

THE COTSWOLD COMMUNITY

WORKING NOTE NO. 21

by

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Introduction

This note records discussions at the Cotswold Community on 31st January, 1978 and takes some account also of previous discussions in December, 1977.

The main areas of work were as follows:-

- 1) Continued discussions of the development of an additional senior staff role.
- 2) The future of staff emoluments.
- 3) The provision of domestic services for group living units.
- 4) The education section.
- 5) The structure and functioning of the Cottage team.
- 6) Work payments for boys.

1) The Additional Senior Staff Role

There is not a great deal to add to previous comments on this. John Whitwell has worked himself well into his role and developed a number of significant areas of work in the last few months and there seems no doubt that there is a meaningful and man sized job for an additional senior man.

Probably the largest single task is staff development in group living carrying through the whole process from recruitment and selection to training and support tasks with individual staff. It includes also the support of whole group living units when a unit may be in particular difficulties through staff loss, too many new staff, and so on.

This latter seems potentially a very useful function and of course is being tested at present in John Whitwell's work with Barry Watts and his staff in the Cottage while they work together to firm up the management system, clarify roles and functions, and so on. This role would involve John Whitwell's putting his experience and expertise at the disposal of unit staff, giving the backing of his personal authority but without management responsibility which would remain with the Principal. The role would have some resemblance to that of the outside consultants, notably Mrs Dockar-Drysdale and to a lesser extent, myself, and some care might have to be given to the boundaries of our functions and tasks, but it has the great advantage that John Whitwell would be more available for day to day detailed work than either Mrs. Dockar-Drysdale or myself.

John Whitwell and I discussed particularly the task of helping Barry Watts get firmly into role and felt that it might be helpful for John Whitwell to offer Barry something like individual supervision at fairly frequent intervals, say two to three times a week, so that

Barry could discuss problems in his role fairly privately and confidentially, and John could back him with advice, authority and information while leaving Barry to work fairly independently with his team. We discussed the confidentiality of these sessions and I think felt that on the whole they should be fairly confidential, although Barry Watts would be free to use them with his team as he felt desirable and John Whitwell to report back in confidence to top management if, and when, he felt it necessary.

I gather that similar work is on hand with Northstead but John Whitwell and I did not discuss this in detail.

John Whitwell has also been working with Bill Douglas on work payments for boys and with Bill Douglas and Jeanne Slinger on the problem of emoluments. The latter work particularly is of great importance to the Community, involving as it does the questions of the staff institutionalisation and the appropriateness of the models for living staff present to boys. What struck me working with them is the extent to which the participation of the acting principal (title?) in these tasks seems to heighten their significance and lend them authority. In general I felt such collaboration might usefully help to strengthen and increase the authority of the Bursar.

John Whitwell also spoke in December of having felt that organising the terms break period had been a useful piece of work, integrating him in the Community and being very central.

The two other most senior men, Richard Balbernie and Mike Jinks, have both expressed their appreciation of the contribution John Whitwell's work in the new role is making to their own roles and tasks. Richard Balbernie now finds himself somewhat freer of practical preoccupations and has more time to distance himself from detailed work, to think more at leisure, or to be away from the Community. Mike Jinks seemed to welcome having a person who is informed on group living matters in general and not just on single units, and with whom he can work on matters of policy across the education/group living boundary, e.g. the role and function of education staff in the management of group living units.

2) **The Future of Emoluments**

This topic was discussed at some length with Bill Douglas, Jeanne Slinger, and John Whitwell on several visits. They have since had discussions with some of the staff who would be affected by changes and principle and practice about emoluments, as I have also.

There seems to be a considerable degree of agreement among staff that their being paid part of their salary in the form of emoluments is incompatible with the way they see their role in work with boys, e.g. it is, or could be, an institutionalising factor. It can, and sometimes does, provoke delinquency (elsewhere if not in the Cotswold Community). It somehow diminishes a person. I put forward the idea, with which there seemed to be a

good deal of agreement, that the image of oneself as an income earner and a spender is a function of the amount of discretion one has over the disposal of the income as well as of its amount. Increasing the discretion may actually make one feel better off, although the actual income remains the same. Staff liked the idea of having all their income in money and full discretion over spending it.

