

REPORT BY ROBERT MORTON, PRINCIPAL MANAGER CHILDREN'S HOMES

The following report will be kept brief due to these factors :

1. Time available to undertake this report.
2. A lengthy report, with all the other reports attached, would not be appropriate.
3. I see no point in writing a long report to detail yet again the crisis in the Section/service.

Since the last Sub-Committee meeting on February 2nd 1989 Josie Durrant has left the Council, and the new Assistant Director, Ainsley Forbes, takes up post on Monday 17th July. His arrival is welcomed and it is naturally hoped that, once he has had time to settle in, he will have a dramatic impact on the situation.

The situation in the Section, as I have detailed at every Sub-Committee meeting, verbally and in writing, is not only at crisis point but very dangerous. I cannot impress this point too strongly. Members must be aware of the possible implications of the present situation.

I provide below a brief summary of the problems.

1. PLACEMENTS

There are very rarely any available in Lambeth Homes, due to:

- a) Shortage of staff - vacancies, sickness.
- b) No movement of young people - home, into flats etc.
- c) Inappropriate admissions blocking places.
- d) No staff - residential, fieldworkers or managers - to address the problems.

Young people of all ages, from babies to young adults, and of all races/ethnic backgrounds, therefore continue to be placed all over the country in Private & Voluntary Homes, which at best we can only be sure are providing a bed. The vast majority have not been visited by the Section and therefore we cannot state whether they are suitable or not. I believe that many are not, if only because of the distance from the child's family and environment.

This situation is not only bad practice and dangerous but very expensive.

2. STAFFING

It would be impossible to give a true picture of this issue. I would ask Members to consider the seriousness of the position and the possible, if not likely, consequences of the following :

- a) Agency staff - almost without exception, the Homes are being kept running by agency staff. If agency staff are withdrawn it would be impossible to keep up to 50% of the service running. That is taking into account that almost 40% of the service is not operational now.