

SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

8TH AUGUST 1984  
APPENDIX 1 TO ITEM 1

REPORT OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE'S RESIDENTIAL REVIEW GROUP  
(Contributor: DSS)

1. Forward from the Chair

1.1 In writing the foreword to this report, I am acutely aware of two things. Firstly, the very real need for change in the children's residential sector and, secondly, the importance of staff (at all levels) feelings reasonably positive about these changes - for it will be far more difficult to implement them if staff are angry and resentful.

1.2 The fact that many staff may be feeling, at best, cynical about this review or, at worst, angry and extremely reluctant to co-operate, does not surprise me. There was the residential workers' industrial action which although (in my opinion) less harmful in Lewisham than in other boroughs, nonetheless did not achieve a great deal in terms of the workers' demands. Then there is the inevitable feeling that decisions have been made ages ago and that consultation hasn't actually amounted to very much. I, too, am disappointed by the shortcomings of our consultation and will be trying to find out how this could have been more effective. Perhaps most importantly is the fact that this review will affect people's working conditions and this is bound to create fear and anxiety for one's own future. The reasons behind the need for change can be divided into:-

1.2.1 Financial - the saving of money in the children's residential sector was a part of the 1984/85 budget. Until then we had been using an enormous amount of the total budget, nearly one third of it, on residential homes but on the children's side only about a third of our capacity was being used.

1.2.2 Policy changes - like greater use of fostering and development of intermediate treatment and other forms of preventive work.

1.2.3 Foreseeable demand - I think everyone knows the demand now is in quality rather than quantity. Our forecast is set out in Section 4.

1.3 It is perhaps, highly regrettable that we (here I refer mainly to politicians) tend to be quicker to initiate changes when financially rewarding but that is not to say the changes in themselves are necessarily bad - in this case they are potentially very positive.

1.4 The positive reasons for the children and young persons' benefit and, hopefully in time, the staff are:-

1.4.1 Fostering - not everyone believes the family is the answer to all our youngsters' difficulties but for the younger less disturbed, child a permanent family does seem to be able to provide more than the best run home.

1.4.2 Most kids in care come from the most deprived backgrounds and a disproportionate number of them are black. This would suggest a link with the problem of poverty - and although Social Services

cannot do much as an income maintenance agency, we can at best try not to reinforce it any more than necessary. The logical outcome is a switch of resources into the preventive sphere.

- 1.5 We must begin to build a positive philosophy of residential care - instead of the dustbin approach.
- 1.6 The starting point seems to me to be that, for some kids, residential care is wholly appropriate - and, indeed, some of the older kids quite consciously choose it as preferential to a family environment which they have outgrown.
- 1.7 So there is a positive need to help older kids who are having greater difficulties. This would be over periods shorter than hitherto and although it can be an uphill task it should be a rewarding one.

## 2. Introduction & Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to determine the pattern of future children's residential provision.
- 2.2 It has been prepared after feed back from staff on a consultation paper. That paper and notes of the review groups meetings have also been sent to the appropriate trades unions, but union discussions have yet to take place and there will be further staff discussion.
- 2.3 There are three components to the Review Group's task: children's residential provision, the appropriate management structure of the division and the adult homes. This report is about children's residential provision.

## 3. Philosophy and Strategy of Review

The Review Group believe that an effective review needs a shared philosophy and a longer term strategy within which progress can be made according to resource implications. These are outlined in the following sections.

## 4. The Needs

- 4.1 The Review Group consider that changes in society, in demand and in professional practice necessitate considerable changes in the concept and scale of Lewisham's residential provision. We have approached our task from the point of view of identifying young people's needs and devising provision to meet those needs. As needs change any provision devised must adapt to meet them.
- 4.2 For practical purposes our recommendations are divided into short term and longer term objectives.
- 4.3 Due to the policy of prevention and the development of fostering, the number of children in care has fallen as has the number placed in children's homes.
- 4.4 An examination of the types and numbers of places likely to be required in Lewisham homes needs to be set against a background of the declining number of children in care, particularly those in full residential care, as shown by the following statistics.

