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1. INTRODUCTION, REMIT AND METHOD

Introduction

1.1 Barlavington Manor was a private children's home in West Sussex. It was used by RBKC from 1966 until its closure in 1984. After the closure, three young people in the care of RBKC continued to live with the proprietors, who had moved to Rotherbridge Farm in 1979.

1.2 In February 1997 a young woman who had been in the care of RBKC sought access to her case records and, in the course of reading them, alleged that she had been physically and sexually abused while placed at Barlavington Manor. The Metropolitan Police opened an investigation and passed it to the West Sussex police. Three further former residents of Barlavington Manor approached the Council stating that they had been abused while placed there, and that they wished to make complaints against the Council for failing in its duty to care for them. The police wrote to all former residents for whom they were able to find an address, and their investigation produced further statements alleging ill-treatment. (The letter is attached as Appendix A.) Following the criminal investigation, the Crown Prosecution Service decided not to proceed with any charges. This decision enabled the Council to proceed with setting up its own independent enquiry, which I was appointed to undertake on 20 January 1999. I was asked to conduct the enquiry in two stages. The first stage comprised interviewing all complainants who were willing to meet me, reading RBKC case files on children placed at Barlavington Manor, and submitting a progress report and method statement. It was completed on 29 April 1999. This report marks the completion of the second and final stage.

1.3 In all, twelve former residents of Barlavington Manor who were in the care of RBKC have made allegations about their treatment there. Some allegations were first made to the Council, some to the police, and some to me in the course of the enquiry.

1.4 In the course of the enquiry, I have interviewed twelve former residents of Barlavington Manor, 23 people who were employed by RBKC Children's and Social Services Departments, ten people who worked at Barlavington Manor and seven others. In a very few cases, interviews were conducted by telephone. I have also read case files of children placed there by RBKC and

other relevant papers. I would like to record my grateful thanks to everyone who agreed to be interviewed. I also wish to record my gratitude to officers of RBKC who have assisted with the enquiry.

Remit

1.5 My remit was to form my best judgement as to the truth of the allegations made against the owners and staff of Barlavington Manor and to examine RBKC's discharge of its responsibilities towards the children whom it placed there. In particular, I was to examine whether RBKC had, either before making placements or during the placements, any concerns similar to the allegations subsequently made, whether the Council received any similar complaints during the placements, whether appropriate action was taken on any concerns or complaints, whether the placements were appropriately monitored, whether the Council made appropriate payments for the children's care and monitored how the money was spent, and whether officers made appropriate judgements about children's contact with their parents. In forming judgements about the Council's performance, I was asked to take account of the circumstances prevailing at the time. The remit is attached as Appendix B.

Method

1.6 The information on which this report is based comes primarily from case files and interviews. Some interviews were conducted at Kensington Town Hall, others at the interviewee's home or place of work. The interviews were fairly informal conversations in which I asked some specific questions and encouraged interviewees to tell me of any memories which they considered significant. Some people interviewed chose to be accompanied by a friend. I took notes during the interviews and wrote them up soon afterwards. I have not asked the interviewees to sign copies of my records of the interviews. These records do not purport to be proofs of evidence, and it cannot be assumed that people interviewed would be willing to give evidence in a court of law.

1.7 I believe that there would have been a general file on Barlavington Manor itself in addition to the case files on residents. A former Director of Social Services told me he was sure that, when he left in 1987, there would have been a "Director's file" on Barlavington Manor. There is now no such

file recorded in the archives index. This is in no way surprising. Files no longer exist for other homes which were used in the past, and Barlavington Manor has been closed for a number of years. It is quite usual to destroy "policy" as distinct from client files when they are no longer active, and a long-serving member of the administrative staff of the Department confirms that this was done. It is, however, unfortunate for this enquiry that the file no longer exists, since it seems likely that any concerns about Barlavington Manor as a resource would have been noted in such a file along with a record of any action taken.

1.8 It was part of my remit to form my best judgement as to the truth of the allegations which have been made, and I have therefore indicated the extent to which I found what I was told to be persuasive. My opinions are, however, not analogous to judicial findings, and I have tried to avoid using terms which might give such an impression.

1.9 In addition to using material gathered from case files and interviews, I have also referred to statute law and guidance in force at the time, a certain amount of contemporary professional literature, and my own professional experience, which is briefly summarised below.

- 1964-1966 Child Care Officer, Somerset County Council
- 1966-1970 General Secretary, Association of Child Care Officers
- 1970-1973 Assistant General Secretary, British Association of Social Workers
- 1973-1977 Assistant Controller of Social Services (Development), London Borough of Harrow
- 1977-1988 Controller of Social Services, London Borough of Harrow

1.10 I would like at this point to make a few observations about the content of the case files. They contain formal documents, such as reports of case reviews, court reports, and committee reports recommending the assumption of parental rights and duties. There are also copies of correspondence. Copies of letters filed by the sender are not necessarily conclusive evidence that the letter was actually sent; copies of letters and other documents received by the Council are of course more reliable. There are also summary records of invoices received and paid and of requests for and approval of other items of expenditure. Finally, there are social workers' records. These of course record the writer's perceptions rather than established facts, but they

do generally indicate what the writer selected as being significant. Some of this recording appears to be reasonably contemporaneous. Other recording takes the form of periodic summaries where some time has elapsed between the summarising and the earlier events mentioned. It is important to realise that case files were not routinely used as a method of communicating information within the Department, and there is generally no indication on the file as to who has read any particular document or recording. Some documents are, of course, internal written communications, but, apart from these, a file entry noting a concern does not establish that the concern was communicated, and the absence of an entry about it does not prove that it was not discussed.

2. SUMMARY OF THE ALLEGATIONS

2.1 In broad summary, the allegations against the proprietors are that they physically ill-treated residents, used cruel or inappropriate punishments and inappropriate methods of control, verbally humiliated children in their care, provided an unacceptably low standard of food, clothing and general care, diverted payments made for the care of the children to their own use, maintaining a very affluent lifestyle which contrasted starkly with what was provided for the children, used children as unpaid or very low-paid labour, again to support their own affluent lifestyle, and discouraged contacts between children and their families. There have been no allegations that the proprietors or any members of their family sexually abused any of the children.

2.2 There are allegations against one member of staff in particular of physical ill-treatment and cruel punishment, and some criticisms of other staff. In the area of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct, the following statements/allegations have been made:

- that a male member of staff sexually abused a male resident, but the male resident concerned has made no complaint about this or any other matter;
- that four of the female residents were indecently assaulted by the husband of a staff member (he was an 'approved Social Uncle' to one of these residents);
- that male residents frequently had sexual intercourse with female residents (none of these female residents wishes to make a formal complaint against these male residents, considering them to be fellow victims of the abusive regime under which they lived);
- that during a Barlavington Manor holiday staff and children watched 'blue movies'.

2.3 There are also complaints that girls' sexual development was dealt with very inappropriately (there is an allegation that girls as young as nine or ten were put on the contraceptive pill, or given contraceptive injections), and that

their needs for sanitary protection and bras were ignored or dealt with publicly in cruel and embarrassing ways.

2.4 There are many criticisms of RBKC staff: that they visited infrequently, failed to spot the abuse which was taking place, and reported to the proprietors complaints made to them by the children. A few of the former residents are aware that one officer's role included regular visits to Barlavington Manor, primarily to attend reviews, and find it impossible to believe that he was unaware that the proprietors were making excessive profits out of the placement arrangements. This is, however, conjecture on their part. Some former residents also criticise the Council's general handling of their lives, believing that they should have been fostered or adopted or kept in contact with their families, rather than being placed at Barlavington Manor.

2.5 All former residents whom I have interviewed consider that their subsequent lives have been at best blighted and at worst ruined by their experiences at Barlavington Manor.

3. THE CIRCUMSTANCES PREVAILING AT THE TIME

Statutes and Guidance

3.1 Appendix C summarises relevant law and statutory guidance in force during the period when Barlavington Manor was operating as a private children's home. All the material in the appendix is relevant to an understanding of the legal context, and to judging the appropriateness of the local authority's actions, but I would pick out the following points as having particular importance.

- i. Throughout the period, local authorities were under a duty to further the best interests of or to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their care.
- ii. Throughout the period, private children's homes were unregulated. They were not required to be registered or to be inspected. Regulations which governed the conduct of local authority and voluntary children's homes did not apply to them.
- iii. A duty to review at six-monthly intervals the cases of children in care placed in private children's homes came into force on 1 January 1971.
- iv. Procedures for investigating allegations of abuse of children in residential establishments were in general not developed before 1986.
- v. Throughout the period, there was no statutory complaints procedure available to children in care and non-statutory complaints procedures were sketchy or non-existent.
- vi. There was and still is no statutory regulation or registration of residential child care staff.

The Role of the Child Care Officer/Field Social Worker

3.2 From 1948 to 1971, local authorities provided child care services through their Children's Departments, whose chief officer was the Children's Officer. Field social workers in Children's Departments carried the designation child care officer. RBKC's Children's Department dates from

1965, when the Royal Borough, along with other London Boroughs, came into being and took over child care functions previously discharged by the London County Council. On 1 April 1971, the Royal Borough's Social Services Department was established, and its child care officers were redesignated as social workers and deployed, together with fieldworkers from the former Welfare and Mental Health services, in area-based teams covering all client groups.

3.3 Throughout the period covered by the enquiry, it was RBKC's policy that all children in care, wherever placed, should be on the caseload of a child care officer/social worker. There is no evidence from the case files I have read that the Council ever asked the area authority (West Sussex) to undertake supervision of children placed at Barlavington Manor on its behalf. For the care authority to retain this responsibility, as RBKC did, would generally have been considered better practice

3.4 The role of the child care officer/social worker appears from the case files and from my interviews with some of them to have changed relatively little in its fundamentals over the period. Child care officers/social workers were particularly concerned with the relationship between the child's past, present and future, with the child's understanding of his/her early life, memories of parents no longer in contact, relationships with parents who were still in touch, with the effect of past experiences on the child's present feelings, behaviour and relationships, and with planning as far as possible for a secure future for the child. Great importance was attached to stability, that is, to preventing as far as possible the breakdown of placements, so that the child might develop a sense of security. Supporting the people actually caring for the child was, therefore, an important part of the role. In comparison with present day expectations, there was less emphasis on active monitoring of all dimensions of a child's development. There was also in my view a greater tendency to seek to understand children's present feelings and behaviour as something strongly influenced by their experiences in their earliest years. The attitude to child protection was also different. Child care officers/social workers were certainly involved and sometimes proactive in removing from their homes children who were suffering from neglect or ill-treatment, but the general presumption was that children who were in care were already protected, by virtue of being in care. It is also worth noting that standard textbooks for child care officers and child care students, written in the middle and late 1960s, concentrate on preventive social casework, on the process of

receiving children into care, on working with the families of children in care and on fostering. They have relatively little to say about investigating allegations of ill-treatment and neglect, about bringing children before the court for their protection, or about using residential care and working with residential child care colleagues.

3.5 It is important to be aware of the generally accepted role of the social worker at the relevant time when making judgements about the Council's discharge of its responsibilities to children placed at Barlavington Manor.

RBKC Children's and Social Services Departments

3.6 When the Children's Department was established in 1965 (on the abolition of the London County Council), there were 760 children in care. (In 1976 there were still more than 720 children in care, but by 1987 this figure had reduced to a little over 200.) The Royal Borough had few foster homes, and Kensington and Chelsea was and remains a difficult area in which to recruit foster carers. RBKC inherited from the LCC two large residential nurseries and several other children's homes, one of which (Beechholme) was a very large establishment. Nevertheless, only 12% of the children in RBKC's care were placed in its own homes, and, given the shortage of foster homes, large numbers of children were placed in private, voluntary and other local authorities' establishments. (Children's homes inherited from the LCC by RBKC would also have contained children in the care of other inner London boroughs.) Few of the establishments inherited from the LCC were within the Borough boundaries.

3.7 The general quality of resources available to RBKC for the care of children was poor, at least by today's standards. The Children's Department nevertheless enjoyed a good reputation, based on its fieldwork services, and was more successful than most in attracting qualified social workers to fill its child care officer posts. As in other authorities, caseloads were high by today's standards. A social worker who came to the Department in 1968 as a newly qualified child care officer told me that he had a caseload which included about 40 adolescent boys and some adolescent girls. It appears that workloads remained relatively high even at the end of the period under review. Another social worker recalled that a workload study carried out in 1987 showed her carrying 32 cases, most of which, she said, would have merited a high weighting in the system now in use.

3.8 Many of the former staff interviewed explained that private and voluntary homes were generally held in higher regard than the Council's own homes. They were seen as offering more stability, with less movement of both children and staff. This was also the view of the person who assumed responsibility for RBKC's children's homes when he was appointed Assistant Children's Officer in 1968 and retained it until his retirement from the post of Assistant Director of Social Services in 1985. He was involved in closing unsuitable establishments inherited from the LCC, including the two residential nurseries, and in planning and opening new homes. In his view private and voluntary homes were able to offer a better standard of care because they were in a position to decide which children to accept, whereas RBKC's own homes were not able to refuse children for whom no other placement could be found, so that inexperienced staff were trying to cope with very difficult children. He said that children would be placed in private and voluntary homes, even though there were vacancies in the Council's own homes. This interviewee said that his view at the time was that these vacancies should be retained as far as possible for use when no other placement could be found, or when children were rejected by other homes.

3.9 It is clear that, until 1984-85, the cost of placements for children in care was not an issue. The child's apparent needs were the predominant consideration, and there is much evidence in the files of the Council's willingness to incur expenditure seen as beneficial, eg to pay for private education or towards the cost of driving lessons. I came across no instance of a placement being turned down on the grounds of cost. This does not mean that there was no monitoring of expenditure. The case files show assiduous monitoring of requests for approval of expenditure by administrative staff. The person who was Area Administrative Officer for the SSD's North Area from 1971 described her role in this respect as being to check expenditure for justification and for compliance with legislation and Council practice. It seems clear, however, that expenditure on individual children in care was not monitored against budget provision. I did not gain a clear picture of how budgetary control was exercised. My impression is that experienced and able senior administrators were adept at forecasting expenditure and at using virement to bring budgets and expenditure into alignment.

3.10 In contrast with contemporary practice, contracts for the placement of children consisted simply of an agreement to pay the establishment's fees in

return for the care of the child. There was no breakdown of the services to be provided, and when the proprietors of Barlavington Manor billed the Council for extras not covered by their fees, such claims might be queried but were generally met. General accusations of profiteering are, therefore, difficult to pin down in any precise way. I will of course deal with these issues in the sections of the report which consider the allegations made and the Council's response to any concerns it had at the time.

3.11 The 1965 London Government reorganisation appears to have had relatively little effect on the child care services. In contrast, the 'Seeborn' reorganisation of 1971 had a considerable impact. Child care work became the responsibility of generic fieldwork teams whose proportion of qualified staff was lower than in the Children's Department. The Social Services Department's policy was not to appoint unqualified social workers, but this made for recruitment difficulties. The workload of the new Department increased substantially, partly owing to the implementation of new legislation such as the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the Children and Young Persons Act 1969. There were unallocated cases. A person who joined the Department in 1973 as a newly qualified social worker in Central Area remembers being the only qualified social worker in her team, although others joined later. A former Assistant Director referred to there being a huge loss of specialist knowledge when the Social Services Department was set up. These problems were common to many authorities, but this was also a time of substantial social problems in Kensington and Chelsea. Homelessness was a major problem. There were race riots, and there was 'Rachmanism'.

3.12 The Social Services Department was initially structured on functional lines, with Divisions for field social work, residential services, community services (including day care and domiciliary services), and administration. The fieldwork division was organised geographically. Specialist adviser posts, outside this structure, were created for each main client group, and a Senior Child Care Officer was appointed Child Care Adviser. He had qualified as a Child Care Officer in 1963 and then worked for the LCC and RBKC Children's Departments, becoming a Senior Child Care Officer in about 1965. While seeking out alternative placements in 1965 or 1966, he was put in touch with Barlavington Manor. He attended most of the reviews held there and was the Department's primary point of contact with that establishment until its closure.

3.13 At some time after 1976 there was a reorganisation of the Residential and Community Services Divisions, and the Assistant Director (Residential) became responsible as Assistant Director for a division which managed all children's services other than fieldwork. At that stage the Child Care Adviser joined this division. Fieldwork services continued to be organised geographically and 'generically' within their separate division.

4. A BRIEF HISTORY OF BARLAVINGTON MANOR

4.1 Barlavington Manor is a large red brick, probably early twentieth century house, in rural surroundings, about two miles south of Petworth in West Sussex. It has extensive grounds which include garden, grassland and woodland areas. In addition to the main house, there is a complex of buildings generally known as The Lodge around three sides of a yard, next to the entrance gate.

4.2 The house was owned by a married couple (referred to in this report as Proprietors 1 (the husband) and 2 (the wife)), who opened a private children's home there probably in 1965. (That is when children from Barlavington Manor first appear in the local primary school's admission records.) They had three children, a son referred to in this report as Proprietor 3, another son and a daughter, but only Proprietor 3 was involved in running the children's home. (Further references in this report to the proprietors' son are to the son who was not involved in running the home.) The following information about how they came to open Barlavington was given to me by Proprietor 3. Proprietor 2 had been a nurse and had been involved in child care. Soon after their marriage, in about 1956, Proprietors 1 and 2 became involved in fundraising for an organisation helping orphaned and abandoned Polish refugee children who were in camps in Germany. Later, a friend who was running a private children's home in Devon asked them to go there and help him in this task. They stayed there for eighteen months, enjoying the work but not seeing eye to eye with the proprietor. They then decided to open a children's home of their own in a part of the country with which they had connections, and bought Barlavington Manor for the purpose.

4.3 Proprietor 3 also confirmed that Proprietor 1, who is sometimes referred to in case files as Commander [surname], had served in the Royal Navy during the war. He was by profession a naval architect and had spent most of his life building and working on boats.

4.4 Proprietors 1 and 2 were described by most people I interviewed as very middle class. Their son kept polo ponies and played polo at nearby Cowdray Park. Proprietor 1 was in the early 1970s a governor of a local Church of England First School. Many witnesses told me that the family lived an affluent lifestyle. Both staff employed to look after the children and the former residents described the set-up at Barlavington Manor as very

“upstairs downstairs” with the Proprietors living in style in the “upstairs” part of the house and staff and children living in, as it were, the servants quarters, with distinctively different standards of furnishing and food in the two parts of the house.

4.5 The first child placed at Barlavington by RBKC went there in 1966. I do not have precise information about other authorities’ use of the home. There was some use by other London Boroughs. Its use by local authorities in its own region (West Sussex, Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton) appears to have been heavier in the earlier part of its history.

