

### Case Notes.

This is a report of a child's transfer to a foster home, and it is told with honesty and caring by the workers involved. As the authors themselves identify, the natural mother's involvement, along with that of her worker, is missing from the report. The authors note that a number of workers were involved, and imply that cooperation and coordination was extremely difficult if not impossible. Although in this situation the lack of

discussion with the natural mother does not appear to have had an adverse effect on the successful resolution, it must create uneasiness and concern.

In respect to the approach with the child, the case discussion provides a description of the difficult step of transferring a child to a foster home, in a way that encourages bonding of the child and family. The difficulty of helping the child and the worker to express their feelings is acknowledged.

# Leo's



This is a description of the transfer into foster care of a little boy who had lived most of his life in an Institutional Nursery. Leo was 3 years and 2 weeks old at the start of the transfer process. (Leo had lived in the Nursery since he was 10 weeks old — excepting for a period of 4 months when he was 13-17 months old. During the time that he was home released, he was frequently returned for weekends and weekly periods, as relief for his mother. Ultimately, this home release was unsuccessful and he was returned to the Nursery.) Mother has visited either once or twice weekly since then.

The aim of this story is to describe how the transfer happened — and to point out the events that seemed to be important for Leo in adjusting to this transfer.

Section 1: The story of how the transfer happened.

Section 2: Mary's notes.

Section 3: Significant points.

## SECTION 1: HOW THE TRANSFER HAPPENED

### A DESCRIPTION OF LEO:

Leo is a very well functioning 3 year old. He is a very verbal child, who seems to understand all that is said within his hearing (or, at least, he gets the idea when he doesn't fully understand). Leo is an intelligent boy who has developed many verbal concepts, e.g. he understands time, to some extent, he knows before and after, tomorrow, another day, either, both etc. He can tell a story of what happened yesterday, or the story of what happened on the day that a photo was taken. He can answer questions, and hold a conversation.

Leo is a sensitive and aware child. He had developed a strong attachment to

the Child Care Officer (Mary) who had looked after him for most of these 3 years. He trusts her, and it is this trust which is so important to transfer to the Foster Mother, Eliza. Another important person in Leo's life is a person who often comes to play with Leo, and who organizes play activities and outings. She, Clare, had known Leo all the time he had been in the Nursery also. Sister Burn is the Sister in Charge of the Nursery, who supported the staff and discussed the plans during the transfer.

There is a fourth person who contributed to the preparation of the plans for Leo. Colleen, another Child Care Officer, is very experienced, and knows Leo well, and the debt to her is acknowledged for teaching us all so much.

### ELIZA (FOSTER MOTHER) VISITING LEO AT THE NURSERY:

**Mon. 19/5** Mary told Leo that a very special visitor, Eliza, was coming to see him. He was *not* told that he would be going to live with her. This was because he was so attached to Mary, and he could "worry". Also, it seemed that he had no understanding of what this meant, as he had no memory of his home release as a 13 month old baby.

**Thur. 22/5** Eliza came to visit, and to help care for Leo. Leo was happy to go for a short walk in the grounds with Eliza, to have a slide and play.

**Sat. 24/5** Eliza brought her family to meet Leo (husband and 2 older girls). Leo was a little uneasy, and very quiet. He sought Eliza's hand to hold, as security.

Leo commented to staff after the visit — "I didn't talk much".

**Mon. 26/5** Eliza visited Leo, helped to care for him and took him out for a slide.

# Transfer

Angela Lundberg  
(Occupational  
Therapist)

Judy Rhodes (Sister in  
Charge)

Helen Rogers (Child  
Care Officer)

**Thur. 29/5** Same as Monday, 26th May.

**Sat.31/5** Sister Burn asked Eliza to increase the frequency of her visits, as Leo seemed not to be forming an attachment. She agreed to this. At the same time, Eliza was given a few pages of notes that Mary had prepared on Leo's routine and what he liked and disliked, and how she (Mary) handled Leo.

At this stage it was most important to get across to Eliza that the staff had confidence in her, but that Leo was an apprehensive child if he was uncertain about events and people. And, Mary did not want to sound as if the notes were saying "I do it like this", and/or "Leo is like this with me!" with any tone of rivalry with Eliza. The aim was to give Eliza some clues about what worked for those who have known him. Eliza wanted to take the notes home to show her family.

The notes are attached — see Section 2.

**Sat.31/5** On this day Leo was more testing of Eliza.

She felt that things were getting pretty difficult. Subsequently, it seemed that, in Leo's eyes at least, this was the culmination of his "testing" Eliza.

Things got much better from this time on. Eliza had passed Leo's test, obviously.

