

POSITIVE VETTING

Protecting the Vulnerable - Positive Vetting for Social Care

Faircheck is a new company, launched in May 1995, which provides a positive vetting service designed to assess the suitability of those who seek to work with or care for children, elderly people, or any other vulnerable group.

The Warner Committee report, *Choosing with Care*, which followed the Frank Beck Inquiry in 1992, stated:

"It is clear from the evidence available that not enough attention has been given to recruitment, selection and appointment of staff. Too often there is a lack of probing into people's previous employment records. Sometimes there is even a failure to check whether staff have a criminal record before they are allowed unsupervised access to children.

Insufficient attention has been given to whether people have the personality or aptitude to cope with the difficult circumstances - and sometimes temptations - of life in a children's home. There is poor matching between the requirements of the job and the personality of the person recruited.

There is an urgent need for a more systematic and rigorous approach to the recruitment, selection and appointment of staff."

Faircheck, a private company, aims to meet that need. Its Managing Director is Michael Hames, former head of Scotland Yard's Obscene Publications Branch. Amongst its consultants are Dr Arnon Bentovim, Child and Family Psychiatrist, Dr Gisli Gudjonsson,



London Guildhall University

Reader in Forensic Psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry, Dr Barbara Kahan, independent child care consultant, Dr Eileen Vizard, Consultant Child and Adult Psychiatrist at the Tavistock Clinic, Sir Peter Imbert QPM, and Richard White, Solicitor.

According to Rachel Downey writing in *Community Care* (4-10 May 1995) the service is 'exactly what the social care world has been calling for.' As she points out, 'the majority of convicted child sex abusers would fail to show up on the police computer as they had no previous criminal record.' Faircheck does not have access to criminal records. It works by subjecting applicants for care posts (who have to agree in writing to the procedure first) to psychometric testing, personality tests, checks and interviews. The

applicant will receive a copy of the final report - except where referees have requested that their comments be withheld.

How much will it cost? Faircheck's literature is evasive on this point, but stresses instead the untold costs of failure to undertake a sufficiently rigorous examination of those whom we entrust with the care of some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Faircheck proposes to donate a proportion of its profits to charities which support victims of abuse.

For more information about Faircheck, phone 0181 390 0999.

W.I.S.E.

Women working with Women In Secure Environments

We are a recently formed group of women committed to establishing a forum for women working with women in forensic settings. Our intention is to promote empowerment, personal responsibility and choice for women.

Our aims are:

1. To develop good practice in our work with women
2. To provide mutual support
3. To establish a communications network.

A series of workshops is currently being planned. For details about these, or W.I.S.E., contact Lucinda Bolger at HMP Risley (01925 763871 x227); Helen Liebling at Ashworth Hospital (0151 472 4581) or Caroline Schofield (01924 848307 x234).