

protection situations. It highlights also the need for chairs of strategy meetings to ensure that all key agencies are invited to meetings and attend whenever it is the interests of the child to do so..

- 7.4. There were a further 9 strategy meetings held between November 1995 and May 1997.

There is evidence to suggest that the strategy meetings were conducted in accordance with the guidance in 'Working Together Under the Children Act 1989' (1991)

Considerable efforts were taken to ensure that [RO-A36] was offered support during this period. There is no information available which outlines the reason why he reversed his earlier decision and decided in July 1996 to make a formal complaint against DL. One cannot however rule out the possibility, that the support offered by his after-care worker gave him the confidence to take the matter further.

Once, the strategy group learnt of the charges against DL, efforts were made to establish whether any other children known to DL and mentioned in his journals/diaries, had been subject to abuse. From verbal reports and relevant documents, it would appear that these interviews with the children concerned were handled with care and sensitivity. No further evidence of actual abuse was found.

7.5. **Handling allegations/complaints**

- 7.5.1. In undertaking this enquiry, the issue of how children and young people could have complained about DL, should they have wished to do so, has been considered. The findings suggest that children and young people in residential settings have greater access to independent adults and relevant information than those who are using, or in need of, services from Education and Housing.

Rochdale Area Child Protection Committee should urge each agency to review and/or develop its complaints procedures for children and young people, with special reference to professional abuse. Consideration should be given as to whether the respective procedures are compatible and complementary and serve the interests of the child.

Social Services have developed what appears to be a sound system for handling complaints from children and young people in residential settings. Information leaflets are given to all children upon admission to care, whether they are looked after or accommodated. Posters giving information about children's rights and complaints procedures are displayed in all children's homes.

The Children's Rights officer visits all residential establishments and will also visit unannounced, or make appointments to talk with children and young people.