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The Educational Attainments and Progress of Children in Public Care

by

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that none of the material has been published by the author. Some of the material has been shared with elected members and officers within the Local Authority where the research was carried out, and this is clearly stated in the text.

I also confirm that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Summary

There has been concern, since the 1970s, that the education of children in the care of local authorities had been severely neglected. Reports into social services for children, such as Utting (1991), recognised this problem, and in 1994 a joint guidance circular was issued by the Departments for Health and Education. As recently as 1995, however, a joint report issued by the Social Services Inspectorate and the Office for Standards in Education stated that the care and education systems, in general, were still failing to promote the education of children in care. The Social Exclusion Unit's report (SEU, 1998) again recognised the problem and set targets for educational attainment. It was, however, the Health Select Committee (House of Commons, 1998) who drew attention to the pointlessness of setting targets when the Government itself acknowledged that there was a lack of data on the educational circumstances and achievements of children in care.

This action research program set out to address this lack of data by collecting educational information on a significantly larger scale and in a more comprehensive way than any previous study (i.e. by covering all looked after children of school age in one authority); by being longitudinal (i.e. to follow the progress of individuals for up to four years); and by incorporating care histories of the young people. It was designed with the aim of informing practice and raising attainment.

The major findings were that children in care underachieve at all stages of their education and that disproportionate numbers have special educational needs; have poor school attendance; and are excluded from school. The analysis also indicated that the relationship between care experiences and academic attainments was more complex than suggested by the targets being set for local authorities in National Priorities Guidance.

Introduction

There has been a growing disquiet about the vulnerability of young people in the care system that has led to an awakening of professional and political consciousness. This started as an awareness that children in care were not always well treated. Chapter One outlines the development of the State's involvement in child care through legislation, and the moral, ideological, and political pressures that brought these about. Particular attention is paid to the impact that deaths in care have had from the 1940s, and to indicating that concern about these tragedies was not limited to professionals and politicians. There was a gradual swell of public concern about the operation of public care that focused on the lack of State intervention, but was matched by a similar but contradictory concern regarding excessive State interference in family life.

The belief that removing children from feckless families and placing them in substitute care would automatically result in good outcomes came under scrutiny. The establishment of the Social Science Research Council led to a great increase in social science research from the early 1960s. This focused on outcomes of particular policies, most notably foster care, and successive studies led to a growing disquiet about the quality and appropriateness of child care and the failure of the State to improve the life chances for these young people. Chapter Two covers this research in detail and the findings that ex-care users were disproportionately represented in almost every disadvantaged group in society. These groups include the unemployed, the homeless, those who live in poverty, and those with serious physical and mental health problems.

Alongside the growing concern regarding general life outcomes for looked after children there has been an increasing focus on their educational attainment. This research has viewed educational attainment as an outcome in itself, and also as a factor which has a significant impact on the other areas of life, e.g. employment and access to further education. The Department of Health (DoH, 2000) commented that, "*The single most important indicator of children's life chances is educational attainment. The unacceptable state of affairs in educational attainment of children looked after is reflected in the target chosen for the National Priority Guidance.*" (para. 5.5). Chapter Three examines the available research evidence on the educational experiences of looked after children and this draws attention to low academic attainments, high rates of exclusions, and poor attendance at school. The studies themselves, however, had limitations, as they tended to focus on relatively small samples of looked after children, and usually at a single fixed point in time. The research program reported here set out to build on these previous studies by collecting data on a significantly larger scale; by being more comprehensive (i.e. covering all looked after children of school age in one authority); by being longitudinal (i.e. to follow the progress of individuals for up to four years); and by incorporating information on the care experiences of the young people.

Background to Research in Metroland

The author has been employed by Metroland City Council since 1986. During the period 1990 to 1998 he developed and managed projects designed to reduce pupil disaffection and improve the ability of schools to work with children presenting challenging behaviour. This work was jointly funded by the City Council and the Department for Education and Employment. In 1995 improving outcomes for children in care became a

core project activity when it became clear that the results of national research on educational outcomes were likely to be replicated in Metroland. This work took the form of an action research program described in Chapter Four. As a senior employee of the Local Authority, the author had the necessary access to educational and care information required for the analysis of outcomes. The Project the author managed was also able to allocate resources, time and finance, to promote interventions designed to improve educational outcomes for children in care.

Following the publication of the second report by Sir William Utting (DoH, 1997), the City Council committed further resources in order to address better the educational needs of children in care. This led to the creation of a small multi-disciplinary service, Education Access, in April 1998. The author was appointed as Head of this Service which consisted at that time of a psychologist, three teachers and an Education Welfare Officer. The overall aim was to assist the Local Authority *to do all that a good parent would* to encourage and support the educational development of children in care, i.e. to raise achievement and promote inclusion.

It became increasingly apparent that the existence of the Service was making a difference to awareness within the whole Local Authority. Not only was discussion about practice ongoing with staff in both social services and education settings, information was also being prepared for committees of elected members who oversaw and gave a steer to the work of the Education Service and Social Services. For example, the inclusion of a significant section on the education of looked after children within Metroland's Education Development Plan (Metroland, 1999), together with targets, ensured that the work was seen as requiring action by the whole Education Service and not just Education Access.

The reason was simply that local education authorities were inspected against the targets set out in the Plan, i.e. it was part of the assessment of the quality of provision made by the whole Service. In fact, Metroland was part way through an inspection by the Office for Standards in Education at the time of the submission of this thesis and the author was interviewed by the team during June 2000.

The author has also been involved in influencing development outside Metroland by, for example, making presentations at Department for Education and Employment conferences and supporting other local authorities implement practice changes. The author was also able to support national development by, for example, participating in a Department of Health pilot study. Metroland was one of only four authorities (identified as authority 'C') able to supply data that were used to support the setting of targets the National Priorities Guidance targets (DoH, 2000):

Information on the educational attainments of children looked after is currently very limited. Table 5.1 provides the best information currently available. It is taken from a pilot collection of outcome indicators for children looked after by local authorities. Although ten authorities volunteered to take part in the pilot, in the end only four local authorities were able to provide any information at all. (para. 5.9)

The Changing Political Climate

During the research program the political climate changed considerably and this resulted in a greater focus on improving circumstances for children in care. The 'New Labour' Government that came into office in 1997 put social inclusion at the top of its agenda (see Chapter Five for a full discussion). The Social Inclusion Unit it established identified

children in care as likely to be in particular danger of social exclusion and the Department of Health launched the three year 'Quality Protects' initiative in 1998. This initiative aimed to ensure that local authority social services for children were well managed and effective and had eight objectives. Each authority was required to submit a plan in relation to these objectives and, critically, their performance would be measured against outcomes that would be linked to future funding. Of these measures, educational outcome data were used to assess the authority's performance against three objectives. The Government took the view that education was a good thing in itself, and that good educational outcomes could be viewed as a proxy measure with respect to care, i.e. if a young person was doing well at school then they were likely to be receiving a good quality of care.

Practitioner as Researcher

The information presented above clearly placed the author in an interesting position. On the one hand he was involved in measuring the attainments and progress of children in care and, one could argue, the quality of care - by proxy. On the other hand he was also employed by the care organisation and specifically charged with the responsibility to bring about improved educational outcomes. Hockey (1993) noted two relevant disadvantages in being too familiar or involved with agencies and settings, such as those described above. The first was a tendency to accept some of the assumptions prevalent within that organisation, e.g. that children in care do not achieve good educational outcomes because of their pre-care experiences. The second was not to be aware of, or notice, important aspects of the setting because such aspects were neither new nor startling, e.g. the number of changes of care placements children experience in their

GCSE year. Against these disadvantages of being too involved in the system needs to be set the value of personal interest and commitment. These can act as motivators to gain greater understanding which needs to be informed by a thorough review of the available literature to gain greater insight into the relevant theoretical issues. As an Educational Psychologist with a personal commitment to improving the educational experiences and outcomes for children in public care I set myself the task of gaining this insight by reviewing the relevant literature prior to embarking on the research program.

Terminology

To be more accurate, the term 'looked after' will be used in the remainder of this document to replace 'children in care'. This new terminology was introduced in the Children Act, 1989 and covers those children who were the subject of Care Orders and those who were cared for by the local authority on a voluntary basis. This second group were said to be 'accommodated'.

N.B. All references to materials published by Metroland are listed on pages 324 and 325.

Chapter One

State Intervention in Childcare

Current concern about children who are abused, neglected or beyond the control of their parents results in the call for “someone to do something about it”. This expression often implies that the state should intervene to protect the child, or the public, and help the child become a responsible and law abiding member of society. The underlying assumptions are that the state has a legitimate right to intervene, and that such interventions will be of benefit to the child and to society. This chapter investigates the developing role of the state, through its various agencies, in the care and control of children and the consequences, in terms of outcomes, of such interventions. It touches on the constraints and opportunities of a legal framework and the interaction between central and local government. It also draws attention to the influence of practitioners as well as policy makers and the effect, or lack of effect, of research, pressure groups and scandals.

To trace the development of the state’s involvement in family life from the era of Dr. Barnado in the late 19th century, when Christian charities invigorated the system with their programs of child rescue, could be misleading. It would suggest that progress has been gradual and planned alongside a growing awareness of children’s developmental needs. The reality, however, is far more complex as it assumes little or no state intervention prior to the 1800s, and does not recognise that much of the change in state intervention since that time has been influenced by public disquiet at the failures of the care system. The limited information that is available suggests that in pre-Reformation England the orphaned and illegitimate child had a place in the feudal community. Orphans

were often fostered with childless couples and those born outside marriage were cared for by their natural families, relatives or the childless. The safeguards for the child lay in the communal nature of society, *"In the fact that life centred round the community rather than the family there lay the possibility of opportunity and protection for the unwanted child."* (Heyward, 1978, p.8)

Pinchbeck & Hewitt (1969 & 1973) give a thorough account of the changing social attitudes towards children and the resulting social policy and legislation. They start their account in the sixteenth century and report that Tudor social policy was more similar to the ideas of the Welfare State than those of any intervening period, although they recognise the qualitative difference between the two based on a greater understanding of developmental psychology in the twentieth century. The ultimate failure of these idealistic policies are chronicled, as is the subsequent alternating pattern of benevolence and enthusiasm, and indifference and neglect throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Frost and Stein (1989) report on the initial piecemeal Tudor response to the destitution, vagrancy and unemployment which followed the breakdown of the old feudal order. This led on, however, to the most significant and comprehensive Tudor response which was the Poor Law of 1601, which set the pattern for administration of poor relief until 1948. By this Act church wardens and parish overseers were empowered to set the poor to work and bind children as apprentices.

The children who were the concern of this legislation were mainly orphaned or illegitimate and they constituted a problem in that they were part of the growing

number of displaced vagrants, destitute and unemployed people who were seen as a serious threat to social order. (Frost and Stein, 1989 p.21)

Ill treatment of children by their parents was recognised as a social problem in the nineteenth century. A number of voluntary organisations, including the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), were established to improve the lot of abandoned, neglected and ill treated children " *...by rescuing them from the streets, by encouraging and cajoling their parents to act responsibly and by campaigning for legislation which would enable them to be protected* (Cretney and Masson, 1997 p.786). Parker (1992) has drawn attention to the development of the array of children's services and child care legislation from that time and argued that these developments were founded on the belief in the essential pliability of children. That is, that once exposed to new environments that separated the children from the deleterious influences of their feckless families they would develop into fine upstanding citizens. In that climate there were few, if any, doubts about the rightness of such interventions and little consideration as to whether it led to desirable outcomes for children. This increasing state intervention has become known as 'welfare' and can be viewed as a 'supervisory' mechanism which monitors family functioning. When a family fails, the welfare professionals develop more intrusive modes of supervision or ultimately remove the child from the family.

Following the Second World War the Labour Government, under Clement Attlee, introduced widespread welfare reforms in the creation of the 'welfare state'. The National Health Service, state education to fifteen, the National Insurance Scheme, public housing

and local authority Children's Departments appeared to embody the comprehensive state provision for the prevention of social deprivation. When the Conservatives took over Government in 1951, the state welfare services were maintained in exactly the same form. The general assumption was that there was a political consensus over the desirability of state welfare provision. Dissenting voices on the political left, however, argued that welfare would not succeed in solving the social problems of the poor and operated to support the need of a capitalist economy to have healthy and educated work force. Right wing critics of state welfare argued against the interference of state provision with the workings of the capitalist market economy. During the 1950s and onwards, organisations such as the Institute of Economic Affairs argued for a return to a laissez-faire state with self-protecting families and communities. Their argument set out in Alcock (1996) was that:

State intervention to provide welfare services ... merely drove up the cost of public expenditure to a point at which it began to interfere with the effective operation of a market economy. They claimed that this point had already been reached in Britain in the 1970s as the high levels of taxation needed for welfare services had reduced profits, crippled investment and driven capital overseas. (p.12)

The right wing also argued that free welfare services only encouraged feckless people to become dependent upon them and provided no incentive for individuals and families to protect themselves. These arguments enjoyed a sympathetic hearing after 1979 when the Conservative Party under, Margaret Thatcher, came into power.

Children's Departments

The reforming Children Act of 1948 illustrates the complex relationship between political ideology, public concern about failures within the care system, and the implementation of practices based on psychological theories. Frost and Stein (1989) saw the final break with the Poor Law and organised charity as part of the aftermath of the Labour Party's historic election victory in 1945.

The victory itself reflected a popular demand for profound changes in society, due in part to the sense of social solidarity generated by the Second World War and the increasing strength of the labour movement. The experience of mass unemployment of the 1930s and the means-testing of poor-relief meant that the labour movement was determined to bring about forms of welfare that did not stigmatise, divide and humiliate. (p.33)

The report of the Curtis Committee (HMSO, 1946) supplied the blueprint for the Act which substantially increased the responsibilities of the State and required the establishment of a children's committee within every local authority. Past inadequacies in child care were blamed on the administrative chaos which had developed through the operation of numerous departments of central and local government, all responsible in some way for deprived children. This chaos was vividly illustrated by the Monckton Inquiry into the death of Dennis O'Neill in his foster home (Home Office, 1945). The Inquiry revealed how divided responsibilities between education and public assistance committees, as well as between two local authorities, magnified the risks of error and neglect by the administration. Such was the anxiety about shared responsibilities that

alternative solutions, such as making the education committees responsible, were rejected as it was considered that the staff involved should not be responsible for anyone other than deprived children - so that all their energies could be concentrated on this neglected group. Even at central government level the responsibilities, for deprived children, of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Pensions and the Home Office were totally given to the Home Office¹.

Among key witnesses to the Curtis Committee was John Bowlby, whose work on maternal deprivation for the World Health Organisation, published as a monograph in 1951 (Bowlby, 1951), was to exert a profound influence on the new service. His report collated the available research evidence on maternal care and mental health issues. These included the prevention of delinquency, the problem of the 'unwanted child', the training for motherhood, and the best ways of supplying the needs of children deprived of their natural mothers. Thus in the very early years of Children's Departments, theories of child development which stressed the prime significance of a child's earliest ties to its mother were widely debated and publicised. A Pelican edition titled, "Child Care and the Growth of Love" (Bowlby, 1953), was written very much as a manual of good child care practice. The emphasis was on maintaining a child's place in the family, whenever and wherever possible, and particularly during the child's earliest years (see page.41). Publication of his work at a time when Britain had framed new legislation gave Bowlby a ready made

¹Not all of the children who were considered to come within the Curtis Committee's terms of reference were subsequently the responsibility of Children's Committees. Handicapped children in special boarding schools remained the responsibility of the Education Committees. Children considered ineducable or mentally disordered children became the responsibility of the hospital authorities and local Health Committees. Children in approved schools maintained their direct link with the Home Office and war orphans still maintained their connection with the Ministry of Pensions.

audience and an administrative structure within which his theories could be put into practice. Few research studies can have had such a favourable launch nor such a profound impact. His book became standard reading for all those on the newly emerging child care training courses and for the larger number of social administration students. Even Bowlby's own part recantation and courageous indication of having 'over-stated' the case, had little impact on the promotion of his original theories and went virtually unnoticed (Bowlby et al, 1956).

The rise in preventative work that resulted from Bowlby's influence was often carried out with families in their own homes with a wider focus than simply meeting the direct needs of the child. This involved a greater degree of involvement with, and dependency on, other agencies who had control over resources such as day care nurseries and temporary accommodation for homeless families. Co-ordination between departments was one way of solving this difficulty and the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act advocated this approach. There was, however, still a strong view that personal social services should be re-structured to respond to the growing inter-agency work. The area that focused both public and political attention at that time was juvenile delinquency which had grown since the mid-fifties and only levelled out ten years later. It was considered that a co-ordinated approach to prevent family breakdown and child neglect would reduce both the number of young people entering the courts and also the number going on to become adult criminals.

The Creation of the Social Services Departments

In 1965 the Seebohm Committee was set up to review the organisation and responsibilities of the local authority personal social services, and consider what changes were desirable to ensure an effective family service. The Committee's report (DoH, 1968) recommended that new local authority Social Services Departments should be set up that would be community based and family orientated. The new structure was to comprise children's departments, welfare services for the old, handicapped and homeless, mental health social work services, education welfare and child guidance, home-helps, day nurseries and other social welfare work carried out by the health and housing departments. After much delay, the structures outlined in the report were made the subject of statute by the Local Authority Social Services Act in April 1971. The subsequent reorganisation of local government, in 1974, left Social Services Departments operating at the level of County Councils, Metropolitan Districts and London Boroughs. These authorities continue to discharge the statutory duties of protecting children in care.

In 1973, shortly after the new Social Services Departments had been set up, another child under public supervision died. The repercussions of Maria Colwell's death (DoH, 1974) were just as great as those following the death of Dennis O' Neill thirty years before and brought discussion about the State's role in child care back into the public domain.

Packman (1981), draws attention to the similarities between the findings of the inquiries into each death, which were set up to investigate what went wrong and what should be done to avoid future tragedies:

Both children came into local authority care from neglectful home situations and were the subject of court orders. Both were under child care supervision at the time of their death (Dennis, because he was in a foster home; Maria because she was at home again with her parents under a supervision order). In both cases there had been a crucial six month gap in supervision prior to the death, through misunderstanding between agencies about who was or was not visiting. In both cases the children's school attendance began to fall off badly and eventually ceased altogether for several weeks before they died and both were undernourished as well as brutally treated... There is evidence in both reports that the children had become subdued, withdrawn and ill-looking in their last months and that visiting officials had failed to talk to them on their own to explore the reasons for this and had left the initiative for taking them to a doctor with the parents and foster parents.

(p.172)

In other ways the cases were quite distinct as Dennis was in a foster home and was killed by his foster father, having lost all contact with his own family. Maria was neglected by her own mother and killed by her step-father after she returned from six years in foster care, during which time she had kept in contact with her family. There were no qualified social workers involved with Dennis O'Neill and the inquiry into that case blamed the ignorance and lack of experience of the officials. This was in contrast to Maria Colwell's case where qualified social workers were involved in the supervision. Both reports blame disastrous failure of communication between the many professionals involved, identifying how the level of seriousness of the risk became dissipated with each message passed

between people. That the report on the death of Maria should contain such similar indictments as those made in the Monckton Report is ironic, as the major argument for the 'Seebohm' reorganisation was to improve the integration of services to children. In fact there was concern that the reorganisation had made things worse as social workers had wider responsibilities and, therefore, less experience of working with children than their predecessors in Children's Departments.

Criticism of child care policy was also implicit in the Maria Colwell Report which suggested that the Social Services Department was wrong to have acceded to Maria's mother's wish to resume care of her child, against the wishes of the relatives who fostered her, and Maria herself. Explicit criticism was also offered by some, like Howells (1974), who accused social workers of clinging to simplistic ideological theories about the ill effects of maternal deprivation as expounded by Bowlby (1951). Critics believed that the focus on the child had been blurred rather than enhanced by the increasing attention to the family context and the strenuous efforts to preserve family ties. The aftermath of the Colwell inquiry saw new legislation in the shape of the 1975 Children Act. The main thrust of this law was to give priority to the long-term welfare of the child even if this entailed overriding the wishes of parents. A developing understanding of the psychological damage caused by delay and children being left in limbo (Rowe & Lambert, 1975) led to the inclusion in the law of various time clauses which progressively reduced parental rights to remove children from long-term foster placements. That is, it set out measures to reduce the 'right' of natural parents over substitute carers and to increase the rights of the children themselves.

During the 1980's there was again a rise in dissatisfaction with existing legislation and professional practice. This was highlighted by research (DHSS, 1985) and the growth of a number of pressure groups specifically committed to the development of children's legal rights, such as the 'Children's Legal Centre', 'A Voice for the Child in Care', and the 'Family Rights Group'. There was also the emergence of self-advocacy groups of young people, including the 'National Association of Young People in Care' and 'Black and in Care'.

The need to reform the law relating to children was formally identified by the House of Commons Social Services Committee Report (1984) which described the current law as complex, confusing and unsatisfactory. The Review of Child Care Law (1985) followed, and led to the White Paper, "The Law on Child Care and Family Services" (1987). The views of politicians were encouraged by the recommendations of the Law Commission in 1988, regarding the reform of private law relating to children, and also influenced by enquiries into the tragic death of Maria Colwell, discussed above, and the much publicised deaths of Jasmine Beckford (Blom-Cooper, 1985), Kimberley Carlile (London Borough of Greenwich, 1987), and Tyra Henry (London Borough of Lambeth, 1988). The enquiries into these tragic events resulted in public reports where services were again represented as being disorganised and ineffective, echoing the findings of the Curtis Committee forty years before. In particular, the Blom-Cooper Report into the death of Jasmine Beckford (op. cit.) influenced legislation, in the form of the Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act, 1986; government publications, such as Working Together (1986); and practice, e.g. an increase in the use of Place of Safety Orders. The Report itself was not only a scathing indictment of the social workers involved, but generalised its arguments to

include the whole of social work practice and theory. Commentators of the time such as Parton (1986) criticised the findings of the report and characterised the picture of 'good' social work practice emerging from it as merely acting as an agent of the law. With hindsight, it can be seen that this focus on carrying out statutory duties would have a major impact on more preventative approaches over the following decade. It is also worth noting that there have been over forty inquiries into child deaths between 1973 and 1997, and most have identified:

... failures by agencies involved in co-operating with each other to identify signs of abuse, assess the quality of parental care and monitor the child's progress.

Although social workers were frequently blamed, the law was also seen as providing an inadequate framework for child protection because it was too difficult to understand, did not help to secure long term placements and failed to ensure that the court had a complete picture of the child's situation before making a decision.

(Cretney & Masson, 1997)

Alongside concern about the tragic deaths reported above, there has been a growing awareness of the extent of physical and sexual abuse that children in care have experienced. Following the conviction of Frank Beck, a senior social worker, in 1991 a Committee of Inquiry was set up under Norman Warner. Their report (DoH, 1992) led the Department of Health to write to local authorities asking them to implement twenty-two of the Committee's recommendations on the selection and recruitment of staff. The following year, local authorities were asked to implement the remaining nineteen recommendations. There followed a great raft of guidance, as outlined by Utting (DoH, 1997):

Between 1992 and 1996 the Department of Health and Welsh Office published 18 circulars (3 jointly with the Department for Education and Employment) bearing directly or indirectly on the safety of children living away from home. Education published 4 important Circulars of its own ... (p.13)

This formidable body of directives and guidance might have led one to believe that children living away from home would be as well protected as it was possible to be. Over this same period, however, revelations were being made by ex-care users about systematic, serious and extensive abuse in children's homes over the previous twenty years. Concern about these tragedies was not limited to professionals and politicians as there was a gradual swell of public disquiet about the operation of public care. This concern focused on the lack of intervention by Social Services Departments but was matched by a similar but contradictory concern regarding excessive state interference in family life. This was largely as a result of the events in Cleveland in 1987 where Social Services were represented as being overly zealous in their response to potential child sexual abuse, seeing problems where there were none. The number of children being diagnosed as suffering from sexual abuse rose dramatically with large numbers of children being admitted to hospital following such diagnosis, and their siblings were also removed from home under emergency court orders for examination and protection. There was widespread disbelief of the numbers of cases in which abuse had been recognised and considerable scepticism, particularly amongst the medical profession and police, and this gained prominence in the press. A statutory inquiry was then conducted under Dame Butler-Sloss and the report (Butler-Sloss, 1988) acknowledged that child sexual abuse

was widespread and that more information was needed about its incidence and identification. It did, however, give the impression that the diagnosis had been incorrect in a large proportion of cases. Cretney and Masson (1997), however, claim that the report was written:

"... in such a way that it was impossible to determine whether individual cases had been confirmed, but p.244 para 13, recorded that "Most of the 121 children ... were seperated from their parents ... by a place of safety order. The majority have now been returned home some with all proceedings dismissed, others on condition of medical examination and supervision orders." The fact that children returned home does not necessarily mean that abuse did not occur.

The report attributed the crisis to lack of communication and understanding amongst agencies involved but also criticised individuals and recommended changes to child protection law and practice. Many of these changes in practice were accepted by the Department of Health and Social Security and incorporated into departmental guidance. Legal changes were incorporated into the Children Act 1989. All of this left welfare workers with what Frost and Stein (1989) saw as a double agenda:

The first part of the agenda says that you must always put the interests of the child first. If you fail to do this, as in the Jasmine Beckford case, you will be attacked and pilloried. The other part of the agenda says that you must respect the privacy and autonomy of the family and you will be criticised for removing children from situations perceived to put children at risk. (p.75)

One of the functions of the Children Act of 1989, therefore, was to try to restore the balance between parents and state on matters of child care and child welfare. This Act² represented a major piece of legislation designed to be comprehensible, accessible and unifying. It encompasses private disputes between parents about the future of their children; public care law dealing with services to prevent family breakdown; and child protection. It also incorporates those children with disabilities who were previously provided for by health and welfare legislation. It has not been superseded to date.

The Children Act 1989

The Act, which is still the main statutory instrument, seeks to protect children from harm within the family and harm caused by outside intervention in family life. It allows the courts to intervene to protect children by making an order to assess a child where there is a real suspicion of harm; to remove or retain a child in an emergency; put the child under the care of the local authority; and make private law orders regulating living arrangements and contacts. The general aims of the Act are to achieve a better balance between the duty to protect children and the need to allow parents to challenge state intervention. It is also designed to encourage greater partnership between local authorities and parents and to encourage more use of voluntary arrangements.

² The Children Act (1989) repealed nine complete Acts: Guardianship of Minors Act (1971); the Guardianship Act (1973); Children Act (1975); Child Care Act (1980); Foster Children Act (1980); Children's Home Act (1982); and the Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act (1986). The Children Act also repealed some sections of a further 30 Acts, most significantly Section 40 of the Children and Young Persons Act (1933) and 20 Sections of the Children and Young Persons Act (1969).

The underlying principle that governs the actions of the court is that the child's welfare is the paramount consideration. The court is also instructed to consider the child's view before reaching a decision and in doing so recognises the capacity of some children, where they have sufficient understanding, to make an informed decision and to determine some issues for themselves. Principally, as in the Gillick case (Gillick v Wisbech and West Norfolk Area Health Authority and Department of Health and Social Security, 1985) this mainly concerns the right to give or withhold consent to medical treatment and examinations. Delay by the court in deciding questions relating to the upbringing of a child is also identified in the Act as likely to prejudice the child's welfare and courts are instructed to make an order only if it were better to do so for the child than not making an order - even if the conditions for an order are established. It is also unlawful to ignore a child's racial origin, culture and linguistic background.

Following the Law Commission's recommendation, the Children Act introduced the concept of parental responsibility which, it was hoped, would replace the phrase 'parental rights'. This shift in terminology aimed to encourage a change in perception. The notion of parent's rights over children, as if they were property, was overtaken by the concept of parental responsibility with its associations of parental duty and obligation towards children. Parental responsibility can be shared between a number of people. Both parents retain parental responsibility after divorce, and when their child is being looked after under a voluntary arrangement with the local authority. A care order gives the local authority parental responsibility and the power to prescribe the parents' parental responsibility, but only so far as is necessary in order to safeguard the child's welfare - it does not

automatically remove parental responsibility. The Act expects local authorities to provide for the child as a good parent would.

The events in Cleveland coupled with the various reports following the deaths of children in care, led to new procedures being introduced for dealing with circumstances when children were thought to be at risk. Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or may be likely to suffer significant harm, the local authority can seek a Child Assessment Order by which a child can be assessed whilst normally remaining at home with its parents. In more serious cases, however, the court can make an Emergency Protection Order by which a child can be removed from its home. The implementation of the Act in October, 1991 also introduced changes in terminology. The term '**in care**' now refers solely to children who are the subject of Care Orders. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are '**accommodated**' by the local authority. Both the groups are '**looked after**' by the local authority.

Parton (1991) portrayed the Act as quite consistent with other social reforms of the 1980s and 1990s such as those relating to education, covered in Chapter 3. He argued that the professional knowledge base and autonomy of social work were diluted to making it more mechanistic and legalistic. Berridge (1996) on the other hand contrasted this Act with other legislation on the basis that there was no explicit reference to, "*... privatisation or purchaser-provider splits. The rhetoric of consumer choice was absent. It was highly child-centred ... Most significantly, perhaps, the Act did not signify a diminution in the role and responsibilities of the state.*" (p16).

In addition to making arrangements for looked after children, local authorities are expected to provide a range and level of services that are appropriate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children 'in need' in their area. A child is regarded as being in need if:

He or she is unlikely to achieve or maintain or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him or her of services by a local authority; his or her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him or her of such services; or he or she is disabled. (schedule 2 and section 17)

The Act lays a duty upon the whole local authority (including education, housing, recreation and leisure) to work together to identify and provide for children in need. It does not, however, specify the exact nature or the quantity of services provided for children in need, they have a duty to provide advice, guidance and counselling; occupational, social, cultural and recreational activities; home help; help with transport to use services; assistance with holidays; and financial help. This introduced, to a wide audience, the idea of the whole local authority acting together in the interests of children being looked after, as a good parent would, as a 'corporate parent'. The whole notion, however, has been challenged by Parker and Millham (1989) who considered that there were inevitable differences between natural parents and a public body, and expressed their views as:

The characteristics of parental love are that it is partisan, unconditional, does not cease, does not have cut-off points, is long suffering and does not evaluate. The State cannot replicate this. Few parents are indifferent to their children but the State, with its emphasis on fairness and equality, cannot get too emotionally involved. (p.73)

The criticism of indifference contained in this quote would be amply supported by the findings of the various committees of inquiry into the tragedies reported above and also the more general enquiries into the practice of state childcare. This is more significant as the committees were reporting on practice under significantly different child care structures, e.g. Children's Departments and Social Services Departments, and must raise the question as to whether any form of corporate body can act as a substitute family.

Corporate parenting is not "good enough" on its own. Every child and young person needs at least one individual to whom s/he is "special", who retains responsibility over time, who is involved in plans and decisions and who has ambitions for the child's achievement and full development. (Utting, 1997, 1:16)

The Department of Health (Parker, et al, 1991) identified those aspects of child development which are informally monitored and promoted by 'reasonable' parents and are seen as necessary for long-term well being in adulthood. These numbered seven and were health; education; identity; family and social relationships; social presentation; emotional and behavioural development; and self-care skills. This led the Department of Health to introduce the Looking After Children System (Parker et. al. 1989), to improve

the parenting experiences and outcomes for children looked after by the local authority and other agencies. When judged against this model of a 'good enough' parent local authorities have been found wanting in almost every area for a significant number of looked after children (as reported later).

Tensions between the State as Carer and Educator and the Impact on Children

There have always been tensions between legislation emanating from different arms of central government, and the legal framework relating to children is no exception. This has resulted in parallel legislation affecting children and families contradicting the ethos of the Children Act (1989) and undermining some of its positive effects. For example, the Criminal Justice Act 1991, took a punitive attitude towards juvenile offenders which meant that little therapeutic help was available to them directly, or in the wider context of family support. Although the Probation Service offered some positive individual and group supervision, their terms of reference were increasingly being constrained by the Home Office to confine their duties to tight supervision relating only to the offence in question. The Health Service, also, has faced substantial changes and is now partly organised as self-governing trusts. General practitioners were given budgets and had to pay for places at specialist hospitals. This system placed in jeopardy the reciprocity of services between child psychiatry and social services. All assessments and treatments at Trust Hospitals had to be paid for and this could disadvantage children in need of services in poor local authorities.

The tensions between legislation that conflicts in ethos if not in regulations is no better illustrated than by consideration of the practical impact on two of the most important services to children - education and social services. The most important new legislation for Education Services have been the Education Reform Act (1988) and the Education Acts of 1993 and 1996, with Social Services being provided with the challenge of implementing the Children Act 1989, covered above.

The 1988 Education Reform Act allowed for schools to become self-governing and opt out of Local Government control. Governors were given greater authority over admitting and excluding children. The number of exclusions for poor behaviour increased following the legislation being enacted and local authorities found it increasingly difficult to place excluded children in new schools. The consequences was that some children were spending protracted periods of time out of school, and that looked after children figure disproportionately in that number. Additionally, the introduction of national league tables, based on grades achieved in the National Curriculum, could be seen to discourage schools from accepting children with educational difficulties. This would again impact on looked after children whose attainments have been shown to be poor (see full discussion in Chapter 3).

A further interesting tension is the different focus of education and child care legislation. The major pieces of education legislation listed above were overwhelmingly concerned with the rights of the parent, to greater choice and more information about the performance of their child, and schools in general. The Children Act 1989, however,

establishes the paramountcy of the welfare of the child above all and is clearly ‘child-centred’ as opposed to the more ‘systems’ orientated education legislation, e.g. a prescriptive National Curriculum, league tables for attainments, etc. The Department for Education and the Department for Health recognised these tensions and responded by issuing a joint guidance Circular (13/94). This Circular proposed alliances between Education and Social Services on all levels (i.e. at systems and practitioner levels) to remedy the educational disadvantage of children in care and, “*To do all that a good parent would to ensure that children’s educational needs are met* (para. 1)”. Specific recommendations were also aimed at schools and teachers, e.g. that educational needs should be identified and plans devised to set realistic challenges and academic targets; and carers, e.g. hearing children read and encouraging ownership of books (para. 17). The Circular concluded by emphasising that wherever children looked after were placed, their education should always be a prime consideration.

As recently as 1995, however, a joint report issued by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) stated that the care and education systems, in general, were failing to promote the educational achievement of children in care, and that despite clear identification of the problem, little had been done in practice to boost achievement. In the summary of main findings SSI/Ofsted (1995) reported that:

The recent changes in the balance of responsibilities between schools and the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were not sufficiently considered by SSDs when developing policies, strategic plans and procedures for the children. Schools and

SSDs both continued to look to LEAs to ensure effective liaison and additional support to protect the educational entitlements of the children. (Para. 10).

The changes in legislation impacting on both the Education and Social Services Departments, covered in earlier sections, plus the tensions described above have a major impact on the lives of looked after children. Their lives are inhabited by professionals in a way not experienced by the majority of young people. It would not be unusual for a child to have contact with a number of adults working from a social services department, e.g. a Social Worker, Residential and Youth Justice Workers, and a Reviewing Officer. In addition, the Education Department might be investing time from a Specialist Behaviour or Learning Support Teacher, a School Attendance Officer and an Educational Psychologist. Finally, the Health Trust or Voluntary Organisation might be making therapeutic services available to the young person. All this in addition to the usual range of people such as teachers, general practitioners, dentists, etc.

Any change within or between the departments has the potential to unsettle the lives of children being looked after and with so many services impacting on them, all of whom have had to cope with significant change themselves, there is little likelihood of children experiencing a constant and consistent service. Fletcher Campbell noted that "*What may appear minor changes in themselves or applied to other situations may further disrupt lives already characterised by instability and fragmentation.* (1997, p.2)

Children's Participation in Decision Making

One expression of the different roots of child care and education legislation is the role children have in relation to decision making about their own lives. The landmark decision in the Gillick judgement in 1985 (op. cit.) established that parents have diminishing rights to make decisions on behalf of their children as they mature. The education legislation referred to above, however, is conspicuous by the absence of statements about children's rights. The participation of young people in decision making which impacts on their lives can be supported by reasons of principle and practice. With respect to principle, children have views and opinions which might not be accurately represented by parents or professionals and it is seen as a basic right of individuals to be consulted about decisions that effect them directly. The main practical reason to involve children in planning is that plans are more likely to be based on accurate and complete information; are more likely to be implemented; and are more likely to have beneficial outcomes (Thoburn, 1992; Hodgson, 1996). This can most vividly be illustrated with reference to the tragedies covered in an earlier section where children were simply not listened to and no systems for gaining their perceptions were in place. For example, the enquiry into events in Staffordshire (Kahan, 1991) noted in particular the lack of any complaints procedure which could have enabled children to seek help. Such reports demonstrate that children participation is closely linked to their protection (Caloustre Gulbenkian Foundation, 1993).

Participation is a broad concept that also embraces collective involvement in a community such as a school, children's home or the local neighbourhood. This was clearly expressed by Kahan (1994) when she wrote:

Participation of children and young people is fundamental not only to the openness in the daily life of the establishment, but also to their acceptance of the necessary structure and 'rules of the house'. When they are involved ... they will have an investment in good standards for behaviour, for the environment and the development of 'their home'. This can also be a very effective way of ensuring that the establishment is child-centred and not, as sometimes happens, run for the convenience of the organisation or the staff. (p.145)

It was also incorporated in Children Act Guidance Volume 4 (Dept. of Health, 1991):

It is essential that children should be consulted and their wishes and feelings ascertained in matters concerning them. Good order is much more likely to be achieved in homes where children are routinely involved in decision making about their care. They should be encouraged to accept responsibility for their own care, appropriate to their age and understanding. (para. 1.88)

The Children Act (1989) gave children and young people the right to be involved in decisions which affect them, most notably in relation to Family Court proceedings and involvement with Social Service Departments. The Act places a clear and specific duty on Social Service Departments and the Courts to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child and to take these into account when making decisions.

Children's rights are enhanced in other ways as Social Service Departments are required to establish and make known a complaints procedure that is accessible to children and which includes independent representatives. All children who are party to public (but not private) law proceedings can have access to their own legal representation and the services of a guardian ad litem. For the first time children were given the qualified right to refuse to submit to medical or psychiatric assessment or examination. The criterion for exercising this right is that of 'Gillick competence', namely that the child is judged to have sufficient understanding. The importance of this right is the control it gives to children, placing the onus on professionals to ensure that the value of any assessment or examination is clearly articulated and understood. Children 'of sufficient understanding' can also seek leave from the Family Proceedings Court to apply for a Residence or Contact Order - that is, an Order which determines where the child shall live or with whom they shall have contact. The Children Act has, therefore, changed the relationship between Social Service Departments and young people which is in contrast to the philosophy within the education sphere.

Since 1988 there have been substantial changes in the statutory framework within which schools operate. This has changed the way in which schools are governed and funded; the way in which children are allocated places; the curriculum that is taught; the way in which the performance of children are assessed; and the level of information made available to the general public about schools' performance via 'league tables'. Despite the opportunities presented by these legislative changes, no attempt has been made to include reference to the participation by pupils within the new laws. Indeed, the 1988 Education Reform Act abolished the previous right of pupils to be appointed as school governors.

The Conservative government that saw through all these changes had a strong commitment to giving the consumer a powerful voice in relation to public services. This did not impact on children's rights, however, as the same government saw parents as the consumers of education and not children, who were viewed as passive recipients of education rather than involved members of the school. This stance was laid out clearly in 'Choice and Diversity' (DfE, 1992a).

It seems remarkable that two major pieces of legislation impacting on children which were being drafted contemporaneously. i.e. the 1988 Education Act and the Children Act 1989, should have such fundamentally different perspectives on the voice of children in society. When questioned about this in the House of Commons, the School's Minister replied;

The answer is that the (Children) Act ranges more widely on welfare issues, inter-personal relations and the child's existence in a social environment, whereas the Bill deals with more strictly educational matters. It is at least arguable that there is a difference between taking full account of a young person's attitudes and responses in a social and welfare context and asking the child to make a judgement, utter an opinion or give a view on his or her educational requirements". (Hansard , 1993)

This disparity between the participative philosophy promoted by the Children Act and neglected in education legislation is exemplified in the case of Education Supervision Orders (ESOs). These were introduced in the Children Act to offer support to children who were failing to attend school. Before making an ESO the Court is required to

ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child. No such consultation is required in making the decision to exclude a child from school which is a procedure governed by education legislation and which has a significant impact on that child's future education, employment and general life experiences. A further source of difference between the Children Act and the Education Acts is the omission from the latter of a statutory right for children to 'make representations' or to make complaints regarding any aspect of the education service.

Even though the primary educational legislation does not give a place for the voice of the child the guidance from the Department for Education often goes a little way towards recognising that children might have a view about their own lives. For example, the Circular on Pupil Behaviour and Discipline (DFE, 8/94) recognised, albeit in a tentative way, that children might be positively involved in discussions about whole-school behaviour policies;

Schools can also nurture a greater sense of responsibility in pupils, and greater commitment to aims of the school, by encouraging them to discuss the aims and rules of the school. (para. 21)

Another area covered by educational legislation which promotes children's views in a stronger way than above is contained within the Code of Practice relating to Special Educational Needs covered by the Education Act 1993 (Department for Education, 1994). Although the parent was still viewed as the consumer, children's views were expected to contribute to any assessment and was, therefore, stronger than previous legislation (i.e. the 1981 Education Act). In particular, the Code said that "*The effectiveness of any*

assessment and intervention will be influenced by the involvement and interest of the young person concerned.” (para. 2:34) The benefits being given as:

- *practical - children have important and relevant information. Their support is crucial to the effective implementation of any individual educational programme*
- *principle - children have a right to be heard. They should be encouraged to participate in decision-making about provision to meet their special educational needs.” (para. 2:35)*

Care Arrangements

There have been a number of arrangements made by the state to provide for children in their care. These have included placing the child with a substitute family, fostering, respite or shared-care arrangements, or placement in a residential home where there would be a number of other young people being cared for.

Adoption

Adoption is a form of substitute care through which a permanent family is created when a child is unable to live with his or her natural family, or when birth parents are unwilling or legally prohibited from caring for the child. It is a legal procedure, whereby all the rights and duties of the natural parents are permanently and completely transferred to the adoptive parents. Adoptive families are different from most families in that they are artificially constructed to provide psychological as separate from biological parenting. An historical examination of adoption practice in Britain could start in the Roman period

when it aimed to serve the interests of those adopting. It involved mostly related young males to perform religious ceremonies; to ensure that a family might not die out; or even to cement political alliances between powerful families. Under Roman law, the position of the adopted person was carefully secured and the birth of subsequent children did not deprive the adopted child of his rights. The adopted sons of Roman Emperors even inherited their fathers' empires (Triseliotis et al, 1997).

The second stage in the evolution of adoption involved the idea of providing some security for orphaned and illegitimate children. In the nineteenth century the tradition was to care for dependent children in institutions during their early years, followed by an indenture system when they became older. It was intended that children indentured to families would be fed, clothed, educated and taught a trade, in return for their work for the family. This system of almshouses followed by indenture was, however, becoming overwhelmed by the middle of the century. Revelations about the conditions for children caught up in the system and calls for better care for children coincided with the religious revivalism of the time. This led to different denominational groups and individuals, e.g. Dr. Barnardo, setting up large orphanages that were then found to have serious problems of infant mortality. The result was to increase efforts to place children with families, which were *de facto* adoptions but with no legal security. Adopted children were expected to work hard, behave well and be grateful to the adopters.

The first British adoption law, passed in 1926, was to provide legal recognition and security to out-of-wedlock children and orphans from the First World War, and the

adoptive families. The reasons for the delay in passing an adoption law have been given by Triseliotis et al (1997) as:

- *the stigma attached to non-marital births and fears that adopted children might inherit traits, including 'immorality' and 'bad habits', an attitude that limited adoption, before about 1945, mainly to the working class;*
- *the courts' close guarding of the right of parents;*
- *the reluctance to see inheritance passed on to 'outsiders'; and*
- *the maintenance of class lines based on kinship.*(p.6)

In the period between the two world wars, infant adoption began to gain in popularity. Major factors were the drop in birth rate after the First World War; the development of artificial feeding for infants, which made such adoptions possible; and the growing perception that environment was as important as heredity in shaping a child's personality (Sokoloff, 1993). Following the Second World War adoption began to be viewed as a solution to the problem of infertility and became more popular among the middle classes. Going against the developing views of the importance of the environment in shaping a child's development, great emphasis was given to 'matching' infant and parents to create as 'like' a biological family as possible. An 'adoptable' infant was, generally speaking, white, healthy, with an acceptable background and with normal development. Bowlby's theories (1951) on maternal deprivation and bonding which suggested that children separated from their parents after the age of two would fail to attach themselves to adoptive parents also proved very influential. So in addition to the above list, only children under two would be considered for adoption. Those who were older or who had even a

minor disability were not even considered for adoption - the practice was more interested in the needs of those adopting rather than in the interests of the children.

