



Alan G Baird - Director
Social Work Department
6 Kirkton Road
DUNDEE
DD3 OBZ

FAX 01382 436022

☎ 01382 436000

REPORT TO SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION SOCIAL BACKGROUND REPORT

The following child:-

Surname	<u>TARBETT</u>		
Christian Names or Forenames	<u>WILLIAM</u>		
Date of Birth	<u>09.07.91</u>	Sex	<u>Male</u>
Address	<u>Strathcarron YPU, Strathcarron Place, Dundee</u>		
School attended	<u>Auchterhouse Primary School, Auchterhouse, Angus</u>		
Religion	<u>Protestant</u>		

BASIS OF REPORT REQUESTED

Section 73(4)(a) Variation of Supervision Requirement

FAMILY COMPOSITION

Name	Dob/ Age	Relationship to child	Employment/ School/Other etc	Income/ Source	Residence if different
Linda Robertson	17.6.69	Birth mother	none		7C Court St, Dundee
David Tarbett	8.4.47	Birth father	none		7D Bonnethill Court Dundee
Michael Tarbett	22.6.88	Brother	BellBaxter HS		Cupar, Fife (LA Care)

Report compiled by Ingrid von Arnim

Date completed 9th June 2003

Sent to Reporter 9th June 2003

Signed

Designation Social Worker

Child's Name: William Tarbett

Introduction to William's Current Circumstances

William was placed in the care of the Social Work Department on a Place of Safety Order at a Childrens Hearing in September 1994. The Panel at that time had serious concerns about the behaviour of William and his siblings [REDACTED] and the lack of adequate parental control. William was three years old at that time. In October 1994 William and his siblings were placed on a Supervision Order (Away from Home). The Supervision Order has been continued since that date.

In March 2000 William was placed on a long-term fostering basis with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] foster carers with Dundee City Council. Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] provided an excellent placement for William. However, in mid -2002 the quality of the relationship between William and his carers began to deteriorate. In November 2002 Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] indicated to the Social Work Department that they were unlikely to be able to continue William's placement beyond June 2003 at that latest. At a Network Meeting on 11th February 2003 Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] informed the Department that the placement would need to end by Saturday 5th April 2003.

As the placement neared an end the situation for the Booth Family and William became increasingly strained and was not helped by the inability of the Department to identify a placement for William. Following a series of increasingly frequent aggressive incidents, it was decided that William needed to be removed immediately, for his own safety and that of the [REDACTED] family and others, including fellow pupils at school.

On 19th March William was placed on an emergency basis with Mr [REDACTED] ACE Carer, in Dundee for a period of three weeks. On 11th April William was moved to Strathcarron YPU in the absence of a suitable, longer term placement being identified. William continues to reside at Strathcarron while the Department continues to seek a suitable longer-term placement for William, both within its own resources and from other agencies.

Previous Placements in the care of the Local Authority

William lived with his older brother [REDACTED] in successive foster placements; from September 1994 to December 1995 with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] from December 1995 to January 1996 with Mrs [REDACTED], from January 1996 until March 1997 with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED], and with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] from March 1997, first with [REDACTED] and then on his own, until March 2000.

In 1996 The Social Work Department decided that William and his siblings, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were unable to return home and required long-term substitute care, with an appropriate placement to be identified for each child where they might stay without further disruption. The Social Work Department then sought such a placement for William over an extended period, without success. It is unfortunately the case that there is a serious shortage of long-term placements for primary-age children, particularly boys, across Scotland.

In 1998 [REDACTED] left his placement with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] and went to Strathmore Cottages before being placed at Thornbrae School in Northumberland, where he stayed for two years. In September 2000 he returned to an 'Ace' placement in Cupar, Fife, where he has remained to date. Also in 1998 William's sister [REDACTED] was placed with permanent carers in Crieff.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

Given continued dispute with the birth parents, particularly Mr Tarbett, over the future plans for the children, the Social Work Department had referred to *Children 1st* in 1997 and early 1998, for independent assessments regarding:-

- 1 The contact arrangements between William, [REDACTED] and their parents
- 2 The potential likelihood of either parent being able to have the children returned to their care

The first assessment concluded that (a) parental and sibling contact should be separate in order for each child to gain the most out of each contact (b) Parental ability to manage contact was limited, therefore contact should be carefully planned, managed, and supervised by the Social Work Department and limited to 45 minute sessions once per month (c) Contact should involve enjoyable activities. This was agreed at the Childrens Hearing on 1st April 1998 and the same conditions repeated at subsequent Childrens Hearings to date.

The second assessment (14.04.98) concluded that rehabilitation was not feasible with either Miss Robertson or Mr Tarbett and reinforced the earlier assessment of the Social Work Department and decision of the Adoption and Fostering Panel.

