

**COTSWOLD COMMUNITY**

**WORKING NOTE NO. 12**

**by**

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## **THE COTSWOLD COMMUNITY**

### **WORKING NOTE NO. 12**

This note follows a visit paid to the Cotswold Community on March 12th/13<sup>th</sup>, 1975.

Two main management problems were discussed with me.

- 1) Acting management in Group Living Units.
- 2) The role and function of the Domestic Bursar.

#### **1. Acting Management in Group Living Units**

I discussed this problem with Richard Balbernie, the four Heads of Group Living Units, Trevor Blewett, Trevor Peacock, Nick Darling, John Whitwell, Mike Jinks, Nick Benefield, Christine Bradley, Fred Green, Chris Hawkes, Brian Shaw, Andrew Smail and Peter Hodgson. Unfortunately the time at my disposal was too short to interview so many people adequately and I was left feeling that I did not really get a good grasp of the problem. What follows must, therefore, be somewhat tentative.

There appear to be three well-defined senior roles in Group Living Units. The Head of the Unit, a man; the Therapeutic Resource, a man or woman; the Domestic Organiser, a woman.

All three of these appear to be reasonably well-defined, to be of an acceptable size giving adequate challenge and satisfaction and to be very directly and significantly concerned with the welfare of the boys. Staff in these roles tend to become fairly permanent members of the Cotswold Community and many of them are now very experienced indeed.

The position is different with respect to the fourth senior role on the Unit's establishment, assumed to be another man. He is sometimes referred to as the "second man". No satisfactory role ever seems to have been developed for him and there has been a high wastage from that role, even among men who seemed basically capable of work in Group Living Units.

Attempts to develop the role have generally been centred around giving him responsibility for maintenance and sometimes for various pieces of administration, some kind of would-be equivalent role to that of a Domestic Organiser on the male side of the household. This has never worked and the man in question has tended to feel belittled, a kind of dog's body or odd-job-man; maintenance never acquires the aura of direct and significant connection with boys' welfare that domestic organisation does. It is experienced as a "bind"; it has a lot to do with dealing with damage rather than being felt

as a creative contribution to the work. It does not on reflection seem to me a relevant role for a senior male staff member. An additional problem is the small amount of time that the “second man” is on duty without the Head of the Unit, that is only 1½ days a week, while they are on duty together for 4 days a week. This does not give him sufficient sense of authority and status.

I have been asking myself, in fact, whether it would not be more appropriate for the responsibility for maintenance to be given to the Domestic Organiser as part of her housekeeping tasks, the carrying out of maintenance being done on her authority by relevant staff inside Group Living Units or from other Community resources. It is a task the actual doing of which could then probably be shared around among staff and shared also with boys when relevant.

It seems to be also that this “second man” is not really needed for Unit management. Here I would like to stress again the distinction made in a previous Working Note between Unit management and boy management. The person who acts for the Head of the Unit when he is off-duty is, of course, concerned directly with Unit management, boy management will also be a part of his or her responsibility but much of it can be delegated to other staff. Thus a senior woman could adequately take on unit management although she would probably need more backing on boy management than a senior man would. A very crucial requirement for Unit management is a full and detailed knowledge of what is going on in a Unit with boys and it would seem to me that the person who contains most of that knowledge would be the Therapeutic Resource. I wonder, therefore, whether, the most effective acting Head of Unit would not be the Therapeutic Resource. He or she would then need very thorough backing from other staff as regards boy management

I gather that boy management is generally very effectively carried out by Polytechnic staff when they are on duty in a Group Living Unit, since they are generally experienced, accustomed to working with groups of boys, often know the boys from Polytechnic, and bring personal authority to the task. What I am not certain about is whether Polytechnic staff can give enough time to this task to keep Group Living Units fully covered. I rather think not, and if I am right in that then this is where the fourth senior staff member, the “second man”, might become important. I wonder, at any rate, whether in fact, boy management rather than Unit management should be seen as his primary task. I am left not at all sure, however, whether that should be enough of a task especially since, for at least some of the time he is on duty, there would be no boys to manage while they are in the Polytechnic. If this is a possible role/task, then the Head of the Unit would need to delegate boy management effectively to the “second man” even when he was on duty, just as the Therapeutic Resource would to the Polytechnic staff member when they are the pair on duty together.