So far so good: the difficulties began to arise when detailed consideration was given to the effects in income terms of doing away with emoluments. Most important was the threat it might well involve a financial loss considerably greater than would be compensated by an increase in discretionary control over income. I am reminded at this point of how much better off housemothers felt when they were given discretionary control over their food budgets as against being given food in kind at Matron's discretion. They were actually better off as well, food supplies mysteriously increased in quality and quantity as the housemothers took the opportunity to behave more responsibly and realistically, but they had the same amount of money as before. It would be impossible to estimate at all accurately what fall of income would be balanced by greater discretion, but what was clear in the discussions was that the staff felt that the likely fall in income might be too great and it seems to me likely that they were right, and that an increase in income would be necessary to achieve a satisfactory balance between income and discretionary spending.

Examination of the present level of emolument deductions shows the amount of money deducted to be ludicrously low compared with the cost of similar provisions in the community at large. For married staff this means only very low rents. For single staff who have a wider range of emoluments the money value of the other emoluments may be so high vis à vis the deductions that no contribution is made to rent at all. For example a garage can apparently be rented for £1.50p a quarter, less than the weekly rent in some areas.

At that point the discussions understandably got rather stuck and there was a tendency to some weakening of the grasp of the theory, especially among less experienced staff. The key question now seems to be whether in fact a method could be developed of ensuring adequate compensation for the loss of emoluments.

It is of course clear that the level of emoluments takes some account of the disadvantages to staff of being in a job where residence is compulsory and out of this the notion of an 'inconvenience weighting' to be added to basic salary came in. I am not sure who brought the term in. The idea would be that there should be an increase to salaries, i.e. they should be weighted to allow for the inconveniences of residence, e.g. the relative isolation of the site leading to, among other things, high transport costs, limited, if any, choice of accommodation, deprivation of the opportunity to buy one's own house. It is quite uncertain whether any satisfactory arrangement could be made with the relevant authorities, notably the two different bodies that negotiate about and fix the salaries of child care and education staff. The matters of principle involved would be expected to prove very difficult.

So there seems to be rather an impasse at present, and it is difficult to see how the matter can progress internally now without exploration of some of those issues so that staff would have some idea of how they would be affected financially. As matters stand, if I pick up the feelings correctly, staff would support an informal approach to County Hall, probably by Bill Douglas, Jean Slinger, and John Whitwell, to explore the matter both in principal and in relation to practical possibilities.

3) **The Provision of Domestic Services for Group Living Units**

On my December visit work on this topic was much influenced by the paper prepared by Colin Handley on instinctual impoverishment, which, if I summarise rather inadequately, stressed the significance of basic experiences in doing simple, ordinary tasks along with important people, or watching them being done, the mother baking, the father gardening, and so on. Cotswold boys would typically have been deprived of such experiences and the maturation linked with them.

The move to change the role of the domestic worker in units stemmed partly from that and partly a general wish to diminish institutionalisation, e.g. the magic of things just being done, often when boys are absent, the provision of a kind of hotel atmosphere. What is envisaged is a considerable change in the domestic worker's role and in her relationship with boys, as well as her becoming a more integrated member of the team, described at one point as a "consultant housewife" working with boys and staff on the domestic side, not just doing the work herself. Some of the present domestic workers were described as being suitable for this role on personality grounds but there seemed to be general agreement that this was quite a demanding job and so it might not be too easy to find other suitable people.

This development was closely related to questions of how much of the domestic work should be done within the unit by staff and boys, and how much should be done elsewhere. Laundry appears to be the area where most questions arise at present. The general move is to get it more personalised and less institutionalised but details are quite complicated. The different units are very different, e.g. according to whether they have any enuretic boys, how able the boys are to do any washing themselves or help staff, how important it is to boys to "keep close to their own laundry", i.e. not to lose it to an impersonal service and so on. Alternatives being discussed are a laundrette in the Cotswold Community to be paid for by units, equipment in the units, the use of an outside laundry but by each group living unit separately. There seems to be a good deal of work to be done in this area but it is progressing.