**Mon.2/6 to Fri. 6/6** Eliza came 4 days during this week, and spent more and more time with Leo. Things were pretty draining for Eliza — so many events, and so many people, and such a different routine and environment.

**Fri. 6/6 Outing to the Fire Station:**

This outing had been arranged for all the children in Leo's area. He knew about it and everybody was talking about it. So it was decided that Eliza should be asked to join, too. This she did.

Leo and Eliza joined in with the general tour to see the hoses and the ladders etc. By chance, another child turned on the siren — a very loud noise. Leo was frightened — he needed Mary to comfort him, reassure him and resettle him with Eliza. This was a good opportunity to show Eliza what Mary meant in her notes — and also to see the pattern that sometimes happens to Leo i.e. that he is happy with an event but will then need reassurance (quite reasonably, on this occasion). Sometimes there seems to be no reason for his change in level of confidence, and he needs reassurance to go on.

We then went to the Park for a swing and a run. Leo was happy, and Eliza relaxed and all the adults and children were happily interacting and laughing. Leo seemed aware of this.

On returning to the bus, Leo said "This is Eliza's seat, next to Leo". This was his first direct and open comment of what Eliza meant to him. There was lots of talk between them, as they saw things and pointed out things they'd seen together, on previous walks. Eliza left after this outing, having put Leo to bed quite successfully.

That afternoon — Mary took Leo to the Park — these were her comments in a note to Clare after that.

Today while at the Park with the three kids, we could see the mountains in the distance. I commented "Eliza's house is up there on that hill".

Leo's comments and my comments are as follows:—  
(intermingled with general conversation)

**Leo**  
"That's a special house for Leo"

**Me**  
"Yes that's right."

**Leo**  
"Did you see that house?"

**Me**  
"I'm going to see that house."

**Leo**  
"Do you like that house?"

**Me**  
"Yes, I do, it's beautiful, beautiful."

(10 minute gap)

**Leo**  
"Eliza loves Leo."

**Me**  
"Yes she does very much."

**Leo**  
"I'm not going yet."

**Me**  
"No not yet."

**Mary's comments and further plans:**

I'd like to tell Leo on Monday morning "That we're going to see Eliza's beautiful house, in the car and we're coming home for tea". If that seems O.K. with you.

Also if it's O.K. with you, that we don't mention anything to Leo about his comments (as above). I think him just saying these few things is all that is needed for now.

I think he is ready for a visit e.g. "Did you see that house?". He's curious (so to speak) followed by "Do you like that house?" (approval).

I'm really happy about these comments. I thought you'd like to know.

I think he knows that he is going to live there even though I haven't said anything specific to this point.

**Sat. 7/6** Eliza and family came to visit Leo. A very happy visit, Leo becoming more confident.

**Mon. 9/6** As planned, Mary told Leo that he was going to Eliza's place for a visit, and coming back for tea in West Wing. Clare drove Mary and Leo in Ruth's car. Leo was very excited, but quiet. Mary talked about all the interesting things we were passing, and how we had been this way before.

Eliza's house is near the hills, and Mary talked of this often — saying "Can you see those hills — we are getting closer" etc. When we arrived, Leo was keen and very excited, but still a little reluctant.

When we got inside, Eliza had gathered a box of toys for Leo to play with — including many of his favourites — cars, trains etc. Eliza and Mary and Clare chatted for while, including lots of references to the beautiful house. Eliza gave Mary and Clare a cup of tea, and they continued to talk and laugh. Leo played about, and listened, Eliza showed

Leo around the house, showing him the beds, and the bathroom and the kitchen etc.

Mary told Leo that Clare and Mary were leaving soon. Mary did this by saying "Leo, Clare and Mary have to take Ruth's car back to her. We will be going, in a few minutes". Mary took off her apron, and put it with Leo's change of clothes, telling Leo that this was for him to bring back in Eliza's car at tea time. Mary also put her purse with the apron, jokingly telling Eliza that this was all the money that she had till Friday. Leo saw this interaction.

A few minutes passed, and Leo put down the car that he was playing with, (Eliza, Mary and Clare all thought that he had misunderstood and wanted to go with Mary and Clare) but he then went on to play with something else. Eliza, Mary and Clare all laughed, as we all realized that we had thought the same thing. (Mary and Clare were reassured that Eliza was aware of Leo's feelings). Then Mary and Clare left, Leo continued playing happily.

Leo returned at tea time. He was very happy, he had had a rest on his bed at Eliza's and had eaten lunch. He was very excited and 'high'.

**Tues. 10/6** Eliza plays tennis, so Leo was not visiting Eliza's house this day. Staff commented on how Leo's face had become so much more relaxed, and he was so much quicker to smile.