4.6 Only a part of the main house was used for the care of children. The rest was used by the proprietors as their private residence. At that time there seem to have been 15 children living there. Very early on, The Lodge was also brought into use as part of the children’s home, and numbers grew to about 25-30 children.

4.7 Proprietor 3 says that he started working with his parents at Barlavington in 1977. This was work he had always wanted to do and he had taken a social sciences degree for the purpose.

4.8 In October 1977 the Commission for Racial Equality decided to hold a formal investigation into Barlavington Manor, having received evidence that Proprietors 1 and 2 would not admit ‘coloured’ children. Proprietors 1 and 2 maintained that they had accepted a number of children of minority ethnic origin, but also argued that attitudes in the local community would present difficulties to coloured children. In April 1979 the Commission published its report, finding that Proprietors 1 and 2 had operated racially discriminatory practices, issuing a non-discrimination notice and requiring the proprietors to provide the Commission with information about future admissions and proposed admissions, to enable the Commission to monitor Barlavington’s observance of its requirements.

4.9 On 1 September 1979 Proprietors 1 and 2 moved from Barlavington Manor to Rotherbridge Farm, which stands beside the river Rother at the end of a lane, about a mile from Petworth. They took with them from Barlavington four children, all in the care of RBKC, who were born between 1964 and 1966 and were admitted to Barlavington between 1966 and 1972 at ages ranging from six years old down to 13 months. These were all children

who had little or no contact with their families. Responsibility for Barlavington Manor passed at this stage to Proprietor 3.

4.10 Proprietor 3 told me that this was a difficult time. Local authorities were cutting back on their use of residential care. Barlavington had had a very stable group of children, but numbers were now dropping as children grew up and left. The only referrals he was getting were of very troubled children, who were very disruptive and rocked the boat. There was arson and serious shoplifting, and the children who had been there for some time were sucked into this. Barlavington had never been run on therapeutic lines and was not suitable for the children who were now being referred. With numbers dropping, the home was ceasing to be financially viable, and it became necessary to try to develop other uses for the main building, and to consider closing the home.

4.11 From 1982, or possibly earlier, only The Lodge was in use as a children's home. The last new placement made by RBKC was in 1980. By June 1984, RBKC had only three children, all boys, still at Barlavington Manor.

4.12 Some time in 1984 the three young people remaining at Rotherbridge Farm from the four who had transferred there in 1979 were moved into a flat in Easebourne which Proprietors 1 and 2 rented from the Cowdray Estate. In September 1984 Barlavington Manor itself was closed and the three young men in RBKC's care who were still there moved to a cottage in the grounds of Rotherbridge Farm. One of them left soon afterwards. The other two moved into the main farmhouse at Rotherbridge Farm in July 1985. One of them stayed there until Christmas 1987, by which time he was 17 years old. The other says that he stayed there until he was 20 or 21, which would have been around 1989 or 1990.

4.13 Appendix D provides a chronology of Barlavington Manor.

5. HOW RBKC VIEWED BARLAVINGTON MANOR AT THE TIME

5.1 The Council's former Child Care Adviser told me that he was told about Barlavington Manor by a Commander R, another former Naval Officer, who ran a nearby private children's home, The Old Rectory at Singleton. He says that he then visited Barlavington Manor in 1965 or 1966 with a colleague. This colleague recalls that Proprietor 1 seemed a gentle, kindly man. She understood that Proprietor 2 had been a nurse. Proprietor 2 seemed the more organised, stronger and more determined. Their children were at boarding schools but were at home during the holidays. They seemed to be a family, able to offer a family atmosphere and positive experiences of bringing up their own children. Barlavington therefore compared favourably with other children's homes which she knew, such as Beechholme (which RBKC had inherited from the LCC) the NCH cottage homes at Harpenden, and other RBKC homes where staff seemed unable to cope and suffered breakdowns. Proprietors 1 and 2 seemed refreshingly normal people compared with others she had met who ran small private or voluntary homes. It was good that there was a man around the place.

5.2 The former Child Care Adviser reminded me that no police checks were then available on staff or proprietors, but said that he would have "sussed the place out" and would have made enquiries of the area authority (West Sussex County Council).

5.3 A former Senior Social Worker, who is still employed by RBKC, echoed some of the above comments in saying that Proprietors 1 and 2 initially established their credibility on the basis of having satisfactorily brought up their own three children.

5.4 A common thread running through many comments from former RBKC staff was that Barlavington Manor offered continuity. In the words of one of them, they seemed to be able to hang onto the children placed there. This is true. I have found few instances of a young person being thrown out on grounds of unacceptable or unmanageable behaviour. Another positive comment was that Barlavington did not seem institutional. This comment at first puzzled me slightly. An Assistant Social Worker who had a lengthy contact with Barlavington and probably visited it more often than anyone else except the Child Care Adviser, said it was run rather like a prep school except

that children did not go home for holidays, and it is clear to me that there was a degree of regimentation in the regime. Those who said that it did not seem institutional explained that they meant that the children seemed to have some freedom to roam around and did not display the grossly institutionalised behaviour often found, for example in residential nurseries, where children would cling to visiting social workers who were strangers to them, often asking: Are you my mummy/daddy?

5.5 Many former staff have expressed some surprise that serious allegations have been made against Barlavington Manor, on the basis that there were other homes in use at the time about which they would have found such allegations much more likely.

5.6 Other points considered favourable were the attractive rural setting and the presence of a variety of animals.

5.7 At least until the mid 1970s, the Children's, and subsequently the Social Services Department regarded Barlavington Manor as a reasonably suitable placement for children who had little prospect of an early return to their families, and who appeared able to adapt to rural life. This was the view of the Department's Child Care Adviser who chaired assessment case conferences on children coming into care, and advised on placements. It was also the view of other staff to whom I spoke. Several social workers drew my attention to the marked social difference between the proprietors and the children placed, and also said they were left in no doubt that the Proprietors viewed the home as a business. In later years social workers' views of Barlavington tended to become more critical. One reason may have been that the home appeared increasingly behind the times, another that the children were generally older and problems in relation to their care were becoming more apparent. Proprietor 3's assumption of responsibility for Barlavington Manor in 1979 was generally welcomed at the time. A Senior Social Worker commented that Proprietor 3's views on child care seemed closer to those of the Department. He was also described as more laid back, and more likely to consult the Department about issues relating to the children.

5.8 This section of the report has concentrated on the views expressed by former RBKC staff when they were explaining why the Department felt that Barlavington Manor was an appropriate placement for some children in care.

There were also adverse comments, which will be considered in relation to the complaints made by former residents.

6. THE FORMER RESIDENTS

6.1 This section gives brief information about each of the former residents.

Child 1

6.2 She was born in 1964 and was received into care at the age of three months, having been left in homeless families accommodation by her mother. She was placed in a residential nursery in Bexhill-on-Sea. Her mother visited her at the nursery, agreed that she should be placed for adoption, and has not seen her since. In 1968, she was placed with foster carers with a view to adoption, but this placement broke down. She was removed after seven months, first to a temporary foster home for five days, and then to Barlavington Manor. RBKC assumed rights and powers of parents on 12 February 1968.

6.3 Child 1 stayed at Barlavington until September 1979, when she moved with Proprietors 1 and 2 to Rotherbridge Farm. From September 1983 she attended a one-year full-time residential course at an agricultural college. Her placement at Rotherbridge Farm was kept open for her. In 1982 she became 18 and left care. At the end of her residential course she returned to Rotherbridge Farm. In October 1984 she moved from Rotherbridge, with three other young people who had been living there, to the flat in Easebourne which Proprietors 1 and 2 rented from the Cowdray Estate. From there she moved, some time after her 21st birthday, to a living-in job at a local private hospital. Her case was closed in September 1985.

6.4 At the end of 1989 child 1 approached the Department with questions about her life during and after the time she was in care. In 1996 the case was again re-opened as she had been in contact with her maternal great aunt, and her mother was thinking about initiating contact with her.

6.5 She has made written complaints to the Council, and I have interviewed her.

Child 2

6.6 He was born in 1963. He was received into care at the age of 6 months, his mother having left him in care of a neighbour and disappeared. He was

placed in a residential nursery in Portsmouth. He moved from there to Barlavington Manor in 1967 and stayed there until 1978. He had many subsequent placements before being discharged from care on reaching 18.

6.7 He has not made a written complaint to the Council, but has made contact with the Enquiry and described ill treatment at Barlavington.

Child 3

6.8 She was born in 1966 and received into care nine days later and placed in a small private children's home in Dorset. Her move from there to Barlavington Manor in 1967 appears to have been precipitate. At Barlavington she was always called by a different name which was not in fact her own, apparently to avoid confusion with another child of the same name.

6.9 Her mother, who had mental health problems, remained in contact with her during her early years. In 1969 she spent a weekend at home with her mother and there were indications that she had been sexually abused during this visit. In July 1970 she was seen by a child psychiatrist in Kensington and Chelsea, who recommended no further contact with her mother until she reached adulthood. Some time in the early 1970s she was befriended by a couple who had worked at Barlavington Manor, and had known her there, and had since moved to the Orkneys. In 1975 they asked to foster or adopt her, a request which conflicted with RBKC's view that she would probably flourish most by remaining at Barlavington Manor.

6.10 In September 1979 (together with children 1, 7 and 8) she moved with Proprietors 1 and 2 to Rotherbridge Farm.

6.11 In 1983 she was re-introduced to her mother. Two months later, Proprietors 1 and 2 informed RBKC that she had been diagnosed as psychotic. Some time that autumn, they moved her back to Barlavington Manor without informing the Social Services Department. She remained there until October 1984 when, by now 18 years old and no longer in care, she was formally admitted to a psychiatric hospital. She appears to have been discharged back to Barlavington Manor, but by December she had been moved to the flat in Easebourne (where child 1 was living) which the Proprietors rented from the Cowdray Estate. In January 1985 she was readmitted to psychiatric hospital and subsequently discharged back to the flat

in Easebourne. In September 1985 the Proprietors arranged for her to move to a student flat in Portsmouth. Soon afterwards she was placed on probation following a court appearance. Her case was passed to West Sussex Probation Service and closed.

6.12 She has made written complaints to the Council, and I have interviewed her.

Child 4

6.13 She was born in 1967. She was received into care at the request of her maternal grandmother late in 1968 and placed at Barlavington Manor on the same day. RBKC assumed parental rights and powers on 12 February 1969. Contact with members of her family was maintained. She remained at Barlavington until 1983, when she was placed in foster care with her maternal aunt and the aunt's husband. Apart from two visits, she had no further contact with Barlavington Manor.

6.14 She has made written complaints to the Council, but, despite a number of efforts, including one appointment which she appeared to accept at the time, I have not been able to interview her.

Children 5 and 6

6.15 These two brothers were born in early 1964 and late 1965. They were received into care on different dates in late 1966. They were initially placed with short term foster parents, and moved to a residential nursery in central London early in 1967. They both moved from there to Barlavington Manor in 1969. In the summer of 1971 they went on what was planned as a visit to their mother, but she wanted to keep them. They were, therefore, discharged from care at this point. They did, however, visit Barlavington Manor on a few occasions in 1971-73 including two-week summer visits in 1972 and 1973. In 1976 child 5 was again received into care and placed back at Barlavington. In 1977 child 6 was made the subject of a care order. He was placed at a psychotherapeutic establishment in London, with plans for him to go to Barlavington for occasional weekends and during school holidays. He moved to Barlavington Manor full time in 1981. Twelve months later, he obtained a live-in job, but Barlavington continued to be his placement. This arrangement was still continuing when he reached age 18 in late 1983. Child 5, meanwhile, had been discharged from care at Barlavington on reaching 18. He was living in a caravan at Barlavington Manor, paying rent to Proprietor 3, and his brother spent weekends and holidays from work with him in the caravan.

6.16 Neither brother has made any complaints about their time at Barlavington Manor, and I have not interviewed either of them.

Child 7

6.17 He was born early in 1965. His mother left him in homeless families accommodation and he was received into care at ten weeks and placed in a short stay foster home, from which he was moved after three months to a residential nursery in Kent. His mother was traced in late 1965. She initially opposed his being fostered with a view to adoption, but by January 1967 was described as having fully accepted this plan. Attempts to place him with a family failed, apparently because prospective foster parents were fearful of the history of epilepsy in his family. A move to Barlavington Manor was planned for late 1967, but in the end no place was available there, and he remained at the residential nursery until 1969 when, because it was due to close, he was moved to a children's home run by the same voluntary organisation, also in Kent. He stayed there until hopes of a placement with

his "social aunt and uncle" were dashed, and moved to Barlavington Manor late in 1969. In January 1970 his mother sought his return home, which RBKC considered to be against his interests. In 1973 his social worker expressed fears that his mother would disrupt his settled life at Barlavington. During 1977 Proprietors 1 and 2 discussed with RBKC their plans to move to Rotherbridge Farm and to establish a "family group" there, including child 7. He moved with them to Rotherbridge Farm in September 1979. He was discharged from care on reaching age 18 and was then still living at Rotherbridge Farm.

6.18 He has made complaints in writing to RBKC, and I have interviewed him.

Child 8

6.19 He was born in 1966, his mother having come to London to conceal her pregnancy from her husband. The Crusade of Rescue were unable to arrange an early adoption placement and he was received into care when two weeks old and placed in a residential nursery in Windsor. While he was there, his mother swung between requesting adoption and wanting him home. RBKC assumed the rights and powers of parents on 30 September 1968. In 1971 he was moved to an RBKC children's home in Ealing. Plans for other children of his age to be admitted there did not materialize. He remained much the youngest child in the home, and it was regarded as an unsuitable placement.

6.20 He moved to Barlavington Manor nearly a year later. It was considered, on the advice of Family Service Units who were working with his family, that visits from them would not be possible and, if they became possible, would be disadvantageous. (While he was at the children's home in Ealing it had been decided that a foster placement should not be sought because his family would find it too difficult to accept, and that he would be better off placed out of London.)

6.21 In 1979 RBKC agreed that he should go to a private school in West Sussex, as a day pupil. He moved with Proprietors 1 and 2 to Rotherbridge Farm in September of that year. He became a boarder at his private school after the 1980 summer holidays. He did not return to Rotherbridge Farm for the autumn half-term break in 1981, but stayed at his boarding school. He spent the Christmas holiday at Rotherbridge. From then on he was reluctant

to spend time at Rotherbridge Farm and stayed at school during several holidays. In February 1983 he said he wanted to sever his ties with the Proprietors. There seems to be no clear date on which he could be said to have formally left Rotherbridge Farm. He was known to be living rough in Brighton in the autumn of 1983, and was formally discharged from care on his 18th birthday.

6.22 He has written a letter of complaint to the Council, and I have interviewed him.

Children 9 and 10

6.23 Child 9, a boy, was born in 1967, and his sister in 1969. They were received into care in 1972 and placed at Barlavington Manor. They were returned to their parents after eight months. Their whereabouts are not now known.

Children 11 and 12

6.24 Child 11 was born early in 1967 and his half brother late in 1970. After brief spells in the care of RBKC (twice) and other authorities, they were received into care in 1973 and placed in a residential nursery in Reading which was used for the training of nannies. They moved to Barlavington Manor at the end of 1973. They were initially visited by child 12's father. He died in a motorcycle accident early in 1975. The boys' maternal grandparents were in contact with them throughout most of their life in care. Their mother was in prison from late 1974 until early 1978. The Council assumed parental rights and duties on 18 February 1976.

6.25 During 1982 their mother, now living in Gateshead, pressed for them to be returned to her care. They visited her in August, during the autumn half-term, at Christmas and at Easter 1983. They visited again in May 1983. Child 12 returned to Barlavington after a few days as planned, but child 11 returned only briefly for a few days at the end of June before going to live with his mother. This arrangement broke down and he returned to Barlavington at the end of 1983.

6.26 Child 11 left Barlavington in June 1984. His brother moved with Proprietors 1 and 2 to Rotherbridge Farm in September 1984. He remained

there until Christmas 1987, when he went to live with his maternal grandparents.

6.27 Neither brother made a written complaint to the Council, but I have interviewed them, and they have made various allegations in the course of the interviews.

Children 13, 14, 15 and 16

6.28 This is a family of four, two older sisters and two younger brothers, born in 1960, 1963, 1965 and 1968. They were received into care briefly in 1973 and again in the same year, and placed on both occasions in a RBKC children's home in London. On the second occasion they stayed there for eight months, moving to Barlavington Manor in 1974. Both parents, who were living separately most of the time, kept contact with them. The Council assumed their parent's rights and duties on 29 July 1977.

6.29 After leaving school, the oldest girl (child 13) at the age of 16 was employed by Proprietors 1 and 2 to help look after younger children at Barlavington. She was still in care at this time. She then had another job which she lost and in February 1978 was again working at Barlavington. In August 1978 she left Barlavington to live with her father. This did not work out and she returned to Barlavington, where she was employed to look after the children living in the Lodge. She eventually left Barlavington Manor on obtaining a living-in job at a local private hospital.

6.30 The second girl (child 14) was removed from Barlavington in 1978 as the Proprietors were no longer willing to care for her. She did not return, but after other placements, including a period with her father, returned to West Sussex to live with her boyfriend's parents. The older boy (child 15) remained at Barlavington when Proprietors 1 and 2 moved to Rotherbridge Farm in September 1979. He moved from the main house to the Lodge, initially while his sister was still working there. (Thereafter he moved several times between the Lodge and the main house.)

6.31 The children's mother died in 1982.

6.32 Child 15 stayed on at Barlavington Manor, and was still there when discharged from care at the age of 18.

6.33 The younger brother (child 16) stayed at Barlavington Manor until September 1984 when he moved to the care of Proprietors 1 and 2 at Rotherbridge Farm. In August 1985 Proprietor 2 wished him to move to their rented flat in Easebourne, but he found himself lodgings (which the Council subsequently approved) with the parents of a school friend.

6.34 I have interviewed children 13, 14 and 16, who made complaints about their treatment at Barlavington. I have had no contact with child 15.

Child 17

6.35 He was born in 1965. Until his reception into care by RBKC in 1975, most of his life was spent in the care of the City of Westminster and in private foster homes. He was placed at Barlavington Manor nine weeks after coming into care. The Council assumed parental rights and duties on 11 May 1977, but his mother, now living in Australia, objected, and, although the juvenile court upheld the resolution in late 1977, it was on appeal determined (i.e. terminated) by the high court, apparently on the grounds that the magistrates had misdirected themselves in law. He was, therefore, discharged from care in late 1978 and went to Australia to join his mother. There has been no further contact with him.

Child 18

6.36 He was born in 1969. He and his brother were removed from home under a place of safety order in 1975 and were placed in a residential nursery. A care order was made six weeks later. He moved to Barlavington Manor over a year later, in 1976. His brother went to a children's home in Lincolnshire, and the boys visited each other from time to time. He moved from Barlavington Manor to Rotherbridge Farm in September 1984. RBKC paid for his maintenance there until he was 19 and a half, and he says that he stayed there until he was 20 or 21.