4) **The Education Section**

Mike Jinks reported to me on his present preoccupation and uncertainties about the role and function of the education section. I find myself sharing these without being able to offer much fresh thinking about them. It does seem that the strengthening of general

educational work with remedial teaching and other activities designed to raise educational levels brings with it its own quota of further questions. What size of group is appropriate for boys at different stages? How many teachers to a group? I think I may now be about to raise a new question which if appropriate might be difficult. Is the group living unit the most appropriate for the education section, or would another division of boys more appropriate to attainment, educational potential, possibly age, be more task related? I am not sure about the carry over of the “home” grouping into the education section. About the related question of whether the same person takes the group in the education section as in group living, I am a little more certain. I have always felt slightly uneasy about it and now feel more so, as Mike Jinks himself also feels, if I interpret him correctly. It seems to reduce opportunity for the ordinary transitions the home-based child makes and through which he can learn and grow and might well lead to confusion about roles and authority, facilitating splitting and acting out between education and group living by confusing tasks, relationships, etc. I also feel it may “baby” the boys.

Another question that seems to be still around, although nearer to resolution, is how much work, i.e. related to therapy, and how much education should be done in the education section groups? Theoretically for me the answer is clear. I think that the primary task of the education section is education, and that would equally be the primary task of groups of boys and teachers within the education setting: group work would then only seem to me to be appropriate insofar as it is necessary or desirable to further that primary task, not as a thing in itself. The practical application of that theory would of course be much more difficult, especially since learning to work together in groups about a common educational task and towards a common objective would certainly be a part of the wider learning for living that the education section should provide in addition to a narrower interpretation of education. The size of the group that boys could work in would probably vary, unintegrated boys could probably only “comprehend” a smaller group. Someone spoke to me of “the fourteen year old toddler” – toddlers can only comprehend very small groups and they also need one to one relationships with adults, e.g. in remedial teaching.

5) The Structure and Functioning of the Cottage Team

The problems of the Cottage staff seem to be centred very much in the general inexperience of the team in the methods of managing units that have evolved in the Cotswold Community and also in the unavailability within the unit of models of appropriate management behaviour. There are a number of areas in which work is being done and in which it is clearly important that it should go ahead quickly. Basic is really the development of understanding of the principles of unit management and its relevance to the therapeutic provision for boys. The problem as described to me at one point was that there is not enough pre-planning. While I would not doubt that there is some truth in the comment, I would suspect it to be a system also of another problem, i.e. that there is not enough, not clear enough, not firm enough, delegation to the people actually on duty, so that they have the authority and support to make decisions effectively for themselves as need arises.

The following points were discussed both with Barry Watts individually, and with the team:-

There is an urgent need for Barry Watts to take on leadership firmly with the implication that he must also delegate the other major roles firmly and clearly to other staff, giving them the authority and responsibility appropriate to them, and holding them accountable to him for their performance. We discussed at some length the need to get the components of the roles clearer, e.g. what actual tasks are involved, what authority the person in the role needs and must operate in relation to other staff to ensure their cooperation, how the roles relate to each other hierarchically and operationally and so on.

Following from that the following roles were discussed in more detail.

Therapeutic Resource This has up to the time of the meeting been held by Barry Watts but was in process of being handed over to Brian Kennedy. I suggest that the process be completed as quickly as possible although both were finding it difficult, - Brian Kennedy out of inexperience, Barry Watts because of Brian Kennedy's inexperience but also, I felt, because it was a more familiar and safe role for him than being head of the unit at present. Quite a tricky relationship would have to be held between the two, while Brian Kennedy gets the role – for Barry Watts training and giving management backing to Brian Kennedy while abstaining from taking it over again – Brian Kennedy accepting and operating delegated authority although perhaps unsure of himself in this role. We discussed also the authority that must be delegated to the therapeutic resource person over other staff if he is to perform the role effectively, e.g. to require the provision of information he may need and the way he could deal with "defaulting" colleagues, i.e. by referring the matter back for the authority of the head of the unit.