**Wed. 11/6** Mary organized to come to work on her day off, in her uniform. This was to provide consistency for Leo. Leo was brought out of West Wing by Janette (Child Care Officer) to meet Mary. Leo is confused. Mary and Clare and Leo commence the trip to Eliza's. Leo is quiet and evasive, and during a petrol stop when Clare is out of the car, Leo says to Mary "Janette (C.C.O.) is here today!", showing that he was confused that Mary did not come for breakfast time and get him up at the usual time.

Mary explained that she wanted to take Leo to Eliza's house again, and that this was 'special' like Monday — just Mary and Clare and Leo. Leo immediately relaxed, became more talkative, and excited and was not reluctant when arriving at Eliza's.

Leo immediately went off to play in the bedroom at Eliza's house, whilst Mary and Clare talked and laughed and had morning tea. Mary especially goes to ask Leo to show her where he had had a rest on Monday.

Leo was to return at 2.00 p.m., as it was visiting day and Leo's mother would be visiting him.

Mary and Clare left. Leo was again quite happy, and had a good sleep. 2.00 p.m. Eliza returns Leo — meanwhile, Leo's mother had come a little early, and they passed her in the corridor. Leo ignores his mother, and she became quite angry. Leo is confused, and wanted to go home with Eliza again. Clare picks him up, and after a cuddle and a little stroll, Leo comes out of his 'ank and non-relating state, saying "Where's mummy?"

So, Clare and Leo went to find her, and the visit went quite well, even though Leo was quieter than usual.

Clare and Mary and Sister Burn decided that Leo would be ready to transfer to Eliza's on Fri — so a number of other plans had to be settled with Eliza. Leo was to be outfitted with clothes on Thursday, so he would need to return at 3.00 pm. And, as it was decided that he was to be transferred on Friday Mary and Clare thought it best to tell Leo that he was going to Eliza's to live, on Thursday, morning. This was to give his time to work it through — so Eliza was told this on Wednesday so that she was in the picture too. On discussion, it was realised that part of Mary's plan was to tell Leo reaccess visits from his mother — and these plans were not known.

**Thur. 12/6** Mary, Clare and Sister Burn had planned that Mary would tell Leo that he would be going on Friday, to live at Eliza's house, on Thursday a.m. at breakfast time. This would allow time to work it through, then *visit* Eliza's house as usual. He could be reassured by the usual process (i.e. have Mary's apron to return) and be doubly reassured that when Mary says something, it always happens. So this would apply to both returning today and that he goes to live with Eliza on Friday — (and not with Mary any more).

Due to a major organizational problem on the part of the parties involved with Leo's mother — and due to the split in responsibilities between people who are geographically separated, a major problem arose.

In this case there was a foster care worker, a regional worker, an institutional worker — apart from the staff working with the child. The problem arose that it was realized by the staff who cared for Leo, that his mother was not aware that he was being placed very soon. She was aware that foster care was arranged, and that the transfer process had started. And, she had met the foster mother and visited her house. But it was not possible ethically, to place the child



before the mother was advised (apart from all the issues that she may need to talk about).

The problem for the staff looking after Leo was that he would need to know if, and when, he was to see his mother — and where. Mary wanted to know this so that she could tell him definitely to round off the whole issue for him. Leo's care staff were also concerned that he be given a chance to settle with Eliza for a couple of weeks without his mother visiting. This meant that mother had to agree to this, and to know not to come and see him on the following Sunday, at the institution.

It came to pass that he could not be told on the Thursday morning — and the possibility arose that he could not be transferred on the Friday (because his mother didn't know, and because he may not have had time to work through in 3 hours after being told that he was leaving Mary the next morning).

After much intense discussion it was still uncertain — as the parties involved were all uncontactable. So Leo was not told — and the trip to Eliza's went as usual. Mary and Clare and Leo drove to Eliza's. Leo was very relaxed and happy.

He had a long sleep at Eliza's and when they returned at 3.00 pm. he was to be outfitted with all his new clothes. By this time a decision had been made — that if he was ready emotionally for the move — then he should be transferred to live with Eliza. So, he could be told. An extra staff was made available to take Mary's place with her group of children, and she took Leo to tell him. Eliza was to wait and then they'd all go and select the clothes. It was felt best that Eliza be involved in the selecting of clothes.

So Mary took Leo to a small room and tole him, as follows:

"Eliza's house that's a special house for Leo. With Eliza and Jack and Gay and Pat (foster family) and Leo. Eliza loves you very much and Jack and the girls love Leo too. You're going to Eliza's house again tomorrow, and going to sleep at Eliza's house after your bath, after supper, sleeping at Eliza's house, in that lovely bed".

"That's a special house all for Leo. Eliza is especially all for Leo. Eliza is lovely, her house is beautiful. You're going to live at Eliza's house, not in West Wing any more".

