



SUBJECT: Report into Management of Child Care Services in Islington
Ian White and Kate Hart

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Members received a copy of the report at the time of publication together with an initial response from Management which went to the Press and the Department of Health.
- 1.2 This is the formal committee opportunity for members to discuss the report in depth and to formally accept its recommendations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to accept the recommendations of the White Report (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 Members are asked to accept the management response to these recommendations.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following allegations of inappropriate treatment of children in the care of Islington Council by the Evening Standard in November 1992 and December 1993, the Council commissioned a number of reports both into the management of Islington's Child Care Services and into the conduct of individual cases. These reports by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were all extremely critical of Islington Child Care Services in terms of organisation, management and professional practise.
- 3.2 At the request of the Minister for Social Services, the Social Services Inspectorate inspected Child Protection Services in Islington in December 1993/January 1994 and were extremely critical of all aspects of the service in their report published in June 1994.
- 3.3 Islington Council commissioned Ian White, Director of Social Services in Oxfordshire to provide an overview report which would bring together all the strands in the different reports and to particularly comment on any loose ends regarding the care and protection of individual children as well as outstanding disciplinary matters with regard to individual staff. The terms of reference were agreed with the Department of Health.
- 3.4 Unpub' shed dossier information provided to the Department of Health by the Evening Standard was made available to Ian White.

4. FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

- 4.1 Islington Council had investigated allegations of organised abuse and had found no evidence to support this. The Social Services Inspectorate had reviewed the paperwork and came to a similar conclusion.
- 4.2 The overall picture presented by enquiring into the allegations concerning the abuse or neglect of children in the care of Islington Council was one where there was no strong ethos of promoting children's rights and protecting children at risk. The welfare of young people, particularly those in residential homes, received insufficient time and attention at management levels and children were not afforded basic standards of accommodation or care.
- 4.3 The various allegations against staff were in the main not properly investigated. As a result of disciplinary procedures and possible criminal proceedings not taking place, there may be staff working in other Social Services Departments who have serious allegations against them which have not been investigated.
- 4.4 The reasons for the above failures were seen by Mr White to stem from confused lines of communication and accountability, lack of specialist management expertise, ineffective management, lack of a sound infrastructure for supervision, inadequate personnel policies and procedures.

5. CONCLUSION OF THE REPORT

- 5.1 Ian White concludes that Islington today is dramatically different from the department it was in 1992. He describes it as being in a much more robust state of health. He expresses his confidence in the new senior management and the changes being put in place which are needed to bring Islington back to being a highly competent and successful child care organisation.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT

- 6.1 These are produced in Appendix 1 together with the action plan which is the management response to the recommendations.

7. EQUALITIES ISSUES

- 7.1 A major recommendation of the report is that Islington review its equal opportunities policy in relation to its application to child care 'in order to remove, once and for all, any possible problems that this policy could create in addressing competency and management issues in Islington'. This review has been set up.

7.2 Islington introduced in late 1993 recruitment and selection procedures for child care staff in line with the Warner Report. These have been reviewed and endorsed by Personnel Sub-Committee as recently as March 1995.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Various management reviews and individual case reviews which have been presented in the past two years to Case Review Sub-Committee and Social Services and Health Policy Sub-Committee. (Full list appears in Chapter 2 of the White Report).


Chief Social Services Officer

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Islington
A.1 Child Care Services

ACTION PLAN - WHITE REPORT

6.7.95

ISLINGTON COUNCIL

APPENDIX 1

This action plan refers to the recommendations made in Section iv "Executive Summary and Recommendations" at the beginning of the report.

Recommendation

"We recommend the Authority should review their employment of this remaining member of staff in the light of not only his recent employment record, but in the light of the contents of this report, matters contained in the dossiers and summarised in the confidential annexes in relation to this member of staff should be thoroughly reviewed with line managers where they can still be found to ascertain whether it is safe for him to continue working in child care".

"We recommend that Islington write to all Social Services Departments suggesting they review current employees who may have come via the Islington route are to be checked with Islington Council and the Department of Health Consultancy Register".

"That all Social Services Departments review their use of such voluntary organisations and agencies and discuss with those organisations how they recruit, supervise and monitor the quality of work of their staff. We urge all Local Authorities to establish a simple "contracting system" which include a specification of requirements, and a process or organisational audit. This might involve, for example, one Authority in the country in whose area the headquarters of such organisation exist, agreeing with that organisation to be lead in checking the organisations' professional practices. We are sure that all such organisations will see this as valuable confirmation of their organisational strength and not as something onerous and to be rejected"

Comment 6.7.95

This member of staff has been suspended as a precautionary measure pending a full review of the matters summarised in confidential annexes to this report.