The Domestic Organiser's role seems to have been more fully delegated to Claire Cooksey but I think the component of the role and the role relationships still need some clarifying. Very important in this role is the differentiation between being responsible for seeing that something is done and actually doing it oneself, so that some elements of the domestic organiser's work are pretty continuous and must be done whether she is on duty or not (other roles are rather more flexible as regards when the work may be done). This raises the question of the domestic organiser's authority over other staff and indeed perhaps boys, when she requires them to deputise for her, and the need for her authority to be firmly backed by the head of the unit at points where difficulty or friction arise.

Although I am not sure if I have got this point quite clear, I felt that there might be in the Cottage as unresolved issue over delegation from Barry Watts to the Domestic Organiser about shopping for stores within the domestic area, Barry perhaps taking too direct a part in planning and organising how it is to be done. If so then I think this needs to be clarified and the Domestic Organiser reinforced in her role (remembering always the importance for boys of carrying staff delegation and staff authority as fully as possible down the staff hierarchy to the boys).

Maintenance and care of building and fabric is a very difficult area indeed. Bill Douglas' and Jeanne Slinger's last inspection having shown considerable and urgent need for a

great deal of work to be done, the Cottage is not unique in finding this a difficult area. The role has always seemed to be unpopular and persecuting to its incumbent in group living. There seems no obvious person in the Cottage at the moment to hold the role since the unit is actually short of a full-time man. In view of the fact that Brian Kennedy may have enough to do with getting into the therapeutic resource role, and Andrew Smail is part-time, it may be appropriate for Barry Watts to continue to take direct responsibility for the time being, especially in view of the seriousness of the matter, unless perhaps one of the women could do it, Yvonne Usher or Claire Cooksey, but probably both have enough to do. In case of any of these three people temporarily taking over this role, the distinction between responsibility for seeing something is done and actually doing it oneself would become crucial.

The role of focal therapist was discussed at some length and it is clear that the role is at present infiltrated by a lack of firmness and that its boundaries are very blurred, for example, the allocation of boys to therapists, or vice versa, seems just to be allowed to happen, mainly it seems, following the boy and drifting along until the focal therapist becomes the person to whom he seems to attach himself. The opportunity for splitting and acting out in this seemed considerable. I suggested that there should really be a staff decision, probably best taken before the boy joins the unit, although taking account of what is known about him. I had several reasons for suggesting this. It puts the authority and responsibility for that boy firmly on one staff member from the beginning which hopefully would diminish opportunities for splitting, acting out, or playing people off against each other, and so on. It would also give the boy more effective boundaries. It would allow the staff to consider realistically in advance the various factors appropriate to the allocation, e.g. work loads, capacity of staff for the role, any preference for particular kinds of boys, and so on. It means the boy's reception into the unit could be carried out by one staff member holding him firmly at the point, rather than his drifting into the group. There would of course have to be the possibilities of change for the boy or the focal therapist should in fact insoluble difficulties arise between them.

The firm establishment of the focal therapist raises again the question of deputing. It seems important that the focal therapist should arrange quite explicitly for someone to take over when he or she is off duty and not just leave it to chance, the risk being that the boy might again be left to "drift". Certain tasks and important aspects of the relationship may be postponable, others are not. The bed-time situation is an example. It would seem that the focal therapist, or whoever deputises for him, is the most appropriate person for the general supervision of getting a boy to bed, washing, undressing, hot-water bottle, drinks, and so on, but the goodnight visits from other staff are quite appropriate when circumstances permit, e.g. provided such visits do not interfere with the work of the focal therapist or distract other staff from their own work with the boys. The focal therapist should really be in authority, however, e.g. to judge if a boy might get too excited and be hard to settle after having too many or too long visits, and so on.