6.37 I have interviewed him, and he has made some complaints.

Child 19

6.38 He was born in 1965. He was in the care of Hammersmith and Fulham but supervised on their behalf by RBKC. He was placed at Barlavington Manor in 1980 and left three years later, a month before his eighteenth birthday.

6.39 He has not made a complaint to the Council and I have not interviewed him.

7. RBKC'S ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING THE CARE AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN PLACED AT BARLAVINGTON MANOR

General

7.1 Responsibility for monitoring or keeping under active review the well-being of children placed at Barlavington Manor rested with each child's social worker and with that social worker's team leader. More senior staff, to whom team leaders were directly or indirectly accountable, will have had responsibilities for satisfying themselves that this function was being discharged and that arrangements for its discharge were in place. The primary means used for keeping children's well-being under active review were the social worker's visits to the child and the review system. I comment on these below.

7.2 It is much more difficult to provide an account of how the Department monitored the quality of care provided. It was put to me by a former team leader (who is now a Director of Social Services in another authority) that, while social workers and team leaders saw themselves as responsible for the appropriateness of the placement for the particular child, responsibility for the overall quality of care provided by the establishment lay elsewhere. The way in which social workers and other team leaders talked to me about their involvement with Barlavington Manor is consistent with this view, and I accept that it represents the then generally accepted understanding of the fieldworker's role. The team leader who drew this distinction was explaining to me why he would not have felt that he had authority to demand to inspect the contents of the fridge or to demand the production of menus.

7.3 I can find no evidence that the Department ever considered whether private children's homes needed any special arrangements for monitoring the quality of the care they provided. With the benefit of hindsight, there are a number of reasons for arguing that special arrangements were needed. Unlike voluntary homes, private homes were not subject to registration or to inspection, and were not covered by the regulations which applied to voluntary and local authority homes. Furthermore, in small private homes such as Barlavington Manor there was no separation between directly providing care and overseeing its provision. In practice, however, private and voluntary homes were not differentiated. I believe that this would have been

a general pattern across those local authorities which used private children's homes.

7.4 Until 1984, responsibility for the Department's overall relationship with the establishment was concentrated in one officer. In the Children's Department he was a Senior Child Care Officer (team leader) and was the person who 'discovered' Barlavington Manor for RBKC. From 1 April 1971 he was the Social Services Department's Child Care Adviser, a non-managerial role reporting to the Director or Deputy Director. At a later date which I have not been able to identify, he became part of a division which was responsible for the Department's child care resources other than field social work (which continued to be provided by a generic social work or fieldwork division). From then he reported to his Assistant Director (divisional head). By 1984 he had been given responsibility for day care and intermediate treatment, but continued to act as liaison officer for Barlavington Manor. I have received many tributes from his colleagues to this officer's professionalism, integrity and commitment, although one team leader described him as a maverick. I have interviewed him. My impression is of a man of great commitment who largely carved out his own role and made his own decisions as to how to discharge it. I have been given no reason to believe that his managers were other than content with his performance, and indeed RBKC's first Director of Social Services (1971-1976) clearly placed great reliance on him as a knowledgeable and experienced child care professional. I sensed from him that by 1984 he felt somewhat sidelined. The clearest part of this role in relation to Barlavington Manor was to attend as far as possible all reviews of children placed there. Another significant role was his chairing of multi-disciplinary assessment conferences on children placed in the Department's residential reception and assessment centre. Long-term placements for children were suggested at these conferences. As Child Care Adviser, he regularly visited the Department's area (fieldwork) offices to provide consultation to social workers on their child care cases. He was the person to whom social workers and team leaders would refer concerns about a child placed at Barlavington Manor, and, according to himself and to several social workers, was active in taking up these concerns with proprietors both at reviews and by telephone. His approach was to work with and support the proprietors and to seek to develop their understanding and skills in the practice of child care. His role was not inspectorial in the sense the word would now be understood. He clearly took an indirect interest in the children placed at Barlavington Manor (he told me that he continued to visit Proprietor

2 after she had retired to learn how young people who had been at Barlavington were faring), but he appears to have had little direct contact with them.

7.5 My conclusion from my interviews with RBKC staff is that the Department sought to provide active support to the proprietors (irrespective of whether they were requesting it) but that, since there was no process of inspection of the care provided, there can have been no effective active monitoring of its quality other than in the course of conversation between social workers and the children placed there. I have no reason to believe that RBKC was atypical in this respect.

Six Monthly Reviews Of Children In Care

7.6 The holding of six-monthly reviews for children placed in private children's homes became a statutory duty from 1 January 1971. Before then it was a matter of good practice only. It is, however, important to remember that, although reviews as such were not statutorily required, the local authority was under a duty to further each child's best interests and therefore needed some process by which it could monitor whether it was discharging that duty. The chart attached as Appendix E shows the reviews held (according to the case files) on RBKC children while they were placed at Barlavington Manor and Rotherbridge Farm. A tick indicates a review held on time. A tick followed by 'L' indicates a review held late. A cross indicates a missed review. In assessing whether reviews were held in time, late or missed, I have borne in mind that the law required the local authority to hold each review, not within six months of the previous one, but "as soon as is practicable after the expiration of that period" (Children and Young Persons Act 1969 s.27 (4)). I have treated a review as late if it was not held within eight months of the previous one. Where there is a gap of twelve months or more between reviews I have indicated one or more missing reviews. The information from the chart is summarised in the following table.

1. Non-statutory Reviews (before 1971)

Reviews held in time	9
Reviews held late	0
Reviews missed	33

2. **Statutory Reviews (from 1 January 1971)**

Reviews held in time	156
Reviews held late	42
Reviews missed	60

NB. Each review form gives the dates of the current and the previous review. In a few cases, a 'previous review' indicated in this way is not on file. I have treated these reviews as having been held.

7.7 The authority's performance in holding reviews improved markedly from 1979 onwards. The period from 01/01/71 up to and including 1978 shows a correspondingly poor performance, as indicated in the following table.

Statutory Reviews 1971 - 1978 inclusive

Reviews held in time	59
Reviews held late	28
Reviews missed	58

This performance suggests cause for concern. I have, however, no knowledge of the performance of other local authorities over the same period, and it is generally accepted that authorities faced particular difficulties in the early years of Social Services Departments, i.e. from 1971. RBKC's performance may therefore not be untypical.

7.8 Not surprisingly, there were long gaps between reviews of some individual children. Child 1's case was reviewed only once (on 21 August 1972) between 14 July 1970 and 6 November 1974, i.e. between the ages of 6 and 10. Child 2's case was reviewed on 24 July 1971, when he was eight years old, and not reviewed again until 18 January 1974. The case of child 3 shows a 33 month gap between reviews (21 April 1971 to 18 January 1974) and then another gap of 18 months (21 March 1975 to 4 October 1976). In other words, her case was reviewed only twice between the ages of 5 and 10. Child 7's case was not reviewed between 7 December 1971 and 4 October

1973, nor between October 1974 and October 1976. His case was reviewed when he was six years old and then only twice until shortly before his eleventh birthday. Child 8 was placed at Barlavington Manor on 20 July 1972 when he was six years and three months old, but his case was not then reviewed until 18 January 1974, an eighteen month gap.

7.9 The above observations on individual cases take account only of statutory reviews, but children 1, 2 and 3 had all been at Barlavington Manor since late 1966 (child 1) or early 1967 (children 2 and 3) and, as the chart shows, had rarely been reviewed in these earlier years either. Child 4 was placed at Barlavington Manor on Christmas Eve 1968 at the age of eighteen months, was not reviewed there until 14 July 1970 at the age of three, and then not again until 13 April 1972, at 4 years 10 months. After that, her reviews were on average annual or worse until October 1978.

7.10 These children (1,2,3,4,7 and 8) were all placed at Barlavington at an early age and relatively early in the life of the home; children 1,2,7 and 8 had no contact with their families, and child 3's contact was stopped when she was four; it was children 1,3,7 and 8 who were chosen by Proprietors 1 and 2 to accompany them to Rotherbridge Farm in 1979; and it was children 1,3,4,7 and 8 who made written complaints to the Council before this enquiry began.

7.11 The manner in which children's cases were reviewed appears to have been in line with the practice of the time. In later years it became standard practice to invite children to attend for part of the review, to have school reports available and to invite a teacher from the child's school to attend. When Proprietor 3 assumed responsibility for Barlavington Manor in 1979, the practice of inviting a member of his staff to attend, and later to present a written report on the child, developed. In the earlier years, however, reviews were normally attended only by the child care officer/social worker, his/her team leader, the RBKC staff member who acted as liaison officer for Barlavington Manor and Proprietors 1 and 2. The style of the review meetings was that of collaboration between professional colleagues. While the social worker contributed information about the child's family, almost all of the information about the child's health, education, behaviour and life in the residential establishment was contributed by Proprietors 1 and 2. They were, therefore, in a position of considerable power in terms of their control of the presentation of information and how it was interpreted. The reviews were not intended to be inspectorial, nor to be a means of holding the

proprietors to account for the quality of the service they were providing. They were, however, seen as a forum within which matters of concern about a child's care could be taken up with the proprietors, and they were on occasions used in this way.

Visits to children by their social workers

7.12 There was and is no statutory requirement for children in residential homes to be visited by their social workers. Nevertheless, such visits were regarded as important, and in interviews social workers have made it clear that they saw these visits as providing the child with an opportunity to tell the social worker if they were unhappy about any aspect of their care in the placement. As far as I can judge from the files, social workers routinely saw the child on his/her own (or sometimes with another child also on the worker's caseload), and usually took them out, aiming to create an atmosphere in which the child felt able to speak freely. The case files do not record any policy on how often a child should be seen. Regulations governing boarding out required that children were seen at least quarterly and in some circumstances more frequently.

7.13 I have looked for evidence of frequency of social workers' visits in the files on children 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 (those where the pattern of reviews caused me most concern). It is extremely difficult to establish from the files how often children were seen by their social workers. The styles of recording on Forms SSD66 are individual. Some social workers recorded each visit against its date; some wrote periodic summaries, which in some cases mention the number or dates of visits but in other cases do not; and some social workers appear to have recorded almost nothing. The other source of information about visits made is the review forms, which have a space for indicating how many times the child has been seen since the last review (and in later in years the dates of these visits). On some forms, however, this space has been left blank, while on others visits are described as "regular"; "two-monthly"; "three-monthly" and, in one case, "spasmodic". The long gaps between reviews add to the difficulty of establishing how often children were visited.

7.14 The best estimate I can make is that it would have been rare for these children to be visited less often than once every six months, while it is clear that some of them were at times visited very frequently. On the evidence of the SSD66 forms alone, there are alarming gaps, but the review forms suggest

that visits were made even though they were not recorded. There are also records which show considerable activity on the case, such as work with parents, telephone conversations with Barlavington Manor's proprietors, visits to the child by parents and, in one case, social worker's visits to the child in the home of relatives, at times when visits to the child at Barlavington appear to be rare.

7.15 The case files do not consistently provide a satisfactory record of social workers' visits to children at Barlavington Manor.

8. COMPLAINTS MADE BY EACH FORMER RESIDENT

8.1 Written complaints were made to the Council by former residents 1, 3, 4, 7 and 8. I have interviewed them all with the exception of former resident 4. Former residents 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 and 18 were also interviewed, and made complaints or allegations in the course of the interview.

Former resident 1

8.2 Her statement is reproduced below.

I am a former resident of Barlavington Manor and Rotherbridge, children's homes operated by [Proprietors 1 and 2]. I was sent to these homes whilst in the care of Kensington & Chelsea Social Services. Whilst living there I suffered neglect and abuse.

I recall that the food at both Barlavington Manor and Rotherbridge was of very poor quality. There never seemed to be enough to eat and what there was, was usually the cheapest and, sometimes, for example, out of date. We were never allowed to have food between our meals and one of my strongest memories of my childhood is being hungry more or less all of the time.

As an example I can recall that we once had a 4lb chicken to feed more than 24 of us, although it was a rare treat for us to have fresh meat. When I was very young at Barlavington Manor I remember being strapped into my bed. I had quite a bad bed wetting problem until I was about 10 and most mornings I would be told off by [Proprietor 1] when he came to check my bed. If I had wet myself then [Proprietor 2] would hit me on the backside in front of everybody at breakfast which I found very humiliating.

If we were too noisy in bed at Barlavington, we were punished by having to stand on the landing for hours or if we went into the boys room, we were usually beaten. The room which I slept in at Rotherbridge was damp and I had no privacy. Every morning we had to get up at 4.00 a.m. to clean the horses out which I enjoyed but it made me tired all the time at school. My teacher began to worry about me falling asleep in lessons.

During all my time in care I never received a clothing allowance and I was usually dressed in jumble sale clothes or rejects. [X], one of the care staff at the home bought me my first bra when I was 15, but I never had one from anyone else. When I was younger I had to share my knickers from a knicker box. I remember another boy having to wear a particularly tatty coat which [Proprietor 3] said made him look like something out of Oliver Twist.

I remember that on one occasion I was feeding the pigs and tasted their food to see what it was like. I remember enjoying it and could not understand why we were not allowed to eat this instead of our usual food. We never had roast dinners except on Christmas day. [The Proprietors] had roast meat every Sunday. Instead we were given, for example, boiled eggs as a main meal or "eggy bread". We were never allowed fresh milk to drink, and the milk that we did have was usually watered down.

I feel sure that the children who lived at these homes were under-developed as a result of their poor diet and I remember fainting on occasions as a child which may have been as a result of this.

I witnessed many assaults whilst I was in care. I remember a boy called [A] being pulled from the lavatory for taking too long. I also saw [Proprietor 1] beating up [child 8] and [child 7]. The assault on [child 8] went on for quite a while and he was punched and kicked a number of times. A boy called [possibly child 9] had curry powder forced into his mouth for swearing which choked him. I also saw [child 4] pulled down the stairs by her hair by [Proprietor 3]. Myself, [child 7] and other children saw what happened. I can also remember [child 7] being picked up by his ears and shook, and recall thinking at the time, that it was just like Tom Browns Schooldays, which has been on television. Another time [Proprietor 3] had a fight with a boy called [C], but [C] got the better of him which we thought was great. Usually if you were in any trouble at all, you would be beaten by [Proprietor 2] or [Proprietor 1] until you confessed.

I don't remember ever seeing a school doctor or nurse whilst I was in care. I remember once getting into trouble for asking to see the school nurse. Neither [Proprietor 2] nor [Proprietor 1] would ever attend Parent evenings at school. Our health was never properly monitored whilst we

were in care. I remember that I had to go into hospital in London when I was about 14 but was sent on my own on the train. I had never been to London and did not know my way around. Although I was quite scared I enjoyed it.

During all this time [the Proprietors] enjoyed quite an affluent lifestyle. They would have three holidays a year, and would drive expensive cars. Whilst I was at Barlavington Manor I can remember that [the Proprietors] drove a Porche, a Jenson Interceptor and a BMW. [Their son] kept polo ponies. If he wanted change, he would simply raid our money boxes.

Despite all that happened to us in the care home, complaints to Social Services were futile. They were simply passed on to [the Proprietors] and we would get into trouble again. In the end we did not bother. My relationship with [Proprietor 2] was particularly poor. She never had a good word to say about me, would call me lazy, feeble, cretaneous. Because I was a child I thought that what she said was right and my confidence was very low. When I was 18, I was given my birth certificate. Nobody had told me that I had a middle name and [Proprietor 2] seemed very uncomfortable about this. For some reason I regarded this as particularly cruel. I was also denied a photograph of my mother which had been sent to Social Services to be passed onto me.

From the age of 8 years old, I would spend most weekends with the family of [X], a staff member at the home. [X] was always very kind to me and I enjoyed going to her house at the weekends.

However, when I reached 12 or 13 I began to suffer abuse at the hands of [X]'s husband. He would touch me through my clothes and would make me touch him through his clothes. On one occasion he put his hand in my trousers. He would tell me that he could go further if he wanted to. When I was older, he would talk to me about what happened and seemed to be remorseful. Nevertheless when we were alone, he would return to his old ways. I always regarded what happened as my fault as a child and have since sought counselling.

I remember staying in the older girls room when they were with their boyfriends. I was once asked to join in with them although I was very

young. I declined. The following day I was questioned about what had happened by [Proprietor 3].

Drugs were kept on the premises. Cannabis was grown in the greenhouse and I remember helping [the Proprietors' son]'s groom to hide a carrier bag full of white powder. At the time I thought it was exciting and later found out that the bag contained cocaine. I remember that [the Proprietors' son]'s friend had been busted and that [the Proprietors' son] needed to hide what he had. I took the bag to the stables with him and hid it until the blacksmith had finished. I did not realise how serious this was.

Throughout my childhood I suffered low esteem and a lack of confidence, caused by the treatment I received from [the Proprietors]. These feelings are still with me today. The relationships that I have established as an adult have suffered as a result of my past. Since my time in care I have abused drugs and have experienced bouts of depression and flashbacks which I believe are caused by what happened to me as a child. What angers me most is that although many of us suffered in this way, it has been impossible for us to obtain help or support.

I make this statement knowing it to be true.

8.3 Former resident 1 also prepared notes for our interview. The following summary taken from these notes concentrates on matters not mentioned in her statement.

8.4 Food

Rotten and green spuds that farmers had discarded. Remember trying pigs' food. Tasted better than our food. Made to eat potato peelings if caught peeling spuds with knife, not peeler. Child 3 caught trying horse feed. Made to eat bowlful for her dinner. I fainted twice. Teacher asked if I had eaten. The Lodge cooked joint of meat. Proprietor 2 took it away as they were about to dish it up saying it was hers. Children were hit on the elbow if they put elbows on the table.

8.5 Beds and sleeping

Hit most mornings for bed wetting. For a while at Rotherbridge had to sleep in sitting room. Damp and no privacy. Getting up to clean out the stables was from age 11-12, 4am at the earliest but usually 5am. Stopped when teacher asked what time I got up.

8.6 Clothing

Some children received a clothing allowance but child 1 did not. Bad fitting shoes. Proprietors had cellar full of shoes. Remember seeing clothing allowance book with list of fictional clothing. Had to buy my own sanitary towels.

8.7 Assaults

Child 17 beaten up by Proprietor 1 for saying Barlavington was like prison camp. Child 9 having curry powder for swearing. Child 2 hit by Proprietor 2 for swearing. Children D and E hit on hand with wooden spoon by staff member BM6. The spoon broke. Child F hit with jokari bat. In great deal of pain. Staff member BM6 scrubbed my face hard with flannel. Ended up with nose bleed. Proprietor 1 slapped me round the face for not knowing where child 3 was.