Given the assessment that William could not return home, but that birth family contact was important to him, the plan to place William in a long-term foster placement remained unchanged and renewed efforts were made to secure a placement, without success. Notwithstanding the insecurity William experienced in living with a 'temporary' family, William spent three years with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] and established a degree of security and a radical improvement in his behaviour and overall functioning during that period.

During this time William attended Longhaugh Primary School, where he struggled to progress academically. In 1998 he was diagnosed as suffering from dyspraxia and requiring additional and specific educational support to help him meet his potential within mainstream schooling.

In February 2000 a suitable placement was finally identified and approved by Dundee City Council Fostering and Adoption panel and William was placed with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] and their three sons, now aged 10 to 15 years, at the end of March 2000. William's mother was fully involved in the plan and was in agreement. At the time of placement the [REDACTED] family lived in north-east Dundee and William transferred to McAlpine Primary School in April 2000. The school was fully committed to William and he made exceptional progress, both academically and socially, while he was there.

In February 2001 the [REDACTED] family moved to a large farmhouse near Auchterhouse in Angus so that all the children in the household could have more space and a room to themselves. William settled well into the large household and also into rural life, relishing the opportunities the location gave him to observe and participate in farming activities.

Along with two of the [REDACTED] children, William transferred to Auchterhouse Primary School, where he has made slow but consistent academic progress and is well-liked by his teachers and peers.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

Child's circumstances since June 2002

Foster Placement

During the first two years in placement with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED], William settled exceptionally well into the [REDACTED] household. He developed a strong and trusting relationship with his foster carers, who gave him every encouragement, including open acceptance of his relationships with his birth parents and siblings. Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] also set clear and strong boundaries to his behaviour, which William generally accepted and was increasingly responsive to. After some initial difficulties with the carers' own children, all four children found their own 'place' in the household, although there remained the occasional conflict. Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] were highly sensitive to William's particular needs, while ensuring that he was treated equally with their own boys.

Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] were approved to offer a further placement, with the proviso that this must not jeopardise William's place in the family. They hoped to offer a long-term placement to a younger, female child.

However, in July 2002 a 13 year old boy was placed with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] on an emergency basis. The child has a diagnosis of ADHD. Although this was intended as a short-term placement until other arrangements were made, the placement has continued, and is likely to continue until at least July 2003.

This placement had a significant impact on William's sense of 'belonging' to the [REDACTED] family and his perception of the amount of positive attention that he felt he received. In consequence, there was a reduction in his responsiveness within the family, and a deterioration in his behaviour, which became increasingly aggressive and difficult to control, with consequences for the whole family. Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] stress that difficulties were already becoming evident prior to July 2002, but agree that the arrival of the new boy increased and highlighted the problems William presented within the family. Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] became increasingly frustrated by William's emotional withdrawal from the family and felt that there was major breakdown in the relationship between William and themselves. William reported feeling unloved and scapegoated.

Sustained efforts were made by the Social Work Department to improve relationships between William and the Booth's and save the placement. Consultations were undertaken with the Department of Child and Family and Psychiatry for advice on strategies to manage and resolve the difficulties caused by William's increasingly aggressive behaviour. These sessions were attended by the Social Worker, Mrs Booth and the carers' support worker. The Social Worker intensified sessions with William, focussing on behavioural management and communication. The Social Work Department offered Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] regular respite care for William, which was accepted and used. Although initially wary, William came to enjoy these weekends once a month. Regular Network Meetings were set up between all workers involved and the carers to plan and monitor progress.

William was aware that the placement was in danger of breaking down and made some effort, with his social worker and Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] to improve his behaviour and relationships at the end of 2002. However, he was unable to sustain this, and despite the intense support offered to the placement Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] began to find it impossible to provide continuing emotional support to William.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

At a Network Meeting on 27th November Mrs [REDACTED] informed the Department that they would be terminating the placement by the end of June 2003 at the latest. In the event Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] were unable to sustain the placement for that length of time, and on 11th February 2003 Mrs [REDACTED] informed the Social Work Department that the placement would need to end on 5th April. This proved impossible and William was removed on an emergency basis on 19th March 2003.

Placement at Strathcarron YPU - 11th April 2003

William has settled well at Strathcarron, where he has impressed staff with his self-control during occasional disturbances at the unit, his ability and willingness to socialise, his acceptance of the house rules and his self-caring skills. Following the second major incident at Strathcarron, William contacted the Childrens Rights Officer to discuss his situation.

William has resumed his ice-skating hobby and is fairly active outwith Strathcarron. William has also actively maintained his friendships in Auchterhouse, visiting the homes of a number of schoolfriends at their invitation.

He returned to Auchterhouse Primary School after the Easter Holiday and is reported by the Acting Head Teacher, Mrs Duncan, to be actively engaged in academic work and playground activities, with no untoward behaviour or unsettled emotional indicators. William is taken and collected from school each day by taxi unless he is staying on to play with friends. Staff at Strathcarron and Social Worker are in regular contact with the school. The Head Teacher is aware that William should continue to participate in preparations for the move to Monifieth High School after the summer holiday.

