

CE/HO/CN/6957E

30 September 1992

STRICTLY PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Councillor Clare Whelan
Members' Room
Lambeth Town Hall

Dear Councillor Whelan,

Thank you for your letter of 25 September. The tone is not helpful to conducive relations. You continue to hurl innuendo about mismanagement in the Social Services Directorate without any precision. You continue to seek information but I cannot understand, as I have indicated previously, why you fail to contact the Director of Social Services direct on these matters. I could understand it if you came to me with a complaint that the Director of Social Services has refused to provide you with information reasonably required, or has failed to respond adequately to any of your serious concerns.

Of course, it is right for you to place matters before the police if you consider it necessary. Equally, it is reasonable for you to pass on the same information to the Council for investigation and response. That is all that was asked for from you. You must realise that DSS and the police work closely on matters of child or sex abuse. The DSS management have nothing to gain by not rooting out abuse and weaknesses in the structures of that Directorate.

With regard to the specific points you raise as set out in my letter to you of 23 September and confirmed by your letter of 25 September as reflecting accurately your concerns:

- (1) It is imperative that these very serious allegations against 'management in Social Services' are made explicit. If 'management' are alleged to 'know about abuse', who are the managers and what are they supposed to know about? Obviously, over the last three years DSS has dealt with a number of abuse investigations involving staff; all in co-operation with the police. Are these the ones referred to? If there are others it would be imperative to have the names of staff/children involved, so that these could be dealt with in the same way.
- (2) Mr L. Paul has been arrested and bailed, following a joint investigation by DSS and Police. The officer has been suspended from duty and DSS and Police are working on further matters to determine the level and range of abuse that may be linked to this or other individuals over the last few years. Such joint activity between the Directorate of Social Services and the police represents years of a developing and trusting relationship between the two agencies; the on-going investigation represents DSS' view that they need to ensure that any abuse is thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to account.

- (3) The officer in charge at Angel Road referred to is the previous postholder? The concerns were raised by another Councillor, following the postholder's dismissal for fraud in 1991. These matters have been discussed with the police, who support the action being taken by DSS, but who would, of course, act on any specific information available from DSS or the Councillor concerned. DSS has written to the Councillor concerned advising of this and requesting any further information.
- (4) The previous Training Manager retired from the department. We can only assume that you were advised of the fact that the postholder was disciplined, prior to his retirement, following the discovery of a pornographic magazine in his desk at work. The postholder had no access to children as part of his duties and we have no knowledge of why you believe he has some link to sex abuse?

All the above matters have been raised by DSS personally with the senior police officers responsible for child protection in Lambeth, as will be any further such matters whether historical or present. It is in our view totally unacceptable, if not defamatory, for you to assert that 'management in Social Services', which I interpret to include the Director and other chief officers, have knowledge of child or sex abuse that they have not investigated fully nor shared with the police. DSS refutes this accusation and asks that you provide the necessary information so that these serious allegations can be investigated.

I trust that you will find this response helpful.

In conclusion, I would stress that we cannot go on with such a ridiculous relationship between you and DSS. It is important that you get access to information to enable you to be satisfied about the proper functioning of the Directorate. It is also important that you either provide evidence to deal with your concerns or to have a more objective approach to your dealings with DSS' senior management. Either way, I am anxious to facilitate an improved relationship and, if you wish, I shall convene a meeting to facilitate such an outcome.

Yours sincerely,

DPA

HERMAN OUSELEY
Chief Executive

cc: DSS - David Pope
File - DSS
File - 72