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PAIN-INDUCING RESTRAINT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S SECURE ESTATE

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Adam Rickwood was a lively boy who enjoyed camping and rabbiting. He wanted to become a police officer, or maybe run a garage business. His mum told me that when five family members died within a four-year period, Adam struggled to understand and his behaviour deteriorated. In 2004, aged 14, he was remanded to Hassockfield Secure Training Centre, a child prison run by Serco in County Durham, 150 miles from home.

Soon after arriving at Hassockfield, Adam was subjected to what was called a 'nose distraction', which is essentially a karate-chop to the nose. In the heated exchanges which followed Adam's death, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) vehemently denied this description of the 'nose distraction', though a G4S senior manager, David Banks (who went on to become a YJB board member), was later to tell Parliament that the technique 'involves a very short chop up on the nose to distract the individual' (he was giving evidence following the death of Jimmy Mubenga while being escorted on a plane).

Within hours of being 'restrained' Adam took his own life. We know what was done to him because it was filmed and Adam left a note describing how it felt to be set upon and hit. Adam's mum, Carol Pounder, viewed the video footage and recounted to me:

'Basically, they beat him up and they took him to his cell and left him. They beat Adam up in the association area. They carried him like a dead animal, face down. And what they said was the reason why they carried him face down was because his nose was bleeding so badly they didn't want him to choke to death on his blood. That's exactly what they said ... On the CCTV evidence that I've seen, they throw Adam in his cell like a dog, and then they go and jump on him again ... The way they were carrying my son, I actually thought he was dead. And he was in his socks. He didn't even have shoes on his feet. And then they threw Adam in the cell, and then they all jumped on him again ... I think the lightest one was 13½ stone, and you see him pushing on to the top of Adam, and you could tell they get a kick out of it. I mean, if we'd done that to a kid, well ... Then they all came running out that room, out of the cell ... When they came running out you can actually see the smirks on their faces.'

On 18 June 2020, the government accepted a review recommendation that pain-inducing techniques be removed from the child prison restraint syllabus. It has taken 16 years to get to the point

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