Category	Number of Children in Care as at			
	March 1981	March 1982	March 1983	March 1984
(a) Lewisham Homes*	117	86	63	39
(b) Private and Voluntary Homes and Hostels	142	119	99	53
(c) Regional Resource Centres	11	14	7	6
(d) Community Homes with Education	36	19	19	11
(e) Boarding Special Schools - Financial responsibility accepted by ILEA	8	8	8	5
(f) Boarding Special Schools - Financial responsibility NOT accepted by ILEA (paid by Lewisham)	37	45	42	43
(g) Boarding Schools	8	4	1	2
(h) Specialist homes (Mother & Baby, Mentally Handicapped, etc)	10	14	10	3
(i) Fostered and Lodgings	319	336	334	359
(j) Non residential placements	183	170	171	134
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>655</b>

\*Excluding Birch Grove

- 4.5 If Lewisham homes are properly staffed for the purposes outlined in paragraph 8.5., it will be seen from the above statistics, notably, categories 1 and 2, that the maximum potential number of young people who need to be catered for at any one time was, at the 31st March 1984, down to about 90 compared with 158 places (excluding Birch Grove) provided at present. In practical terms within the next twelve months, taking into account current trends, the actual number of young people suitable for placement in Lewisham homes at any one time is likely to be less than 60.
- 4.6 Those needing residential care nowadays need such care for relatively short periods, not all of their young lives. In fact "children's home" is misleading; those in residential care are all of secondary school age and mostly young people in the 14, 15, 16 year age group. As Lewisham youngsters they come from an urban environment and will return to such on leaving care. Hence we recommend that children are placed in or near Lewisham.
- 4.7 The foregoing dicatates less use of private and voluntary homes, most of which are well distanced from Lewisham, and we would wish to see these used only where they provide for an individual a form of care which cannot be provided in one of Lewisham's own homes.

4.8 It follows that Lewisham's own homes must be capable of meeting, as far as possible on an individual basis, the real needs of a variety of young people, whilst recognising them as individuals.

5. Philosophy and Long Term Objectives

5.1 Essentially the services will be geared to enhancing the ability of children, teenagers and young families to exercise choice over their lives in all spheres. It will be a service providing care and support and will not have as a primary goal the provision of custodial services.

5.1.1 Child/young person centred care

That is that everything should paramountly be geared to the individual young person's needs and progress. Other needs, the department's or Committee's for example, cannot be ignored but will not be the prime consideration in any sphere.

5.1.2 Flexibility of staff and systems

We attempt to regulate for all circumstances and then to be stuck with those regulations even when they work to no one's benefit. Young people's needs are too individual and varying to be foreseen accurately. Those concerned in meeting them need the authority and ability to adapt.

5.1.3 Unconditional acceptance of a young person as she/he is

This does not mean one allows or condones, for instance, thieving or violence or other unacceptable attitudes or behaviour. It does mean accepting that some young people will behave inappropriately and then one's responsibility and commitment to work with them to improve their - and everyone else's situation.

5.1.4 Open Communication (between all parties)

Communication which does not hide the real situation and which works across a total spectrum and between any given combination of interested parties - be they the young person, their family, residential workers, management or elected members.

5.1.5 Allowing, indeed encouraging young people to participate in services which affect their lives.

New legislation and developing organisations such as N.A.Y.P.I.C. and "Who Cares" increasingly advocate such views. Our service should encourage such participation and with skilled and professional carers, this could only work to everyone's advantage.

5.1.6 Freedom - for the young person to grow and make choices.

Young persons in care should not be denied the opportunities of decision making and freedom of choice.

5.1.7 Security and continuity (where desirable)

For the young person to feel secure, she/he will have to be understand exactly what is happening to them and why. The notion of time limited agreements between the young person, the family and the professionals is part of that security.

5.1.8 Care, not containment

Although care may at times involve control, a service which provides only containment is of little use to the young persons or their families. Any kind of residential care should include the philosophical standpoint that care-givers not only operate within the confines of the insitititon but reach out into the community in which the young person lives and belongs.