"I'm sorry that you're going. I'll miss you and I'll be thinking about Leo. But I have to look after the other kids in West Wing. Mary has to look after them. Eliza's house that's a special house all for Leo. Beautiful, beautiful house. I'm pleased for Leo. Everything's O.K. I promise".

\* (On the following two points Leo maintained direct eye contact:

"I'll miss you".

"I have to stay and look after the other kids in West Wing").

He was blank and continually changed the subject and didn't talk about the issue at all. He seemed to hear it, but did not react yet. Mary left her notes in this room.

Then Mary and Leo collected Eliza and went off to select the clothes — Mary carrying a rather blank and confused, but not overwhelmed Leo. He clung to Mary throughout this activity. It lasted ¼ hour. He said very little. They all returned, and Mary was still carrying Leo — he gave Eliza a kiss and she went home.

Mary and Leo went to have tea. As was usually the case, Mary brought up the topic, and continued to talk about it, whenever Leo showed that he could cope with more reinforcement. Mary often talked to Leo about important things, or plans for new events. She would return to the topic many times over the space of a day, or days. This was to enable him to fully grasp the idea,

and/or to reassure him that it would be fun. After tea, Clare joined the activities. Mary planned that Leo and Mary would put all his belongings (toys, paintings, presents, etc.) in a big box — to take to Eliza's. Clare was to help, and join with Leo's best friend (another 3 year old boy). Leo put the box on the floor — and *slowly* Mary started to collect all the toys and books etc. that belonged to Leo. She passed them to him, he put the first 3 or 4 on the floor beside the box. Mary was continually saying like — "This is Leo's bike from his mummy and he's taking it to ride at Eliza's beautiful house". "Put it in that box". "Oh, here's your book" etc. etc. — He gathered all his things — and they all went into the box. After about 10 minutes he was very happy and started clapping his hands, saying "I'm excited." "Goody goody".

After a while, a toy telephone appeared — he rang up on it saying "Hello, Eliza, I'm getting my toys, I'm coming to your house, in the morning, — and my coat — and my paintings — and my teddy and my book — I'm coming in your green car".

He also rang to speak to Eliza's two children — he told them a similar story.

Another important incident during this hour was over the papers that Mary had left in the playroom after she'd told Leo that he was going to live with Eliza. These notes contained all the important issues that Mary wanted to tell Leo.

Mary said to Clare that she was going to get those papers that she'd left behind. Leo was playing about, heard, and asked Clare where is Mary going. Clare said "To get those papers".

In a few moments Mary returned — and Leo asked "Where are those papers?" and Mary said "In my pocket". With that, she took them from her pocket, and threw them in the cupboard and said "I don't need them any more, I've told Leo everything". He laughed uproariously.

Our interpretation of this is that he knew that the papers held significant information. He thought that Mary might have more to tell him. But she realized this, and immediately reassured him that there was nothing else (by throwing the notes in the cupboard). He laughed, it seems, because he was happy and eager about what she had told him, and he was relieved that this was all. He could cope with this.

Another important incident during the toy gathering was when Mary gave Leo one of her aprons. She said that Leo could have her apron to take to Eliza's

and that Mary would collect it when she came to visit. This would be in many days, but that she would come.

As she started to fold it up and put it in the box — Leo said "No, no, it's Mary's apron, it's all right". So she said "O.K." as she retied it on again — he changed his mind saying "Please, I will have it". So Mary put it in the box.

He went to bed quite happily, and his friend (another 3 year old boy) was crying. He said "Why is Kenny crying?" Mary said "Oh I think because Leo is going to live with Eliza, and Kenny is staying here". Leo said "Oh, that's right" and went to sleep.

That night Clare rang Eliza to tell her that Leo was much more positive about the transfer than he had seemed when she had left. Eliza was most appreciative and relieved.

(One omission was that we didn't give Eliza a copy of Mary's notes to tell her what Leo had been told. It may have been wiser if this had been done, as Eliza could then back Mary up, when and if Leo asked where Mary was.)

**Fri. 13/6** Next morning Mary went to collect Leo. Again this was Mary's day off, but he was not so confused. His immediate question was "Where's Clare?" as she taken him every day to Eliza's. Clare appeared in a few moments.

Then Leo went to get some of his new clothes, and then returned to give his friends a kiss, goodbye. He collected his box of toys and Mary and Clare and Leo proceeded to go through the box again. He selected a few toys that are important to him — his teddy, his double decker bus, his Police car, and the book, that contained his photos and about him as a baby. He wanted all these in a little carry bag that he owned. All the others went back into the box.