The numbers involved were relatively small with only 4,500 children being recorded as adopted in 1930, and this included children who were adopted by step-parents and relatives. Ten years later the number had doubled and by 1950 the number was close to 14,000. At that time, and for the next twenty years, adoption by non-relatives was almost entirely confined to the placement with infertile couples of young babies born illegitimately. Confidentiality was considered an essential element of adoption and a major objective of both law and practice was to create an impenetrable barrier between the birth and adoptive parents. The idea of open adoption was not taken seriously until the publication in 1964 of an article on 'genealogical bewilderment' by a psychologist, Sants. This work was described by a leading researcher in child care, Jane Rowe (in Fratter, et al 1991, p.8) as *"...the root from which present-day concerns about the identity were to grow."*

Social changes in the sixties had a dramatic effect on the number of children placed for adoption with the peak year being 1968 when 27,000 adoptions were granted. Jane Rowe (op. cit) explained this rise as follows:

"...the period created a climate in which sex before marriage became widespread amongst all social groups. In spite of this move towards sexual freedom, contraceptive supplies were not readily available, abortion was illegal, accommodation and financial support for single parents was meagre, and public

opinion was still censorious towards unmarried mothers. The result was that thousands of young women decided to place their babies for adoption, often under pressure from their families.” (p.8)

Adoptions themselves were often by step-parents (e.g. 10,000 in 1968) and some by grandparents and other relatives. The local authority Children's Department arranged some adoptions but the majority of agency adoptions were arranged by voluntary bodies such as Barnardo's, the National Children's Home, and the Catholic Rescue Societies. During the late 1970's there was a sudden dramatic change in the number of babies placed for adoption with the number of orders reducing to 11,000 by 1980. While the drop was due largely to the legislation of abortion, the somewhat improved housing and financial provision for single mothers also played a part, as did a shift in public attitudes to out-of-wedlock pregnancy. This reduction in babies led to an increased interest in the possibility of adopting older children, those with disabilities, and black and mixed-heritage children. Pressure from disappointed would-be adopters led to an influential study by Rowe and Lambert, "Children Who Wait" (1975), that revealed many such children who had lost touch with their families and where no efforts were being made to establish substitute family placements, i.e. they were expected to 'languish in care'.

The search now was for 'a home for a child' moving adoption towards a more child-centred approach. This shift was greatly helped by studies showing how well older children placed for adoption could do (Kadushin, 1970) and the work of Goldstein et al (1973) on the reality of psychological parenting. The British Adoption Project

demonstrated success at finding families for special needs children and succeeded in reversing the then current thinking about the adaptability of black children although many would now criticise the BAP for its use of transracial placements for minority race children.

Foster Care

Until the end of the Second World War foster care was predominantly a form of substitute parenting as the children were neither expected to keep in touch with their parents or return to them. With few exceptions, parents and children were cut-off from each other as it was thought that parents would continue to exert bad influence in their children. The practice of fostering, however, was of long standing and Poor Law guardians had experimented with boarding-out, both inside and outside the boundaries of their unions. The big nineteenth century voluntary foundations for children, like Barnardo's Homes, the National Children's Homes, and the Waifs and Strays (the Church of England Children's Society), had also used fostering as one method of child care. Most recently, the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act had required education authorities to board-out children committed to their care by the juvenile courts.

With the implementation of the Children Act 1948 and the setting up of the Children's Department, there was a gradual conceptual shift towards viewing family foster care as a temporary service to parents and the children in need. The influential report of the Curtis Committee (1946) had argued in favour of fostering as the best form of substitute care for deprived children (barring adoption) based on the evidence it received from witnesses who

were recognised as child care experts. These included the children's psychiatrist, Dr. D.M. Winnicott; Dr Susan Isaacs, who had written of the problems of evacuees in Cambridge; and most significantly Lt-Col. John Bowlby who had been working as an Army Psychiatrist from 1940 to 1945.

In 1948, Bowlby had been asked by the World Health Organisation to assist the United Nations who were concerned about the plight of homeless children after the war. This led him to consider all the research that had been carried out in Europe and America on the development of deprived children in different settings. Bowlby concluded by placing a high value on a warm, intimate and continuous relationship between a child and its mother, or a permanent mother substitute. This meant that if a child had to be separated from his parents the best remedy was not an institution, but an adoptive or foster home, preferably with familiar people such as relatives or neighbours. He went on to discuss the views that had underpinned the practices associated with boarding out, for instance the belief that removing a child from home would lead the child to forget the family of origin and start afresh. In the past, and far too often even now, there has been a reluctance on the part of agencies to recognise the following three principle:

a) A clean cut cannot be made between a child and his home.

b) Neither foster-homes nor institutions can provide children with the security and affection which they need; for the child it always has a makeshift quality.

c) Day-to-day arrangements create insecurity in the child and dissatisfaction in the foster mother; sensible long-term plans are essential from the beginning if the child is not to suffer. (Bowlby, 1953 p.137)

The eventual aim of fostering from then onwards was to return the child to the family of origin with social workers, parents and foster carers working jointly towards this end. This shift placed a different set of expectations on foster carers. They were expected to continue to provide the experience of family life to the child and promote his or her emotional, physical and intellectual development. In addition, however, they were expected to include the family origin in a kind of shared parenting activity by encouraging and welcoming parents' visits and talking to the child about the birth family, why he or she was living away from home and what the future held. All this work was to prepare the child for returning home or, if necessary, adoption.

The emergence of specialist fostering in the early 1970's added a new dimension to this form of care by providing families to children with disabilities, and to some of the most difficult children and adolescents who previously were in residential care or in institutions. The specialist foster carers would have received training and enter into a contractual arrangement with the local authority, for which they would receive a salary. This has encouraged a movement towards professionalising all foster care by greater emphasis on selection, preparation, continued training and post-placement support. The final ingredient, salary, is still, however, not a common feature as social service departments have found themselves having to reduce their expenditure over the last 15 years or so,

rather than look for new opportunities to spend money. While discussing finance it must not be overlooked that, aside from the support for fostering from influential theoreticians such as Bowlby, economy was one factor that ensured that foster care was seen as the most desirable means of caring for deprived children. In fact economy, or at least the lack of remuneration, was viewed as an essential element by the Curtis Committee,

"... some of us feel that the acceptance of payment for the work cuts at the root of the relation between foster mother and child which we wish to create..." (para. 470)

Parker (1966) calculated that the average cost of institutional care in 1952/3 was 2.9 times that of the boarded out child and that the gap widened as time went on, i.e. by 1961/2 children in children's homes cost 3.7 times as much as foster care. This had risen to a factor of 7 by the time Utting produced his report (DoH, 1997) and he went on to say that this was not a negligible matter when priorities for the use of limited budget have to be established. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA, 1996) calculated that the average cost of a residential placement was £51,500 per resident compared to £8,125 per foster placement. These figures do not include expenses such as social work time, travel or carer recruitment costs, but the above crude calculation makes the average residential placement six times more expensive than the average foster placement. The virtues of pursuing a policy which cut costs, while contributing to the best interests of deprived children, were obvious at all levels of government and, therefore, fostering remains the chosen method for trying to meet the needs of the majority of deprived children.

The reason the Curtis Report was encouraging of the development of fostering was that the committee wanted to pursue care in a domestic setting, as a retreat from the worst features of institutionalisation. The views were influenced by the depressing scale of the homes (barrack style buildings housing two hundred or more children) or the decrepitude of the fabric of the buildings brought on by years of neglect, exacerbated by wartime conditions. They also found that smaller 'grouped cottage' homes were often no better, being unhomely in appearance and set out in grounds that were often formal and forbidding. Shortage of accommodation also meant that many homes were badly overcrowded. The inadequacies of overworked, untrained staff were also apparent to the committee in the responses made to problems such as bedwetting or destructiveness.

The advice of psychiatrists and psychologists would often have been welcome, yet was rarely available and there was very little evidence that the child guidance service had begun to play a part in helping staff of homes with difficult children (ibid., para.220).

There was also little evidence of the wider needs of children and the environment that would encourage children to grow emotionally and intellectually.

The importance of play to children - space in which to play, toys and equipment to experiment with, interested adults to listen, suggest or unobtrusively to supervise - were all sadly lacking in many homes (ibid., para.211).

The report recognised that fostering was not possible for all children in need and made recommendations to reduce the size of units to a maximum of twelve boys and girls of various ages. There were also recommendations about staffing and training. The cost of pursuing these recommendations, however, proved prohibitive and the Curtis ideal was never achieved and by 1970 there were still nearly as many homes (7,000) with more than twelve children as there were with twelve or fewer (8,000). By that time notions about residential care had developed and changed and the numbers in homes was falling significantly (please see section Chapter Two). Bowlby (1951) underlined the effects of being cared for in such circumstance by stressing the links between the ‘affectionless character’, the intractable delinquent and a cold institutional upbringing. Care in these conditions was the antithesis of the warm, intimate and continuous relationship that he had declared as vital for the child’s successful upbringing and subsequent mental health.

The purpose of children’s homes has been comprehensively described by Utting (1991) as providing a home for children who have decided that they do not wish to be fostered; have had bad experiences of foster care; have been so abused within the family that another family placement is inappropriate; or are from the same family and cannot otherwise be kept together. A children’s home can also provide a setting for multidisciplinary help with social and personal problems, and containment. Tasks include observation and assessment, permanent family placement, juvenile justice projects, respite care for disabled children, and preparation for independent living.

Since the report of the Curtis Committee there has been a trend away from residential care towards care in the community, based on the fact that the latter is both cheaper and

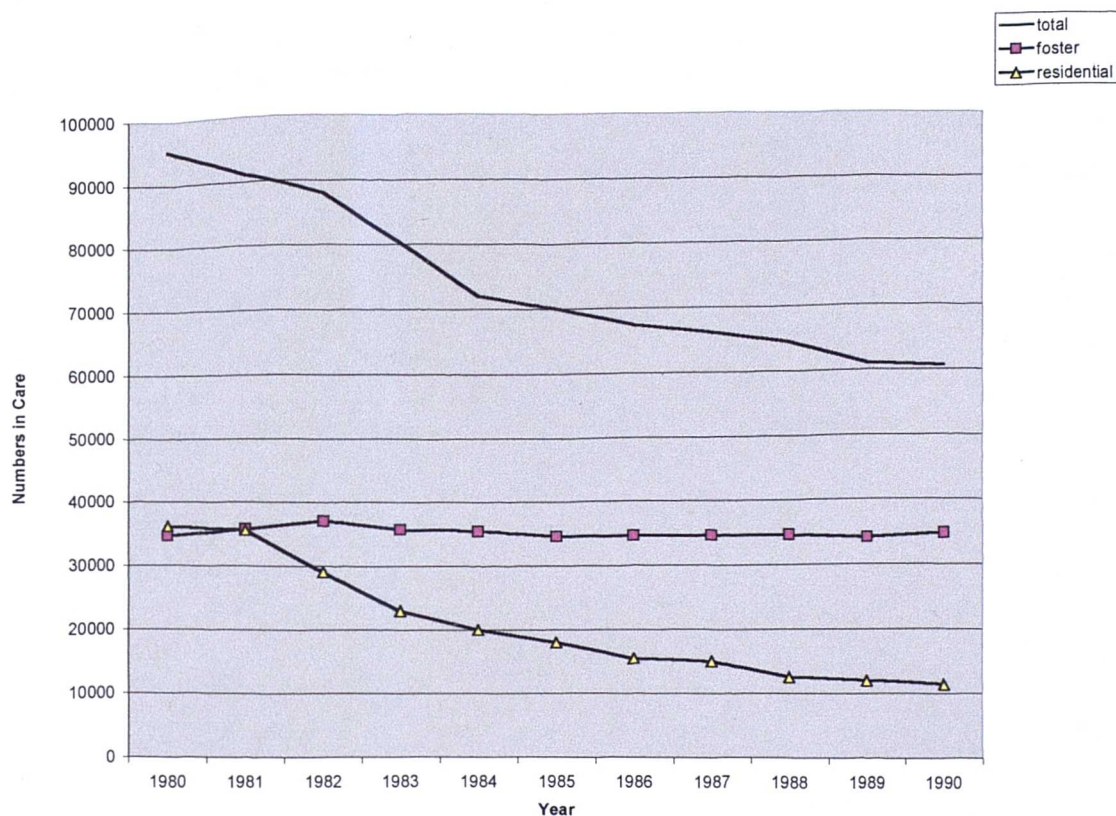
corresponds with the widespread belief that children benefit from placement in a family home. This has resulted in the number of residential homes reducing dramatically and a corresponding increase in the proportion of children placed with foster carers. Utting (1997) reported that the number of children in residential accommodation had reduced from 40,000 in 1975 to only 8,000 in 1995. Linked to this, the proportion of children placed in foster care has more than doubled from 32 per cent in 1978 to 65 per cent in 1997 (NFCA, 1997). Given the overall decline in the numbers, and percentage, of children in care (see Chapter Table 2:2), this means that the number in foster care has remained static over that period with the residential population declining dramatically to around 15 per cent (see Figure 1:1). As the total population of children living in residential homes has decreased, there has been a gradual change in the profile of typical residents. In the report "Remember my Messages" (Who Cares Trust, 1999) attention is drawn to this older population also being, more likely to present multiple problems than those in other forms of accommodation. Utting (1991) characterised residential care as being primarily a service for teenagers and noted the high turnover of clients. This suggested that many, if not most looked after children, would experience a period in a residential home at some time, for instance at entry or breakdown of other arrangements. Utting also mentioned the likelihood that the contracting residential sector would mean that the fostered population would contain a higher proportion of more disturbed children.

Despite the fact that foster care is now the preferred, or sometimes the only available, option for children in care, social workers can qualify to work with children with only a very limited understanding of foster care. A report from the National Foster Care

Association (NFCA, 1997) stated that, "*Students on the main social work qualification course spend only about two days of their two year course on foster care.*" (p. 9)

Figure 1:1 Children in Care at 31st. March 1980 to 1990

(from Utting, 1997)



Following a comprehensive survey of foster care in six local authorities, the Social Services Inspectorate identified serious failings (SSI, 1996). One of the most serious was that many of the children in the survey had not received a thorough assessment of their needs. Not one of the local authorities surveyed met the regulatory requirements in this respect. It is too easy to see how this situation could develop as assessment could be seen as pointless in a system where, all too often, placements were resource-led, with children

having to be placed with the only available care rather than in a home suited to their need. Research in Warwickshire (Cliffe & Berridge, 1991) found that in half the foster placements investigated the child had no option but to go to the only carer vacancy available. The SSI Report found a particular shortage of appropriate carers for black children, and children with special needs. Demographic and economic changes, including the different needs of women regarding work, have contributed to a drying up of the traditional pool of available carers. More rigorous assessment and demand for skills, coupled with inadequate provision of support and incentives, have also contributed to an overall shortage of foster carers. One result of the lack of local foster carers is that children are placed at greater distances from their home and thereby separated unnecessarily from family and friends. They also have to move to new schools in unfamiliar areas (ADSS, 1997). The National Foster Care Association Report "Foster Care in Crisis" (1997) makes a similar point:

Vulnerable children already traumatised by the move out of their birth family, have to face the additional stress of adapting to a new family environment too far removed from their own experience. (p. 29)

The lack of an appropriate placement, whether residential care or foster care, following a thorough assessment foster placement has an obvious impact on the likely success of that placement and contributes to the high level of placement breakdown. The NFCA Report (1997) commented, "*The high level of placement moves experienced by foster children is symptomatic of placements being made with inadequate assessment and child care planning and of resource-led rather than needs-led services. (p. 30)*

Other Forms of Care

The arrangements discussed above cover 90 per cent of the looked after population (DoH, 1997a) with the remaining children being compulsorily accommodated, e.g. children on remand and those subject to emergency protection orders. Respite care developed as an emergency service, frequently providing care within an hospital or institutional setting and usually seen as crisis intervention. Since the early 1980's, however, respite care has been seen increasingly as one aspect of an integrated support service for families with children with special needs. Under the Children Act 1989, the social services department or voluntary agency makes an arrangement for a child who normally lives with his or her family to spend a period of time with either an approved family or in residential care. Parents continue to exercise full parental responsibility. If the period of respite care exceeded 20 days in one session or 120 days in total, then these children were to be counted as part of the looked after population. This ended in 1999 when new reporting requirements were put in place to monitor the Quality Protects initiative discussed later (DoH, 1998). Residential care homes and nursing homes also provide a service for looked after children and in 1996 there were approximately 1,800 children and young people living in such establishments (Utting, 1997). Around 80 per cent of these are in homes primarily for people with learning difficulties.

Secure accommodation is provided for the purpose of restricting liberty and is used for the remand of children while awaiting a decision by the courts; assessment and treatment, particularly of enduring behaviour problems; for the protection of the public; and for the protection of children seriously at risk of harming themselves. The use of secure

accommodation for children in care raises many difficult issues and enshrines the inherent conflict between welfare and punishment approached to the child. With respect to numbers, on the 31st March 1994 there were 244 young people held in secure accommodation. Most of these were boys, three quarters aged between 14 and 16. One in nine had been in the unit for more than one year. Admissions to the units during the twelve months totalled 1365, half the discharges being after less than one month.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the developing involvement of the State in child care through legislation and guidance with respect to professional practice particularly since the 1948 Children Act which was influenced by the Monckton Inquiry (1945). The text also sets out the types and changes in arrangements made by the state to care for children, and chronicles the many subsequent tragedies that have occurred in spite of the particular structural embodiment of the 'Corporate Parent'. The reports of all the committees of inquiry over the years follow similar themes of poor co-ordination and lack of positive action, and the same failures still occur as exemplified by the death of Lauren Creed. The inquiry into her death, by the Norfolk Child Protection Committee (1998), revealed a damning catalogue of failures at every level of the system. Among its findings were uncertainty among child protection staff over their responsibilities; failure to realise the seriousness of the incidents being reported; and failure to interview Lauren alone about her bruises. The report said that mistakes were not made wilfully or through negligence, but because no one agency was aware of the whole picture in the months leading up to

Lauren's death. This gives little assurance that anything has been learned in the period of over 40 years since the Monckton Inquiry.

Chapter Two

State Care and Life Outcomes

In Britain, children come into care for a wide variety of reasons. A small number will have been abandoned as babies, some are in a crisis of adolescence, many have been neglected or offended against. The largest category in March 1994 (DoH, 1996) was that of abused/at risk which accounted for 45 per cent of looked after children, while children classed as offenders accounted for only 1.2 per cent. The 1985 inspection of children's homes by the Social Service Inspectorate identified many children who, in addition to family breakdown, had experienced sexual abuse, violence within the family, repeated rejection and numerous changes of carer before admission to local authority care. Failure to attend school was common and some committed delinquent acts. Solvent abuse, misuse of drugs, self-mutilation or suicidal episodes were also noted. Bebbington and Miles (1989) studied 2500 children entering care in 1987 and found that deprivation was strongly associated with coming into care. Only a quarter were living with both parents; almost three-quarters of their families received income support; only one in five lived in owner-occupied housing and over half were living in 'poor' neighbourhoods. By far the most vulnerable had a one in ten chance of admission to care arising from a combination of a home with a single adult head receiving income support, the family containing 4 or more children; the child being of mixed ethnic origin; and all living in a privately rented home with one of more persons per room.

A study carried out for the Department of Health (DoH, 1991) investigated the reasons for children entering the care system in 1990 and reported that 37 per cent were there on a voluntary basis, i.e. because their parents had requested it or agreed to it. Fewer than 3 per cent were placed on criminal care orders and the remaining 60 per cent on a variety of orders under the Children and Young Persons Act (1969). In a retrospective study of all looked after children completing their compulsory schooling in one local authority (Garnett, 1994) it was found that 68 per cent were aged 11 years or over at the time of their last admission to care, whilst 48 per cent were aged 14 to 16 years of age. It was also reported that the reasons for entering care and the age at entry were strongly associated:

Amongst those who entered care during their pre or primary school years, the most common reasons for admission were reported to be abuse (38% of cases). For those youngsters who were admitted at 11 years of age or over, the most common reasons were 'beyond control/management problems' (31% of cases) and 'offending behaviour' (29% of cases). However, 15% of teenagers were admitted for reasons of 'abuse'. (p.13)

The latest available analysis of the reasons for becoming looked after is taken from the Report on Children Looked After (DoH, 1999c) and covers the 29,700 children who started to be looked after in the year ending 31st March, 1998 (see Table 2:1). This gives the two major reasons for social service intervention as parents abusing or parents neglecting their children. These, together, account for over half the receptions into care with parents' health given as the next most common reason.

Table 2:1 Reasons for Being Looked After
Children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31st. March 1998

Reason for Being Looked After	Number	Percentage
Abuse or neglect	7,700	25.8
Parent's need relief	7,400	24.8
Parent's health	3,700	12.4
Concern for child's welfare	2,300	7.7
Accused of an offence	1,900	6.4
Other	1,600	5.4
Child's own behaviour	1,400	4.7
Abandoned or lost	940	3.1
Request of child	830	2.8
No parents	430	1.4
Preliminary to adoption	410	1.4
Families need relief	360	1.2
Parent(s) in prison	340	1.1
Child homeless	220	0.7
Guilty of an offence	140	0.5
Family homeless	130	0.4
Breakdown of adoption	50	0.2
Freed for adoption	30	0.1
Total	29,880*	100

** N.B. Inconsistency in source data, i.e. Table N of DoH 1999c, due to rounding .*

Changes in the Looked After Population

Following the Children Act of 1949 there was a substantial increase in the number of children in care. Packman (1981) reported that in 1949 there were 55,000 children in care in England and Wales and the figure rose to 62,500 in 1951 and 64,500 in 1952. Part of the rise was due to children's departments having wider responsibilities than their predecessors, covering a greater age range and more categories. Part, however, was likely to have been due to the publicity the new departments received and the presentation of previously unmet needs. Part was also accounted for by a steady movement from the

voluntary to the statutory sector. Other factors identified include the rise in delinquency rates, that doubled between 1954 and 1958 (Ingleby, 1960). The increase in the numbers of children in the care system continued and reached a high point in 1978 when there were 95,816 children in the care of local authorities in England (DoH, 1991).

During the 1980s there was a gradual decline in the care population and at the end of March 1990 the numbers had reduced to 60,532. The overall population of children declined during that period, but there was nevertheless a substantial decrease of 29 per cent in the number of children in care. This number decreased still further with SSI/Ofsted (1995) reporting that there were about 55,000 young people in England being looked after in 1992; and the Department for Health reporting 49,150 at 31st March 1994. From this low point in 1994, however, the numbers have been gradually increasing each year and by March 31st 1999 they stood at 55,325. i.e. an increase of 8 per cent. This has not only been a rise in absolute numbers, which might reflect an increase in the overall population, but also a small increase in the percentage of the 0 to 18 year old population coming into the care system (see Table 2:2).

The numbers for looked after children given in Table 2:2 below relate to the total number of children looked after at a single point in time, i.e. on 31st March of the year in question. The number looked after at any time during the year is, understandably, higher, e.g. in the year ending 31st March 1998 the estimated number was 87,500 or 0.77 per cent of the 0 to 18 year old population (DoH, 1999c). Another way to express this flux in the looked after population is to report that the total cases started in the year exceeded the cases still looked after at the end of the year by 28 per cent (DoH, 1995). The aggregate figures for

England, as shown in Table 2:2, also conceal considerable variation between local authorities. This variation is said to reflect differences in needs of the populations that the local authorities serve, as well as differences in the responses of the individual social services departments to meeting those needs. The figures for individual authorities range from 0.08 per cent in Rutland to 1.24 per cent in Kingston Upon Hull (DoH, 1999c).

Table 2:2 Numbers and Percentages of Children Being Looked After

Year	No. Looked After	% of 0 - 18 Population
1949	55,255	*
1950	58,987	*
1952	64,682	*
1954	64,560	*
1956	62,347	*
1958	62,070	*
1960	61,729	*
1962	63,648	0.48
1964	66,281	0.49
1966	69,157	0.49
1968	69,358	0.50
1970	71,210	0.50
1972	86,504	0.64
1974	91,316	0.67
1976	95,786	0.71
1978	95,816	0.73
1980	95,298	0.74
1982	88,663	0.70
1984	74,845	0.61
1986	67,326	0.56
1988	64,352	0.55
1990	60,532	0.52
1992	55,470	0.48
1994	49,150	0.42
1996	50,518	0.43
1998	53,338	0.45
1999	55,325	0.46

Source: Private communication (DoH, 2000)
Population estimates not available for 1949 - 1960, data held in quinary age bands only.

Utting (1991) considered that the reduction in numbers reflected changes in practice, i.e. the virtual ending of care orders in criminal proceedings and the development of more preventative approaches by social service departments. Prevention made sufficient psychological and economic sense to produce a broad consensus on its desirability. He also considered, however, that there was a higher threshold for admission into care, with the inevitable outcome that those who cross it are likely to have, on balance, a greater concentration of difficulties than their predecessors.

During the 1980s there was a great reduction in the former approved school population (introduced in the 1933 Children and Young Person's Act). This reduction, which itself led to a decreased demand for residential care, arose from reaction against the Children and Young Person Act 1969 which sought to establish local authority care as a major means of dealing with juvenile offenders. It replaced approved schools and remand homes with residential community homes with educational facilities. This was on the basis that the same roots produced both delinquency and social deprivation. The reaction against it was due to a lack of belief in the efficacy of the approach and a view that the 'sentence' of care was more punitive than a straightforward sentence.

Duration of Care Episodes

The Department of Health publish annual data on the amount of time that children and young people spent in the care during their last episode of being looked after. It demonstrates that a significant majority return to their parents within eight weeks of first being received into care, but that there has been a trend towards longer placements over

the years 1995 to 1999. During that period the percentage of children being returned home within 8 weeks gradually reduced from 45 per cent to 40 per cent. This has resulted in increases in other categories of duration, but without there being a strong pattern, e.g. over the same period the percentage being looked after for 6 months to one year has go up and down.

Table 2:3 Duration of Last Period of Care 1995 to 1999 (percentages)
(extract from DoH, 1999a)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Under 8 weeks	45	44	42	42	40
8 weeks to under 6 months	15	16	16	16	17
6 months to under 1 year	9	10	10	13	12
1 year to under 2 years	9	9	10	11	11
2 years to under 5 years	13	12	13	11	13
5 years and over	9	9	9	7	7

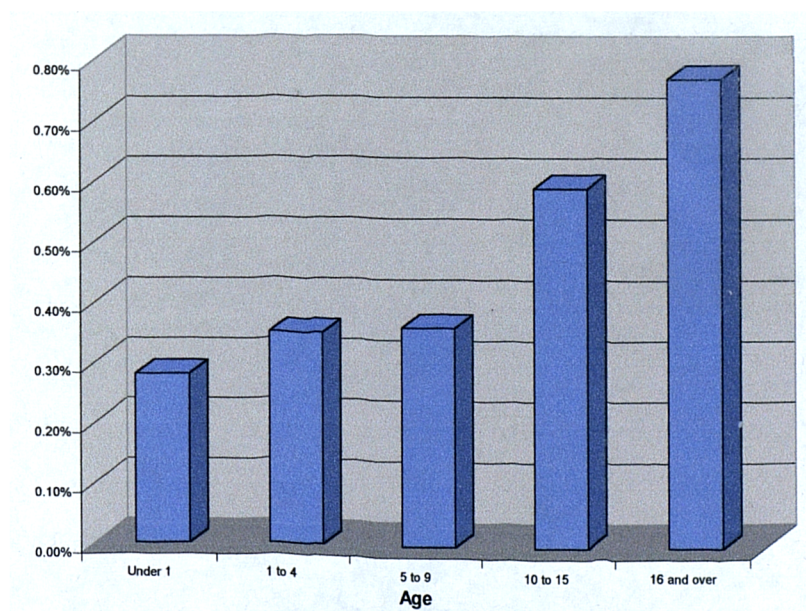
The difficulty with the information in Table 2:3, however, is that it doesn't necessarily give a true picture of the amount of time an individual child might have spent in care in total, as it only lists the last care episode and an individual might have had more than one episode. Garnet (1994), found that fifteen per cent of her survey of Y11 looked after children in Humberside had been in care for more than ten years.

Age and Gender

The mean age of children coming into the care system has been steadily falling for a number of years, e.g. it was 11 years 2 months at March 31st 1988 while ten years later the mean age had gone down to 10 years and 6 months (DoH, 1999c), and was said to be

continuing to fall. The Department of Health reports for intervening years marked the steady decline, i.e. 10 years 11 months in 1996, and 10 years 10 months in 1997 (DoH, 1997a). Given this lowering of the age that children enter the care system it isn't surprising that the percentage of all looked after children under 10 years of age is increasing. This stood at 31 per cent in 1987 and rose to 36 per cent in 1996, rose again to 40 per cent in 1997 and finally to 42 per cent at 31st. March 1998 - the last available report from the Department of Health (DoH, 1999c). The full distribution in March 1998 was 4 per cent under 1 year; 17 per cent between 1 year and 4 years; 23 per cent aged 5 to 9 years of age, 14 per cent between 10 and 15, and 16 per cent were 16 years and over. Although the mean age of children in the care is falling, a far greater proportion of older children are looked after as set out below.

**Figure 2:1 Percentage of General population Looked after by Age
(at March 31st. 1998)**



Boys are over-represented in the looked after population and, in 1998, they accounted for 55 per cent of children in care, compared to 51 per cent of all children in England. Girls, therefore, are correspondingly under-represented making up 45 per cent compared with 49 per cent. These proportions have been only subject to minor variations over time, e.g. the percentages were exactly the same in 1988 (DoH, 1999c).

Legal Status

The Department of Health reported that at 31st. March 1998, 60 per cent of all looked after children were on Care Orders, with a further 36 per cent being accommodated under single voluntary agreements. The remainder were either on remand, committed for trial or had some other legal status (DoH, 1999c). Table 2:4 shows the change in the use of care orders over a seven year period with a gradual reduction between 1992 and 1996 before increasing again (n.b. different categories were used prior to 1992 and the full implementation of the Children Act 1989). This upward trend is likely to continue as the Department of Health have reported an increase in the use of care orders for children being received into care from 1997. For example, during 1996/97 there were 4,600 children who started to be looked after under care orders compared to 3,300 during the previous year. This increase in the use of care orders, half of which is accounted for by the increased use of interim care orders, and the decline in voluntary arrangements is consistent with the increase in children being looked after due to abuse or neglect (DoH, 1999c).

Table 2:4 The Legal Status of Children in Care 1992 - 1998
(calculated from data in DoH 1999c)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Care Order	68%	62%	59%	58%	57%	58%	60%
Accommodated	31%	36%	38%	39%	39%	38%	36%
Other e.g. remand	1%	2%	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%

The figures for England given above, conceal wide variations in practice across the country. For example, on average 36 per cent of children looked after children in 1998 were accommodated with the range for individual local authorities extending from 7 per cent in Hartlepool to over 60 per cent in four outer London boroughs, and 71 per cent in Rutland.

Changes in Care Arrangements

It was noted in Chapter One that there had been a significant change in care arrangements for the majority of looked after children. Table 2:5 illustrates the dramatic shift away from the majority being placed in children's homes towards placement in foster care. Chapter One gave a general overview of the reasons put forward for this change, and the part that psychology and child development played is examined in greater detail below.

Table 2:5 Changes in Care Arrangements (percentages)

Year	Foster Care	Children's Homes	Placed with Parents	Placed for Adoption	Other
1974	32	40	17	-	11
1976	33	39	18	-	10
1978	35	35	18	-	12
1980	37	34	18	-	11
1982	42	30	18	-	10
1984	48	24	17	-	11
1986	52	22	15	-	11
1988	54	21	14	2	9
1990	57	19	13	3	8
1992	58	16	12	5	9
1994	64	15	9	4	8
1996	65	13	9	4	9
1998	66	12	11	5	6
1999	65	11	11	5	6

Source: Private communication (DoH, 2000)

Stability in Care and Duration of Placement

The number of different placements a child has experienced is seen as an important indicator of the stability of care that the child has received as continuity, or stability, of care is seen as having an impact on general development. The Department of Health have been concerned about the number of changes that children experience in care, and have set targets through the Quality Protects Programme (DoH, 1998) for local authorities to achieve. The specific target is that a maximum of 16 per cent of looked after children experience 3 or more moves in a year, to be achieved by 2001. At 31st. March 1998 the DoH reported that nationally 19.3 per cent of looked after children had experienced three or more moves during the previous year. This was a reduction on the two previous years, i.e. 20 per cent in 1997 and 20.8 per cent in 1996 (DoH, 1999c). There was, as with all the national data presented above, wide variations between

individual authorities and in this case the range was from 0 per cent (Kensington and Chelsea) to 38 per cent (Solihull). Finally, Table 2:6 gives an indication of the mean duration that children spent in different types of placement. This shows that young people tend to spend considerably longer in care if placed in a children's home rather than with a foster family. This is, however, not surprising as the young people placed in children's homes are likely to have more complex problems and challenging behaviour, and might have experienced breakdown in a previous foster placement (Utting, 1991).

Table 2:6 Duration of Care Placements
(For placements ceasing during year ending 31st. March 1998 - DoH, 1999c)

Type of Placement	Number	Mean Duration (Days)
Foster placement	61,400	210
Children's homes	12,800	460
With parents	5,700	330
Other	4,700	150
Living independently	2,800	150
Placed for adoption	1,700	490
Residential schools	1,500	230
All placements	90,500	210

Early Experiences and Life Outcomes for Looked after Children

The changes over time in the arrangements the State makes to care for children have been set out in Chapter One, with further more detailed analysis in the section above. These changes have partly been influenced by differing theories about child development and

children's needs, both physical and psychological. One of the most pervasive views held about early childhood experiences is that they are likely to predetermine the individual's future. These views have been both developed and supported by major figures in the world of psychological knowledge. Theories expounded in the early 1900's by Freud and J.B. Watson, representing opposing theoretical positions in psychology, both saw experiences in the early years as crucial to success in later life. These theories were reinforced by Bowlby's highly influential views outlined in Chapter One. As nearly all children who enter the care system will have suffered neglect or abuse it is worth considering the extent to which early negative experiences can be ameliorated by later more positive forms of care. Clarke and Clarke (1998) presented evidence to support a less direct link between poor early experience and negative outcomes:

In summary, for most children 'good' early experiences tend to be reinforced during development, and 'bad' likewise. Especially where a sharp and continuing break occurs, one can estimate the consequences, or lack of them, of the earlier period. This also applies to those cases where early educational intervention sets off a sequence of positive, enduring parental and other effects. The evidence is firm; while there is a range of outcomes, early social experience by itself does not predestine the future. (p. 436)

Rutter (1989) expressed much the same view in a slightly different way. He talked about 'chain' effects during development, "*Life transitions have to be considered both as end products of past processes and as an instigator of future ones ... as both independent and dependent variables*" (p. 46). He proposed that there were 'risk' factors and 'protective' factors and used a follow-up study, carried out with Quinton, of girls brought up in

children's homes to illustrate this (Quinton & Rutter, 1988). They proposed that the major protective influence which enabled the girls to provide good parenting for their own children was the presence in adult life of support from a non-deviant spouse:

However, having such a partner was not just a matter of good luck. It was influenced by the social settings in which the young women found themselves and particularly by whether or not, in late adolescence, they had shown a tendency to plan ahead. This in turn, depended on their having had positive experiences at school. Thus the 'outcome' was not decided by any single event - both risk and protective mechanisms derived from a chain of continuities and discontinuities over time that served to increase or decrease the likelihood of a maladaptive outcome.

(p.20)

In an earlier work, Rutter (1979) also demonstrated that exposure to hazards increased in linear fashion (summed), but the behaviour problems associated with hazard exposure increased geometrically (multiplied). Schorr and Schorr (1988) supported this view and saw that children from stressful or damaging home backgrounds were especially vulnerable to the damaging effects of poor schooling. On a more positive note, they did point out that if risk factors multiplied each other, then interventions that reduced one risk factor could have a relatively large effect by removing a multiplier. Schaffer (1992) considered that the idea that specific experiences, occurring at specific points in time, " ... *can in themselves have long-term consequences must be rejected in favour of a much more complicated, multi-determined and continuing process.* (p.51) As an example, Tonge et al. (1983) carried out a follow-up study of thirty-three multi-problem families they first identified fifteen years before as " ... *families having contact with the largest*

number of social agencies (p. 39). They found that, in adulthood, about one third of the children lived normally, the second third were marginal, and the final third remained seriously deprived. In a later study by Kolvin et al. (1990) it was shown that a population of previously deprived children included 13 per cent who were living entirely normally as adults. This was also a follow-up study, in this case of the children of families classified as deprived in the 1947 Newcastle Thousand Families Study. They used six main areas to define deprivation, i.e. family / marital disharmony, parental illness, defective care, social dependence, housing and overcrowding. In another study, Rutter (1990) drew attention to protective factors in terms of individual personality differences as well as socially supportive ones. He acknowledged the 'permitting circumstances' in which good-enough parenting becomes possible. Environmental, social and economic factors can all have a major impact on parents' ability to parent. There are then the more personal and interpersonal factors that contribute to resilience. These include the inner psychological resources of the child, the quality of the relationship between children and their parents and whether the family benefits from supportive networks within the community.

Another source of evidence about the resilience of children and their ability to make progress following adversity comes from outcome studies of children orphaned during recent civil strife in Europe, e.g. Rutter et al (1998). This study involved the assessment of 111 Romanian children at the time of their adoption in the United Kingdom, all before two years of age, and again at the age of four. At the initial assessment, almost half the cohort were suffering from severe developmental impairment (below the 3rd. centile for height, weight, and general cognitive functioning) but at four their physical and cognitive 'catch-up' was described as dramatic. Returning to Clarke and Clarke's review (1998),

they gave two very persuasive reasons why negative early experiences should not be viewed as inevitably leading to poor life outcomes. The first was simply that the evidence did not support this position and the second was that:

... an acceptance of the early years as critical can carry with it subtle lowered expectancies for psychologically damaged children and hence less than desirable interventions. (p. 436)

This theme of lowered expectations has been picked up in almost all the major reports into the care of looked after children. For example, the joint departmental guidance on looked after children (DfE/DH, 1994), exhorted that teachers should guard against having low expectations of children being looked after and should set realistic challenges and academic targets.

Psychological Adjustment

Before moving on to discuss the research on life outcomes for looked after children, it is necessary to consider some underlying psychological processes. These have a significant impact on children's ability to adjust to new environments and circumstances, and impact on the success, or otherwise, of placements. Fahlberg (1988) outlined the development problems that could be experienced by looked after children drawing attention to delayed cognitive development resulting from a mixture of early deprivation and disruption, i.e. the numbers of moves could lead to gaps in learning and social development. Delayed emotional development was seen as resulting from previous abusive relationships. The child placed in care usually experienced loss of regular contact not only with parents but

also with the extended family, friends, pets, home, school, neighbourhood and routines. This can result in grief reactions including anger and rejection of the substitute carers as well as depressed moods. The child might find it difficult to express feelings and may instead show symptoms of stress such as fears and phobias. They may become over-dependent or may conversely become too independent, being reluctant to create an attachment in case significant others disappear.

One of the key notions in attachment theory, as outlined by Howe (1995), is that children who find themselves in close social relationships which are unreliable and unpredictable have to develop defensive strategies in order to cope with the psychological stress and anxiety that such relationships engender. Anxiety normally triggers attachment behaviour in which children 'approach' their attachment figure seeking proximity a warm, secure base. When a child's attachment figure fails to supply comfort and affection, the emotional pain and anxiety this causes results in the child developing alternative defensive strategies. Rather than approach the unresponsive attachment figure, the child tries to cope by withdrawing from and 'avoiding' the potentially rejecting relationship. The child attempts to become, in Bowlby's term, emotionally self-reliant (Bowlby, 1979). These strategies are adaptive to that situation and make sense when seen in the context of adverse emotional and social environments but might well be viewed as generally maladaptive. When the child approached a subsequent relationship, such as with a new caregiver, he or she will be heavily influenced by the quality of past relationships and the defensive manoeuvres they triggered.

Outcome Studies

The belief that removing children from feckless families and placing them in substitute care would automatically result in good outcomes was a common perspective until the early 1960s. At that time the Social Science Research Council was established and the many new departments of social policy in universities, and polytechnics, led to a great increase in social science research. A number of systematic studies were undertaken which focused on outcomes of particular policies, most notably foster care (e.g. Trasler, 1960) and an influential study in 1973 by Rowe and Lambert. This highlighted how many children were shown to languish in 'care' with no firm plans for their future. These led to wider issues being investigated, such as whether it might be better for most vulnerable children to remain with their families as separation was not shown to improve their life chances. Successive studies led to a growing disquiet about the quality and appropriateness of services for disadvantaged children and have emphasised the number of needs that have not been met. The report of the Seeborn Committee (1968), which outlined the broad shape of current social services departments, stated that they attached great importance to research:

The personal social services are large-scale experiments in ways of helping those in need. It is both wasteful and irresponsible to set experiments in motion and omit to record and analyse what happens. (para. 455) ...need for accurate and complete information in an area of social policy all too liable to be affected by partial research, individual cases and anecdotal evidence. (para. 255)

The same report, however, also recognised the shortcomings of the systems in operation at that time commenting that, *"Research depends on basic data being readily available, but at the moment there is inadequate provision for the systematic collection and sharing of information."* (para. 97) Following the advice of Seebohm, when social services departments were first established in 1970 the majority incorporated some research capacity into their organisation. It would appear, however, that due to reorganisations, policy changes and fluctuating resourcing much of this research potential was lost by the time the House of Commons Social Services Committee reported in 1984:

There is a lack of research into children in care, and an even more noticeable absence of a co-ordinated approach to dissemination of research once completed. Some aspects have been profoundly and even repetitively studied; others apparently neglected. (para. 258)

The Department of Health took steps, in 1987, to consider the question of outcomes in child care by setting up a working party of policy makers, practitioners, and leading child care researchers to establish the state of knowledge in the field and to make recommendations regarding improvements in assessment procedures and care management. When reviewing the research on outcomes, the working party (Parker, et. al., 1991) concluded that:

...with few exceptions, almost everything that could be called 'outcome research' centred on a single measure - the breakdown or continuance of placements. On many of the aspects of the child's life that are generally agreed to be important, for example education whilst 'in care', no research existed at all. It further became

clear that no satisfactory instruments were available for determining outcomes for children who had been or were being looked after by the local authority. (p.5)

Care leavers account for fewer than 1 per cent of their age group, yet they are massively over-represented amongst those who are disadvantaged. Detailed research findings are provided below in relation to major aspects of disadvantage, i.e. health, employment, crime, homelessness and poverty. The fact that young people leave the care system unprepared for independent living and unsupported by either local authorities or families, is reflected in the statistics for young homeless. Triseliotis et al (1995) found care leavers to be a particularly vulnerable, unhappy and dissatisfied group, feeling rejected by the system. Although they started off with high expectations of post-care life, they quickly became disillusioned. This is linked in the literature with poor educational outcomes (see Chapter Three) and the increased likelihood of being unemployed and experiencing homelessness and poverty.

Health and Mental Health

Research has consistently demonstrated the relationship between social disadvantage and impaired development. For example, Spencer (1996) has reviewed a range of health factors, and shown that there is a relationship between degree of social disadvantage and low birth weight, infant mortality, and death from subsequent life events. Children from social class 5, compared with those from class 1, are 3 times more likely to die from injuries; 7 times when these are due to a traffic collision with a pedestrian; 8 times when due to fire; and 15 times when due to head injuries. When the House of Commons Social Services Committee conducted an inquiry into health aspects of one very disadvantaged

group, children in care (HMSO, 1984) they found a picture which was starkly different from the approach to health care found within the average family and commented:

Because a child in care often lacks one single person intimately familiar with his medical history, symptoms which normal caring parents would be in a position to observe and interpret may go unnoticed, so that they may suffer from non-acute but serious problems such as hearing or sight defects or other long-standing conditions such as asthma or diabetes. Younger children in particular may miss out on the proper series of inoculations, and dental treatment may be unduly intermittent.

(para. 331)

In their guide to healthcare and planning for looked after children (DoH, 1999a) the Department of Health comment that:

There is clear research and practice evidence that children and young people who are looked after away from home have greater levels of health needs than their peers yet are less likely to receive adequate health care, including mental health and monitoring. (para. 1.5)

Research carried out by Biehal (1995) found that 60 per cent of her sample of 183 care leavers from three local authorities suffered from serious health issues. These findings are unsurprising given the comments on health care for children being looked after made by Utting (1991). He reported that there was evidence that the process of health assessment generally was haphazard and the use of medical services was largely in response to illness with little concern with prevention and health education.

Linked with general social disadvantage is the increased likelihood of early pregnancy.

The report of the Social Exclusion Unit, Teenage Pregnancy (SEU, 1999), recognised that teenage pregnancy was, "*... a problem which affects every part of the country. Even the most affluent areas in England have teenage birth rates which are high by European standards. But it is far worse in the poorest areas and amongst the most vulnerable young people, including those in care and those who have been excluded from school.*"

(p.2) The report recognised that the reasons for such high rates were complex but drew particular attention to poor expectations of education and / or the job market.

Stein and Carey (1986) reported that at least one in seven young women leaving care was pregnant or already a mother. Sinclair and Gibbs (1996) reported similar findings with 17 per cent of young women leaving care being pregnant or already mothers. In her study of all looked after children leaving Humberside schools in July 1993, Garnett (1994) found that by the following January, one-in-eight of the young women were either pregnant or were already mothers. The studies mentioned in this section give a range of figures for pregnancy rates, from 12 per cent to 40 per cent, which is not surprising given that the 'population' size was inevitably small. However, whatever the actual rate might be, it is certainly much higher than the equivalent teenage pregnancy rate for England of approximately 3 per cent (SEU, 1999).

The mental health of children in care has received, by comparison, more attention from research than physical health and the theories that have been developed from this research

have sought to explain the origins of childhood psychopathology, e.g. the work of Bowlby on maternal deprivation. Mapstone (1969) reported on 314 children out of a total sample of 15,000, in the National Child Development Study, who had spent some time in care before the age of seven years and nine months. It was found that a third of these were classified as 'badly adjusted' on the Bristol School Adjustment Guide, which was three times higher than in the general population. Rutter et al. (1983) found that women who had been in care obtained higher scores on the Malaise Inventory (a screening device for detecting neurotic ill health); had a significantly higher rate of psychiatric disorder during the early years of parenthood; and interacted less with their young babies. Whatever the reasons for behavioural and emotional disturbance amongst children in care there is evidence that the rates are higher than in the general population. A study of children in the care of one local authority showed that the rate of psychiatric disorder was 67 per cent among those in both residential and foster care. This compares with a 15 per cent disorder rate among children generally (Community Care, 1996).