8.8 Chores

Included bale carting, potato picking, pulling ragwort, hand-polishing floors.

8.9 School and Health

I got into trouble for seeing school nurse after banging my head at Barlavington. I had knocked myself out on climbing frame. I remember waking up screaming. Proprietor 3 had a go at me for screaming so loud. A staff member told me that when we were younger dentist told her we were malnourished from state of our teeth. Children 4 and F were given experimental contraceptive injection. Child 4 was 10-11 at time. The Proprietors delayed calling ambulance when child G had appendicitis. I remember him screaming for hours.

8.10 Bullying

I was bullied a lot by the other kids, one girl in particular. The Proprietors never stopped it.

Fomer resident 2

8.11 *In his interview child 2 described an incident when he had refused to help cut branches off trees. Proprietor 1 sat him on a tree stump and got other children to pile leaves around it, then set fire to the leaves. Child 2's shirt quickly caught fire, and Proprietor 1 pushed him off the stump with his foot. Child 2 showed me a scar on his side which he says was caused by his shirt catching fire.*

8.12 *He had to steal food because he was hungry.*

8.13 *Proprietor 1 used to hit the children with a jokari bat. On one occasion child 2 put his hand behind him to protect his bottom. The bat hit his hand. The injury was noticed by his teacher who sent him to hospital, where it was found that a bone in his thumb was chipped.*

8.14 *He described getting up at 6.30am to make tea and toast for Proprietors 1 and 2. After school, the children had to clean the house, and chop firewood for the Proprietors. There were no open fires in the children's part of the house. On Saturday morning they had to rake the drive, sweep the yard and weed the gardens. Sometimes they worked in the fields, baling hay or spreading fertiliser by hand. He also sometimes had to look after the horses. He was not keen on horses.*

8.15 *At a time when he was suspended from school, he had to work at Rotherbridge Farm, stripping tiles off the roof and stripping plaster off the walls with a chisel.*

8.16 *Child 8 was one of those who were picked on.*

8.17 *On child 2's seventh birthday, a staff member gave him some sweets. He went to her house to thank her. Proprietor 2 beat him because he had not asked permission to go. She said he did not deserve to be seven and she was putting him back to being six. He thought she had the power to do this.*

8.18 *Proprietor 2 was always telling him from an early age that he was going to prison, and telling him that his mum was a prostitute and didn't want him.*

8.19 *He had lots of beatings from Proprietor 1. He used to smack the children over the head with the back of his pipe. Proprietor 2 used to pull your ears and pull your hair. Proprietor 1 was predictable. You knew if he was in a bad mood. Proprietor 2 would swing between hitting you and hugging you and saying she loved you.*

8.20 *The Proprietors destroyed any relationship where children got close to you.*

Former resident 3

8.21 Her statement follows. It was written on 8 July 1997 with a Community Health Nurse.

I was in care at Barlavington Manor from when I was 8 weeks old until I was 19. There follows an account of some of my memories of my experiences there.

1) My first memory is of being strapped into bed at night until I was about five years old. The straps were actually attached to the bed, and were intended to stop us getting up in the night. If we wanted to go to the toilet, we just had to wet the bed. If we cried in the night, no one came to see to us.

2) I remember having to bathe with 5 or 6 other boys and girls in one normal size bath, up until I was 12 years old. I presume it was to save money. All the girls also had to share underwear, and I was never bought a bra ever. We had to buy our own tampax. We never got any of the clothes that families brought in or paid for. One day we saw a book of all the stuff we were supposed to get, but never did. We always had handed down clothes from the other kids. We never got money or grants for new clothes.

3) *We were never allowed to eat anything between mealtimes. All the food was always locked up, we weren't even allowed a slice of bread, and there was never anything like fruit or sweets for us. You'd go to bed hungry without even a hot drink. I always thought of it as being normal, because all the kids were treated like that. The food was always stodgy and cheap.*

4) *From when I was 8-16 years old I was sexually abused by three older boys. I remember their names and they were doing it to the other girls too. I was pinned down onto a bed and forced to have full sexual intercourse. It happened on a daily basis and the staff must have been aware of what was going on. I don't blame the boys, they were brought up in the home too.*

5) *We were often beaten up by the staff, for silly things. One member of staff, [BM6], was evil. She'd get you out of bed in the middle of the night and make you wash floors. She'd hit you and get you into trouble by saying you'd done something you hadn't, like smoking or something. Once she beat me up on the school bus. I can't remember what she said I'd done. It could have been something like taking an apple off the tree. [Proprietor 3] beat up my friend [child 4]. I saw him drag her downstairs and beat her up in the yard. [Proprietor 2] sat on her and he kicked her in the head and stomach. Once I caught my friend sniffing glue and I took it off her. [Proprietors 1 and 2] accused me of doing it. They were always picking on me. We were punched and kicked and the local Doctor was a friend of the family, so you couldn't tell anyone.*

6) *One of the worst things was that they never encouraged any of us to keep in contact with our families. I never knew about my mum until I was 16. I sneaked a look at my file. Until then I didn't know I had parents. That is when I had my first breakdown. They actually put people off who asked about their families. They'd say they didn't want to hear about it, and that your family was horrible because they'd left you there in the first place.*

7) *I never saw staff sexually abusing the kids, but when I was 11 or 12, and we were on holiday in the Isle of Wight, the staff got out blue movies and made us watch them.*

8) *[Proprietors 1 and 2] who owned the home were respected people in the community. Because it was a private home, out in the sticks, no one saw what was going on. They had lots of dinner parties and we used to wait on them, and do the washing and clearing up. We used to have to get up at 6am to feed their polo ponies. Once I tried the ponies food to see what it tasted like and I was forced to eat a big bowl of it as punishment. Staff were always moving on, so I suppose none of them ever reported what happened, and the Social Services only came once a year anyway.*

9) *None of the kids were ever adopted or fostered. Sometimes people asked to adopt me, my friends mums or members of staff, but nothing ever happened.*

I have had Mental Health Problems since I was 17, and many of the other kids have been in and out of Mental Hospitals. I have never really discussed my childhood experiences before, or the effect it has had on my life. Two months ago I did a video at a police station, but I didn't say much. I've been quiet about it for years. I have never told either my psychiatrist or Community Nurse, and it is only now that I'm remembering more, and feel able to talk about it.

8.22 Former resident 3's typed statement ends there, but there is an addition in her own handwriting which states that **staff member X's "husband abused me sexually from the age of about 5 till 13, groping me"**.

8.23 When I interviewed her, former resident 3 made some additional allegations and expanded on others in her statement. These additional points are summarized below.

8.24 *The Proprietors told children not to talk to social workers, and beat them up if they did. She was hit by the Proprietors but doesn't remember what for.*

8.25 *The children had to do the Proprietors' ironing and their washing up.*

8.26 *They had hardly any pocket money, and what they got had to be earned.*

8.27 Proprietors 1 and 2 got the GP to put all of the girls on the pill when they were about 14 or 15. She herself could not go on the pill because of her ovarian cyst. She was in agony with her cyst for a long time. She kept telling the proprietors and the staff but they took no notice.

8.28 Proprietor 2 used to beat children on the arse with a wooden spoon. She was beaten most nights, sometimes hard, so that she couldn't sit down for days.

8.29 Children who got an 'A' or a star at school were allowed to take two sweets from a jar, but the sweets in the jar had been given to individual children as presents by parents/relatives.

Former resident 4

8.30 Her statement follows. I have not been able to interview her.

I am a former resident of Barlavington Manor, a children's home in Petworth, Sussex. I was taken into care in 1969 and lived at Barlavington Manor until I was 16 years old. During my stay at the children's home I was physically and sexually abused. I set out below certain examples in this respect, although the record is far from exhaustive.

One of my earliest memories of the home was being strapped or harnessed to my bed, in the same way as that a baby would be secured in a pram. I had no way of getting out of my bed to use the toilet and quite often I would wet myself. If I did this I would be slapped around my legs and face. There were other children sleeping in the same room as I who were punished in the same way. I would guess that this went on until I was 6 or 7 years old.

I was made to share a bath with the boys at the home until I was 11 or 12 years old. As I grew older this caused me considerable embarrassment, particularly as I began my periods when I was 10. If I needed a sanitary towel I had to ask at the table during meal times. [Proprietor 3] would ask "anyone need a white mouse?" I am certain that I was put on the pill at 10 or 11 years old.

In all the time I lived at Barlavington Manor, I was never given a clothing grant or even bought a bra, even though I stayed there until I was 16. The knickers which we wore were shared out of a big box and as I was the youngest girl, I ended up with the worst.

I continued to have contact with my grandparents while I was at Barlavington Manor but between the ages of 4 until my grandfathers death, when I was 7 and a half, he sexually abused me. I was forced to have vaginal and oral intercourse with him and was threatened that if I told anyone, I would never be able to leave Barlavington. On one occasion I did tell [Proprietor 2], one of the co-owners of the home about this. I recall the occasion when [Proprietor 2] told me of my grandfathers death. We were in the boot room at the top of the building and she came to speak to me. I laughed so much on hearing the news that my belly ached and [Proprietor 2] slapped me around the face to stop me.

I was also forced to have intercourse with the boys who lived at Barlavington manor. My earliest recollection is a boy called [D] making me masturbate him and perform oral sex. I remember telling a member of staff about an occasion when he had locked me in a cupboard and made me do this, later making me clean up his sperm with my mouth. He was punished by being made to run around the field with no clothes on, in front of all of the children. [Two other boys] also made me have sex with them. [One] would come into the "pink" girls room at night and would pin me to the bed. [The other] would get me in the laundry room, passageways or in the woods. The boys were all considerable older than I was.

I do not feel bitter or resentful towards the boys, who were themselves only children. What I do regret was that the home was not properly supervised to prevent this from having happened.

I was also physically abused while I was at Barlavington Manor. I remember [staff member BM6] dragging me from my bed, in the early hours of the morning, together with [child 11], and making me scrub the floors. On another occasion she rubbed my face in a pile of vomit when I was ill in bed.

[BM6] once caught me picking an apple from the orchard floor and I was made to sit and eat the maggots crawling inside it.

As a child I suffered with boils on my bottom and [BM6] would bend me over her knee to lance them in front of all of the other children. The others found it funny but I was totally ashamed.

Another person involved in the running of Barlavington Manor, was [Proprietor 3]. When I first came to the home, [Proprietors 1 and 2] had been in charge, but eventually they left to run another property. Their son, [Proprietor 3], was then left in charge. I remember that [Proprietor 3] once went on holiday to Mexico and when he came back, he had got married. I think her name was Laupe which, for some reason, I found that to be funny. When I passed his wife on the stairs, I said "hello loopy" which caused [Proprietor 3] to fly into a rage. He was shouting at the top of his voice and dragged me down the stairs, kicking me as he went. My head was banging on the walls as he dragged me through the passageway and out of the boot room into the yard. The other children were sitting in the blue van, waiting to go to Petworth, for Saturday cinema or shopping. I can remember they were all watching and holding their hands to their faces and ears. I was crying and screaming but [Proprietor 3] was continuing to kick and pull me around, shouting at me "how dare you call my wife names". Eventually the beating stopped and the van drove away. I can remember holding my knees in the yard, confused about what had happened. Blood was coming from out of my ear but it did not bother me. I can remember vividly the sight of [Proprietor 3]'s brown cowboy boots as he kicked me around the yard on that day.

[Proprietor 3] was also present in the yard area on one occasion when I was sitting on the wall. I was trying to tattoo myself and [Proprietor 3] watched me. He made no effort to try and stop what I was doing. I was determined to make myself as ugly and unattractive as I could, to stop the attention from the boys. I would wipe dirt on myself and sit on the dung heap to make myself smell, but this seemed to only encourage them more. I felt as though I could not win.

I also recall a holiday to the Isle of Wight. Also present was [BM7], the Staff Handyman. I had later seen [BM7] abusing [child 5] in a caravan which stood in the grounds of the manor. On one occasion during the

holiday, we went to Robin Hill and I got talking to a biker. I walked off with this man but all we were doing was talking. When I got back to the group, [BM7] was really angry. He accused me of having sex with the man and although I denied it, he called me a slut and a slag. No one else would speak to me during the holiday, except for [child 1]. When I got back to Barlavington Manor, I was called to see [Proprietor 3] who lectured me about men putting their fingers inside me, or putting their dirty penis inside me. He was pushing me as he said this. I did not understand why it was happening because I had done nothing wrong. I was only 10 or 11 years old when this happened.

Child 7

8.31 His letter of complaint is reproduced below.

10 July 1997

To whom it may concern

I am writing to you to make a formal complaint about the gross negligence of Kensington and & Chelsea Social Services.

There are a number of complaints that I have firstly from the time I was 0-4 years of age. I was abandoned by my mother at [X] Mother and Baby Home on the 10th March 1965 and after initial correspondence with my birth mother placed into care on the 25th March 1965. On the 16th November 1966 my mother consented to my adoption and although an advert was placed it seems a family history of epilepsy meant that Social Services in their infinite wisdom decided that I was not suitable for adoption although at the time I was not showing any symptoms of inheriting this disease, this of course meant that it was not worth trying to find me a suitable home in a "normal" family. Instead they "played God" and decided to commit me to a life of institutionalization.

On the 9th February 1968 Kensington and Chelsea assumed "Rights and Powers" over me and at the age of 4 years I was moved to a children's home in Sussex called Barlavington. It was there until the age of 19 years that I was subject to cruel treatment and emotional abuse.

[Proprietors 1 and 2] ruled Barlavington with a rod of iron. We were regular beaten sometimes with the hand and sometimes with a stick. If we swore we were forced to swallow curry powder and if we were caught smoking we were forced to smoke cigarette after cigarette until we were physically sick. On one occasion when I was about 12 years old I swore and [Proprietor 1] bashed my head against the refrigerator making it bleed very badly. I never received any medical help and had to deal with it by myself. Another example of their cruelty was the way that they dealt with bedwetting. If you wet the bed you were severely punished but if you were caught out of bed you were forced to stand in the corridor in the pitch black with your hands on your head and if you moved a muscle you were shut in a cupboard. As you can imagine as a young child the whole experience was deeply distressing.

As a child I did receive pocket money but only if I worked for it mowing lawns and helping out in the grounds. If you didn't work you didn't get pocket money.

[The Proprietors] were negligent in not seeking medical treatment. There was a time when I was young that I hurt my leg at school and after being taken to the hospital by the school was told that I had tore a muscle and given crutches and told to rest my leg. When I got back to Barlavington [Proprietor 1] took away my crutches and made me walk on my bad leg. Later that night my leg muscle went into spasm and although children went and told the [Proprietors] that I was in agony they were so busy entertaining their friends they left me for hours before calling a doctor. I can clearly remember the Doctor exclaiming "Why have you left it so long to call me" when they did eventually call him.

I do not remember being hungry but the food we did get was poor quality and as a result I suffered terrible boils which [the Proprietors] dealt with themselves. Also you were forced to eat everything even when you really hated it.

I was aware as I grew up that the Social Services paid for our clothing but most of the clothes we had were second hand or poor quality "seconds" from a factory owned by friends of [the Proprietors].

I have found out recently from my Social Services file that money was paid to [the Proprietors] for driving lessons and a driving test. I never received any help and paid for all driving lessons and driving tests myself out of my own earnings. Also it seems the Social Services paid for me to live at Barlavington or Rotherbridge (also owned by [the Proprietors]) until I was 18 years old. In fact from the time I was 16 years old I paid housekeeping to [the Proprietors] as well as working around their properties.

If any child ever complained about the treatment that we received at Barlavington at the hands of [the Proprietors] they were dealt with swiftly and severely. I remember one occasion a child complained and [Proprietor 1] found out. He hauled the child out of bed by the hair and said if you think this place is a prison how does it feel to be prisoner number one.

Of course there was some good times but this was worse in a way because you never knew when you got home from school whether they would be nice to you or beat you for some minor misdemeanour.

On my Social Services file one social worker commented that "they were concerned about [the Proprietors'] ability to encourage the children to express themselves and their worries and fears". However these concerns were never acted upon and in fact [the Proprietors] never encouraged us to do things, rather criticized things we had done, therefore I had and still have a low self esteem and have always felt insecure.

More recently I have made the devastating discovery that my whole life in care is written up in one small file and although a review on my file in 1982 specifically said that information should be made available to me about my birth parents all I ever received was a small photo album and lies. All my life I believed that my father was Australian and Mr and Mrs [R] were my aunt and uncle. In fact that is both untrue; the R's were social aunt and uncle and my father was English.

One of the main reasons for me making this complaint is the fact that Kensington and Chelsea took it upon themselves to withhold vital medical information regarding the serious family history of epilepsy and

although I wrote a letter in July 1993 regarding access to my file to find out any medical history before I got married, the two letters I received never mentioned the fact that my birth family was "rife" with epilepsy and so it happens that I may have passed this awful illness onto my son. Also I have to deal with the fact that my wife and I may not be able to extend our family for fear of passing on this potentially devastating disease. I can assure you that if I was made aware of the risk of passing on the disease to any child I would seriously have considered having children at all. At least I would have been able to speak to a specialist about the risks of my children inheriting epilepsy.

Kensington and Chelsea Social Services never offered me any emotional or financial support when I left care at the age of 18 and from the time that the Proprietors turned me out of Rotherbridge in 1984 until 1986 when I was housed by the local council I slept on friends' sofas and in my car.

I would like to point out that I think that we should have been disciplined by [the Proprietors] for smoking and swearing but their methods of punishment were totally uncalled for and at times sadistic.

Kensington and Chelsea Social Services are guilty of not investigating the treatment I received at Barlavington and not caring about the long term effect that living my whole childhood in care would have on me. [The Proprietors] are to blame for the treatment given to us but they are beyond reach as they both died, untimely as it happens, so Kensington and Chelsea must face the consequences of their negligence and failure to protect me as my legal guardians.

I look forward to hearing your response in the very near future.

8.32 Former resident 7 made the following complaints in addition to those in his letter when I interviewed him.

8.33 He said that Proprietors 1 and 2 told him he would always live off other people.

8.34 *He said that he had been made to wear shoes too small for him. He showed me his feet. He has small feet, and they look cramped, the toes being turned down in a way which does not look natural.*

8.35 *Staff member BM6 would lock you in the cellar or in a cupboard, at night, for a long time.*

8.36 *Proprietor 3 would bellow at you, and hit you sometimes.*

8.37 *Children were encouraged to fight each other. You had to fight till only one was left standing.*

8.38 *He was fed curry powder for swearing many times. They clamped your mouth shut.*

Former resident 8

8.39 *His written complaint is reproduced below.*

16th March 1998

Please treat this letter as my official complaint and accord it due attention and respect. I wish to place on record my feelings on how the years I spent in your "care" have affected me, and why. I do not feel comfortable detailing all of my memories in writing but would happily discuss them with anyone from within your department.