5.2 This approach to care and control may bring the service into conflict with the goals of other established institutions in society. Whilst acting within the law at all times and providing mandatory services, the residential service will give strong advocacy to the rights of children and young people. An important task of the service will be to remind government and society generally of their responsibilities to adopt policies which will reduce poverty, family stress and the need and opportunity for juvenile crime.

5.3 Particular attention will be paid to the needs and rights of all groups in residential care. This will involve positive discrimination in relation to those groups where this is necessary to bring about equality and to counter past deprivation.

5.4 In summary, it is aimed to evolve over the next five years a service which will reflect the positive values outlined under 5.1 in all day to day operations and will also take an active stance with regard to the underlying causes of individual problems and family breakdown. Some of the issues which need to be tackled to achieve these goals are described in Section 6 of this report.

5.5 Prevention and Community Care are seen as Major Goals.

A major thrust of both short and long term strategies is to shift resources from the traditional residential services to those which will help children, adolescents and growing families in their own homes. Essentially these services will be designed to enhance social and personal functioning and to prevent problems developing for people and communities.

5.6 An early improvement in preventive services is crucial to the development of longer term plans. Prevention in the community means reducing the need for expensive residential care, particular in the private and voluntary out-Borough Sector. A further reduction in these placements (as well as a reduced need for use of our own beds) will produce real money to improve services further.

6. A Strategy for the Next Five Years

6.1 The long term strategy for residential child care suggested here will be a component of broad plans for all children's services, and residential care in general. A shared starting point for all child care strategies is the philosophy outlined in Section 5 of this report.

6.2 A strategy to achieve long term goals will build in the achievement planned for the coming year (as described in Para 8.5) and will address the following:

6.3 Flexibility

The provision of social services is not a precise science. Needs and values change and ideas and practice evolve and improve. Previous planning has fallen into the trap of trying to shape the future; and large buildings and complex bureaucracies, obsolete at the time of commissioning, have been the result. The aim of this strategy should be to produce a service which is inherently flexible and responsive to community need. This is likely to mean small residential units, able and willing to combine with other services to provide new patterns of care to meet changing or more individual requirements. In particular all staff will need to be flexible and not constrained by rigid job descriptions and theories and values. This will have important implications for industrial relations remuneration, conditions of service and training.

6.4 Participation

The rights of both clients and staff at all levels to be involved in the design and management of services must be acknowledged if the best use is to be made of the human resources in the system. Ways of achieving involvement will need to be worked out early on with clients, their representatives and staff. The recognition of these rights will inevitably mean conflict and much debate about how to achieve goals. This should be welcomed and planning time must be available to accommodate this.

6.5 Industrial Relations

Major change is envisaged with considerable upheaval in the working life of many staff. It will be undesirable and destructive to move ahead without the early and continuing involvement of the Trades Unions. Consensus on all points should not be anticipated, but shared objectives are possible as a result of open communication and actual recognition. Clear thinking management, backed by a consistent member level approach will be essential. A highly skilled and effective (not elitist) service is envisaged, and the necessity to reward staff at a high level for these results must be recognised early on.

6.6 Management

New services cannot be developed without management time and new ideas will not appear unless Managers are flexible and welcoming

in innovation. There is a need to build up the residential services management team and to introduce new skills in the next five years to facilitate the strategies for both children's and adult services.

#### 6.7 Training

New ideas, attitudes and ways of working will require a heavy training input at all levels. A training strategy should be evolved to run parallel with plans for new services and training must anticipate the introduction of new methods.

#### 6.8 Research

Plans and innovation can be evolved through the application of experience and common sense, but there are gaps in the process which can only be filled by the systematic gathering and analysis of facts. It is also necessary to evaluate new services in effectiveness and value for money is to be proved. There are no resources in the department currently to carry out these tasks at a useful level.

#### 6.9 The Community

It is argued that to be effective, future services for children will need a firm base in local communities. It should be relevant to local need and influenced by those using and funding them. The Council's policies on decentralisation will be influential on how this is achieved, but systems will need to be developed to enable our residential care to interweave more closely with informal, everyday support and care in the community. In the latter part of the five year period this may mean a move away from specialisation as some homes become local child care resource centres.