Soon, Eliza arrived and we carried all the boxes to the car, and put the carry bag next to Leo. He climbed in to see Eliza's new car seat, and sat in it. He gave Mary and Clare a kiss — and said "Is Mary coming?" She said "No, not this time — but soon, to visit". He didn't say, "no, no" — he just looked. He looked peaceful, but sad, and also expectant. We were glad that he had a few moments at the final break to show both emotions. Over the previous 18 hours that he had known he was leaving, he had shown sadness and ambivalence and joy. We had worked hard to maintain his trust in Mary and transfer this to Eliza. We felt that we had succeeded.

(It is a routine, to always make a book for the children when they leave the Nursery. This book contains

developmental milestones, photographs, and anecdotes about the child, and memorable events. Without exception, the children treasure these books, especially those who are over 18 months old. Often, these books are made available (in childproof form) to the children, before the transfer process begins.)

## SECTION 2

### ABOUT LEO:

The ROUTINE has been :—

**Breakfast:** Approx. 7.30 a.m.

2 cups of milk, weet-bix, yoghurt, and toast with vegemite or peanut butter.

**Morning Tea:** Approx. 10.30 a.m. — fruit and a drink.

**Sleep:** 10.45 a.m. — 1¼ hours.

**Lunch:** Approx. 12.15

2 cups of milk, vegetables and meat or fish. (Our main meal is lunch time, because of kitchen situation). (Leo just doesn't seem to like vegetable. Perhaps he may change his mind if they were cooked differently).

**Afternoon Tea:** Approx. 3.00 — drink or orange.

**Tea:** Approx. 4.30 p.m.

2 cups of milk, a custard or mornay or chocolate pudding, sometimes soup, eggs, sandwiches.

**Supper:** Approx. 6.00 p.m.  
Fruit and a drink.

**Bed:** 6.15 p.m.

Leo has started using small fork at lunch times, with meat and potato and does well. Actually I think Leo would love a change of diet, after having the same type of food for so long.

Leo generally has a sleep around 10.45 and usually sleeps for about 1¼ hours. Bed time is around 6.15 p.m. but this usually means he will wake about 6 a.m. or earlier the next morning. I think a later bed time would mean he would sleep later. Unfortunately due to the Nursery situation, bed time has to be at this time. I think if he gradually got into the routine of going to bed later at night, he would cope very nicely.

Goes to Kinder (a Nursery Kindergarten) for 1 hour each morning at 8.45 a.m. and occasionally Playgroup in the afternoon for 1 hour, weekdays

only. Both groups similar to Tiny Tots Kindergarten. The playgroup is a distance from the Nursery and I take Leo over and stay with him for the hour.

Leo takes a nappy to bed with him, at night (very important to him) and at rest times (for a comfort, perhaps similar to a dummy) as well as Teddy. May go into sort of trance after waking-up after midday sleep, sometimes in the mornings also, he seems a little distant. I think it's just that Leo takes a little time to wake up, sometimes on these occasions Leo may ask for "a nappy suck" with means he just wants a nappy, needs that comfort. While he is a little distant and waking up, generally I find that by giving him a little time, that trance stage disappears, and he discards the nappy. Generally I find him best left, especially if he is unhappy about something, as well as when he is distant in this waking-up stage. If something very interesting catches his eye he comes out of it almost immediately.

If having trouble getting Leo to sleep, he may need a dry nappy to such if he has used all four corners of the previous nappy and it is wet.

Leo's toilet training to date has not been 100% successful. If reminded he will sit on the potty and stay dry for the day. But bowel actions for him are not comfortable (possibly due to lack of vegetables in his diet) and so far we have not been successful with the potty in that respect. I've tried sitting Leo on a toilet but he doesn't like the idea at all — seems scared and much prefers a potty.

When happy and relaxed, and that's almost always when we're out walking, Leo talks about what we have done, what we're going to do tomorrow or about what's happening around him at the

time, and often does so for an hour or so, non stop. He answers questions that are familiar to him and asks questions.

Leo loves trains, books, puzzles, and has just started doing some messy finger painting at Kindergarten. Also loves tractors, trucks etc., loves rides in cars, buses, trams and trains — may be a little apprehensive with the train. Occasionally, he may be frightened of dogs.

