

# Memorandum

# Social Services

to Childrens DMT  
Childrens P/SPO's

from Principal Assistant (Child Care)

cc. D. Spicer. Princ. Scientist

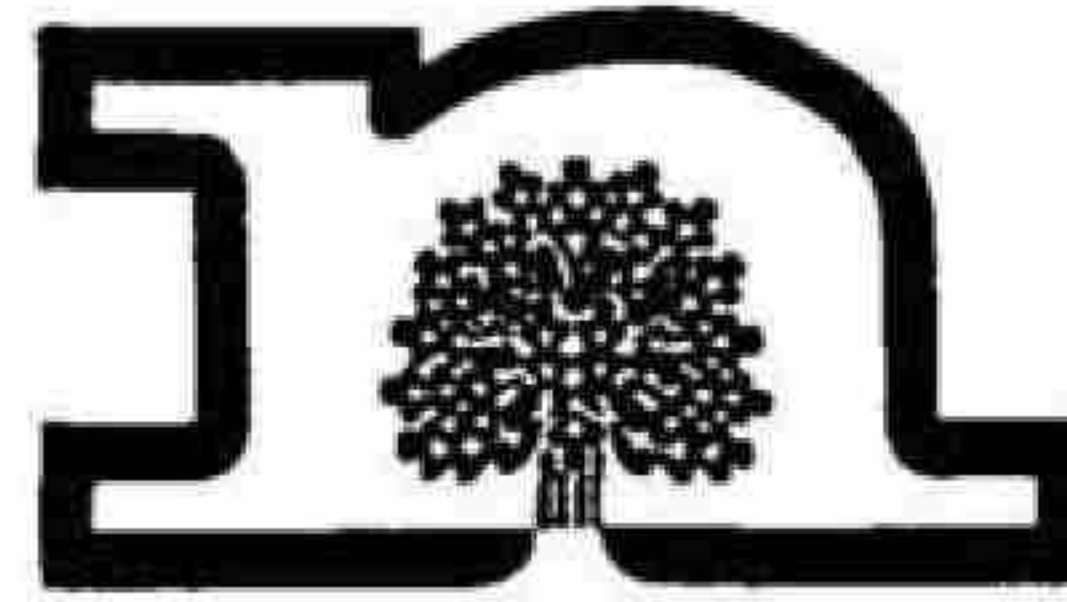
Your ref

Our ref CH/RMJ/SPH

Please ask for Mr. Jones

Tel extension **DPA**

Date 17.7.89



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For being  
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procedures*

## Investigation of Child Abuse within Foster and Adoptive Care

### Introduction

This represents the current principles and procedures within Childrens Division. It is derived from proposals by the SPO Fostering and Adoption and the PO - Child Protection and agreed between the respective Principal Assistants. It is based on experience of several cases, the G. Swaine Interim Inquiry Report and current departmental structure.

### Principles

1. The Nottinghamshire child abuse procedures apply to domestic households and since they were issued in 1984 it has been and is clear that allegations and suspicions of child abuse within foster or adoptive or other carer families must be investigated and dealt with under those procedures. This position is clarified and reinforced in the attached memorandum of 9.3.89.

There is no discretion with any agency to not investigate an allegation concerning abuse by a carer. There is obviously judgement as in other child protection issues, about how to investigate and whether to proceed to conference etc.

Where the carer is approved or registered with an Area Office other than that of residence, there has been some uncertainty in the absence of a definition. The Division's position is that the responsibility to investigate and to convene and chair a Child Protection Conference rests with the area of residence who should expect cooperation but not responsibility for following the procedures from the area of approval/registration.

2. Our ready access to detailed information about carer families greatly increases our power to know or infer from this during investigations. Also the sort of children placed are likely to bring abnormally difficult behaviour which increases stresses and vulnerability of carers to accusations of actual or suspected abuse. Investigations regarding black children or black carer families need to be additionally sensitive to issues of race and culture and their effect on child and parent styles and expectations and to be sensitive to the effects of racism in issues of power.

Therefore carers need access to independent support e.g. Foster Parent Association, Nottinghamshire Foster Parent Liaison Committee, National Foster Care Association, legal advice.



3. Where possible, the support SFC worker or other staff who act as worker to the carer family, will retain contact to advise and counsel about the emotional and practical effects upon the foster parents but not to advise on the allegation. Any support staff should not be responsible for the investigation of the potential child abuse although their information should be available to the investigating staff. The support role should be offered whether or not the family are thought likely to be cleared of blame - though the family may reject the offer.
4. The Department cannot divulge information about the nature of an allegation about the carer to the carer in the course of an investigation or Police enquiry until it is complete. The objective of the Department is to pursue the best interests of the child and any need for protection and to seek to bring the matter to a conclusion as soon as possible.
5. Carers should know that the Local Authority's file concerning them is maintained with the ultimate purpose of promoting good care and protection for children and this and information within it will therefore be available to any child protection investigation.
6. Carers should know that their approval/registration will be reconsidered subsequent to an investigation whatever the outcome. Their views upon this must be considered before a final decision is made.
7. Carers need training on how to avoid inappropriate parenting in relation to sexuality and gender roles within families, and how to protect themselves by avoiding misinterpretable behaviour and situations and how to deal sensitively and appropriately with the needs of abused children who are placed with them. The Division and specifically the SPO Fostering and Adoption and the PPO - Child Protection through links with Area staff and Training will seek to promote such opportunities.