William is aware that this is a temporary placement and is extremely keen to move on to a family placement. Underlying his apparent ability to cope with the recent changes and uncertainty, William is anxious about his future and is undoubtedly feeling isolated and rejected by his previous carers, and his mother in particular.

Social and Emotional Development

William made good progress in these areas following placement with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED]. William was beginning to express appropriate emotional responses to those around him, to express affection and anger, and also to control his emotions and reflect on his behaviour and its impact on others around him. Although much of this was due to normal emotional development, William was also being greatly assisted in this process by Mr and Mrs [REDACTED].

However, the last year has been a difficult one for William in a number of respects:

- In February 2002, as a result of lifestory work being undertaken, William began to talk about abuses to other children that had allegedly taken place in a previous placement. This was a traumatic event for him, and was followed later in the year by further disclosures about abuses he alleges he experienced in this placement.
- William has experienced a very erratic pattern of contact with his mother, who was previously reliable, and has had no contact with her since October 2002. He is aware

Child's Name: William Tarbett

of the bereavement she had in May 2002 and the difficulties she has had coping with her younger children since that time, and he is both angry with her and concerned for her wellbeing.

- The placement of a child with severe behavioural and learning difficulties within the Booth household displaced William's established position in the family.
- William is in final year at primary school and has expressed his anxieties about the transition to secondary school.
- Finally, William is now nearly 12 years old and it is to be expected that he may be progressing into puberty with its attendant impact on his mood and behaviour.

These events have exposed William's uneven pattern of development and ability to cope. William has suffered a continuing tendency to labile moods and strong and inappropriate reactions to events around him, which have increased in frequency and intensity during the year.

In January 2002 Social Worker and Carer took advice from, Dr Esparon, Child Psychiatrist and Mrs Sheridan, Child Psychotherapist, on strategies to help William deal with his impulsive anger and inability to express his feelings more appropriately. A follow-up in June 2002 concluded that William was making steady progress in his emotional development and that the quality of his relationships had improved.

However, a further consultation was taken in November 2002, given the deterioration within the placement from July. The Department of Child and Family Psychiatry encouraged Mrs [REDACTED] to consider realistically whether her family could continue to offer a viable long-term placement, and also recommended that William should have some form of psychotherapy to address his anxieties and vulnerabilities. Unfortunately, NHS Tayside does not have the resources to offer William such treatment.

Despite these difficulties William continues to mature. Over the last year he has become far more reflective and articulate, if he is given time to marshal his thoughts and feelings, and shows far greater understanding of his own actions and their relationship to events around him. At Strathcarron YPU he has displayed a remarkable degree of maturity in his social behaviour, in avoiding participation in some of the 'anti-social' behaviour that has occurred recently involving other young residents.

Education

William has been in a small composite class at Auchterhouse Primary School since March 2001. He is now in P7. He is well integrated into the life of the school and is popular with his teachers and peers. The staff have only ever reported minor incidents involving William and does not regard these as of great significance. They feel well able to manage William within the school environment. There is good communication between Strathcarron YPU staff and staff at the school.

The school has taken a proactive and pragmatic approach to William's slow educational development and has produced an IEP for the academic year which focuses on his

Child's Name: William Tarbett

mathematical and language/conceptual development. William continues to have Learning Support, provided by his teacher. There is a slow but continuous improvement in his achievement in all basic areas.

The Social Work Department is making every effort to keep William at Auchterhouse Primary until the end of the summer term, in order to maintain some continuity for him. William also wishes to remain at the school, where he feels safe and has a number of friends.

William has a place at Monifieth High School in August 2003, where it is planned that he will initially be placed in a small unit and receive learning support to assist his integration into the school. William will be able to take up this place if he remains at Strathcarron YPU, but in view of the uncertainty of his current situation this cannot be guaranteed if he is offered a long-term foster placement.

Health and Physical Development

William is a sturdy boy who enjoys good general physical health. He is rarely ill. He has an excellent appetite. He sees the dentist at regular intervals and, while he has no general dental problems he is waiting for orthodontic treatment to correct the growth of his secondary teeth.

As previously noted, William has a specific motor-visual deficit (dyspraxia). In general this does not interfere with his normal functioning, although there are days when he can tire easily and his motor skills and concentration deteriorate. Sensitive support of his condition at home and school during the last three years has minimized the impact on his development.

Birth Family

Current Circumstances

There have been some major changes in birth family circumstances over the past year which have impacted on William's level of contact with birth family members and his relationships with them.