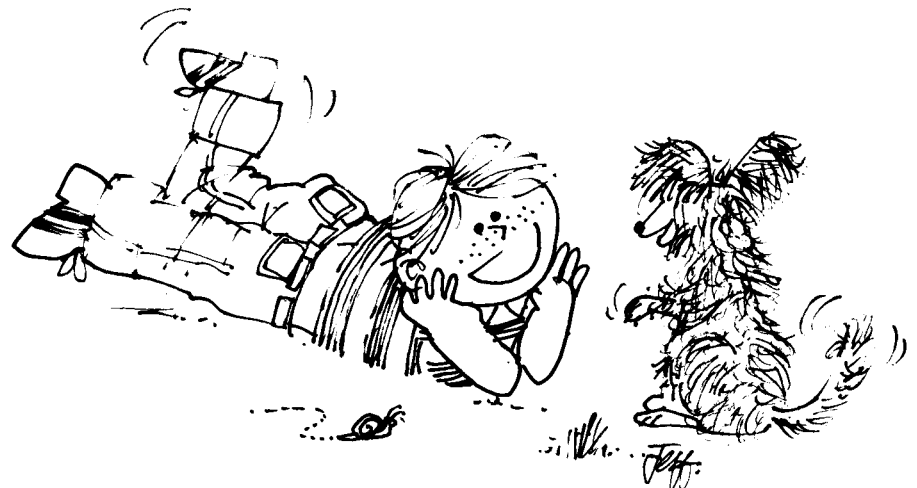
Leo's conversation for a three year old, seems fairly advanced, and he usually repeats words in their correct context, even if only heard once or twice.

Leo is approaching fast that stage where he will play alone happily with a train set, or some other favourite, or new toy. Loves T.V. and watches with open mouth, particularly loved Sesame Street, Big Bird, Bert and Ernie.

Like all 3 year olds, has to be reminded about saying please and thank you. I usually remind him by saying "What's the magic word?"

Leo can be very apprehensive about a lot of things.

When telling him of a new thing we are about to do, for example an outing to the Airport or an outing to the beach, Leo in that situation can be apprehensive and has almost to be convinced it would be "lovely and nice" before going. This may be possibly due to his limited experience outside the Nursery. He knows about the city, "it has big buildings", but he has never been there, and the hustle and bustle and so many people, would be very new and possibly frightening for him. (The Airport, by the way, when he did go, was a very small one, and the beach was not crowded. He showed some fear of the water, but eventually got the idea that it was "fun".) With all



these new experiences for Leo, I have found if he is told about them, and they are talked about beforehand, he is less anxious.

With a new person he is likely to be a little evasive. For example, in this situation Leo would talk about things around him — birds, aeroplanes etc. by means of distracting the new person, and at the same time Leo is listening for any cues the new person may give him. I think this is his way of “feeling them out” so to speak, and how they will react to him. Of course this is Leo’s little ‘secret’ way. Occasionally if a situation is very tense for him, his conversation dwindles to just a few words now and then; what I think he is looking for is reassurance that everything is O.K. In this situation I generally carry on as usual, he gets my casual “things as usual” vibes, and relaxes. Or alternatively if advisable I explain the situation that I know is worrying him, and this also helps. Referring to his unusual evasiveness I find just puts him more on guard.

This sounds fairly complex but I think with all the changing staff, and the sea of faces that pass before the children’s eyes, changing moods of the different staff, with different reactions with different situations, Leo’s way of adjusting to these situations has been to wait for a cue from a new person, to see just where he stands with them. I think that’s pretty resourceful for a 3 year old. Also occasionally with some visitors Leo has had on various occasions he may have seemed not pleased to see them, or evasive when they first arrived, or occasionally during a visit.

Generally Leo needs lots of reassurance at times about new and unusual situations, about new people and his relationship to them, their relationship to him. However, if new situations are explained to him beforehand, or casually talked through, he understands and feels more relaxed.

Leo has reached the stage where he will accept limits. For example, perhaps when he has to finish playing when he doesn’t want to, but for some other reason has to, perhaps when he has to get out of the bath, give another child a turn, time for a rest etc., in this situation I generally tell him when he has a few minutes left to play, that he should have the “last one” (meaning last turn or time) and nearly time to finish. Then I say “last one”, and count down from ten to one, “last one already gone”, “finish”.

Sometimes I may have to pick Leo up, to finish off, I tickle him, he laughs, and

we go on to the next thing we have to do, and, as a rule, he accepts.

If Leo does something that I consider to be completely unacceptable, I say “that’s a time out one” to which he replies “no, no”, and generally that’s the end of that.

But if he continues, I say “time out” and (*not* removing him to another room or corner) remove him from what he is doing. He then generally realizes that I disapprove strongly, and the disapproval hurts more than the removing I think. After a minute or two I say “time out finished now” and he can get up and return. Time out with Leo is a *rare* occurrence.

If time out is done with someone he doesn’t know, I think he would become very upset and withdrawn. Afterwards (time out) he would probably not wish to return to the toy or activity he was previously involved in.

Over the years Leo has been in the Nursery other children Leo has known have left to go to foster homes, adoption etc. Occasionally he may ask where is Sam, Bill, Steven or George? I have told him they have gone to a beautiful new home, with the new aunty. “That’s right”, and he accepts that and doesn’t enquire any further.

