

Education

- 5.20 Without exception schools referred to the development of positive links with staff from other agencies, even though the workload of some individuals, in particular social workers, meant that feedback on cases was slower than they would have wished. Good links were maintained with social workers, members of NSPCC, school nurses, educational psychologists, Education Welfare Officers and Community Police Officers.
- 5.21 The current guidelines state that 'in every school it is desirable that one or more members of teaching staff should be designated and trained as the liaison officer(s) with the Social Services Department...'. Schools received a letter from the LEA in 1988 drawing their attention to the Department of Education and Science Circular 4/88 'Working Together for the Protection of Children from Abuse: Procedures within the Education Service', and requested that in line with the recommendations of the circular, a senior member of staff be designated as having responsibility for acquainting him/herself with the procedures adopted by the authority.
- 5.22 The LEA did not record the names of the designated teacher in each school, nor of those who had attended training: not all designated teachers had received training. Especially in view of the recent major reorganisation of schools it is essential that this information is collected. There may well be instances of secondary schools with several designated teachers, some of whom may not have received training. Previously understood and acknowledged methods of identifying children at risk and the subsequent coordination of action within schools may need to be re-affirmed in these reorganised schools.
- 5.23 Procedures for checking the child protection register were known and understood, but some concern was expressed that children may be on the register but that this was not known by the school. It is essential that the head teacher should be informed when a child is placed on the register and kept in touch with any subsequent action.
- 5.24 Attendance at case conferences and reviews was seen as high priority; staff spoke of the value of working with colleagues from other disciplines. Wherever possible the class teacher is released but this may not always be feasible due to the availability and cost of providing a supply teacher to cover the class.
- 5.25 Any referral and action taken was recorded clearly by the designated teacher and copies sent to the LEA designated officer. Consideration should be given to providing a proforma which, whilst not constraining the teacher, would ensure that information was provided under given headings.
- 5.26 An issue which was raised by all schools was that of the delay between a referral and the calling of a case conference or follow-up action. Schools would welcome more support and information in the intervening period, particularly as the child invariably remains at the school. One case was quoted of a disclosure to a teacher at the end of July, and the case conference not being held until mid-October. The teacher and school managed to support the child but felt vulnerable.