In May 2002 Ms Robertson's partner, the father of [REDACTED] died suddenly. Ms Robertson became increasingly depressed and unable to cope with the care of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Although she moved back to Dundee from Perth to live with her mother, who provides some support, Ms Robertson was unable to use the support offered to her by the Social Work Department over the ensuing months. On 7th January 2003 [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were placed on the Child Protection Register under the category of Neglect-At Risk.

The writer has made continuous efforts to meet with Ms Robertson and to keep her informed of William's changing circumstances. However, Ms Robertson has made no effort to communicate with the writer, attend meetings, Reviews or Hearings over the last year, and has also ceased her contact with William. The writer was recently advised by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] social worker that Ms Robertson has moved into her own property at 7C Court Street, Dundee.

Mr Tarbett continues to live in Dundee and has regular contact with Ms Robertson. Nothing is known of his personal circumstance. Neither parent has attended William's LAC Reviews

Child's Name: William Tarbett

during the year. In October 2002 Mr Tarbett lost his appeal to acquire some Parental Responsibilities in respect of [REDACTED] William and [REDACTED]

Birth Family Contact

Parental contact was amended at the Children's Hearing of 1st April 1998 to take into account the conclusions of the report prepared by *Children 1st*, which recommended that all parental contact should be on an individual parent/child basis, once a month, supervised by the Social Work Department.

During 2001 monthly individual contact between William and his parents was regularly maintained and settled into a routine which William was happy with. Each contact was for one hour, supervised by Mrs Petrie, who has known the family for many years. Previously, Mr Tarbett's unreliability in attending contact had been a source of great anxiety and upset for William.

During 2002 and to date Mr Tarbett has become fairly reliable in attending contact, and, although the quality is very limited, he is now more attentive to William's needs and wishes.

Until May 2002 Ms Robertson's attendance at contact was very reliable. However, following the death of her partner became increasingly erratic in her attendance for contact with William, Michael and Linda and has managed only three contacts with William since July 2002, the last being in October 2002. Linda Robertson's poor contact record has been discussed with William, with a view to requesting a variation in the supervision requirement. William is uncertain whether to pursue this or not.

William has also had contact during most school holidays with his siblings [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] living in Perthshire and Fife respectively. As [REDACTED] increasingly makes a separate family life for herself the contact between her and William is superficial in quality, but important to the maintenance of family contact, which William values. Ensuring contact between William and [REDACTED] has proved problematic because of the numerous commitments of [REDACTED] and his carers. While William is extremely keen to maintain contact with Michael, it is unclear how [REDACTED] feels. This is being pursued.

Birth Family Relationships and Quality of contact

William's relationship with his father remains ambivalent and superficial. During contact very little meaningful communication or interaction is observed between them. Nevertheless, William looks forward to these meetings and is much less anxious now that his father's reliability has increased. William is strongly aware of his birth family identity.

William had an affectionate, easygoing relationship with his mother, which was reciprocated by her. In recent months this has turned to frustration and anger as he has become aware of her inability to focus on his needs at all, having failed to attend contacts sessions, reviews and meetings. William is strongly aware of his mother's preoccupations elsewhere and has been kept up-to-date by his social worker. He identifies strongly with her two young children as his siblings.

The most important relationship in William's birth family is with his brother [REDACTED] as noted above.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

Lifestory work with William has been pursued during 2002/3. He generally finds this enjoyable and interesting and has been increasingly curious to know about his family history and his parent's life circumstances. He takes great pride in the information he has and the size of his family. He is very non-judgemental about events. However, some of the work, particularly during February/March 2002, was quite traumatic for him, and has possibly contributed to the general difficulties he has experienced during the year.

Family Background

Mr Tarbett has five adult children by a previous marriage. The relationship ended in 1979 and the children were received into care. In February 1983 Parental rights were assumed in respect of all five children.

Ms Robertson and her older brother were received into care when she was 18 months old. Her parents had separated and both had been convicted of neglect. She spent all her childhood years in the care of the local authority apart from a two year period, 1980 -1982, when she returned to her mother's care. She has many negative memories from this time, having lived in nine different placements including foster homes and residential units.

Mr Tarbett and Ms Robertson met and began their relationship when he was 39 and she was 17. Ms Robertson and Mr Tarbett set up home in Whitfield shortly after they met. Ms Robertson became pregnant [REDACTED]

William's brother [REDACTED] was born in 1988 and his sister [REDACTED] in 1989. William was born in 1991 and a half-brother, [REDACTED] by a different father, in 1992.

Following [REDACTED] birth it would appear that the parental relationship deteriorated quickly. It continued to be problematic, with numerous separations and reconciliations. When together, the relationship was reported as acrimonious, with many arguments, fights and incidents of physical violence. Both parties were described as strong willed and unwilling to back down. The children were present during many of their parents' arguments and witnessed physical violence between them. Against this background the children received poor, often neglectful, parental care.

