

JVF/BB

For the attention of Mr T Smedley

Department of Social Services
The Health Centre
25-27
Hollis Street, L1 1JG

30th April, 1987

Dear Mr Smedley

NO-A316

Thank you for the letter dated 14.4.87. I realise it was addressed to Mrs [redacted] but now that I am back at Beechwood clearly it is for me to take the responsibility. I apologise for the delay in answering but I view Livius's comments as extremely serious and I have therefore made attempts to investigate things quite thoroughly and I only finished these enquiries yesterday when I had the opportunity to see Dr Darlaston at some length.

I hope the following points serve to help resolve the situation:-

1. I think that we must all accept that there is a certain amount of vindictiveness about **NO-A316**'s general comments e.g. "staff always getting at kids at Beechwood". **NO-A316** had a tendency to dislike being faced with people who would insist that she acted with some sort of reason and sensitivity to circumstances and others around her. The fact that she lived here fairly happily for some 10 months would certainly not indicate any degree of dissatisfaction with the way she was being treated (especially when one compares those months with her attitudes and behaviour elsewhere).

2. In paragraph 4 of your letter you refer to an incident involving **NO-F134** and **NO-F8** when **NO-A316** claims that her hands were held and her fingers bent back until they became very painful.

I have seen both **NO-F134** and **NO-F8** about the incident. I saw them separately with neither knowing the reason for which I wished to talk with them. The accounts given about the incident were, almost identical.

On Friday, 12th December, **NO-F8** had occasion to remonstrate with **NO-A316** about her manners and attitudes to other people at the breakfast table. She responded by getting up from the table and leaving the dining-room amid further abuse. **NO-F8** followed her to insist that she returned to complete the meal in a reasonable manner. She refused, continued with her verbal abuse and violently pushed **NO-F8** out of the way in order to go into another room. **NO-F134**, realising the situation was getting worse, went to assist and, in order to insist that **NO-A316** returned to the dining-room and to stop her getting more violent she had to be restrained. Both **NO-F134** and **NO-F8** totally deny the suggestion that they deliberately inflicted any pain and that they only used the necessary amount of force required to restrain her.

3. The main part of your letter refers to marks on **NO-A316**'s neck

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NO-A316

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resulting from being manhandled by NO-F15 after some incident
"a few days before" her court appearance in February. Quite obviously
this was a serious incident and it in fact, took place on Sunday evening,
15th February. The seriousness was twofold, (a) the attitudes that NO-A316
was displaying, both verbally and physically, were totally unacceptable
and were clearly leading towards someone having to step in and do
something but (b) in tackling the problem, especially when one has had time
to think about the difficulties, staff have no right to undertake any
physical restraint that is not absolutely necessary. It would appear that
NO-F15 did deal with NO-A316 in a manner that was not entirely necessary
and this is borne out by my discussions with Dr Darleston. I have seen
NO-F15 about the incident and, while wishing to point out the extreme
degree of provocation he, other staff and children had been put under by
him, does accept the criticisms and wishes to assure people that it will
not happen again.

I sincerely hope that the above comments give satisfactory explanations
to the points raised in your letter. On a general point I feel that I
must point out and emphasise (although I am sure you are no doubt well
aware) that these sort of confrontations happen all too often with the
type of children in residential care. Staff have little or no preparation
or training for dealing with situations that become physical and, all too
often, we are left attempting to manage stressful and awkward youngsters
with resources that are not matched in any way with the degree of difficulty
they produce.

Yours sincerely

G. J. Smith
Principal