

127. This letter is quoted in full as it gives the first indication of issues that were to be raised subsequently:

"This is an anonymous letter to implore you to act immediately to relieve Angell Road Children's Home of the blight that is JC. JC is a dictatorial autocrat who's impressions of the Lord God Almighty would be better suited putting young boys through paratrooper exercises than looking after young people in care.

JC constantly undermines the authority of the care staff in the eyes of the children by reversing decisions already taken by them. He will make decisions and decide upbringing policy without prior discussion using the expressions "I expect my staff" and "I want". He refers to everything as "His", "my home", "my staff", "my van" and indeed uses everything as though it were his own. The transit van is a good example of this. He will take it home overnight and at weekends and use it for his own private use without so much as a by your leave. One blatant example of this was on October 3rd when he told a Senior Officer to inform the rest of the the staff that he didn't want the children fetched from school in the van any longer because they were getting spoiled and that they should therefore fetch them on the bus. This would have meant two out of a maximum four staff leaving the building. Two maximum looking after five daycare children ages six months to two years and one boy of twelve, taking two buses to Camberwell New Road and back to fetch two children and another bus to Kennington to fetch another. Ten minutes after he gave this "order" he disappeared with the van, had it all night long and returned it next morning with 38 miles clocked up.

The domestics are treated like dirt beneath his feet. He makes totally unacceptable demands on them which they tolerate only because they are frightened of losing their jobs. There has been no kitchen assistant for some time so the laundry worker has been told to do both jobs, she is also expected to clean upstairs when the other cleaners are off and do the weekly washing for a **Name Redacted** and his **DPA** teenage sons who were once in care but long since left (they also incidently get two meat pies a week which the cooks are told to make). The cooks are on their feet from 8-6pm sometimes helping out with the children when things get bad and doing lots of unseen things. Their reward for this dedication was to be told off one morning for taking twenty minutes instead of fifteen for their tea-break.

143. In June and July 1986 Lambeth contacted former employers, the Merseyside Police, Wirral Magistrates Court and the Probation Service to ascertain details of the actual offence.

144. Former referees, one of whom was a former employer, in written communication with Lambeth expressed their extreme disquiet that JC is still being made to answer for a charge that happened 20 years earlier. One correspondent says "surely JC has suffered for a fault he committed as a teenager, I think he has paid the price." Another correspondent comments "the night of his arrival there were the more or less usual boyish pranks in the dormitory. The boy in question thought they were directed against him, they were not. However, he had a long tale of woe for his mother. She went to the police, who had to take notice. JC was the oldest boy there at the time and he had to take responsibility for something quite harmless which should have been dealt with on the spot...."

145. On the 7th July 1986 Merseyside police consented to declare what was on their records, it stated:

"... The recorded method was that JC, as an ex-inmate of St. Edmonds Home visited the home and during his visit went to see his old house. Entered the bedroom of a 12 year old boy and tickled him and then pulled his pyjamas down and played with his penis."

204. The alleged telephone call and letter from Lambeth officials to Wandsworth officials gives rise to considerable concern.

205. The Lambeth Fostering Officer who is alleged to have made the call at the request of the Chair of the Fostering Panel cannot remember making the call. The Chair of the Fostering Panel admits to asking for the call to be made and there is a clear record on file within Wandsworth of the call being received. The Fostering Officer accepts that the call must have been made because the others involved would have no reason to say that it had, if it had not.

206. The telephone call can be viewed from two standpoints.

207. The first is quite simply to bring about undue influence on Wandsworth officials in seeking to bypass procedures and to ignore requirements in law.

208. The second is to view the authority, namely the London Borough of Lambeth, as being under considerable pressure from the children, particularly from the children's school, legal representatives and Mr & Mrs C to expedite fostering arrangements. Officials therefore contacted Wandsworth seeking to hasten the fostering application and indicating that as Lambeth knew about the offence and had legitimised JC's position then the police record could be deemed to be satisfactory because it had already been dealt with by Lambeth.

211. The Principal Officer (Social Work) who chaired the Foster Panel in Lambeth seemingly also provided a written note supporting the application of Mr & Mrs C to foster the children concerned. The inquiry did not have sight of this note although the Principal Officer concerned confirmed its existence in written correspondence with the Director of Social Services some years later. Given this confirmation the inquiry judges this to be an example of gross unprofessionalism.

212. As Chair of the Foster Panel he should have remained strictly neutral and should not have become involved in this particular case in the way that he did and his professional behaviour during this time is a cause for regret and concern.

213. The inquiry has examined whether any formal or informal communication took place between Wandsworth and Lambeth staff, and between elected members during the process of the fostering application. The issue of communication between staff is addressed elsewhere in the report. There is no evidence to support any impropriety between Wandsworth and Lambeth elected members and no evidence to support impropriety between staff and elected members during the process of the fostering application.

214. Further comment is now made on matters that arose in relation to the decisions taken by Lambeth as far as the two children and Mr & Mrs C are concerned following the formal refusal to allow fostering to take place.