William, [REDACTED] were received into the care of the Social Work Department in September 1994 as a direct consequence of the conflictual parental relationship and its impact on their care and subsequent behaviour.

Since their separation Ms Robertson has maintained that she does not intend to renew her relationship with Mr Tarbett. Nevertheless, it would appear that Ms Robertson maintains almost daily communication with Mr Tarbett. Ms Robertson does not talk about this with the children unless they raise it.

Mr Tarbett has seemed to the Social Work Department to remain quite preoccupied by the ending of his relationship with Ms Robertson. For many years he raised concerns and allegations regarding Ms Robertson's behaviour on a regular basis. This subsided between 2000 - 2002 but has again become a major feature of Mr Tarbett's communication with the Department. It is Mr Tarbett's view, as expressed to previous social workers, that the children's mother does not love them, because she has not fought to have them returned to

Child's Name: William Tarbett

her care as he has, and that she is now neglecting to maintain contact with them.

Circumstances Leading to Compulsory Measures of Care for William and his siblings

(Compiled 1998 by Mr Robin Duncan, Senior Social Worker, from the children's social work files)

There has been regular and more or less continuous Social Work department contact with [REDACTED] and William throughout their lives.

The children were received into care for the first time on 21st January 1994 ([REDACTED] then aged 5 years 7 months, [REDACTED] 4 years 10 months and William 2 years 4 months.) Ms Robertson had left the family home and Mr Tarbett felt unable to care for the children. The children came into care for the second time on 22nd September 1994 after the Children's Hearing made a Place of Safety Order. They have remained in care ever since. The principle areas of concern, leading to proceedings and their reception into care were:

a) Parents' acrimonious relationship and their willingness to involve the children in this conflict

Both Ms Robertson and Mr Tarbett made numerous allegations to the Social Work department about each other and about each other's care of the children. These included:-

- That Ms Robertson [REDACTED]
- That Mr Tarbett had assaulted her.
- Allegations from both parents against the other of physical abuse of the children/ inappropriate care of the children/ being drunk while in charge of the children.

Many of these allegations were made in front of the children. Workers noted that neither parent made any attempt to keep the children separate from their relationship difficulties.

Mr Tarbett frequently directly involved the children in his disputes with Ms Robertson, for example:-

- Telling the children that their mum's "away with a Paki" or that she doesn't love them.
- On another occasion he left the three children at the Social work department in Whitfield saying it was Ms Robertson's turn to care for them.
- On one occasion, when they were living separately, Mr Tarbett took [REDACTED] to sit outside Ms Robertson's flat in the car even though [REDACTED] had had nine teeth extracted under general anaesthetic only two hours previously.

Following their more serious disputes Mr Tarbett and Ms Robertson frequently separated in the early years of [REDACTED] life. This normally meant that Ms Robertson would leave and

Child's Name: William Tarbett

████████ would stay with Mr Tarbett. From the time ██████████ was three years old, the separations more often involved him and his brother and sister leaving with Ms Robertson. The Social Work department may not have known about all the separations that took place, but there are 26 such changes in living situation recorded for ██████████ prior to the first reception into care. Again these changes frequently happened in a way that was highly unsettling for the children.

- On one occasion when ██████████ was living with Ms Robertson, Mr Tarbett removed him from the Social Work assistant who was taking him to the child and family centre
- On another occasion when Ms Robertson had been granted interim custody of ██████████ and William, Mr Tarbett forced entry into Ms Robertson's flat and removed the children. On this occasion the interim custody had not been properly served so they could not be returned to their mother.
- On a further occasion Ms Robertson and the three children were required to leave the Women's aid shelter where they were staying after Ms Robertson had assaulted another resident.

Ms Robertson frequently said she wanted to finish the relationship once and for all, but found it hard to manage as a parent by herself. Mr Tarbett also constantly sought to undermine her ability to cope on her own. As a result there was a long-standing pattern that even after bitter separations, they were reconciled.

b) Concerns over lack of appropriate supervision

When the children were in the care of Mr Tarbett or Ms Robertson, whether jointly or separately, there were periodic concerns about the level of supervision they received.

- While living with Mr Tarbett, ██████████ was seen a number of times unsupervised in the Hilltown.
- On one occasion ██████████ were picked up by the police in the Wellgate Centre having stolen pot plants. They were then aged 5 and 3.
- On another occasion ██████████ arrived at Lilybank Family Centre nearly two miles from home, alone, on his scooter. Mr Tarbett's response was that if he could make it to the centre alone he could get himself back.
- While living with Ms Robertson there were reports from neighbours that the three children were playing outside completely unsupervised. On one occasion they were found outside at night having opened the unlocked front door of the flat themselves.

