 June 2002 Grievance letter he had advised on.

8.13.7 While he felt sure Individual F's data had been removed, Individual N confirmed any information he had used to come to this conclusion could only have come directly from Individual F and not independently. He confirmed the issue would have been discussed in his meetings with Individual F, but that it had not been discussed in any meetings with Rotherham Council which he had attended with Individual F. If it had been, then he would have made reference to it in a letter he sent to the Council dated 26 April 2002 following an investigatory interview the Council had held with Individual F on 22 April 2002.

8.13.8 Individual N was contacted again on 9 October 2015 in respect of the suggested change in date of the discovery of missing files. He confirmed the incident could have been discovered on 18 April 2002, as he recalls

there being very little time between him being instructed by Individual F and the meeting on the 22 April 2002.

Individual K – Formerly member of the Coalition for the Removal of Pimping (CROP) – now Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (Pace)

8.13.9 Individual F had indicated that Individual K might have access to minutes that could contain reference to the alleged incident. Internal Audit contacted Individual K via e-mail on 10 July 2015 and Individual K replied on 16 July 2015 stating *“All I can say to you is that all that I remember and believe to be the case is that what Individual F is saying is right, but my detailed memory is not great after that time”*.

8.13.10 Individual K indicated that she had some records at the Pace office, including a letter she sent to a former Rotherham Council Chief Executive. Individual K suggested asking Individual L at Pace to look through Individual K’s records on her behalf for any pertinent information.

Individual L – Pace

8.13.11 Internal Audit spoke to Individual L on 22 July 2015. Individual L had copies of the documents that Pace had already given to Internal Audit. Individual L agreed to check further through all the minutes and documentation at Pace for any reference to files belonging to Individual F being removed. Individual L confirmed to Internal Audit on 22 July 2015 that she could find no references to this.

8.13.12 Even so, Individual L has stated that whilst Pace had no specific evidence to prove the files had been removed, and their knowledge of it came from Individual F, the official stance from Pace was:

“Pace is clear that data was removed from Individual F’s files and minutes fabricated in what was referred to in the media as a ‘raid’. This is based on i) the written records we have in letters and charity minutes written at the time; ii) the personal recollection and face to face engagement Trustees of CROP in 2002 and 2003 had with RMBC staff; iii) what Individual F directly reported to the Trustees at the time and was recorded and iv) the removal of data fits in with the overall pattern of behaviour and actions of RMBC staff in 2002 and 2003 which can be evidenced from the CEO to mid-level managers towards Individual F, the research project and CROP Trustees. This pattern included falsifying data, removing information and ignoring “whistleblowing” letters from CROP”.

8.13.13 Internal Audit enquired what evidence Pace had with regard to *“falsifying data”* and *“removing information”* and were told this was based upon information provided by Individual F and their observations of the Council’s behaviour following the alleged incident. Individual L provided Internal Audit with a number of e-mails and

letters to evidence Pace's concerns regarding the overall pattern of behaviour and actions of Rotherham Council staff.

National Crime Agency (NCA)

- 8.13.14 The National Crime Agency (NCA) currently holds the Council's files relating to the Risky Business Project. Individual A indicated that these files may include copies of the Steering Group Minutes / Personal Diaries / Supervision notes, any of which could contain reference to the alleged removal of files belonging to Individual F. Internal Audit contacted the NCA to request access to any documents that could progress this investigation.
- 8.13.15 The NCA provided Internal Audit with three encrypted CDs that contained scanned images of the Risky Business' files and documentation. These were examined by Internal Audit to determine whether or not they contained any copies of the steering group minutes / diaries etc, or any other documentation containing any reference to the allegations that Individual F's files were removed or that computer files had been impaired.
- 8.13.16 The CDs contained details of 47 folders of evidence. Internal Audit accessed every folder. The following documents from the folders were found:
- Individual A's Academic Diary 2001 – 2002. It was noted that there were some entries for the 15 April 2002 (the Monday where it was originally alleged that files were discovered missing) but there was no reference to any missing files, or anything else that happened in the aftermath.
 - Individual A's Weekly Engagement Sheet for the week ending 21 April 2002, showing that she was in the office on the 15 April 2002.
 - Individual E's Weekly Engagement Sheet for the week ending 21 April 2002 which indicates that she took TOIL (time off in lieu) on the 15, 16 and 17 April 2002. This is important as it had been reported by Individual A that Individual E was in the office on the 15 April 2002, the day when it was alleged that Individual F's files were found to be missing, and computer files impaired.
 - Minutes of the Staff Meeting held on Thursday 18 April 2002 at the Rotherham International Centre. There is no mention within the minutes of any missing files. The minutes record discussions about the changes to Key Players' meetings and Individual F's role.
 - Copies of Risky Business Steering Group Minutes. There was no mention of any missing files within these.
- 8.13.17 In light of the discovery of the above documents, and their importance, copies were sent to Individual A and Individual F for their observations. Individual F replied via e-mail on 24 September 2015 as follows:

“As I have said previously my recollection of events all those years ago is based on my memory and the handwritten notes that I have recovered. As I have already said it is entirely possible that the events regarding the "raid" happened on a Thursday rather than Monday - indeed the handwritten notes that I have supplied you with make reference to the 18th and I know this is something that we have discussed before”.