Following negotiations with the Evening Standard, access to the unpublished dossier will be granted to the Chief Social Services Officer to enable her to carry out the recommendations of the White Report.

All Social Services Departments in the UK have been written to by the Chief Social Services Officer. Islington is co-operating fully with departments who have requested that staff names be checked against the confidential annexe. The letter to other departments reinforces the professionalism and hard work of the bulk of Islington staff and makes it clear that Islington staff in general should not have their careers blighted due to organisational and procedural mistakes of a previous era.

Islington has already initiated discussions with such voluntary organisations to doubly ensure that unsuitable people do not gain access to children in our care. We hope that the Department of Health will take the lead in ensuring proper regulation of such organisations.

The Association of Directors of Social Services are taking up regulatory issues direct with the Department of Health.

"We recommend that London Borough of Islington, as part of their new administrative arrangements, urgently review the arrangements for client files to make sure that a consistent approach is adopted and introduced across the Council as soon as possible".

A new format for case files is being phased in for all children and family files.

A rolling programme of file audits is planned to link with the computerisation of records. This will be completed by October 1995. The Chief Central Support and Finance Officer has set up a review of the current arrangements for security, storage and retrieval of files to ensure a standardised approach in light of the Department's recent restructuring. Earlier improvements were recognised by [redacted] following the 'Missing Files' saga.

"We recommend that Islington undertake an audit of its supervision policy and practice to review the extent to which supervision systems are working effectively"

A new supervision policy and supervision contracts have been introduced for all Social Services staff. All residential and fieldwork staff working with children should receive personal supervision time at least once a month under this system. A full audit is scheduled for October 1995 and in the meantime formal monitoring and spot checks are the responsibility of the department's Strategic Support Unit.

An Implementation Group has been set up to monitor the introduction of the new policy. Training needs of supervisors is part of their brief.

"We recommend that Islington undertakes a training needs analysis and a review of training priorities against the department's training plan for 1995/96"

Training was targeted at residential child care workers during 1993/94 to ensure that they had the skills to deal with the difficult young people they were looking after. A recently completed training needs analysis has led to 1995/96 training priority being given to residential child care managers and fieldwork managers in areas such as staff supervision, handling complaints and managing child protection issues.

In addition training for child care social workers is being closely linked to the professional competencies required for a safe, effective child protection service. Communication with children, working with children and their families and issues of neglect are being particularly targeted in the current year.

Each new Children & Families Social Work Team is taking part in a programme of team building which includes an analysis of training needs which will inform next year's training programme. Training in the new recording system and child protection procedures together with assessment and reviews of 'looked after' children are already underway.

"We understand that new recording system has already been introduced and that new file structures have been implemented. We recommend that Islington undertake an audit of the implementation of these new policies in the Autumn of 1995"

Recording practise will be routinely monitored by our new team of Child Protection Coordinators whose role is about assuring quality in child protection work. In addition spot checks are being carried out by the Council's Quality Unit and by an N.S.P.C.C Inspector seconded to work with Islington's Area Child Protection Committee. The policies and their implementation will be reviewed in Autumn 1995 in the light of these audits.

"We therefore recommend Islington urgently review whether the arrangements now put in place for professional audit and other matters will be sufficient to see the Department over the next two years and if not to make further time available through this crucial phase"

An N.S.P.C.C Inspector has been contracted for two days each week to audit professional standards through spot-sampling of case records and interviews with social workers and their managers. Islington is committed to increase this facility if it proves necessary.

<p>"We recommend Islington to review and strengthen the management of the personnel system to ensure overall control and quality checks are robust enough to meet child centred management requirements".</p>	<p>The Personnel Section has recently been reviewed and should now be in a better position to ensure proper controls and quality checks. This will be kept under constant review. Police checks and Department of Health Consultancy Register checks are still being processed centrally.</p>
<p>"We recommend that Islington Council formally review the equal opportunities policy in relation to its application to child care in order to remove, once and for all, any possible problems that this policy could create in addressing competency and management issues in Islington".</p>	<p>Islington Council is reviewing its Equal Opportunities Policy. The adoption of the Warner Report recommendations ensure that our recruitment and selection of child care workers is now of the highest standard. No risk will be tolerated in recruiting to child care posts.</p>
<p>"We recommend Islington now review the evidence presented and consider whether some or all of these names should be added to the Department of Health consultancy list</p>	<p>Meeting is set up with senior SSI/Department of Health staff for July 21st to review the list of names in the confidential annexe.</p> <p>It is unlikely that without reform of the Consultancy Register that many of these people will be eligible for inclusion. Some have already been turned down for inclusion despite grave concerns about alleged abusive behaviour.</p>

A.6

PLCKW

SPECIAL CASE REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE - 24th JULY 1995

At a meeting held at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors: [redacted] (Chair), [redacted] (Vice-Chair), [redacted], [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted].