Ms Robertson acknowledged that she sometimes felt unable to provide close enough supervision for the children, but argued that when living with Mr Tarbett he undermined her attempts to impose appropriate controls. Mr Tarbett took the view that since he was catering adequately for their physical needs, there was nothing wrong with the way he was caring for the children.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

c) Concerns over lack of appropriate boundaries to the children's behaviour

Linked to the concerns about inadequate supervision were worries about the children's behaviour and the fact that Mr Tarbett and Ms Robertson appeared unable or unwilling to impose appropriate controls. The children were observed to be aggressive towards one and other and to behave in an inappropriately sexualised manner (see below). Both Mr Tarbett and Ms Robertson had difficulty controlling the children. In addition to finding it hard to manage the children's behaviour, they also presented, through their own actions some very unhelpful examples.

- The children frequently witnessed violence between their parents, between adults and children and with people outwith the household.
- On one occasion the children watched from the car as Mr Tarbett got out and assaulted [REDACTED] father of Ms Robertson's youngest child.

Both parents' use of alcohol affected their ability to relate appropriately to the children at different times.

- On one occasion Mr Tarbett returned after drinking to find that [REDACTED] had wet the bed and hit him in the face (see child protection investigations below).
- On another occasion, Linda Robertson was found to be drunk while the children played unsupervised outside.

While Ms Robertson was caring for the children, she was noted on a number of occasions to be very depressed, emotionally flat and unresponsive to the children's needs.

The children's understanding of what was acceptable behaviour was moulded to a significant extent by the example they were being set.

d) Children's sexualised behaviour and language

When [REDACTED] was four years old concerns were expressed about his sexualised language and behaviour by staff at the Child and Family Centre. There were related concerns about [REDACTED] amid allegations by Mr Tarbett [REDACTED]. These were the first of persisting concerns in relation to the fact that all three children clearly had knowledge of sex and sexual language quite inappropriate for their age. The concerns persisted when the children were in foster care and were noted when Michael started school.

- [REDACTED] was found, for example, [REDACTED]
- The children would speak about specific sexual acts.

A referral to Polepark family counselling centre was made in May 1993 and again in December 1994. On the second occasion work was done with [REDACTED] and William. In relation to the sexualised behaviour, the workers concluded that it was unlikely that [REDACTED] had been sexually abused, but likely that he had witnessed sexual acts between adults.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

The allegations in relation to [REDACTED] were considered by a child protection case conference which, at that stage, could find no evidence to support them. Mr Tarbett continued to talk about the details of the allegations with the children present, despite being told that it was not appropriate for them to be involved in these discussions.

e) Children's aggressive behaviour

The social workers, health visitors and family centre workers involved with the children all commented from the earliest involvement with the family on the aggressive relationship between the children.

- The children were observed to hit, bite and kick each other while their parents were present.
- They fought and jumped over the furniture while their baby brother ([REDACTED]) was in the room.

This behaviour appeared to be accepted by the parents. Ms Robertson maintains that she tried to impose tighter controls, but that this was undermined by Mr Tarbett, who allowed the children more leeway. The aggressiveness between the siblings continued after they moved into foster care and was one of the main reasons why it proved so hard for them to stay together with the same carer.

f) Child Protection Investigations

In addition to the general and long-standing concerns about the parenting that the children were receiving, there were a number of specific incidents which were investigated more formally. Between December 1991 and September 1994 there were 15 observed incidents or allegations which led to enquiries, and 9 of these were followed up with a formal child protection investigation. The focus of these investigations was:-

- Dec 91 Mr Tarbett hit [REDACTED] in the face while he was asleep for wetting the bed. (Charges dropped by procurator fiscal but grounds found to be established by sheriff in relation to Children's Hearing).
- Jan 93 Ms Robertson hit [REDACTED] with a wellington boot. Found to be accidental.
- Feb 93 Ms Robertson alleged Mr Tarbett hit [REDACTED] with a yardstick and hose from a vacuum cleaner. Not pursued through lack of evidence.
- Mar 93 Investigation into [REDACTED]
- May 93 Allegation by Mr Tarbett [REDACTED]
- June 93 [REDACTED] nose was hurt when he was pulled off a table by Mr Tarbett. Accepted as accidental.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

- Aug 93 [REDACTED] alleged that Mr Tarbett threw him across the room - parents refused to give consent for a medical examination. All three children were placed on 'at risk register'; [REDACTED] on grounds of physical abuse (proven) and physical neglect (suspicious).
- Feb 94 [REDACTED] alleged that Mr Tarbett assaulted him. No further action.
- May 95 [REDACTED] and his sister were found playing in the Wellgate centre.

g) Mr Tarbett's unwillingness to work with agencies for benefit of the children.