If that is a possible and desirable but possibly insufficient role then it might be worth examining the tasks and functions of the Head of the Unit to see whether there are any that could appropriately be wholly delegated to the “second man” in addition to boy management. I made a beginning with the Heads of Units to investigate their roles and

tasks but did not get very far. The clearest description I can give is that he is responsible for:

- internal boundary control
- external boundary control
- general administration
- the general running of the Unit including tasks delegated to the Therapeutic Resource, the Domestic Organiser and others
- development and organisation of the professional work of the unit

This is not detailed enough to give any guidance about further differentiation out and possible delegation of tasks and more work would need to be done on it. Finally I think there were some rather vague doubts around as to whether a second man is really necessary, or at least whether there was enough work for him. Over staffing can reduce challenge and job satisfaction. Would it be worth considering another version of the "Polytechnic arrangement", e.g. a man who might divide his time between two Group Living Units, working at a high level of boy management in each but not Unit management. I am not sure whether this is possible but again it might be worth looking at.

## **2. The Roles and Functions of the Domestic Bursar**

I discussed this with Richard Balbernie, Bill Douglas, Laura Crump, and Mike Jinks. The topics discussed here concerned mainly

- i) the possibility of separating the Domestic Bursar's department from the Bursar's. This would involve the Domestic Bursar having direct responsibility to Richard Balbernie and raising the hierarchical position to senior staff.
- ii) the internal allocation of tasks and functions between the Domestic Bursar and the Assistant Domestic Bursar.

### **i) The Position of a Domestic Bursar's Department**

There appear to be a number of arguments in favour of separating the Domestic Bursar's department from the Bursar's and promoting the role to a senior staff level, with direct responsibility to Richard Balbernie. These are as follows:-

- a) The present grading of the post and the salary it carries make it comparable to the post of Bursar and Head of the Polytechnic. I do not know how it compares with those of Head of Group Living Units although this fact would also be relevant.
- b) The present hierarchical position seems somewhat to diminish the role of the Domestic Bursar, putting her in strictly hierarchical terms on a level with the Domestic Organisers in Group Living Units. This does not seem entirely

appropriate task-wise and cannot be wholly helpful to her in developing her for advisory and support functions in relation to them. This, as I am told, has never developed very satisfactorily. It might help if the role carried the additional hierarchical authority suggested.

- c) The task of Domestic Bursar seems of a considerable size if looked at both in terms of the staff she controls and the resources she is responsible for deploying. She controls all domestic staff, directly or indirectly, deploying them in Group Living Units, delegating responsibility for some of them to the Assistant Domestic Bursar or directly employing them herself in Community-based tasks. The shop, laundry, sewing room and kitchens, together with the “public” parts of the Community involve very considerable equipment and resources.
- d) The Domestic Bursar at present attends senior staff meetings although not as a member of senior staff. Her role and tasks would seem to justify her presence but not her hierarchical position since in present circumstances she is responsible to the Bursar and not to Richard Balbernie.
- e) The Domestic Bursar acts as a senior staff member in relationship to telephone duties.

Since there seems no significant argument against the Domestic Bursar being made a member of senior staff, it would seem appropriate that the role is promoted in anticipation of the appointment of a new Domestic Bursar. This would also have implications for the role of Assistant Domestic Bursar, which would also be raised, making her now on the same hierarchical level as the Domestic Organisers which would also seem appropriate.

ii) **The Allocation of Tasks and Functions within the Domestic Bursar's Department**

This was not discussed in great detail, but one point that seemed to emerge was the possibility that the Domestic Bursar would fully delegate to the Assistant Domestic Bursar the complex around the shop, laundry and sewing room. These are physically close together and a great deal of mutual assistance and interaction goes on between staff there. It is a very united group. It might be possible also to include the kitchen in this complex since the kitchen staff are very closely involved with the shop. This would seem likely to make a well integrated and sizable job for one person. This would then, hopefully, free the Domestic Bursar to develop other aspects of her role more fully, particularly the advisory and support function within Group Living Units.

The Domestic Bursar and Assistant Domestic Bursar would, of course, need to deputise for each other as they have always done.

A number of other changes would necessarily follow this new arrangement, notably the relation between the Bursar's and the Domestic Bursar's department, about financial control and control of other resources, and various service functions from the Bursar to the Domestic Bursar. Also it would be necessary to review the present arrangements whereby the Domestic Bursar deputises for the Bursar in some respects when he is off-duty.

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