Dimigen et al (1999) found a high prevalence of mental health problems in children and young people entering public care, and a study in Oxfordshire by McCann et al (1996) found a particularly high prevalence amongst those looked after children in the residential sector. The Department of Health guidance (1999a) summed up the plight of looked after children as:

Conduct and anxiety disorders, depression and attentional disorders are particularly common in this group of children and young people. These young people have often experienced family break-up, bereavement or abuse. They may

have a history of being misunderstood, rejected and poorly served by the communities in which they live and by statutory agencies. (para 9.2)

Employment

The transition from care to independent living tends to be accelerated for looked after children (see below) and to overlap with other key transitions, in particular the transition from school to work or training. For most care leavers, without the security of the parental home, gaining entry to the youth labour market is a priority and success or failure in this area may act reciprocally on other aspects of their lives such as their ability to manage their accommodation or to sustain friendships.

Employment, or the lack of it, can be a significant problem for young people who have a history of care. The SSI study in 1985 found that fewer than 30 per cent of 368 children over school leaving age encountered in their inspections were in further education or employment. The lack of access to experiences which would help them make informed choices and understand the links between education and work was identified in Barnados (1996) as one of the reasons for this. One of these experiences is careers guidance, and Garnet (1994) found that only 35 per cent of the 124 looked after young people who completed Year 11 in 1993 in Humberside had a careers interview. She went on to report that only 48 per cent were engaged in further education or Youth Training by the following October. This was compared with 83 per cent of the County's school leavers. Twenty-one per cent were reported to be unemployed compared with the County mean of just under five per cent. By the following January, the unemployed figure had risen to thirty-three per cent.

A survey for the National Children's Bureau (Biehal et al, 1992) found that 80 per cent of young people were unemployed 30 months after leaving care. Her later survey (Biehal, 1995) of a sample of 183 care leavers from three local authorities gave a rate of 36.5 per cent unemployment shortly after leaving care, rising to 50 per cent when 74 young people were followed up six months later. To put this into perspective, national unemployment amongst 16-19 year olds in 1993 was 22 percent for males and 16 per cent for females in this age band (Social Trends, 1994). Biehal also reported that 80 per cent of 18 to 24 year old ex-care users were jobless, compared with the national mean of 16 per cent. A larger survey of 859 young people (Broad, 1994) reported a rate of 49 per cent unemployment rate. Similarly, Sinclair and Gibbs (1996) found that 50 per cent of their sample of 16 year olds leaving care were unemployed, compared with the national mean of 18 per cent.. Being without work produces additional problems while in care and becomes acutely disabling at the point at which a young person should become self sufficient. This lack of 'mainstream' employment can make it more likely that these young people experience homelessness and poverty, or resort to crime or prostitution.

Homelessness and poverty

Every year approximately 10,000 young people leave care from foster homes, children's homes, and other provision arranged by the local authority (SSI, 1997). Unlike young people in the wider population who remain in their family home until their early twenties young care leavers are required to survive independently at a younger age. Jones (1987), in a large scale survey in Scotland, found that the median age for children leaving care was

17 years which compared to 20 years of age for females in the general population and 22 for males. Biehal et al (1992) found that 24 per cent of her sample (i.e. 18 young people) moved to independent accommodation at 16 and 61 per cent (i.e. 45) had done so by 18. In her later survey (Biehal, 1995) she found that by 19, 59 per cent were living in independent households compared to 0.5 per cent of the general population. Young people in care often have no choice but to leave their children's home or foster family and this results in young people who have been in care being greatly over-represented in the numbers of homeless people. For example, Biehal (1995) found that of her survey " ... 22 per cent (16) had become homeless within the period 18 to 24 months after leaving care, some on more than one occasion. For care leavers, leaving care at 16 or 17 clearly increases the risk of homelessness." (p.52) She also found that young men were twice as likely as young women to be homeless. A survey for the Department of Environment (DoE, 1981) of 134 homeless young people aged under 25 revealed that 22 per cent had been in care. The percentage for the forty-four young people under the age of 20 was much higher, at 32 per cent:

"It seems clear from our evidence that institutions play an important part in the experience of homelessness. Half of the respondents [all homeless] had been in institutions such as prisons, borstals, mental institutions, ... and a third of the under 20's age group had been in child care institutions. (p.103)

Stein & Carey's (1986) study of a representative group of 45 care leavers concluded that the limited amount of preparation and support available to the young people, as they embarked on independent life, compounded rather than compensated for the disadvantages they had experienced in childhood. In particular they found that young

people who had been in care were more likely to lack educational qualifications, to be unemployed, to be living in poverty, to change accommodation frequently and to be confused about their past and unsettled in their current relationships. Maclagan (1993) found that one in ten 16-17 year old claimants of Department of Social Security severe hardship payments had been in care and Garnett (1994) reported that out of 124 Year 11 pupils in Hull, there were 13 young people (10 per cent) who, "*... were living in some form of independent or semi-independent accommodation and had been living there for some time prior to their official school-leaving date.*" (p.15). A study for Barnardos (1996) revealed that a third left their care aged 16 and almost all had left by their 18th birthday and drew attention to the common experience that once young people become homeless, their prospects of finding a route out of homelessness were very poor. A Social Services Inspectorate report on care leavers (SSI, 1997) concluded that many young people leaving care each year after age 16 are left isolated and vulnerable. Finally, Vostanis and Cumella (1999) reviewed three studies of homeless where interviews had been conducted with over 600 homeless young people in total. They found that up to half the single young homeless in each study had social work 'in care' experiences. They accounted for this by saying that:

The care system appears to foster an over-reliance on others, where survival skills are acquired for group rather than independent living. Residents [of homeless shelters] are frequently ill prepared for independent living with limited problem solving skills. (p.87)

Crime

Only one per cent of young people looked after by local authorities in England and Wales in 1995 came into the care system on remand, committed for trial or detained by the courts (DoH, 1996). Longer term, however, those who have been in public care have a high probability of becoming involved in crime. A national survey of the prison population (Office of Population, Census and Surveys, 1991) suggests strongly that being in public care was correlated with later imprisonment. The survey found that 38 per cent of the prison population under 21 had such experiences, compared with 2 per cent of the general population. Another survey in the same year (Prison Reform Trust, 1991) reported that 23 per cent of adult prisoners and up to 38 per cent of young offenders had been in care. The National Children's Bureau also reported that 38 per cent of prisoners between 18 and 25 years of age had been in care (NCB 1992). The Audit Commission report on young people and crime 'Misspent Youth' (1996) linked the vulnerability of children in care becoming involved in crime to disaffection from school which either led to exclusion or self-exclusion, "*The antipathy between school and the disruptive child is usually mutual, and disaffected young people who are not excluded often truant from school.*" (p.67)

Links between Outcomes and Care Placement

Most research on children placed in permanent substitute families has focused on the risk factors for placement breakdown. The overall level of adoption breakdown quoted falls within the range 7-21 per cent with much of the variability due to studies differing on sample characteristics such as age at placement, and pre-placement experiences. A review

showed that late placement had positive outcomes, findings were hard to aggregate due to differing sample characteristics; length of follow-up period; and measures of children's psychological state. Studies that have assessed psychological functioning of children placed after infancy have focused on placements of pre-school children, for example, 86 per cent of the adoptees in the study by Tizard and Hodges (1978) were placed between 2 and 4 years of age.

The research reported by Rushton et al (1995) is the first prospective study known to the author that assessed the psychological functioning of children placed after 5 years of age, even though such placements are quite common. Although the study only had a small sample, 16 boys between the ages of 5 and 9, the data revealed some differences between those with good and poor outcomes, and highlighted potential causal paths. The psychological development of the boys was assessed at 1, 12, 60 and 96 months into placements and this revealed that conduct and emotional problems fell significantly after the first year. However, they also reported a high rate of breakdown, i.e. by 8 years nineteen per cent of placements had disrupted and 15 per cent of the remainder had a poor outcome. Of significance was their finding that the level of pre-placement adversity predicted placement outcomes. They found that the total number of admissions to care did not predict outcome, although there was a non-significant trend for a greater risk of poor outcome for those who had a first admission under the age of two or prolonged residential placement. A significant association was found between poor outcomes and an absence of any prior experience of good parenting. Placement with childless parents also predicted a more positive outcome.

The cohort studies of the National Children's Bureau (Crellin, et al., 1971) suggested that illegitimate children who were adopted fared better socially and educationally than their counterparts who remained with their families and better, even, than legitimate children in their own homes. Tizard (1977) found that children adopted from institutional care compared very favourably with those who returned to their parents. Her most striking finding was that on all measures (intellectual, scholastic and emotional) the 'restored' children were disadvantaged compared with the adoptees. They and their parents were less often attached to each other, and where there were siblings, these were preferred to the restored child. Tizard considered that the adoptive families strongly encouraged the development of attachments while those of the restored children hindered them. Howe (1995) interviewed the adoptive parents of 300 children to try to determine the impact of the pre-placement social environment on post-placement social development. He developed an attachment framework to try to understand the experience of the adoptive parents and identified six 'patterns of adoption', with each pattern being defined mainly by the children's relationship history, behaviour development, and emotional attitude towards the adoption as described by their parents. He reported that in broad terms;

"...there was a rough correlation between the quality of the children's pre-placement experience and the character of their post-placement development. The children with the more disturbed relationship histories prior to being placed tended to exhibit more anxious and insecure relationships, particularly with adoptive parents. (p.76)

Keane (1983) collected information from 139 foster parents about their experience of behavioural difficulties with their foster child. The study children were mostly very young when they joined the foster family, with half being under two years and only 16 per cent being of school age, and had been with the families for more than three years. Foster parents recalled a wide range of problems at the time of placement:

Taking the group as a whole, the most frequently reported were attention demanding behaviour (24 %) eating difficulties (24%) sleeping difficulties (23%). Temper tantrums and being too quiet and withdrawn were also reported often (21% & 20% respectively). The incidence of these problems did, however, vary in according to the child's age at placement. (p.55).

Fewer problems were reported for children placed before their first birthday with the other pre-school children displaying the greatest number of difficulties. This was attributed to their reaction to separating from parents, or a previous caretaker, and their limited intellectual development. Other factors highlighted by the study were that the greater the number of changes of caretaker the more likely a child was to display problems at placement; and that previous residential placement was significantly associated with a greater number of problems. Foster parents reported more problems when asked about their child's current behaviour with lack of concentration, temper tantrums and demanding attention continuing to be amongst the most commonly reported. It is, however, difficult to interpret this rise in reported behavioural problems as it might be expected in any group of children moving from infancy to adolescence. The foster parents were also asked, however, to complete a behavioural rating scale, the Rutter A, which provided some

comparison with other groups. Using this, the study group was found to contain 30 per cent with either a disorder or giving cause for concern. This was much higher than the 7 per cent reported for the general population of 10 -12 year olds in the Isle of Wight Study (Rutter et al, 1970) but lower than that found in children in residential care, 46.5 per cent (Wolkind, 1974). As usual, however, caution needs to be exercised when making this comparison as there were significant methodological differences between the studies.

Berridge and Brodie (1996) drew attention to the limited availability of information on child-related outcomes from different care placements, and the resultant focus of research on service-related outcomes, e.g. placement breakdown. Colton (1988) did, however, compare the progress of matched samples of young people in children's homes and specialist foster care. He concluded that similar improvements were made by both groups. Rowe et al (1989) and Kendrick (1995) took a different approach and asked social workers to rate the success of a variety of placements for comparable groups of children. The social workers rated the outcomes from different types of placement as broadly similar. Cliffe and Berridge (1991) carried out an evaluation of services for young people in Warwickshire following that county's decision to close all its children's homes. They reported that: *Outcomes for children in Warwickshire were broadly comparable with findings from other research studies undertaken in areas where residential care remains an option.* (p.22) The most extensive research to date on the factors leading to quality care was carried out by Sinclair and Gibbs (1996). They analysed the care provided to 220 children living in 48 children's homes and concluded that the main factors associated with good quality care were small numbers in the home, empowered heads of home, and homes

where the staff shared a common purpose. Unfortunately, the same could be said for children's homes where systematic sexual and physical abuse has occurred.

Specific concern has also been expressed about the education of children looked after (e.g. DfEE, 1994a) and this will be covered in detail in Chapter Three. Residential homes, in particular, have come in for criticism and some have been described as having anti-education cultures (e.g. Cleaver, 1996). When commenting on educational qualifications of looked after children over sixteen, the Audit Commission (1996) reported that, "*The proportion without qualifications is higher among those leaving residential than foster care ...*" (p.75) This is, however, an unfortunate comparison as the underlying assumption is that there is an equal chance that children are placed in children's homes as in foster care. In reality, residential accommodation is often seen as the placement of last resort, following one or more foster care breakdowns. Berridge and Brodie (1998), in their study of the children in twelve children's homes, report a catalogue of such prior breakdowns:

... three fifths of these 60 children had experienced breakdowns in placements of some sort. This affected all but four of those living in homes for younger children. A quarter of the 60 had lived through residential breakdowns and one in five had experienced failed long term fostering ... in addition, over a third of children had suffered breakdowns in other types of fosterings - approaching half of the adolescent category. (p.76)

One outcome from residential care that the general public has been made aware of is the extent of the abusive experiences children have been subjected to when in care. Although

the scale of these abuses, in terms of the number of children and 'carers' involved, has largely come to light over the past decade, the majority of the abuse took place ten to twenty years before (Kahan and Levy, 1991; and Berridge & Brodie, 1996). The most recent report (Waterhouse, 2000) investigated abuse in children's homes in North Wales between 1974 and 1996 and concluded that:

Widespread sexual abuse of boys occurred in children's residential establishments in Clwyd between 1974 and 1990. There were some incidents of sexual abuse of girl residents in these establishments but they were comparatively rare.

There was also widespread sexual abuse ... in private establishments for children in Clwyd throughout the period under review. Sexual abuse of girl residents also occurred to an alarming extent. (para. 55:10)

All these reports into abuse in institutions has had the effect of hastening the move away from residential accommodation towards fostering (see Table 2:5), even though fostering has not been shown to be free of difficulties (see Chapter One).

Summary

This chapter has outlined the reasons that children enter the care system and the fluctuations over time in their number, due to changes in legislation and professional practice. It goes on to give a general description of the characteristics of this population (in terms of age, sex, legal status and duration in care). It describes the move away from residential homes towards the majority of looked after children being placed with foster

families and the important role that theories of child development played in this transition.

The final section is an examination of research into the long-term impact of early experiences, the psychological adjustment of the child and the resultant life outcomes. The long term economic and social costs of the failures in the public care system, as identified in this chapter, are immense with the wasted potential of thousands of young people who might end up ill, homeless, unemployed and in conflict with society unless dramatic and purposeful action is taken.

Chapter Three

State Education and Looked-After Children

The provision of education in Britain is based largely upon a state education service, much of which was introduced during the period of welfare reform in the 1940s (see Chapter 1). What seems entirely strange is that until the 1830s schooling had been entirely voluntary with no state funding. There were only 6 universities in the whole country (4 in Scotland and 2 in England) and fewer than ten public, or fee paying, schools. There was also a spread of endowed and often ancient grammar schools, private tuition and small 'dame' schools taught by women in private houses. In addition, a little rudimentary teaching for the young was provided in Sunday Schools or in elementary schools which were run by church-sponsored voluntary societies. Timmins (1995) reported that just 7 per cent of children attended a day school. He went on to say that:

... the beginnings of an educational movement were, however, under way, although there were still strong fears that 'too much education might lead to disaffection' in a society where the labour and service of the many supported the wealth and leisure of the few. (p. 67)

The industrial revolution, however, produced a demand for better educated workers and Timmins reported that in 1833 a half-empty House of Commons took the first step for the state to become involved in education by approving a grant to two church societies for

school buildings. To put this in some context, Parliament was still spending more on the Queen's stables than on the education of all the children in the country (Timmins, op cit). In 1867 working class men in urban areas, where schooling was least good, gained the vote and Forster's Elementary Education Act followed in 1870. This introduced the first state 'primary' schooling, for 6 to 10 year olds at a time when an estimated one million children, out of one million seven hundred thousand, were not receiving any schooling. It was neither free nor compulsory and was run by locally elected School Boards. In 1902 Balfour's Education Act amalgamated the 2500 school boards into local education authorities (LEAs), which in turn became a full part of local government.

'Secondary' education was provided in private schools from which the working class were largely excluded owing to their inability to pay the fees. The secondaries mainly absorbed the lower middle class children, while 'grammar' schools were used by the children of more wealthy middle-class parents. The education provision clearly reflected the class-based society that had developed it, and resulted in fewer than ten percent of children receiving a secondary education. Alcock (1996) argues that during the inter-war years:

...there was increasing pressure for the expansion of secondary education to all ... to extend equality of opportunity to children of all social classes and as a product of the increasing recognition that a growing industrial economy required a better educated workforce. (p.26)

The Education Act that provided for this, was introduced in 1944 by a Conservative, R.A.B. Butler. This extended compulsory schooling to 15 for all children (extended again

in 1973 to 1966). Secondary education was to be provided by local authorities under a tripartite system of grammar, technical and secondary modern schools according to the ability of the child. This was assessed by the "Eleven Plus" examination at the end of primary school. Few technical schools were set up and the system largely consisted of grammar and secondary modern. Local authorities, or Local Education Authorities (LEAs) as this aspect of their work became known, were responsible for virtually all aspects of curriculum development and school organisation and management.

Labour Party support for this system waned over time, and in the 1960s the Labour Government introduced reforms requiring local authorities to move towards a system of 'comprehensive' schools (DfE Circular 10/65, 1965). These were to have an all-ability intake and would prepare children for assessment at 16 in GCE 'O' Levels. Some able students could also stay on until 18 and complete 'A' Level examinations. Local authority control, however, restricted central government influence and many LEAs resisted introducing comprehensive schooling and continued to maintain a version of the old system. Despite the comprehensive ideal, however, assessment at both levels of examination revealed inequalities in educational achievement in schools. Middle class children, especially those attending schools in predominantly middle-class areas, on average did better in examinations than working class children (Alcock, 1996 p. 27). Alcock went on to suggest that comprehensive schooling was not able entirely to counteract broader societal disadvantages. A number of government reports were commissioned over time such as the Newsom (DES, 1963) and the Plowden Report (DfE, 1967). In the Report "Half our Future" Newsom found wide differences in educational attainment between one

school and another, and in different parts of the country. The Report supported the idea that it was social factors that held children back and argued that this led to a waste of talent and ability, which was not in the interest of the economic development of the country. The Plowden Report, "Children and their Primary Schools" went further and recommended that Educational Priority Areas be established in poorer areas to raise the attainment of the children to that achieved in more affluent areas. This policy of positive discrimination meant that schools in deprived areas would qualify for extra resources to be spent on the fabric of the schools, curriculum materials, extra pay for teachers, better teacher-pupil ratios, and the provision of teaching assistants. These exhortations did lead to some additional funding being directed towards education provision in deprived areas but not on the scale envisaged in the reports, e.g. in 1968 teachers in deprived areas were paid an additional £75 per year to aid recruitment and retention.

During the 1970s the debate moved on from considering differentials between different groups to concern over the overall levels of attainment. James Callaghan, the Labour Prime Minister, initiated the 'Great Debate' (Ruskin College speech, 1978) on the need to link school education more closely to the needs of economic development. His 'Big Idea' might have had more to do with the need to divert attention from the ailing economy but had long-term repercussions. The debate started a train of events that eventually resulted in the introduction of a 'National Curriculum' (DfE, 1988) for all schools with regular testing of pupils standards of achievement (SATs) at particular ages (7, 11 & 14). In the '70s and '80s, central government began to increase its influence over the structure and delivery of school-based learning through the introduction of restrictions in LEA powers

and budgets. Kenneth Baker, Secretary of State for Education, introduced Local Management of Schools (LMS) in 1986 allowing individual schools to run their own budgets. The delegation argument contends that those actively engaged in delivering the service to the client (parents) are best placed to decide how to use the resources most effectively and efficiently (Peters and Waterman, 1982). Some authorities, however, retained more of the money than central government wished and were 'named and shamed' by Baker.

The Education Reform Act 1988, established the mechanisms for a market in education by giving parents more choice of school placement by introducing open enrolment; by providing a wider diversity of types of school; by introducing the element of competition between schools; and by introducing per capita funding with school funding being largely determined by student numbers. The Act was described by Lindsay (1997, p.23) as " ...*a comprehensive legislative attack on the educational system designed to change radically its operation*", brought in a new type of school, i.e. Grant Maintained (GM). These introduced a free-market approach where schools moved outside the sphere of control of local authorities and received their finance directly from the Department for Education and Employment. Lindsay went on to draw our attention to the contradictory philosophical and value positions underlying Government intervention in education:

Local Management of Schools and GM Schools represent attempts to introduce free market, 'hands off' approach. The National Curriculum, its attendant assessment programme, and the development of the Office for Standards in Education

(OFSTED) with its four year cycle of school inspections, represents attempts by the state to ensure standards. (p. 23)

Teachers themselves, or at least a small number of them, played their part in this centralising control of education. Whilst most teachers went about their business in a perfectly normal way Maclure, Editor of the Times Educational Supplement between 1969 and 1989, comments ... *there were always enough spectacular examples of extremist behaviour to gain widespread publicity and tar the whole profession with the 'crazy progressive' tag.* (Times, November 25th. 1999, p.21) A memorable example of this occurred in the mid-1970s in Islington, North London. Teachers at the William Tyndale School decided to allow pupils to choose which, if any, classes they should attend. This resulted, unsurprisingly, in a great deal of football and table-tennis being played. Parents, perhaps for the first time, also exercised their influence, by keeping their children away from school. Eventually, the teachers were suspended because they refused to allow inspectors into the school.

The Conservative approach to education reform in the late '80s, suggested that state schools were no more than an embodiment of socialism and the welfare state, full of left-wing teachers using 'trendy' and ineffective approaches to teaching. This built on the drip, drip of criticism of teachers that started almost as soon as they came into power in 1979. Schools and teachers were seen to be protected from competition, buffered by continual subsidies, consuming budgets and returning little on the investment. The Conservative's approach to this was to introduce spending cuts on the basis that there was little correlation

between the quality of education and the amount each school spent. Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for Education, declared that, *"More money does not mean higher standards"* (The Times, 27th. October 1981). The solution to the educational problems was to unleash market forces on the schools by promoting parental choice and thereby competition between schools, and by rewarding good teachers and sacking bad ones. The White Paper "Choice and Diversity" (DfE, 1992) set out the government's main proposals for consolidation and expansions of its educational reforms for the 1990s and was intended as the precursor to a major new Education Bill in 1993. It presented these proposals as promoting five major themes which had underlined its education policy since 1979 - quality, diversity, increasing parental choice, greater autonomy for schools and greater accountability. This gave rise to what Brown (1990) termed the 'ideology of parentocracy' where *"... a child's education is increasingly dependent upon the wealth and wishes of parents, rather than the ability and efforts of pupils.* (p.66)

The failure of teachers to rehabilitate their image enabled the Conservative Government to bulldoze through policies that transformed their role. The view of teaching itself was also subject to a great deal of debate. It suggested to Lindsay (1995) that this "New Right's" political agenda saw teachers as needing to be 'Competent Practitioners' rather than 'Extended Professionals': *... craft skills rather than professional understanding.* (p.494)

Critics, such as Asher (1994), have described the inadequacies of the conservative, market-driven approach to school reform as being based on the very dubious notion that there exists 'empty good schools' just waiting for students to fill the places. This approach,

however, was seen by Asher and others as more likely to leave poor children without choice and receiving education in 'sink' schools. This emphasis on consumer (parental) choice also impacts on the general purpose and function of school and education drawing attention to the values underlying Government policy, i.e. replacing societal and social functions with more narrow self-interest.

... is it enough to satisfy the needs of those who drive the market, the DES estimated 5 - 10 per cent? Or should schools have a wider public welfare, public service, brief? ... The notions of educational judgements based on professional or research criteria and of value judgement or value dispute are almost totally displaced. They have no standing. They are part of producer interest and a barrier to choice. The customer/ parent always knows best ...(Bowe et al, 1992, p.33)

... the period of Conservative administration was marked by a significant shift away from resourcing the disadvantaged to a world where personal responsibility, and individual rather than collective action have been considered preferable. (Lindsay, 1997, p.26)

Similarly, Parsons (1999) argued that in the provision of public services, exclusions from school served as an exemplar of the way the attribution of blame changed British society since the late 1970s *"public issues are rendered personal choices, and interventions and support are withheld or reduced in favour of punitive responses. (p.34)*

Local authorities have continued to be required to give a progressively greater amount of the money they received directly to schools, who then accept responsible for its management. Schools could also, with the support of parents, opt out from local authority control and receive funding directly from the Department for Education. Other financial changes at that time saw the termination of funding for non-educational provision within schools, e.g. free milk, and school meals. Business and industry were also encouraged to provide resources for their local school. This movement of available resources and control away from local authorities and towards schools appeared to enjoy a broad political consensus as it continued under Tony Blair's 'New Labour' Government, elected to office in 1997 (see Chapter Four).

Lindsay (op cit) draws our attention to the less than enthusiastic response, from parents as well as teachers, to the extension of market forces ideology into education. He used a report from the Times Educational Supplement (13th January 1995) to demonstrate that despite vastly better funding, there were only 1000 GM schools in existence at that time compared to 25,000 LEA controlled schools. The difference in funding he drew attention to was indeed quite remarkable with GM schools receiving, on average, 4 times as much money as an average LEA school for capital expenditure.

LEA control over further education for 16-19 year olds, and higher education in the old polytechnics (now universities), was also removed in 1993. Colleges became self-governing and received funding from new national bodies, such as the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), directly controlled by central government. The colleges have not

only changed their status but they have also undergone a period of rapid expansion with a growth of 28 per cent in student numbers between 1989 and 1993 (Young, 1995). In 1963 the Robbins Report (1963b) reviewed higher education and recommended expansion in the provision to allow all qualified young people access to higher education. At the time of the Report only 8 per cent of young people entered universities and the report recommended an increase to 17 per cent of the age group by 1980. The Government allocated large sums of money to the expansion of higher education and the number of universities increased in 1992 when the polytechnics were allowed to become universities. By 1993 almost one in three 18 year olds entered higher education (Central Statistical Office, 1994).

Special Educational Needs

Special education is about *"giving exceptional consideration and providing exceptional opportunities and exceptional help to those whose needs (... by reason of ... significant handicaps, disorders or difficulties) are greatest, while at the same time acknowledging their entitlement to maximum participation in the social, political, cultural, moral and religious aspects of life which we all share."* (Adams, 1986 p.1) Special education in Britain developed first in the form of separate institutions to help the more obviously and severely handicapped and its development was eloquently summarised in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978):

Special education for the handicapped in Britain is of relatively recent origin. The very first schools for the blind and deaf were founded in the time lifetime of Mozart;

those for the physically handicapped awaited the Great Exhibition; day schools for the mentally handicapped and epileptic arrived with the motor car; whilst special provision for the delicate, maladjusted, and speech impaired is younger than living memory. (Chapter 2)

The Education Act 1944 placed special education for handicapped pupils firmly within the general duty of local education authorities. Whereas the 1921 Education Act had provided for handicapped children to be educated only in special schools or special classes, the 1944 Act envisaged that the less seriously impaired might be catered for in mainstream provision. Handicap were identified in the regulations (blind, partially sighted, deaf, partially deaf, delicate / diabetic, educationally subnormal, epileptic, maladjusted, physically handicapped and children with speech defects) and there was a requirement that blind, deaf, epileptic, physically handicapped and aphasic children should be educated in special schools. The 1944 Act led to a substantial expansion of special schools during the 1950's and 1960's which developed separately from mainstream provision and provided for approximately two per cent of the school-age population. So, contrary to the intentions of the Act:

... and to the Ministry of Education guidelines ...the narrower view of special education was underlined and the potential contribution of mainstream primary and secondary schools substantially underexploited. (Adams, 1986)

Circumstances changed and 1970 saw the introduction of a new Education Act which brought all handicapped children, i.e. the children who had previously been deemed to be 'ineducable' and the responsibility of local health authorities, within the remit of the

education authority. There was also growth in 'remedial' education in mainstream schools and some special classes and units attached to mainstream schools. This all led to pressure for a radical review of the arrangements for children with special needs and, consequently, in late 1973 a national committee was established under Mary Warnock. The report of the Committee was published in 1978 which led the Government to produce a White Paper (DES, 1980) and formed the substance of the Education Act 1981. This Act represented a radical change in the way in which provision for pupils with special needs was considered. The individual pupils became the focus of attention rather than the category into which they fitted. In the Act, a child was defined as having special educational needs if he or she:

... has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child has a learning difficulty if he or she:

- *has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age*
- *has a disability which either prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority*
- *is under five and falls within the definitions of (a) or (b) above or would do if special education provision was not made for the child.*

A child must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of the home is different from the language in which he or she is or will be taught.

Special educational provision means:

- *for a child over two, educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally available for children of the child's age in maintained schools, other than special schools, in the area.*
- *For a child under two, educational provision of any kind. (section 156)*

The Act required LEAs to identify children with special needs; place children in ordinary schools where possible; make additional provision where a child's needs could not be met by an ordinary school alone and work closely with parents. A model for achieving this was set out in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) and still exists in the Stages of the Code of Practice described later. For the small percentages of children who had needs that were likely to fall outside the range catered for with the resources available within a mainstream school, the Act obliged LEAs to consult with parents and then undertake a full multi-disciplinary assessment. If the LEA considered that special help was required it issued a Statement of SEN. In this statement the LEA outlined what educational provision was required to meet the child's needs and was obliged to make that provision. Throughout the process the views of parents were taken into account and they had rights of appeal against the statement if they did not agree with it.

In the years following the introduction of the 1981 Act there were significant changes to the methods of financing schools; to the way in which they admitted pupils; to the information they published about performance; and to the curriculum they taught. This created a regime quite different from the one pertaining when the Act was passed and

raised the question as to whether the objectives of the Act could be achieved in that new environment. In 1992 the Government responded to these concerns and published proposals in the consultation paper “Access to the System” (DfE, 1992) to legislate to extend parents’ rights over the choice of school; reduce the time taken by LEAs in making assessments and statements; make parents’ rights to appeal more coherent and to extend those rights; and establish an independent tribunal which would replace the jurisdiction of both the Secretary of State and appeal committees to hear appeals. They received advice from professional organisations, special interest groups plus HMI and outlined their amended proposals in the White Paper “Choice and Diversity” (July 1992a) covered above. With regard to special educational needs, a further piece of major legislation, the 1996 Education Act, left the actual requirements the same as the 1993 Act.

The 1996 Act is supported by a Code of Practice (DfE, 1994). The Code proposed a model comprising five individual stages, the first three being school based, and the LEA having responsibility under Stages 4 and 5. **Stage 1** is characterised by the gathering of information and increased differentiation within the child’s normal classroom work. The class teacher is seen as responsible for identifying and meeting a child’s special educational needs. At **Stage 2** the school’s SEN Co-ordinator takes lead responsibility for co-ordinating the child’s special educational provision and an Individual Education Plan is produced. **Stage 3** support for a child includes the involvement of a specialist from outside the school, such as a behavioural support teacher or an educational psychologist. At **Stage 4** the LEA considers whether a statutory assessment is necessary and, if so, makes the

assessment. Finally, at **Stage 5** the LEA considers whether a Statement is necessary and, if so, makes the Statement.

Lindsay (1997) saw the legislation that impacted on children with SEN from the early '80s as progressing positively, with a gradual extending of their legal rights. He saw this as representing long and hard campaigns fought by voluntary bodies, professionals and individual parents on behalf of their children. He went on, however, to set out that other legislation impacting on the education system was producing challenges. The first was the lack of the necessary financial resources to implement effectively the good practice encouraged by SEN legislation. The second was the tensions produced by placing contradictory demands on providers, whether LEAs or schools. For example, LEAs being required to plan provision for SEN at the same time as the control of schools was being taken away from them; or schools being encouraged to be more inclusive whilst at the same time having to compete with other schools via league tables of academic performance.

The other major concern, which particularly impacts on looked-after children, is the way special educational needs are conceptualized. A construct system which has little regard for the social environment and views the problem to be 'within child' can lead a local authority to make an inappropriate response. For example, by viewing a young person's difficult behaviour as abnormal, rather than as a normal response to abnormal care arrangements, could result in a placement in a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) rather than naming more supportive care arrangements.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage and Educational Achievement

Longitudinal studies have shown significant relationships between educational attainment and social disadvantage. For example, Floud et al (1956) showed that the chances of the son of an unskilled worker entering grammar school could be seven times less than the son of someone in the managerial class. Douglas (1964) found that children from upper middle-class homes were five times more likely to go to grammar school as children from working-class parents. Davie et al (1972), as part of the National Child Development Study (NCDS), revealed that an unskilled manual worker's child had a seven times greater chance of being a poor reader, i.e. 50 per cent of 7 year olds in Social Class 5 had poor reading scores compared with 7 per cent in Social Class 1. Furthermore, follow up studies have revealed that the effects of disadvantage may be cumulative, and that those children who are in positions of social disadvantage at several, or all points in their childhood, fare worse of all. Essen and Wedge (1982) collected data on the NCDS sample (i.e. all children born in one week in 1958) at 7, 11 and 16 and found that disadvantaged children scored worse but that those who were disadvantaged at all three ages had the lowest scores. The Robbins Report into higher education (1963b) found the same relationship between social class and access to higher education, with few working-class students entering university.

More recently the relationship between poverty and educational underachievement was vividly demonstrated using league tables for examination results in 1995 (Times Education Supplement, 13th. February 1997). The analysis compared the percentage of pupils eligible

for free-school-meals within authorities (a measure of deprivation) with their GCSE results. This showed a dramatic, and inverse relationship, i.e. as the percentage of free school meals went up, the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grades went down (see Table 3:1).

Table 3:1 LEA Attainments and Free School Meals

GCSE league table: Rank Order of LEAs (1995)	% of pupils achieving 5 or more A* to C grades	% of pupils eligible for free-school- meals
1-10	51	10
11-20	48	13
21-30	45	14
31-40	43	14
41-50	41	17
51-60	39	17
61-70	36	23
71-80	34	26
81-90	31	30
91-100	27	36
101-110	21	53

An analysis at the level of individual LEAs reveals a similar inverse relationship between the percentage of pupils on free-school-meals and the average performance at GCSE, although not as strong. Table 3:2 lists a selection from the 148 LEAs in England, and Figure 3:1 plots all of them.

Table 3:2 Local authorities ranked by GCSE points score above or below the trendline (1999)

	% secondary pupils eligible for free school meals*	GCSE average points score per pupil**	GCSE points score above or below the trendline	Ranking
Tower Hamlets	66.1	32.8	7.3	1
Ealing	29.8	38	4.3	10
Wirral	26.6	37.6	3.0	20
Windsor & Maidenhead	5.9	42.6	2.1	30
Slough	16.5	38.8	1.4	40
BEXLEY	14.1	39.2	1.1	50
North Tyneside	20.2	37	0.7	60
Stockport	15.1	38.1	0.3	70
Milton Keynes	15.1	37.7	-0.1	80
Blackburn & Darwen	27.8	33.7	-0.5	90
Medway	11.8	37.8	-1.0	100
Worcestershire	9.0	37.9	-1.7	110
Wakefield	17.5	35	-2.1	120
Metroland	19.4	33.7	-2.8	127
Salford	26.9	31.4	-3.1	130
Leicester City	22.0	32	-3.8	140
Kingston Upon Hull, City	27.8	26.6	-7.7	148

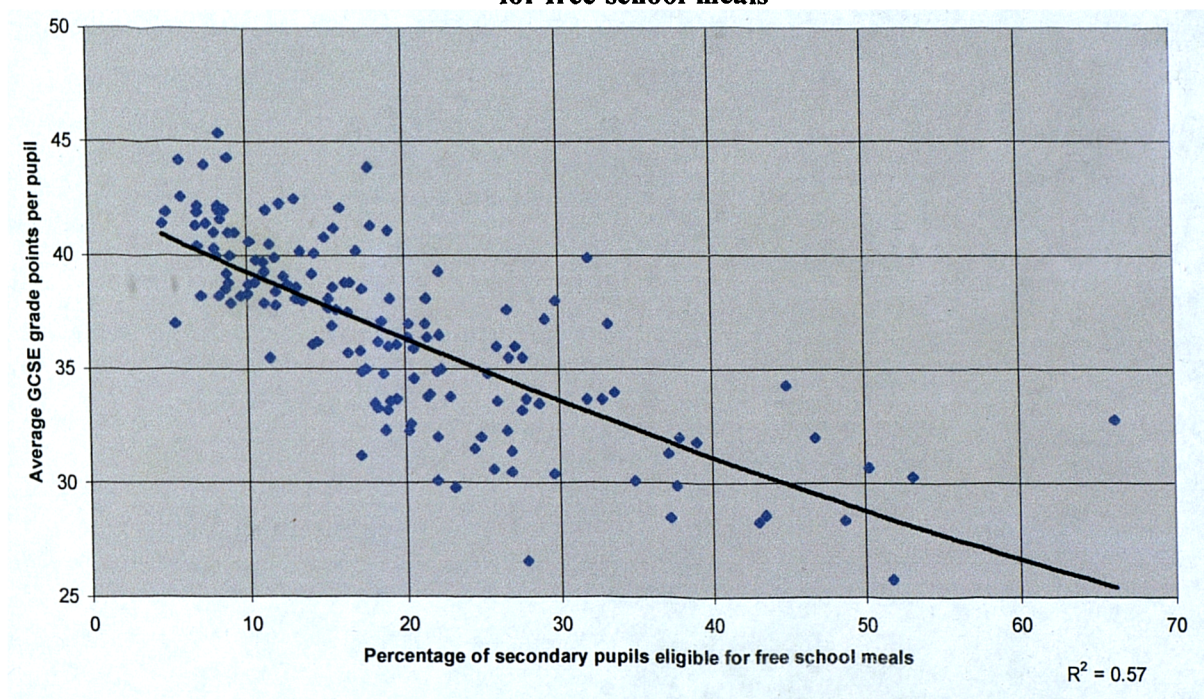
* DFEE Jan 1999 (DfEE, 1999a)

** DFEE Nov 1999 (DfEE, 1999b)

Plotting each local authority's average pupil GCSE points score against the percentage of its secondary pupils eligible for free-school-meals gives an indication of how well or badly each authority performed in relation to this index of deprivation, i.e. percentage of free-school-meals. It also shows the extent to which performance and social deprivation are linked. On these results the correlation was high ($r = 0.76$) with over 57 per cent of the variation between authorities being statistically associated with the percentages of secondary pupils eligible for free-school-meals. The line summarising the trend suggested by the points on the scattergraph provides an estimate of the performance associated with any given level of free school meals. The vertical distance between that line and each local

authority's plotted point gives an indication of how well or badly that authority performed in relation to this estimate. That distance above or below the line is measured in GCSE points.

Figure 3:1 GCSE mean grade point score for each LEA against eligibability for free-school-meals



The Audit Commission report (Audit Commission, 1999) compared the 15 most deprived LEAs and the 15 least deprived in relation to GCSE results and found that there was almost no overlap in attainment. In the former, between 21 and 39 per cent achieved grades A* to C, while the figures for the least deprived were 34 to 60 per cent. In his article 'Education and the Disadvantaged', MacKay (1999) argues that the allocation of public spending does not take into account the level of real need in a community. He ranked 32 Scottish authorities for poverty and then for per-capita grant-aided expenditure and found no significant relationship. This suggested to him that the allocation of funding for education does not take into account real need. MacKay also analysed the

relationship between the level of poverty and the level of council tax across the same 32 authorities. He found that:

... the poorest councils with the highest level of need and the poorest base for collecting tax from their population have the highest council tax ...In these councils, vast amounts of tax remain uncollected, and so they become poorer still.
(p.349)

The links between the socio-economic catchment of the school and academic achievement is illustrated above but that doesn't necessarily apply to individual schools. There are those, including the Government, that would draw attention to the wide range of performance between schools in broadly similar social settings. For example, in his speech to the National Union of Teachers Conference (March, 2000) the Secretary of State for Education highlighted the different exam performances of schools with similar socio-economic profiles:

There are cynics who say that school performance is all about socio-economics and the areas these schools are located in. ... In the 530 struggling schools [where less than one-in-five pupils achieve at least five GCSEs] the free school meal rates varied from 6 to 96 per cent.

The reason for drawing attention to these 'failing' schools was to warn them that they faced closure if results did not improve. The following week, however, the Office for Standards in Education published the first draft of their report 'Improving City Schools' which took a different stance (Ofsted, 2000). Their survey was of 804 primary and 178

secondary schools defined as disadvantaged, i.e. more than 35 per cent of pupils were on free school meals (the average was 62 percent for primary and 57 per cent for secondary). The report commented that in such schools disadvantage is widespread and against such odds it is only the exceptional school that manages results near the *national* average. They found that only 2 per cent of the secondary schools managed to come near national results and 4.4 per cent of the primary schools and argued strongly for substantial additional funding for these schools - rather than threats of closure.

From the information presented above, and in Chapter Two, it is clear that children from disadvantaged background are likely to do less well educationally than their more advantaged peers and also to be more likely to be received into care (Bebbington and Miles, 1989). Poverty places parents under stress, decreasing their capacity to provide good-enough parenting (Leach, 1994). The number of families living on relatively low incomes in Britain grew dramatically through the 1980s, to a point where one in three children in the mid-1990s were living in households with less than half the average level of income (Department of Social Security, 1997). More specifically, changes in housing and social security provision have had a direct impact on young people, including the removal of Income Support from 16 to 17 year olds. All this has happened at a time of rapid change in family structures. One in five families with dependent children were headed by a lone parent (Office for National Statistics, 1998), while a survey of over 22,000 children between 12 and 15 revealed that around one in eight 12 to 15 year olds live in step families (Balding, 1997). All these tensions and pressures result in the peak age for reception into care being 15 (DoH, 1997a).

Education and Looked-After Children

Alongside the growing concern regarding general life outcomes for looked-after children, covered in Chapter 2, there has been an increasing focus on their educational attainment. This has viewed educational attainment as an outcome in itself, and also as a factor which has a significant impact on the other areas of life, e.g. employment and access to further education. More than twenty years ago Rutter, in his review of cycles of deprivation (Rutter, 1976), emphasised this latter point when he argued that successful schooling was one expedient way for children to escape from social disadvantage. Poor outcomes are not only of concern to academic researchers and Buchanan et al (1993) have demonstrated that they are also of particular and urgent concern to care users themselves. This concern about the education of children in care, however, has a very short history. In her seminal work 'The Education of Children in Care', Sonia Jackson (1987) drew attention to the fact that at that time there was:

... not one single book published in Great Britain or the United States concerned with the education and welfare of children in public care ... The computer research revealed an enormous number of publications on children in care ... Of these only a tiny handful focus on the education of children in foster and residential care.

(p.5)

The increased focus on educational attainment since Sonia Jackson's 1987 publication has resulted in much comment in influential reports, such as Utting (DoH, 1991) and SSI/Ofsted (DoH & Ofsted, 1995), on the causes of educational under-achievement in this

population and recommendations about ways to tackle it. It has not, however, resulted in a great deal of reliable information about the actual scale of the difficulties which, in time, will make it problematic to evaluate the impact of implementing any of those recommendations. This is not to say that there has been no research effort in this area but, to date, the results have usually been based on small samples or have focused on a small sub-group. For example, the research which informed some aspects of the SSI/Ofsted (1995) report was based on a sample of 18 children out of a total population of 55,000 looked-after children in England. Similarly, Garnett (1994) studied only 124 Year 11 children who were all in one authority. In the introduction to her research, Garnett (1994) reported that Humberside Local Authority would have been able to identify how many children being looked-after were of school age and which phase of schooling they were in, i.e. primary or secondary. They would not, however, have been able to say any more about the educational status of the children such as how many had special needs or were in special schools, or how many obtained educational qualifications. She also reported that Humberside were not alone in this and that there were no national statistics.

The situation had not improved dramatically even by March 1999 when the Times Educational Supplement sponsored a survey of all LEAs in England (Times Educational Supplement, 5th. March 1999). Out of 148 Authorities only 56 claimed to hold reliable data on the GCSE results of looked after children, a further 11 gave estimates or excluded children educated outside the Authority. The editorial commented "*However, some authorities may have artificially boosted their results. Many appeared to see no problem with routinely excluding from their data those with special educational needs and those*

attending schools in another authority. (p.23) " The lack of information was even more striking when considering available information about the attainments of younger children and only 36 (out of 148) authorities were able to provide any data on the performance of children at 7, 11 and 14 years (i.e. the end of Key Stages in the National Curriculum).

In the joint circular sent to all school (DfE/DoH, 1994) the Departments of Education and Health recognised that many children being looked-after entered the public care system developmentally and educationally behind their peers, and that their subsequent educational experience did not succeed in making up the ground. The circular also said that there was evidence to suggest that children being looked-after feature disproportionately among truanting and excluded pupils.

Failure to get on at school may have led to low self-esteem, alienation and a fear of future failure. A deep sense of stigma may be felt. Once children are being looked-after the disruption may not end. Their lives may continue to be turbulent and, even where the placements are successful, difficult behaviour at school may result from strenuous attempts to cope with new living arrangements or many changes of school through no fault of their own. The difficulties may accumulate over time.

(p. 8)

The circular recognised that frequent changes of home and school were undesirable and likely to have an unsettling and disruptive effect on educational progress. The National Curriculum and associated assessment arrangements, however, were considered to offer help in a number of ways by ensuring consistency in the pace, level and content of what

was being studied. This still left Year 10 and 11 children somewhat exposed as transfer at this time disrupts GCSE coursework or result in a complete change of examination board and syllabus. Therefore, continuity of education was encouraged to be considered as a priority wherever possible (DfE/DH 1994).

