

Again, it is important to recognise that it is the decision of the parents, not of social services. Only in circumstances where their response seems totally unreasonable, and that a Place of Safety Order needed to be sought, would the social services go against the parents' wishes. At that point, there would be the question of whether a magistrate would grant an Order in such circumstances.

The situation with Jill seems to have been further compounded by involving the police to provide transport. The responsibility for taking Jill to any agreed place of safety would surely be, in the first instance, with the parents and/or social services.

In addition, social work assessment would take into account not only the context within which the crisis had occurred, but also the consequences of resolution through admission to any institution. The concern expressed over admission to a psychiatric institution and contact with psychiatric patients has its equivalent in, for instance, the admission to a local authority children's home. The population of these

homes or "assessment centres" varies from week to week. Jill may come across other children who are already well versed in various forms of delinquent behaviour and, given the powerful influences of peers to children of this age, she may get some "expert" guidance in other methods of expressing her distress. The option of placement with a foster family who were experienced in caring for young adolescents would have to be considered as possibly the least damaging "holding situation".

It hardly needs stating that the use of the Mental Health Act seems both clumsy and potentially harmful in these circumstances, where a more comprehensive assessment of Jill's behaviour within its social context could be realistically set alongside the resources available to social services.

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Miscellany

Molecular genetics

An international symposium on *The Ethical Implications of the New Genetics for Psychiatry* will be held on 7 June 1989 which aims to provide a forum in which the scientific and medical communities can facilitate discussion with colleagues from other disciplines on the ethical and moral dilemmas posed by recent advances and potential discoveries in molecular genetics in relation to psychiatry. Topics include: schizophrenia, Huntington's Disease, genetic counselling, feminism, history of genetic research, liberatory biology, prenatal diagnosis and science & society. Participants include: Dr Jim Birley, Sir Douglas Black, Professor Ranaan Gillon, Dr Germaine Greer, Dr John Harris, Chris Heginbotham, Professor Peter McGuffin, Dr Bernadette Modell, Dr Robin Murray, Dr Adrienne Reveley, Professor Steven Rose, Professor Erick Strömberg and Julie Weleminsky. Registration fee: £40 (to include lunch and refreshments). Further information: Nadine Morgan, Conference Office, Institute of Psychiatry,

De Crespigny Park, London SE5 8AF (telephone 01 703 5411, extension 3170).

Professor Sir David Weatherall, Nuffield Professor of Clinical Medicine, University of Oxford, will give a lecture on *Human Molecular Genetics* on 10 May 1989 in the Mansfield Cooper Building, University of Manchester. Further details: The Secretary, The Centre for Social Ethics and Policy, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL (telephone 061 275 3463).

Appeal for funds

Mental Aid Projects is a registered charity whose aim is to care for the mentally handicapped and mentally ill by providing residential homes, day centres and group homes. It is funded in part by its local authority but this is insufficient to support all activities, future expansion of the charity, maintenance of premises, etc. Further information: Eric Cronk, Fund Raiser, Mental Aid Projects, "Fircroft", 96 Ditton Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6RH.