

3 The management of the Child Protection system in Rochdale 1974-1989

3.1 In 1974 the Government issued guidance to Local Authorities on the management of child protection services. This included the requirement to establish the following systems:

i) multi-disciplinary Area Review Committees: to co-ordinate the work and training of the agencies involved in child protection work;

ii) the establishment of registers of child abuse;

iii) the organisation of case conferences in cases of child abuse.

3.2 In Rochdale the register and case conference system were managed by the Social Services Department until 1980.

In that year, following an agreement between the Local Authority and the NSPCC, the NSPCC assumed responsibility for the management of the child protection system on behalf of the Local Authority.

3.3 Similar arrangements were reached in other Local Authorities, including Manchester where the first NSPCC Child Protection Team had been established. The creation of Child Protection Teams by the NSPCC was part of its transition from the employment of uniformed inspectors, often working alone, to the establishment of teams which provided a treatment service to families of abused children. Child Protection Teams also developed new approaches to child protection work and provided training facilities for their own staff, and workers in other child protection agencies.

3.4 The tasks which the NSPCC contracted to assume on behalf of the Local Authority, were: the administration of the register of child abuse (including 24 hour access); the chairing of case conferences; and a consultancy service for staff working in child protection agencies, and the provision of training.

3.5 In addition, the Child Protection Team operated a referral system, including an out of hours service to the public, and treatment services

3.6 Staff of the Social Services Department, the Health Authority and voluntary child care organisations operating in Rochdale, were closely involved with the work of the Unit, notably in the areas of treatment - with co-working arrangements on cases - and training. The NSPCC provided a focus for the development of innovative approaches in child protection work which was of mutual benefit to child protection agencies in Rochdale and the Child Protection Unit itself.

4 "Working Together" and Child Protection in Rochdale

4.1 In 1990, following some preliminary discussions, I reached an agreement with the Regional Director of the NSPCC that the management of the multi-disciplinary child protection system in Rochdale should revert to the Social Services Department for the following reasons:

i) The most recent guidance from the Government on the management of child protection systems, "Working Together" (1988), made it clear that the Local Authority should act as the lead agency in establishing and implementing multi-disciplinary child protection procedures and systems.

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