#### 6.10 Finance

Prediction is difficult, but it is unlikely that substantial sums of wholly new money will be available in the next five years. The five year strategy will likely recommend a small, efficient residential service with money being freed for prevention and out-reach services. Better grades, skills and equipment will be costly and totally new services will require 'pump-priming' cash from outside in order to free money in the longer term. An analysis of financial savings and requirements must be a first priority in producing a detailed strategy.

### 7. Resources

7.1 This is the first stage of the complete residential review. The children's residential service is the only section of the review which will release resources to achieve the full review.

7.2 If we are to produce a service which adequately meets the needs of residents, money released by the review must be re-directed into:-

- (a) Significantly improved officer staffing levels in the proposed children's homes with a possible reduction in manual workers.

- (b) A contribution towards the cost of any national settlement arising from the current joint inquiry.
  - (c) Establishing a staff 'care bank' as outlined in paragraph 8.6.
  - (d) Improvement of management support to homes across the Service to assist staff in the increasingly difficult task they are undertaking.
  - (e) Additional staff in the adult service.
  - (f) Better pay for staff, particularly those at the bottom end of the salary scale.
  - (g) More money for training particularly qualifying and post-qualifying training.
  - (h) Additional support to help homes, through their staff, to meet their agreed objectives. This would vary from home to home and therefore, need to be worked out between management and staff for each home.
  - (i) Additional support services to prevent reception into care and to assist young people to leave care.
- 7.3 Without the positive savings achievable by this review, and sufficient re-allocation of them for the above purposes, the predicted and desired outcome can not happen.
8. The Shorter Term
- 8.1 A significant number of young people in residential care will be 18 within the next 18 months to two years and therefore the proposals in this review are primarily directed towards those not yet in care.
- 8.2 Young people may come into care because family relationships have irretrievably broken down. Intervention at an earlier stage with the necessary resources available in the community could enable the young person and their family to remain together.
- 8.3 A working party set up by the Residential Review Group has suggested a new type of non-residential assessment service aimed at supporting fieldworkers in that task. The main elements are that the service must be easily accessible, would reach out into the community, be applicable to young people who are not in the Council's care or before the Juvenile Courts and be an enabling and resource providing, rather than elitist diagnostic agency.
- 8.4 Further details need to be worked out before this suggestion can have the status of a proposal. The Review Group generally accept that a service which can facilitate more suitable solutions for young peoples problems is valuable in both human and managerial terms.
- 8.5 For those young people who are recieved into residential care, much greater emphasis needs to be placed on time limited contracts with both



the young person and their family. Residential care should be seen as an episode in a young person's life, with a specific task to be undertaken and with staff with the skills and training, and the right numbers.

- 8.6 Since the mid 70's there has been little increase in staffing in any homes, despite a continual and welcome reduction in the working week, coupled with an increased leave entitlement. Shortfall in staffing has been coped with by the use of agency staff and heavy overtime working by many staff. Both these situations were regarded as unacceptable by management and the Trade Unions and this was reflected in the return to work agreement made in February 1984.
- 8.7 As the residential child care services of the future will be dealing with the most difficult adolescent, this alone will require more staff.
- 8.8 Both the above factors indicate that the staffing proposals for the homes which will form the new service must have more staff coupled with greater experience and training.
- 8.9 It is also essential that consideration is given to establishing a pool of workers in a 'care bank' who are available as and when required to cover unavoidable gaps which were previously covered by the use of agency staff. Officers are making enquiries of other authorities who run a similar service, as to its operation.
- 8.10 Shape of the future service
  - 8.10.1 Whilst there is the occasional need for a residential placement for a younger child, this is unpredictable in demand, and the needs are so varied as to make it unlikely that one establishment could meet them all. It is proposed therefore that the service does not provide for such children but continues to seek placements in the private and voluntary sector, aiming to find the most suitable placement as near to the Borough as possible.
  - 8.10.2 All resources (with the exception of provision for mentally handicapped children) should be focussed on the 13 plus age range with homes undertaking a variety of tasks within this age group.
  - 8.10.3 There will continue to be a need for an emergency unit, receiving young people via the Courts, on place of safety orders or through sudden placement breakdowns (own family, foster family, other residential placement).
  - 8.10.4 It is anticipated that some of the last group will be avoided through early intervention of the assessment service. Following admission, the assessment workers will work with the staff of the reception unit, identifying needs and assisting in their realisation. This is crucial to the dynamic functioning of the unit. Family placement preparation is already being undertaken with adolescents at Brownhill Road and Committee have already approved its continuation. As at present however the task will not be exclusive to Brownhill Road and young people will be prepared in other settings as appropriate. Long term work with disturbed younger adolescents is a very specialised task which has been undertaken successfully in the past and it is recommended that this should continue but within the Borough. These