Throughout the time of his involvement with the Department Mr Tarbett maintained that there had been nothing wrong with his parenting of the children. He was adamant that his children should be returned to his care and completely opposed to the Social Work Department's plans. Mr Tarbett's refusal to acknowledge any shortcomings made it virtually impossible to work with him to reduce the level of concerns or make a rehabilitation feasible. This has been a continuing problem in relation to planning for the children:

- When Mr Tarbett was granted interim custody of [REDACTED] in 1989 one of the conditions was that [REDACTED] care should be subject to the supervision of the Local Authority. The Social Work department had to take this back to the court because Mr Tarbett refused to meet with the supervising worker.
- The Children's Hearing in September 1994 which imposed a Place of Safety order on all the children, gave as one of its reasons, 'Mr Tarbett's point blank refusal to adhere to the conditions of the care order, to work with the Social Work Department or other support agencies.'

As well as refusing to work constructively with the Social Work department, Mr Tarbett consistently undermined attempts by Ms Robertson to care effectively for the children. He always sought to find out where she was staying, even where this meant tracking down the address and phone numbers of Women's Aid refuges. He would then harass her or try to influence her to return.

- Mr Tarbett phoned a Women's aid hostel where Ms Robertson was staying with her youngest child, at 2 am, sounding under the influence of alcohol, and put one of the other children on the phone.
- Workers at another Women's Aid hostel told Mr Tarbett that Ms Robertson was no longer there after receiving as many as 20 abusive phone calls in a day.

There was no evidence over this period that Mr Tarbett developed any insight into the children's emotional needs or the way his own behaviour could have a seriously detrimental affect on them.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

Reception into care

On 26th June 1992 [REDACTED] and William were received into care for a few hours while Ms Robertson was interviewed by the police. This followed an incident where Ms Robertson had assaulted another resident at the Women's Aid hostel where they were staying.

They were received into care for the second time on 21st January 1994. This followed a particularly acrimonious period in the relationship between Mr Tarbett and Ms Robertson. The events that led up to this reception into care were, briefly:-

On November 27th 1993 Ms Robertson left the house on her own at 3 am after an argument with Mr Tarbett and under the influence of alcohol. The following day she lodged a court action requesting the return of her son [REDACTED] to her care. She returned home on December 14th.

On December 17th Mr Tarbett alleged that Ms Robertson kicked [REDACTED]. Social workers who visited to investigate found no evidence. They were concerned that neither parent was present and the children were 'running amok'. Mr Tarbett's son, who was ostensibly in charge, was in the bath.

On December 26th Ms Robertson left the house at 4 am with [REDACTED]. She claimed that Mr Tarbett assaulted her two nights previously. Police returned the children to Mr Tarbett. Ms Robertson returned the next day.

On January 20th 1994 Ms Robertson left the home with [REDACTED].

On January 21st [REDACTED] and William were received into care on Mr Tarbett's request. Mr Tarbett stated that he was troubled with gout and unable to care for the three children on his own. Ms Robertson alleged that this was untrue.

[REDACTED] returned to the care of Mr Tarbett ten days later. [REDACTED] and William returned a week later.

The third reception into care, was eight months later on 22 September 1994. The events that led to this decision were, briefly:-

On September 2nd 1994 the children moved from Ms Robertson's care (in a Women's Aid hostel) to Mr Tarbett when Ms Robertson said she was no longer able to care for them. Staff at the hostel were also concerned that [REDACTED] behaviour was a danger to other children.

Mr Tarbett made it clear that he was not willing to co-operate with the requirements of the previous Children's Hearing order which specified that [REDACTED] were to attend at St Matthew's for an assessment of their behaviour and that the children should be allowed access with Ms Robertson. On September 21st Mr Tarbett threatened that he would bring the children to the Children's hearing and leave them there.

At the Children's Hearing on September 22nd a Place of Safety order taken by the Children's Hearing on [REDACTED] and William. The Hearing's reasons for this decision were:-

- Mr Tarbett's point blank refusal to work with the Social Work department or other support agencies.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

- Mr Tarbett's clear inability to exercise control over the children, thereby placing them at risk.
- Mr Tarbett's continuing denial of access to the children by Ms Robertson.

Mr Tarbett appealed the decision of the hearing, but the sheriff subsequently dismissed the appeal.

When the Place of Safety order expired, the Children's Hearing made a supervision order requiring the children to remain in foster care. The reasons the Hearing gave for this decision included:-

- The children's behaviour improved following reception into care.
- Mr Tarbett's refusal to co-operate with the supervision order and work with Social work department and other agencies.
- Ms Robertson's inability at this time to offer the children a home.
- Mr Tarbett's attitude to the care of the children, which the Hearing regarded as totally selfish and failing to meet their physical and emotional needs.

Rehabilitation

It was agreed that work needed to be done with both the parents and the children to consider whether rehabilitation was a feasible option. The rehabilitation assessment was organised in several parts and addressed the parents relationship, previous difficulties with the children and the parenting skills needed to meet the needs of the children. [REDACTED] and William were referred to Polepark Family counselling centre, for work in relation to their difficult and sexualised behaviour.