ABSENT: Councillors: [redacted] and [redacted].

* 172 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - STANDING ORDER 26(1)(Ag.Item 4 (CE:HA))**
None.

* 173 **REPORT INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF CHILD CARE SERVICES IN ISLINGTON - IAN WHITE AND KATE HART/MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (Ag.Item 5/CSSO)**

RESOLVED:

(1) To note the introduction of the Chief Social Services Officer that much change and improvement had taken place since the report and the Social Services Inspectorate was very satisfied that the Council was now on the right track.

(2) That it be noted, arising from debate and the questions and concerns of members:-

- that a major management of change initiative had been and continues to be underway in the Department, with the introduction of new policies and procedures, new ways of recording, new staff supervision policies, social work specialisms, all of which had received acceptance from staff in the Department;
- that there had been problems in recruiting social workers to Child Care Services in Islington;
- that in the Departmental re-organisation many staff had opted to work in Adult Services rather than Childrens Services;
- the situation with regard to recruitment had improved with a good calibre of staff now being attracted;
- a review of the career grade scheme and packages offered to Social Work staff was underway;
- the introduction of social work specialisms and improved salary levels had helped in recruiting social work staff;

SPECIAL CASE REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE - 24TH JULY 1995

- efforts continued to be made to make Islington more competitive in the job market and to sell it in a better light as an attractive place to work;
- the White Report had mainly related to residential staff, not field staff; the Department's use of agency staff had been unacceptably high but this was now on the decrease; the vacancy factor was also much reduced;
- that it was felt that there had been an over-emphasis on the equal opportunities issues in the press and that instances of poor management had been a more major issue; a different culture of management now existed throughout the Department with a more clearly accountable structure now in place;
- morale in Homes was now good with staff feeling they have managers who will listen to them;
- that there had been 22 names of individual workers detailed in the report; there were also a number of unnamed agency staff;
- efforts were being made to get other local authorities to send lists of their own staff for checking; a number of authorities had already done so;
- detailed discussions had been undertaken with the Department of Health on the consultancy register, four of the twenty-two names were already included;
- that newly introduced good management practices would go a long way to ensuring that staff would be properly trained and developed and therefore have the required skills and competencies to undertake their jobs effectively; there are procedures to be used in situations where staff have difficulties in carrying out the required tasks in their jobs;
- that the number of local social work teams, currently 11, would be reviewed after 12 months
- that there were concerns at the very broad span of control and supervision of the Social Work Manager to the team managers and that the Council had been committed to review this situation, six months after implementation; that the timing and completion of the Review be organised so as to avoid delays in submitting the report to Committee.

CSSO(HM)

SPECIAL CASE REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE - 24TH JULY 1995

- a 'whistle blowing' mechanism was in place whereby staff could inform senior management of unusual events, etc; senior management would meet with all new starters to inform them that management is accessible and open to comment and complaints of staff.
- that all new social worker starters are Police checked, a procedure which has been more recently tightened up; the Chief Social Services Officer was to meet with those Social Work Agencies used by the Council to discuss the Council's expectations of them with regard to Police checks and the general change in the ethos and culture in Islington;
- that there would be on-going checks on childrens' files in neighbourhoods to ensure that they match up with good practice; Angel N.O. was to be reviewed in the interim;
- a full child protection audit was to be carried out next spring.
- (3) that Councillor [REDACTED] be circulated details of numbers of agency staff employed in the current and previous financial year together with costs. CSSO
(HM)
- (4) To note the oral report of Councillor [REDACTED] (Vice Chair) that she had visited a number of children's homes and that with the exemption of Park Place, soon to be refurbished, homes were in good condition; staff appeared very committed, complaints procedures were in place and individuals were aware of how to use the procedure.
- (5) That the Case Review Sub-Committee, for its part, considers that in the light of the events investigated in the Ian White Report, its findings, and the priority that Child Care Services in Islington requires, these services should be exempt for this year from Programme Plan Savings.
- (6) That a report back on progress in implementing the recommendations of the report be made to the Sub-Committee early in the New Year.
- (7) That a report back also be made on the effectiveness of the Social Worker Manager's broad span of control over 11 team leaders.
- (8) That the Sub-Committee accept the recommendations of the White Report and the management response. CSSO(HM)
- (9) That a list of all children's establishments be sent to all members of Case Review and Social Services and Health Policy Sub-Committees.



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