Utting (DoH, 1991) considered that children who had experienced disturbance and disruption in their early lives were likely to come into care already educationally disadvantaged. The report concluded by saying that these educational difficulties present at the time entering care might have been compounded by their experience of it, with crippling effects on their lives after leaving care. He also exhorted care authorities to act to remedy the educational disadvantage of children in their care, and do all that a good parent would do to ensure that children's educational needs are met. Warner (1992) found that too often looked-after children, many of whom needed special help as a result of behavioural problems or previous non-attendance at school, were receiving little or no education. All of the comments above do not sit comfortably alongside the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that was ratified by Great Britain in December 1991. This stated that:

"State Parties recognise the rights of child to education, and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall in particular:

- *encourage the development of different forms of education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child;*
- *make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;*

- *make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;*
- *take measures to encourage regular attendance at school and the reduction of drop-out rates". (Article 28)*

The guidance and regulations relating to residential care (DoH, 1991), accompanying the Children Act 1989, stated that children who are looked-after have the same rights as all children to education, including further and higher education. However, it recognised that young people who are looked-after can be specially disadvantaged educationally and emphasised that children's homes must place great importance on promoting education. It drew attention for residential staff to develop good relationships with school and colleges and attend social events as well as parents' evenings where educational progress could be discussed.

A survey of the experiences and views of 1551 young people in public care (Shaw, 1999) revealed that 45 per cent enjoyed school most of the time; 39 per cent some of the time; and 16 per cent not at all. Enjoyment of school decreased with age, with 56 per cent of children 11 and under enjoying it most of the time while only 37 per cent of 14 and 15 years olds did so. Young people who had only been in care for less than six months seemed to enjoy school the least but this might be linked to an enforced change of school and loss of friends, etc. Table 3:3 represents the views of young people about whether reception into care enhanced or hindered their school performance. This demonstrates that these young people believed foster care to be more positive although there is no

attempt to adjust the analysis by considering the impact of age, i.e the foster care sample could have contained more younger children.

Table 3:3
Reception into Care and School Performance

	Foster Care	Other	All
I've done better at school	54%	36%	47%
Being in care has made no difference	36%	36%	36%
I've done worse at school	11%	29%	18%
Total numbers	888	601	1479

Shaw also demonstrated a more dramatic difference by comparing the views of children on their success at school with the number of placement moves (see Table 3:4).

Table 3:4 Number of Placements and School Performance

	1 placement	2 to 5 placements	6 to 10 placements	11 or more placements
I've done better at school	60%	47%	35%	31%
Being in care has made no difference	35%	38%	38%	33%
I've done worse at school	7%	17%	28%	36%
Totals	350	722	229	144

During the inquiry into child abuse in North Wales (Waterhouse, 2000) the wider experiences of young people, including their experiences of education, were also

investigated. The report catalogued the serious concerns about the provision of education in children's homes, expressed by professionals during the period under investigation (1974 to 1996) and concluded that "*The provision of education was inadequate in all the local authority community homes with educational facilities.*" (para. 55:10) The views of ex-care users were also reported:

Teachers at one of the homes with an education facility, Bryn Estyn estimate that between 500 and 600 boys passed through their hands between 1974 and 1984 and this may well be an under-estimate. But we know of only one who has expressed a degree of satisfaction with the educational arrangements; he said that the education was not too bad ...(para. 11.26)

Academic Outcomes

The first large scale study of academic attainments for children in care that has been identified is Essen et al (1976). This work focussed on 414 children (3.4 per cent) of the National Child Development Study 1958 cohort. It identified, amongst other findings, that at eleven years of age the average Reading Age for children entering care before they were seven was 9 years 2 months, and for those entering later their average Reading Age was 10 years 1 month. In a later study of the attainments of 146 Year 11 looked-after children, Firth (1992) found that only thirty-nine gained one or more General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) passes. Of these thirty-nine, only fifteen gained a pass at levels A-C, i.e. approximately 10 per cent compared with 40 per cent for the general school population. Heath (Heath et al, 1989 & 1994) found that 91 per cent of the foster

children in their longitudinal research obtained a below average score for one or more of three measures of attainment (vocabulary, reading and maths). The findings above are further supported by SSI/Ofsted (DoH & Ofsted,1995) who found that out of a group of sixty secondary age children studied, none was judged by their teachers as likely to achieve five subjects at grade A to C in GCSE examinations. Yates (1995) in a study for Heads of Career Services found that 75 per cent of care leavers had no formal qualification.

The most comprehensive research into formal academic outcomes and destinations of young people who were being looked-after in their final year of school was carried out by Louise Garnett (Garnett, 1994). Her research compared the educational attainments of young people looked-after by Humberside County Council in Year 11 with those of their peers. It also investigated how many went into further education, employment and /or training. She reported that of the total Year 11 looked-after population of 124, only 48 per cent obtained at least one GCSE at Grade A to G compared with 98 per cent of the County's Year 11s. The results at the higher grades were said to be even less encouraging as only 3 per cent obtained five or more GCSEs at grades A to C, compared with the county average of 31 per cent and a national average of 42 per cent. She also noted that 43 per cent were not even entered for examinations, largely owing to non-attendance.

Garnett did find data that indicated that those who had been in long term care performed considerably better than those admitted in their teens. Of those children admitted at ten years or younger, 27 per cent obtained one pass at A to C grades, compared with 11 per

cent of teenage entrants. In one-third of the cases studied, she found that social workers had no idea if exams had been taken or had no actual record on file.

Attendance

Concern does not only focus on cognitive outcomes directly. School exclusion and non-attendance are associated with disadvantage and there is evidence that children being looked-after feature disproportionately among truanting and excluded pupils. In 1997, secondary schools reported 1 per cent of school time was lost to unauthorised absence with a lower figure of 0.5 per cent for primary schools. About one million children (15 per cent of all pupils) truanted for at least one half day and these numbers have been relatively stable since recording began in 1992 /93 (DfEE, 1997). These official figures show relatively low, and stable levels of truancy but according to surveys of young people themselves, the levels are far higher. One major study (O'Keefe, 1993) based on a confidential questionnaire to 3,500 pupils in Year 10 and 11 showed much higher figures. Thirty per cent of those who responded (over 2900) said that they had truanted at least once in the previous half term and ten per cent of 15 year olds said they truanted at least once a week. The Youth Cohort Study (Graham and Bowling, 1995) showed that two per cent of Year 11 pupils truanted for weeks at a time, a further two per cent for several days at a time, and another thirty-four per cent truanted occasionally. The study also identified that truants tended to be older pupils and from poorer backgrounds, with boys living in a single parent family being particularly at risk.

Garnett (1994) found that fewer than half of Year 11 children looked-after in Humberside were reported to attend school regularly, whilst a third were described by their Year Heads as non-attenders. The SSI/Ofsted report (1995) indicated a poor non-attendance rate of 8.4 per cent of looked-after children across all ages. The more detailed analysis carried out demonstrates the age related nature of non-attendance, i.e. Key Stage 1 (4 - 7 years) = 2.1 per cent; Key Stage 2 (7 - 11) = 1.6 per cent; Key Stage 3 (11 - 14 years) = 7.3 per cent; and Key Stage 4 (14 to 16 years) = 18.9 per cent. The Audit Commission (Price Waterhouse, 1994) found that in some authorities up to 41 per cent of children living in children's homes were not attending school and a more recent study (Berridge and Brodie, 1998) reported that the majority of adolescents in the 12 children's homes they visited were not attending school.

A variety of inter-related circumstances that lead to young people truanting from school have been identified by the Social Exclusion Unit. These include poverty, lack of future job opportunities, peer pressure, bullying, learning difficulties, a curriculum seen as boring and irrelevant and the crucial role of parental supervision and commitment to education (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). The report also went on to draw attention to the impact of school organisation and ethos:

The importance of what happens in schools in shaping truancy can be gauged by the wide variations in truancy levels between schools that appear to have similar intakes. DfEE research has found that there is ample evidence that schools can and do have a significant impact in improving attendance and reducing disaffection.

This is borne out by the wide variations between regions and between schools. For

example, the level of unauthorised absence in Manchester is four and a half times that in South Tyneside and nearly nine times that in Oxfordshire. And there are many examples of schools with similar intakes and results but very different truancy rates. (p.5)

A survey of the experiences and views of care users (Who Cares ? Trust, 1999) resulted in over 2000 questionnaires being returned. One area of enquiry was related to school attendance and how care users rated their own attendance patterns. These were then related to care experiences, i.e. longevity in care and number of different placements, to draw out some common trends. This aspect of the survey had 1,631 responses and revealed that a surprisingly high proportion, almost three-quarters (74%), claimed to 'always' attend school; 14 per cent attended 'some of the time'; 6 per cent said they were excluded; and 4 per cent said they 'never' attended. The remaining 2 per cent of the sample had already left school. The report said that patterns of school attendance did not vary by gender or ethnic origin, and that age only had a minor effect - with regular attendance decreasing slightly with age. It must be said, however, that the questionnaire had a number of limitations even for a self-report. It was constructed to be easy to complete, being of a multiple choice design, with 5 options for the question on attendance (always; some of the time; never; I am excluded; and I have left school). This forced respondents to choose between, for example, 'always' which could or should be interpreted as 100 per cent and 'some of the time' which suggests less than 50 per cent. The questionnaire would have produced more valuable results if a category such as 'most of the time' had been incorporated. This limitation of possible responses clearly impacts

on the value of subsequent analysis of the data. There was also no guidance about the time period the answer should encompass, e.g. attendance at present, over the past year, etc. Given the above limitations, the survey did reveal that the current placement and care histories had a more marked impact on attendance patterns:

For children in foster care, the proportion stating that they 'always' attend school is a somewhat surprising 86 per cent. In line with other research findings, children looked-after in residential homes were less likely to attend regularly than those in other types of placements, only 55 per cent doing so always, and be considerably more likely never to attend, or be excluded from school, 8 per cent and 11 per cent respectively.

As the total number of placements increases, so regular ('always') school attendance decreases, and the exclusion rate rises. Thus for those in the most stable situation (a single placement) 83 per cent always attend school and just 3 per cent are excluded. For those with the most disrupted care histories (11 or more placements) the equivalent proportions are 61 per cent always attending school and 10% excluded. (p. 35)

The Who Cares ? Trust (1999) survey also revealed that there was a positive correlation between longevity in care and good school attendance. Only 60 per cent of those in care for less than six months stated that they 'always' attended school compared with 80 per cent of those who had been in care for five years or more.

Exclusions

The term 'exclusion' refers to the expulsion of a child from school either permanently or for a fixed period, such as 5 days. Responsibility for encouraging good behaviour, self discipline and proper standards of conduct are given in law to the headteacher in conjunction with the school governors. Alongside this, the decision to exclude is the sole responsibility of the head teacher, although the governing body has the right to order reinstatement. Exclusions should only take place according to strict legal procedures set out within the Education Act 1997 and supplemented by guidance contained in Circulars such as 10/99 and 11/99 (DfEE, 1999c & d). Exclusion from school will obviously have a direct impact on the young person's acquisition of curriculum knowledge and skills and impact on educational attainment and life outcomes. It will also, however, have a more indirect cost for the individual and society in relation to the increased likelihood of involvement with the youth justice system as covered in Chapter Two.

The purpose and value of exclusion was investigated by Kinder et al (1997) who interviewed 25 LEA staff and 41 school staff from 15 schools and six off-site units in 15 LEAs. The responses either characterised exclusion as removal; reprisal; or remedy. Viewing exclusion as the action of removal of unacceptable disruption to the learning process resulted in the beneficiaries being given as other pupils and staff who were no longer subjected to the disruption. The advantages of the excluded pupil remaining in school were outweighed by the needs and rights of the rest and it was:

sometimes implied that the 'exclusion as removal' rationale became a way of manipulating or deselecting a school's clientele, as pupils with behavioural

difficulties were a tax on the reputation, and academic achievement, of a school.

(p.4)

It has long been known that schools with similar intakes vary significantly in their exclusion rates (Galloway 1982, & McManus 1989) and it appears that the significant influence was the philosophical stance taken by the school. Kinder et al (op cite) reported that when exclusion was seen as 'reprisal' it performed a punishment function and was the supreme sanction by which a school indicated its non-acceptance of certain behaviours. School staff, however, reported that they used this approach when there was a lack of other options within their sanction repertoire, even though they considered that the likelihood of it resolving or curing the difficult behaviour was limited. Finally, exclusion was seen by some staff as having the possibility of remedy associated with it, i.e. prompting alternative or additional educational provision. Pupils were seen as failing to cope in the context and needed greater individual attention, smaller group setting, therapeutic intervention or an alternative type of learning experience, e.g. a work placement.

Not surprisingly, Kinder et al reported that pupils viewed exclusion from a different perspective. They collected the views of 28 pupils from off-site units and 102 from mainstream schools and although there were differences in pupils accounts, there were two distinct trends:

Exclusion was either generally accepted or resisted as a reprisal. Thus, initial reactions to the sanction might be expressed in terms of fear and distress, while at

the other end of the continuum some pupils would suggest their immediate response to exclusion was that it was fun or a pleasing escape. In the longer term, accepting the exclusion as reprisal would be associated with statements of contrition and regret, while those resisting the sanction would refer to feelings of antagonism to the school, victimhood, indifference and so on. (p. 14)

A brief history of exclusions and current concerns

It seems that children have always been suspended and expelled from school, and a number of research studies have examined the phenomenon (e.g. Galloway et al, 1982). However, interest in the issue has increased in recent years, mainly as a result of the apparent rapid increase in the numbers of children being excluded from school since the late 1980s (ACE 1992; MORI, 1993; Hayden, 1994; and DfEE, 1995).

Table 3:5 The Increase in Permanent Exclusions in England (1990 to 1996)
(Sources: Hayden, 1994; DfEE News 342/97; and DfEE SFR 11/99)

	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
1990 - 91	378			2910
1991 - 92	537			3833
1992 - 93	1215	7421		8636
1993 - 94	1291	9433	457	11181
1994 - 95	1400	9200	500	11100
1995 - 96	1608	10344	524	12476
1996 - 97	1573	10463	632	12668
1997 - 98	1539	10187	572	12298

The above table represents the available information on national data and is based on DfEE data where published. The accuracy of the figures, however, is suspect. The figures for the first two years were collected on a voluntary basis and the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU,

1998) considered that they were almost certainly underestimates. There were no national data collected in 1992/3 (numbers in Table 3:5 from Hayden, 1994) and 1993/4 and 1996/7 is a DfEE estimate based on a sample of LEAs. The numbers of exclusions for the last year reported (1997/98) represent 0.03 per cent of the primary population; 0.33 per cent of the secondary population; and 0.58 per cent of the special school population. The overall rate for all children was 0.16 per cent.

This rise in permanent exclusions has occurred in almost all LEAs in England and was a feature in all sixteen LEAs, including Metroland, that were inspected to inform the Ofsted Report 'Exclusions from Secondary Schools' (Ofsted, 1996). This report gave the common immediate reasons for exclusion as verbal abuse to staff; violence to other pupils; persistent failure to obey school rules; disruption; and criminal offences, usually related to theft or substance abuse. The report also showed some association between rates of exclusion and the proportion of young people taking free school meals, and also an increased rate of exclusion in schools which were judged to have serious weaknesses. They also reported that few authorities monitored the numbers of looked-after children who were excluded, even though they were found to make up a sizeable proportion of the excluded population.

The NFER survey in 1997 by Kinder et al (op cit) identified four key reasons for the rise in exclusions which were: general pupil disaffection (e.g. current lack of curriculum relevance, changes in home circumstances, and a developing lack of respect for authority); the current educational climate and policy (e.g. league tables and competition between schools); the exclusion process itself (e.g. lack of consistency between schools and lack of other

sanctions); and lack of resources and training (e.g. need for more support/training in learning and behavioural problems). Earlier work by Ofsted (1993) also put forward a number of hypotheses for the increase in exclusions. These included:

Increased stress in families being reflected in difficult behaviour; reduced levels of teacher tolerance in the face of minor misdemeanours; ...to bring parents into school to discuss a child's behaviour; a self imposed pressure to raise the image of the school by being tough on discipline issues; ... headteachers no longer willing to make arrangements between each other; and to secure special educational needs placement or additional support for individual pupils.(p.3)

The National Union of Teachers (1992) also made early contributions to the debate by surveying teachers in 14 LEAs. These teachers placed a rather different emphasis upon the underlying causes and emphasised: *insufficient resources under LMS* (Local Management of Schools) *...and lack of parental discipline.* (p.5) Insufficient resources included a lack of central LEA resources such as alternative provision, Educational Psychology Services, and a reduction in Home Tuition Services.

Others, such as Slee and Weiner (1998) have drawn attention to the negative impact of the 'effective schools' debate, where the Governments in the 1990s viewed effective schools as those with good academic outcomes. Parsons (1999) considered that there was a significant difference between the 'effective school', as defined above, and a good school:

The 'good' school may be different, placing an emphasis on its caring role (without detriment to its academic functions). The 'very good' school, very much a moral

project, may be the inclusive school which keeps its clients and retains responsibility to cater for their needs - however demanding these may be. (p.34)

Within the overall pupil population, certain groups have been identified as being especially vulnerable to exclusion from school. Gender is highly significant, with boys three or four times more likely to be excluded than girls (Hayden, 1995 & Children's Society, 1998) and children with learning difficulties also experience higher rates of exclusion (Ofsted, 1996). Children from minority ethnic groups, in particular African Caribbean males, are also excluded in disproportionate numbers (Bourne et al, 1994). A further group experiencing high levels of exclusion are children looked-after by local authorities (SSI/Ofsted, 1995; & Ofsted, 1996). This is not a new phenomenon as earlier studies of exclusion drew attention to this. For example, in Galloway's study (1982) half the excluded young people in the sample had been in the care of the local authority at some time. Parsons' (1999) study into exclusions in three local authorities revealed that 20 per cent of permanently excluded pupils were open cases with the social services department. Interestingly, he also calculated the average cost per pupil to social services during the year of exclusion as £1,100; plus £93 for health service costs; £2,062 for the Police; and £5,134 for LEA services. This all came to a total of £8,389, equivalent to two and a half times the cost of full time education in a secondary school.

In 1992, research by Stirling revealed the high level of exclusion among children living in residential accommodation, and also demonstrated the considerable proportion of this group that were **informally** excluded.

My inquiries in two local education authorities suggest that unofficial exclusions may far outnumber those which are officially recorded and reported. Any figures of permanent exclusions which the National Exclusions Reporting System might publish would be the tip of the iceberg. They would reveal only a small proportion of the total number of pupils who had been excluded and who may not attend school again.

(p.128)

These informal exclusions are by their very nature difficult to quantify as head teachers are unlikely to report that they have behaved improperly - to say the least. Evidence of a softer nature is, however, available to LEAs when parents seek new schools and report that they had been advised to do so by staff from their child's previous school. The Audit Commission, in their report 'Misspent Youth' (1996) stated that *"More than half of the authorities visited also admitted that 'informal' or 'backdoor' exclusions took place, and the frequency of these was also increasing. (p.66)* Methods amounting to illegal exclusion include parents, or carers, being asked to keep their child at home until arrangements can be made with the LEA for alternative or additional provision; parents being persuaded that it would be advisable to seek an alternative school for their child to make a 'fresh start'; and schools delaying re-entry of an excluded pupil for an unreasonably length of time after the official exclusion had ended.

The joint inspection by SSI/Ofsted (1995) found that at the time of their census there were twenty-three children (1.9%) permanently excluded while Garnet (1994) reported that 6 per cent of the total survey of Year 11 pupils (124 pupils) were subject to permanent

exclusion during Year 11. The Ofsted survey also demonstrated an age profile to the exclusion figures with 0 per cent at Key Stage 1; 0.6 per cent at Key Stage 2; 2.1 per cent at Key Stage 3; and 3.9 per cent at Key Stage 4. The Audit Commission report 'Seen but not Heard' (Audit Commission, 1994) found that 35 per cent of children living in children's homes were permanently or indefinitely excluded from school. There are no reliable national figures for the school days lost owing to permanent exclusions but a small study by Carl Parsons (Parsons, 1994) showed that on average children permanently excluded lose 75 per cent of a school year.

In contrast to permanent exclusions, there is less reliable information available on fixed-term exclusions. The Ofsted investigation into exclusions, discussed above, found that only a quarter of LEAs in their study (16) either collected data only on exclusions over 5 days, or no data at all. They went on to say: *While three-quarters collected more comprehensive data, they were not rigorously analysed, and most recognised the fact. The failure of some schools to inform the LEA of all instances when pupils reach an aggregate of five days' exclusion in a term makes it difficult for the authority to check schools are not infringing the 15-day limitation for exclusions in any one term.* (p.23) The Children's Society (1998) survey of school exclusions 'No Lessons Learnt', reported that 20 per cent of the 66 LEAs they surveyed did not hold full records of fixed-term exclusions; 40 per cent did not record the number of days the exclusions lasted; and 62 per cent had no idea how many excluded children were in local authority care.

SSI/Ofsted (1995) found that at the time of their census there were twenty-one children (1.7%) on fixed term exclusions while Garnet (1994) reported that 6 per cent of the total survey of Year 11 pupils (124 pupils) were subject to fixed-term exclusion during the year. The Audit Commission report 'Seen but not Heard' (Audit Commission, 1994) found that 7 per cent of children living in children's homes were temporarily excluded. The most comprehensive survey was carried out by The Children's Society (Children's Society, 1998) who compiled information from 66 LEAs across England and Wales. They found that there were almost 11 times as many fixed-term exclusions as permanent exclusions and that they lasted, on average, between 3 - 5 days. They also reported enormous variation between LEAs, with one reporting fixed-term exclusion rates 24 times greater than another LEA of similar size. There was also evidence that variation occurred at the level of individual schools with one secondary school recording 469 exclusions and one primary school recording 48.

The overlap between children looked-after by social services and those who are excluded from school is unsurprising. The disadvantage and family stress which has been identified as common among children who are excluded also represent the factors which are likely to lead to social services' involvement (Bebbington and Miles, 1989). For example, the Audit Commission's report into young people and crime, *Misspent Youth* (1996), shows that 42 per cent of offenders of school age who are sentenced in youth court have been excluded from school, i.e. 78 per cent of those permanently excluded and 31 per cent of temporarily excluded pupils commit offences. Ofsted (1996) reported that in their survey, children of families under financial or emotional stress were more likely to engage in behaviour leading

to exclusion. This ties in with a history of educational research linking such disadvantage with low educational achievement and behavioural difficulties at school (Rutter et al, 1979). It is also important to remember that the disadvantages experienced by looked-after children do not begin with their reception into care

Special Educational Needs

Research into the educational outcomes for looked-after children having drawn attention to the disproportionate numbers that are designated as having SEN. Garnett (1994) reported that twenty-five young people out of the 124 looked-after children in her study were reported to have special educational needs. Of these, twenty-three of them (20 per cent of the total study group) were the subject of a Statement under the terms of the 1993 Education Act. This compared with 2 per cent of children in the Humberside population at large. Eighteen were reported to have mild or severe learning difficulties and the remaining five to have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The two young people without Statements were said to have severe mental health problems. In this study there was no analysis of children who had special educational needs that were below the level requiring a Statement, i.e. at Levels 1 to 4 of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. Analysis of data on 295 children looked-after by another large local authority (Christmas, 1998) revealed that 24 per cent of those aged between five-16 years, inclusive, were at Stages 4 or 5 of the Code of Practice. The Government's response to the Children's Safeguards Review (House of Commons, 1998a) also drew attention to the high number of

looked-after children with Statements, which they estimated to be 30 per cent of the whole population.

Post-Compulsory Education

There has been a steady increase in the number of young people staying on in full-time education after compulsory schooling. The proportion making a direct entry to work from school fell from 53 per cent in 1976 to 15 per cent in 1986, and in 1990 only 17 per cent of 16 year olds directly entered employment. Even at 17 years of age more than 58 per cent were continuing in education (Biehal et al, 1995). Care leavers, however, are significantly under-represented in this trend. For them, the failure to obtain qualifications at school coupled with the difficulty of establishing themselves in the community at an early age, had made a foothold in the Further Education ladder very difficult. Biehal (op cit) found that in her survey of 182 care leavers only 8.5 per cent continued with education post 16, while Broad (1994) found that 19 per cent of his much larger sample (859) continued after the age of 16. Cheung & Heath (1994) investigated the number of ex-care users who entered higher education and found that only 1 per cent followed this path.

In England in 1997 (Quality Careers Service, 1997) the 'destinations' survey showed that 68% of Y11 school leavers continued in education at school or college; 7 per cent were on Work-Based Training; and a further 7 per cent in jobs with training. The remaining 18 per cent were in jobs without training, unemployed or had unknown destinations. More detailed analysis in this survey report plotted academic attainment against the above destinations. This demonstrated the link between high GCSE points scores and positive destinations or outcomes as shown in Table 3:6

below (N.B. at GCSE an 'A*' Grade is equivalent to 8 points; an 'A' Grade = 7; 'B' Grade = 6; ... down to a 'G' Grade being equivalent to 1 point). Against this background of an increase in the numbers of young people taking up post 16 education and/or training the position of looked-after children is quite depressing.

Table 3:6 Destinations of School Leavers by GCSE Points Score

Destination	GCSE Average Points Score
School	45
Jobs with training	33
College	30
Work-based training	23
Jobs without training	21
Unemployed	17
Unknown	19

The 1989 Children Act places a duty upon the local authority to advise and befriend a looked-after young person with a view to promoting his or her welfare after care (Section 24(1)). The Act also provides a local authority with the power to provide financial assistance connected with a young person's education, training or employment (Section 24(8)). Broad (1994) draws attention to the distinction between a duty and a power and that the use of this power is the exception rather than the rule. This places care leavers at a particular disadvantage at a time when the state is increasingly requiring parents to take on more of the financial burden of maintaining their children in further education. Even in the case of entitlement to a free place in school or college between sixteen and eighteen years of age, the underlying assumption is that a parent will provide food and housing.

Reasons for the Educational Under-Achievement of Looked-After Children

The contributory factors that Garnett (1994) suggested to account for the low level of attainment of looked-after children at GCSE related to their pre-care experiences; low self-esteem; special educational needs; poor school attendance; disrupted schooling whilst in care; and disruption in care placements. Only 27 per cent had remained in the same placement throughout their stay in care, with approximately half experiencing at least two placement changes and a quarter experiencing at least four. Nine young people (7%) had moved more than fifteen times each. Nearly two-thirds had changed schools at some point in their secondary school career with one-in-four of these changes having happened whilst the child was being looked-after - with half of these being due to placement moves. The Audit Commission (1994) identified the lack of attention to education issues in the authorities they investigated and commented on the way in which professionals cast blame on each other. Social workers were said to criticise education departments for not providing sufficient alternative education, while education officers criticised their social services colleagues for not intervening early enough to prevent difficulties arising with social placements. Meanwhile '*... children missed their education.*' (Para. 95)

SSI/Ofsted (1995) drew attention to the low expectations of levels of attainment for children who are looked-after; a high level of disruption and change in school placements; lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities; inconsistent or no attention paid to homework; and under-achievements in further and higher education. They attributed this

to social workers, teachers and carers not giving the children's educational progress sufficient priority compared with the attention given to such matters as care, relationships and contact with parents. This view was similar to that expressed earlier in the Pindown Report (Kahan & Levy, 1991) which noted that, for children in residential care, educational needs and achievement tended to take second place to social and family needs, and recommended that there needed to be a much sharper focus on these issues. They also commented on the lack of understanding between social workers and teachers about each others work and the absence of a co-ordinated approach to raising educational achievement. These barriers included differences in priorities and expectations and the lack of knowledge of different legal requirements among carers and social workers of education, and teachers of care. Other significant shortcomings that the report identified were the lack of someone responsible for the general oversight of the education of the children (which often fell between carers, parents, social workers and teachers) and drift and delay in implementing decisions about care placement which had a damaging effect on educational progress. The report also focussed on the recent changes in the balance of responsibilities between schools and LEAs that were not sufficiently considered by SSDs when developing policies, strategic plans and procedures for children. Schools and SSDs both continued to look to LEAs to ensure effective liaison and additional support to protect the educational entitlement of the children. The report concluded that despite clear identification of the problem, little had been done in practice to boost achievement.

The Health Select Committee (House of Commons, 1998) commented on the lack of effective working between Social Services Departments and Local Education Authorities

and mentioned, in particular, the lack of a single individual to take responsibility for promoting the education of looked-after children: *We believe that for every looked-after child there should be a single individual who will have the responsibility as acting as an advocate for that child in respect of education, by monitoring their progress, keeping in regular contact with their school, and actively promoting their best educational interests* (para. 298). The Who Cares? Trust (1997) gave the key factors leading to educational failure as social services departments, schools and carers not sharing information that would help them plan effectively; lack of clarity about respective professional roles and low expectations; unnecessary changes of school with children being out of school for prolonged periods; and day-to-day carers not valuing education; Fletcher-Campbell (1997) brought together much of the concern expressed above into a list of aspects of the experience of being looked-after which had a negative impact on children's experience of education.

- ***fragmentation:*** *a variety of adults (for example natural parents, relatives, foster carers, residential carers and social workers) hold information which is usually lodged with the natural parent(s) who have cared for the child continuously since birth; thus it is difficult to trace the history of young people's educational careers, strengths and weaknesses, interests and achievements.*
- ***changes of school:*** *young people who are not living consistently at home often have frequent changes of care placement which, for logistic or resource-driven reasons, may entail changes of school at times other than those normally experienced - for example other than at ... primary-secondary transfer stage.*

Children who very often lack social skills are faced with having to make new friends and establish relationships with new teachers far more frequently than their peers who may be better equipped for this anyway.

- ***poor attendance:*** *young people who are looked-after have poor attendance records as a result of their out-of-school experiences; some come from homes where school is not valued or where the domestic situation mitigates against regular attendance and so irregular or minimal attendance has become routine; some have significant behaviour difficulties which mean that it is hard for them to maintain school placements; some may have periods out of school because of exclusion combined with changes of care placement.*
- ***low expectations:*** *very often adults working with young people who are looked-after have low expectations of what they can and/or will achieve at school, either because they consider that they are, by nature, low attainers, or because they consider that there are other things in their lives which take priority.*
- ***low attainment:*** *although there is a serious lack of reliable data about the attainment of these young people, what there are suggest that, without positive intervention and support, young people looked-after fail to attain in the “normal” range in terms of 16+ examinations. (p.11)*

This recognition of some of the causes of underachievement would give us hope that they would, in some sense, automatically lead to actions to ameliorate the difficulties.

However, there is little difference between the lists of causes given above to that set out by Sonia Jackson in 1987 as *'The Path to Educational Failure'* (p.25).

Reasons for Achievement

All the research into educational outcomes commented on above has tended to focus on poor educational outcomes. Researchers have not, on the whole, investigated the reasons for the children, admittedly smaller in number, who have achieved even though they have been looked-after by local authorities. One of the few researchers who has looked at children succeeding from care is Sonia Jackson. She carried out a retrospective questionnaire study of 133 adults (average age 26 years) who had spent a year or more in care and had obtained at least five 'O' Level or GCSE passes at Grade C or above (Jackson, 1998). Of these, 38 of the most successful were interviewed in depth. The successful group were indeed successful, i.e. 97 per cent had achieved at least an 'A' Level or Diploma; 66 per cent had a Degree; and 16 per cent had a Higher Degree.

Jackson compared this group with a matched group of similar age range, family background and care experience and found striking differences. The members of the matched group of ex-care users were all found to be largely unemployed, and to have numerous problems such as homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, poor health, trouble with the law and early parenthood. Members of the educationally successful group were almost all on planned career or educational paths, living in settled accommodation and

integrated into mainstream society. At a conference in Metroland (February 1999), Jackson presented the following table to add detail to the above findings:

Table 3:7 Care Leavers - A Comparison of Outcomes

	High Achievers (%)	Comparison Group (%)
Unemployed	2.6	72.7
Single mothers	3.8	41.7
Serving custodial sentences	0	18.2
Rented private or own home	73.7	13.6
Rented council or lodgings	23.7	63.6
Homeless	2.6	22.7

Since both groups had a poor start, Jackson accounted for the resilience of the high achievers in terms of *"Having a carer who valued education highly; learning to read and enjoying books; stability and continuity in placement and schooling; having close friends unconnected with care; developing strong out-of-school interests and hobbies; meeting a significant adult who offered consistent support and encouragement; and planning consciously for the future and having a strong sense of self-efficacy (i.e. feeling responsible for the direction of your life* (p. 3). Some of the research participants were reported to feel that care had given them opportunities they would not have had in their own families, however, most said that:

...the care system had put enormous obstacles in the way of their educational progress. Ninety-two percent stated that social workers had done nothing to support them at school or to encourage them to continue their education. (p.3)

Some researchers have had a different, more institutional, focus and have tried to examine ways in which the local authority can function to improve the likelihood of educational success for children in the care system. Stobbs (1999) carried out such a survey for the Society of Education Officers and the Association of Directors of Social Services. She analysed information from seventy-one local authorities to identify factors that resulted in better outcomes for young people and their families, with improved cost effectiveness.

The main factors identified which encouraged positive outcomes were:

Political support ... a determination to overcome traditional obstacles ... special funding mechanisms ... cooperative agreements and coordinating bodies ... research, monitoring and evaluation ... joint training ... joint physical location and a shared geographical area of responsibility ... (p.11 to 16)

Summary

This chapter has outlined the development of the involvement of the state in the education of its children. It demonstrates how education provision has gradually enlarged, from encompassing only the most advantaged in society, to be a universal provision. Although universal, however, it is not equal and the relationship between social disadvantage and poor attainments was outlined. This impacts on looked-after children as the majority come

from families who are socially disadvantaged and the children are then likely to experience educational disadvantage as a consequence. This educational disadvantage results in a higher likelihood of poor life outcomes covered in Chapter Two. The final sections draw together the research evidence on the reasons for both educational under-achievement, and the less frequent, positive achievement. The state needs to listen to these messages, as failure to address this inequality in educational opportunities removes one of the most important routes for young people to escape from playing their part in the cycle of deprivation.

Chapter Four

Action Research Plan and Methodology

Overview

Chapter Three examined the available research evidence on the educational experiences of looked after children and this drew attention to low academic attainments, high rates of exclusions, and poor attendance at school (e.g. SSI & Ofsted, 1995). The studies themselves, however, had limitations, as they tended to focus on relatively small samples of looked after children, e.g. children in residential care or in Year 11, and usually at a single fixed point in time. The research program reported here set out to build on these previous studies by collecting data on a significantly larger scale; by being more comprehensive (i.e. covering all looked after children of school age in one authority); by being longitudinal (i.e. to follow the progress of individuals for up to four years); and by incorporating information on the care experiences of the young people. It was designed to be relevant to practice, as defined by Tooley and Darby (1998), and also fulfil what Mortimore (2000) saw as the main purpose of educational research:

... to further educational improvements ... through the advancement of trustworthy knowledge about education ... Research is not just fun - although hopefully sometimes it will be - nor just theory building. Rather we want something to happen as a result of the endeavour. (p. 12)

The research program explored the issues raised in the literature review within one local authority and was considered to be an 'action research' design. That is, the research activity itself altered the circumstances that were being researched as, for example,

information collected on the academic attainments of looked after children was disseminated to officers of the Local Authority and to elected members on an annual basis. This influenced policy and practice that, in turn, were likely to impact on the educational attainments of children in subsequent years of the study. In addition to the object of the research being influenced by the research process itself locally, there were also significant changes at a national level that had a dramatic effect on the position of looked after children. The most important of these was the focus of the New Labour Government, that came into office in 1997, on reducing social exclusion. This impacted on children in care by virtue of the 'Quality Protects' initiative that set targets for all local authorities in terms of educational attainments, amongst others. The research reported here became 'policy relevant' and influenced these measures and targets as Metroland was one of the local authorities that formed part of a Department of Health's 'Pilot' project in 1998 (see Chapter Five). The intention was for the research to act on policy development and practice through all the routes identified by Hillage et al (1998):

*It can act **directly** on policy makers or practitioners, suggesting, changing or confirming a course of action; **cumulatively**, e.g. through adding to the sum of knowledge ..., or **indirectly**, e.g. through assessment instruments, curriculum materials, and pedagogic practice. The route can also be long, mediated through policy makers (local and national), advisers, administrators and local managers. Policy and practice are also influenced by other factors, political ideology, pragmatism and personal prejudice among them. (p.45)*

The research itself consisted of a sequence of studies. The first of these was formative in nature and investigated the quality of collaborative work between the Social Services Department, the Education Department, and schools in Metroland and resulted in a set of

recommendations for action which informed subsequent work in the Local Authority (see Chapter Six).

The second constituted the major study of the research program. It involved the collection of information on the educational progress of children that covered measures of cognitive outcomes (i.e. SATs and GSCE results) and non-cognitive outcomes (i.e. attendance and exclusions data), together with information on childrens' care experiences. This resulted in a set of data that allowed analysis from both a 'dynamic' and a 'relative' perspective, dynamic in the sense that it assessed changes over time, and relative in that it compared those changes with some norm or other 'external' point of reference, e.g. GCSE examination results of all children in Metroland. The design, therefore, allowed both longitudinal analysis, with information on some children being collected in each of four years, e.g. analysis of progress from the end of one Key Stage to the end of another; and cross-sectional in that the results from each year could be compared with those from another. Finally, information about individual young people's care experiences could be used to investigate the impact of particular factors, such as longevity in care or the number of care placements, on academic outcomes (see Chapter Eight).

There was also a subsidiary study based on the recommendations contained in Study One. This investigated the way one arm of the Local Authority, the Educational Psychology Service, delivery services to children in care and their families (see Chapter Seven).

Aims

The research program was designed with three different but interlocking aims. The first aim was to investigate the quality of collaborative work between the Social Services Department, the Education Department, and schools in Metroland. The second aim was to collect comprehensive quantitative information about the educational progress and attainments of looked after children on a significantly larger scale, and over a longer period of time, than had been previously reported. The final aim was to use the results of the above research to promote the introduction of changes designed to establish effective alliances between the Social Services and Education Departments, and schools. These alliances would take purposeful action to improve educational outcomes for looked after.

Hypotheses

- i) That looked after children underachieve at all stages of their education.
- ii) That disproportionate numbers of looked after children are placed at each stage of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice; have poor school attendance; are excluded from mainstream school; and are placed in special schools.
- iii) That being looked after contributes to this underachievement, i.e. that it is not simply the result of general social disadvantage.
- iv) That educational outcomes for looked after children can be improved by taking purposeful action in relation to: individual children (e.g. by improving their literacy attainments); professional practice (e.g. by ensuring that care plans include education); and policy development (e.g. that the needs of looked after children are specifically identified within policies relating to raising the achievement for all children).

Research Ethics and Confidentiality

Carrying out research in relation to looked after children requires particular attention as they are widely recognised as being amongst the most disadvantaged group in society, to be lacking in power, and often without a strong parental figure to safeguard their interests. In addition, as the researcher was a senior employee in the Local Authority where the research was carried out - that shares parental responsibility for the children covered by the research - it would have been too easy to misuse that position. To safeguard against this, the purpose, methods and intended uses of the research were agreed with chief officers in both the Social Services Department and the Education Service, and outlined to elected members of the Council. The Director of Social Services gave overall written permission for the collection of information on looked after children and the procedure was developed following advice from Metroland's solicitor.

Looked after children were told that information was being collected about their educational progress; that it was kept secure; and that it was available for them to view if they should wish to do so. The protection procedures for this information were in line with procedures set out by the Local Authority for storage of information on all children. They also complied with the relevant Data Protection Act in force at the time. Chief Officers and elected members had been made aware that the results of the research might not reflect well on the organisation and could lead to a conflict of interest with respect to, for example, making the findings public.

The research work did not only focus on children as the first study sought the views of professionals about their working relationship with other groups of professionals from different disciplines. The professionals involved were all senior managers and could be

viewed to be as equally powerful as the researcher in an interview situation. There was, however, still likely to be a power imbalance in that the researcher would be taking away the views of respondents who might feel they could be mis-represented at a later stage to their disadvantage. Denzin and Lincoln (1994), have argued that this approach can be criticized as researchers exercising a more subtle form of control over their participants by getting 'close' to them and uncovering their perspectives.

To reduce this power imbalance it was decided to use a qualitative approach in line with the arguments of Bryman (1988), i.e. researchers avoiding imposing their conceptual framework on participants, and aiming to study phenomena in their natural setting with minimal interference. The written record of each interview was also made available to each interviewee who was assured that no names or specific location information would be used in the report and all information would be aggregated where possible.

Methodological Issues

There has been a long-running tension between quantitative and qualitative approaches in social research which has been reflected clearly in the field of policy and practice evaluation (Finch, 1988). Quantitative methods are often seen as objective and rigorous as against qualitative methods, which by contrast, tend to be regarded as soft, subjective and speculative. Of course, much turns on the care and thoroughness with which each method is used and, in practice, they are often combined in evaluative research. These issues will be discussed further with reference to the studies undertaken.

Study One

The first study investigated the quality of collaborative work between the Social Services, the Education Service and schools and was qualitative in nature and took the form of _____ semi-structured interviews. The term qualitative research was based on the definition provided by Wragg (1994) who saw it as *'typically involving the gathering of evidence that explores the significance, meaning and impact, individual or collective interpretation of events (p.9).'* This approach was taken as it seemed the most suitable for collecting in-depth data on sensitive issues, such as inter-professional collaboration, which Edwards (1993) suggests are more accessible using a personal approach such as interviewing. By contrast quantitative approaches such as questionnaire surveys would not allow social workers and teachers to freely and fully describe their personal experiences. Cohen and Manion (1994) also argue that direct interaction between researchers and participants in the interview situation allows participants to describe their views or feelings in greater depth, and Vincent and Warren (1998) claim that better rapport is generated if interviewer and participant have shared experiences. However, they also caution against making assumptions about shared knowledge and meaning. This rapport can be enhanced according to Fielding (1993) by researchers: providing a careful explanation of the purpose of the interview, so as to avoid biasing the participants in their responses; being relaxed and unselfconscious, to put participants at their ease; and showing interest without intrusiveness. Cohen and Manion (1994) express similar views by drawing attention to trust, curiosity and naturalness as being crucial for successful interviewing. Notice was taken of the advice given by Fielding and others and prior to the interviews described in Chapter Six, the interviewees were contacted by telephone to be given an explanation of the purposes of the interview (see Chapter Six for full details).

The validity of information collected from interviews has been questioned due to the effect of the researcher's subjective interpretations, i.e. being selective about what is recorded (if only a written record is kept) and / or what is reported. Wragg (1994) commented that '*we often interpret events as we wish to see them, not as they are*' (p.50). Researchers become the arbiters of what is and what is not disclosed, and of how such disclosure is presented to the reader (Vincent and Warren, 1998). To counter this source of bias, or at least to expose it, the questions that were used in the interviews have been included in the text in full. The themes that emerged have also been included for each professional group before being combined and transformed into recommendations (see Chapter Six). The deviations between researchers and participants may be based on the tendency for researchers to seek answers to support their preconceived ideas and misperceive what participants say (Cohen and Manion, 1994), or researchers could exhibit a focus of interest which deviates from the participants' focus of interest (Bryman, 1988).

Study Two

In the absence of a large-scale data set describing the educational attainments of looked after children the second study took an alternative form of investigation based on a quantitative approach. This seeks to break the subject under scrutiny down into manageable components with hard, objective data with no consideration of subjective experience (Bryman, op cit). The methodological concerns of this approach are identifying, defining and measuring elements in the natural or social world, measuring the relationships between elements and ultimately discovering universal laws to explain reality. This fitted the main aim of the study which was to gather educational data from a large population of children in care; to use statistical analysis to provide a reliable

description of their educational attainments; to investigate the impact of care in general on educational progress and outcomes; and to reveal any relationships between particular aspects of care and educational outcomes.

This study was also designed to be longitudinal in nature as it would then be possible to investigate changes in an individual over time as well as between individuals and groups. Tracing causal processes, which usually involve complex chains of continuities and discontinuities, depends on the availability of reliable information for the same subject over an extended period of time. Mortimore (2000) considered that longitudinal studies '*illuminate the changing and constant patterns in people's lives*' (p.13). He also went on to make the comment '*Nor have we, in the last 20 years, undertaken many large scale studies*' (p.14). Rutter (1988) has set out the many advantages of a longitudinal approach. These include the ability to be precise about the timing, measurement and sequence of experiences; the possibility of studying the process by which a particular risk variable may lead to several different maladaptive outcomes; and the analysis of what he called 'direct causal chain mechanisms'. Although Rutter's emphasis is mainly on the causal connections between adverse experiences and subsequent pathology, he does also point to the fact that one major advantage of longitudinal data is the opportunity they offer to study 'escape from risk'. Parker et al (1991) asked a similar question:

What is it that ... enables some individuals who have suffered very adverse childhood experiences to become competent adults and good parents to their own children? Identifying the protective factors could provide valuable leads to child care workers wondering where to focus their efforts. (p. 41)

The measures of attainment and progress were to be SATs, GCSE and attendance and exclusion data - all information gathered by schools and reported to parents.

Theoretically, therefore, the collection of suitable measure for a large population within a limited time-scale seemed a reasonable proposition (see Chapter Eight for a discussion of the reality). By adopting the measures standardized across the country it allowed comparison of the performance of looked after children with the performance of all children in Metroland, and all children in England. The method used is easily replicable, and will enable comparisons to be made with the performance of looked after children in other authorities, when that information becomes available as part of the new requirements under the Quality Protects initiative (see Chapter 5). A quantitative approach was also used in one of the subsidiary studies which analysed the delivery of Educational Psychology services to looked after children and their families (see Chapter Seven).

