

- (11) The children and young people being admitted to residential care usually have a complex range of problems and have often already experienced a poor quality of life. The Department endeavours to meet the needs of children through placement in suitable foster homes and residential establishments. It is a constant struggle to meet the demand for foster homes and it is generally the older children and those with the most difficult and challenging behaviour who are cared for in residential establishments. Over 70% of those in residential care are aged 14 and above.
- (12) Many of the children have histories of family breakdown and relationship difficulties; they may have experienced problems at school and have been involved in criminal activities. Children and young people are frequently emotionally damaged and have had years of poor care. Increasingly, staff are identifying children who have been sexually or physically abused or neglected. In addition to the usual difficulties that adolescents face, these young people may lack a sense of self-worth and respect for others, they may have little self-discipline and have developed challenging and difficult ways of relating to adults. As a result of this, they can exhibit behaviour which goes well beyond the normal adolescent "testing out" and makes the task of caring for these young people a most difficult one.
- (13) At any one time out of the 2,000 children in the care of the County Council approximately 380 are in residential homes. The major reason for children coming into care is child abuse and a rapidly increasing part of this is child sexual abuse. In recognition of this the Committee at its meeting on 1st August agreed to the temporary secondment of a member of staff to work with adolescent sex offenders primarily in the area of bail support (ie. to divert the need to bring perpetrators into care). From monitoring undertaken in June of this year with regard to the characteristics of youngsters in care the following results were produced.
- (a) Placed as sexually abused: 33 boys, 46 girls.
 - (b) Identified as sexually abused subsequent to placement: 27 boys, 21 girls.
 - (c) Placed as sexually abused and abused by other residents whilst in care: 7 boys, 19 girls.
 - (d) Sexually abused for the first time by other residents whilst in care: 4 boys and 2 girls.
 - (e) Placed as a sex offender: 23 boys.
 - (f) Committed a first sexual offence whilst in Care: 14 boys, 1 girl.
 - (g) Placed as victim but sexually abusing other residents: 8 boys, 8 girls.