“Again all I can reiterate is although my recollection of the exact dates is hazy, as you would expect after some 14 years, my recollection of what happened regarding the removal of my data is absolutely clear”.

- 8.13.18 Individual F subsequently emailed Internal Audit on 12 October 2015 to state that following examination of Individual A’s diary and the Staff Meeting Minutes, she was now certain that she discovered someone had removed her files from the filing cabinet on Thursday 18 April 2002 and not on Monday 15 April 2002 as was first thought. Individual F’s response stated:

“... my records show that Key Players was due to take place on 18th but was cancelled and that there was subsequently a staff meeting and then a meeting with myself and Individual C, where I was suspended. This is definitely the date that I discovered that someone had taken my data”.

- 8.13.19 Individual A telephoned Internal Audit on 2 October 2015 and said she could now say that the discovery of the missing files must have been on Thursday 18 April 2002, as this tied in with her recollection of a Key Players’ meeting being cancelled and a Staff Meeting taking place instead. The copy of her diary and staff meeting minutes have confirmed to her that the correct date was Thursday 18 April 2002. Individual A’s engagement sheet and diary showed that she was not in the office on Tuesday or Wednesday (16 & 17 April 2002) and she explained this is probably why she had originally thought the events had taken place over a weekend and been discovered on a Monday.
- 8.13.20 Individual E was sent a copy of her Engagement Sheet where she had recorded TOIL. Individual E was asked if she had any additional documentation that could verify whether or not she was at work on 15, 16 and 17 April 2002. Individual E has provided details of a number of university assignments which were saved on her home computer during this period, constituting reasonable evidence that she would not have been in the Risky Business Office on 15 April 2002, as was originally suggested by Individual F and Individual A.
- 8.13.21 As a result of the now suggested change of date that the files were allegedly found to be missing from Risky Business office (i.e. now 18 April 2002), Internal Audit e-mailed Individual E on 14 October 2015 to ask if she recalled being in office on Thursday 18 April 2002. Individual E informed Internal Audit on 14 October 2014 that she did not recall

being in the Risky Business Office on 18 April 2002 nor did she recall having any discussions about missing files with Individual A or Individual F. Individual E's Engagement Sheet shows she was working for Places to Go (a separate project) on 18 April 2002, which Individual E states meant she would have been in a different office (the 'Places to Go' Office) in the same building on this date. Individual E did not recall any of the Risky Business staff coming into the Places to Go Office to inform her about any missing files or impaired computer files. This contradicts statements made by Individual F and Individual A.

8.14 Examination of Former RMBC Team Manager's Computer and Supervision Files

- 8.14.1 On 8 September 2015 Internal Audit were made aware of the discovery of a desktop computer; some supervision files and computer (floppy) discs which had been found by Children and Young People's Services Business Administration Team. They belonged to the former Team Manager.
- 8.14.2 While the files did not relate to the Risky Business project, Internal Audit reviewed the documentation on the files and found nothing that would assist in the investigation of the alleged missing files from the Risky Business office.

8.15 Comments on the Research Report to the Home Office

- 8.15.1 Individual F's 2002 research report to the Home Office could not be traced. Nor was a copy retained in the Risky Business records. It seemed the report had been lost forever. However, on 22 October 2015 Individual A provided to Internal Audit a document that she claimed was part of the report. Individual A told us she had only recently been given this document herself and explained it had also recently been given to the NCA. It will be for the NCA to investigate any matters arising from this document, but we note it includes the identity of significant persons and, if this was part of the report issued at the time, it could have provided a motivation to remove records relating to Risky Business work.

Appendix 1: Extract from the Grievance Letter from Individual F to the Council, 28 June 2002

"28 June 2002

Dear Sir

Re: Employment with the Risky Business Project Home Office Pilot: Notification of Grievance

I am employed on a Home Office pilot based in the Risky Business Project. The project is located in the Youth Service. My post was created in partnership with an organisation, CROP, based in Leeds. I am employed by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and funded by the Home Office. I am managed by the youth service and my research is managed and supervised by a Director from CROP.

I am writing to you as I wish to lodge a formal grievance against Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and my managers as follows:

...

2. *... On 19 April 2002 I visited the project office to collect some data that I thought I would need for the ... meeting. Data belonging to me had been taken from the filing cabinets. One of the project co-ordinators also had documents removed. I formally complained about this to the Project Co-ordinators and my line manager. To the best of my knowledge this matter has not been taken any further. The data has never been returned.*
3. *On 19 April 2002 when I visited the project office I also could not find some minutes which I wished to consider. The project co-ordinator assisted me in accessing the computer. I discovered three versions of the same minutes relating to a meeting which had taken place in December. The trashcan was also full of documents which had been erased, saved with the text erased and then placed in the trashcan.*

...

Yours faithfully

...

*Head of Human Resources
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Norfolk House
Walker Place
Rotherham
South Yorkshire*

Cc ..."