

accommodation in the town.

I was very disturbed by this allegation and made arrangements to interview the boy -which I did so at my office a couple of days later. The boy's name was [RO-A49]? - I can't remember his surname. I think he was in the Council's care because he was beyond parental control and had been placed at Cambridge House in late July 1965. [RO-A49] confirmed Mr Gavin's story that he had been punished in this way by Smith. The boy said that the punishment issue had come up in conversation with Mr Gavin and that he was not making a complaint. I cannot recall that he made any allegation that Smith had fondled him or sexually interfered with or abused him

But I can remember being shocked and troubled by what the boy had told me and wondered whether a sexual element was involved, having regard to the circumstances relating to Smith's use of corporal punishment of this nature. The line between his administering corporal punishment and sexual abuse and gratification could be a thin one I thought.

So what should I do? In those days it was not unusual for corporal punishment to be used - it occurred in schools and residential homes - but of course not in the Cyril Smith model. It was certainly irregular and uncommon for the Secretary to a Management Committee to be in charge of punishment. Normally discipline is the responsibility of the Head of the home. So what to do?

I didn't seek to discuss the matter with any member of my Committee or staff, nor did I think it wise to interview the Head of Cambridge House or his staff, realising that Cyril Smith was a very powerful and popular figure in Rochdale - both in the Council and the wider community. Had I attempted to do so, there was every chance that word would have got back to Smith himself as he had "listening posts" and friends in "high places" in all services and activities in the town. For the same reason, I committed nothing about the allegations to the written record. So a day or so, after receiving the allegations, I made up my mind to contact Patrick Ross, the Chief Constable of the Borough and went to see him at Police HQ the following week. I appraised the CC of what I had been told and he said that he would make further enquiries.

I received no Police feedback, so some weeks later - 2 or 3 weeks I think - as I was leaving a Chief Officers Meeting at the Town Hall I saw Mr Ross and asked him what progress was being made with his investigations. He replied that it had been decided to take no further action. I was rather surprised but unfortunately did not ask for the reasons. I had the greatest respect for Patrick Ross and knew him to be a man of the utmost integrity and professionalism; "As straight as a dye" Had he, in his enquiries, been unable to obtain hard evidence of the practice of sexual abuse by Smith at Cambridge House and concluded that the case against him was weak?