For now I think it best to tell you simply that it was hell and has had an extremely bad effect on my life, personality and social ability. I have had one lengthy spell in hospital and have suffered depression, anxiety and bouts of anger and rage which have immobilised me and resulted in the necessity to take an unpleasant quantity of medication on a daily basis, making work next to impossible and leaving me unable to function properly as an adult. I have been prescribed for many years now anti-depressants, tranquillisers, sleeping tablets, Beta blockers (to counter panic attacks) and various other forms of medication, not to mention counselling sessions, with psychiatrists and doctors.

For many years I ploughed through life drug abusing and desperately trying to escape my memories and myself. I felt worthless, soiled and constantly panicked and fearful. I was not able to communicate with anyone and spent the first couple of years out of care living rough, almost drifting and falling apart. I have not been able to retain any jobs, nor live up to and maintain any relationships up till now, and only very recently spoke to anyone of my feelings and my past, always previously embarrassed and even ashamed. I feel very strongly now, having established some level (if only superficial) of stability in my life, that your department has quite some explaining to do and I look forward to hearing from you.

During my years at Barlavington Manor I suffered beatings and abuse on such a regular basis, that the issue of the violence for a long time after I had left there was secondary to the general neglect and lack of care. The regime was strict, violent and extremely cold and lacking in caring. In brief, I never felt happy, never enjoyed any memorable event and still now can't describe without becoming very upset some of the punishments given to myself and other children. Total control was the way of Barlavington, and only having recent access to my files has enabled me to see the extent of the control. It is obvious your department has been fooled and deceived into believing that Barlavington was not only an adequate home, but some sort of flagship for the social services, when in fact it was a hot bed of abuse, neglect and brutality. I understand all too well how easily this was possible; [the Proprietors] were on the surface highly respectable and socially of the highest upper echelons, appearing above and beyond approach. However this does not excuse nor justify the failure of the department to uncover this and to act. I feel robbed and extremely angry that the lovely, sensitive and highly intelligent [child 8] presented to the social services and with a potential which prompted suggestions of an education at Oxford, was able to go undetected on a rapid downward decline in demeanour, personality and general progress, not least academic achievement. It is surely an understatement to say I failed to realise my potential and I know now, such is my lifestyle, that I almost certainly never will. I am a difficult adult, and have been an inadequate parent (so far as basic and specific parenting skills go) and as much as I hate the term, a damaged and unbalanced adult.

There are other issues I wish to raise pertaining to [XX] and my placement there, and also the subject of the maintenance of contact or, rather not, with interested parties. It appears several people were allowed to lose contact with me, being told I no longer wanted contact, or that the powers that were deemed it non productive or not fit.

Obviously I have many issues to take up with you, and not enough paper or energy prevent me from elaborating to any greater extent. It seems I have filled several pages simply outlining my complaint, and I am sure it is necessary for someone from your department to discuss these and other points in person. I hope this letter is taken seriously as previous efforts to gain response from your department have been fruitless.

Thank you if you have taken time out to read all of my letter. I hope to hear from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

8.40 Former resident 8 was more specific when I interviewed him, and the main complaints he made during the interview are summarised below.

8.41 *He ran away from Barlavington once because Proprietor 1 made him participate in a boxing match with a bigger stronger boy.*

8.42 *Proprietor 2, despite her kicking, punching and spanking, mainly controlled him emotionally. She gave him little bits of affection which made him desperate for more. On the occasional morning she would just be nice.*

8.43 *He was hit every day. Proprietor 1 had an obsession with toughening him up. He used to hit children with a jokari bat.*

8.44 *There was no talking allowed after 10 or 11pm or midnight according to age. If caught talking you were sent to stand in the corridor. There, you might be forgotten for hours. You wouldn't dare to move, but when someone found you there later you could be whacked for not being in your bedroom.*

- 8.45 *Proprietor 1 seemed to enjoy scaring children. He once, in his car, chased child 8, who was on his bike. He nudged him with the car, bumping him off the bike, and drove on.*
- 8.46 *He had to serve meals when Proprietors 1 and 2 gave dinner parties. The Proprietors showed the children off to their friends. After the dinner parties children would sometimes be clearing the table and washing up until 1am or 2am.*
- 8.47 *He described Proprietor 1 as 100% racist, and "in his eyes I was black". (He has dark hair, brown eyes and a complexion perhaps more common in southern than in northern Europe.)*
- 8.48 *Proprietor 3 would hit and slap you, but was a bit wet. The other son never got involved. Proprietors 1 and 2 had a stormy, volatile marital relationship. Proprietor 2 was "barking mad". She had the power. Proprietor 1 was a bully and a henpecked husband. The children would hear Proprietors 1 and 2 having rows, especially at Rotherbridge Farm.*
- 8.49 *Adults who had contact with the children were often told that the children no longer wanted to see them.*
- 8.50 *Children's post at Barlavington was always withheld.*
- 8.51 *The Proprietors must have made very substantial excess profits out of the children.*
- 8.52 *A staff member once stole money from the office. Initially, Proprietors 1 and 2 suspected the children and, because none of them owned up, they were all beaten.*
- 8.53 *He was made to eat potato peelings because he had peeled them too thick.*
- 8.54 *Among chores he had to do he particularly remembers pulling up ragwort all day in the hot sun and being beaten if you dropped the flower heads on the ground. Loading hay bales onto a trailer while Proprietor 1 drove the tractor was a chore which child 8 described as dangerous.*

8.55 *He remembers the Proprietors encouraging him to tease child 1. They found and exploited the children's weak spots.*

8.56 *He once heard Proprietor 1 and his son discussing spontaneous combustion, When they realised he was listening they set about him. Soon afterwards, the son's barn burnt down.*

8.57 *Christmas presents for the children were donated by the Chanctonbury Lions. He had no photograph album and left Barlavington with nothing.*

8.58 *Once, when he had got dog shit on his shoes and walked into the lawn, staff member BM6 pushed his face into it so that it went into his mouth and up his nostrils. She also used to hold his head under the tap for a long time to wash his hair. For long afterwards, he could not stand having water near his face.*

8.59 *Children were bathed one after the other in the same bath water.*

8.60 *When splitting logs with an axe he badly injured his toe. Staff member BM6 kept him off school and away from the doctor until it had healed. She spread a story that he had stolen money from child X and was being protected from reprisals.*

8.61 *Proprietor 2 pushed him into a radiator and cracked his head open. Afterwards she gave him just enough affection to make sure he kept quiet about it.*

8.62 *Staff member BM6 decided that he would eat his spaghetti. She had everyone looking at him and was pushing it down his throat, holding him by the hair and holding his nose. At the time he was not allowed to sit at the main table, but was put at a separate table on his own.*

8.63 *At about 15 he had a tonsillectomy. He remembers being hit by Proprietor 2 on the way home from hospital.*

Former resident 11

8.64 *The following complaints and allegations are summarized from my interview with him.*

8.65 *He said he was not himself sexually abused but that staff member BM7 (a man) sexually abused other boys.*

8.66 *Proprietors 1 and 3 would lose their tempers and lash out, but were not constant abusers. Proprietor 2 was a constant abuser and staff member BM6 was her henchwoman.*

8.67 *If he had not done one of his chores (e.g. lay the breakfast table or empty the waste bin), staff member BM6 would pull him out of bed at 3am, and make him scrub floors, sometimes with a toothbrush.*

8.68 *While on holiday on the Isle of Wight in the charge of staff member BM7 they were taken to Robin Hill, where a man made them watch pornographic films.*

8.69 *They also were sent on PGL adventure holidays for a month at a time with perhaps 50p a week pocket money. He says that on these holidays he several times ended up in hospital.*

8.70 *Children were grounded for visiting school friends' homes straight from school and were sent to the homes of friends of the Proprietors as free labour.*

8.71 *When he was nine or ten, about six of them arrived at Duncton Primary in the morning with bruised thumbs and maybe fractures. They had been beaten severely on the hands with a wooden spoon for picking apples.*

8.72 *He was beaten up quite a lot. Once Proprietor 2 marked him with a stick and drew blood in front two other staff members.*

8.73 *He described his ill-treatment as consisting of sleep deprivation, beatings, and zero encouragement – being told that you were a failure, would achieve nothing and should be grateful for what you had.*

8.74 *Proprietor 2 would beat child 8 at every opportunity. The older children were used as a tool to control the younger ones.*

8.75 Boxes of reject/seconds clothes were put in the cellar and the children had to buy them with money earned from their outside jobs. No clothes were bought for him except for school uniform. Pants and socks were communal. If you succeeded in getting the least awful ones, you had to conceal this from older children who would otherwise take them from you. Shoes were second-hand and handed down.

8.76 The Round Table gave Christmas presents but these had to be shared e.g. a skateboard between two or three children.

8.77 Bikes were made up from the most serviceable parts of discarded bikes. Once new bikes were bought in, photographed, with the children, and then taken away.

8.78 The cook was often told off for overfeeding the children or giving them food which was too good.

8.79 He remembered Proprietor 3 kicking child 4 around the yard.

8.80 No interest was taken in his education.

8.81 When he was 13 he was selected to train on Saturday mornings for the County athletics team. He was told he had to find a job to pay for this. Staff member BM7 found him a cleaning job at a pub, but this was also on Saturday mornings, so he was not able to go to the athletics training sessions.

Former resident 12 (younger brother of former resident 11)

8.82 The following complaints/allegations are summarized from my interview with him.

8.83 He was unhappy at Barlavington from the beginning.

8.84 You got no privileges unless you put the wind up the Proprietors. A privilege might be staying up till 7pm or having hot water in your bath.

8.85 He was made to bathe in cold water with three boys in the bath together. He once complained to staff member BM6 that the water was cold.

She made him stay in the bath for 15 minutes and did not let him use a towel to dry himself, so he had to get into bed wet.

8.86 As he got older, Proprietor 2 would shout and scream at him, and hit him on the arms and legs with wooden sticks. Staff member BM6 did the same.

8.87 If staff member BM6 caught them in the orchard looking for windfall apples, she would line them up with one arm stretched out in front, palm down, and hit them hard on the thumb with a wooden spoon. This happened regularly.

8.88 When staff member BM6 gave you a pair of shoes from the store in the cellar, you had to accept the pair she gave you, whether or not they fitted. He says that he first noticed when he was 12 or 13 that his big toe did not straighten much. He had to see the specialist who said it was obvious that he must have been wearing shoes too small for him. He had to have an operation to straighten his toes when he was 16. He has had to have painkillers for his feet in the last two or three years.

8.89 Proprietor 2 used to threaten him that his social worker would put him into a closed unit.

8.90 Once when he wanted trainers he was given football boots and told to cut the studs off.

8.91 Chores included chopping and stacking firewood for the Proprietors, and the children had to ensure there was always a supply of firewood for the Proprietors' part of the house.

8.92 Proprietor 2 got clothes from jumble sales. Later Proprietor 3 got seconds or rejects from FUS.

8.93 The food was very poor – lumpy porridge like concrete and watery sago/semolina pudding, overcooked cabbage and small quantities of tough meat. Staff member BM6 often cooked it and had no idea how to cook. Sometimes she collected and cooked maggoty brown windfall apples.

8.94 He and others were hit for talking in their bedroom.

8.95 *Sometimes staff member BM6 would wake them up in the middle of the night and make them scrub or polish floors, so that she would not have to do the work herself.*

8.96 *When his father was killed in an accident, Proprietor 2 gave him the news casually in the big kitchen, as if it was a matter of little importance.*

8.97 *Proprietor 1 used to pull his hair and twist his arm occasionally, and Proprietor 3 may have hit him a couple of times, but most of the hitting was done by Proprietor 2 and staff member BM6. When Proprietor 3 was helping his parents run Barlavington he behaved much as they did. When his parents moved to Rotherbridge Farm he relaxed a bit.*

8.98 *His elder brother was hit by Proprietor 2 on the arms, legs and back with a bamboo cane when caught having bought cigarettes, because he would not say where he got the money from. (He was buying the cigarettes for older children who had given him the money.)*

8.99 *Once when Proprietor 3 had taken them to a youth club, they felt very hungry when they got back, and helped themselves to some cornflakes. Proprietor 3 saw them and launched into an attack, saying that if they were shown a favour they abused it.*

Child 13

8.100 *She made the following complaints/allegations during my interview with her.*

8.101 *Once she was in bed because she was ill, but Proprietor 2 wouldn't allow this. "You couldn't be ill." Proprietor 2 dragged her by her hair out of her bed, across the first floor of the house to the stairs, kicked her down the stairs and, at the bottom of the stairs, trod on her when walking over her. Some of her hair was pulled out. She remembers being in great pain and thinks she may have had broken ribs.*

8.102 *She remembers walking past the hatch into the kitchen, when it happened to be open, and seeing Proprietor 2 in the kitchen holding another child off the ground by the clothes at the back of his neck. He was blue and*

choking and she thought he was going to die. She went in and stopped Proprietor 2. She still thinks that the other child would have died if she had not intervened.

8.103 She remembers being taken shopping for clothes on their (her and her sister's and brothers') first day at Barlavington. After that they had seconds/rejects and second-hand clothes. School uniforms were bought as birthday presents or with birthday money. She had coats handed down from the Proprietors' daughter. She noticed on her file claims for clothes bought from Marks and Spencers, but never had anything from there.

8.104 Proprietor 2 knocked her brother across the yard.

8.105 If you were useful to Proprietor 2, you were fine. When Proprietor 2 was away for 6 weeks Proprietor 1 was fine.

8.106 She (child 13) could sit on her hair when she arrived but Proprietor 2 cut it off.

8.107 Children were allowed one bath a week and some had to share bath water. Her sister (child 14) was not allowed a bath after mucking out the stables and had to go straight on to school smelling of horse manure.

8.108 The Proprietors threw away letters sent to and by the children.

8.109 When she was 16 she was paid £7.50 a week to look after 10 children at the Lodge. She worked single-handed, seven days a week. When she got another job and gave Barlavington Manor seven days notice, Proprietor 2 threw her out on the spot and did not allow her to go back to see her brothers (children 15 and 16). Proprietor 2 told her she would be a trespasser and that the police would be called to arrest her.

8.110 Proprietor 2 put her on the pill by sending her, on her own, to Worthing Family Planning Clinic. They gave her pills which she was told were for her periods. Her blood pressure was never checked.

8.111 There was a box containing communal knickers and socks.

8.112 The aunties did the washing.

8.113 *The food was disgusting. For example there was just one pound of mince for all the children. Proprietor 2 once made her finish eating her meal after she had already vomited. They drank water, squash and powdered milk. There was no fruit, not even apples, and any vegetables seemed very old.*

8.114 *When her mother suffered serious burns, Proprietor 2 gave her the news casually, saying, "Your mother was burnt in a fire last night, probably drunk, I expect."*

Child 14 (younger sister of child 13)

8.115 *I interviewed child 14 with her younger brother (child 16)*

8.116 *She said she was keen on horses so her main job was looking after them. Proprietor 2 would wake her up at 5am and then go back to bed (and would later be brought tea and toast in bed.) She was not allowed a bath after mucking out and feeding the horses so had to go to school smelling of horse manure and was made fun of by other children. She got 50p per week for seeing to the horses morning and evening. She also had to take them to polo matches, riding one and leading three, which was dangerous.*

8.117 *If you were not considered ill enough to need to stay in bed all day and have the doctor sent for, then you were treated as being well.*

8.118 *When the Proprietors entertained guests, children had to serve dinner, clear away and wash up. One of the perks was that you could eat the leftovers.*

8.119 *Proprietor 1 hit her once, and it really hurt.*

8.120 *On the day she left Barlavington, she came back on the school bus to find Proprietor 1 outside in his car with her belongings in a black plastic sack. She did not know she was to leave, and was not allowed to say goodbye to her brothers.*

8.121 *She once saw staff member BM6 chasing child 8 around the woods. She chased him for about ten minutes and she could see the extreme fear on*

child 8's face. When staff member BM6 caught him she laid into him viciously, dragging him around and punching and kicking him.

Child 16 (younger brother of children 13 and 14)

8.122 The food was disgusting and there was not enough of it. He was once made to eat until he vomited.

8.123 If you didn't wash properly, staff member BM6 would scrub your face with a green pan-scourer.

8.124 Clothes did not fit properly, and were either second-hand or rejects. You had to thank the Proprietors for these clothes.

8.125 Once someone stole a bottle of wine and sixteen of them were punished - six strokes of a wooden spoon on the bare backside.

8.126 Pocket money was not paid as of right but had to be earned by doing chores. Once, after he had picked up paper from the drive, Proprietor 3 picked up a further 89 pieces of paper and docked him 89 pence from £1 pocket money.

8.127 Proprietor 1 beat him for smoking a toy plastic cigarette with an end which lit up, without stopping to find out that it was not a real one.

8.128 Children 14 and 16 both commented that there was not enough bedding - two blankets all year round and there was no heating in the bedrooms, so it could be very cold in winter.

8.129 They both said that for swearing, mustard, pepper or soap was put in children's mouths.

Child 18

8.130 He described Barlavington as operating a strict, loveless, cold and distant regime, with no-one to go to.

8.131 *He was physically beaten occasionally, usually when he had done something wrong.*

8.132 *For bedwetting, he was made to wash his own sheets.*

8.133 *He remembers that staff member BM6 pushed him backwards and he hit his head on a radiator.*

8.134 *He was caned by Proprietor 1 when he stole something from a shop.*

8.135 *He was useful to Proprietors 1 and 2 at Rotherbridge Farm because he did everything – chopping logs, mowing, cleaning etc – although he was also contributing to his keep from his earnings.*

8.136 *Food and clothing were “third world” and bought in bulk.*

8.137 *When he lived in the farmhouse at Rotherbridge, after all the other children had left, he was still provided with separate food from the Proprietors and ate alone. He was allowed the Proprietors’ leftovers.*

8.138 *Nothing good was ever said about him. He was only talked to when he was in trouble.*

8.139 *He was in pain with a stomach ulcer for four years from age 18 to 21 or 22.*

9. THE COMPLAINTS AND MATERIAL IN THE CASE FILES

Whether complaints were made at the time

9.1 In considering this issue I have broadened the definition of a complaint to include things said by children which might have suggested some cause for concern.

9.2 In a summary covering the period August 1968 to March 1969, child 3's social worker recorded that child 3's mother made "a number of accusations against Barlavington". These were:

- i. The children were not kept clean.
- ii. Child 3 was tied to her cot (child 3 would have been two years old at this time).
- iii. Child 3 was left in dirty nappies in her cot.

