

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SAFEGUARDERS REPORT FOR CHILDREN'S HEARING OF 13 MAY 1998  
AT IRVINE

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CHILD

LEWIS DUNCAN (22.10.84)

HOME ADDRESS

14 MORAR PLACE, CASTLEPARK, IRVINE BUT  
CURRENTLY RESIDING AT NEWFIELD RESOURCE  
CENTRE, JOHNSTONE

1. I met with the following:-

- (a) George Hutton, Lewis' Keyworker at Newfield Resource Centre on 20 April 1998;
- (b) Lewis and his mother, Carolyn Duncan in the family home in Irvine on 22 April 1998;
- (c) Sheila Stewart, Teacher of Guidance, at Irvine Royal Academy on 22 April 1998;
- (d) Caroline Garrigan, Social Worker, in her offices on 24 April 1998;
- (e) John Cameron and Lewis in John's home in Troon on 27 April 1998.

2. MEETINGS

- (a) Keyworker George Hutton indicated that Lewis was not a management problem in Newfield, although he could irritate and annoy his peers in the unit on occasions.

Since his entry to Newfield in September 1997 efforts have failed in ensuring his full-time attendance at Irvine Royal Academy.

His mother, who cannot cope with Lewis' behaviour struggles to cope with the various stresses in her own life, appears to need constant support, which could account for the poor relationships she has formed that have caused her and her sons some difficulty. She has a lot of affection for Lewis but seems to be incapable in controlling or influencing his behaviour to any major extent.

John Cameron who is known as Lewis' dad, contacted Newfield on Lewis' entry in September 1997 and has maintained regular contact with him, having Lewis staying overnight on a regular basis. He is genuinely interested in Lewis' welfare and makes a positive contribution when required at review meetings. It was his view that Lewis has a lot of potential and has made some progress in his attitude, and behaviour, with him being less aggressive and less inclined to run away from home.

School is a major problem for him, and despite being put back a year he still had difficulty in coping; without the necessary supports he would easily slide into delinquent behaviour.

(b) When I called at the family home, Lewis' mother Carrie informed me that he had returned home at 1.00 p.m. with his clothes muddy, claiming he had been bullied on his way to school. She added they had lunch together and later without warning he had run off leaving by a window. The Social Worker had been informed and he would likely be returned to Newfield.

Carrie informed me that she had moved into her flat seven weeks ago and was in the process of redecorating. She indicated that as a result of relationships that had broken down she has had to move house on several occasions with consequential upset.

Since primary school Lewis had experienced problems in attendance and over a period has deteriorated. With the arrival of George Wilson into their lives Lewis' conduct worsened. Thought had been given to giving up her job to teaching Lewis herself with the help of a tutor, but this is now felt to be unrealistic at this stage.

During our discussion Lewis appeared: on being pressed to give an explanation as to the events from leaving for school after 8 a.m. this morning until his arrival home at 1 p.m., he stated he had been bullied, but refused to give any details as to the circumstances.

It was evident by his actions that his mother appeared to have little control over him and he was resentful at being accused of taking lighter fuel from her handbag without her knowledge. She commented that he is no longer guilty of stealing money from her purse, and although in the past he has indulged in solvents she believes he was after fuel for his lighter for his cigarettes.

(c) Sheila Stewart, Teacher of Guidance informed me that Lewis was enrolled in the school in May last year and has had difficulty with attendance during this time. Part-time attendance has been tried since his entry to Newfield, but has proved to be unsuccessful. He is not perceived to be a management problem but struggles to cope academically. He is not very convincing in his tales of bullying, and presents as a rather immature 13 year-old who seems naïve.

I was shown written comments by some of his teachers in February who indicated he was a courteous boy who was not a problem in class, but requires a lot of individual help and thrives on praise, to one who described him as one who annoys other pupils, finds work difficult and is disruptive.

Another stated he could be lazy and although quite capable, loses interest in catching up. One said he resents being made to work and is very very lazy. One other commented he was a pleasant pupil who gets on well with others and works well in class.

(d) Social Worker Caroline Garrigan spoke of Lewis being immature in his behaviour and resorts to infantile mode when confronted, as if he wants to shut out the whole world. He is an unhappy lad who at times can be chatty superficially but shies away from speaking of how he really feels.

Both parents are very caring and now seem able to speak to each other amicably regarding arrangements for Lewis. At the present they share the care of Lewis which appears to be operating successfully.

Application will be made to Kerelaw Residential School as it would seem that Lewis is currently incapable of coping with the demands of normal day school attendance and neither parent is able to influence him sufficiently for him to respond accordingly. Carrie will be given the opportunity to attend another parental group to offer her support in how best to deal with Lewis.

(e) John Cameron informed me that he is employed as Head Chef in a hotel in Ayr, where has been for three years. He is actively pursuing a change of career into Social Work, but it is early days.

He described Lewis' mum Carrie as being totally self-centred, putting her own needs before the boys and feels she resents them, believing they are a hindrance to her. He said she had used the children as a bargaining counter after they had separated and is basically a selfish person looking out for number one.

He was of the view that much of Lewis' problems stem from his relationship with his mother, and is a child looking for individual attention who feels secure in a structured regime. The relationship his mum had with George Wilson was disastrous for all concerned and created enormous upset for both boys, and consequent resentment against mum.

He was at pains to advise me that he was quite neutral towards Carrie and personally held no grudges against her, and is aware both of them need to work together for the ultimate welfare of Lewis and Grant, his younger brother.

On speaking to Lewis on his own he was visibly more relaxed than on the previous occasion. He indicated his mum tended to be negative and obdurate when he made, what he claimed were reasonable demands of her. He is happy to continue to see both his mum and dad when appropriate, and was agreeable to my suggestion that contact arrangements be discussed by all concerned with the Social Worker.

Lewis made it plain he had no desire to return to day school either in Irvine or Troon, indicating with some vehemence that he does get bullied, but again refused to give any specific details.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Lewis gives me the impression of an unhappy wee lad who craves individual attention and will require skilled handling in helping him articulate what is troubling him. With the onset of adolescence he is I believe in need of care and guidance in a structured environment for a period, with the possibility of him attending on a daily basis thereafter, as I do not think he will ever attend day school voluntarily.

I therefore would recommend that he be considered for Kerelaw Residential School as soon as a place becomes available, and if appropriate he be offered counselling to assist him to come to terms with the various stresses in his life.

Contact should be maintained with both parents, with arrangements mutually agreed after discussion with the Social Worker.

R R HANVEY  
SAFEGUARDER