

Press Release

PR/238/85

October 25 1985

Concern over police abuse of powers

Evidence has come to light which suggest that juveniles held in police custody and questioned following the riot in Broadwater Farm might have been denied their civil rights.

Haringey Council's Social Services Department has compiled a report which shows that-

- *Some youths were held for a total of five days before being charged or released


- *Some were denied access to a social worker or other adult acting in their interests while they were being questioned

- *Some had their clothes taken away for forensic tests and were only provided with paper clothes and no shoes in the meantime

- *At least one of the youths involved was only twelve years old.

The evidence has given rise to very serious concern in the Council over the methods of the police. This has strained the relations between the Social Services and the police- so much so that it is now the Council's policy that social workers should not be the sole responsible adult present at interviews but that a solicitor should always be present as well.

Councillor Toby Harris, Chair of the Council's Social Services Committee, said: "We obviously don't want to obstruct the police in their enquiries, but we are very disturbed about the way in which our juvenile clients were treated in police custody. The behaviour of the police since the riot, their methods in handling juveniles and their attitude towards

 PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: JOHN WALKER 01-881 3000 Ext. 3844 more....

our social workers all give rise to very serious concern. We have simply tried to ensure that the welfare of our clients is being looked after while they are in police custody but the police have been obstructive and unhelpful to us. The result is a very troubled relationship which is going to take a long long time to rectify."

"I do not believe that it is acceptable for boys of this age to be held without access to family or professional advice for such long periods. We will want to discuss details of the report with the police and will certainly want these issues to be looked at in a public inquiry into the Tottenham riots."

Ends

Note to Editors: A copy of the report is attached.