"She described her as being strapped onto her cot and her feet tied to the side as well." The recording continues:

"We talked at some length about the deficiencies of care in large establishments such as Barlavington and what staff could reasonably be expected to do. She was more reasonable by the end of the conversation but complained bitterly at having to leave [her child] there. Her own guilt is increased inevitably by any deficiencies apparent and obviously the tension is very difficult for her to bear. I agreed with her that no child should be tied to her cot and encouraged her to tell me of other deficiencies".

9.3 I interviewed the social worker concerned. She did not remember this conversation, but said that she would have discussed the complaints with the Senior Child Care Officer who liaised with Barlavington (subsequently appointed Child Care Adviser).

9.4 The next record I have found of an expression of concern is in June 1975, when an Education Welfare Officer from West Sussex telephoned the social worker for children 13, 14, 15 and 16. The case notes say only that "she feels [these] children are unhappy at Barlavington etc". Three days later the social worker visited the children at Barlavington and spoke to child 14's headteacher. Child 14 told the social worker she had run away from Barlavington because she had stolen a sausage. The file does not record any

discussion of why she took a sausage, whether it was reasonable to regard taking a sausage as stealing, or why, having taken it, she felt the need to run away. The next day, the social worker telephoned the Education Welfare Officer and said that she "felt the children were well settled at Barlavington, that of course ups and downs were expected".

9.5 In June 1977 a social worker employed by Family Service Units (a voluntary organisation), in a "transfer summary" on child 6, who had been at Barlavington from 1969 to 1971, and had paid some weekend visits to his brother there until 1973, wrote that child 6 "was previously against Barlavington, as he said they put pepper in his mouth if he swore". Other former residents (child 7 and child 16) have made complaints about this practice. There is no other reference to this on the file. Child 6 would have been eleven years old when his comment was recorded. In January 1980 a residential social worker at another establishment recorded that (child 6) "recently shared with me the fact that he wouldn't like to go and live at Barlavington. He was very definite about this but, unfortunately, we did not have time to go further into it as he had to go to school".

9.6 On 16 June 1978, according to the case file, Proprietor 3 phoned child 14's social worker "to talk about [child 14] who is being exceedingly difficult. She runs off, refuses to obey sanctions, goes off with boyfriend and comes in late. [She] has been involving other girls, and has found ways of really getting at Proprietor 3. She complains to the police about their treatment at Barlavington Manor, and to the school. As [Proprietors 1 and 2] are on holiday [Proprietor 3] is especially anxious to retain control". Child 14 was then 15 years old. The file then records considerable discussion with Proprietor 3 but no attempt to find out the nature of the complaints made by child 14 to the police and to her school. A later entry dated September 1978 records that child 14 "has now missed lessons at school, stayed out late, run away made complaints about Barlavington". Child 14 was removed from Barlavington on 6 October 1978. An educational psychologist reported on 13/11/78 that child 14 "told me she hated the owners of the private children's home where she had been staying". This report was considered at a case conference on 16.11.78 which recommended that she should return to Barlavington.

9.7 On 2 August 1980 she was taken to Barlavington "to collect a reference from [the proprietors' son]. This was a good reference but [child 14] worked

herself up into a high state of anxiety beforehand about meeting [him]". On 4 August 1981 she was reported to be "very angry about [Proprietors 1 and 2], and had a great time telling tales of mistreatment, particularly of their horrible food". It is clear from the way reference is made to child 14's complaints that they were not taken at face value but were treated as symptomatic of her feelings and problems.

9.8 The case file on child 4 contains two entries which record her telling different social workers, once in June 1979 and once in July of the same year, that she saw no point in having a social worker because everything a child said to them was repeated to the Proprietors. On the second occasion the social worker responded that he would discuss with her what he would say to the Proprietors and why.

9.9 In June 1982 child 1, now 18 years old, was seen by an educational psychologist and a child psychiatrist. The educational psychologist reported that "she described a prison where the inmates had had their lives ruined, their children and families separated from them and their freedom curtailed. They however remained powerless to do anything about it". This was a "free story" told in response to a card intended to evoke aggressive feelings. This former resident now feels fairly sure that she would have been describing her feelings about Barlavington Manor.

9.10 In September 1982 a senior social worker in West Sussex became concerned about child 4 and about Barlavington generally. There are on file some rough notes of a telephone conversation between this man and child 4's social worker. He felt that the level of supervision at Barlavington was inadequate and described Proprietor 3 as shaking as if he had something to hide. There was a reference to plants growing in the back garden which may have been cannabis. The RBKC social worker wrote a memo on the same day (27/9/82) to the Child Care Adviser which reads:

"I have today been contacted by a senior social worker called [X], who works in Petworth. He has become involved in [child 4's] case (not involved by me) as a result of which he and one of his colleagues ([Y], Senior Team Leader) decided to visit Barlavington Manor and were "concerned". I would like to discuss this with you.

[The senior social worker] was concerned about 1.) [child 4] – for whom West Sussex are not responsible, but whom he decided to interview and also give his telephone number, which surprised me, and 2.) Barlavington Manor as a whole. He was not prepared to put anything in writing and wanted it to be kept “confidential” at this stage. I advised him of your role in relation to Barlavington and said I felt it more appropriate for concern about the establishment to be discussed with you. He was willing for this, but in spite of this, wished me to go and visit his office for coffee on my next visit to Barlavington, and was quite persistent with this invitation. I was unable to elicit what he felt the purpose of such a visit from me would be, and it seemed to me inappropriate. I did NOT therefore, agree to go.

Please may we discuss?”

9.11 I have interviewed the social worker and the Child Care Adviser. They do not now remember any subsequent developments. The absence, now, of a general file on Barlavington Manor makes it probably impossible to find out whether the concerns expressed by the West Sussex Senior Social Worker were followed up.

Complaints made subsequently

9.12 There were also some complaints and other adverse references to Barlavington made by former residents after they had left.

9.13 In August 1984 former resident 4 told her social worker that she had not told the Social Services Department about her feelings about a subsequent placement, because she feared being returned to Barlavington, which she hated.

9.14 In February 1985 the Director of Social Services received a letter from London Weekend Television saying that former resident 8 would be featuring in a programme about children in care and would be saying that “his wishes and complaints were ignored by the Social Services Department and his fieldworker”. The Director, who no longer remembers the incident, placed a handwritten note on the file recording his telephone conversation with the programme’s producer. This note includes his observation to the producer that it would be unfortunate if the impression was created that the only avenue of complaint open to a former child in care was to appear on a television

programme. I have found nothing which supports former resident 8's understandable suspicion that the Royal Borough used undue influence to prevent his appearing on the programme. There is, however, no record on his file of any attempt by RBKC to contact him about his complaints, an initiative which might have been expected, given the Director's observation to the programme producer and his assurance that, although the Department had no complaints procedure, all written complaints came to him personally.

9.15 In November 1989 former resident 1 was seen by a social worker because she had questions about her background and her life in care. The social worker noted that "she had numerous complaints about [the Proprietors] which may well have been founded" (sic).

9.16 Similarly, former resident 4 talked to a social worker in August 1991 in the course of gaining access to her records. The social worker noted: "We talked about some of [Former Resident 4]'s experiences growing up in care. The discrepancy between her own perceptions and experiences and how this appeared to others became apparent. She had felt unable to share some of her feelings about growing up at Barlavington and felt that staff maintained a façade of care which was not consistently offered to children there". The social worker also prepared some extracts from the file, with observations on them, for former resident 4, which include the following: "You told me about the incident when you found the clothing list in the rubbish bin. When your social worker talked to [Proprietors 1 and 2] about this you said they punished you. So you felt there was no point in talking to social workers." The case file entries for June and July 1979 (which record child 4 saying there is no point in talking to social workers because they tell the Proprietors) say nothing about child 4 finding a clothing list. Several former residents have, however, talked to me about this list or notebook being found in a rubbish bin or wastepaper basket. They all believe it to have been a fictitious list of clothing claimed to have been bought for the children, and they presume it formed the basis for claims for expenses made to local authorities.

9.17 Finally, in May 1995 former resident 4 signed an access to records request form on which she stated that she wanted in particular to know why the Social Services Department did not act sooner to protect her.

Allegations that children were hit

9.18 There is a small number of entries which might be considered relevant to allegations by former residents that they were beaten and knocked about.

9.19 From child 2's case file, dated 19/5/67: "The period of aggressiveness at Barlavington continued for several weeks prior to the building up of a crisis point when [child 2] set on the nursery school teacher and hit her extremely hard. She took him to [Proprietor 2] in the kitchen saying she could not have him in her class and [Proprietor 2] quite spontaneously gave [child 2] a hard slap. Before this he had never been able to cry although he had been severely reprimanded but at this point he burst into tears. [Proprietor 2] described this as a turning point with [child 2], as he seemed very much more at ease and much more good humoured and cooperative after this." The entry is written by the social worker but clearly gives Proprietor 2's account of the incident.

9.20 Also from child 2's file, in August 1976: "During the summer holidays, [child 2]'s behavior began to cause increasing concern and his aggression towards one boy in particular led to another boy asking [Proprietor 1] if he could teach him a lesson. At this point [the Proprietors] seem to have been at the end of their tether in knowing how to handle [child 2], he had already fought [Proprietor 2] when she tried to break up another scrap he was involved in. [Proprietor 1] agreed to a sort of boxing match, and [child 2] was duly brought to earth by a boy older than himself. The match was observed and [child 2] lay some time afterwards on the ground snivelling. Eventually [Proprietor 2] took him upstairs to bed and comforted him". The record makes it clear the social worker had this account from Proprietor 1, and it seems likely that "snivelling" is his word. "Duly brought to earth" also does not give the impression of being the social worker's own turn of phrase. The impression is given that child 2 was not much hurt, but he was taken to bed. The match was clearly recognized as and intended to be an uneven one. Two other male former residents have complained of being made to take part in boxing matches which they described as bloody, frightening and painful. There are no other references to boxing in the files, but staff member BM6 remembered one boxing match, involving child 8, who is one of those who has complained of being made to fight. She said that child 8 "went down before he was hit", which may reveal an attitude somewhat similar to Proprietor 1's. (On a review form – 12 May 1981 – child 8 is described as "dreadful physical coward", and Proprietor 1 seems to me the most likely author of this description.)

9.21 There is an entry in child 1's file, part of a summary to May 1977, which reads: "For a long time [child 1] regularly wet the bed. [Proprietor 2] one morning became so exasperated with her she lost her temper with her and since this time [child 1] has not been enuretic". This recording does not of course say what form Proprietor 2's loss of temper took. Former resident 1's statement says "I had quite a bad bed wetting problem until I was about 10 (she would have been 13 in May 1977) and most mornings I would be told off by [Proprietor 1] when he came to check my bed. If I had wet myself then [Proprietor 2] would hit me on the backside in front of everyone at breakfast which I found very humiliating". The entry in the file suggests that Proprietor 2 either believed in the therapeutic value of a short sharp shock or was disposed to present it to others as therapeutic.

9.22 Former resident 16 said in interview that when another child stole a bottle of wine, sixteen of the children were punished by being given six strokes of a wooden spoon on the bare bum. This may or may not be the incident described in child 19's file, where it is recorded that early in 1981 he stole three bottles of wine from Proprietor 3, and eventually owned up, but not before all the children had been kept in during the evening and weekends for over a week. There is no record of any physical punishment, nor any comment on the appropriateness of punishing the whole group.

9.23 The record of the review on child 8, held on 12/5/81, referred to above, also comments that "he has a capacity to upset everyone and would provoke [the Proprietors] if they let him. [Proprietor 1] keeps on threatening him but dare not carry it through in case he hit him too hard". This may suggest that Proprietor 1 thought it acceptable to hit a child provided one did not hit too hard.

9.24 Finally, in April 1986 there is a report on file of an altercation between child 12 and Proprietor 2. Proprietor 2 rang the social worker demanding child 12's removal. The social worker visited next day and saw, first, child 12, then Proprietor 1, then Proprietors 1 and 2 together. "[Proprietor 1] retold the incident to me, getting more angry as he went along. It began to emerge, however, when [Proprietor 2] joined us, that the incident was not quite as straightforward as they had originally presented it. [Proprietor 2] had lost her temper first and had been first to push [child 12]."

Indications of the proprietors' attitude to their responsibilities and to the children

9.25 The files give some insight into how the proprietors presented Barlavington Manor to the local authority, how the local authority perceived it, how the proprietors viewed children in care, and how they viewed their relationship with the local authority.

9.26 A file entry for child 3 dated 4/7/67 records in passing that her first name has been changed. "[A], now renamed [B] to avoid confusion with another [A]." This name change has clearly been imposed by Proprietors 1 and 2 with no consultation with the Social Services Department and apparently no thought that they might be exceeding their authority. It seems to have been accepted by the Department without question.

9.27 Proprietor 2's presentation of Barlavington to the local authority comes across clearly, in a letter she wrote to the Department on 5 March 1969, in the words "I feel very strongly that if they [children 5 and 6] are to benefit fully by coming into our family..." A later passage in the same letter may be suggestive of her general attitude to children in care: "We feel we could give them a full life with us as they do seem to have some intelligence, which is a change".

9.28 A Committee report recommending the assumption of parental rights and powers in respect of child 2, dated 9 November 1970, states that he was "transferred in May 1967 to a private children's home skilled in handling children with behaviour problems". It is difficult to see how this assessment was arrived at. When the report was written, child 2 was the oldest child to have been placed at Barlavington by RBKC and was aged 7. The Social Services Department had however by then placed seven children at Barlavington, who had been there for periods ranging from ten months to four years, and none of them had been rejected as unmanageable. The Committee report suggests that the home was acquiring a certain specialist status in the Department's eyes.

9.29 An entry for child 3 in July 1972 records a phone call from Barlavington reporting that she had fallen out of a window and had been taken to hospital, where she required only two stitches. It is, however, more

common to find that accidents suffered by children were discovered by social workers only when they next visited.

9.30 My interviews with former staff at Barlavington drew several comments that Proprietor 2 had favourites among the children. The file on children 9 and 10 records in August 1972 that Proprietor 2 "told me that they were adorable children and she could spend hours just listening to them because they are so interesting". In other cases Proprietor 1 and 2's expressed attitudes to children were less positive.

9.31 Another entry about child 10, in October of the same year, states: "One child went home fairly recently and returned to Barlavington with nits and little [child 10] had to have most of her hair cut off because she was in such distress when the nit comb went through her hair". This seems to me a somewhat unconvincing account. One former staff member told me that Proprietor 2 used to cut the girls' hair short if they came with long hair, to their distress, and former resident 13 has complained that this was done to her. A number of former residents have stressed how Proprietor 2's treatment of them veered to and fro between affection and cruelty.

9.32 Child 17's social worker, discussing in the file the reasons for his placement at Barlavington, recorded in May 1975 that he had complained of being hit by the person in charge at a previous home and had found the Council's reception and assessment centre far too rough, with children who were aggressive and violent to him. "I decided that Barlavington provided atmosphere where violence wasn't likely to break out at any time." This assessment appears, from the evidence of the file, to have been based on a satisfactory introductory visit by child 17 and on the middle-class image projected by the proprietors, which created an impression of a civilized atmosphere.

9.33 In July 1977 Proprietor 2 discussed with child 17's social worker her and her husband's plans to semi-retire to Rotherbridge Farm, "taking four children with them to give the children a 'finishing off'". The social worker comments: "these plans were totally unknown to me prior to this conversation and although they have selected children with little or no contact with relatives etc., it is difficult to decide for whose needs this plan has been evolved. While it will undoubtedly offer the boys something – will it be what they need. I feel quite strongly that it is [Proprietor 1 and 2s'] needs which

are paramount". One may also note here that the local authority does not seem to be getting much of a look-in in the planning of the children's futures.

9.34 There is an indication that Proprietors 1 and 2 were exercising considerable authority in their relations with the Social Services Department. A typed note date-stamped 14 September 1972 states:

"Barlavington Manor: [Proprietors 1 and 2] on holiday 16 September – 2 October. Do not want social workers or relatives to visit during this period."

There is no indication that the message thus conveyed was challenged.

9.35 A striking example of failure to keep the Department informed of significant developments in a child's life comes in a social worker's summary dated August 1973. It records that child 1 has acquired a social aunt and uncle who have taken her away on holiday. The 'aunt' has been working for Barlavington for nine months. She has recently starting saying that she wants to adopt child 1, and if that is not possible, to foster her. The plan, however, is for child 1 to stay at Barlavington till she is 18, and she sees it as her home. The social worker noted: "I explained the official requirements re social aunt and uncle...and said I would send a form so that they can be officially recognised as such". Clearly this social befriending arrangement had developed considerably by the time the social worker became aware of it. Evidence from another file suggests that the procedure for approving social aunts and uncles included obtaining two references. There is no indication on this file that this was done. Former resident 1 now feels that Proprietor 2 prevented the social aunt from adopting her, though it appears from the file that the Department, too, would have been against this. She also now states that she was indecently assaulted by the social uncle. Former residents 3 and 13 have made the same allegation against him.

9.36 Running through the files is a certain tension between a presentation of Barlavington as a "family" and consciousness of its being very much a business. A divorce court welfare report written by a RBKC social worker in April 1975 includes a reference to "Commander and Mrs [Surname] who have a 'family' of permanent children in whom they take a personal interest providing continuity of care".

9.37 Child 1's social worker wrote in a summary covering June 1977 to June 1979: "I wonder what sort of place in the family [child 1] and the other children will have, since at the Manor [the Proprietors] live a very separate life from the children". These doubts do not seem to have been felt by child 3's social worker, who, writing in October 1978 about the same proposed move to Rotherbridge Farm, commented: "[The Proprietors] are an upper middle class couple and will no doubt in their new home be formally entertaining many of their friends. [Child 3] will be very much part of this lifestyle".

9.38 On the subject of not informing the local authority about accidents suffered by children, there is a note on child 1's file dated 22 July 1988 which reads: "18 June, Review at Barlavington. [Child 1] struck by a horse and broke her collar bone, so we did not see her". Clearly, the accident had not been reported when it happened. It is also not clear why the child's broken collar bone should prevent her social worker from seeing her.

9.39 In November 1983, child 3's social worker recorded that he and his senior social worker were most concerned that she had been moved back from Rotherbridge Farm to Barlavington Manor without the Social Services Department being involved in negotiations. It appears from the file that the Social Services Department was not only not consulted, but also not informed of the move until some time later.

