

File Note - 3/53/45

BEECHWOOD CHILDREN'S HOME, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

24.2.93 Today's papers featured Beechwood Children's Home in Nottinghamshire and a range of issues that had been raised by the police which pointed to the home having a range of young people who are out of control contributing to a number of arrests and crime in the area. (See attached example from Daily Star). Matter raised in discussion with Malcolm Stevens at HQ and later Gordon Rees, CS Division requested briefing to go into Minister this pm, also press office was asking for background and a line to take.

Having failed to contact senior managers in Nottinghamshire, eventually Philip Arnold, Line Manager for the juvenile justice system including Beechwood phoned back and offered me the following information which has been passed on to Gordon Rees for briefing.

Beechwood is a specialist children's home which takes all young people remanded from the youth court who are refused bail throughout the country. It has 17 beds all of which are targeted at youth court remands. The age range could be 12 to 17 as indicated in the articles but the average age is 15 and 16. The unit is considered to be offering a generally good job but again there are a small number of persistent hard core offenders who present difficulties and have not yet reached the point where they may be remanded into custody or secure provision. It is a children's home and therefore accommodating the young people and cannot restrict or restrain liberty. This year already there have been 28 admissions in 50 days, the average length of stay could be a month although much shorter and more longer placements are possible. The admissions come without notice and the establishment has to try and engage with the young people and assess their needs and appropriate placement. Some may be able to move on to bail schemes whilst others will remain in the home. The police had not used their normal liaison avenues with the SSD to raise their concern about this establishment and so SSD staff did not know the basis of the statistics that had been quoted to the press. The 54 arrest episodes cannot be explained or challenged, ie. this could be one person 54 times or 54 single occasions and it is unclear what is meant by arrest - could this mean picking up people who have absconded etc. Of the 95 abscondings again detail is not known although it must be acknowledged that as a specialist remand home every time a young person is overdue, a missing persons report is made to the police, although in effect there may have a genuine reason for being late. Being reported as being absent from the home does not necessarily mean that one has absconded or is committing further crime. There is no basis that is known to the SSD to link the figures with the criminal activity such as car stealing that is talked of in the press coverage.

The current situation is that there are 17 people on the books of the establishment but three are absent missing at this point in time.

PHIL GREEN