young people often have special educational needs and the present location within the London Borough of Bromley makes the task more difficult.

It is proposed that there should be three units for adolescents catering for their overall needs leading to leaving care. The skills of working with young people to independence will be required in all three establishments if the young people are to make a success of that independence and therefore the staff must have the skills of working both with individuals and in a group. These three homes should jointly provide for up to 30 young people.

Birch Grove is a most unsuitable building for the ages and numbers of mentally handicapped children. It is proposed to seek a pair of houses which could accommodate the same number, in two groups in order to give the children more individual care. There would need to be access between the two houses.

8.11 Use of outside resources

There will continue to be a short term need to provide for young people already placed in the private and voluntary sector, though that number should continue to contract. Specialised accommodation in Regional Assessment Centres (including secure accommodation), CHES, specialised facilities (including those for younger children) and homes in other locations will continue to be used but in reduced numbers.

8.12 Proposed Lewisham Service

Sydenham Hill	-	Reception Home
Brownhill Road	-	Family Placement
Westbourne Drive	-	Disturbed Younger Adolescents
39 Bromley Road )	-	Older adolescents
Kingfisher Square )	-	
Desmond Street		
Pair of Houses	-	Mentally Handicapped Children
Form and location		
not yet confirmed	-	Assessment

8.13 Buildings for which function not yet decided

Building

Recommendation

Liskeard Lodge

Closure and disposal. There has been national recognition of the fact that removing children and young persons from the community into residential care purely for assessment purposes is inappropriate. Admissions to Liskeard Lodge have dropped dramatically.

Cordwell Road

or

- a. 'Amersham Family Centre'
- b. Closure and disposal

The geographical location of this home has proved ill suited for the task of residential care. Attempts at providing residential care for varying client groups have met with limited success.

Leeways

Closure and disposal. The numbers of pre-adolescent children requiring residential care has fallen dramatically within the advent of increased fostering resources. Being situated within the London Borough of Bromley means that access to I.L.E.A. special schools is limited and problematical.

Scotts Lane

Closure and disposal. This home is geographically ill suited for providing residential care, being situated out Borough and not having ready access to I.L.E.A. special schools.

Oakwood Avenue

This home to continue in its present form until the young people there are ready for an alternative.

Then closure and disposal.

Birch Grove

Closure when alternative premises obtained and adapted.

Hollydale

or

- a. Assessment Centre
- b. 'Amersham Family Centre'

8.14 Timetable

Once the staffing of the proposed units is agreed new structure to come into being as soon as possible to increase job satisfaction for staff for better service for young people. There may be staff who feel unable or unwilling to take on a new task in the proposed service, and it is essential that satisfactory alternatives are made for them.

9. Financial Implications

The Committee's agency services budget for 1984-85 reflects a reduction of £507,000 in the cost of children's residential placements to be achieved by increasing the occupancy level in the Council's homes. Estimates of the direct savings resulting from the review and rationalisation of homes will be reported to the Committee in due course once a more detailed assessment of the proposals has been carried out and evaluated and negotiations taken place with the staff side.

10. ACTION REQUIRED

To consider the report of the Residential Review Group and to agree the pattern it outlines for future childrens' residential provision and concomitant supportive services.