Continuity management is another problem. It is apparently carried out at present by Andrew Smail. I reiterate now in this context that I do not really like the term, and am afraid it may be confusing. It suggests the management of continuity, whatever that

would be. Also I suspect that it may evade rather than tackle an issue, that is, that the unit always needs a manager and that in the absence of the head of the unit there must be a person – a deputising head – that person for the time being in charge of the unit's operation. I do not like the abstractness of “management” as against a person linked title, e.g. deputising or deputising head.

In the Cottage there seems no real grasp of a point which has been much worked out over the years, that is, the difference between unit management and boy management. Linked with that it has, I think, gradually evolved that unit management and deputing management would be carried by group living staff, deputising staff being usually a second full-time man or a senior woman, often the person who was the therapeutic resource. It does not seem to be an appropriate role for someone from the education section because he might not have enough grasp of the unit. Boy management is a role delegated by the head or deputing head and responsible to him, and concerned only work with boys. It has been accepted that this role should be carried by a man or by a woman only in emergency. It would be a very appropriate role for part-time staff from the education section.

I would stress also that these are functions, not permanent roles, that is, functions which are delegated from time to time as required, e.g. a person is deputing head only when the head is off duty and at different times it could be different people. It is not a permanent role or title. I felt that there was some danger that a permanent association between a person and a deputing function might be developing in the Cottage, e.g. Andrew Smail is continuity management.

It does seem appropriate that Andrew Smail take a major share in providing deputing headship for the Cottage under present circumstances while Barry Watts needs experienced support. Brian Kennedy is relatively inexperienced and they are short of a full-time man, but as a permanency I would see his role as boy manager, not deputing manager. I noted another confusion, that Andrew Smail is called continuity management, while it is Brian Kennedy who attends management meetings in Barry Watt's absence, deputising for the head of unit.

The Unit Office While not a role, is an important symbol and has apparently become a kind of place where the confusion of the unit is dumped, representing the sense of confusion in the staff about themselves. It is probably helpful to clear it up and to orientate it to what the office should be, a kind of administrative or nerve centre, so long as this is not done instead of, or as a substitute for, working at other things which, if successful, might mean the office did not matter so much.

Finally there is the problem of the integration of the unit in the sense of the development of a sense of common objectives, policies and strategies. I think a good deal of work needs to be done and thought needs to be given to how this should be accomplished. The meetings with Mrs. Docker-Drysdale will be crucial here, and the unit working jointly together on tasks will also make a contribution, but I think it may be worth considering whether further work may be necessary in the interim to help staff come together around

these issues, e.g. by special meetings at which other than practical issues are discussed. John Whitwell might make a useful contribution here, although this would need to be done in such a way as not to undermine Barry Watts' authority.

I have already discussed above the contribution John Whitwell may make by developing a supportive and supervisory relationship with Barry Watts.

6) Work Payments for Boys

Work is continuing in devising an appropriate method of making payments to certain boys for work done within the Cotswold Community. The boys concerned will be boys who are no longer held within the Education Section, who have no outside jobs, but who can be, and are, usefully and meaningfully employed within the Cotswold Community itself, the latter point being very important. In effect the idea would be to have an addition to the wages bill, the money being earmarked for working boys. The number of boys involved and the money needed would be small. The idea and the possible ways of organising it need discussion with County Hall.

Some points now clear to me which I have not discussed, e.g. what would the system of payment do to the relations between boys who get paid and those who do not for possibly similar work, e.g. boys who spend their days in the Education Section and work for Cotswold in their spare time? What about the difference between working time and spare time activities for boys who are being paid? These are not objections in principal but might need looking at.

Consideration of the issue has also raised questions of the payment of boys working outside the Community. Apparently employers pay £5 per week to a boy regardless of the job he does and how well he works. This sum apparently was fixed on the basis of what the boy could earn before he has to make contributions. It is also probably some enticement to employers to take a boy, but this level of payment is now felt to be an evasion of issues and collusion, as well as being probably demeaning to the boy, so that the question of wages arranged with outside employers now seem to need further examination.

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