Some of Leo’s close friends in the Nursery are Margaret, Nola, Jim, Kate, Paula, Kenny, Donna, Anne, Colleen (or “Our Colleen” from previous room). Leo’s mother and her friend Steve also have visited frequently, as well as Nanny and Pop.

At one time or another, I have found Leo upset and crying for a reason unknown to me, perhaps because he fell, or another child took something from him; a reason unknown to me is a seriously upsetting situation for Leo.

In this situation I have found picking him up and saying nothing, holding him and perhaps just looking out the window, while holding him, has pacified him, and when he quietens, still holding him for a few more minutes and then asking him “are you O.K. now?” His response, yes or no, telling me whether he needs more holding, or whether he will tell me what happened.

On the whole I think Leo is a happily little boy interested in everything and full of life, but just at times needs reassurance when faced with situations that are new or unusual to him.

Leo has had many experiences e.g. excursions and outings. He has been to the Zoo, the Botanical Gardens. etc. He has been on all forms of public transport,

he has often been shopping and he has been to visit his friends’ houses.

*But*, his experiences have been much more for his entertainment than as part of a daily routine. Thus, he has not had to catch a bus when his mother/foster mother is laden with parcels and is tired. He has not been shopping and had to wait at the supermarket whilst mum does the weekly shopping and had to wait in the usual Friday queue.

Leo has explored his friends’ houses, but he has been closely supervised. His daily environment is carefully “baby-proofed”. So he has no experience with waiting for his tea to be cooked, the clothes being washed, the floor being vacuumed etc. He may be apprehensive about the new noises of washing machines, dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers, sewing machines etc. Also he has very little experience with things that are not to be touched — e.g. television sets within his reach, record players, cupboards and the fridge. These are things he could open, but which generally children learn are not to be played with. These things are not within his experience or reach in the Nursery.

(Also included were some words that Mary often used, so that Eliza would understand too, if he should happen to use these words, e.g. “wire” — when speaking about power points, electricity or such like, Mary would say that Leo would have to be careful because of the “wires”.)

### SECTION 3 SIGNIFICANT POINTS:

1. The use of a consistent, and small number, of staff to be involved in the whole transfer of the child. This seemed to give the child some security, and also seemed to cut down the possibility of confusion and blurring of messages.

Along the same lines, it was helpful and supportive to those staff who were involved, to know that there was only a small number of staff with whom to communicate. It was easier to clarify ideas, and talk through problems with only a few people.

2. It was important that the most significant person (Mary) was the *only* one who talked to Leo about his transfer plans. This seemed especially important for a child such as Leo. He had good comprehension and could easily pick up inconsistencies in what had been said to him. Also, Mary also knew what she had

said, and what he had said — the whole interaction was therefore less open to misunderstanding, and/or missing a cue that Leo gave.

3. That the whole process was a team effort — between the Sister in Charge, the Child Care Officer and the Special Unit Member. Each provided support, opportunity to discuss plans and talk through issues with each other, as well as each having different jobs to perform (i.e. Mary doing all the talking to Leo, Sister Burn providing extra staff to cover for Mary when she needed to see Leo in a 1 to 1, and Clare who was able to provide assistance with observing Leo's emotional state, and assist Mary with the timing of each new phase of the process).

4. Various other staff of the Nursery contributed also, by filling in and doing extra jobs, to enable the plans to run smoothly. *Our thanks to them.*

5. The points that Leo took special notice of, and which seem to have been significant to him were :—

(a) The explanation that Mary had to stay and look after the other kids in the Nursery. He maintained direct eye contact and seemed to understand this.

(b) The explanation of Mary's feelings. It was felt that it was honest to tell Leo that Mary was both sad, and that she would miss him — and that she was concurrently pleased for him, and that he was a lucky boy. He maintained direct eye contact during this time also.

6. It is seen as important that Leo was given time to express a full range of emotions about the one event. It was sad that he was leaving his friends whom he had known for so long, and that he was leaving Mary whom he loved, and who loved him, but it was also exciting, and he was pleased and happy to be going to live with Eliza.

Leo had time to show ambivalence as well as both happy and sad. This was felt to be a good resolution — rather than a quick decision, and “aren't you lucky” — and “off you go”. The time he was allowed did enable him to express his happiness about the occasion, in his own time.

The time he was allowed, also enable him to be involved in the process of leaving, and actually working it through — e.g. packing his toys, and books, and belongings, into a box.

7. Mary's leaving her apron with Leo at Eliza's house, seemed to give him support and reassurance that he would see her again. He was also given the

opportunity to take one of Mary's aprons in his box of belongings. He did take it. It was not forced upon him, but he was given a little token of security, should he desire it. He did.