The assessment continued until February 1995 and included both individual and joint sessions with Mr Tarbett and Ms Robertson. At that stage a decision was taken to halt the assessment for the following reasons:

- Refusal by both parents to accept any responsibility for the children being received into care.
- Mr Tarbett's refusal to acknowledge that there had ever been a problem with the way he cared for the children or that he needed to change this in any way.
- No commitment from either Mr Tarbett or Ms Robertson to maintain their relationship in a way which would allow them to care jointly for the children.

The workers concluded that there was no merit in continuing to meet with Mr Tarbett and Ms Robertson as they remained completely unwilling to address the issues that had given rise to the children being received into care. All three children have remained Looked After since that date, with a recommendation that they should be placed with substitute families on a permanent basis. This was finally achieved for all three children in 2000.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

Child and Family's Views of Current Needs and Way Forward

William's wishes

William is increasingly understanding the reasons for being in the care of the Social Work Department and able to express his own views verbally and through drawings. He has actively participated in recent Reviews and Hearings, expressing his (at the time) satisfaction with his placement with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED], and his wish for continuing contact with both of his parents and his siblings.

William has stated in the past that he does not want to go and live with his family and he has not indicated any change in this respect when given the opportunity to discuss the issue. Nevertheless, William has a strong sense of family identity and his parents and siblings are important to him. He looks forward to contact with them and at the moment feels that his current level of contact would be right for him if adhered to by his parents.

Following his recent removal from Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] care, William has quite naturally expressed anxiety about the future, and his wish to be placed with another suitable family as soon as possible.

Parental wishes

William's mother has recently refused to engage in any communication with the Social Work Department regarding William's situation, so her current views and wishes are unknown. However, in the past Ms Robertson has consistently expressed the view that William should remain in the care of the Social Work Department.

Mr Tarbett was informed of William's situation at a meeting in January 2003, and has been kept informed of developments. He attended William's emergency Childrens Hearings in March and May 2003, and seems to accept that William's placement at Strathcarron YPU is in his best interests in the short term, and that the Department's plan is to find William a new long-term foster placement.

In the past, Mr Tarbett has never accepted the need for William to be Looked After, nor that he was other than a good parent to William. His insistence upon these points has been a constant feature of his relationship with the Social Work Department. Mr Tarbett has previously failed to attend regularly either Looked After Reviews or Children's Hearings in respect of William.

However, in the last two years there has been a significant change. Mr Tarbett appears to have accepted William's placement and no longer makes this a source of conflict. He has attended a few of William's LAC Review's (although not recently), engaged appropriately with his carer, and actively agreed the plans for William in placement.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

Social Work Department Plans

It remains the plan of the Department for William to continue in placement with a permanent substitute family, where he can have security into adulthood but maintain contact with his birth family as he wishes. Given William's age, there is no plan for adoption unless William should indicate that he wishes this to be considered.

As previously noted, the Department is seeking a suitable placement both within its own resources and from other agencies. The Department is currently unable to provide such a placement, and there is a dearth of placements nationally for young people of William's age and requirements. There is a possibility of a placement in the Dundee area later in the year through the Jane Moore Trust, who are currently assessing a number of applicants for approval as foster carers. The Department acknowledges that Strathcarron YPU is an inappropriate placement for William, where he has been exposed to a number of violent events and is under peer group pressure to participate in these. Nevertheless, until an appropriate placement is found, it is judged better for William to remain at Strathcarron YPU, where he is receiving excellent planned and individualised care from the staff, rather than bounce around numerous short-term foster placements.

The Department will ensure that William is able to continue his education at Auchterhouse Primary until the end of the summer term and that he then commences at Monifieth High School as planned unless he is placed elsewhere beforehand. Mr Tocher, who holds responsibility for the education of Looked After Children is assisting in this matter.

Conclusions and Recommendations

2002-3 has been a difficult year for William and much remains to be worked on and resolved, including a future permanent placement, therapeutic support to address William's emotional and behavioural needs, William's secondary education, and Ms Robertson's poor level of contact with William.

It is the view of the Social Work Department that it remains inappropriate for William to return to the care of either parent. He remains a child whose early experiences were poor, and who has clear needs which require close attention from a variety of agencies, including Education and Social Work.

William has no wish to return to the care of either parent at present.

Recommendations to the Children's Hearing

The writer would recommend to the children's hearing:

- Continuation of William's Supervision Order under Section 70 (Away from Home) with his named place of residence being Strathcarron Young Persons Unit, Dundee.

Child's Name: William Tarbett

- Continuation of birth parent contact on the same basis: one hour every four weeks with each parent individually, supervised by the Social Work Department, unless and until William wishes to cease ongoing contact with either parent.
- Provision of respite care if required with named carers: Mr and Mrs [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Ingrid von Arnim
Social Worker
Permanence Team

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