Mixed Methods

The research program, as a whole, uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods and on the basis that different elements needed different approaches and that, as both methods have their limitations, it was most appropriate to use the 'best fit' for each study. This mixing of approaches, however, would be rejected by some researchers because they are associated with two different and antagonistic theoretical perspectives. Denzin (1970), for example, argued that researchers using social surveys tend to view social reality as if it were static, invariant and stable, while researchers using participant observation are more inclined to study processes occurring in a dynamic, changing social reality. Stevenson and Cooper (1997) contended that both positivist and constructivist approaches were problematic. They considered that:

Positivism entails a narrow definition of good science which serves to distance the researcher from the researched. In constructivist research there is no strong methodological position as the relativism implicit in this approach suggests that as all accounts of the world are equally good, all research positions are equally good. The definition of 'knowledge' becomes more fluid. (p.159)

Atkinson et al (1988), questioned whether the two approaches are as distinctive as their proponents would argue and Bryman (1988) and Brannen (1992) both proposed that decisions on which approach to adopt should be predicated on judgements about suitability in relation to the problem. That is, qualitative research for studying processes (such as those in study one above) and quantitative research for studying 'rates' (such as in study two above). In their article looking for common ground in the debate over the two approaches, Stevenson and Cooper (1997) concluded that:

Neither positivist approaches nor constructivist research are better than each other. Different inquiry positions are associated with different kinds of knowledge; it is people... who create hierarchies by giving legitimacy to one kind of knowledge over others. By adopting a view of research that includes the reflexivity of the researcher on the selection of suitable methodology for the phenomena under investigation and the interpretation of findings, the reflexivity applied by the researcher may become one overarching criterion for good ... research. (p.160)

Summary

This chapter gives an overview of the research undertaken in Metroland and its aims and hypotheses. It covers the type of research carried out and discussed the merits and problems of the research methods adopted. The limitations of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches are reviewed and the argument is made for a combined approach within one research program, i.e. matching the approach to the research question under consideration.

Chapter Five

The Social and Political Context

Metroland

Metroland is a modern industrial City situated in the West Midlands that was reconstructed following its destruction during the Second World War. It has a total population of approximately 304,400 (1997 Census data). This represents a fall over the previous 30 years from the high of 340,000 although the population had been stable since 1992. Traditionally a manufacturing City, the decline in manufacturing in the UK had a profound effect, causing the closure of world known industrial names and a correspondingly high unemployment rate. The sudden decline of the coal industry and the closure of coal mines also had a significant effect on particular parts of the City and outlying village communities.

Population Characteristics

In contrast to the general decline in traditional industries, the good motorway links in particular have encouraged inward investment. The unemployment rate fell by 42 per cent between 1981 and 1991. In 1981 there were 22,452 people unemployed compared to 13,046 in 1991. This number continued to fall and by 1997 there were 9,043 people unemployed in the City (Metroland City Council, 1997). The downward trend in unemployment mirrored national and regional trends but Metroland still suffered higher rates than both. For example, the figure given above represented an unemployment rate of 7.1 per cent in Metroland at a time when the rate across the West Midlands was 6 per cent, and the rate for the whole of the UK was 6.2 per cent.

Metroland is multicultural with representation from most of the communities classified as ethnic minorities, but the population is still mainly White European. The percentages for the City in the 1991 Census were: White 88.2 per cent; Asian 9.38 per cent; Black African and Caribbean 1.63 per cent; Chinese and other 0.82 per cent. The population of children and young people aged 0-19 years at that time was 78,308 which represented 27 per cent of Metroland's population. The number of children in each ethnic group is given in Table 5:1 below:

Table 5:1 Ethnicity in Metroland's 0 - 19 Year Age Group (1991 Census)

	0-19	% 0-19 pop	Met. pop	% Met. pop
White	64,278	82.1	259,513	88.2
African Caribbean	1,735	2.2	4,822	1.6
Asian	11,152	14.2	27,623	9.4
Other	973	1.2	1,604	0.5
Irish	374	0.5	13,540	4.6
Chinese	170	0.2	825	0.3
Total	78,308		294,387	

The proportion of white children as a percentage of the total white population is 25 per cent; for the African Caribbean group the percentage is considerably higher at 36 per cent. The Asian percentage is highest at 40 per cent and the Chinese population is 21 per cent.

Nationally the percentage of lone parent households is 2.8 per cent, ranging from 8.6 per cent in Manchester to 1.0 per cent in the City of London. Metroland's figure of 4.9 per cent places it 37th. highest out of the total of 366 (1991 base) local authorities (Metroland

Children's Services Plan, 1997). City-wide figures equate to 16 per cent of children aged 0 to 15 having lone parents. This does not, however, fall equally across all Wards. For example, in Ward S (in the center of Metroland) 31 per cent of children live in a lone parent household compared to 4 per cent in Ward W (an affluent area on the southern edge of the City).

The percentages of children (successful applicants) in receipt of free school meals are slightly higher in Metroland than the figures for England in 1997 as set out below. The rate varies across the different Wards with the highest rate being recorded in Ward S (39 per cent) and the lowest in Ward E (8 per cent).

Table 5:2 Free School Meals

	Metroland	England
Primary	21.2%	19.8%
Secondary	19.8%	17.5%

Levels of overcrowding for the City are 3 per cent as a whole, but this gives a poor indication of the position for children. The percentages of children living in overcrowded households range from 3.7 per cent in Ward E to 40 per cent in Ward F.

The indices of unemployment, the number of children in lone parent households, and overcrowding commonly used in formulae to indicate the general level of disadvantage are, as elsewhere, co-related. The levels of unemployment and overcrowding in the Wards given above are a good example, e.g. Ward S is 16 per cent and 25.4 per cent respectively, compared to the 1.8 per cent and 5 per cent levels in Ward W.

Education

Metroland had 89 primary schools, 19 secondary schools and 11 special schools. Of the special schools, 4 were for children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD); 1 for children with physical handicaps (PH); and 3 each are for children with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD).

The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 was broadly similar to the attainment of pupils nationally at all levels and in all subjects. The gap between Metroland and the national position across all curriculum areas tested was between 0 and 3 percentage points (Metroland Educational Development Plan, 1999). The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 was 3 to 5 percentage points below the national average across all three core subjects at and above the expected level, i.e. Level 4. In assessing Metroland's performance, Ofsted compares it to a group of ten 'statistical neighbours', i.e. authorities that have a similar social and economic profile to Metroland. (These authorities are Bolton, Derby, Kingston-upon-Hull, Oldham, Rochdale, Sandwell, Salford, Southampton, Walsall and Wolverhampton.) As an example of performance, at English Key Stage 2, Metroland is 3rd out of the eleven authorities with 67 per cent of children achieving Level 4 or above, compared to a statistical neighbour average of 65 per cent (Metroland, 2000).

Attainment levels fell again at the end of Key Stage 3 and were 4 to 7 per cent below the national average in all three core subjects. Finally, at the end of Key Stage 4 the performance of Metroland children at GCSE, measured by five or more A* to G grades,

was 7 per cent below the national position. This performance placed Metroland 5th out of the eleven statistical neighbours, and at 39 per cent was above the 'neighbours' average of 37 per cent.

Metroland had a far greater percentage of pupils in special schools than other Local Education Authorities. In 1999, 1.6 per cent of all children in Metroland were placed in special schools which was high even when compared to Metroland's statistical neighbours. This could also be expressed in 'league table' terms with Metroland having one of the lowest rates of inclusion of all authorities, i.e. it ranked 120th out of 150 local authorities. The number of pupils in special schools had remained fairly stable between 1991 and 1998, but the number of pupils with statements of SEN had increased significantly, the difference being due to the increased number of pupils in mainstream schools with statements (Metroland, 2000).

Table 5:3 Placement of Children with Statements in Metroland

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Total new statements	150	179	189	196	221	231	234	213
% resulting in mainstream placement	8	14	27	29	42	55	55	54

The attendance rates of children in Metroland were within the average range for authorities in England as a whole. Table 5:4 gives the unauthorised and authorised absence rates for primary children in Metroland and compares these with England as a

whole. It also gives the authorities with the highest (Greenwich) and lowest (Northumberland) reported rates of absence (DfEE, 1997d). Table 5:5 gives similar information for secondary age pupils, with Metroland again occupying a position within the average range. Bath and North East Somerset had the lowest reported absence rates, with Kingston-upon-Hull having the highest.

Table 5:4 Attendance Rates of Primary Children in Metroland Compared with the Authorities with Highest and Lowest Rates (1996/97)

Authority	Number of pupils of compulsory school age	Unauthorised absence - % of half days missed	Authorised absence - % of half-days missed
Northumberland	16,083	0.1	4.8
Metroland	26,350	0.4	5.9
Greenwich	18,299	1.7	5.8
England	3,770,801	0.5	5.6

Table 5:5 Attendance Rates of Secondary Children in Metroland Compared with the Authorities with Highest and Lowest Rates (1996/97)

Authority	Number of pupils of compulsory school age	Unauthorised absence - % of half days missed	Authorised absence - % of half-days missed
Bath and North East Somerset	10,079	0.4	6.5
Metroland	17,650	1.3	8.9
Kingston-upon-Hull (City)	15,388	4.1	12.4
England	2,790,039	1.0	8.1

Metroland had slightly higher rates of exclusion than the West Midlands in general or England as a whole and these are set out for a sample year, 1995/96 (DfEE, 1997c).

Table 5:6 Exclusion Rates for Metroland, West Midlands and England (1995/96)

	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
Metroland	0.6	5.3	1.1	2.3
West Midlands	0.3	3.6	4.4	1.7
England	0.4	3.4	5.4	1.7

Social Services Provision

There were four residential children's homes in Metroland, one of which acted as a short-term assessment center with young people being placed there for periods of up to six weeks while the most appropriate care arrangements were identified. This might result in

a return home, a foster care placement, or a place in one of two long-term residential units. One of these catered for children between the ages of nine and fourteen, while the other provided a home for young people over fourteen. The fourth residential home was different in nature as it was used to provide respite care for children and young people with severe learning difficulties. Metroland also had a Secure Unit as a regional resource.

Table 5:7 Age Distribution of Looked after Children in Metroland (Oct. 1995)

Age	Accommodated	Care Order	Total Looked after
0	9	5	14
1	7	7	14
2	10	13	23
3	9	10	19
4	10	11	21
5	6	18	24
6	10	12	22
7	11	17	28
8	7	15	22
9	10	11	21
10	10	16	26
11	9	20	29
12	15	12	27
13	25	13	38
14	21	18	39
15	46	11	57
16	28	25	53
17	16	16	32
18	4	4	8
19	1	0	1
20	1	0	1
Total	265	254	519

At any point in time in Metroland approximately 500 children and young people would be looked after by the Local Authority. Of these, approximately 360 would be of statutory school age. The likely distribution of ages of these children and young people

has been illustrated in Table 5:7 with reference to a typical month, i.e. October 1995.

The Office of National Statistics provided a mid-year estimate for 1995 of 489 children being looked after in Metroland out of a total child population (0 - 19) of 83,462, or 0.59 per cent (Metroland Children's Services Plan, 1997).

The largest numbers of looked after children were placed in foster care (approx. 66 per cent), with parents (11 per cent), and residential care (8 per cent). The care status and placement of looked after children has also been illustrated in Table 5:8 below with reference to the same month as Table 5:7, i.e. October 1995.

Table 5:8 Placement and Care Status of Looked after Children in Metroland (Oct. 1995)

Placement	Care Orders	Accommodated	Looked after
Fostered in Metroland	129	135	264
Fostered outside Metroland	8	14	22
Placed for adoption	5	1	6
Children's homes in Metroland	19	37	56
Other local Authority children's home	3	1	4
Young offenders institutions, or prison	3	2	5
Nursery care	0	1	1
Homes under supervision	6	0	6
Independent living	4	0	4
Hostel	2	0	2
Family Units	4	0	4
Charge and control - parents	3	0	3
Charge and control - grandparents	1	0	1
Parents or persons with parental responsibility	48	3	51
Other placement	19	3	22
No recorded placement	20	45	65
Total	254	262	516¹

¹ Figures supplied by Metroland Social Services Department for Table 5:7 and Table 5:8 did not agree and almost 9% had no recorded placement!

A breakdown of the number of male and female children being looked after has been given below for children of statutory school age, broken down into Year Groups (author's own research, June 1998).

Table 5:9 Gender Analysis of Looked after Children of Statutory School Age in Metroland by Year Group (June, 1998)

Age	Male	Female	Total Looked after
YR	14	12	26
1	15	10	25
2	10	14	24
3	8	13	21
4	21	6	27
5	18	11	29
6	15	8	23
7	12	12	24
8	18	12	30
9	24	13	37
10	18	18	36
11	28	17	45
Total	201	146	347

The majority of children entering the care system in Metroland are classified by their parent(s) as United Kingdom European (85 per cent), with 7 per cent of mixed heritage, 3 per cent Asian and 2 per cent African Caribbean. On the whole these percentages are broadly in line with the percentages in the whole 0 - 19 year age group in Metroland (see Table 5:1), with the exception of Asian children who are under-represented in the looked after population, i.e. 3 per cent compared with 9 per cent. More detailed analysis is not possible as the Local Authority collects ethnicity data in different ways in each department, e.g. the Education Service differs from the Social Service Department and both use different categories than the National Census.

Table 5:10 Ethnicity of Metroland Looked after Children (May 1996)

Looked after Children - by ethnic group				
	Care Order	Accomm.	Total	%
UK European	223	225	448	85.5
Mixed Parentage	23	13	36	6.9
Asian	11	5	16	3.1
African Caribbean	7	4	11	2.1
Other European	2	5	7	1.3
Not Seen	0	5	5	1.0
Other	0	1	1	0.2
Totals	266	258	524	100%

The Audit Commission report 'Seen but not Heard' (1994) called for Health Authorities, SSDs, LEAs, and voluntary agencies to publish joint plans for improving services. The report highlighted that although £2 billion was spent each year on services for children, little joint planning was evident. Advice was also given directly to Metroland City Council when they contributed to an Audit Commission survey. That is, that procedures in Metroland should be developed to cover making arrangements to address a child's educational need at the time he/she commences being looked after; to ensure that children who are excluded from school or are refusing to attend are identified quickly; and to ensure that there is a process for involving Social Services earlier when children whom they are looking after are excluded from school. They also argued that a case could be made for regular meetings between the two departments to develop such approaches (Price Waterhouse, 1994).

New Government Initiatives

The 'New Labour' Government, under Tony Blair's leadership set education and social inclusion at the heart of their social agenda. To achieve this they started implementing policies that stemmed from, and in many ways, were more extreme than those introduced during Margaret Thatcher's leadership of the previous Conservative Government. On entering office, Blair declared that one of his key aims was to bring about a more inclusive society. He intended to identify the principle causes and effects of exclusion, and to develop effective ways of dealing with them. It is this new social agenda which is likely to characterize his Government in the same way that privatization defined Thatcher's. Within this broad framework, looked after children have been identified as one of the major groups likely to be at the margins of society and likely to become disaffected.

Education

Prior to the last election, 'Education Education Education' was identified by Blair as his top priority and once in power New Labour embarked on a programme of rapid reform. Within a year, they had introduced a policy paper, 'Excellence in Schools' (DfEE, 1997a), aimed at raising standards; a consultation paper, 'Excellence for all Children' (DfEE, 1997b) concerned with the introduction of more inclusive educational practice for children with special educational needs; an Education Bill outlining a legislative framework for school exclusions, attendance, and pupil behaviour; and a policy paper, 'Life Long Learning', proposing action to improve learning among young people and adults aged 16 and over (DfEE, 1998). The pace since then has not reduced and more recent legislation and guidance are covered below in greater detail. The main thrust has

been to charge teachers, head teachers, governors, education officers and other professionals working in education, further education and training with the task of raising the achievement of pupils. Pupil and student achievement is the focus of Government targets and the way the performance of all those listed above, and others such as councillors, will be measured.

The last Conservative Government and the current New Labour Government have focussed on raising standards and in so doing have given the impression that standards are falling. This is a view that influential researchers such as Mortimore (2000) do not share:

Until the late 1980s, the governments of the day had exhibited fairly low expectations of the academic potential of most secondary school pupils ... It is against the norms of behaviour and popular aspirations of the period that 'average standards' have to be judged. Any talk of declining standards overall is nonsense. The record of gradual improvement is undeniable but - and this is the crucial point - from a low starting point at which only one fifth of each age cohort was expected to take academic examinations and an even smaller proportion was expected to succeed in them. (p.8)

The greater centralization of control over the educational process, started by the last Conservative Government, increased considerably after New Labour came into office in 1997. This transformed the equilibrium of 'a central service locally administered' worked out after the Second World War into a 'strong hub and rim', i.e. strong Government and schools with the local authority being the weak link between them. For

example, the Conservatives were happy to just tell teachers what to teach, i.e. the National Curriculum, and left the process of teaching to teachers. The new administration, however, takes the process of control one stage further. They now also specify how teachers are to teach for a significant proportion of each day, and for the most important subjects. The National Literacy Strategy introduced in the Autumn of 1998, is a good example of this new approach. It was said to be the means of raising the standard of literacy to meet the governments target, i.e. that by 2002, 80 per cent of 11 year olds would achieve Level 4 or above in English at the end of Key Stage 2. Each primary school received three copies of the literacy file, 'The Framework for Teaching' (DfEE, 1998b). It contained precise details of how the daily literacy hour should be structured:

- 1) Shared reading and writing - whole class activity. (15 mins.)*
- 2) Word and sentence level work - whole class activity: emphasis on phonological awareness (Key Stage1) and grammar and punctuation (KS2). (15 mins.)*
- 3) Group and independent work with the teacher focusing on guided text work with at least two ability groups (KS1) or one group (KS2). (20 mins.)*
- 4) Whole class session, reviewing, reflecting on, and consolidating learning. (10 mins.) (p.9)*

Prior to winning office, a Labour Government might also have been seen as a natural ally of local authorities. These past loyalties, however, were not allowed to stand in the way of their drive to raise standards. The role of the LEA was rewritten as a challenger of schools to raise standards continuously and to apply pressure and provide help when necessary - but, critically, to leave alone those schools that were doing well. The Audit

Commission Report 'Held in trust: the LEA of the future' (Audit Commission, 2000) said that local authorities were to challenge schools to raise standards and act as a voice for parents; provide clear performance data that could be readily used by schools; offer educational services to schools which choose to use them; provide focused support to schools that under perform; focus their efforts on national priorities such as literacy and numeracy; and work with the DfEE and other LEAs to help celebrate excellence and spread good practice.

All of these tasks were backed up by the threat that failure on the part of the LEA would lead to private organisations taking over part, or the whole, of the functions of the LEA. This was not to be taken as an empty threat as, by the end on November 1999, changes had been implemented. Hackney had LEA services put into private hands, Islington was to hand over responsibility for all school services to a private company and consultants had been appointed in Leicester. The clear message at the time to other LEAs was that these were not to be seen as token examples. Estelle Morris, the schools standards minister, announced that up to 10 per cent of all LEAs (150) would be contracted out, in full or in part, to private companies (Warwick University speech to Chief Education Officers, Nov. 1999). Critics and sceptics were commenting that this amounted to .. *a 'creeping privatisation' programme planned for Britain's schools, which even the Tories did not dare to contemplate.* (Smithers, Guardian Education Nov. 23rd 1999, p. 2)

Social Exclusion Unit

The Social Exclusion Unit was formally launched by Tony Blair in December 1997. Its main purpose is to help government work in a more coherent way across departmental

boundaries to reduce social exclusion. It is based in the Cabinet Office and reports directly to the Prime Minister who also chairs the regular meetings with relevant ministers. The aim is to co-ordinate and improve government action by improving understanding of the key characteristics of social exclusion and the impact of government policies. It was also given the role at its inception of promoting solutions by encouraging co-operation, disseminating best practice and recommending changes. One of the key differences from previous 'think tanks' was the Prime Minister's concern that the Unit should hear from practitioners and from the socially excluded themselves. The Unit is backed by a social exclusion network of ministers from departments most affected who draw together social exclusion issues in their own department, as well as guiding and presenting the Unit's work. This approach became embodied in the phrase 'joined-up thinking.'

The first report by the Unit was on Truancy and School Exclusion (SEU, 1998) which it considered to have reached a crisis point with thousands of children not attending schools and being drawn into a life of crime and unemployment. The report considered that this damaged the children themselves and everyone else:

The children themselves lose out because they stop learning. This is self evident for truants, but it is also a problem for excluded pupils ...These lost years matter: both truancy and exclusion are associated with a significantly higher likelihood of becoming a teenage parent, being unemployed or homeless in later life, or ending up in prison:

The wider community suffers because of the high levels of crime into which many truants and excluded pupils get drawn. Time lost from education is a direct "cause

of crime". For example, in London it has been estimated that 5 per cent of all offences are committed by children during school hours. 40 per cent of robberies, 25 per cent of burglaries, 20 per cent of thefts and 20 per cent of criminal damage in 1997 were committed by 10 to 16 year olds. The police and public are paying a huge price. (p.1)

The Report recognized the variety of inter-related reasons why young people dropped out of education, drawing attention in particular to poverty, lack of future job opportunities and the role of family problems. They characterized children as becoming disaffected when school seemed boring, too difficult, or unlikely to lead anywhere. The Report also signaled that the Government had recognised looked after children as a particularly disadvantaged group likely to continue to be at risk of becoming disaffected with education and society unless significant action was taken.

Improving attendance and reducing exclusions among children in care is critical to improving their very poor educational outcomes. The Government has already announced that it intends to set targets for the educational attainment of children in care. It has in mind that the starting point might be that 50 per cent of all children in care should achieve a qualification by 2001, and 75 per cent by 2003..... In addition, effective education should be considered a key outcome of relevant social services work involving school-aged children. (para. 5.21)

Target Setting

Another phrase, alongside joined-up thinking, that has gained primacy in the Government's approach to improving the quality of services to people is 'target setting'.

Targets have been set by Government in relation to the whole population (e.g. that by 2002, 80 per cent of 11 year olds would achieve Level 4 or above in English at the end of Key Stage 2) and also to smaller groups such as looked after children (e.g. that 50 per cent of all children in care should achieve a qualification by 2001). This simple model is associated with all their policies and involves setting clear numerical targets for service providers to achieve. A problem is identified, such as too many people dying from coronary disease, and the policy solution is to set a target for the health service to deliver against.

Target setting has a beguiling simplicity but there are several hidden problems not least of which is their often arbitrary nature and the lack of any research base, i.e. whatever the problem reduce it by 50 per cent. Targets can often focus on variables that are easily measured, such as the number of names on a hospital waiting list, rather than what might be considered more important, i.e. the quality of surgery received. They can also be seen as encouraging service providers to meet the target by whatever means, rather than delivering quality services. Linked to all the above is the question of validity, as one has to consider whether achieving a particular target will indicate that people are getting a better, as opposed to different, service. Finally, there are some technical difficulties associated with setting a target as a specific number, rather than a range, particularly in relation to small populations. 'Confidence Intervals' express the likely range of chance variation for a particular measure and would be much more appropriate to use than the single target figure. They give an indication of certainty or uncertainty about a result or prediction. This is crucial for analysing data as one needs to know whether a few points departure from a target is within the realms of chance variation or unlikely to have

occurred by chance. A 95 per cent confidence level indicates that the range within which we could be confident that 95 out of every 100 measurements would occur, if the same measurement were repeated 100 times. Confidence Intervals are calculated from the standard deviation or range of individual scores contributing to the overall percentage target. They get larger the smaller the size of the cohort, e.g. the smaller the class size the wider the confidence limits. For example, one could set a target of 35 per cent of Year 6 pupils achieving Level 4 or above in their English SAT, i.e. you consider that 35 per cent should generally be capable of achieving this grade or higher. If there were only 10 pupils in this cohort, then on any particular test we could only be 95 per cent confident statistically that the actual result would fall somewhere between 13 per cent and 65 per cent. The range reduces as the cohort size increases but is still much greater than one might imagine, i.e. using the same target figure as above but for a cohort size of 40, rather than 10, the 95 per cent confidence limits are 23 per cent and 51 per cent. The Department of Education and Employment are well aware of this particular problem and have drawn attention to the care that needs to be taken when analysing the results of small year groups and small schools (DfEE, 1999f):

This is because with small numbers of pupils, the effects of one additional pupil on, for example, a school percentage measure can be considerable, but in larger schools the effect will be less marked. This does not mean that analysing the performance of small cohorts is invalid, rather it means that the findings from such analysis should be interpreted carefully, and may need to be augmented with other information. (p.2)

New Labour has set out what it expects from local authorities in general, e.g. to raise standards in education and child-care, and in particular, e.g. by setting specific targets for each authority. This approach is backed up by a rigorous inspection regime involving organisations such as Ofsted, SSI and the Audit Commission. Any local authority found wanting will find that the responsibility for providing services might be taken away from them.

Targets and Looked after Children

Taking the general criticisms of target setting set out above and applying them to a particular population, in this case looked after children, illuminates the problems. To start with, the Government is well aware that there is no baseline national data on the educational attainment of LAC from evidence in reports by organisations such as SSI/Ofsted (1995) and the Social Exclusion Unit (1998). In particular, the Health Select Committee (House of Commons, 1998) commented on the arbitrary nature of the target of 50 per cent of looked after children attaining at least 1 A* to G:

... as the Government acknowledges, there is a great lack of data about the educational circumstances and achievements of children in care. There is no point in setting targets at all until firm statistics are available, together with mechanisms for measuring progress beyond an initial baseline. (para. 293)

The Government's target for secondary schools is to increase the percentage of children attaining five or more GCSE passes at Grades A* to C. To boost their performance schools often provide additional resources to children on the C/D borderline. It is hard to see how this will have an impact on the G/fail borderline. In addition to any Government

targets, the view of the school within the local community, and its subsequent ability to attract pupils, will be shaped by the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades and not how many achieve at least one pass at Grade G. Supporting evidence for this is that the national newspapers only include the percentages schools achieve with respect to five A* - Cs (Times, 25th. Nov. 1999) and even the specialist educational press only report down to five A*-Gs (Times Educational Supplement, 26th. Nov. 1999).

The size of the cohort of looked after children within any one local authority for many of the measures, e.g. GCSE and SATS for seven year olds, is likely to be both small and to vary from year to year. It is not possible, therefore to just consider the crude raw data to make comparisons for the reasons set out above when discussing Confidence Limits.

There is no comment in the text from the Social Exclusion Unit or within the Quality Protects literature regarding the value to individual young people of attaining the target that is set within the documents. Whether achieving the target is seen as worthwhile has a subjective and an objective dimension. At the subjective level, evidence would be required in terms of whether young people value a single, or number of passes, at Grade G and whether it would enhance their feelings of self-esteem as a learner. The latter could be objectified by assessing whether they sought out further training opportunities. The author is not, however, aware of any research to date that has investigated this area.

The value of a GCSE Grade G in Metroland

The objective aspect is easier to assess as GCSE performance, for example, could be set against improvement in access to the next level of education, training , or work - i.e. their

value to employers and trainers. To gain an understanding of the marketable value attached to one or more GCSE passes at Grade G, interviews were conducted with senior managers in the local careers services and Further Education colleges. It was considered that these managers would have an understanding of all the opportunities available locally for the young people in Metroland. The FE Vice-Principal indicated that whether a young person had no GCSE passes or one pass at Grade G made no difference to their prospects at FE colleges in Metroland, as the only courses available in both circumstances would be at 'Foundation Level'. Access to courses at the next level, 'Intermediate', was only open to students with 1 or more passes at Grade C or above, accompanied by further passes at D or E. She indicated that there was some variability in the grade requirements to join similar level courses within each college and gave the example that courses in hairdressing and catering had less demanding entry requirements than courses in leisure and tourism. She also indicated that there was considerable variability across the country, partly based on supply and demand, but also reflecting the arrangements made for all post-statutory education. She gave the example that some authorities, such as Herefordshire, made no arrangements to teach 'A' Level in schools so the FE sector offered these courses and was, therefore, more academically orientated.

Advice from a senior manager from the careers service in the neighbouring shire was similar in that, for the majority of young people, obtaining one GCSE pass at Grade G would not enjoy enhanced prospects of accessing the next level of college course. Basic Level courses at FE colleges in Ruralshire were available to young people with no GCSEs, and the likelihood of gaining access to an Intermediate Level course would not be enhanced until a candidate had 4 passes at around the D or E level. Advanced courses

would require 4 passes at Grades C or above. At the Basic Level, the admissions tutor would be likely to give as much, if not more, weight to personal characteristics of the candidate, e.g. ability to interact socially and communicate effectively, rather than whether they had 1 or 2 passes at Grade G. If the college staff considered that a young person was more able than his or her qualifications suggested then they would probably set the candidate their own test which focussed on the skills required for entry to that course.

The career service managers from both services outlined a similar hierarchy in relation to work-based training schemes. The 'Basic Level' training was potentially available to all, whereas the 'National Traineeship Level' (intermediate level - NVQ Level Two, equivalent to four or five Grade C GCSEs) would require in the region of three passes such at D, E or F Level. Modern Apprenticeships had an entry requirement of four passes at Grades C or above.

The information contained in the interviews suggested that the Government setting targets in relation to one or more Grade Gs was not encouraging local authorities to aim for grades that would actually make a difference in terms of further education or work-based training. For this to happen, then the target grade should be at least Grade 'D'.

Quality Protects

In September 1998 the Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, announced a major programme called 'Quality Protects', to transform children's personal social services. This was part of the Government's response to the Utting Report (1997) and involved a

set of eight service objectives against which local authorities' performance would be monitored (DoH, 1998c). The first five of these objectives were termed 'child and family outcome related' and were as follows:

- 1) To ensure that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of childhood.
- 2) To ensure that children are protected from emotional, physical, sexual abuse and neglect.
- 3) To ensure that children in need gain maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities, health care and social care.
- 4) To ensure that children looked after gain maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities, health care and social care.
- 5) To ensure that young people leaving care, as they enter adulthood, are not isolated and participate socially and economically as citizens.

The final three objectives were said to be 'service related' and are given below:

- 6) To ensure that children with specific social needs arising out of disability or a health condition are living in families or other appropriate settings in the community where their assessed needs are adequately met and reviewed.
- 7) To ensure that referral and assessment processes discriminate effectively between different types and levels of need and produce a timely service response.
- 8) To ensure that resources are planned and provided at levels which represent best value for money, allow for choice and different responses for different needs and circumstances.

The Government said it believed that setting national objectives was the essential first step to improving the effectiveness of children's social services. The program was quite prescriptive about process but left the 'content' to local authorities. Social Services Departments were required to demonstrate that they were achieving objectives so they also needed to develop effective systems for measuring their performance. It was also recognised that there needed to be a corporate commitment on behalf of the local authorities, with education, housing, leisure and youth offender teams all playing a full part. The responsibility of ensuring that this happened was given to elected members.

In his speech to the House of Commons the following month, Frank Dobson the Secretary of State for Education, gave the reason such action was required to be taken by drawing attention to why children came into the care system, what happened to them once inside, and who was to blame (House of Commons, 1998d):

Many children who had been taken into care to protect and help them had received neither protection nor help. Instead they had been abused and molested. Many more had been let down, never given the attention they needed, shifted from place to place, school to school, and often simply turned out at 16 ... This wasn't just a failure of the care staff directly concerned. It was a failure by social services managers, by councils, councillors, the police, the courts, schools, voluntary organisations, neighbours, the news media, the Government's Social Services Inspectorate, Government Departments, Ministers and Parliament. Some people from all these institutions and in all these categories had worked hard to do a good job for these children. But too often many had not. The whole system had failed ...

We started from a recognition that if the whole system had failed these children then the whole system had to be put right. (p.1)

Local authorities were required to draw up Management Action Plans with baseline data and details of planned improvements. In a letter to all Directors of Social Services, from the Branch Head of the Social Care Group dated 18th November 1998, the Department of Health made clear that the performance of individual local authorities would be monitored against their plan and that concrete statistics would be needed. The payment of the new children's special grant, £375 million in total, was also dependent on demonstrating improvements. As a measure of the importance attached to education the letter went on to say:

A key measure of the success of looked after children's care experience is their level of educational attainment. In order to measure progress against Government's targets in this area, we need to begin to collect data more quickly, and to have a more complete set of data, than for other key outcome indicators generally. (p.2)

The most relevant of these objectives with respect to education were objectives three, four and five (DOH, 1998c), and the appropriate sub-objectives are given below:

***Sub-objective 3.1:** To help promote the individual performance of children in need at key stage SATs and GCSE. Social Services should regard the educational attainment of the children they work with as an indicator in its own right and as an indicator of children's social well being. They should consider how their contribution can help the children they are working with get the best out of their educational opportunities.*

***Sub-objective 4.1:** To bring the overall performance of children looked after, for a year or more, at key stage SATs and GCSE closer into line with local children generally. This is perhaps the single most significant measure of the effectiveness of local authority parenting. The very reasons why children will need to be looked after will bring some degree of disadvantage, but this must never be used as an excuse to lower aspirations. There will be National Priorities Guidance target to complement this objective.*

***Sub-objective 5.1:** For young people who were looked after on their sixteenth birthday, to maximise the number engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19.*

The Department of Health analysed the Management Action Plans from 150 local authorities and produced an overview report (DoH, 1999b). This, together with the work in relation to the white paper, 'Modernising Social Services' (DoH, 1998) led to the initial eight objectives being increased to eleven. There was also a significant increase in the number and complexity of sub-objectives and performance indicators, which increased to thirty-four. In relation to education, for example, objective 4 expanded to include performance indicators for attendance and exclusion in addition to SATs and GCSEs (DoH, 1999d). The first year of action planning was about establishing baseline data and planning, however, the Quality Protects Program for 2000/2001 (DoH, 1999e) focussed more on achievement.

This year local authorities are expected to demonstrate how through the Quality Protects Program they are making a demonstrable difference to the lives of children. They are also asked to define clear objectives linked to numerical targets

for continuing progress towards meeting or exceeding Government objectives for children's services by March 2002. (p.4)

The Program for 2000 / 2001 also introduced two new priority areas on which the children's services grant could be spent, one of which was:

Improving the life chances of looked after children through expenditure on their education ... Particular attention should be given to implementing the joint guidance (draft) on the education of looked after children. (p.8)

The Government position on viewing school performance as reflecting the overall well-being of a child, as well as being a good thing in itself, is not without precedent in more academic circles. For example, Fanshel and Shinn (1978) considered that school offered some children respite from troubled and unpredictable environments freeing a child's cognitive resources as a result of cessation of anxiety.

Guidance on the Education of Looked After Children

The Government's interest in looked after children wasn't restricted to areas of policy covered by the Department of Health. Their sister department, Education, also played its part in drawing attention to the disadvantages associated with being looked after and these concerns were reflected in their development of guidance and policy. For example, in October 1997 the DfEE issued guidance to LEAs on the development of Behaviour Support Plans (DfEE, 1997). The purpose of the guidance was to ensure that LEAs had coherent, comprehensive and well-understood local arrangements for tackling pupil behaviour and discipline problems that covered the full range of needs. Part of the

guidance focussed attention on vulnerable pupils who were more likely to experience behavioural difficulties because of their circumstances. Looked after children were identified within this group and the following advice offered:

Close inter-agency working is of particular importance for looked after children, for whom school can be the most stable part of their lives. For various reasons, including their previous life experience, they often fail to achieve their full educational potential. Local authorities have particular responsibilities in their role as corporate parents for children in residential care. (para. 60)

LEAs will wish to look particularly carefully at how behaviour support arrangements impact on this group of children, not least because of disproportionately high exclusion rates among such pupils. Plans should include information about any initiatives which relate specifically to the behavioural difficulties of looked after children. Most importantly they should set out arrangements for facilitating joint planning which stress the importance of continuity of education for the child. Plans might also include details of other preventative work with carers and schools, such as information about training given to carers or schools to improve understanding of each others' perspectives and of relevant legislation, e.g. the parental obligations of carers in relation to school attendance. The plans should indicate the LEA's expectations of both schools and carers in relation to looked after children with behavioural difficulties. (para. 61)

The Department of Education issued guidance on the education of looked after children in 1994 (DfE & DoH, 1994) and the main points were covered in Chapter Three. However, a

report the following year by Social Service Inspectorate and the Office for Standards in Education (SSI / Ofsted, 1995), concluded that little had been done in practice to boost the achievements of children in care. The Departments issued a further consultation document, the Draft Guidance on the Education of Children Looked after by Local Authorities, in June 1999 (DfEE / DoH, 1999b). This formed part of the Governments broad agenda on social inclusion discussed above. It again drew attention to the very poor educational attainments of looked after children and how this impacts on their life chances, e.g. the disproportionate numbers of looked after young people who become unemployed, homeless and lived in poverty.

It sets out the key principles for service provision which were stated as prioritizing education in the lives of looked after children; promoting social inclusion and equal access; continuity and stability; having high expectations; early and priority intervention; and listening to children. It encouraged corporate planning and working and strongly suggested that it was likely that statutory force would be given to some of the key recommendations. These might include the requirement that each looked after child had a Personal Education Plan; that there should be a designated teacher for looked after children in each school; that local authorities has a protocol for sharing information on the education of looked after children; that care placements should always be made with education provision secured; and that a time limit of 30 days was set to secure an educational placement.

The Draft Guidance was more comprehensive and detailed than the previous version (DfEE / DoH 1994) and was particularly useful in linking initiatives impacting on different arms of the local authority. It would be hard to argue that looked after children

would not benefit from a plan in relation to their education. One might, however, be concerned about the number of different plans one child might have, e.g. a young person would have a Care Plan and a Personal Education Plan, and might also have an Individual Education Plan and a Pathway Plan. This could all divert too much time and attention towards assessment and planning at the expense of providing necessary services to the young person.

The collection of information on the progress of looked after children to aid local planning was clearly in line with the research program being conducted in Metroland. However, the author expressed the view to the DfEE, through the consultation process, that any reporting requirements imposed should be consistent with those required by the Department of Health. Finally, the DfEE were asked to make representations to the Data Protection Registrar with respect to sharing information between different arms of the local authority as the legal situation at the time was not clear.

The period of consultation on the draft guidance ended in October 1999 and the revised Guidance was issued at the end of the following March (DfEE / DoH, 2000). The main thrust of the document was as outlined above although a new section recognising the importance of Early Years was added, together with appendices linking the Guidance to the Quality Protects initiative. There were also minor changes to the sections on advocacy, young offenders, and the section on post-16 was extended to include pre-16 support and career planning. The intention to give statutory force to some aspects of the Guidance was continued, and Social Services Departments were expected to follow some

parts², specifically paragraphs 5.17, 6.17, 10.3 and 10.5. These have been reproduced below together with a comment about changes from the Draft Guidance:

5.17 Every child and young person in care needs a Personal Education Plan which ensures access to services and support; contributes to stability, minimises disruption and broken schooling; signals particular and special needs; establishes clear goals and acts as a record of progress and achievement. [No change to the wording but a clear message that it is the responsibility of the Social Services Departments to take a lead in producing the plan.]

6.17 ... Each local authority has a duty to establish and maintain a protocol for sharing relevant information about care, placements and education ...

10.3 Securing an educational placement is one of the main criteria which must be used in identifying a suitable care placement. This should generally be taken to mean a full-time place in a local mainstream school, commencing without delay ... [and in relation to exclusions from school]

10.5 The Government expects local authorities to set a maximum time limit of twenty school days within which they must secure an educational placement for any pupil in public care. It will be a full-time place in a local mainstream school unless the circumstances of the child make full-time or local or mainstream provision unsuitable. [The significant change in this paragraph is the reduction from thirty days in the Draft to twenty days in the final Guidance.]

² The paragraphs given were issued under section 7 (1) of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities in the exercise of their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. By issuing them as s7 guidance, Social Services Department's are expected to follow them, unless there is good reason not to do so.

The Guidance recognised that primary legislation would be needed to place complementary duties on local education authorities and schools and intended to introduce the necessary primary legislation '*when possible*' (p. iii), to give statutory force to the paragraph below:

5.34 ... schools should designate a teacher to act as a resource and advocate for children and young people in public care. LEAs should co-ordinate suitable training for them and maintain an up-to-date list of designated teachers in schools in their area.

Alongside the Guidance, the Government made finance available to implement the recommendations through the Social Inclusion Standards Fund for financial year 2000/2001 (DfEE, 1999g). This required all authorities to use a proportion of their grant allocation on looked after children with the aim of raising achievement to the targets set by the Government.

The targets for looked after children should be "to improve the educational achievement of children looked after, by increasing to at least 50% by 2001, the proportion of children leaving care at 16 or later with a GCSE or GNVQ qualification." (B19.1)

LEAs must spend at least 19% of the LEA initiatives fund allocation ... on projects supporting looked after children ... (B19.20)

The Social Inclusion Standards Fund also made available an Access Fund to provide financial assistance to pupils who attend school beyond compulsory school age. The stated purpose was to help increase and widen education participation, and contribute to

an improvement in retention and achievement. Although not directed specifically towards looked after children, it would be likely that they could be included in the group that benefited.

It will be for each LEA to decide its criteria and procedures for considering applications and making payments to eligible pupils. Authorities will want to target expenditure on those pupils where the need is greatest. ... (B20.4)

Summary

This chapter shows that the 'New Labour' Government has adhered to its electoral promise of putting education and social inclusion at the top of its agenda. The Government has demonstrated its will through an almost endless stream of new legislation, guidance and requirements since they entered office in 1997. Some of the many ways their key policy areas have been addressed have been covered, and the major themes such as 'target setting' have been discussed. This focus on looked after children by Central Government has significantly changed the political and professional climate in relation to looked after children over the four years of this research program. The increased demands on all local government have increased activity in all local authorities, and transformed a peripheral activity in Metroland into a mainstream Service (see Introduction).

Chapter Six

Corporate Parenting in Metroland

An outline of the socio-economic profile of Metroland in general and the looked after population in particular, is provided in the previous chapter. This type of analysis, however, gives very little guide to the arrangements made for looked after young people, and the extent to which all parts of the Local Authority act in a coherent manner to fulfil Corporate Parenting responsibilities. National problems in this area had been identified in 1995 by the Social Services Inspectorate and the Office for Standards in Education. Their joint report (DoH & Ofsted, 1995) stated that the care and education systems, in general, were failing to promote the educational achievement of children in care. That despite clear identification of the problem, little had been done in practice to boost achievement. In the summary of their main findings they reported that:

Planning to encourage greater educational progress was unsatisfactory in schools and in social services departments (SSDs). Schools did not have enough information from the SSD to plan effectively and frequently did not understand the purpose of different SSD meetings. In consequence, at care planning meetings and statutory reviews arranged by SSD, the school's contributions were not fully used and the meetings did not give sufficient priority to education.

Liaison between social workers, carers and teachers was fragmented and patchy and this contributed to an absence of a co-ordinated approach to raising educational achievement. These barriers included differences in priorities and expectations and the lack of knowledge of different legal requirements among carers and social workers of education and teachers of care. Difficulties were often caused because of the different vocabularies used by carers, social workers and teachers. Practical difficulties also impeded good liaison such as the organisation of school routines and timetables and sometimes the unhelpful frequency and timing of meetings which made it difficult for teachers to attend.

(p.3)

This lack of co-ordination of services to looked after children was not limited to those provided by local authorities. An audit undertaken in South Glamorgan Health Authority (Payne, 1992) found that, although the Children Act 1989 requires all looked after children to have a written health plan and to be receiving regular medical examinations, they only had details of 49 per cent of children looked after by the local authority. Moreover, in those cases where information was available, it was often sketchy and in over 50 per cent of cases there was no information about birth families or whether there was a family history of inheritable disorders. In addition to the national research, Metroland was one of the Audit Commission's pilot sites when they undertook national

research in advance of a value for money study (Price Waterhouse, 1994). One of the objectives of the study was to comment on the quality of collaboration between agencies, particularly between Health and Social Services, but also with Education. The report of the study recommended that the City should develop procedures to cover:

... making arrangements to address a child's educational need at the time he/she commences being looked after; ensuring that children who are excluded from school or refusing to attend are identified quickly; and ensuring that there is a process for involving social services earlier when children whom they are looking after are excluded from school. (p.14)

To help understand the nature of corporate parenting in Metroland and to help determine how the above exhortations to improve the quality of collaboration between education and social services could be translated into practice in Metroland, a small research study was designed and carried out. This involved interviewing Headteachers, or senior teachers, and Social workers during July and August of 1996. The purpose was to inform the Local Authority, via a report to Chief Officers in Social Services and Education (Metroland, 1996), about the work it needed to engage in to improve outcomes for looked after children, e.g. organisational changes and training programmes.

The Study

Interviews with teachers focussed on the information they considered they needed to be provided with by the Social Services Department when a looked after child started at their school; when a pupil on roll became looked after; and also, what information they would value in relation to the work of Social Services in general. The ten Head Teachers, two Deputy Head Teachers and two Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators interviewed worked in primary and secondary mainstream schools, and in each type of special school the LEA maintained. They will collectively be referred to simply as 'teachers' for the remainder of the text, unless there is a specific need to identify a sub-group. The mainstream schools were selected in relation to social disadvantage as measured by the take-up of free school meals in the City, i.e. one from the most disadvantaged third, one from the middle third, and one from the most advantaged third. Special schools were heavily represented in the survey because they would have more frequent contact with Social Services, e.g. less than 1 per cent of the general school population are looked after compared to approximately 11 per cent of the special school population (see Chapter Eight). In addition, special schools were also likely to have more specialist contact, e.g. respite care planning.

Similarly, ten social workers were invited to be involved in a structured interview to investigate what information they considered they needed to have about a child, and about schools/education in general, to make an effective contribution to a child's education plan.

Two social workers were selected from each district team, thereby geographically and socially covering the whole of Metroland. In addition, two social workers from the Disability Team were interviewed as it was considered that they would have more specialist contact with schools and the Education Department.

Table 6:1 Teacher Sample

<i>School Type</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>No. Interviewed</i>
Mainstream	Primary	3
	Secondary	3
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties - Day	Primary	1
	Secondary	1
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties - Residential	Secondary	1
	Primary	1
Moderate Learning Difficulties	Primary	1
	Secondary	1
Severe Learning Difficulties	Primary	1
	Secondary	1
Physical Handicap	All Age	1
Total teachers interviewed		14

Method

The interviews were arranged by telephone with the general purpose being stated as trying to develop better working relationships between the Social Service and Education

Departments and the content, for teachers, being given as, "*The information they considered they needed to be provided with by social services when a looked after child started at their school; when a pupil on roll became looked after; and also, what information they would value in relation to the work of Social Services in general.*"

The interviews were conducted at a place chosen by the interviewee, usually their office, to enable them to retain control and reduce any power imbalance (see Chapter Four) and at a time of their convenience. The interviews themselves were of a semi-structured nature. Key questions were asked and the interviewer recording the comments on a pro-forma under sub-headings, considered in advance to cover most likely responses - to aid later analysis. The sub-headings were not used to prompt interviewees if they did not offer a comment, with the exception of the two sub-headings under the question for social workers on the National Curriculum. The interviews were scheduled to last approximately forty-five minutes but the majority took ten to fifteen minutes longer.

Questions for teachers:

- 1) What information do you require when a looked after child starts at your school?
 - a) *Names of previous schools;*
 - b) *Educational attainments and progress;*
 - c) *Learning strengths*
 - d) *Learning difficulties (including Code of Practice information);*

- e) *Attendance*
 - f) *Exclusions*
 - g) *Personal strengths*
 - h) *Personal difficulties*
 - i) *Current care situation (including parent responsibility)*
 - j) *Day to day arrangements*
 - k) *Family information*
 - l) *Child protection issues*
- 2) What information do you require when a child on roll starts being looked after?
 - a) *Current care situation (including parental responsibility)*
 - b) *Day to day arrangements*
 - c) *Family information*
 - d) *Child protection issues*
 - 3) Are there any difficulties with information exchange, or arrangements, between school and Social Services, including carers?
 - 4) Can you suggest more effective ways of working together?
 - 5) What additional information and / or training about the work and procedures of Social Services would be of value to teachers?

The same procedure was adopted for social workers with the original contact being by telephone followed by an interview, usually in the social workers office. The content for social workers, was stated as, *"The educational and care information they were usually in a position to provide when a looked after child was introduced to a new school; the care information they could provide when a child became looked after; their knowledge about key areas of recent educational development, e.g. the National Curriculum and the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice; and finally what information or training*

they would value in relation to the work of the Education Department and schools."

Questions for social workers:

- 1) What information are you usually able to provide before the child is admitted to a new school with regard to care circumstances?
 - a) current care situation (care status, how long, reason, & parental responsibility).*
 - b) child protection issues.*

- 2) What information are you usually able to provide before the child is admitted to a new school with regard to educational progress?
 - a) previous schools*
 - b) educational progress (including National Curriculum attainments)*
 - c) learning strengths*
 - d) learning difficulties (include. CoP Stage)*
 - e) personal strengths*
 - f) personal difficulties*
 - g) attendance patterns*
 - h) exclusions*

- 3) What arrangements are made before admission to a new school and by whom?

- 4) What information are you usually able to provide to a school with regard to care circumstances, when a child becomes looked after?
 - a) current care situation (care status, how long, reason, & parental responsibility)*
 - b) child protection issues*

- 5) How is liaison maintained between school and those with parental responsibility?

- a) Written communication, e.g. reports and letters.*
 - b) Attendance at meetings*
- 6) How are arrangements made for any therapeutic work with the child, e.g post-abuse counselling?
- 7) What is your level of knowledge about the National Curriculum?
 - a) Subjects (core & subsidiary)*
 - b) Would you know the average NC levels for children of 7, 11, & 14?*
- 8) What is your level of knowledge about the special educational needs Code of Practice?
- 9) What is your level of knowledge about exclusion procedures?
 - a) Fixed term (e.g. maximum duration, notification, appeals, etc.)*
 - b) Permanent (notification, appeals, etc.)*
- 10) What additional information and / or training about the work of schools and the Education Service would be of value to Social workers?

Analysis

The information contained in the fourteen teacher reports was initially summarised onto one pro-forma grouping the responses according to type and phase of school. The drawing together of all responses to a particular question aided the analysis of themes common to a number of schools, whilst the grouping of schools according to type aided recognition of themes pertinent to one particular phase or type, e.g. schools for children

with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Themes emerging from the fourteen teacher interviews

The majority of teachers (9 out of 14) did not look to social workers to provide educational information on children in care. They relied on the child's file passed from the previous school, but some (3) recognised that attendance data and exclusion information were not always in the file, e.g. *"We sometimes get a Social Services report about two-thirds of a page long, just a brief commentary with hardly any school information. We rely on contacting the previous school and having the records transferred (primary mainstream school Head)."* This reliance on school transfer information was particularly the case in special schools where all children had a Statement of special educational needs. However, over a third of all teachers (5) drew attention to the limitations of this as learning strengths were not necessarily contained in the reports forming part of a Statement, except in the case of children going to schools for children with severe learning difficulties. Half of all teachers (7) reported that any learning or behaviour problems, however, tended to be highlighted. Half of the teachers in special schools (4 out of 8) drew attention to the lack of information from Social Services, in their advice attached to the Statement, and their desire to be provided with a good case history, e.g. *This school gets only minimal information or help from Social Services and this was commented upon in our recent Ofsted report. Social Services don't seem to have systems that involve*

paperwork. This is important because paperwork protects what happens around a child. Social Services don't seem to put anything in writing and this doesn't aid information exchange (secondary EBD school Head)." The lack of reliance on social workers for information extended beyond education, and some teachers (2) also collected medical information from school nurses.

Over a third of teachers (5) reported that they had to seek information about changes in care circumstances, such as respite care arrangements, rather than being updated automatically. The majority (11) also complained about the number of changes, particularly of social worker that made developing good working relationships more difficult. A number (4) also said that even written requests for information went unanswered. Day to day arrangements were also of concern to over half the teachers (8) who said that they often found out about changes, usually after the changes had happened, from foster carers, or from the young person themselves (3 of the 8), e.g. *"Problems with social workers changing all the time as it's hard to liaise with someone you don't know. Also, information about changes of [care] plans not communicated to the school fast enough. We often hear about it from the children first (primary MLD school Head)."* Only one school reported that they invited social workers to school meetings and reviews although three complained that they did not attend. The majority of teachers (10) made positive comments about the child protection procedures and recognised that child

protection conferences were an important source of information about a child's care circumstances. Both teachers working in schools for children with severe learning difficulties (SLD), however, were concerned about child protection issues seeming to be different for different groups of children, particularly SLD children.

There was a recognition (7) that teachers lacked experience and knowledge of the work of the Social Services Department, e.g. *“Social workers need to know more about how schools work. It would be useful for social workers to spend more time in schools as part of their core training to get an idea about how schools function and the various routines involved (secondary mainstream school Head).”* In return, social workers were said to not understand how schools functioned in terms of day-to-day arrangements, and generally lacked understanding of special educational needs, e.g. degree of difficulty, types of problem and provision. There were also practical issues in relation to planning (e.g. meetings taking up a great deal of time from school staff and not enough notice being given); the purpose of therapeutic help often being unclear and the timing of therapy sessions not being planned with school.

When asked, teachers were not short of suggestions for more effective ways of working with Social Services. These included: having a named social worker linked to each school; having a team of social workers specialising in the education of children with particular

needs (e.g. SLD); regular meetings (termly) to discuss general concerns in addition to individual children; teachers being given information about the roles of residential social workers and foster parents, and what the school could expect from them; and opportunities for joint in-service training for teachers and social workers. When asked about the additional information about the work of Social Services, teachers (12) said they would value information on legislation, especially those aspects that impact on schools, and local procedures - possibly through an information pack for teachers.

Themes emerging from the ten social worker interviews

The responses of the social workers have been summarised in a similar way to those of teachers. This process allowed easy identification of common themes and areas of common concern for both groups, and these are presented in the General Findings section below. It also identified that there were differences of views between professionals about the current state of inter-agency collaboration, e.g. social workers portrayed their contact with school as much greater than the picture presented by teachers. When asked about the information on care circumstances they were able to provide to schools, all ten social workers said that they provided information although there was little agreement between them about what information should be provided, e.g. *“There are no guidelines on liaison with schools, we rely on individual social workers using their judgement to keep schools informed about care placements* (social services team leader).” Some (4) tried to give an

overview of care circumstances, e.g. reasons for being looked after and family composition. Others (2) provided only educationally relevant information and a further group (3) negotiated with the child to determine how much information to pass on to schools. One social worker tried to avoid problems of confidentiality by arranging to be accompanied by the child's parent so they could decide how much information they felt comfortable to give. There was greater agreement when child protection procedures were involved as schools were needed to help monitor any further abuse.

Eight of the ten social workers recognised that very little educational information was held on social work files and they relied on schools to pass information between themselves, e.g. *"We have little [educational] information held on file about school progress. School reports are not usually held on file as foster parents usually keep these (senior social worker)."* One social worker asked the last school attended to provide a report and three said they would have more information on a child who had a Statement. Some social workers (2) said they were rarely given any educational information unless there were problems at school and another said they were only asked about potential behaviour difficulties. One worker also said that a social worker's account of a child would be viewed by schools as naïve and overly positive.

There seemed to be very little preparation of the child for a move to a new school with

only one social worker reporting that they tried to arrange a visit to the new school. A great deal was left to foster carers (who do not have any parental responsibility and usually had little information at that stage) who were said by three social workers to make all the arrangements. One social worker said he was only 'dragged in' if there was no local school and liaison with the LEA was required. There were also a myriad of small problems that were mentioned including organising the purchase of uniforms and arranging payment for school meals.

For children already on the role of a school who became looked after, there was a similar range of approaches to those described above. Social workers (4) said they provided schools with basic information about change of status and new address, carer's name and arrangements for transport to and from school. Foster carers, again, were expected to take a lead in this by two social workers. Three social workers drew attention to the views of some children who would prefer that the schools were not informed about their difficulties at home. Again, if the young person was placed on the Child Protection Register a more standardised approach was taken with schools being contacted immediately to supply information as well as receive it. When asking about maintaining liaison between schools and those with parental responsibility six social workers saw the role of foster carer as key. They were the people who were in more regular contact with school and had day-to-day responsibility. Five of these social workers recognised that a

weakness of this system was that only foster carers received reports and invitations to parents evening. Parents lose the link with schools and schools only contact social workers when there are problems. One social worker commented that foster parents and residential social workers do not routinely go to open evenings and events in school, and that the [Social Services] Department really ought to arrange this at planning and reviews meetings.

All the social workers interviewed recognised that arranging therapeutic work for young people often results in clashes with other aspects of the child's life. Of significance here is the loss of curriculum time if a child attends therapy during the school day. In addition to the time spent away from school there is the additional loss of time if he or she returns to school distressed. To help reduce these difficulties, five of the social workers said they try to arrange any therapeutic work outside school time but this is not always possible as the timing is usually dictated by the agency offering therapy.

With regard to knowledge of the National Curriculum or the special educational needs Code of Practice, no social worker reported any knowledge gained through work or training. One worker was on the board of governors of a school and had acquired extensive information that way. She was one of only two able to volunteer the 'core' subjects of English, Maths and Science. The common stance was to rely on teachers to

explain the significance of any particular level attained in a SAT, for example. The level of understanding of special needs procedures was also very limited. Three had a rudimentary knowledge of 'Statementing' and only one had a general idea of a staged approach with more intervention as one progressed from Stage 1 to Stage 5.

Although eight social workers commented that they had recently been involved in cases where young people were excluded from school none of them reported that they were familiar with local procedures or the legal position, e.g. time limits and rights of appeal. One reported that there was a copy of the relevant procedures in the district office but drew attention to the wide variation between schools in their application. Three workers said they were aware that schools probably act improperly by sending children home and 'unofficially' excluding them.

Like the teachers above, social workers were not short of ideas about how to improve the quality of collaboration with schools and the Local Education Authority, e.g. *"An 'idiots guide' to LEA procedures is required plus information regarding support services including the distinction between the EPS and Child Psychiatry. More collaborative work with EWOs and regular (termly) meetings at secondary schools to talk about children felt to be 'in need'. These meetings could involve the Head, school nurse, EP, local PC, and a social worker from the local [SSD] office. (social worker)."* Six

commented on the need for training in relation to legislation and local procedures, on the National Curriculum, special educational needs and exclusions. Other comments (3) focussed on the clarification of the role of various education and health services, e.g. Behaviour Support Service, Education Welfare Officers, Educational Psychology Service and Child Psychiatry. There was also an emphasis on joint training with education and health staff (3), more direct contact and active work between social workers and teachers (2), perhaps on an area basis, and joint planning meetings (2) were seen as likely to be more effective than separate Social Services and Education meetings.

Themes Common to both Social Workers and Teachers

All parties accepted that the information on a child's education held by social services was very limited compared to that known by the majority of parents. This resulted in schools gaining information from other sources, e.g. files from previous schools, school nurses, etc. This 'formal' information also tended to be skewed, i.e. the omission of positive aspects of a young person's functioning with the focus being almost exclusively on problems. The lack of guidance, or procedures, about maintaining liaison between schools, parents, carers and social workers was commented upon by all parties. This acted in both directions, i.e. social workers reported that invitations to Parent's Evenings and reports would often only be sent to a foster carer (with copies never finding their way to the file

held by the District Office or to parents); and school staff reporting that they were often not informed about changes in care or access arrangements.

It was acknowledged that there was a lack of understanding of the purposes of the various formal meetings held by each service, and unhelpful timing resulted in poor representation at each other's meetings. There was also a lack of clarity about the role of foster carers, i.e. the extent of their decision making powers and the expectations schools could have about home / school programmes. Major decisions such as the selection of a new school owing to a change of accommodation, were made by foster carers unilaterally, even though they had no parental responsibility. Social workers were only involved if there were problems that required direct contact with the LEA. Finally, teachers and social workers recognised the need to have a greater understanding of the legislation that impinged on each other's work, and the translation of that legislation into local policies and procedures. A significant number also drew attention to the benefits of joint training.

Recommendations

This was an action research study and resulted in a report being written to inform policy makers within Metroland. The major recommendation in the report to Chief Officers (Metroland, December 1996) was that a planning group should be established to promote

and co-ordinate the role of the local authority as a Corporate Parent. It was further recommended that this group should consist of senior staff from the Social Service and Education Departments, and Elected Members, to ensure that purposeful action was taken in relation to each of the activities identified below:

- that each school should nominate a teacher to take particular responsibility for co-ordinating work for looked after children. This person could take advantage of the training opportunities mentioned above; develop links with the local SSD office and carers; and assist the school to develop and implement plans in relation to looked after children;
- that each section within both services examines its practice to look for ways it could discharge its share of the local authority's parental responsibility more effectively, particularly with regard to promoting continuity (see Chapter 7); and
- that a programme of training be established for teachers covering the aspects of legislation, e.g. Children Act, that impact on day-to-day practices in schools. A similar training programme for social workers should also be set up in relation to education legislation. Every effort should be made to deliver part as joint training;
- that good practice guidelines should be produced for local procedures, e.g. establishing and maintaining liaison between schools, parents, carers and social workers, and co-ordinating the statutory review meetings held by both parties.

Outcomes

These recommendations were the starting point for developments within Metroland and the whole process was similar to the approach promoted by national voluntary bodies such as the Who Cares? Trust, in their 'Equal Chances' programme. The 1999 national launch of Stage One of that programme, subtitled 'Finding the Facts', was based on social services, schools, education and other departments having a joint commitment to gathering, sharing and acting upon information which reflected the experiences of the looked after child. It gave local authorities the tools to conduct detailed audits in relation to educational outcomes for looked after children. This was followed by Stage Two, launched in November 1999, which helped local authorities use the audit information to inform changes in professional practice (1999, Who Cares? Trust).

Dissemination of the research study in Metroland led to the under-achievement of looked after children and the lack of focus on their education becoming more widely recognized across the Local Authority. The first step taken to ameliorate the problem was for the Social Services Department to appoint a Teacher for Looked after Children, in September 1997, to promote the education of children in residential care. This was followed by the setting up of an inter-departmental working group the following month to focus on the

Statutory Review process. From that time Reviewing Officers were given the responsibility for collecting a basic data set of education and health information, and ensuring that plans were made to address any identified problem areas. This basic data set included the name of the school attended; its type and address, if out of City; attendance and exclusion information; and Stage on the special educational needs Code of Practice.

Following the publication of a second report by Sir William Utting (DoH, 1997) the City Council committed further resources, in April 1998, in order to better address the educational needs of looked after children. This led to the establishment of a permanent specialist multi-disciplinary service, Education Access, dedicated to raising the achievements, and promoting the inclusion, of all looked after children. The Service came into existence in September 1998 and consisted of an educational psychologist, three teachers, and an education welfare officer. In practice, the work of the Service was assisting carers to help young people access the normal range of educational services, e.g mainstream or special schools; Learning and Behaviour Support Services; and the Educational Psychology Service. Education Access also worked directly with children and young people. The key components of the Service were:

- providing advice and guidance on educational matters to looked after children their carers; and social workers;
- providing training and guidance to residential staff and foster carers on parental

support for learning and on becoming more effective advocates for promoting young people's education.

- providing material resources to foster carers, social workers and residential social workers - including developing and maintaining a materials and resource base in each Children's Home.
- direct work with individual young people (teaching, welfare, and therapeutic) to maintain an existing educational placement; to assist a return to school following an exclusion or period of absence; and to help a child make a successful transition to a new school;
- direct work with groups of young people to raise their educational attainment;
- providing consultation to residential staff and foster carers with respect to meeting the psychological and educational needs of children and young people in their care;
- providing psychological advice on children and young people to inform placement decisions or for court proceedings;
- monitoring the educational progress of all looked after children (see Chapter Eight);
- providing specialist advice to the City Council regarding policy, provision and planning for looked after children, including those who have special educational needs; and
- maintaining and developing effective multi-agency working relationships to facilitate the educational progress of looked after children and young people.

This Service was seen as the main vehicle to take forward the full recommendations given above and the underlying plan was to take action at a number of different organisational levels. It was considered important to develop policies to promote the education of looked after children; to improve professional practice; but also to work directly with individual children. This implementation programme was informed by the advice on good practice contained within the various reports and guidance emanating from government departments, research organisations and special interest groups (see Chapter Three). Work on developing policy, for example, resulted in a substantial section on looked after children being included within the LEA's Educational Development Plan with related targets for the LEA to achieve. An example of changing professional practice related to building clusters of schools each with a post of 'Co-ordinator for Looked after Children', then training these Co-ordinators alongside nominated colleagues from the local Social Services Department office. Responsibilities of the Co-ordinator included raising awareness amongst the whole staff group, monitoring the performance of looked after children, and taking positive steps to ameliorate some of the difficulties they experience. A full list is given in Figure 6:1 below:

Figure 6:1 Responsibilities of a Co-ordinator for Looked-After Children in Metroland

Working with Individual Looked after Children:

- to arrive at a statement about their circumstances that they would be happy to share with staff and / or pupils;
- to enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their Care Plan;
- to ensure that each pupil has a Personal Education Plan; and
- to supervise the smooth induction of a new looked after child into the school.

Liaison:

- to liaise with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register;
- to co-ordinate education and Social Services Department review meetings, so that the Personal Educational Plan can inform the child's Care Plan;
- to attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to Social Services Department's care planning meetings;
- to be the named contact for colleagues in the Education Service and the Social Services Department; and
- to report on the progress of all looked after children to Education Access.

Training:

- to develop knowledge of Social Services Department and Education Service procedures by attending training events; and
- to cascade training to school staff as appropriate.

This work started with a group of three schools and grew, by April 2000, to include 77 of the 119 schools in Metroland, i.e. almost 65 per cent). A further development was including the role of the Co-ordinator within a whole school policy for looked after children that also included a role for a named governor (see Appendix A).

An example of direct work was the book ownership / supported reading scheme. The objectives of the scheme were to provide young people with the opportunity to purchase and own books; to provide adult support for children in choosing and reading books; to improve reading accuracy and reading comprehension skills; and to help develop more positive attitudes towards reading. Carers would be recruited to support a young person's reading and take part in a training event. The child they looked after would then receive a 'credit card' to the value of £30, which they could exchange for books at a specified bookshop. The expectation was that adult and child would read together for 15 minute three times each week for six to eight weeks and complete the record card provided. The rolling programme started in October 1996 and was designed to involve 10 child and adult pairs in each cohort, with the intention of involving as many of the children and young people as possible. Over 200 children and young people had been involved in the scheme by April 2000.

Final Comment

The message that comes out of this work is that poor outcomes are not inevitable for looked after children if purposeful action is taken. As Utting (1997) stated in his second report on personal social services for children:

Bad outcomes need not follow if the local authority ... ensures that it is always able to exact accountability from service providers, and to discharge its own accountability for all acts and omissions concerning the child. The demanding nature of this accountability arises from the concept of parental responsibility contained in the Children Act and the general obligation a local authority has in spending and obtaining value for public money ... For the authority to be properly informed of what is being done to and for children in its name requires a system of reporting all the way through to elected members. Social services should satisfy themselves that their managerial, professional and reporting systems are adequate to discharging their accountability for the children they look after. (p.167)

Chapter Seven

Analysis of Service Delivery - a case study of an Educational Psychology Service

Introduction

One recommendation from the study of corporate parenting in Metroland, covered in Chapter Six, was that each service within the Education and Social Services Departments should examine its practice in relation to looked after children. The aim of this was given as *"... to look for ways it could discharge its share of the local authority's parental responsibility more effectively, particularly with regard to promoting continuity"* (p.199). That is, to examine their organisation and practice to ensure that the response to looked after children and their families was optimised. One aspect of the research program was to engage with these component services to encourage and assist them in this review process. The action research study outlined here focuses on one such service within the Metroland Education Department, the Educational Psychology Service.

The aim of the study was to investigate the appropriateness of the services delivered by educational psychologists to looked after children, their families and carers. The research focussed on both policy and practice, and examined whether service delivery was arranged with the needs of looked after children in mind. The results of the analysis were considered in the light of the available literature and a series of 'options for change' were developed. These options were accompanied by recommendations, and both presented to

the Educational Psychology Service for their consideration. Finally, the outcomes in terms of changes to policy and practice have been included in this report.

The Educational Psychology Service was chosen as educational psychologists play a significant role in providing advice to schools, the Local Education Authority and the Social Services Department, in relation to meeting the learning and psychological needs of children in the care system. The author was also employed in that Service at the time and was in an advantageous position in terms of encouraging and assisting the Service to review its practice.

Educational Psychology Services

The research presented in Chapter Six involved interviewing social workers and teachers to seek their views regarding their roles in supporting a child's educational progress. It is clear from these interviews that social workers were very aware of their lack of understanding of the education system in general and of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice in particular. They also recognised that they were not in a position to understand the issues faced by the school in trying to help a child who is looked after. For their part, teachers highlighted their lack of ability to have a meaningful input to social service plans for an individual child and their lack of understanding of the child care legislation and common care arrangements.

McParlin (1996a), an ex-care user, saw educational psychologists as ideally placed to help in planning for children because they were aware of both systems and how they work. Educational psychologists were also seen as being able to make a unique contribution in terms of offering psychological advice to both parties, which was specific for an individual but based upon general expertise in child development and learning. Christmas (1998) saw psychologists playing an essential role in visiting residential units and becoming involved in training and development work with social workers and carers. The educational psychologist was also seen as being in a key position to help explain a child's behaviour and learning difficulties with reference to their history rather than labelling the child as problematic, e.g. assisting social services in making decisions about the appropriateness of, for example, a referral to child mental health services (McParlin, 1996b).

A further reason to focus on the Educational Psychology Service was that concern had been expressed nationally about the availability of educational psychologists to work with children in the care system. In particular, Norman Warner (DoH, 1992) had been concerned about educational psychology services to children in residential care. He reported that:

... The picture to emerge from our visits is that too often staff in children's homes are left to cope with abused, disturbed and violent young people without access to the specialist psychiatric and psychological services that are needed... (8.4)

... Children in residential care have the same entitlement to education – and access to an educational psychologist – as any other group of children ... (8.10)

... local education authorities should take steps to meet more fully the identified educational needs of children in residential care, including the provision of educational psychology services. (Recommendation 72)

Circumstances did not appear to change over time, and Berridge and Brodie (1998), in their review of children's homes, also reported that there was a general absence of specialist input in helping heads of homes and staff:

Staff individually or collectively usually had no regular specialist support. Educational problems in children's homes, therefore, were mostly addressed without specialist educational help. Clinical or educational psychologists were not involved in devising programmes of behaviour management. (p. 165)

McParlin drew attention to the wider role educational psychologists could play in improving the circumstances for looked after children and produced a Draft Code of Practice for Psychologists (McParlin, 1996a). In a journal aimed at this group of professionals (McParlin, 1996b) he emphasised the importance of psychologists being involved in care review meetings and identified specific issues that they could help address. In particular, he drew attention to their ability to explain challenging or 'abnormal' behaviour as a normal reaction to 'abnormal' circumstances:

Attention from an EP at a moment of crisis for a child - when a short sighted reaction might be to seek psychiatric help - would, among other effects, put in place a more realistic set of expectations for the future. It is difficult to shrug off a psychiatric 'history', however unnecessarily acquired ... (p. 115)

His paper also suggested ways that the skills of some psychologists could be used specifically to support children and young people in residential homes, for example:

... supporting residential staff in nurturing a positive educational environment; ... suggesting how to support a child with learning difficulties in a residential setting (or foster home); ... advising staff how to promote educational interests, hobbies, leisure pursuits, and how to assist with study; advising staff on how to empower young people looked after - how to raise self-esteem, confidence, enthusiasm [and] interest level' (p. 114).

Finally, in her survey of local authorities Fletcher-Campbell (1997) commented on the range of organisational problems that restricted access to educational psychologists. Chief amongst these were 'service level agreements' that Educational Psychology Services made with schools. These were often framed in relation to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (see Chapter 3) and children actually attending schools were prioritised, i.e. these were the young people causing the school concern. Looked after children who did not attend or whose attendance had been so poor that their special educational needs had not been identified were, therefore, not drawn to the attention of educational psychologists.

Metroland's Educational Psychology Service

At the time of the review of the Service, March 1997, there were fourteen educational psychologists in employment. As some were part time this equated to thirteen full-time equivalent posts to serve a school age population of approximately 44,000, i.e. a ratio of one psychologist to 3,400 school age children. The range of services to schools included work in relation to individual children such as consultation with school staff, individual assessment, and advice on teaching and support methods. Psychologists also carried out work in relation to groups of children such as running social skills training groups, in-service training or policy development (Metroland, 1996a).

Each Psychologist generally worked with schools within a specified area of the City, i.e. a 'patch', and the Service attempted to equalise the overall work-load through a time allocation system. It was hoped that equalising the load on individual psychologists would allow all psychologists to offer a similar range of services to clients, i.e. equality for psychologist and for clients. The formula itself took into account the size of each school, the general level of social deprivation (through the proxy measure of free school meals), and the number of children with statements of special educational need. A significant amount of Service time (10 per cent) was also held centrally to develop and run in-service training courses for teachers on a wide range of special needs. Work with individual schools was then organised on a termly basis, during a planning meetings between the school's psychologist and the special educational needs co-ordinator and / or the headteacher.

Data Collection on the Work of the Educational Psychology Service in Relation to Looked After Children

The information collection stage was divided into several strands. The first was to examine the policy documents produced by the Service that guided its work, to see in what way the specific needs of looked after children were addressed. The second was to examine the day-to-day practice of psychologists that stemmed from policy guidance, or the lack of it. The final strand was a quantitative analysis of aspects of the day-to-day work of the Service in relation to children in care and their families.

Examination of Policy Documents and Guidelines

The work of the Service was circumscribed in very general terms by the Local Education Authority's policies such as 'Entitlement and Achievement' (Metroland, 1989), and in particular the special educational needs policy (Metroland, 1994). This document made no specific reference to children in the care system or work with the Social Services Department. The Service itself had developed a number of policies that guided practice in relation to certain specific aspects of the work. For example, there were policies and procedures in relation to the assessment of children felt to have a specific learning difficulty (Metroland, 1987) and the same in relation to behaviour problems (Metroland, 1995). There was no policy in relation to children in care or work with Social Services Department, or any specific reference to them in any other policy.

One very important aspect of policy was the decisions the Service had made, in consultation with headteachers, about the allocation of Service time between competing priorities (Metroland, 1990). The time allocation system used by the Educational Psychology Service started by calculating the total time available for all activities during the academic year, i.e. by multiplying the number of psychologists by 39 weeks by 37 hours. From this total, an amount of time (20 per cent) was deducted to cover Service maintenance activities such as team meetings, professional development and participation in working groups. The remainder, 80 per cent, was allocated in relation to schools on the basis of a formula. This took into account the phase of the school (primary or secondary), its size (no. on roll), the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and a fixed amount for each child in the school with a statement of special educational needs. The result was a figure for each school which represented the approximate number of Service hours they should receive in direct work and the amount of time the psychologist should spend on indirect work relating to the school, e.g. writing reports and planning interventions. The only recognition within the time allocation system for individual casework, that might include looked after children, was for children with Statements of Special Educational Need placed in educational establishments outside the City. These young people had a named psychologist who would usually remain attached following a further change of school, if it was still outside Metroland.

The time allocation system was designed to place similar work demands on every psychologist by virtue of having a roughly equivalent total time to deliver to schools. This would then, at least in theory, enable them to deliver equivalent services to schools and

children. It is clear, however, from the description above that no specific factor was used in relation to children in public care. In fact, at that time the Service database did not contain a 'field' for care status or have any systems set up with the Social Services Department to be informed about children the Local Authority was looking after.

This analysis of policy demonstrated that the Service had no systematic way of recognising and responding to the needs of looked after children, e.g. the Service was not aware of which children were looked after, and the time allocation formula did not have a factor for the numbers of looked after children in each school. The second was that there were no specific arrangements, agreements, or policies for the work of the Service with children who were looked after by the Social Services Department. For example, there was no allocation of psychologist's time to residential homes and no psychologist with specific responsibilities for work with the Social Services Department. Given this lack of policy guidance the next section explores what happened in practice.

The Practice of the Service and Looked After Children

The time allocation system described above provided time for intervention with individual children by virtue of the school they attended. That is, if a child was involved with an educational psychologist and changed school, then case responsibility moved to the educational psychologist working with the receiving school. As a result, children had changes of school and educational psychologist at times that were sometimes critical for them, e.g. when they moved to a special school. For looked after children this might also be a time of crisis in their lives outside school, e.g. when the change of school had been

prompted by their care placement braking down. This served to increase the discontinuities in the lives of these children and the number of different professionals involved in, and helping to make decisions about, their lives.

The Service time allocation system could be characterised as allocating psychologist's time to schools and not children, and allocating time on the basis that the school population was assumed to be largely static. In addition to any negative impact on educational attainments, Vostanis and Cumella (1999) have drawn attention to the way in which the mobility of a population and the traditional role of institutions to support static populations may disguise psychological problems:

High mobility prevents continuing care. A new practitioner may accurately assess a child's current state, but not having met the family before, may not identify regression of development or extent of behaviour change, which might indicate the level of psychological distress. (p. 35)

The Joint Commissioning Group (Health, Social Services and Education) in Metroland established a protocol that outlined the agreement to work closely together to address the mental health needs of children in the city (Metroland City Council, 1996b). The document specifies joint working practices at all levels throughout the services in order to provide a comprehensive and coherent child and adolescent mental health service. Children being looked after were highlighted as a group who were particularly vulnerable to emotional and behavioural difficulties and to more serious mental health problems.

There were two important principles in this document that stand in contrast to the practice of the Educational Psychology Service outlined above:

*It should be **child centred**, so that thinking about how it meets the needs of users (children and their carers) and proceeds from their standpoint rather than that of providers. (Para. 3.2)*

*From the child's point of view there should be the possibility of **continuing contact with key professionals** if he or she moves between various areas of service. (Para. 3.9)*

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative aspect of the review used data relating to all children of statutory school age who were being looked after at any time during the month of June in 1996, i.e. 371 children or 0.66 per cent of Metroland's school population. Of these looked after children, 140 (38 per cent) were known to the Educational Psychology Service.

Table 7:1 Looked After Children Known to the Metroland Educational Psychology Service in June 1996

Total No. of looked after children of school age in Metroland	371
No. of these known to the Educational Psychology Service	140

Of the 140 children known to the Service the majority (119) had a Statement of Special Educational Needs, i.e. they were at Stage Five of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfEE, 1996). This was equivalent to 85 percent of the children known to the Service, and 32 per cent of all looked after children of school age. There was one child undergoing formal assessment, i.e. Stage Four, and all the others were at Stage Three.

Table 7:2 Stage on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Looked After Children Known to the Educational Psychology Service in June 1996

Stage of the Code of Practice	No.
One and Two	0
Three	20
Four	1
Five	119
Total	140

The majority of the children with Statements were placed in special schools, i.e. 100 out of the 119. These were schools for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (42), severe learning difficulties (33), moderate learning difficulties (19), and physical disability (6). The remaining children were either placed in social care establishments outside Metroland without a recognised education provision (15) or held in secure accommodation (4). There were no looked after children with Statements in mainstream schools at that time. (N.B. There were very few children in total with Statements in

Metroland's mainstream schools in June 1996 - see section on special needs in Chapter Five.) Table 7:3 shows that those educational psychologists covering some special schools would have a disproportionate number of children who were looked after amongst their case load. As no additional time was allocated for this it could make it more difficult for those psychologists to participate in child care planning, for example, by attending statutory review meeting arranged by the Social Service Department every six months.

Table 7:3 Placement of Looked After Children Known to the Educational Psychology Service in June 1996 who had Statements of Special Educational Need

Provision	No.
Schools for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD)	42
Schools for children with severe learning difficulties (SLD)	33
Schools for children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD)	19
In placements with no educational provision	15
Schools for children with physical disabilities (PH)	6
In Secure Units	4
Total	119

Taking the 140 looked after children known to the Service in June 1996, Service records were examined to discover how many had experienced a change of psychologist by the end of the following September (see Table 7:4).

Table 7:4 Changes of Psychologists for Looked After Children between June 1st and 30th September 1996

Reason for Change of Educational Psychologist	No.	%
Change of phase, i.e. primary to secondary school	11	7.9
Change of school following a change of carer	8	5.7
Move to a special school	5	3.6
Change owing to a re-allocation of psychologist following staff changes	8	5.7
<i>No change</i>	<i>108</i>	<i>77.1</i>
Total	140	100

This revealed that 32 children (23 per cent) had experienced a change of educational psychologist over that period for a variety of reasons. Some had moved from primary to secondary schools (11); a number had moved home/carers and this resulted in a change of school (8); others had been moved to a special school (5); and the remainder (8) had a

new psychologist due to re-allocation of schools within the Service following staff changes. A number of other children (18) had moved school but continued to work with the same psychologist, i.e. because the same psychologist covered the new school.

When the focus of the analysis turned to the families of the 140 looked after children, it was found that there were 129 families involved, i.e. some families had more than one child looked after and known to the Service. A significant percentage of these families were working with more than one educational psychologist. For example, during the month of September 1996, there were twenty-five families working with two psychologists, and the remaining families were involved with three psychologists (see Table 7:5).

Table 7:5 The Number of Psychologists working with a single family of a Looked After Child in September 1996

Number of Psychologists Working with a Family of a Looked After Child	No. of Families	%
Only one psychologist working with a family	97	75.2
Two psychologists working with a family	25	19.4
Three psychologists working with a family	7	5.4
Total	129	160

It could be argued that changing psychologist would lead to some inefficiency owing to the time required for the new worker to become familiar with the case. Other inefficiencies could result from more than one psychologist working with a family (i.e. if there were children in different schools) when each worker would have to read the case files or attend review meetings. All of these efficiency arguments could, however, seem minor and bureaucratic when compared to the most significant factor, i.e. how children and families responded to these arrangements.

Options for Changes in Service Arrangements to Meet the Educational and Psychological Needs of Looked After Children

The review of the Educational Psychology Service was carried out to examine the current practice in relation to children in care. It was also designed to identify changes that might provide a better service to looked after children, and help their carers and teachers develop a better understanding of the psychological issues for these young people. The analysis presented above, suggested that the Service needed to consider changing the way it allocated cases and prioritised work with schools if they were going to make any significant progress in this area. On the basis of the analysis, an option appraisal was undertaken with respect to more effectively meeting the needs of looked after children and their families (see Figure 7:1). The options available to the Service ranged from no-changes being introduced, through two intermediary options, to a full child and family centred approach – at least for children in the care system. This would be a radical shift

away from a school-based allocation system where Special Educational Needs Coordinators were the determinant of priority for referral.

Option One: No Change

The simplest solution would have been to keep the working arrangements the same. This would not require any additional work for the Senior Management Team, in terms of gaining the agreement of Headteachers or developing new systems of accountability, for example. It would also mean that the management process of ensuring equality of work load and access to services, at least as described above. It would not, however, necessarily reflect well on a group of professionals who were commonly perceived as being child and family centred, i.e. by not doing all they could to meet the needs of one of the most disadvantaged groups of young people in society.

Option Two: Follow on determined by individual needs

The second option introduces changes that could have a positive impact on some individual looked after children by virtue of reducing the likelihood of a change of psychologist if they moved schools for whatever reason. There would be no change of policy or time allocation system, but a psychologist could decide to continue to work with a child following a change of school. The main disadvantages of this option are to do with varying practice within the Service and some psychologists having increased work loads.

Option Three: Increased focus on looked after children

Another option that could be open to the Service to introduce, without the need to carry out any external consultation, would be to increase the focus on looked after children in their consultation work with schools. The individual psychologist would need to be provided with the names of all children in the schools he or she worked with and could then make sure that their progress was discussed at termly consultation meetings. This approach would depend on the Social Services Department providing lists of looked after children, and the schools they attended, on a termly basis, but could reduce the likelihood of the needs of children in care being overlooked. All this exchanging of information and monitoring could, however, result in no change of service to children in care unless the criteria for intervention were different for these children compared to the general school population.

Option Four: Automatic follow on for all looked after children

This option was the most radical as it proposed a model of service delivery that, at least for a minority of clients, was child and family centred. The main feature would be that looked after children would continue to work with the same psychologist following a change of school. In addition, once the system had been in operation for a period of time, all children in the same family requiring services would see the same psychologist. Eventually, this would result in each school having to work with a number of different psychologists and, therefore, probably require the service level agreement with headteachers to be renegotiated. A negative effect, at least from the perspective of the Principal Psychologist, would be that the neatness and simplicity of the time allocation

system would be lost. More elaborate methods would need to be introduced to ensure equality of workload; access to psychological services; and accountability.

Figure 7:1 Options for Change

	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. No change Continue with school focussed system and current allocation procedure.	<p>The allocation system has been agreed with schools and the Local Education Authority.</p> <p>Allocation system is relatively stable over time.</p> <p>Allocation system is relatively simple.</p>	<p>Not consistent with the climate of better corporate parenting</p> <p>No improvement in service to one of the most disadvantaged groups of children</p>
2. Follow on determined by individual needs Following a change of school, the individual psychologist decides whether or not to follow on with further work for individual children,	<p>No overt change to the current school focussed allocation system.</p> <p>Choice could be exercised by individual psychologists.</p>	<p>Varying practice within the Service.</p> <p>Could lead to overload of individual psychologists.</p> <p>Some schools may have unplanned, increased allocation of psychologist time.</p> <p>No agreed criteria for making the decision to follow on.</p>

<p>3. Increased focus on looked after children</p> <p>Work with looked after children is prioritised by the psychologist at the termly planning meeting with the school.</p> <p>Administrative assistants check database whether child is looked after and whether any siblings are known to the service to inform psychologist.</p>	<p>No agreement required from other people.</p> <p>Relatively easy to implement and manage.</p> <p>Draws psychologist's attention to a child's care status (and any siblings known) to allow the Service to monitor and evaluate its work with all looked after children</p>	<p>Would not necessarily lead to any positive change in the Service's work with children who are looked after.</p>
<p>4. Psychologist follows on unless it is not compatible with individual needs</p> <p>Psychologist continues involvement with child following a change of school, and takes on any work with siblings.</p>	<p>Promotes a psychological service to individual children by maintaining a developmental perspective.</p> <p>Helps social workers, carers, parents and teachers develop a better understanding of psychological issues for these children.</p> <p>Helps to avoid unnecessary psychiatric labelling.</p> <p>Supports better attendance at Social Service planning and review meetings.</p>	<p>Service Level Agreement would need to be re-negotiated with schools.</p> <p>It would introduce another significant factor in the time allocation system.</p> <p>It might lead to an increased demand for service time.</p>

Proposals to the Educational Psychology Service

An abridged version of this research report was presented to the senior management team of the Educational Psychology Service (Principal Educational Psychologist and two Senior Educational Psychologists), for information only, and then to a meeting of all educational psychologists. The options for change were accompanied by a recommendation for a progressive change, with the first step being to have information about which children were in the care of the City Council. This would require the Service to establish an information link with the Social Services Department to gain access to basic information, e.g. name, date of birth, carers name and address, and name of social worker. The second step would be for the Service to incorporate this information into their client database by adding additional fields (see Figure: 7:2) or amending existing fields. For example, adding residential social worker to the list of potential carers in the existing field, 'Status of Principal Carer'. In addition to identifying children in care and aiding communication, e.g. by including the social worker's name, it also provided valuable information about family relationships. This was as a result of the Social Services Client Number being constructed out of a seven digit family number, followed by a letter indicating each child in the same family. This would be prove to be invaluable if the Service progressed to Option Four as children from the same family often had different surnames, attended different schools and lived with different carers. Once established, selective print-outs would then allow each psychologist to know, and enquire about, children who were looked after and attended the schools with whom they worked. These development would be within the gift of the Service to progress as there would be no need to consult 'stakeholders' such as headteachers.

Figure 7:2 Additional 'Fields' Recommended for Addition to the Service Database

<i>Name of Field</i>	<i>Content</i>
<i>Care status</i>	Accommodated; Care Order; Interim Care Order; Freeing Order.
<i>Child's Social Services Client No.</i>	8 figure reference code (7 numbers and 1 letter)
<i>Social Worker</i>	Name of allocated Social Worker
<i>Office</i>	District Office base for allocated Social Worker

The second, and major recommendation was that once the above information system was set up and working effectively the Service would move towards Option Four, given above. That is, the school's educational psychologist would work with a child who was looked after (if agreed as a priority with the school) and continue to do any necessary work if the child moved to another school. That same psychologist would also be involved with any siblings who subsequently became looked after, so that social workers, parents and carers would only have to relate to one psychologist for each family. This would require that when a piece of work was agreed with a school the care status of the child was known and, if looked after, a further check was made with respect to previous educational psychology involvement with the child or any siblings.

Outcomes

The research was completed and the information presented to the Senior Management Team and then the whole service during a professional development day. This resulted, in July 1997, in a decision to implement some of the recommendations stemming from the research. Specifically this resulted in the adoption of a system identifying all looked after children both on the Service database and by a marker in the individual child's file. One necessary step to accomplish this was to establish a formal link with the Social Services Department who arranged to supply the Educational Psychology Service with details of children being looked after prior to the start of each school term. This process was implemented in the Autumn Term 1997. From that time, the Service's administrative assistant would then provide each psychologist with a printout of all looked after children in each of their schools. They would receive this at the beginning of each term so that they could enquire about the progress of the children, and establish whether any psychological intervention was required. The printouts would also show the date of last involvement of the Service with any child and the psychologist who carried out that work.

The link psychologist for each school would negotiate the work to be carried out during the school term with the school in the usual way, but with an increased awareness of the possible need to work with looked after children. Where a piece of work involving psychologist input was agreed with the school, the decision as to which psychologist would do the work would be made with reference to the best interests of the child. For example, it might be important that the psychologist previously involved with the child or family (or working with another child from the same family) follows through, or it might

be that knowledge of the particular school context was seen to be more important in the particular circumstances. This approach was most similar to Option Two. The Service Development Plan was also amended to include an acknowledgement of the importance of this work by allocating an additional responsibility point (i.e. one additional salary increment) to an educational psychologist to develop and implement the above system; and to raise awareness about relevant issues.

The inclusion of information on children's care status on the Service's database was seen as the first step in developing an information management system that could lead to a more coherent service to looked after children, their carers and families. The Service could also analyse its own performance, as well as meet the needs for greater accountability, by analysing and reporting on the number / percentage of looked after children worked with over the year; the level of psychologist input, i.e. the proportion at different stages of the Code of Practice; the continuity of psychologist input to the child, i.e. the number of changes of psychologist; and the organisation of educational psychology support to families, i.e. the number of psychologists working with the same family. All of these raw data could lead to the Service setting targets for further improvement and plan strategies for achieving those targets.

Current practice

In May 2000, the Educational Psychology Service were still organising services to looked after children and their families in line with Option Two, i.e. they have not taken

organisational developments forward since the initial changes implemented for September 1997. There had, however, been changes nationally (see Chapter Five) and within the Local Authority that resulted in changes in practice. For example Metroland set up a new education and psychology service for looked after children, Education Access, in September 1998 (please see Introduction). That Service was able to provide more comprehensive information to Educational Psychologists than had been available from the Social Services Department. This information included the dates of Social Services six-monthly Statutory Review meetings and assisted psychologists in drawing together Social Services and Education review and planning meetings.

Alongside the provision of information to the Psychology Service, Education Access required that the forms the information was supplied on were returned with any changes of circumstances recorded. In addition to helping Education Access track and monitor the educational progress of the children, the system provided feedback on whether the agreed process was being followed. That is, returns were required from all psychologists, even if there were no changes, and this encouraged psychologists to make time to discuss the children.

The examination of practice in Metroland Educational Psychology Service, with respect to work with looked after children, led directly to changes in practice. Although not as radical as the initial proposals, the agreed changes proved to be sustainable and were still in place at the time of submitting this report - three years later.

Chapter Eight

The Educational Attainment and Progress of Children Looked After in Metroland

Introduction

Research into the education of children looked after in Metroland began during 1996. At that time, Metroland had almost no hard data about the education attainments and progress of children in care although anecdotal information suggested that they were likely to be poor. The research program collected educational and care data on all children of statutory school age (4 to 16 years) being looked after, for any length of time, in the month of June 1996 (see Table 8:2). This process was repeated in the following three years, i.e. 1997, 1998 and 1999. As the research spanned four years a significant number of children could be tracked over that period. For example, of the 371 children included in the 1996 survey, 248 were being looked after in June 1997 (i.e. 67 per cent); 183 in June 1998 (i.e. 49 per cent); and 144 were still being looked after, and of school age, in June 1999 (i.e. 39 per cent of the original cohort). Table 8:1 plots this information broken down into year groups, e.g. of the 22 children being looked after in June 1996 and in the Reception Year at school, 14 were being looked after the following June, 11 in June 1998, and 9 in the final year of the survey, 1999. This 'staying on' rate varied from approximately 40 per cent (YR to Y3) to 80 per cent (Y7 to Y10).

If one just considered those children in Year R to Year 8 in 1996 (220), i.e. those who

would still be of school age in June 1999, then the percentage still being looked after in June 1999 was 65 per cent. At the end of the four-year program, the database contained a range of educational and care data on 690 different children and young people. Some of these looked after children would appear only in one year's cohort, while others would appear in all four years.

Table 8:1 Children and Young People 'Tracked' for Every Year of the Four Year Research Program (1996 to 1999)

Year	June '96	June '97	June '98	June '99
R	22			
1	24	14		
2	22	17	11	
3	24	18	14	9
4	29	22	16	12
5	24	20	16	14
6	28	18	18	16
7	26	24	13	17
8	31	25	23	13
9	44	23	22	21
10	45	37	22	21
11	52	31	28	21
Total	371	248	183	144

Individual Assessment Factors

The data collected for the research program consisted of information provided by Metroland Social Services Department: name; client number; Date of Birth; ethnicity; care status (i.e. Care Order, Interim Care Order, Freeing Order, Secure Order or Accommodated); and care history (i.e. longevity in care, number of care episodes, number of care placements, and number of carers).

To this was added information collected from the Education Service or directly from schools: name of school attended and type (e.g. mainstream, Moderate Learning Difficulty, and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties); Stage on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice; number of changes of school; attendance and exclusions data; attainments on National Curriculum based standard tests (referred to as SATs in the remainder of the document); and GCSE results.

Research Method

The names of all children being looked after, at any time during the month of June 1996, were supplied by Metroland Social Services Department from their central database.

Other essential information provided was date of birth, gender, and ethnicity. This information was provided during July 1996 and the same process followed in each of the study years, i.e. 1996 to 1999. The Social Services Department was not in a position to provide any educational information as there was not even a 'field' on their database for the name of the school the young person attended. Similarly, the database held by

Metroland Education Service had no indication as to which young people were looked after and, therefore, could offer no information directly about the attainments and progress of children in the care system.

A major hurdle in the early years of the research program was establishing an accurate list of looked after children. The Social Service database did not contain the names of every child who was actually being looked after, and many that were listed had left the care of the local authority. Even for the final cohort study in June 1999, when the Quality Protects Program (DoH, 1998) had led the Department to commit additional resources to information management, there were still inaccuracies. For example, one of the young people listed as being looked after in June 1999 was found to have had two care episodes, with the final one ending in July 1988. Of a total of 69 young people listed, whose care histories were investigated in detail, three were found not to be looked after, equivalent to a 4.3 per cent error rate. The problem of inaccuracies was not confined to the items given above and also encompassed important health information, such as the name of young people's General Practitioner. During a pilot exercise for the Department of Health, to investigate suitable 'Outcome Indicators' for the Quality Protects' initiative (Private communication, June 1998), it was found that the General Practitioner's name was only correct in approximately 15 per cent of cases and some G.P.s had, in fact, died many years before.

When an accurate list had been determined, the Education Service was asked to provide as much as possible of the educational information listed above from their central database. This resulted in less than 17 per cent of the required data being made available,

i.e. only 59 of the 352 children being looked after in 1997 were listed on the Education Service database. There were a variety of reasons for such a poor return, e.g. children being recorded under different names; errors in dates of birth; frequent changes of school (resulting in no school providing the Education Service with information); and a significant number (ranging from 15 per cent to 18 per cent over the four years of the research) being placed in schools outside the City.

For those children not recorded on the main Education Service database, other 'stand-alone' systems were then interrogated to try to match children with schools, e.g. the database held by the Special Education Service and that held by the Educational Psychology Service. Finally, if a school had not been identified by the above route, individual Social Workers were contacted and asked to provide school details. All missing data was then requested directly from the school by written communication. This whole operation proved to be extremely time consuming, expensive and not unique to Metroland.

Other researchers have drawn attention to the difficulties of obtaining information about the educational attainments and progress of looked after children. Christmas (1998) using a similar method to that described above was only able to collect information on 22 out of 31 children in her small study, i.e. 71 per cent. On a different scale, Fletcher-Campbell (1997) asked all local authorities in England to provide information about the numbers of children they looked after; their school placement; and whether hard data on exclusions, attendance and attainment could be extracted from centrally held records. She reported that "*The responses were disappointing in terms both of response rates and*

of the data that could be supplied." (p.36)

The Times Educational Supplement (TES, 5/3/99) carried out a similar survey to that described by Fletcher-Campbell which revealed that only fifty-six authorities out of one hundred and forty-eight, claimed to hold some reliable data on the attainments of looked after children. Only thirty-six of these authorities provided end of Key Stage results and sixty-seven provided GCSE results. Of these, eleven gave estimates that excluded children being educated outside the area. This led the TES to comment "*However, some authorities may have artificially boosted their results. Many appeared to see no problem with routinely excluding from their data those with special educational needs and those attending schools in another authority.* (p.23)

This demonstrable lack of management information sits very uneasily against the views on accountability outlined by Utting (1997). He considered that every local authority:

... ensures that it is always able to exact accountability from service providers, and to discharge its own accountability for all acts and omissions concerning the child. The demanding nature of this accountability arises from the concept of parental responsibility contained in the Children Act and the general obligation a local authority has in spending and obtaining value for public money. ... For the authority to be properly informed of what is being done to and for children in its name requires a system of reporting all the way through to elected members. Social services authorities should satisfy themselves that their managerial, professional and reporting systems are adequate to discharging their accountability for the children they look after. (p.164)

Data Capture

The extensive efforts to collect information, outlined above, established a database that was not only large but also well populated with data in comparison to other studies. For example, attendance, exclusions and special needs data are available for 99 per cent of the 1998 cohort. Table 8:2 sets out the size of the various cohorts and shows a gradual improvement in the percentage of data gathered. This can be attributed to having a better starting point each year (e.g. knowing the school the young person attended the previous year) and having better data collection procedures in place.

Table 8:2 Data Capture Rates for Educational Data over the Four Years of the Research Program (percentages)

	Data Capture			
	1995/96 n=371	1996/97 n=352	1997/98 n=345	1998/9 n=376
Name and type of school	95	100	100	99
Stage on SEN Code of Practice	89	93	99	98
Attendance	53	90	99	94
Exclusions	60	94	99	96
Key Stage One	68	89	95	96
Key Stage Two	80	83	95	92
Key Stage Three	79	90	94	84
GCSE	100	100	100	100

Demographic Information on Looked after Children

The average number of looked after children of statutory school age in Metroland was 360 at any one time, equivalent to approximately 0.66 per cent of the general school population. This compares with a figure of 0.44 per cent across all England.

Approximately 40 per cent attend mainstream primary schools, 30 per cent in mainstream secondary schools and 30 per cent in special schools. The looked after population was small in relative terms and, with a few exceptions, constitutes a very small percentage of an individual school's roll. In 1998, for example, of the 89 primary schools in Metroland, 47 had at least one looked after child (range being from one to 9). All 19 secondary schools had at least one looked after child (range one to 11), as did all 11 special schools (range five to 21). From the information presented above it is clear that some schools have a disproportionate number of looked-after children when compared with their size. Looked after children formed 22 per cent of the roll of the special school with the highest number, and 4 per cent of the equivalent primary school. The range in secondary schools, while not so dramatic, was from 0.15 per cent to 1.46 per cent. The general distribution of looked after children around Metroland, as in other authorities, acted to discourage schools from developing programs for such relatively small numbers, e.g. one pupil in a secondary school with a roll of 900 (1998 cohort). On the other side, having a significant number of looked after children in a school, e.g. 14 pupils in a 300 pupil primary school (1999 cohort), introduced a major strain just in terms of management time to attend review and planning meeting. A significant number of looked after children were also cared for and educated outside Metroland. This figure ranged from 15 per cent (53 children in 1998) to 18 per cent (66 children in 1999) and had a significant impact on the collection of data to monitor progress and the ability of Metroland's Education Service to implement initiatives to improve attainment.

The percentages of boys and girls being looked after in Metroland proved to be remarkably stable over the four years, with 57 per cent of the population being male

(higher than that reported in Chapter Two for all England, i.e. 55 per cent). The analysis for all four years is given below in Table 8:3.

Table 8:3 Gender of Looked after Children in Metroland (percentages)

	Males	Females
1995/96	56	44
1996/97	57	43
1997/98	58	42
1998/99	57	43
Average	57	43

Academic Attainments

Standard Attainment Tasks

The attainments of children being looked after in Metroland fall significantly below the attainments of Metroland children as a whole, at all ages. To illustrate this, the results of research carried out in years 1996 to 1999 has been given below in Table 8:4. This shows the percentage of looked after children who attained the level expected for their age on Standard Attainment Tasks (SATs), compared to all Metroland children. At Key Stage 1, pupils sat statutory tests during the month of May in mathematics, reading, writing and spelling. Pupils were awarded levels 1,2, or 3 with the typical pupils attaining level 2. Tests were marked by the pupils' class teacher with the Local Education Authority auditing the quality of schools administration of the tests. For Key Stages 2 and 3, pupils sat tests in English, mathematics, mental arithmetic and science on set days in May. The

papers were externally marked by the Midlands Examining Group. The levels awarded range, at Key Stage 2 from level 3 to 5 with the typical pupil attaining level 4. At Key Stage 3, the awarded levels range from 3 to 8 with the typical pupil attaining level 5 or 6.

Table 8:4 SATs Attainment for Looked after Children in Metroland compared to all Metroland Pupils (1995/6 to 1998/9)

Age	SAT level Benchmark	Subject	% of all Metroland children who achieved benchmark				4 year ave. % for all Metro. children	% of Metroland looked after children who achieved benchmark				4 year ave. % for Metro. LAC
			95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9		95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9	
								n=19	n=19	n=22	n=28	
7 yrs.	2 or above	English	78	79	80	79	79	21	33	32	50	34
		Maths	80	81	83	84	82	16	50	36	57	40
		Science	82	84	85	84	84	16	50	18	57	35
								n=25	n=23	n=22	n=36	
11 yrs.	4 or above	English	55	60	61	67	61	16	26	14	25	20
		Maths	48	57	54	64	56	12	22	5	22	15
		Science	57	65	67	75	66	12	26	36	42	29
								n=39	n=20	n=36	n=32	
14 yrs.	5 or above	English	51	52	65	60	57	15	10	11	13	12
		Maths	51	55	55	57	55	13	25	17	16	18
		Science	46	53	48	47	48	13	15	8	6	14

Given the variation in the percentages of looked after children achieving any particular benchmark over the four years (e.g. Level 2 in Science), it is both useful and dubious to combine them to form a four year average. On the positive side, the value of combining them is to provide, in effect, a much larger cohort and therefore results that are likely to be more representative, e.g. the cohort goes up from 30 (approx. size of 'n' for each year), to 120 if all four years are combined. It could, however, also be considered dubious in that it suggests that there is more stability in the results from these small populations than there is in fact.

Although there looks to be a clear and apparently large difference between the looked after children and Metroland children in general, the data were subjected to analysis to establish the level of any statistical significance. The question to answer was whether the two samples, i.e. all Metroland children and looked after children, came from the same populations or whether they represented populations that differ in central tendency. The Mann-Whitney U Test¹ was used to compare looked after children with Metroland children in general in each subject (English, Mathematics and Science) and at each age (7, 11 and 14 years), i.e. nine tests. As there was no overlap in the range of results for looked after children and all Metroland children in any subject at any age, each of the nine tests produced the same results (Mann Whitney 'U' Test, $U = 0$, $p < 0.014$, with $n_1 = 4$, and $n_2 = 4$). One could, therefore, be confident that the population results were significantly different, i.e. that looked after children achieved significantly poorer results than children in the general population.

One interesting finding from the research program was the high number of looked after children who were not entered for Key Stage Three SATs, see Table 8:5. Whilst all looked after children were entered for Key Stage One and Key Stage Two SATs, almost a quarter (23 per cent) were not entered at Key Stage Three. This looks to be a very high percentage but could not be compared with all Metroland children, as no similar information was available from the Local Authority.

¹ The Mann-Whitney U test was chosen as this is one of the most powerful non-parametric tests and is a useful alternative to the parametric 't' test when the researcher wishes to avoid the assumptions of the 't' test, e.g. that both populations are normally distributed.

Table 8:5 The Number of Looked after Children in Metroland entered for end of Key Stage SATs

Key Stage		No. of LAC entered for SATs			
		95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9
		<small>n=19</small>	<small>n=19</small>	<small>n=22</small>	<small>n=28</small>
One	SATs taken	13	17	21	27
	Not entered for SaTs	0	0	0	0
	Information not available	6	2	1	1
	Disapplied	0	0	0	0
		<small>n=25</small>	<small>n=23</small>	<small>n=22</small>	<small>n=36</small>
Two	SATs taken	20	19	20	33
	Not entered for SATs	0	0	0	0
	Information not available	5	4	1	3
	Disapplied	0	0	1	0
		<small>n=39</small>	<small>n=20</small>	<small>n=36</small>	<small>n=32</small>
Three	SATs taken	22	15	24	18
	Not entered for SATs	9	2	9	9
	Information not available	8	2	2	5
	Disapplied	0	1	1	0

The results of SATs in Metroland reflect those found across England with respect to differences in attainment of males and females. Gender attainment in Metroland is analysed in two ways. Firstly, by comparing boys attainment with that of girls and secondly, by examining local girls' and boys' attainment with their corresponding national group. Using the results from academic year 1996/97 as an example (Metroland, 1997), the Local Authority reported that:

Key Stage 1

When girls' attainment is compared with that of boys', proportionately more girls attain the benchmark (level2+) than boys in all subjects. The pattern is the same locally and nationally. Metroland girls' attainment is close to that of national girls, and Metroland boys' attainment to national boys. (p.1)

Key Stage 2

Girls' attainment is higher than boys' in English ... Boys' and girls' attainment is similar in mathematics and science ... This pattern is the same locally and nationally. (p.2)

Key Stage 3

Girls' attainment is higher than boys' in English ... There is little difference between boys' and girls' attainment in mathematics and science ... This pattern is the same locally and nationally. (p.2)

**Table 8:6 Comparison of Attainment by Gender for Metroland and all England 1997
(percentages attaining benchmarks)**

		Girls		Boys	
		National	Metroland	National	Metroland
Key Stage 1	English	85	83	75	74
	Mathematics	85	81	82	80
	Science	87	86	84	83
Key Stage 2	English	69	67	57	54
	Mathematics	61	57	63	58
	Science	69	66	68	64
Key Stage 3	English	66	63	47	44
	Mathematics	60	55	60	55
	Science	59	53	61	53

Given the gender differences presented above it was decided that the data on the attainments of looked after children should be analysed to investigate whether this was also true for that population. Table 8:7 sets out the attainments of looked after boys and girls and reveals that for English, the comparative results are in the same direction as the local and national results. That is, girls achieve higher than boys at all three ages (7, 11

and 14), although both at a much lower level. For mathematics and science, however, there are differences in relative performance at ages 11 and 14, with looked after boys generally achieving poorer results than one would expect from the results of all boys in Metroland. One exception to this is at Key Stage One, in Science, where their attainments are significantly higher than one would predict.

A visual analysis of the Tables 8:4 and 8:7 reveals a much more alarming level of underachievement in some areas when gender is taken into account. For example, Table 8:4 shows that the 4-year average percentage of Metroland children attaining level 5 or above in the Key Stage Three science SAT was 48 per cent. This compares with 14 per cent of looked after children and only 8.75 per cent of looked after girls. Similarly for boys only, but this time for the Key Stage Three English. That is, 57 percent attaining level 5 or above in the general Metroland population, 12 per cent of all looked after children and only 8.50 per cent of looked after boys.

The data for English were subjected to analysis using the Mann-Whitney U Test and this revealed that the results achieved by girls were significantly different from boys at ages 11 and 14 (Mann Whitney U Test, $U = 1$, $p = 0.029$, with $n_1 = 4$, and $n_2 = 4$ for both ages). There was, however, no significant difference at age 7 (Mann Whitney U Test, $U = 5$, $p = 0.243$, with $n_1 = 4$, and $n_2 = 4$). There were no statistically significant differences in the results for girls and boys in mathematics at any of the three ages (Mann Whitney U Test, $U = 8$, $p = 0.557$ at age 7; $U = 6$, $p = 0.343$ at age 11; and $U = 7$, $p = 0.443$ at age 14, with $n_1 = 4$, and $n_2 = 4$ at all ages). Similarly for science, there were no statistically

significant results ages (Mann Whitney U Test, U = 7, p = 0.443 at age 7; U = 6, p = 0.343 at age 11; and U = 7, p = 0.443 at age 14, with $n_1 = 4$, and $n_2 = 4$ at all ages).

Table 8:7 SAT Attainment for Metroland Looked After Children, Analysed by Gender (1995/6 to 1998/9)

Age In yrs	SAT level Benchmark	Subject	% of female LAC who achieved benchmark				4 year average % for females	% of male LAC who achieved benchmark				4 year average % for males
			95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9		95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9	
7	2 or above		n= 8	n=11	n=12	n=12		n=11	n= 8	n=10	n=16	
		English	25	36	42	58	40.00	18	38	20	44	30.00
		Maths	13	45	42	66	41.50	18	63	30	56	41.75
11	4 or above	Science	13	36	25	58	33.00	18	75	10	62	41.25
			n=10	n= 9	n= 8	n=14		n=15	n=14	n=14	n=22	
		English	20	33	25	43	30.25	13	21	7	14	13.75
14	5 or above	Maths	10	44	0	29	20.75	13	7	7	18	11.25
		Science	20	44	37	43	36.00	7	14	36	41	24.50
			n=15	n= 9	n=12	n=14		n=24	n=11	n=24	n=18	
14	5 or above	English	20	22	25	7	19.00	13	0	4	17	8.50
		Maths	0	33	42	14	22.25	21	18	4	17	15.00
		Science	7	11	17	0	8.75	17	18	4	11	12.50

When comparing the attainments of looked after children with the whole Metroland population the difference is clear and significant, see above. However, it was also seen as important to compare the looked after population with other potentially disadvantaged groups about whom the Local Authority collected data. This was an approach at investigating whether the attainments of looked after children could be accounted for by general disadvantage, or whether the experiences prior to becoming looked after and whilst in care were uniquely disadvantaging. The only group to fall into such a category where data were available was referred to as 'transient'. These were young people who experience at least one change of school within the Key Stage and, at least in that respect, are more similar to looked after children than the general population. The rates of

transience are particularly high in Metroland and in 1996/7, 17 per cent of pupils were classified as such at Key Stage One; 19 per cent at Key Stage Two; 8 per cent at Key Stage Three; and 10 per cent at Key Stage Four.

Table 8:8 Comparison of SATs Attainment for Three Groups - Looked After Children, Transient Children and Non-Transient Children

Age	SAT level Benchmark	Subject	Children who achieved benchmark in 1997		
			Non-transient Children	Transient Children	Looked after children
7 yrs	2 or above	English	82%	64%	33%
		Maths	83%	70%	50%
		Science	87%	73%	50%
11 yrs	4 or above	English	64%	45%	26%
		Maths	61%	43%	22%
		Science	68%	50%	26%
14 yrs	5 or above	English	52%	30%	10%
		Maths	58%	33%	25%
		Science	56%	29%	15%

The comparative results are set out in Table 8:8 and look to be quite different from one another, i.e. there is no overlap between the scores for the different groups. The attainments of transient children falling between those of looked after children and the general population in Metroland. This could lend some support to the idea that the movement of looked after children between schools does not account for their low attainments and this theme will be returned to later. A statistical analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance² rejected the null hypothesis that the

² The Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks was used as it is an extremely useful test to decide whether independent samples are from different populations. It tests the hypothesis that the samples come from the same population, or identical populations with respect to averages.

samples at all ages (7, 11, and 14 years) were drawn from the same population. They were found to be significantly different at the same level ($H = 7.2$, $p < 0.004$) as the test uses ranked data and there was no overlap between the populations at any age.

The analysis presented above demonstrates that the percentage of looked after children attaining the benchmark level, or above, falls significantly below that for all children in Metroland. Tables 8:9, 8:10, and 8: 11 takes this one stage further and sets out the spread of attainments at Key Stages One, Two, and Three respectively. The data were not subjected to sophisticated statistical analysis owing to the vastly different sizes of the population involved, i.e. the average looked after cohort was 20 young people (so that one young person's results equated to 5 per cent of the sample) compared to average cohort size of approximately 4000 for Metroland in general (where one pupil's contribution equated to 0.025 per cent). A visual inspection, however, reveals that the spread of attainments for children in Metroland and in England are very similar, and quite different from the spread of attainments for looked after children.

Table 8:9 Comparison of the Spread of Key Stage One SATs Results for Looked After Children with Local and National Results (Percentages for 1997)

	Level	U	W	1	2	3
Looked after Children (<i>N=19</i>)	English	0	11	42	32	5
	Maths	5	5	26	47	5
	Science	0	5	32	53	0
Metroland all children	English	1	3	18	63	15
	Maths	1	2	17	67	14
	Science	1	1	14	67	17
England	English	0	3	17	63	17
	Maths	0	2	14	65	18
	Science	0	1	13	68	17

Table 8:10 Comparison of the Spread of Key Stage Two SATs Results for Looked After Children with Local and National Results (Percentages for 1997)

		Below				
	Level	2	2	3	4	5
Looked after Children (N=23)	English	17	17	22	22	4
	Maths	13	17	26	13	9
	Science	9	22	22	22	4
Metroland all children	English	0	2	28	48	12
	Maths	0	3	32	43	14
	Science	0	1	26	50	14
England	English	0	1	26	47	16
	Maths	0	2	28	44	18
	Science	0	1	23	50	18

Table 8:11 Comparison of the Spread of Key Stage Three SATs Results for Looked After Children with Local and National Results (Percentages for 1997)

		Below							
		2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Looked after children (N=20)	English	20	0	15	35	5	5	0	0
	Maths	5	10	30	10	20	5	0	0
	Science	10	5	15	30	15	0	0	0
Metroland all children	English	5	0	5	29	34	15	4	0
	Maths	1	1	12	25	24	23	7	1
	Science	0	0	9	29	21	18	5	0
England	English	5	0	4	27	34	17	5	1
	Maths	1	1	10	22	23	25	11	1
	Science	1	1	8	24	31	22	7	0

The distribution of attainment for looked after children can clearly be seen to be lower than the other two groups in all subjects at all levels. The distributions also differed in other ways, but not always consistently. For example, the shape of the distributions for looked after children were generally 'flatter' than the 'normal' distribution for the other

populations and this is best illustrated by the English, maths, and science results at Key Stage Two. However, this was not replicated at Key Stage One where the distribution for looked after children level was more 'normal' in shape but with a lower mean than that for the other populations. The data also generally shows a sharper decline in attainments above the benchmark for looked after children than the general populations.

The analysis carried out above demonstrates that the attainments of looked after children are significantly below the attainment of children in Metroland and England as a whole. This was the case in each of the three core subjects (English, mathematics and science) and at the end of each of the first three Key Stages, i.e. at seven, eleven and fourteen years of age. It also demonstrated that distribution of attainments for looked after children appeared to be different than the general Metroland population although caution was expressed about this analysis as it was based on small cohorts.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Table 8:12 lays out the results of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination results for looked after children in Metroland in the categories normally reported by schools, e.g. 5 or more passes at Grades A* to C. It also allows comparison with the results achieved by all young people in Metroland; the Metroland school with the poorest performance; and England as a whole.

Table 8:12 Comparison of GCSE Grades for Looked after Children with Local and National Results (1995/6 to 1998/9) - percentages

	5 or more A*- C				5 or more A*- G				1 or more A*- G			
	95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9	95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9	95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9
Looked after children	0 n=54	3 n=41	6 n=37	5 n=22	19 n=54	32 n=41	30 n=37	32 n=22	36 n=54	54 n=41	43 n=37	50 n=22
The poorest performing Metroland school	11	11	16	13	64	78	76	69	78	78	82	80
All Metroland children	38	37	37	39	84	82	85	86	91	91	92	93
England	42	43	46	48	86	86	88	89	92	92	93	94

Care needs to be taken in considering the percentages given above as one looked after child can equate to almost 5 per cent. For example, in 1998/9 there were only 22 looked after children in Year 11 so each child was equivalent to 4.54 per cent (see discussion on targets in Chapter Five). It does, however, allow comparison with the other groups and demonstrates the consistently low level of attainment of children in care at all Grades. Even when the effects of year on year fluctuations are ameliorated by using a four year average the results for looked after children always fall well below even those obtained by pupils in the most disadvantaged school in Metroland. Averaging the attainments over the four years of the research program (n = 154) gives only 2.6 per cent obtaining five or more passes at grades A* to C (compared with 38 per cent in Metroland as a whole); 27 per cent with five or more passes at grade G or above C (compared with 87 per cent in Metroland); and 44 per cent gaining one or more passes at grade G or above (compared with 93 per cent).

Analysis of the data in Table 8:12 using the Mann-Whitney U Test revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the performance of looked after children and all Metroland children in GCSE examinations. Looked after children were found to have lower attainment if one compared the numbers obtaining five or more A* -Cs; 5 or more A* to Gs; or one or more A* to Gs (for all three comparisons, $U = 0$, $p < 0.014$, with $n_1 = 4$, and $n_2 = 4$).

Another approach to comparing relative performance at GCSE examinations for different groups is to use the number of 'points' they achieved. The 'points score' is arrived at by adding together the points equivalent of each grade awarded, i.e. A* = 8; A = 7; B = 6; C = 5; D = 4; E = 3; F = 2; & to G = 1. The average points scores for populations used in tables above have been used in Table 8:13 and this presents a similar picture to Table 8:12.

Table 8:13 Comparison of GCSE Average Points Scores* for Looked After Children with Local and National Results

	GCSE average points score in 1997
Looked after children	10.2
Transient children	21.7
Non-transient children	35.1
All Metroland children	30.8
England	34.9

Academic Progress

One of the strengths of this research study was its longitudinal nature. This allowed comparison of the educational progress made by individual children between two Key Stages of the National Curriculum, e.g. between Y6 and Y9. Not only can we see whether children have made progress themselves, i.e. by comparing the Levels they attained at the end of each Stage, but we can compare their progress against a wider National population. For example, if a looked after child attained Level 3 at the end of Key Stage 2 then his/her attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 would be compared with the progress of all other children who attained Level 3 in England.

The Department of Education publish a statistical package each Autumn to help schools compare their performance at a number of levels with all schools in England or with schools with similar characteristics (DfEE, 1999f). The package also offers the possibility of analysis at 'pupil level', i.e. it *'enables you to compare the progress made by individual pupils in your school with the progress made by individual pupils nationally ...* (p.29) It presents information in two ways, i.e. as value added lines and as chances graphs and is said to provide information that teachers can share with pupils and parents about expectations for achievement, to involve them in target setting.

Table 8:14 highlights the cohorts for whom there are two sets of Key Stage results. There are three groups in total, one which spans Key Stage 3 (the group of looked after children who were in Year 6 in 1996 and remained looked after until 1999 when they completed Year 9), and two that span Key Stage 4 (i.e. Y9 in 1996 to Y11 in 1998, and Y9 in 1997 to Y11 in 1999).

Table 8:14 Looked after Children monitored over Key Stages

1996			YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11
1997		YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	
1998	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11		
1999	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11		

Key Stage 3

There were 22 young people who were in Year 6 in 1996 and remained looked after until 1999 when they completed Year 9. SATs data for both Year 6 and 9, however, were only available for 12 of these partly due to four of the number not being entered for SATs in Year 9 (see Table 8:5). The Department of Education (DfEE, 1999f) state that '*Many studies confirm that prior attainment is by far the best predictor of a pupil's ultimate performance.*' (p.29). At the simplest level, therefore, one would expect to see a direct relationship between the level of attainments at the end of Key Stage 2 (Y6) and Key Stage 3 (Y9), i.e. that these two measures were positively correlated. Using the Spearman Rank-Correlation³ test the correlations were found to be significant at the 0.01 level in all three subjects (for n = 12: English r = 0.89, Science r = 0.91, and Mathematics r = 0.73).

Having established that there was a strong positive relationship between attainment at the end of the two Key Stages, the analysis moved on to investigate whether the progress made by individual looked after pupils was comparable to all other children in England. The Year 6 SAT attainment levels were translated into points scores such that a Level 1 = 9 points; Level 2 = 15 points; Level 3 = 21 points; Level 4 = 27 points; Level 5 = 33; and

³ The Spearman Rank Correlation is a non-parametric test of the relationship between two variables without making the assumption that the two variables are 'normally' distributed.

a Level 6 = 39. These points scores were then used to predict the points scores at Year 9 SATs by using Graph 3:1 in Section 1C of the Autumn Package (DfEE, 1999f). The predicted and actual results are set out in Table 8:15 and these were found to be very highly correlated (Spearman Rank Correlation for $n = 12$: $r = 0.92$, significant at the 1 per cent level). That is, looked after children made the same relative degree of progress between the end of Key Stage Two and the end of Key Stage Three. The Mann Whitney U Test was then carried out on the same data and this revealed that the actual attainments were at the predicted level, i.e. there was no statistically significant difference between the predicted and expected results (Mann Whitney U Test; $U = 59$, with $n_1 = 12$ and $n_2 = 12$).

Table 8:15 Observed and Expected Attainments on Key Stage 3 SATs

Y6 Average Points Score	Predicted Y9 Average Points Score	Actual Y9 Average Points Score
3	17*	7
5	17*	7
11	18	15
11	18	17
11	18	19
15	21	17
19	25	21
19	25	25
21	27	29
23	28	25
23	28	27
23	28	29

* single estimate given for all average point scores below 9.

Key Stage 4

There were 26 young people for whom there were both Year 9 SATs attainment and GCSE results available (thirteen in each cohorts that spanned Key Stage 4 (see Table 8:14) and these have been combined for the following analysis.

Table 8:16 Observed and Expected Attainments at GCSE

Y9 Average Points Score	Predicted GCSE Points Score	Actual GCSE Points Score
15	4	5
19	7	4
19	7	0
19	7	0
21	10	16
23	15	3
23	15	0
23	15	0
23	15	0
23	15	0
24	15	0
25	20	19
25	20	20
25	20	10
27	24	0
27	24	29
29	31	0
29	31	31
29	31	27
30	31	8
31	36	0
31	36	0
31	36	17
31	36	26
33	41	25
37	50	46

For the same reasons as stated above, one would expect to see a direct relationship between the level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Y9) and the number of GCSE points a young person would obtain, i.e. that these two measures were positively correlated. The average points score for each of the pupils was calculated, as outlined above, for both Year 9 SATs and GCSE results. A Spearman Rank Correlation analysis was then carried out and this demonstrated that the attainments at Key Stage Three and GCSE points scores were significantly correlated at the 1 per cent level ($n = 26$, $r = 0.48$). That is, looked after children made the same relative degree of progress between the end of Key Stage Three and the end of Key Stage Four.

Having established that there was a positive relationship between attainment at the end of the two Key Stages, the analysis moved on to investigate whether the progress made by individual looked after pupils was comparable to all other children in England. The average points scores for Year 9 SATs were used to predict the points scores at GCSE by using Graph 3:1 in Section 1C of the Autumn Package (DfEE, 1999f). The predicted and actual GCSE points score are set out in Table 8:16 and these were subjected to analysis using the Mann Whitney U Test. This revealed that there was a significant statistical difference between the observed and expected results, i.e. looked after children did not make the expected degree of progress between the end of Key Stage Three and the end of Key Stage Four (Mann-Whitney U Test; $U = 151$ equivalent to $Z = 3.42$; $p < 0.003$; with n_1 and $n_2 = 26$).

Special Educational Needs

Numbers

Of the children being looked after in Metroland a significant number were formally identified as having special educational needs, i.e the school had recorded them in the Special Needs Register at one of the Stages of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (1996 Education Act). The table below sets out the results over the four years of the research program.

**Table 8:17 Special Educational Needs and Metroland Looked after Children
1995/6 to 1998/9**

Stage on the SEN Code of Practice	1995/6 n=371	1996/7 n=352	1997/8 n=345	1998/9 n=376
Stages 1 to 4	27%	32%	35%	35%
Stage 5	32%	30%	33%	34%
Total	59%	62%	68%	69%

The proportion of looked after children considered to have special educational needs is considerably higher than in the general population of Metroland. Taking a sample year, 1998, only 19.4 per cent of the whole population were considered to have SEN compared to 68 per cent of the looked after population, i.e. 3.5 times greater. This contrast is even more stark when considering children with Statements, i.e. Stage 5. Again taking 1998, only 2.6 per cent of the general population had Statements compared with 33 per cent of looked after children, i.e. nearly 13 times greater (see Table 8:18).

**Table 8:18 Special Educational Needs and Looked after Children
Comparison with All Metroland Children (1998)**

Stage on the SEN Code of Practice	Looked after Children	All Metroland Children	Increased likelihood of SEN if looked after
Stages 1 to 4	35.0%	16.8%	2.08 times
Stage 5	33.0%	2.6%	12.69 times
Total	68.0%	19.4%	3.51 times

School Placements

The percentage of children in mainstream schools was found to vary according to the phase of education. For example, in 1998 66 per cent of all LAC were receiving their education in mainstream schools. This was, however, composed of 74 per cent of all primary age looked after children and 56 per cent of those of secondary age. All of the looked after children with Statements in 1998 (33 per cent or 115 children) were being provided for within a special school context. This was in contrast to the increasing numbers of pupils in the general population that were being supported within mainstream schools (see Chapter Five).

The largest group, thirty-seven children, was placed in schools for children with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and the majority of these were only receiving respite care from the Social Services Department. The second largest group, thirty-three, had been identified as having emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and placed in a mixture of day (15), residential (6), and out-of-city residential schools (12). The next largest group was provided for within schools for children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD).

Table 8:19 School Placements for Looked after Children in Metroland (1998)

Type		No.	%
Mainstream		230	66%
Special		102	29%
	<i>Severe Learning Difficulty</i>	37	10.7%
	<i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty</i>	33	9.5%
	<i>Moderate Learning Difficulty</i>	26	7.5%
	<i>Physical Handicap</i>	6	1.7%
Alternative education, e.g. Home Tuition or F.E. College		9	3%
Secure Units		3	1%
Unknown		1	-
Total		347	100

Attendance

Previous research on educational outcomes for looked after children, covered in Chapter Three, drew attention to the increased likelihood of poor school attendance compared with the general school population. The data collected in Metroland supports this general finding but allows more detailed examination due to the large size of the sample and the longitudinal nature of the research program. For example, even a simple analysis of the attendance rates for looked after children in Metroland in 1998 (presented in Table 8:20) revealed interesting information. It shows that the large majority of looked after children in primary and special schools have relatively good attendance, i.e. 91 per cent attendance or greater. In primary schools 81 per cent of looked after children fall into this range, with special schools having a similar figure, i.e. 80 per cent. The difference with attendance at secondary phase is quite dramatic where only 46 per cent of looked after children attend 91 per cent of the time or more.

Table 8:20 Attendance Rates for Looked after Children in Metroland (1998)

Percentage attendance	Primary	Secondary	Special	All LAC
0%	0	4	2	6
1 to 10%	0	1	1	2
11 to 20%	0	1	2	3
21 to 30%	0	2	2	4
31 to 40%	1	1	3	5
41 to 50%	2	7	2	11
51 to 60%	0	4	1	5
61 to 70%	4	7	2	13
71 to 80%	3	8	0	11
81 to 90%	15	16	7	38
91 to 100%	108	43	94	245
Unknown	0	0	2	0
Total	133	94	118	345

The Education Welfare Service in Metroland record the number of young people who have an attendance rate of 71 per cent or less. This is used, in Table 8:21, to compare the performance of looked after children with the Metroland population in general. The analysis reveals that if you are in a mainstream primary school and looked after, then you are nearly 7 times more likely to have poor school attendance (using the 71 per cent or less criteria) than if you are not looked after. Similarly, a looked after child in a secondary school is over 8 times more likely to have poor attendance than a pupil not in the care of the Local Authority. Finally, if you are in a special school and looked after then you are 3 times more likely to suffer from poor attendance.

Table 8:21 A Comparison of Attendance below 71 per cent for Looked After Children and all Metroland Children in 1998

	Rate per 1000 pupils in the general Metroland population	Rate per 1000 looked after children	Increased likelihood of poor attendance of looked after
Primary	8	53	6.60 times
Secondary	34	287	8.44 times
Special	40	127	3.18 times
Overall	19	142	7.47 times

Table 8:22 carries this analysis to the next level of detail by examining attendance patterns by year group. The data are averaged over three years and identify that poor attendance increases substantially in Year 8 (from 6 per cent in Y7 to 16 per cent in Y8), and continues to increase until Year 11 (25 per cent).

Table 8:22 Attendance below 71 per cent for Metroland Looked After Children by School Year (1996/7 to 1998/9)

School Year	1996/7 No.	1997/8 No.	1998/9 No.	3 Year Average %
YR	0	5	0	6%
1	0	0	2	2%
2	1	1	0	3%
3	1	0	1	2%
4	2	2	0	5%
5	0	0	2	2%
6	3	0	1	5%
7	4	1	2	8%
8	5	6	4	16%
9	3	12	7	22%
10	14	8	8	22%
11	9	15	4	25%

The three-year average figures contained in Table 8:22 are then set out against equivalent statistics for the general Metroland population in Table 8:23.

Table 8:23 Attendance below 71 per cent for Metroland Looked after Children Compared to all Metroland Children (1996/7 to 1998/9)

School Year	3 year average percentage for all Metroland children	3 year average percentage for looked after children
YR	1.2	6
1	1.4	2
2	1.2	3
3	0.9	2
4	1.1	5
5	1.1	2
6	1.0	5
7	2.6	8
8	4.0	16
9	6.3	22
10	8.0	22
11	9.7	25

The percentage of looked after children with poor attendance rates is seen to be higher at all ages than Metroland pupils in general. To investigate whether these differences were statistically significant the data in Table 8:23 was subjected to analysis using the Mann-Whitney U Test. This found that the attendance rates for looked after children were significantly different from the attendance rates for all children in Metroland (Mann Whitney 'U' Test, $U = 29$, $p < 0.01$, $n_1 = 12$, & $n_2 = 12$).

The attendance data for looked after children were then investigated to determine whether there were any differences in the patterns of attendance for males and females. This resulted in Table 8:24 which shows little overall difference between the attendance rates of males and females, 19 per cent and 20 per cent respectively, over three years of the study. This mirrors the general population in Metroland, i.e. the percentage of boys with poor attendance is similar to that of girls – although both at a lower level. For example, in school year 1998/99 the gender distribution in Metroland was 51 per cent

boys and 49 per cent girls at primary, and an equal split at secondary (Metroland, 1999). During that year 548 boys had attendance below 71 per cent, as did an almost equal number of girls, i.e. 538. A final point on this analysis is that the data suggest that there might be an earlier onset of poor attendance for boys when compared with girls.

Table 8:24 Attendance below 71 per cent for Metroland Looked After Children in the Secondary Phase (1996/7 to 1998/9)

	1996/7		1997/8		1998/9		1996/7-8/9 Totals	
School Year	Boys <i>n=103</i>	Girls <i>n=79</i>	Boys <i>n=100</i>	Girls <i>n=71</i>	Boys <i>n=97</i>	Girls <i>n=69</i>	Boys <i>n=300</i>	Girls <i>n=219</i>
7	3	1	1	0	2	0	5	1
8	3	0	3	3	4	0	10	3
9	2	1	8	4	2	5	12	10
10	8	6	4	4	7	1	19	11
11	1	8	9	6	0	4	10	18
Total	17	16	25	17	15	10	57	43
Percentage	17%	20%	25%	24%	15%	14%	19%	20%

This information presented in the tables above is invaluable as it enables limited local authority resources to be directed to the looked after children most at risk in a more subtle way, based on their year group and the type of establishment they attended.

Exclusions

Previous research on educational outcomes for looked after children covered in Chapter 3 focussed attention on the increased likelihood that this group of young people would be excluded from school more frequently than the general school population. The data

collected in Metroland support this general finding but allow more detailed examination due to the large size of the sample and the longitudinal nature of the research program.

One of the difficulties when discussing exclusions is one of terminology. For any group of young people not going to school there will be a variety of reasons that might be conveniently labelled or viewed as an 'exclusion'. In their report into exclusions, Ofsted (1996) found that social services staff were often vague about the exclusion status of children in their care. For example, during the research period all eight of the young people in one of Metroland's Children's Homes were said to be excluded from school. When this was investigated, it revealed a plethora of different reasons for non-attendance, however, none of these were to do with being formally excluded.

- 4 young people simply refused to go to school as they claimed to have been bullied.
- 2 were being kept off as teachers had suggested a 'cooling off' period - but without formally excluding them.
- 1 boy had not been expected to go to school because the Residential Social Workers (RSW) had been told that if he did return to school he would be permanently excluded; and, finally,
- a boy had returned from a placement outside Metroland and no-one had asked the LEA for a school place. The RSW had assumed the Social Worker had done this and vice versa.

This indicates that whatever the 'official' exclusion rates reveal for permanent or fixed-term exclusions, a significantly greater number of looked after young people will find themselves out of school.

Permanent Exclusions

As a percentage of the school population there are more exclusions in Metroland than in England as a whole. For example in 1996/7, 0.23 per cent of the school population was permanently excluded from Metroland schools compared with 0.17 per cent in England as a whole. In line with national trends, more boys were excluded in Metroland than girls, and 80 per cent of all permanent were White children (Metroland Education Development Plan, 1998).

Table 8:25 Comparison of Permanent Exclusions for Metroland pupils and England as a Whole (exclusions per 1000 children)
(Source: DfEE SFR/1999)

	Permanent exclusion rate/1000 for all Metroland pupils			Permanent exclusion rate/1000 for pupils in England as a whole		
	95/6	96/7	97/8	95/6	96/7	97/8
Secondary	5.3	5.4	5.6	3.4	3.4	3.3
Primary	0.6	0.3	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.3
Special	1.1	4.8	1.2	5.4	6.4	5.8
Overall	2.3	2.3	2.6	1.7	1.7	1.6

Table 8:25 gives the absolute numbers of permanent exclusions over the four year research period, 1995/96 to 1998/99, for both looked after children and pupils within Metroland in general. These are broken down into the three categories used in reports by Metroland Education Information Team, i.e. secondary, primary, and special (encompassing primary and secondary age special schools).

**Table 8:26 Permanent Exclusions for Looked After Children in Metroland
(1995/6 to 1998/9)**

	No. of all Metroland children who were permanently excluded				No. of Metroland looked after children who were permanently excluded			
	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99
Secondary	91	94	99	111	<i>n=126</i> 2	<i>n=118</i> 5	<i>n=108</i> 3	<i>n=111</i> 7
Primary	16	9	21	6	<i>n=128</i> 0	<i>n=132</i> 1	<i>n=135</i> 1	<i>n=161</i> 0
Special	1	4	1	4	<i>n=117</i> 1	<i>n=102</i> 4	<i>n=102</i> 0	<i>n=104</i> 1
Totals	108	107	121	121	<i>n=371</i> 3	<i>n=352</i> 10	<i>n=345</i> 4	<i>n=376</i> 8

A visual examination of the above table shows how small the absolute number of exclusions was over the four year period, with a range from 3 to 10. It also demonstrates how variable the numbers were from year to year within each of the categories, e.g. from 2 to 7 for secondary exclusions. What it doesn't easily demonstrate, however, is the relationship between the exclusion rates for looked after children and children in the general population. Table 8:27 attempts to rectify this by using a common reference, i.e. exclusion rates per 1000 pupils.

Table 8:27 Comparison of Permanent Exclusions for Looked After Children and all Metroland Pupils (exclusions per 1000 children)

	Permanent exclusion rate/1000 for all Metroland pupils					Permanent exclusion rate/1000 for Metroland looked after children				
	95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9	95 to 99 average	95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9	95 to 99 average <i>n=463</i>
Secondary	5.3	5.4	5.6	6.2	5.6	15.8	42.3	27.8	63.1	36.7
Primary	0.6	0.3	0.8	0.2	0.5	0.0	7.6	7.4	0.0	<i>n=556</i> 3.6
Special	1.1	4.8	1.2	4.7	2.9	8.5	39.2	0.0	9.6	<i>n=425</i> 14.1
Overall	2.3	2.3	2.6	2.6	2.5	8.1	28.4	11.6	21.2	<i>n=1444</i> 17.3

To even out the variations over time in the relatively small looked after population, the year data have been combined to provide an average over four years of the research program. These average rates are used in Tables 8:28 to provide an estimate of the increased likelihood of looked after children being permanently excluded.

**Table 8:28 Comparison of Likelihood of Permanent Exclusions
(1995/96 to 1998/99)**

	Rate per 1000 pupils in the general Metroland population	Rate per 1000 looked after children	Increased likelihood of permanent exclusion if looked after
Secondary	5.6	36.7	6.6 times
Primary	0.5	3.6	7.2 times
Special	2.9	14.1	4.7 times
Overall	2.5	17.3	6.9 times

During the four year study there were 25 permanent exclusions of looked after children in Metroland (see Table 8:26). Of these 24 out of the 25 were male, i.e. 96 per cent. The only girl was a Year10 pupil classified as UK European. Table 8:29 compares the percentages of looked after boys and girls who were permanently excluded with boys and girls in the general population. It is the only table which demonstrates that you were relatively less likely to suffer an educational disadvantage, in this case permanent exclusion, if you are female and looked after. The situation is also reasonably equitable for males, unless you happen to attend a special school.

**Table 8:29 Gender Analysis of Permanent Exclusions in Metroland
(1995/96 to 1998/99)**

		Proportion of boys and girls in the permanently excluded population	Proportion of boys and girls permanently excluded looked after population	Increased likelihood of permanent exclusion if looked after
Secondary	Boys	81.25%	94.12%	1.16 times
	Girls	18.75%	5.88%	0.31 times
Primary	Boys	100%	100%	1.00 times
	Girls	0%	0%	1.00 times
Special	Boys	68.75%	100%	1.45 times
	Girls	31.25%	0%	----

Fixed-Term Exclusions

During the academic year 1998/99, 26 looked after children were excluded from school on at least one occasion, i.e. equivalent to 7 per cent of the looked after population. There were 52 exclusions in total and 191 school days, or one whole school pupil-year, were lost. There are, unfortunately, no reliable data available for Metroland as a whole with

which to compare the experiences of looked after children. It is possible, however, to compare both groups with respect to exclusions of five days or more and this is done in Tables 8:30 to 8:32 below.

Table 8:30 Comparison of Fixed-Term Exclusions over 5 days for Looked After Children and all Metroland pupils (1995/6 to 1998/9)

	All Metroland children				Metroland LAC			
	95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9	95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9
Secondary	108	133	114	109	5	21	11	18
Primary	23	19	24	19	1	7	3	3
Special	6	10	4	14	1	7	2	1
Overall	137	162	142	142	7	35	16	22

As with permanent exclusions, a visual examination of the above table shows how small the absolute number of exclusions are over the four year period. It also demonstrates how variable the numbers are from year to year within each of the categories, e.g. from 1 to 7 for primary and special school exclusions. What it does not easily demonstrate is the relationship between the fixed-term exclusion rates for looked after children, and children in the general population. Table 8:31 attempts to rectify this by using a common reference, i.e. exclusion rates per 1000 pupils.

Table 8:31 Comparison of Fixed-Term Exclusions over 5 days for Looked After Children and all Metroland pupils (exclusions per 1000 children)

	Rate/1000 for all Metroland pupils					Rate/1000 for Metroland looked after children				
	95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9	95 to 99 average	95/6	96/7	97/8	98/9	95 to 99 average
Secondary	6.3	7.7	6.5	6.2	6.68	39.7	178.0	101.9	162.2	120.5
Primary	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.78	7.8	53.0	22.2	34.7	29.4
Special	6.9	11.9	4.7	16.3	9.95	8.5	102.9	19.6	9.6	35.1
Overall	3.0	3.5	3.1	3.1	3.18	18.9	99.4	46.4	58.5	55.4

To even out the variations over time in the relatively small looked after population, the year data have been combined to provide an average over four years of the research program. These average rates are used in Table 8:32 to provide an estimate of the increased likelihood of looked after children being excluded for a fixed-term.

Table 8:32 Comparison of Likelihood of Fixed-Term Exclusions of Five Days or more (1995/96 to 1998/99)

	Rate per 1000 pupils in the general Metroland population	Rate per 1000 of Metroland looked after children	Increased likelihood of fixed-term exclusion if looked after
Secondary	6.68	120.5	18.0 times
Primary	0.78	29.4	37.7 times
Special	9.95	35.1	3.5 times
Overall	3.18	55.4	17.4 times

As with the data on permanent exclusions, the fixed term data for looked after children were analysed by gender and compared with the information available for the general pupil population in Metroland over the four years 1995/6 to 1998/9 - (see Table 8:33).

Of the 55 secondary phase looked after children excluded for fixed terms over five days 11 were girls. This equated to 80 per cent boys and 20 per cent girls which is exactly the same proportions as in the general Metroland population. During the same period, all primary exclusions were of looked after boys (14) which was not too dissimilar to the 95 per cent 5 percent split in the general population. There was, however, a significant difference with respect to children in special schools. For the general special school population the vast majority of fixed term exclusions were of boys (94 per cent), while for children in care there were an equal number of boys and girls excluded from special schools, i.e. 5 of each.

Table 8:33 Gender Analysis of Fixed Term Exclusions (Five days and over) in Metroland (1995/96 to 1998/99)

		Gender breakdown of fixed-term exclusions in the general population	Gender breakdown of looked after children subject to fixed-term exclusions	Increased likelihood of fixed-term exclusions if looked after
Secondary	Boys	80%	80%	No increased likelihood
	Girls	20%	20%	No increased likelihood
Primary	Boys	95%	100%	Very slight increase in likelihood
	Girls	5%	0%	Very slight decrease in likelihood
Special	Boys	94%	50%	Significant decrease in likelihood (0.53 times)
	Girls	6%	50%	Significant increase in likelihood (8.33 times)

Informal Exclusions

There is no hard evidence available about the level of informal exclusions in Metroland for pupils in general or for looked after children in particular (see Chapter Three for general discussion of informal exclusions). A specialist education service, Education Access had, however, recorder the level of such exclusions experienced by children referred to the Service. Over the period from September 1998, when the Service was set up, until January 2000, 70 looked after children were drawn to the attention of the Service for a variety of reasons. Of these 70, who were clearly not necessarily a representative sample, 13 (or 19 per cent) had experienced informal exclusion.

Care History and Educational Outcomes

One of the hypotheses underlying this research program was that being looked after in some way contributed to the educational underachievement of this group of young people, i.e. it was not simply the result of general social disadvantage, or the disadvantage they suffered prior to coming into care. The approach to examining the validity of this hypothesis had two strands. The first was to compare, longitudinally, the progress of children in care with their peers (covered in the section above on academic progress) and the second was to investigate whether care experiences and educational achievement were related.

When collecting information on the educational progress of children in care from local authorities, the Department of Health specified that they only wanted information on

children looked after for more than a year (DoH, 1998c; DoH, 1999d; & DoH, 1999e). The only exception to this was in the case of care leavers when the Department wanted information about all of them. The reasoning behind only collecting information about children who had been looked after for a year or more was that children would be distressed by the circumstances leading to them being received into care and would not be functioning at their potential. The corollary is, that after being in care for a year the local authority would have helped the young person over the initial difficulties and he/she would be enabled to continue to progress educationally (Fanshel and Shinn, 1978). This was a contrary view to the hypothesis behind the research reported here which views long-term care as contributing to a child's difficulties.

The care histories of all 39 young people in Year 6 and Year 11 during 1998/99 were investigated in terms of the total length of time they had spent in care; the number of care episodes they had experienced; the number of different placements they had been in; and the number of different carers who had looked after them (sometimes the child returned to the same foster carer on a number of occasions).

Longevity in Care

For the 39 Year 6 children it was found that, up to the end of Year 6, the time they had spent in care ranged from as little as 0.08 years, i.e. they had just been received into care, to 11.41 years. The average length of time was found to be 4.52 years with a median value of 4.11 years. A similar analysis was carried out with the 30 young people in Year 11 during 1998/99 and it was found that their duration in care had a similar range, i.e. from 0.25 years to 12.2 years, but with a higher mean and median, 5.91 years and 6.33

years respectively. The distribution with reference to duration in care for both populations is set out in Table 8:34.

Table 8:34 Duration in Care (Y6 and Y11 pupils 1998/99)

Duration (yrs.)	0 to 0.9	1 to 1.99	2 to 2.99	3 to 3.99	4 to 4.99	5 to 5.99	6 to 6.99	7 to 7.99	8 to 8.99	9 to 9.99	10 to 10.99	11 to 11.99	11 to 11.99
Frequency Y6 <i>n</i> =39	7	5	4	1	5	3	4	3	2	4	0	1	0
Frequency Y11 <i>n</i> =30	2	0	3	6	2	2	5	2	2	2	1	2	1

Of the 39 looked after children in Year 6, Key Stage Two SATs data were unavailable for two and a further three children were not included as they attended a school for children with severe learning difficulties (SLD). The correlation coefficient⁴ between **longevity in care** and the average points score for this group of 34 Year 6 children was found to be strongly positive ($r = 0.98$ significant well beyond the 0.0005 level). That is, the longer a primary aged young person was in care the more likely it was that they would perform better academically. In contrast, the correlation between longevity in care and GCSE points scores for the 26 young people completing Year 11 in 1999 was not statistically significant ($r = 0.18$). This suggests that the link between longevity in care and academic attainment had a strong mediating factor, i.e. the age of the young person in question.

Care Episodes

The number of different occasions a young person was received into care, care episodes, was also investigated for the Year 6 group of children. The number ranged from 1 to 6

⁴N.B. All correlation coefficients are Spearman's rank correlation co-efficients, i.e. non-parametric.

with a mean of 2.03; a median of 2; and a mode of 1. The Y11 pupils had a smaller number of care episodes in general than Y6 pupils, with the same median and mode but a more restricted range (from 1 to 3) and a lower mean of 1.73 years.

The correlation coefficient between the number of care episodes and the average Key Stage Two SATs points score for this group of 34 Year 6 children was not found to be statistically significant ($r = 0.18$). Similarly, the correlation between care episodes and GCSE points scores for the 26 young people completing Year 11 in 1999 was not statistically significant ($r = 0.02$). That is, the subsequent academic performance was independent of the number of care episodes experienced by these children.

Table 8:35 Number of Care Episodes (Y6 and Y11 pupils 1998/99)

No. of Care Episodes	1	2	3	4	5	6
Frequency Y6 $n=39$	18	10	6	3	1	1
Frequency Y11 $n=30$	14	10	6	0	0	0

Care Placements

Often young people have a number of different placements during one care episode, e.g. they might go into residential accommodation or an emergency foster placement when they were first received into care prior to a longer term placement. Alternatively they might have had to move following a breakdown of the placement owing to behaviour management difficulties. In the Year 6 group there were 4 of the 39 who had very high

numbers of recorded placements, i.e. 60 plus. These, however, were for children living at home who received weekend respite care and were excluded from the analysis. Of the remaining 35 children, the number of placements varied dramatically, i.e. from 1 to 52, with the average number of placements being 13. This number was, however, skewed by the small number of young people who had very high numbers of placements and the median value of 7.5 placements is a more representative measure.

The Y11 cohort of 30, had 8 young people receiving weekend respite care and these have been excluded from the analysis for the reason given above. Of the remaining 22 young people the range of care placements was not as great (see Table 8:36) and the average number of placements was found to be 9.8 with a median of 7.

**Table 8:36 Number
of Care Placements (Y6 and Y11 pupils 1998/99)**

No. of Placements	1 - 9	10 - 19	20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59
Frequency Y6 <i>n</i>=35	21	6	3	2	2	1
Frequency Y11 <i>n</i>=22	12	6	4	0	0	0

Given the high frequency of placements in the 1 to 9 category, a more detailed breakdown has been given below in Table 8:37.

**Table 8:37 Analysis of Care Placements in the range 1 to 9
(Y6 and Y11 pupils 1998/99)**

No. of Placements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Frequency Y6 <i>n</i>=21	4	3	1	3	4	2	1	3	0
Frequency Y11 <i>n</i>=12	2	2	0	0	3	0	5	0	0

The correlation coefficient between the number of **care placements** and the average points score for this group of 34 Year 6 children was found to be significantly positively related beyond the 0.001 level ($r = 0.65$). This is quite an unexpected finding as one would guess that the disruption caused by greater numbers of placements would make it less, rather than more, likely that children would succeed academically. This could suggest that greater sophistication is required in the statistical analysis, i.e. to use a measure or index of performance against expectation, rather than just taking raw SATs results. Alternatively, it could suggest that a more qualitative analysis is required as, for example, frequent changes of carer could have meant frequent returns to parents for short periods. This might prove to be an important feature, giving a greater sense of continuity that, in turn, promoted academic attainment. The correlation between the number of placements and GCSE points scores for the 26 young people completing Year 11 in 1999 was, however, not statistically significant ($r = 0.17$) and, therefore could be seen as a neutral relationship. The tentative message from these results is that striving to achieve Government targets to reduce the number of placement changes might have perverse outcomes, at least for some children.

Carers

The average number of carers by whom each Y6 young person was looked after was 5.1 which was rather high owing to the small number of children who had been looked after by 13, 14 and 15 carers respectively. A more representative value would be the median value of 4 carers, that also coincided with one of the modes in this bi-modal distribution (modes of 1 and 4). Surprisingly, the average number of carers for the older children, Y11, was lower at 4.63 with a mean of 4 and a single mode equal to 1. Table 8:38 shows that of the 30 Year 11 pupils, 9 (30 per cent) had a single stable placement. This compares favourably with only 7 out of 39 Year 6 pupils (18 per cent) having a single stable placement.

Table 8:38 Number of Carers (Y6 and Y11 pupils 1998/99)

No. of Carers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Y6 Frequency <i>n=39</i>	7	5	4	7	4	1	1	1	3	1	2	0	1	1	1
Y11 Frequency <i>n=30</i>	9	3	0	5	2	2	2	3	2	0	0	0	2	0	0

The Spearman correlation coefficient between the **number of carers** and the average points score for this group of 34 Year 6 children was not found to be statistically significant ($r = -0.11$). Similarly, the correlation between number of carers and GCSE points scores for the 26 young people completing Year 11 in 1999 was not statistically significant ($r = -0.22$). That is, the number of carers who looked after these children was independent of their subsequent academic performance.

Table 8:39 Summary of Correlations between Care Experiences and Academic Performance (1998/99)

	Years in Care	No. of Episodes	No. of Placements	No. of Carers
Average SAT Point Scores (n = 34)	0.98***	0.18	0.65**	-0.11
GCSE Points Score (n = 26)	0.18	0.02	0.17	-0.22

Significance levels: *** $p < 0.0005$

** $p < 0.001$

All of the Spearman correlation coefficients presented above have been drawn together in Table 8:39 for easy comparison. As becomes clear from this table, there does not appear to be as simple a relationship between care experiences and academic performance that the Quality Protects targets suggest. For example, Table 8:40 demonstrates that the highest achieving group of Year 11 looked after children had, on average, spent more years in care with a higher number of care episodes, placements and carers. All of these changes, or lack of stability, would have suggested poorer outcomes - not better ones. The other important aspect identified is the extreme variability of care experience that exists within this group of five high achieving pupils, e.g. the number of placements range from 2 to 20. This suggests that a much more subtle analysis is needed to identify factors within the young person and their care, and educational, settings that have enabled them to achieve academic success.

Table 8:40 Care Experiences of the Five Looked after Young People obtaining the Highest Number of GCSE Passes in Year 11 (1998/99)

Passes at A* to G	Years in Care	No. of Episodes	No. of Placements	No. of Carers
9	3.66	3	7	6
8	8.00	1	20	13
8	3.17	2	2	2
7	8.51	2	5	4
7	11.30	2	20	9
Average	6.92	2	10.80	6.80
Average for all Y11 LAC	5.91	1.73	9.80	4.63

Attendance

One non-cognitive measure that was recorded for all the Year 6 and Year 11 used in the analysis above was their attendance rates during 1998/9. These were compared with the features of care used above, i.e. longevity, number of episodes, number of placements and number of carers. Spearman correlations were calculated for each of these relationships and are set out in table 8:41 below. The only relationship that was of statistical significance was between attendance rates and the number of carers. It was found that the high attendance rates were negatively associated with high numbers of carers, i.e. the greater the number of carers you had the higher the likelihood of poor school attendance. This was the case for Year

6 looked after children ($r = -0.48$, significant beyond the 1 per cent level) and for Year 11 children ($r = -0.34$, significant beyond the 5 per cent level).

**Table 8:41 Correlation between Care Experiences and Attendance Rates
(Year 6 and 11 pupils 1998/99 excluding SLD)**

Attendance	Years in Care	No. of Episodes	No. of Placements	No. of Carers
Year 6 <i>n=34</i>	0.04	0.00	0.22	-0.48***
Year 11 <i>n=26</i>	0.11	-0.26	0.23	-0.34**

Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$

** $p < 0.05$

Changes of School

Ward (1995) reported that the data from their surveys suggested that many looked after children were pre-occupied with concerns about relationships with their families and their current situation at a time when their peers were devoting their energy to considering their educational and employment prospects. Evidence from other studies (e.g. Garnett, 1994) suggests that authorities found it difficult to appreciate the detrimental effects to children of moving school halfway through examination courses. She found that the local authority where she was conducting her research, Humberside, closed down residential units just before children were due to sit their GCSE examinations.

In Metroland, of the 26 young people who were looked after for the period between the end of KS3 and the end of KS4, 10 (38 per cent) experienced a least one move within six months of sitting their GCSEs (1 in January; 2 in March; 1 in April; 5 in May; and 1 on

the 2nd. June). This is not a move that the majority of concerned parents would take.

Amazingly, some of these young people still managed to obtain GCSEs.

Summary

This chapter outlined the major study of this research program and covers the collection and analysis of education and care information. The unique contribution of this research is related to its size (i.e. all looked after children in one local authority); the comprehensive nature of the cognitive and non-cognitive educational data gathered (e.g. SATs and attendance); the high data capture rates; the linkage with care histories; and its longitudinal nature (enabling individual children's progress to be monitored over four years).

The results of the analysis are presented in a number of sections to aid clarity with comparisons with local and national data. The first covers the **Academic Attainments** of children in care and provides a comprehensive account of the very low level of attainment of looked after children in SATs and GCSE between 1995/6 and 1998/9. The second section examined the **Academic Progress** made by looked after children over Key Stages of the National Curriculum and this revealed that progress was as expected over Key Stage Three (Year 6 to Year 9), but fell significantly short of expectations over Key Stage Four (Year 10 and Year 11). The section on **Special Educational Needs** draws attention to the very high percentage of children placed on Stages One to Five of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, particularly those at Stage Five, i.e. with

Statements. Analysis of pattern of **Attendance** reveal that the majority of looked after children have good school attendance at primary school but that a minority are likely to miss significant amounts of schooling. The problem becomes more acute with age and from Year 9, almost a quarter of children in care attend for less than 70 per cent of the time. Data on **Exclusions** show that children in care were almost seven times more likely to be permanently excluded than children in the general population, and seventeen times more likely to experience a fixed term exclusion. The last section on **Care History and Educational Outcomes** examines the links between academic outcomes and care experiences. The results identify that the relationships between aspects of care and academic achievement are far more complex than Government's targets for the Quality Protects Programme (DoH, 1998) suggest. The main findings of the research will be discussed again in greater detail in Chapter Nine.

Chapter Nine

Discussion

Introduction

Looked after children have been identified as one of the most disadvantaged groups in society, being disproportionately represented amongst almost all groups identified as being socially excluded. This theme was covered in Chapter Two, with the linkage between social exclusion and poor educational attainment further developed in Chapter Three. The research reported here identifies the extent to which these young people are disadvantaged within the educational system and some approaches that could be employed to overcome these disadvantages. The research program was designed with three different but interlocking aims. The first aim was to investigate the quality of collaborative work between the Social Services Department, the Education Department, and schools in Metroland. The second aim was to collect comprehensive quantitative information about the educational progress and attainments of looked after children on a significantly larger scale, and over a longer period of time, than had been previously reported. The final aim was to use the results of the above research to promote the introduction of changes designed to establish effective alliances between the Social Services and Education Departments, and schools. These alliances would take purposeful action to improve educational outcomes for looked after children.

Collaborative Working

Chapter Six drew attention to the lack of effective action being taken by local authorities and schools to boost the educational achievements of looked after children as reported in, for example, the joint Social Services and Office for Standards in Education report (DoH and Ofsted, 1995). To help understand the nature of corporate parenting in Metroland, and how to improve the quality of collaboration between schools, the Education Service and the Social Services Department, a study was carried out that involved interviewing Headteachers and social workers. The purpose was to inform the Local Authority about the work it needed to engage in to improve outcomes for looked after children, e.g. organisational changes and training programs.

All parties reported that the information on a child's education held by social services was very limited compared to that known by the majority of parents and that there was a lack of guidance, or procedures, concerned with maintaining liaison between schools, parents, carers and social workers. This acted in both directions, e.g. social workers reported that invitations to Parent's Evenings would only be sent to a foster carer and school staff reporting that they were often not informed about changes in care arrangements. It was acknowledged that there was a lack of understanding of the roles of other agencies and their procedures, e.g. the purposes of the various formal meetings held by each service, that resulted in poor joint working. Finally, teachers and social workers recognised the need to have a greater understanding of the legislation that impinged on each other's work, and the translation of that legislation into local policies and procedures. A significant number also drew attention to the benefits of joint training.

Educational Achievement and Progress

To respond to the findings of the study described above and fulfil the second research aim and test three of the four research hypotheses, a computer database was set up to draw together comprehensive quantitative information about the educational progress and attainments of looked after children. The hypotheses were that they underachieve at all stages of their education; that disproportionate numbers are placed at each stage of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, have poor school attendance, are excluded from mainstream school, and are placed in special schools; and finally, that being looked after contributes to this underachievement, i.e. that it is not simply the result of general social disadvantage.

Chapter Three reviewed the research evidence on the educational achievements of looked after children available prior to this study. It started by quoting Sonia Jackson's findings (1987) that there wasn't a single book published concerned with the education of children in public care, and only a handful of research papers. Since that time there have been a number of important research initiatives, such as that conducted by the Social Services Inspectorate and the Office for Standards in Education (DoH and Ofsted, 1995), but these have usually been small scale and at a single point in time. Larger scale research, for example that by Garnett (1994), have tended to focus on specific measures, usually GCSE. In discussing the findings of this research project, reference will be to previous studies where possible with a comparison of findings.

The hypothesis that looked after children underachieve at all stages of their education was strongly supported by the research results. In the SATs it was found that children in care achieved significantly poorer results than all Metroland children at all ages (7, 11,

and 14 years) and in all core subjects (English, mathematics, and science). To replace the word 'significant', in the sentence above, with the word 'dramatic' might be less statistically precise but more appropriate. At best, the percentage of looked after children achieving the benchmark, at any level and in any subject, was less than half that for the general population, i.e. 40 per cent of looked after children achieved the benchmark in Key Stage One English SATs compared to 82 per cent of the general population. At worst, the ratio was almost one-to-five, i.e. 12 per cent of looked after children achieved the benchmark in Key Stage Three English SATs compared to 57 per cent in Metroland generally. The spread of SATs levels achieved by children in care was also found to be significantly different from the general population, at all stages and for all subjects, with the mode for looked after children being approximately one level below the general school population. These are important findings as they show not only the extent of the educational underachievement of looked after children but how early it is evident, i.e. at the age of seven. This also suggests that, if reliable baseline measures were available on entry to school, a similar picture might be found at that time, indicating the lack of an appropriate environment in the pre-school years. This gives a significantly different message to much of the previous research studies that concentrated on GCSE results and, thereby, encourage efforts to be expended at that end of the educational process, e.g. the Government setting targets for GCSE results through the Quality Protects Programme (DoH, 1998c). Prior to this study there was very little information available nationally regarding the attainment of looked after children at SATs, e.g. the SSI/Ofsted report (1995) did not contain any SATs data. The only identified source was the report on the Children Act (DoH, 2000) that gave the results for one year for three local authorities, one of whom was Metroland (see Introduction).

The underachievement recorded above for SATs at 7, 11, and 14 years of age was also evident at the end of statutory schooling. The GCSE results for looked after children were significantly, and consistently, poorer than for all Metroland children. These results supported the earlier work of Garnet in Humberside (1994) who reported 3 per cent of her survey obtained 5 or more passes at grades A* to C (the average in Metroland for the four years was 2.6 per cent, with a range from 0 to 6 per cent). She also reported that 48 per cent obtained at least one pass at Grade G or above (the average in Metroland for the four years was 44 per cent, with a range from 36 to 54 per cent).

Areas Identified for Further Quantitative Research

At the outset of this research program, there was very little reliable quantitative information about any aspect of the education of children in care. This study has made a significant contribution to the state of knowledge in this area. Over subsequent years ongoing data collection will continue to develop our understanding of circumstances within one local authority. For example, the period covered by this report, academic years 1995/6 to 1998/9, resulted in only one set of data for children looked after in Year 6 who continued to be looked after until the end of Year 9. In June 2000, however, the available information will double as those children who were in Year 6 in 1997 will complete Year 9. June 2000 will also yield the first set of data on the progress made by children in the primary phase, i.e. those who were looked after children between Year 2 and Year 6. In addition to this developing picture within one local authority, the Quality Protects Programme required all local authorities to start to collect similar academic data from academic year 1998/99. This information will be forwarded to the Department of Health and will start to allow similar analysis to that presented in this report - but at a national level. These larger cohorts should enable identification of general relationships

that are submerged by individual variation within a small cohort in one local authority. At the time of writing, however, there is some concern about the quality of the returns from local authorities. This concern is based on initial returns to the Department of Health from a number of local authorities that claim a 100 per cent GCSE pass rate for children they look after, i.e. above the level reported for all children in England (Private communication, DoH, 2000).

The monitoring of educational progress, however, has a starting point at the end of Key Stage One (Year 2) when the first statutory assessments take place. In June 2000 there were 163 looked after children in Metroland in Year One or younger, about whom no reliable information was available on their general cognitive development. This was out of a total looked after population of 532 and equated to 31 per cent. Clearly steps will need to be taken locally and nationally to gain a better understanding of the developmental level of these children when they are first received into care, and the subsequent progress they make whilst being looked after. A further difficulty with the current monitoring arrangements is that academic information, such as SATs and GCSE results, is only available at four points in a child's school life, i.e. at the end of each Key Stage. This has two implications, the first is that for an individual child there is a gap of up to four years (Year 2 to Year 6) between standardised progress information. The second is that in any one year, the progress of only a percentage of looked after children is monitored. For example, in Metroland in June 2000 there were only 129 young people out of a total of 538 looked after children, or 24 per cent, completing a Key Stage. Again, steps will need to be taken to collect reliable information on a more regular basis, such as annually.

With respect to annual assessment of attainment there are now SATs available at other years, such as Years 3 and 4, which are currently non-statutory. Their use has been limited to date, however, this might change dramatically as teachers respond to the requirement for evidence to support their applications to pass through the pay 'Threshold' (DfEE, 2000a). The Threshold Standards require that:

Teachers should demonstrate that, as a result of their teaching, their pupils achieve well relative to the pupils' prior attainment, making progress as good or better than similar pupils nationally. This should be shown in marks or grades in any relevant national tests ... (p.15)

This pressure on teachers and schools will not end when teachers pass through the Threshold as there will be an on-going requirement for regular hard data on pupil performance as the teaching profession moves towards Performance Related Pay (DfEE, 2000b).

Special Educational Needs

The available research evidence on the special educational needs of looked after children presented in Chapter Three was very limited but did indicate that disproportionate numbers were deemed to have special educational needs. Typically, this research focussed only on children subject to the protection of a Statement, i.e. Stage 5 of the Code of Practice, with no information on special needs identified below that level. For example, Garnett (1994) reported that 20 per cent of her Year 11 cohort had a Statement but presented no information on other levels of special educational need, or other age groups. The study by Christmas (1998) was the only one that sampled the whole school age range, but reported data only on children undergoing an assessment under the terms

of the 1996 Education Act, i.e. Stage 4 of the Code of Practice, together with children at Stage 5.

In Metroland, the numbers of looked after children considered to have special educational needs, i.e. by virtue of being recorded at one of the Stages of the Code of Practice, was found to be disproportionate to the ratio within the general school population. Over the four years of the research program, children in care were three-and-a-half times more likely to be recorded as having special needs than the general population. That is, 68 per cent of looked after children were recorded on Stages 1 to 5 compared with 19.4 per cent of the general school population. This overall proportion, however, masked two significant findings. The first was that the proportion of looked after children with Statements was almost thirteen times greater than for children in Metroland generally. That is, 33 per cent for looked after children compared with 2.6 per cent of the general school population. This figure of 33 per cent is close to the estimate of 30 per cent given in the Children's Safeguards Review (House of Commons, 1998a), but significantly higher than the 24 per cent reported by Christmas (op cit), the 26 per cent reported in the Children Act Report (op cit), and the 20 per cent reported by SSI/Ofsted (1995). Unfortunately, the studies mentioned above did not report comparative Statementing rates for the general population. It is, therefore, not possible at present to determine whether the discrepancies reflect different practices in relation to meeting special needs generally within different local authorities, or whether they reflect different practice in relation to looked after children in particular.

The second significant finding was that the balance between special needs children with Statements and those at other Stages on the Code of Practice was quite different for

children in the care system than pupils in general in Metroland. That is, the percentage of looked after children at Stages 1 to 4 is double the percentage for children generally. The increased likelihood of having a Statement if looked after is, however, thirteen times greater. For some children there is a clear reason why they have a Statement and are being looked after, e.g. they have a severe learning difficulty (hence a Statement) and are provided with respite care through the Social Services Department. For others, however, the reason might be less clear. One possible way of understanding the data, which also suggests further research and an intervention strategy, is to consider the impact of frequent moves of school on the identification of special needs and the provision of appropriate support. That is, it takes time for schools to identify clearly that a child has a developing special need and it takes a further period before resources are mobilised to remedy, or ameliorate, the difficulty. If the young person moves school frequently, and this process is repeated, it is easy to see how the support arrangements made at early Stages of the Code are never implemented. The problem then becomes relatively more severe and, subsequently, the local education authority becomes involved in drawing up a Statement and making provision in a special school. If this view has any validity, then approaches to reducing the prevalence of special educational needs within the looked after population could first seek to reduce the likelihood of a change of school or, if unavoidable, could ensure that once any special needs had been identified the support arrangements would continue into a new setting.

Unless one excepts that 66 per cent of looked after children would have special needs whatever their home circumstances, i.e. that the problems are totally within-child, then the appropriateness of care will be viewed as having an impact on learning and development. The research presented here draws attention to the discontinuities that

characterize the lives of children in care, e.g. the many changes of placements and carers, but it says little about the quality of care received and this might be the crucial factor in relation to educational performance. That disadvantaged and potentially socially excluded children, by virtue of being (at least temporarily) excluded from the normal 'mainstream' experience of family life, are not offered stability, at the very least, should be a cause of concern in itself. However, that the local authority then fails to take effective action to ameliorate educational underachievement is inexcusable. The result is that a greater number face further exclusion from the mainstream of life by being labelled as having special educational needs and being placed in a special school. The measures within the Quality Protects Programme include the proportion of children identified as having special educational needs and local authorities are expected to set targets in relation to reducing this proportion. One can only hope that local authorities will take this as an opportunity to provide more coherent services for children to improve their attainments and social relationships.

Areas Identified for Further Quantitative Research

The hypothesis, presented above, that children in care do not have arrangements made at earlier Stages of the Code of Practice should be investigated by obtaining detailed educational histories. These would help determine whether discontinuity of schooling was a significant factor in the lives of children who received a Statement of Special Educational Needs. This research could, alternatively, identify other factors, such as the general stress within the lives of children caught up in the care system, that result in exceptional arrangements needing to be made to meet their educational needs. The collection of data from all local authorities on the special needs of looked after children, through the Quality Protects Programme, will add a great deal to that presented by one

local authority - particularly as the Department of Health also require comparative information for the general school population in each authority.

Attendance

The hypothesis that disproportionate numbers of looked after children would have poor school attendance was supported by the results of the research. Attendance rates were found to be age related with only small numbers of looked after children being poor attenders at the primary phase, but with the numbers rising dramatically after Year 7 in secondary school. This rise in non-attendance also occurred in the general population but at a lower level and also a year later. Children in care were found to be seven-and-a-half times more likely to have poor attendance than children in the general population, with poor attendance being defined as less than 71 per cent. That is an overall poor attendance rate of 14.2 per cent, which is far higher than the 8.4 per cent reported by SSI/Ofsted (1995) - although they did not define what constituted poor attendance and did not include children who were not attending owing to a permanent exclusion. The secondary phase had the highest rate with an increased likelihood of eight-and-a-half times over the general population, i.e. 28.7 per cent compared with 3.5 per cent. The rates for looked after children in the primary phase were slightly lower than at the secondary phase, at six-and-a-half times the general population (or 5.3 per cent compared with 0.8 per cent. Special schools were found to have the best comparative attendance rates at just over three times the rate for the non looked after special school population (12.7 per cent compared with 4 per cent). That special schools achieve higher attendance rates for looked after children than their mainstream counterparts is an interesting finding. This might be related to children being transported to school; the reduction in transience (children moving to new foster carers tend to continue at the same special school but

often move if they attend mainstream); or that young people find the schools more agreeable.

Exclusions

Analysis of exclusion rates supported the hypothesis that disproportionate numbers of looked after children are excluded from schools, with these children being almost seven times more likely to be permanently excluded than other children during any school year, i.e. 1.7 per cent of the looked-after population compared with 0.25 per cent of the general population. SSI/Ofsted (1995) reported a slightly higher rate of 1.9 per cent, although their figure was based on young people excluded only at the time of their survey. The situation with respect to fixed-term exclusions was found to be even worse with the increased likelihood of a child in care receiving a fixed-term exclusion in any year being over seventeen times greater than the general population, i.e. 5.5 per cent compared with 0.3 per cent. This was a dramatically higher figure than the 1.7 per cent reported by SSI/Ofsted although the basis of collection was different - see above. The research also indicated very high rates of informal exclusion for children in care although there was no comparative data available for the general population. All the data reported above clearly demonstrate that looked after children experience educational disadvantage by virtue of exclusion from school to an even greater extent than other groups said to be disadvantaged in the same way. For example, Carl Parsons (1999) reported that African Caribbean males were five times as likely to be excluded compared with white pupils.

The Contribution of Being Looked After to Educational Underachievement

Another hypothesis related directly to academic attainment was that being looked-after contributed to the underachievement of children in care. An ideal method to investigate this would have been to assess every young person's attainments as they entered care and then on a number of subsequent occasions. Progress could then be compared to young people of the same age in the general population, who were at the same starting point. The nearest this research program could come to that ideal was to compare the progress of individual looked after children, over the two Key Stage in the secondary phase, with data on the progress of all children in England published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE, 1999). The analysis carried out did not support the hypothesis over Key Stage Three (Years 7, 8 and 9) as looked after children were found to make the same degree of progress as children in the general population who started the Key Stage with the same level of attainment. This finding, however, was not reproduced at Key Stage Four (Years 10 and 11) where the attainments of looked after children fell significantly short of those expected, i.e. the hypothesis was supported.

Areas Identified for Further Quantitative Research

Further research consideration needs to be given to try to resolve the conflicting findings, i.e. do the care experiences of children at Key Stage Three differ from those at Key Stage Four or do those experiences impact in a different way at different ages. For example it might well be that either changes of accommodation were more frequent during Key Stage Four, or that they had a greater impact on young people owing to other life pressures such as preparing for greater independence. The latter point is of great significance as the majority of young people continue to live in the family home into their

early twenties, whereas looked after children tended to leave care and change home at 16 or 17 years of age. The additional volume and scope of research data, becoming available in subsequent years, might start to illuminate the more limited and contradictory findings given above.

Another aspect to explore in greater depth would be the group with whom looked after children's progress should be compared. The analysis given above, for example, compares the progress made by looked after children starting Key Stage Three at Level Four, with children in the general population achieving the same level. This approach does not take into account the underlying cognitive ability of the children involved, i.e. that looked after children might simply be more academically able than others achieving the same Level, owing to a disrupted home and school life. In this context, even equal progress might represent greater underachievement for looked after children.

Further Research using Qualitative Methodology

The quantitative approaches to further research, focussed on above, has significant limitations to gaining an insight into complex social processes and relationships, for example, between care experiences and educational attainment. One of the problems with aggregated quantitative data is that one tends to lose sight of the individual and, in this research, tends to present looked after children as if they were one homogeneous group. Closer inspection of the data, however, revealed that there was considerably variation above and below the mean. The quantitative approach was not able to represent, or hide, the heterogeneity of the sample. Consider the attempts made in Chapter Eight to find an 'objective' variable to account for the differential progress of the children in the

study, e.g. by looking for a negative correlation between the number of GCSEs aquired and the number of carers a young person had in their lives. This positivist, one could say simplistic, approach also applies to policy makers. For example, the Government is keen to encourage Social Services Departments to reduce the number of care moves a child experiences and has set targets for them in this area. This is based on a view, not substantiated by this research on educational progress, that that will lead to better outcomes. Furthermore, detailed research could use qualitative approaches to reveal the individuality of each young person and investigate the reasons for success or failure to develop the work of Jackson (1998).

The difference in attendance rates between mainstream and special schools is worthy of investigation to identify the key factor for young people that encourages them to attend. Some suggestions have been given above and to these can be added more, such as the smaller size of special schools making absence more obvious. However, until we ask young people themselves we will only be generating more hypotheses.

Establishing Effective Alliances to Improve Outcomes for Looked After Children

The study described in Chapter Six resulted in a set of recommendations from practitioners about improving working relationships between all arms of the Local Authority with the aim of improving educational outcomes for children in care (see above). This process did not, however, identify the factor that was found in practice to be the most important for developing services in Metroland. This factor was the availability of comprehensive information about Metroland children made possible through the

research program. At the simplest level, it is clear that it is difficult to make management decisions about allocating resources to children in care if one does not know, who the children are, and where they are, i.e. which school they attend. It is also difficult to make arrangements or allocate services to ameliorate problems if one has not already identified the problem. At a more political level, having educational information about **Metroland** children had a much greater impact on elected members than if similar information had been presented about children from another authority. For example the City Council's decision to allocate funds to establish a dedicated service for looked after children was partially based on information available on the poor GCSE results obtained by children in **their care** during 1996 and 1997. The fact that Louise Garnet's research in Humberside (Garnet, 1994) demonstrated very similar results several years earlier had led to no action.

All local authorities are now required to report on the educational performance of children they look after through the Quality Protects Programme (DoH, 1999). The difficulties encountered in data collection for this research, covered in Chapter Eight, would suggest that each authority would be well advised to establish a co-ordinating group with a senior officer representing each arm of the organization. This group would then be aware of all the reporting requirements on the whole local authority and could ensure that actions were taken to capture the necessary data efficiently, and in a form that would be useful. It is unlikely that many local authorities would be in a position to consider investing in a single database containing all the relevant care and education information but a 'field' common to each database would effectively allow the same management and reporting requirements to be met. One candidate for this would be the 'Unique Identifier' to be given to each child by the Department for Education and

Employment. The program to allocate Unique Identifiers started in Autumn 1999 and will assist in tracking children within and between local authorities, and overcome some of the problems identified above, such as changes of name. Having accurate and high quality information available should give confidence to those in local authorities that they have a sound basis for their judgements and have the capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of policy and practice changes. The collection of accurate data, however, is not enough in itself, it is the use to which it is put that is paramount and the Quality Protects Programme (DoH, 1999) provides a framework to enable this to happen, i.e. the requirement for the local authority to produce Management Action Plans and report on progress annually.

The dissemination of the research results in Metroland, starting in 1996, led to the underachievement of looked after children being more widely recognised and increased the willingness of professionals to examine, or re-examine, their practice. The most successful initiative, in terms of structural change and the number of young people effected, was the recruitment and training of specialist teachers in schools (see Chapter Six and Appendix A). These are known as Co-ordinators for Looked After Children and this approach has been endorsed by the latest Department for Education and Employment and the Department of Health in their recent guidance for children in care (DfEE and DoH, 2000). The appointment of specialist teachers, however, was only the first step towards the significant changes required to remedy the underachievement chronicled above. Training those teachers, supporting them in raising awareness in their schools and helping them develop and encourage their school's to adopt whole school policies were the next steps. The crucial phase, however, will be evaluating over time, the implementation of that policy in the face of individual pupils presenting school with

challenges, especially of a behavioural nature. In this context, the ability of the Co-ordinator to act as child advocate might prove to be very limited as it would put them in direct conflict with their line managers who might, for example, be considering permanently excluding that child.

Finally, experience within Metroland suggests that having a team dedicated to improving the education of looked after children, without competing demands on their time, has moved the local authority forward more rapidly than would otherwise be the case.

Whatever the level of political will, however well developed the policies, you still need people on the ground working with young people to make a real difference.

Summary

This Chapter draws attention to the major findings of the research into the educational progress and attainments children looked after by Metroland City Council. It goes on to suggest further research questions that have been generated by these findings and the way some of these might be answered, i.e. through data collected for the Government's Quality Protects Programme. It also identifies the limitations of this quantitative approach and argues that qualitative methods should now be employed to gain an understanding of the sometimes counter-intuitive results obtained.

The author hopes that the research program presented in this Thesis supports his view that educational outcomes for looked after children can be improved by taking purposeful action. Furthermore, that this action should be in relation to: individual children (e.g. by improving their literacy levels through a Book Ownership scheme); professionals (e.g. by

establishing specialist Co-ordinators in each school); and policy development (e.g. that the needs of looked after children are specifically identified within the local authorities Education Development Plan). The rationale is that working at all the levels identified above will have the maximum impact on the educational achievement of young people who find themselves being looked after by the state. This in turn should improve their life chances and reduce their over-representation in disadvantaged and excluded groups later in life.

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Draft School Policy for Looked-After Children

Background

There has been concern since the mid-Seventies that the education of children in care has been neglected. Conversely, from about the same time, attention was also being drawn to the important part that successful schooling could play in helping children escape from social disadvantage. In 1995 a joint report by the Social Services Inspectorate and Ofsted stated that the care and education systems were failing to promote the educational achievement of children in care and drew attention to:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population.
- A high level of disruption and change in school placements.
- Lack of involvement in extra curricular activities.
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework.
- Underachievement in further and higher education.

It is, therefore, essential that schools promote the achievement of such vulnerable children. All schools should have a policy for Looked-After Children (LAC) that is subject to review and approval by the Governing Body. The Policy should set out not only the ethos of the school in its approach to meeting the needs of looked-after children but also the procedures.

The Children Act (1989) introduced changes in terminology. The term 'in care' now refers solely to children who are subject to Care Orders. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority. Both these groups are said to be 'looked-after' by the local authority. Accommodated children also include those in receipt of respite care - if it exceeds 20 days in one episode or over 120 days in a year.

It is important not to confuse a young person's legal status with their living arrangements.

For example, a child on a Care Order can be living with:

- foster carers;
- in a children's home;
- in a residential school;
- with relatives; or
- even with parents - under the supervision of the Social Services Department.

Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living:

- in foster care;
- in a children's home; or
- in a residential school.

The Policy

(a) The Objective

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of looked-after pupils.

(b) The Name of the Co-ordinator for Looked-After Children:

(c) The Role of the Co-ordinator for Looked-After Children

Within School Systems:

- to ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by children and young people 'looked-after' and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them.
- to inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children who are looked-after, and to promote the involvement of these children in school homework clubs, extra curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils, etc.
- to develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, the Social Services Department (SSD) and the Education Service;
- to hold a supervisory brief for all children being looked-after, eg to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date.
- to monitor the educational progress of all children who are looked-after in order to inform the school's development plan.
- to intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy;
- to ensure the involvement of the Careers Service with children in Years 10 and 11 who are looked-after.

Work with Individual Looked-After Children

- to work with individual children, possibly through a carer, to arrive at a statement about their circumstances that they would be happy to share with staff and/or pupils.
- to enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their Care Plan.
- to ensure that each pupil has a Personal Education Plan.
- to supervise the smooth induction of a new looked-after child into the school.

Liaison

- to liaise with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register.
- to co-ordinate education and SSD review meetings, so that the Personal Educational Plan can inform the child's Care Plan.
- to attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to SSD's care planning meetings.
- to be the named contact for colleagues in Education and SSD.
- to report on the progress of all looked-after children to Education Access.

Training

- To develop knowledge of SSD/Education procedures by attending training events.
- To cascade training to school staff as appropriate.

- (d) The name of a Governor with special responsibility for looked-after children:**
-

- (e) The role of that Governor**

The named governor will report to the Governing Body on an annual basis:

- the number of looked-after pupils in the school;
- a comparison of test scores as a discrete group, compared with those of other pupils;
- the attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared to other pupils;
- the level of fixed term/permanent exclusions; and
- pupil destinations.

The named governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedures ensure that looked-after pupils have equal access to:

- the National Curriculum;
- public examinations;
- careers guidance;
- extra curricular activities; and
- work experience.
- Additional Educational Support

(f) Responsibility for LAC in School

It is important that all teaching staff who are in contact with the child or young person are aware that he/she is being looked-after by the Local Authority. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be that of the Head Teacher and/or the Co-ordinator for Looked-After Children.

It is appropriate for a classroom support assistant to have knowledge that the young person is being looked-after only when directly involved in the teaching of the young person.

In the absence of the usual class teacher, some information regarding the child's circumstances should be shared with the teacher covering the class. The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Headteacher or the Co-ordinator for Looked-After Children.

(g) Admission Arrangements

On admission, records will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer / parent / Social Worker as appropriate – but always involving someone with parental responsibility. This will enable the monitoring form (Appendix A – with guidance in Appendix B) to be completed which should ensure that all information relevant to school is exchanged, and also help inform the Personal Education Plan. An appropriate school induction will take place.

(h) Involving the Young Person

It is important that a young person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them clearly depends on their age and understanding. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the Social Worker, and their carer(s) are working together to promote their education.

It is important to establish the child's view of their changed circumstances and what they want others to know. It is also important to ensure that a Social Worker / teacher / carer prepares the child for situations when they may be asked about home, eg by other pupils in the playground.

(i) Communication with Other Agencies

Schools should ensure that a copy of all reports (e.g. end of year reports) should be forwarded to the young person's Social Worker in addition to the foster carer or Residential Social Worker.

Schools, the Education Service and the Social Services Department should endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings, eg to have an Annual Review of a Statement combined with a Statutory Care Review.

Social Services, the Education Service and schools will need to exchange information between formal reviews if there are significant changes in the young person's circumstances, e.g. if school is considering an exclusion, there is a change of care placement or there are significant attendance issues.

(j) Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each looked-after pupil will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that the Social Worker takes a lead in developing. This will identify specific areas of concern and include achievable targets. Areas for consideration will include:

- Attendance;
- achievement Record (academic or otherwise);
- behaviour;
- homework;
- involvement in Extra Curricular Activities;
- special needs (if any);
- development needs (short and long term development of skills, knowledge or subject areas and experiences); and
- long term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and aspirations).

The PEP will be updated at least every six months, as part of the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by the Social Services Department. The named governor will report annually to the Governing Body on the progress of all looked-after children against the key indicators outlined above.