

ROCHDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL.

SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT.

This is a summary of a meeting held on 17.2.89 called at the initiative of Mr D Edmunds, Educational Psychologist and attended by representatives of police, education and social services.

The substance of the meeting was to establish whether there is an identifiable group of children who frequent the "Tasty Bite" during the school hours and if so, whether any viable measures could be taken to reduce the risks of offending and/or increase the probability of their attending school.

On balance, there seemed to be some consensus that a "group" of children did exist. A total of twelve children seem to be involved who gather in the course of Rochdale during school hours. The Tasty Bite provides with a focus for meeting followed by various video games. The ages of the children involved ranges from 10-14 years. A core group of these has been involved with repeated offences involving shopliftings and burglary as well as other offences. Five children are currently in care to this department. At least two others are at serious risk of coming into care. Several have complex care plans that either involve rehabilitation back into the community or prevention intervention to forestall reception into care. Non school attendance is equally a severe problem in several cases.

The subject of what could be done to intervene in this situation was also discussed. Half of these children have individual care plans and a number of Social Workers are involved, as well as residential staff of several children homes.

This of itself creates logistical problems, coordinating a "group" response consistent with the needs of each child. There were also other issues such as treating a group as a real entity, thereby potentially giving it a higher profile than it otherwise has, or perhaps worst of all, giving it a sense of life and dynamic of its own by virtue of intervention. After much discussion some tentative suggestion was made for this matter to be brought to the attention of the Youth Work Services. It was certainly our feeling that this was not the first time such a group of youths had gathered and engaged in both legal and illegal activities and one of the dangers of treating it as a concrete, rather than transient entity would be to develop a worse problem than initially we began with.

As virtually all children are known to use I have not felt the normal restraint of confidentiality and a 'map' of their links is provided.

DPA

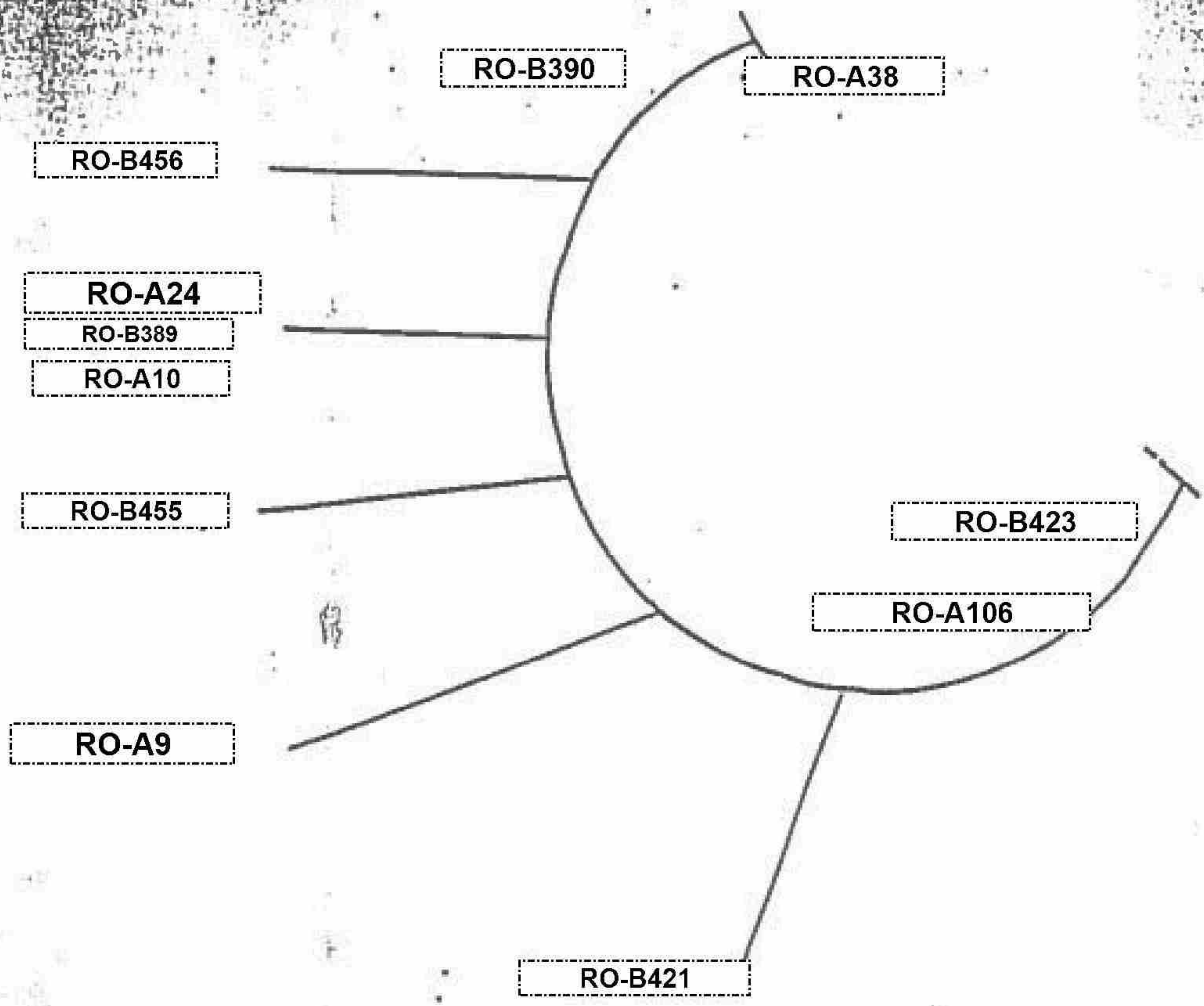
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and Michael Duvell

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