

Ref: **DPA**

Alan Jones
ACI Central Inspection Group

From: Rupert Hughes CS3
Date: 22 December 1993

Copy: Miss Hey
Mrs Rose
Mr Allard
Mrs Hickman
Mrs Arkley
Ms Taylor

Nottinghamshire

Thank you for your note of 21 December. I understand you have sent the report to the Authority for checking, and no further substantial amendment can reasonably be made. I remain concerned that it will convey an over optimistic impression of police/social services cooperation at a time when other material presented to Ministers will report on the problems.

The purpose of investigation is to discover whether there is evidence to substantiate the allegation. I cannot believe that the police are waiting for Social Services to produce the evidence of physical abuse. There is an irony in the situation if the police are willing to investigate jointly in sexual abuse cases where the evidence is much more elusive. Perhaps the jointly agreed protocol on investigation which we understand is to be promulgated in January will put this right.

Name Redacted - As below please. ✓ **Name Redacted**
NEW FILE **DPA** 914
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" Nottinghamshire: Joint HMIC/SSI ^{Follow-up} inspection of investigations of child sexual Abuse 1993.
Name Redacted
DPA

FAX

In reply please quote

Our ref:

DPA

Your ref:

To: Mr R P S Hughes
CS3

DPA

From: Alan Jones, ACI
Central Inspection Group
Social Services Inspectorate

15 December 1993

cc: Mrs W Rose, ACI,
Miss C Hey, DCI,
Mrs R Arkley, SSI,
Ms K Taylor, CS3A,

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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE: JOINT HMIC AND SSI FOLLOW UP INSPECTION OF
JOINT POLICE AND SOCIAL SERVICES INVESTIGATION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:
THE FINAL DRAFT REPORT: AND THE REVIEW OF THE DEATH OF Name Redacted

Further to our telephone conversation on 9 December, you asked me if I would look again at the draft of this report in the light of the findings of the Section 8 review into this child's death. You were concerned that, in the light of the criticisms in the report, we might be viewed as being too generous in our judgements about Nottinghamshire's joint work with the police.

My understanding of the broad concerns which emerge from the review are that the staff concerned failed to thoroughly investigate the allegations that Name Redacted was being abused, and failed to take the opportunity to bring the police into the investigation. They did not follow the ACPC procedures, although the SSD review team did not think the procedures themselves were inadequate.

From my reading of the report, the following issues may be significant. I will comment on them in relation to the findings in the present draft report:

- a. Training: the staff investigating Name Redacted appeared to have had no training in the new procedures. This is a matter which we comment on adversely in the joint report. However, it has been a feature of the joint child sexual abuse investigations, that staff have had extensive training in, to undertake it. I do not think there is a need to revise the draft.
- b. References made in the report to Nottinghamshire's attempts to reduce the number of child protection conferences which are held. This may be a contributing factor to the very long period of investigation which was typical of cases in the City and led to delays of months in convening child protection conferences. We comment very adversely on this practice. Although it may be well intended, it has the effect of subverting an important requirement of *Working Together*. I see no need to amend the draft in this respect.
- c. Alleged reluctance on the part of the police to become involved in the early stage of child protection referrals where allegations are hard to substantiate. This was claimed by the staff involved and supported by the SSD review team. No evidence was offered on this matter as far as I know but I will consult with HMIC. Certainly there was a large list of child sexual abuse cases which were awaiting investigation which was due to the police not having time to undertake them. We got

the SSD to check the most serious of them and none of them had immediate child protection implications for the children involved. Nonetheless, we were critical of the practice because of the uncertainty it introduced into police and social services' working relationships, and it seemed to be due to a failure to set appropriate priorities for the work on the part of the police. The numbers have been subsequently reduced and new priorities introduced. I do not think it has implications for the draft, but I will consult with HMIC.

Paragraphs 5.5 and 5.7 deal with the ACPC procedures and the training for them respectively. Both of these paragraphs are critical in their tone. 5.5 makes it clear that the procedures were too cumbersome and were not being used by staff. We propose as a matter of urgency that social workers should have a small portable practice handbook which would cover the most relevant aspects of the child protection policy and procedures.

At 5.7 we note that there has been no inter-agency implementation training on the procedures and that each agency was seen as responsible for briefing its own staff in this respect. We were sceptical about the effectiveness of the briefing provided in the SSD. This point is not given repeated emphasis in the conclusion to the report and I think that it should. I will discuss this with the authors.

While the report is generally positive about the inter-agency working relationships between police and social services, it is far more critical of the performance of the ACPC. One of the significant failures in the Name Redacted case is that social services did not attempt to involve the police, who can hardly be criticised for their lack of collaboration. However, we do need to check out whether the expectations of the SSD were realistically too low in this respect.

I suppose the question which remains is the tone of the report. Although the report is critical, should it be demanding a bigger shake-up in Nottinghamshire, if this is what lies behind the failures in the Name Redacted report? I will talk to HMIC about this. The points about the failure to collaborate on Section 8 reports is made in the draft and the fact that the recommendations arising from them have not been incorporated into the present procedures.

In my view, and that of other colleagues in the Nottingham office, there is a serious problem that needs to be tackled in Nottinghamshire. It has reduced under Name Redacted directorship, but it was reflected in the very large numbers of unallocated cases, and in the culture of Area Officers running their own show irrespective of the department's policies (reflected in the present practice in relation to initial child protection conferences) and in the endemically poor relationships on the ACPC. An inspection report should support the need for changes in those respects. However, I think the Department should intervene by other means, to insist that Nottinghamshire undertake an audit of its child protection services, with an independent element, followed by a full inspection to ensure that their procedures and practices have been put on to a proper footing.

I will write to you again when I have had a word with HMIC.

DPA

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