9.40 From about this time, the case files become increasingly critical of certain aspects of the care provided at Barlavington Manor. In 1984 Proprietors 1 and 2 planned to move children 12, 16 and 18 from Barlavington Manor to Rotherbridge Farm. (The first group four children taken to Rotherbridge Farm had left, there were few children left at Barlavington Manor and Proprietor 3 had decided that the home was not viable and would have to be closed.) In June 1984 social workers for the three boys (12, 16 and 18) shared concerns about the plan to move them to Rotherbridge Farm. Boy 16's file notes: "Wonder how willing or committed [Proprietors 1 and 2] are to this". Meetings were held in the Department about the proposed move, and concerns were expressed, but it took place in September 1984. In February 1985 child 12's social worker recorded: "It seemed to me that the number of the concerns felt about [Proprietor 1's] commitment to looking after the teenagers remained alive and he was obviously finding the challenge presented to him something of a burden he

had not looked to shoulder”. However, on 31 July 1985 the same social worker, commenting on a plan to move boys 12 and 18 from a cottage in the grounds of Rotherbridge Farm into the main building, commented: “I told [Proprietors 1 and 2] that I was pleased that [boys 12 and 18] were moving into the main house. Not only so that they could be kept under close surveillance (the reason given by [Proprietors 1 and 2]) but also because they would feel more a part of the family home. Typically [Proprietors 1 and 2] played down this point, illustrating I think their unique relationship to the children – neither foster parents nor care staff but something in between”.

9.41 A closing summary on child 1, written in September 1985, includes the observation, “It is well known that [the Proprietors] ran their children’s home as a business, eating separately from the children”. It also notes that child 1, who was by then 21 years old, is still referred to by the Proprietors pejoratively as [nickname].

9.42 Another comment on Proprietors 1 and 2’s attitudes towards children in care is given in a closing summary on child 16, written in October 1985. “[Proprietors 1 and 2] have tried to ensure that [child 16] is polite and well behaved, which he is on the whole. However, neither has been able to really engage with [his] feelings. I also think that he suffered from their low expectations of children in care.”

9.43 I have referred earlier (para. 9.24) to a report in April 1986 of an altercation between child 12 and Proprietor 2. The social worker commented in the file that this incident seemed to illustrate to him the shallowness of the Proprietors’ commitment to child 12. He also recorded that, in talking about the incident, Proprietors 1 and 2 spent “quite a lot of time running [child 12] down, describing him as a ‘thug’ and a ‘psychopath’ etc”.

Allegations that children were exploited

9.44 The occasional perceptions of Barlavington as ‘a family’ contrast with the general view of former residents that they were exploited and that their main function at Barlavington was to provide a source of profit, and to some extent to act as servants to the family. Entries in the files with some relevance to complaints of exploitation occur from 1975 onwards and particularly in 1984-85 when former resident 1, by then aged 20-21, drew attention to various financial arrangements.

9.45 A review form on child 2 in 1975 includes the following. "Recently [child 2] has begun to take a much greater interest in himself, in his clothes and his appearance. He has chosen a pair of trousers for himself, asked if he could pay for them himself and is in fact paying [Proprietor 2] by weekly instalments. [He] has a job with [Proprietors 1 and 2] as a stable lad, so he pays for the trousers out of his extra pocket money." This arrangement could of course be seen as useful preparation for adult life, but it must be remembered that it is the story as presented by Proprietors 1 and 2. Child 2 was aged 12 at the time. The account raises unanswered questions about the distinction between pocket money and payments for work done, and about Barlavington's use of clothing allowances.

9.46 From time to time, there are indications that the Council was concerned that the proprietors were sending in claims for expenditure which had not been authorised. There is a letter dated 21 June 1976 from the Social Services Department referring to an account in respect of clothing in the sum of £88.42, for child 5, which had not been authorised in advance. On this occasion, no doubts were expressed as to whether the clothing had actually been purchased, but it is not clear from the files that claims of this kind were supported by receipts. A similar letter in December 1977 about children 1 and 4 is more combative, and refuses or delays reimbursement of various claims for expenditure on clothes, on the grounds that claims for the same or similar items for the same children have been submitted in the recent past. This letter may perhaps suggest some suspicion as to whether the items had actually been purchased. There is no reply on file. Child 4's clothes come up again in a summary covering the period December 1977 to June 1979. Her aunt, with whom she had been staying, "explained to me that it sometimes seemed rather odd to take [child 4] out with her own children as there is such a contrast in appearance; her own children wear smart clothes whereas [child 4]'s always seemed to be falling apart and there is often a large expanse of flesh round her middle". As with most of the extracts from the files, there is nothing conclusive about this. The aunt was having doubts about a plan to foster child 4.

9.47 In May 1978 Proprietor 1 notified the Council that Barlavington had "decided to change our policy on fees to one of 'Total Care'". There would be a new daily rate of £9 per child (previously £6.75). "This will include all expenses, even holidays, with the following exceptions: - initial clothing,

when a child changes schools and travel expenses when for the purpose of visits to relatives, social aunts and uncles and social workers.” The letter observes that this arrangement will save paperwork and previous misunderstandings. In the event, additional claims for unforeseen items seem to have continued. An important consequence of the new arrangement seems to have been that expenditure on clothing (apart from initial clothing) was no longer separately identified and that the Council was no longer involved in considering how children’s clothing needs were met.

9.48 The issue of pocket money, clothing and chores came up again in July 1979. Children 15 and 16 (brothers) raised it with their social worker. Child 15 “asked several questions indicating particular resentment about money at the home. Although he now gets £1 pw pocket money he has to do more chores, and the money he earned working on the new home (presumably Rotherbridge Farm) he spent on his best trousers”. Child 16 “only gets 35p pw pocket money and doesn’t think it fair that he does chores regularly”. The social worker took this up in September with Proprietor 3, who said that child 16’s pocket money had now increased “but he would continue to expect the children to do some things for the pocket money and not have unconditional pocket money. However, he would be trying to sort it all out so everyone knew the situation, for example, giving the older ones their own clothing allowance”.

9.49 In March 1983, the social worker for child 1 (now over 18) noted that she “is at present contributing towards the cost of her maintenance. While on her YOPS course she told me that she is contributing £12.50 a week.” “The finance sheet at the back of the file indicates that she is continuing to contribute £5.00 per week, which I believe is the standard rate of contribution from working children in this establishment. I **hope** that [child 1] is not losing out on this, and will attempt to clarify it when I have the opportunity.”

9.50 In August 1983 the same social worker discussed financial arrangements for child 1 with Proprietors 1 and 2. Child 1 was about to go to College and live in a Hall of Residence, but “there is no question of her ‘leaving’ Rotherbridge Farm at present. She has no other family or ‘home’, and this will remain her home base. She will be spending weekends and vacations with [the Proprietors]. They will not be filling her place during her absence. In discussion, it was agreed that during the academic year starting on 19/9/83, they would be prepared to accept 75% of their normal rate”. This

was agreed. Child 1 was still regarded at this time as needing considerable help in coping with mundane aspects of daily life.

9.51 On 28/9/84, child 1 moved (with three others) into a flat in Easebourne rented by Proprietors 1 and 2 from the Cowdray Estates. Her social worker (not the one who was working with child 1 in 1983) wrote that the proprietors "are guaranteeing the rent; are providing food hampers to assist the three young occupants of the flat (who are responsible for the bills); and generally supervising the placement. [The Proprietors] are requesting payment of 50% of their rate until [child 1] is 21 (3/5/85).

"This is a lot of money at £10.25 per day but is requested because of the sterling work that [the Proprietors] are putting in to help this girl, who is still very young for her age and in need of care and support."

Again, this financial arrangement was approved.

9.52 In December 1984, the social worker for child 3 (who was living in the flat in Easebourne with child 1) received a telephone call from a woman living in the flat below, who worked or had worked for the proprietors. She was concerned that child 3 and the others were not given enough money to live on. She said that child 3 received £24 per week supplementary benefit and had to give £20 of this to the Proprietors. She felt that the young people were all being exploited. The social worker visited child 3 on 12 December 1984. He found that child 3 was receiving £24.90 a week from the DHSS including £1.05 for heating costs, but no allowance for housing costs. She was expected to pay the proprietors £10 a week rent and £10 for food (the hampers referred to above). She was also expected to pay off a court fine at the rate of £5 per week. The social worker and child 3 then went to see Proprietor 3 and "agreed £10 could be renegotiated for food – residents being given responsibility for buying their own food." The social worker undertook to help with an application for Housing Benefit. He later (4/1/85) discussed the situation with his senior social worker, and it was agreed he would write to (the colleague in RBKC who was previously the Child Care Adviser but was by this time referred to in the files as Day Care Officer or Principal Officer – Day Care). There is a copy on file of his memo, dated 7/1/85, to this colleague. The memo outlines child 3's financial situation and includes the following – "[Proprietor 3] told me that he had put in a claim for housing benefits for [child 3] dated 20/11/1984, but she wasn't receiving anything yet.

Nevertheless, he is still expecting her to pay £10 a week from her supplementary benefit". The memo concludes: "It is however a situation about which I feel rather uneasy and wonder whether you might have any thoughts on the matter".

9.53 There is no response to this memo on file. It is not clear what formal responsibility in respect of Barlavington Manor, if any, the Principal Officer (Day Care) retained.

9.54 Following this, child 1's social worker contacted her about her financial situation and she replied on 12 February 1985.

"While I worked at _____ I received a basic wage of £36, plus overtime nearer Christmas. Now I am on the dole I receive £24.

"We now buy our own food as we think it is cheaper that way, as we were getting about £10 worth in which we paid £30 to [the Proprietors].

"The rent is now £60 in which we all pay £15 each. There is also the electricity and coal I have to pay towards, so after paying rent I am left with £10 to pay for these, and food.

"I did receive £5 a week from the Council to help pay towards the rent but they stopped it last week for some reason.

"P.S. the flat is bloody freezing."

9.55 In response, the social worker visited child 1 at the flat on 20/2/85, and noted that "the flat was absolutely freezing, and [child 1]'s bedroom showed bad signs of damp. Only heating working is coal fire in lounge (but floorboards and windows let in draughts) and electric fire in [young man not in care of RBKC]'s room (he is only boy and works and has own room). ([Child 1] shares a room with [young woman not in care of RBKC]; [child 3] has set up her 'room' as a partition in lounge."

9.56 Child 1 "feels let down by [the Proprietors] and says she would like to get a live in job and move away from them. She feels they 'cheat' her e.g. they used to bring a food basket which they said cost £30 (i.e. £10 each – [child 3] buys own food) but which [child 1] felt was worth only £10. She

was being charged £20 per week which she understood was £10 food and £10 rent but when she asked to be able to buy her own food she was then charged £15 per week rent, which is high above the housing benefit rate. She said they were supposed to be providing coal, but only gave 2 bags recently – probably, she thought, because [RBKC social workers] were visiting”.

9.57 The social worker then visited Proprietor 2 with child 1 and raised the issues she had complained about. Proprietor 2 said she had told child 1 to open up the kitchen fire; suggested she heat her own room for half an hour to clear the damp; said the rent was high in anticipation that there would be high electricity bills; said it was therefore all right for child 1 to use the electric heater more; got child 1 to agree she had underestimated the amount of coal the proprietors had bought; said she and her husband disliked the responsibility of the flat and were considering closing it down in summer and re-opening it for holiday lets; said they would never abandon child 1 (but used the proprietors’ pejorative nick-name for her).

9.58 The social worker’s record goes on to comment that “[Proprietor 2] got rather sharp with [child 1] about her job-finding efforts, and I felt she was rather down-putting and I was not surprised when [child 1] ran out crying. But I could also believe [Proprietor 2] when she spoke about [child 1]’s laziness and her unrealistic expectations”.

“I spoke with [the Proprietors] about the rate K&C are paying them. If they are taking money from the girls to pay for electricity, food, coal etc., then what is the rate for? [The Proprietors] asked me to interpret this as a supervision fee.”

9.59 Still on the same day (20/5/85), the social worker spoke to a Housing Benefits officer who explained that child 1 was not currently receiving Housing Benefit because an overpayment was being clawed back. When this had been done, in two weeks’ time, she would receive £5 per week. This was based on information provided by the owners of the flat, Cowdray Estates, who had given a figure for rent and rates etc. which worked out at £21 per week to be divided between the four occupants. “Why then does [child 1] have to give £15 pw. What is extra £10 pw for if she now buys her own food? Supervisor said she’d spoken to [Proprietor 1] and she referred me back to him”.

9.60 The social worker subsequently sought agreement to the continuation of the 50% supervision fee to the Proprietors, on the grounds of child 1's continuing need for support and guidance. In a closing summary in August 1985 he noted that child 1 "thinks of [the Proprietors] as having been more interested in financial gain rather than caring".

9.61 Child 11 was still in care, though no longer at Rotherbridge Farm, in 1987. In January of that year he was living with his grandparents, and his social worker noted that he "certainly believes his grandparents unlike [the Proprietors] are looking after him because of him and not due to any financial incentive". A summary written in October 1987 notes that he "has expressed frequent feelings of exploitation by [Proprietors 1 and 2], feeling that they have made money from him and other children at Rotherbridge Farm and have had a low commitment to their care". His case was closed in 1990. A closing summary dated 27/3/90 by an assistant social worker who had known him for practically all his life includes the following. "[Child 12] is very bitter about the treatment he received at Barlavington and Rotherbridge from [Proprietors 1 and 2]. He blames them for the damage done to his foot which the doctors say was caused by wearing shoes too small, and from which he still gets a lot of pain. He also alleges that at times, [the Proprietors] were quite cruel to him."

Contact with parents and others

9.62 A recurring complaint is that the proprietors of Barlavington Manor stopped children having contact with their parents and with other adults they had known in the past, and prevented their being fostered or adopted. It seems clear, from the files and from accounts given by people I have interviewed, that some parents and relatives were made more welcome than others. When enquiries were received from people who knew one of the children about fostering her or him, they were sometimes pursued, particularly when the enquiry came from a relative, but in some cases it seems clear that the Social Services Department itself did not think that the fostering placement would be in the child's interest. The following extracts mainly illustrate situations in which social workers appeared to feel some concern about the proprietors' attitude.

19/7/70, child 2

9.63 The Senior Child Care Officer liaising with Barlavington and the Child Care Officer “discussed with [Proprietor 2] the possibility of bringing up the question of [child 2’s] mother. [Proprietor 2] said that he did not question the existence of his mother now, and almost felt it would be better to leave him in his present state of mind as he would then gradually come to understand about his mother. However, after further discussion with [Proprietor 2], she agreed that [child 2] remained something of an enigma and that in many ways he needed to be shaken into reality and perhaps the discussion on his mother would help bring more of his feeling to the surface. After the review I spoke to [housemother] and asked how [child 2] was and particularly whether he ever did ask anything more about his mother. She said that in fact he did question her about the existence of his own mother...and one day had asked [her] out of the blue if in fact he did have a mummy who had lived in London”. I think that the social worker was here concerned to show Proprietor 2’s preference for letting sleeping dogs lie, even when others had actually noticed that they were awake. The reference to the child’s need to be shaken into reality is reminiscent of other indications that the proprietors were attracted to a “short sharp shock” approach.

10/5/71, child 7

9.64 The social worker felt it was time to discuss child 7's mother with him. "[Proprietor 2] took the view that no reaction could be worse than what they were going through at the present time and may be this would help to clarify things for him, as when [child 5] was talking one day on the telephone to his mother, [child 7] came along and punched him very hard in the face." I do not read this entry as intending criticism of Proprietor 2, although her attitude appears to have been that talking to children in care about their parents might in normal circumstances be expected to make things worse.

July 1975, children 11 and 12

9.65 These two boys' mother was in prison. Their social worker recorded that Proprietor 1 was of the opinion that she should not see her children "and seems to see this as part of her punishment and refuses to see any reason why it would be good for the children to see her". When in February 1976 a visit was arranged for the boys to see their mother in Durham prison, "Barlavington rang to say that [child 12] had been unwell over the weekend and they did not think he would be fit enough to take the trip to see mother on Wednesday. They had not had the doctor and I suggested that they call the GP, so that we could have a medical certificate saying that he was unfit to travel". The following day the social worker rang Barlavington and was told that the GP had left a note saying child 12 had had a viral infection but was fit enough to travel if it was essential.

May 1977, child 1

9.66 "A worrying aspect of this search for the past was the attitude of [the Proprietors]. They are always rather apprehensive about natural parents coming and disturbing the status quo at Barlavington. (This has actually happened with another child.) They are very wary of social workers coming in and stirring up difficulties around the past, upsetting the children etc. this feeling must have been conveyed to the children. They regularly talk about how they arrived at Barlavington as small children/babies and these stories tend to be glamourised e.g. arriving in a Moses basket at Christmas time. Apart from this families are something of a taboo subject."

1977-1979, child 1

9.67 There are some indications in the files that the proprietors also did not welcome contact with the local child guidance clinic. For example:

“Over the last two years [the Proprietors] have become more and more irritated with [child 1]’s ‘dopiness’. This culminated in a decision being taken at a review a year ago to refer [her] to a psychiatrist at the local child guidance clinic. However, when I next visited [the Proprietors] after this review, they said they had changed their minds about the clinic as [child 1] had greatly improved and they felt there was no need for her to see a psychiatrist. It subsequently appeared that [the Proprietors] are considerably agin psychiatrists, feeling that they do little good and I feel that this was an important factor in their decision.”

February 1978, child 7

9.68 This child’s mother and step-father had written to him. “In conversation with [Proprietor 2] I enquired about [child 7’s] reaction to the letter from [mother and step-father]. She explained that the letter was mostly from the children and that [he] had not seemed very interested – dismissing it quite casually and not wanting to talk about it. While I feel sure that this is how [child 7] handled it, I don’t feel entirely convinced of his lack of emotion but consider that there is an element of vested interest from [the Proprietors] which demands that they underplay [his] reactions.”

November 1982, child 1

9.69 A summary records that all contact with social aunts and uncles has now ceased for her.

Allegations of sexual relationships between the children in care at Barlavington

9.70 On 8 June 1981 the social worker for child 11 visited Barlavington and placed on file a note of his conversation with the staff member who was then the housemother at The Lodge. She is reported as telling the social worker that child 11 “was recently ostracised by some of the girls at Barlavington, as they complained that he was ‘touching them up’”.

Complaints that girls at Barlavington were put on the contraceptive pill

9.71 There is on child 4's file a memo dated 26 May 1981 (when she was not quite 14) from her social worker to the Assistant Director, Social Work. It reports that:

contraception for child 4 was discussed at her review on 13/5/81;

child 4 saw her GP in Petworth with two other girls from Barlavington a few months earlier at Proprietor 3's request, for a general discussion on sexuality (this was arranged after Proprietor 3 discussed it with the social worker);

a few weeks later child 4 asked to see her GP again, this was arranged and the GP subsequently prescribed oral contraceptives.

The memo goes on to discuss the possibility that child 4's grandparents might find out and complain.

