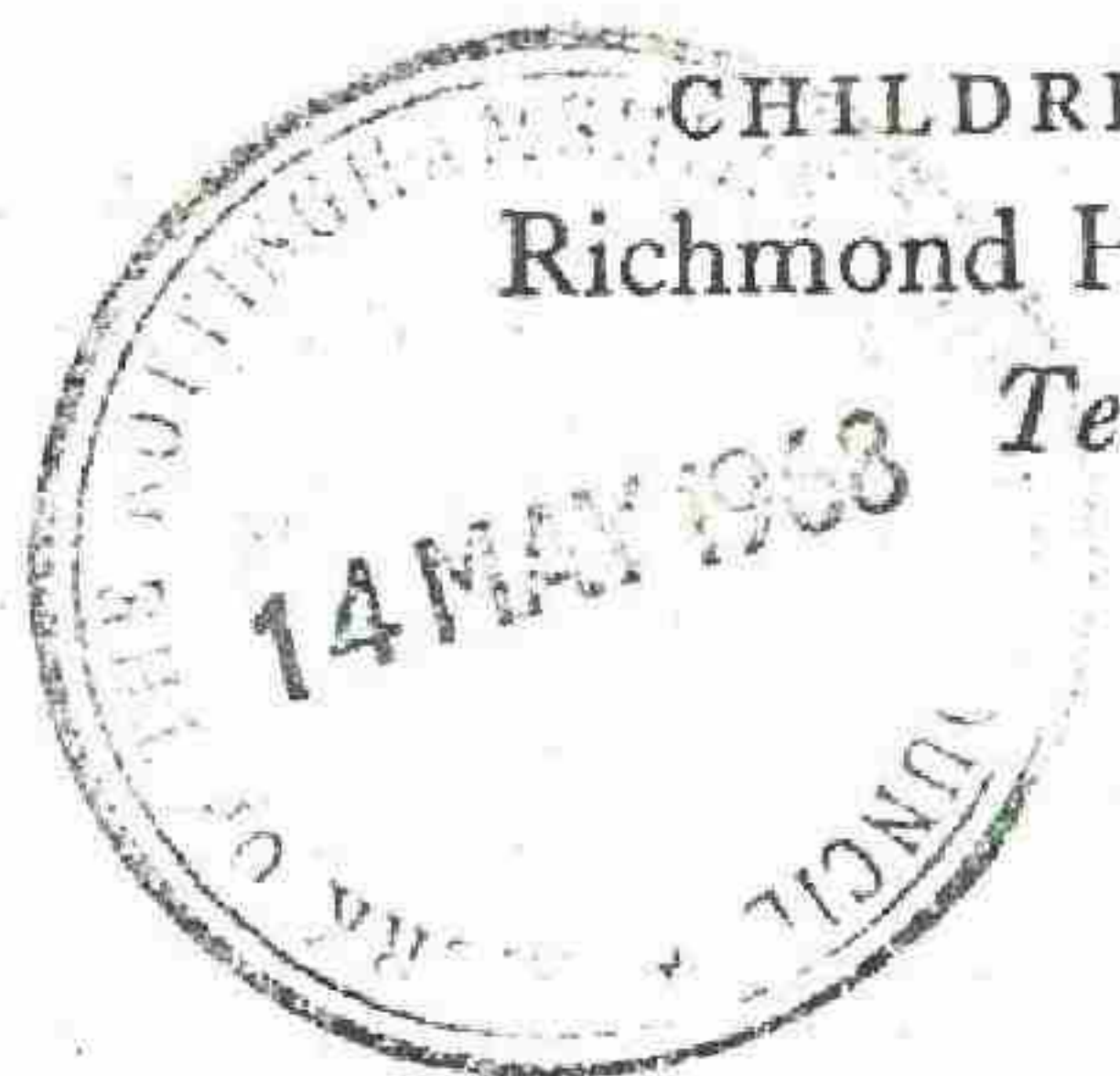




HOME OFFICE



CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT INSPECTORATE  
Richmond House, 84 Newhall Street, BIRMINGHAM 3  
Telephone: CENTRAL DPA ext.

Our reference: DPA  
Your reference:

13th May, 1968

Dear Mr. Davis,

Child Care Review

Mr. Kiddle, Mr. Bassett and I were glad to have an opportunity to discuss with representatives of the Authority points arising from the 1967 review of the Children's Department's activities and as then agreed I now write confirming the principal matters discussed.

The Nottinghamshire Children's Department continues to deal with a large number of children although at the time of the review the numbers in care had dropped a little. More important, perhaps, was the turnover of children in care, about 100% in 1967. The percentage boarded out, about 60%, remains above the regional and national average.

A considerable increase in preventive work has occurred since the previous review and this has been both in quantity and quality. Family Caseworkers have been appointed who give intensive professional attention to selected families. Preventive work is carried out in the spirit of the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act. A Rent Guarantee Scheme is administered through Welfare Services and the Children's Department provides casework for the families concerned.

Adoption work has increased and this demanding and confidential work is well done.

Decentralisation into area offices has made considerable strides despite staffing shortages, particularly at local senior level, and this has helped to bring the Children's Service close to those who need it.

Communications within the Department seem to us excellent. Roles and duties of senior staff are clearly defined; departmental policies are well relayed and understood; various staff meetings are held regularly.

A Training Officer has been appointed and undertakes vital work. Professional training is encouraged. Inspectors were pleased to hear of departmental seminars, induction courses, foster parent courses and participation in the "Six Authority" Residential Child Care Course, while the attendance of staff at short courses and secondment for training point to a desire for good professional standards of social work and are to be commended.

Inspectors noted the large number of student placements within the Department for practical training and experience and clearly this is of great value to all Authorities. At all levels staff were found to be keen and enthusiastic; despite the usual staff shortages the standard of child care appeared to Inspectors to be good both in the field and residential work.

A.R. Davis, Esq., D.L.,  
Clerk of the Nottinghamshire County Council,  
County Hall,  
West Bridgford,  
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

DPA DPA DPA



During the year there had been great pressure upon residential accommodation. The Authority has recognised the need to provide good standards of accommodation for the staff in homes by its plan for improvements at various establishments.

Although the case loads of child care officers appears reasonable, field staff are involved in much work that cannot be evaluated in caseload terms - training, work studies and aspects of preventive work. Certain senior area staff have case loads which should be reduced if effective consultation is to be provided for recently appointed field staff.

The accommodation in the two area offices seen - North Nottinghamshire and South Nottinghamshire - is not really sufficient. It is appreciated that this matter is recognised by the Authority and that other premises are being sought.

The continuing process of decentralisation produces problems relating to records - their location and keeping. Some records could perhaps be passed to areas to avoid duplication, but it is understood that with the appointment of chief clerks in areas early in 1968, these matters are being investigated. Decentralisation also entails a change in the use of head office staff who may need to visit the areas more frequently for oversight of area senior staff as well as providing professional consultation.

Inspectors suggest that the Department needs to consolidate for a while rather than to embark upon further projects so that field staff, particularly the newer and younger members, are not overstrained. This period certainly needs to extend for another six months, perhaps longer if there is a great deal of change among field staff.

In summary, Inspectors were pleased to comment favourably on the work of the Authority's Children's Department; clearly it is a dynamic Department firmly led and forward looking. This has been achieved despite expansion of work, increase in number of staff and the usual staff turnover, all of which might well tend to lower standards. There is no doubt that this favourable position has been achieved largely through the efforts of senior staff, who have been in post for a number of years, but continuity of membership within the Children's Committee has clearly been an important factor in pursuing progressive policies.

Yours sincerely,

**DPA**

Superintending Inspector