8. Another important point in the handling of the transfer, was to provide opportunity for Leo to see Mary (and Clare) enjoying Eliza's company. Leo took many of his cues about his level of confidence from how “happy, as usual” Mary was. For Leo, to see Mary enjoying Eliza's company, seemed to give him confidence (and permission) to enjoy her company too.

9. The importance of the child's bed. The child's bed seems to provide feelings of security and permanence. In an institutional setting, where staff and other children are constantly changing, the child's bed is the one constant item in the child's life. So it was felt that Leo's new bed would be an issue that would hold significance.

Because of this, Mary took particular notice of Leo's bed when she visited Eliza's house. She commented to Leo about it when he returned to the Nursery after his visits to Eliza's. Leo's new bed was also mentioned when Mary was telling Leo that he was leaving West Wing, and going to stay with Eliza.

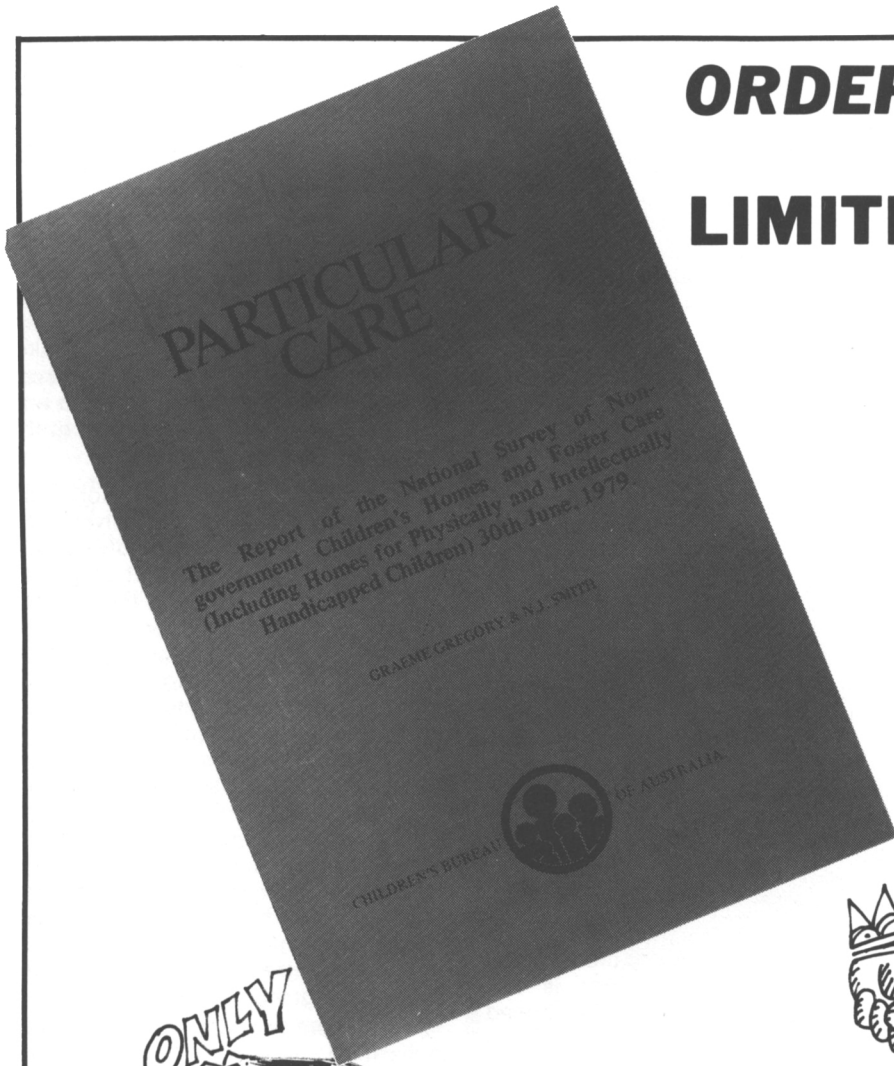
10. Lastly, but by no means of least importance, there is a need in such a process to allow the care-staff the time and the opportunity to deal with their feelings. Care-staff do invest a great deal of energy, time and emotion with the children in their care. They often need the chance to work through the separation, with the child — usually, and most appropriately, by being involved in the transfer and its planning.

Care staff are usually happy if they know that the child is happy and settled. But, it is seen as a better outcome if it is acknowledged that the care staff have strong feelings for the child too. This seemed an especially important issue in this case where Mary and Clare had known Leo for his 3 most dependent years.





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Findings included:—

- \* nearly 40% of the children in care came from 1 parent families (at the point of admission to care).
- \* in at least 79% of the cases the reasons for admission to care would appear to be attributable to factors apart from the child. In only 8% was the child's behaviour identified as the primary reason for admission into care.
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