10. INTERVIEWS WITH PEOPLE WHO WORKED FOR RBKC

10.1 These interviews have shed little further light on allegations of specific incidents. Some former child care officers/social workers remembered well events which had been recorded in the files; others had little or no recollection. In general the files proved a better source of information about specifics than the interviews. The interviews were, however, helpful in tapping general impressions of a kind less likely to have been recorded on file. The following paragraphs summarise information from these interviews under various headings and maintaining a rough chronological order under each heading.

Child placements

10.2 The former Child Care Adviser was concerned to emphasise the extreme difficulty in the 1960's of finding suitable placements for children in care. He referred to placements being made on the basis of vacancies, not need, children who had many placements, unsatisfactory placements such as convent-based residential nurseries, residential workers moving frequently and local authority homes disrupted by the placement of disturbed children. He said the reason for using private homes was that they offered continuity.

10.3 Child Care Officer 1, also speaking of the 1960's, said that it was desperately difficult to find placements at that time. She felt that Barlavington Manor compared favourably with other children's homes she knew.

10.4 Assistant Director 1 said that when he became an Assistant Children's Officer in 1968, the residential scene was chaotic and the Royal Borough had very few foster homes.

10.5 The Child Care Adviser told me that, after the Social Services Department was set up, in 1971, an information service was created, the objective being that staff should feed in information on placements and resources they had visited. The Director of Social Services (1971-76) had a similar recollection. No-one interviewed has mentioned using this service when considering a placement (although Team Leader 2, speaking about the later 1970s, said that Barlavington was on a Departmental list of well-known good homes). The Assistant Social Worker who had a long involvement with

children 11 and 12 said that Barlavington was chosen for them for lack of alternatives, and added that it was best placement they could have had at the time.

10.6 Team Leader 1 (who was a social worker from 1976 to 1979, a team leader from 1979 to 1985 and a principal officer from 1985 to 1988) said that RBKC was somewhat late in developing fostering services. He had discussions with his team members about their and his concerns about placements and whether better placements could be made (though not in relation to the three children at Barlavington who were supervised by his team). He tried to put some teenagers into family placements and remembers some of them not wanting it.

10.7 The Director of Social Services (1976 –1987) said that he inherited and continued to support a policy that there was a place for residential care, and that the Department had a considerable investment of staff time in the private and voluntary sector.

10.8 Social Worker 4, who was the social worker for children 13, 14, 15 and 16 from 1978 until 1989, wondered periodically if the Department could and should find another placement for them. He said that Barlavington was not working out financially, and he sometimes discussed with the Child Care Adviser whether the Department should pull the plug on it.

10.9 Social Worker 6, who was in RBKC from 1979 to about 1987, when asked about removing children from their placement, said that the issues were always: where else are you going to put them; will it be any better; and will it break down?

Corporate culture

10.10 The Child Care Adviser did not think it realistic to talk about a departmental view of Barlavington Manor, commenting that a Department has no continuity. Team Leader 1 described the Department as having no corporate culture (and said that a positive feature perhaps associated with this was that he was never obstructed by higher authority). However, by the mid 1980s it appears that a concern had developed about the lack of co-ordination of child placement decisions. The Residential Services Officer (appointed to this post in 1985) talked to me about the setting up of the Care Division at

about that time. He said the Department was very concerned about the number of children placed in distant private and voluntary homes with apparently no adequate plan for their independence and future. He added that there was no overall control of spending on these homes. These concerns became issues for the Care Division to tackle. There was a lot of tension between the Fieldwork and Care Divisions. The Care Division was challenging the quality of child care decisions taken in the Fieldwork Division.

Views about Barlavington Manor and its proprietors

10.11 The Child Care Adviser said that Proprietor 1 was strong on education and crime but not sympathetic to psychiatry; believed in parental firmness; and was dominant and strong with local authority staff, but the Child Care Adviser says he developed a constructive relationship with him, and that Proprietors 1 and 2 would seek his advice as to whether they should accept children about whom they had been approached by other authorities. He described Proprietor 2 as explosive. He maintained an involvement with Barlavington Manor after he had been moved to a post carrying responsibility for day care and intermediate treatment. He considered Barlavington Manor a reasonably good placement, though not suitable for children with a reasonably good prospect of an early return to their families.

10.12 Child Care Officer 1, who made the initial visit to Barlavington with the Child Care Adviser, described the proprietors as a very middle class Service family. Proprietor 1 seemed a gentle kindly man. Proprietor 2 seemed stronger, more organised and more determined. She remembered that Proprietor 1 said he had driven in the Monte Carlo Rally. They seemed able to offer a family atmosphere and positive experience of bringing up their own children. Some of Proprietor 2's ideas might seem odd. For example, she suggested that very small children placed at Barlavington could sleep in dog's beds. However, when Child Care Officer 1 saw these beds she considered them satisfactory – canvas beds on metal frames, low to the ground so that a child who rolled out would be unlikely to suffer harm.

10.13 The Assistant Social Worker who was in contact with children 11 and 12 from 1971 or 1972 until after child 12 left care viewed Barlavington Manor as giving less cause for concern than some of the Council's own homes. The children there seemed occupied and did not show

the distressing attention-seeking behaviour – attaching themselves to any stranger who visited – that she had seen in other residential establishments. She remembered that Proprietors 1 and 2 made no bones about running Barlavington Manor as a business. Because of the kind of people they were, it was run slightly on the lines of a private prep school. Proprietors 1 and 2 were not fond of social workers, although she herself was acceptable to them because she talked posh. She considered that they were not knowingly unkind, although Proprietor 2 made no bones about being a beady business woman. They were concerned with the children but there was a certain amount of fake, a bit of a show put on, and Proprietor 2 slightly acted the earth mother. Child 11 told her he got a freedom and independence at Barlavington which children in families did not get. The Proprietors provided continuity and consistency. Proprietor 1 was always supportive to children if they were prosecuted in the courts. Proprietor 2 was pretty defensive at some reviews. The children always seemed to relate well to Proprietor 3.

10.14 Social Worker 1 was child 8's social worker from 1976-1984 (with a one-year break). She saw Proprietors 1 and 2 as warm grandparental types. She was disconcerted by one comment made by Proprietor 2. Proprietor 2 told her that when liquidising food for babies she mixed savoury and sweet foods together. As a mother herself, Social Worker 1 thought this odd, but did not regard it as relevant to her responsibilities. She recorded that when Proprietors 1 and 2's daughter was around, the children were expected to treat her as 'third-in-charge', and remembered thinking this was inappropriate, as the daughter was not involved in running the children's home.

10.15 She had the impression that child 8 was regarded by Proprietors 1 and 2 as the most attractive of the children there in terms of brightness and what they might do for him. He was a show child for them – very attractive, good manners, presentable, intelligent. They were of a social class where these things mattered.

10.16 Social Worker 2 was a social worker in RBKC from 1973 to 1977. She remembered that Proprietor 2 seemed very powerful, very suspicious of social workers, a rather strange earth mother type, not outwardly very warm but concerned that children should be within her domain. She felt that Proprietor 2's attitudes were not uncommon among residential workers, that she was acting in good faith and concerned to protect the children in her

care. The children at Barlavington seemed happy and settled. There was continuity and the place was not institutional.

10.17 Social Worker 3 was a bit uncomfortable with Proprietors 1 and 2's middle-class attitudes and with the home being a business, and noted their different treatment of their own children, but she had no experience of their being unreasonable. She once visited when bad weather had brought down the electricity cables and found Proprietor 2 sitting by the fire reading to the children. She felt reassured by this.

10.18 Team Leader 1 said that, although he never found it necessary to remove a child from Barlavington, it would not in his view have been suitable for a new placement in his period as Team Leader (1979-1985). (There was in fact only one new placement made by RBKC there after 1976.) When Proprietor 3 was in charge (from 1979) he functioned as owner rather than manager.

10.19 Social Worker 4 (1977-89) found the culture of Barlavington Manor very old-fashioned, more like the 1950's and 60's, and very middle-class, with routines and expectations about getting up on time, have baths, doing chores etc. This had its good points, but when the children were teenagers they found it increasingly difficult to accept. He had no sense of things going very wrong, but there were irritations, and all the children had moans and complaints. He spent a lot of time trying to help Proprietors 1 and 2 to see things from the children's point of view. There was some doubt about their professional ability with older children. It was typical to discover after the event that they had done something about which the Department would have wished to be consulted.

10.20 He was very pleased when Proprietor 3 took over. The culture was then very different. Proprietor 3 would take the initiative in ringing him with concerns.

10.21 Team Leader 2 said there was a feudal aspect to the proprietors' regime, and it could be difficult to tease out expertise from their style of presentation. Their social skills made it difficult to tackle them. They kept control of reviews. She did not think Proprietor 2 had a short fuse to a worrying extent; she had a certain middle-class abrasiveness. The fact that she had favourites among the children was a little worrying.

10.22 Team Leader 3 said he found Barlavington Manor of less concern than many other homes. It improved a lot when Proprietor 3 took over. He was concerned about the proprietors' combination of a "professional face" and a "personal family face". In the debate about which children should accompany Proprietors 1 and 2 to Rotherbridge Farm, he thought the Proprietors never understood how rejecting this was for the children left behind. He tried to help Proprietor 3 to understand this. Proprietor 3 was easier to deal with than his parents and his ideas about child care were closer to those of the Department.

10.23 He never felt that the proprietors saw the children as inferior or less deserving, although there was no doubt that the home was a business for them, and they were not going to splash out.

10.24 Proprietors 1 and 2's style with social workers could be somewhat intimidating. He was not aware of Proprietor 2 ever being out of control. She tended to bark out staccato sentences.

10.25 Social Worker 5 was the social worker for child 7 while he was at Rotherbridge Farm. She said there was always a feeling in the Department that there was a marked social class difference between the proprietors and the children which raised questions about how they perceived young people in care. This could have come across more acutely at Rotherbridge Farm.

10.26 Social Worker 6 said there was concern about the split between the lifestyle of the proprietors and that of the children in their care. He described Proprietor 3 as suave and persuasive, but not overbearing. He was not really the carer, not much "hands on".

10.27 Social Worker 7 was struck, at Rotherbridge Farm, that Proprietors 1 and 2 ate separately from the children, and that they continued to call child 1 by a pejorative nick-name although she made it clear to her social worker that she wished to be called by her proper name. She said that child 4 complained of being humiliated by Proprietor 3, and that the lack of supervision at Barlavington was worrying.

10.28 The Residential Services Officer made one visit to Rotherbridge Farm in 1985 or 1986. The visit was made to follow up concerns which had

been expressed about Rotherbridge Farm and its suitability for children 12, 16 and 18. He met Proprietor 1. He remembers him as a man who seemed quite tense, never quite relaxed. There was a cold feeling about the meeting, and Proprietor 1 made no attempt to set out his stall or to win over the Residential Services Officer. He was not forthcoming, and left the Residential Services Officer to make all the running.

Child care staff employed by Barlavington Manor

10.29 There was little reference in the case files to staff employed at Barlavington while Proprietors 1 and 2 were in charge. The files suggest more contact between social workers and Barlavington staff after Proprietor 3 assumed responsibility, and staff members then began to attend reviews. The interviews bore out this impression of social workers knowing little about the people employed to look after children at Barlavington in the 1960's and 70's.

10.30 Child Care Officer 1 had no recollection of any staff at Barlavington. The Assistant Social Worker whom I interviewed did remember some of the staff, including one person who "had a dirty mucky baby of her own", and who the Assistant Social Worker thought was no good. She did not stay long at Barlavington. Social Worker 1 at first, during the interview, thought that only domestics were employed at Barlavington, but later had some recollection of there being 'Aunties' there. She did not remember discussing child 8 with any member of staff, only with the proprietors. Social Worker 2 remembered there being a good housemother at The Lodge.

10.31 Team Leader 1 commented that under Proprietor 3 there was a high turnover of child care staff and said that he could have done more to get committed and skilled staff. He said the staff were always female.

10.32 Team Leader 3 was concerned that former resident 13 was employed at Barlavington as an 'Aunty' when she left care, and considered this inappropriate.

10.33 Social Worker 6 had little recollection of staff employed at Barlavington Manor, and did not remember any by name. Social Worker 7, however, remembered that in 1982-83 there were young housemothers, who did not stay long, and who complained about working conditions.

Attitude towards parents

10.34 The interviews, unlike the files, produced fairly positive views about the proprietors' attitudes towards parents. Child Care Officer 1 was clear that Proprietors 1 and 2 were in no way obstructive of plans to return children 5 and 6 to their mother's care, despite there being considerable concern about the plan, in view of the high level of support their mother would need. Child care officer 2, discussing former resident 3's complaint that she knew nothing about her mother until she was 16, pointed out that child 3's mother visited her several times at Barlavington (the file confirms this) as part of a plan to explore the possibility of restoring child 3 to her mother. She said that Proprietors 1 and 2 had some reservations about this plan but went along with it, and certainly did not sabotage it. A trial visit home when she was three years old went badly wrong. Child 3 was for a time missing and when she returned to Barlavington it was found that she appeared to have been sexually abused. (This incident is probably the one which is referred to in one or two case files as an instance of Proprietors 1 and 2 having had bad experiences with social workers and/or parents in the past.) Child Care Officer 2 remembered, and the file confirms, that child 3 was then seen by a child psychiatrist who advised that the child might not herself have experienced the home visit as traumatic, that she should not be given the impression that it was a great concern to others, but that further contact with her mother should be delayed until she reached adulthood. The Child Care Officer thought that, following receipt of this advice, there might have been something of a conspiracy of silence about the child's mother, and she therefore found it believable that child 3 did not recall having any previous contact with her mother.

10.35 Social Worker 2 remembered Proprietor 2's opposition to children 11 and 12 visiting their mother in prison, and that when Proprietor 2 claimed that child 12 was not fit to travel, she had to insist on a medical certificate to that effect in order to force the issue. She also remembered that Proprietors 1 and 2 were good with the maternal grandparents of these children.

10.36 Team Leader 1 said that Barlavington could and did handle parental contact.

10.37 Social Worker 4 said that under Proprietors 1 and 2 there were sporadically problematic relationships with parents.

10.38 Social Worker 6 said that they could tolerate, and at least did not sabotage, contact between children and their parents.

Attitudes towards education

10.39 The Child Care Adviser said that Proprietor 1 was “strong on education”. Certainly Proprietors 1 and 2 often put forward clear views about which school a child should attend, and gave their reasons. Proprietor 1 had also been a governor of the local Church of England primary school.

10.40 Child Care Officer 1 said that she visited children 5 and 6 both at Barlavington and at their primary school. She said it was part of the Child Care Officer’s job to visit children’s schools and would find it surprising if colleagues did not do this. I have not, however, found references in the files to child care officers/social workers making **routine** visits to day schools. They visited when there were serious problems requiring negotiation between social worker and headteacher.

10.41 Team Leader 1 took the view that Barlavington offered little support for the children’s education and that Proprietor 3 showed little interest in helping them achieve at school.

Food at Barlavington

10.42 Child Care Officer 1 did not think she ate any meals with the children, but remembered Proprietor 2 talking about food, and said that she seemed to favour homely sensible food for children and to understand the comfort children derive from food. The Assistant Social Worker remembered there being bloater paste sandwiches for tea, and said that supper at The Lodge came down from the main house in catering containers. She confirmed that the proprietors ate separately from the children. She said she had seen the children having meat to eat. Children 11 and 12 once came to stay with her and her husband. (She was an approved social aunt to these children in addition to being an assistant social worker.) She remembered that when they came to stay they loved being able to help themselves to fruit from the fruit bowl and to yoghurt, as food was not freely available in this way at

Barlavington. Social Worker 2 said she had tea with the children at The Lodge a couple of times. She remembered seeing vast bags of mince in the freezer, and that the proprietors and the children had separate food.

10.43 Team Leader 3 said that he had been concerned about the different standards of catering for the children and for the proprietors, and that child 16 had talked to Social Worker 4 about this and it had been taken up with the proprietors. Social Worker 8 remembers child 16 saying (perhaps at the handover meeting with Social Worker 4) that the owners of Barlavington ate good food and gave the children rubbish. She said child 16 had clearly not been happy at Barlavington but did not like to talk about it.

Clothing at Barlavington

10.44 The Assistant Social Worker remembered that each child had only one school uniform which had to be washed in the evening in an aged washing machine. She said there was concern about the children's clothes and that Social Worker 2 was incensed when she found out that, although the Council was paying for clothes, the children were not getting new clothes. She said Social Worker 2 then insisted on the production of receipts. Social Worker 2 herself did not, however, refer to this. She said the children's clothes seemed fairly neat but also fairly shabby, and that children 11 and 12 were satisfactorily dressed for events such as their visit to their mother. Social Worker 5 thought that child 7 always looked appropriately turned out. (This would have been after he had left school and was working and earning.) Social Worker 7 said child 4, as an adolescent, often complained about inadequate clothing.

Pocket money at Barlavington

10.45 Team Leader 3 said he had been concerned about the withholding of pocket money as a control measure, but that the Child Care Adviser had taken a firm line on this, and it was resolved. He said Social Worker 4 also showed insistence in raising the pocket money issue. Social Worker 6 recalled that child 18 expressed concerns about pocket money (and about the lack of milk in the fridge). Social Worker 6 felt that the resentment expressed was genuine. He believed there was some general concern about what pocket money children were receiving, and that this was addressed in reviews. Social Worker 7 said that child 4 frequently complained about not

having enough money, but it was not that unusual for adolescents to want more materially.

Punishment at Barlavington

10.46 Social Worker 1 never discussed methods of discipline and control with the proprietors. As far as she was aware there was no corporal punishment, and she never heard of children being hit. Social Worker 6 never sensed that there was inappropriate punishment at Barlavington and never got from child 18 any sense of fear of the placement. He noticed that the young people at Barlavington seemed unusually well behaved.

10.47 The social work assistant said she knew from Proprietor 2 that she kept a wooden spoon with which she used to hit the children in extreme circumstances. (This is not recorded in the case file and I have the impression that the social work assistant kept it to herself.) She also said that, very much towards the end of his stay at Rotherbridge Farm, child 12 started to say, "you know they beat us," and so on.

Excess profits

10.48 Social Worker 6 found it difficult, now, to say whether he had concerns about the care of child 18, but he remembered concerns around money and standards of physical care, that is to say, around whether fees and expenses paid to the proprietors were reflected in the value of services provided to the children. He now felt with hindsight that the Department did not look carefully enough at what was actually provided.

Other matters

10.49 Child Care Officer 2 said that child 3 was placed at Barlavington Manor together with two other children, all three having been at the same private children's home in Dorset. They were moved precipitately because the home was passing to a new proprietor or manager whom the Department considered unsuitable, and it was thought she might obstruct the children's removal. (It has not been possible to find case files on these other two children.) Child Care Officer 2 said that the previous proprietor of the home in Dorset visited the children at Barlavington and that after perhaps a year or so the other two children were placed back in her care. This person was,