

BAD PRESS

Scandal of 'back to babyhood' therapy

by Sarah Lonsdale

REGRESSION therapy, practised by three Leicestershire children's home care workers now undergoing trial on charges of physically and sexually abusing children over 13 years, is widely used in Britain.

Regression therapy is based on the theory that, in order to get to the root of personal problems, subjects have to be taken back to their childhood. The technique involves putting patients in nappies, bottle-feeding and standing them in corners, and alternately shouting at and hugging them so that they eventually feel like helpless children.

Mark Salisbury, a residential care worker, said in evidence that the children were challenged and provoked until they 'blew out'. Staff repeated taunts like 'You hate your mother', and shook children until they lost their tempers. If they did not, they were put in isolation.

The Institute of Transactional Analysis, which actively promotes regression therapy among psychotherapists, social workers and teachers, in this country has several hundred members and regularly organises workshops to disseminate ideas.

Regression therapy encompasses a range of controversial treatments, including so-called 're-parenting', where patients are encouraged to reject their own parents and adopt the therapists as their new parents. The institute also promotes a form of regression therapy widely discredited in the United States, where it originated, called Cathexis.

Cathexis was the brainchild of American social worker Jacqui Schiff who developed the technique of 'reparenting' for her work with schizophrenics. Courts in Virginia ordered Ms Schiff never to work again, and a home she operated in California had its licence taken away. She is now living in Birmingham, where she runs a private reparenting practice.

Nick Irving, head occupational therapist at West Norfolk and Wisbech Health Authority's child and family unit in Kings Lynn, supports regression therapy and admits to bottle-feeding and hugging adult clients. He says regression therapy is widespread: