# University of Stirling

## At School with Looked After Children:
## A Study of the Views of Children in Public Care

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I would not have predicted that at this end of my career I would be submitting a doctoral thesis. My daughter Dr. Jane has done it the other way round. I am hugely proud of her achievement and warmly recollect the methodological conversations we had that she has been kind enough to refer to as influential in her thinking. Mine too.

I thought I knew about educational research when I started conversations with the Stirling staff. Thank you for helping me discover that I knew very little. I think I've since learned a lot. The early discussions with Steve Waterhouse as my first Supervisor were always thought provoking and extremely valuable to me. On Steve's retiral I was delighted that Julie Allan took me on. Her patience and kindness in reading and re-reading so much that I'd written has been without price. I hope I have gone some way to justify her encouragement and the time so freely given.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the education of children in care. Its analytic focus is on ways in which children in public care are and have been constructed by knowledge and policies that are embedded in the discourses that surround them.

A literature review of empirical research conducted in the UK concludes that the dominant research strands and epistemologies used in this area have failed to allow foregrounding and exploration of children's own accounts of their experiences at school as children in care. Other literature concerning policy and historical contexts is considered within subsequent analytic chapters where a Foucauldian approach is adopted.

The empirical work reported is of the content of interviews conducted in schools with 27 children and young people who were in foster care. A Foucauldian perspective allows consideration of the fashion whereby practices of surveillance and "the gaze" construct children by adults. The children's accounts are foregrounded in the data chapters where, firstly, their experiences of adults are explicated in terms of the three mechanisms of surveillance that Foucault identified. Adults' writings about the children, particularly within Records of Needs that had been opened to delineate the special educational needs of some of the children, are described and the fashions whereby these too construct the children, often negatively, are exposed.

A sometimes overpowering sense of public intrusion into the children's private lives permeated their accounts but the final data chapter considers the ways they utilised their own agency sometimes as a struggle to resist the markers of difference experienced. Here again their own stories are given prominence.

The implications of these accounts lead to suggestions about how changes to adults' practices in their dealings with children in care could be introduced in a range of settings including schools, the meetings held about children and educational psychologists' activities where, fundamentally, a need for adults to display more genuine respect to children and young people is required.

# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to examine the historical, policy and other discourses surrounding children in care[1] with particular reference to their educational arrangements. Its empirical focus is on children's accounts of their experience in schools. Interviews revealed troubling accounts of the effect of surveillance, their lack of agency, the strategies the children employed in combating markers of their difference and their concerns over public intrusion in their private lives. These push me to a set of conclusions about the respect we show children.

I have worked as an educational psychologist in the same local authority in South West Scotland for 30 years during which time a central challenge has been to balance responsibilities towards the children with whom I work, their parents, schools and my employer in a way that satisfies felt personal and professional standards. Children in public care, whose experience is the subject of this thesis, have been especially marginalized and their interests often submerged by professionals including educational psychologists who should be expected to pay better attention to them (McParlin 1996); so their situations have often highlighted issues that relate to the practice of educational psychology.

A professional doctoral thesis should relate to professional concerns. Undertaking the doctorate experience should clarify and improve professional practice. For me the journey has been exhilarating. This thesis tells the stories of some children and young people from interpretive and analytic positions that are new to me and so my own story intersects with these others. As a practitioner, the opportunity to hear the children's descriptions of their

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[1] I have not specifically distinguished between "children" and "young people". Here also the terms "looked after" and "in care" are used interchangeably. It is recognised that official terminology for children in foster or residential care is "looked after and accommodated" but the term "in care" is still used widely by the children themselves. In Scotland children are "looked after at home" if subject to a supervision order. Where necessary I use that term where that group is to be identified but generally those looked after at home are rarely referred to.

experiences has resonated with ethical obligations to try to represent their concerns by writing of these and by foregrounding the experience of children in public care. Writing by education professionals has more often been eclipsed by policy concerns that have not arisen directly from an understanding of how the children seem to feel about their lives and the services they value. The thesis also tells a story of how the local Council is trying to improve outcomes for children in its care. It tells a story too of how a professionalism of educational psychology might be described that could contribute to improving opportunities and the lives of those children and young people who are looked after away from their families.

## 1.1 The precarious position of educational psychology

Paraphrasing MacKay's (2002) characterisation, the vulnerabilities of educational psychological practice might be thought of as a service that one party receives whether they want it or not at the request of a second, funded by a third with money from a fourth to help the imposed standards of a fifth at the hand of a sixth (the educational psychologist) whose availability is largely dependent upon the interests and economics of a seventh. The insecurity and naval gazing resulting from such role confusion seems inevitable.

Trenchant attacks on educational psychology undermine its confidence. Challenges come from within and without. We perpetuate confusion through evident variation among models of service delivery, even within a single service, thus begging the question of accessibility to and validity of our knowledge base (Lunt and Majors 2000). From our flirtation with notions of reconstructing educational psychology since the heady days of my training in the 1970's, through the marketising of improved portfolios to be stripped of declining "products" such as psychometric tests (or so we've said unless we can think of no other response), we have prostituted our existence as definers of resource worthiness

and quantifiers of need and as architects of bland statutorily required descriptions in Records and Statements. We have restricted our ambition for children and willingly cooperated in the erection of temples to othering in landscapes of "specialised" units for misfits with whose labelling we have regularly conspired.

Some aspired to erect a systemic model of educational psychology practice that would affect schools and other institutional structures by targeting staff development, changing perceptions and focussing on machineries for the support of learning and behaviour rather than trying to influence children more directly. These so called "systems approaches" eg Burden (1981) were predicated upon twin assumptions that the problems of individuals can only be understood within the context of the systems (eg schools) that impinge upon them and that it is more likely to be the system that will be in need of change rather than the individual. At the same time, the individual focus was seen as labelling and restrictive. Aspirations to become change agents rather than agents of the establishment encouraged removal of the focus of intervention from the individual to the system. But that search for innovation has accompanied oppositional oversimplifications and denigration of other models of practice and theory without adequate consideration of the complexity of bringing about change at either level. Thus, for example, some ill-fated school improvement efforts appear to have failed because of the inability to impinge upon inter and intrapersonal dynamics that affect organisational processes (Reynolds 1994). Conversely Miller (1994) illustrated how the effects of educational psychologists' interventions that focussed upon individual children's behaviour in classrooms might have been far more closely related to pre-existing teacher skills and beliefs, staff and school culture or ethos than the nature of the intervention per se.

In working with schools in ways that had aimed to bring about change at the organisational level I had become increasingly disheartened. Regularly, it seemed to me that the staff

development I was offering on, say, whole school approaches to behaviour management or precision teaching and curricular differentiation for children with learning difficulties, was not reducing teachers' and parents' concerns over their children's difficulties. During the period 1983–1997 the Educational Psychology Service for which I shared management responsibility had allied itself closely to the administrative and bureaucratic functions related to the administration of special education. I have written in Ed.D assignments about the compromises that working in this way, as a "street-level bureaucrat" (Lipsky 1980) led to when acting as both a definer of need and allocator of resources to meet that defined need. Increasingly I had become dissatisfied with the remoteness of my practice from children and their families because the narratives I scribed for my employer, for example in documenting children's special educational need, held little scope for the largely unheard stories of the children themselves.

In relation to children whose difficulties were not only related to their school learning, but also to their domestic circumstances – particularly abused children and children thought to be in need of care or in actual care for other reasons – my workload equally became detached from direct involvement with the children themselves. It more often took the form of a consultancy approach which predicated an agenda on professionals', mainly teachers', concerns about managing behaviour within the school context. Colleagues outwith the Education Service, especially social workers, became less likely to seek my advice on the needs of their clientele possibly because they sensed the close affiliation between the Educational Psychology Service and education management which they identified as autocratic and driven by budgetary imperatives rather than having a client centred focus. For whatever reason though, the consideration of educational arrangements for children entering care, and whilst in care, was a process from which the Educational Psychology Service locally was becoming marginalized: where the tasks became routinised and unskilled, exemplified in our role as arrangers of school transport. Other agencies

outwith the local authority, like clinical psychologists, who had not made our error in eschewing individual work with children, became a more natural source of advice and support for carers and social workers. Working in many schools in an attempted collaborative fashion often seemed to fail because of our mismatch of expectation. It became clearer to me that I was being perceived as somebody who might help relieve classroom stress either by removing troublesome children elsewhere or by sanctioning additional resources.

So for me, there was a crystallisation, around children in care, of concern for what should be a proper educational psychological role at the time also when a research topic was being sought for this professional doctorate. By then too, increasing research studies were highlighting the inadequacies of educational, and other services for children in care which was prompting the need for local study and evaluation of services.

## 1.2 The research story

These practice considerations above partly contextualise my selection of research focus in seeking to understand more of the experiences at school of children in public care. Later, a literature review provides further rationale and the methodology chapter expands on other epistemological issues. But here it is worth declaring the research biases in which I had been trained. These had been entirely rooted in the positivist paradigm from undergraduate experimental and social psychology through subsequent Masters Degrees in research methods and in applied educational psychology and child guidance. My foundation as a scientist-practitioner in the empiricist tradition had entirely lacked consideration of naturalistic research which, as I became exposed to it through taught modules in this degree programme and further reading, seemed so much more capable of explicating and illuminating an understanding of people's lived experience. It was the writings of

sociologists, and a few notable exceptions amongst psychologists such as Burden (eg 1997) and Richardson (1996), that helped move forward my knowledge of grounded theory and other qualitative methods and the ontological and epistemological foundations that underpinned knowledge claims deriving from and consistent with method. The journey traversed a post structuralist and post modernist landscape too where I became especially interested in the writings of Foucault and, though less so, Derrida and Deleuze. These were challenging and exciting new ideas. They have influenced my writing here in a direction I could not have predicted – thinking, as I did then, that I was already well versed in research and analytic methods for the social scientist.

## 1.3 The local authority's story

The Council area is the third largest of 32 Scottish Councils but with a population of only 147,000. Only two towns have more than 10,000 inhabitants, and most of the population lives in 120 towns and villages. Average earnings are 13% lower than the national figure. Unemployment is slightly below the Scottish average although in the area where this study was situated there is higher unemployment and significant rural deprivation. The Council cares for 350 children, almost 150 of whom are looked after away from their homes in foster care (80%), residential units (5%) or agency placements. The proportion leaving care with basic numeracy and literacy skills is below the national figure. (All data from HMIe/Accounts Commission 2005)

By 2000, research evidence of the extent of underachievement, truancy, and behavioural difficulty at school of children and young people in care was growing. The evidence of the fragmented responsibility for the education of these children was also apparent and government attention in England and Wales was becoming focussed on the issue with the publication of updated statutory guidance (DfEE 2000) although the corresponding advice

from the Scottish Executive did not follow until 2001. That year, partly through my own interest but strongly supported by my Director of Education, I organised a conference which aimed to raise awareness amongst councillors, educationists, social workers and health professionals, of these research findings at which Professor Malcolm Hill spoke of potentially useful corporate and local interventions to address various issues. Discussion groups took place and the conference issued an Authority-wide mandate to a new interdisciplinary standing committee to advise the Council on the need for such developments that might improve the educational attainments of children in care as the establishment of interdisciplinary training, the monitoring of the educational progress of looked after children, the promotion of their advocacy and the determination of suitable content for local authority guidelines.

I represented the Educational Psychology Service on that standing group and prepared the Council's guidelines on the education of looked after children which were launched at a second conference organised by myself and colleagues at which Professor Robbie Gilligan spoke of ways to promote the resilience of children in care. Professors Malcolm Hill and Andrew Kendrick participated and I was able to speak to the results of a quantitative analysis of questionnaire surveys of the views of children in care and their carers concerning their education which I undertook on behalf of the Council and as part of the consideration of research questions for this study. In McKay (2002) and other unpublished work, the outcomes of these conferences and survey is reported.

My involvement in this area of work for the Council has continued to be a central interest. I remain a member of a reconfigured standing group that advises the Council now on all aspects of provision for children in care. In 2004, I took responsibility for mounting and delivering region-wide interdisciplinary staff development concerning the education of looked after children. That task required my redrafting of a training package initially

sponsored by the Scottish Executive (Hudson et al 2004) and my own version is available (McKay 2004a). An evaluation of that staff development was conducted by another officer of the Authority (Tulbure 2005).

In my concluding chapter to this dissertation I reflect upon some of this activity and its value in improving the opportunities for looked after children in Dumfries and Galloway. Whilst I look forward to continuing to act as an advocate for looked after children in determining Council policies and procedures and by trying also to disseminate an awareness of some of the difficulties facing these children (eg McKay 2004b), I observe that there is still work to be done in grounding this in the views of the young people themselves.

## 1.4 The research questions

These are contextualised through the next two chapters but stated here at the outset:

How are the identities and experiences of children in care constructed in education and care policy discourses and how have these changed over time?

How do local authority procedures such as special educational needs recording mechanisms construct the identities of the children?

How do children in care account for and describe their experiences and to what extent do these accounts reveal aspects of power relationships?

To what extent do the children resist and contest their construction in school and other spaces where educational matters arise?

# CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Focus of this review

This study is situated in various research contexts and there is complex and intersecting academic literature that relates to the themes explored. For example, there is a wide literature, mainly authored from a social work background, concerning the experience of being brought up in the care of foster and adoptive parents and within other residential settings such as children's homes and residential schools (eg Ward et al 2005). Much of that writing focuses upon outcomes, policy options and practice recommendations. There is an extensive literature concerning children's experience of schooling generally (Rutter et al 1979) and of the value of and rationale for listening to young people's views on schooling (Ruddock et al 1996) and other aspects of their lives. There is a literature that explores themes of surveillance generally in society (Graham and Wood 2003) with respect to young people particularly (Garrett 2004) and of the operation of Foucaldian themes of panoptocism and the operation of the gaze within our public institutions.

This literature review will confine its focus to the research concerning the education of children in public care and in particular explore the fashions in which children in care have been positioned by each of three strands of research. These are: studies that display poor outcomes of the care experience and offer causal interpretations largely on the bases of factors to do with the children themselves, those that consider structural failures and those that consider the views of the children themselves. I argue that these positions are partial or inadequate in constructing the child in care because they fail to take account of or explore the children's own construction of their experiences. This review focuses almost entirely on empirical research carried out in the UK. Gilligan (2000a) has reviewed international evidence about in-care experience including its educational impact.

Remsbery (2003) reviews European perspectives on the education of children in public care. Other literature, particularly policy and historical literature contexts is referenced in other chapters.

## 2.2 Poor educational and other outcomes for children in care: A search for explanatory variables.

Early survey data reported by Pringle (1965) and Ferguson (1966) highlighted concerns over the poor educational attainments of children in care. More extensively, Essen et al (1976) analysed data from the National Child Development Study and reported the poorer reading and mathematics attainments of children who had been in care before age 11 compared to those who had not. Children who had come into care earlier – before age 7, were found to be even further behind in these areas by at least a year on average compared to children who had not entered care. Using data from those cohorts of children, Lambert et al (1977) further reported that the behaviour and school adjustment of children in care, as rated by their teachers, was significantly poorer than children from similar backgrounds who had not experienced care. The authors were reluctant to consider a causal effect of the care experience upon attainment, although they did choose to make that casual connection between the care experience and certain behavioural outcomes. Indeed they warned against accepting the equally plausible implication that there might have been something about the care experience that depressed attainment. Instead the authors foregrounded the disadvantaged backgrounds and conditions that children in care experienced prior to care as holding the explanatory power in understanding their educational underachievements.

Generally this early research thrust aimed to establish the extent of the educational failure experienced by children in care. It utilised an entirely quantitative methodology within the positivist tradition and sustained conclusions such as those made in another widely cited

study by St. Claire and Osborne (1987) to the effect that although significantly poorer educational performance was again displayed by those children who had been in foster or residential care, only "residual deficits" (p70) could be attributable to the care experience compared to the effects which were attributed to social background. The conclusion surprises since, as the authors themselves point out, the average level of achievement of the children in care was significantly lower than controls "even after adjustment for home background" (p70) and the interpretation that there might be factors about public care itself – that worsened an already poor prognosis for those children – remained unexplored. Indeed the design of such studies, and the reports from a major ESRC sponsored study that followed (eg Heath et al 1989, 1994) all within a positivistic paradigm and seemingly eschewing more interpretative and naturalistic methods, seemed incapable of more sensitively capturing aspects of children's experience that might have allowed a more dynamic explication of their pathways toward educational failure.

That influential ESRC study aimed to evaluate the possible causes of low educational attainment amongst children in care. Via longitudinal study the authors examined the progress of 49 children aged 8-14 who were in long-term foster placements described as stable and optimum. Standardised tests of reading, vocabulary and mathematics were administered with questionnaires to carers and teachers. A control group of 58 similarly aged children whose families were receiving help from social services and living in circumstances said to be similar to foster children's birth families, but not in care, was established and measures compared.

The material circumstances in the foster children's placements were more affluent than controls. Foster carers were more likely to work in managerial and skilled occupations and had higher educational qualifications. They helped the children with homework more often, attended school events and were generally found to be more supportive of the

children's education. Despite these more advantageous backgrounds, their foster children attained no better than the children from similar backgrounds who had not been in care. The authors concluded that foster care provided no "escape from disadvantage" (1994 p255). In other reports (eg Aldgate et al 1993) hypotheses concerning the possible effects of low teacher expectations and the effects of legal status of the children that might have impacted upon their sense of permanency and therefore school performance were evaluated and rejected as explanatory variables.

Research in this paradigm appears unable to illuminate these causal questions. For example, children's sense of permanency or security was operationalised simply by the researchers noting the length in time of their placements. The assumption that placement length leads to security is one that would have required further investigation. Again, in relation to another variable, the authors concluded, on the basis of evidence that children for whom teachers reported higher expectations were not displaying a widening attainment gap from other children, that higher expectations were not affecting progress. But in relation to both these variables a causal process nor its direction could be inferred anyway on just the basis of an observed association.

Another example underscores the weakness of the research. The authors (Heath et al 1994) interpret evidence that children whose care orders had been made for reasons of child abuse were making particularly poor educational progress as testimony to the inability even of long term and stable placements to overcome the effects of "poor parenting" from which these children did not recover as easily as others (p256). Not only are assumptions made about parenting skill here, but the variable goes no way to explain the low attainment of children in care generally nor can the data offer insight into a mechanism for its translation into low attainment. The connection between a small sub-

sample of 12 children in care for reasons of suspected abuse and their earliest parenting is not made explicit.

The conclusion of the studies was to position low attaining children and their carers as lacking in "cultural capital". In "inclining" to this theory they write "...it is not so much the material advantages...that are important but the educational skills that the more qualified parents possessed" (p254) although no explanation is offered as to why the possession of cultural capital did not affect some measures of attainment. Summarising, it is simplistically stated: "As might be expected, our measures of parental interest aspirations and cultural capital correlated significantly with social class and parental education and they therefore tell the same story" (p255). What story? Simply, it would appear, it is that "greater-than-average progress needs greater-than-average inputs... something more than normal family life and normal parental interest may be required to compensate for earlier deprivation" (p257). Whilst generalisations are possible in social science, they will tend to be truisms or of limited value because of their generality (Scott and Usher 1996). Furthermore in choosing to import notions of cultural capital, the authors cannot explain how or when or in what circumstances that variable would take effect. Might it be a threshold or a critical period variable: do children need to be exposed to only so much "cultural capital" to make a difference or might it be that it operates critically and influentially only at certain critical developmental periods? We don't know; nor does their "story" tell us because there is no richer information about the children's own construction of their experience to provide understanding about processes or turning points that might signpost educational failure or success.

Other work has positioned children in care as being so damaged by pre-care experience that it would be unrealistic to expect them to reach average levels of attainment. Goddard (2000) notes that the dynamic nature of the care population, with many children spending

only short periods of time in care, is such that reasons for poor outcomes cannot be put down to the in-care experience itself. Rather, he readily foregrounds pre-care experience as "the most important of course" (p80).

Even although it is the case that children who are socially disadvantaged are more likely to enter care (Bebbington and Miles 1989) and the link between disadvantage and poor educational performance is established (eg Mortimore and Whitty 2000), other studies show that poor educational outcomes persist even when socio-economic disadvantage is taken into account (Harker et al 2004b). Simply to foreground pre-care experience may deflect attention from the observation that being in care appears not to improve outcomes. Harker et al (ibid) reviewed the most recently released statistics in England and Wales (Social Exclusion Unit 2003), noting that only 53% of children in care obtained at least one GCSE pass compared to 95% of all school children, and that only 8% obtained at least five passes compared to 50% of all children. A significantly higher proportion of children in care (27% compared to 3%) had Statements of Special Educational Need and were ten times more likely to have experienced permanent school exclusion. Evans (2000) confirmed the disproportionate number of children in care with Statements and noted their greater likelihood of attending special schools, whereas in the authority studied, mainstream placement was the most likely provision for Statemented children generally. Less than 20% of children in care proceeded to further education from school compared to 68% of the general population with only 1% reaching university compared to over 30% of all pupils (Jackson and Sachdev 2001).

In Scotland, Dixon and Stein (2002) reported only 39% of a sample of children in care having one or more Standard Grade passes and only 3% having a Higher pass. The average number of Standard Grade passes was two compared to the national average of seven, and 60% of the children in care had no Standard Grade passes. Less than 50% were

achieving 5-14 curricular targets and over 70% had been excluded at one time. The joint HMI/SWSI report (Scottish Executive 2001a) and associated staff development materials reported that 75% of children in care left school with no formal qualifications and that almost 50% had been excluded from school with children in care accounting for 13% of all exclusions although they represent only 1% of the school population. Confirming other estimates (eg Social Exclusion Unit 1998) that children in care are at least ten times more likely to be excluded from school than those outside the care system, Berridge and Brodie (1985, 1998) in studies that allowed comparisons of features of children's homes over time, found significant increases in rates of exclusion, truancy and non-attendance. In a Scottish survey, Lockhart et al (1996) found 40% of residents of care homes in a single authority absent from school and 20% to be without any educational provision made available to them on the survey day. Blyth and Milner (1998) and Blyth (2001) also reported that children in the care system were much more likely to be without a school place for lengthy periods and at high risk of exclusion. Francis (2000) also in a Scottish context reported upon how school exclusion and other educational and behavioural difficulties contributed significantly to decisions to place children in care.

Goddard (2000) claimed that research into outcomes for care leavers consistently displayed that educational disadvantage leads to disadvantage in other areas of their lives citing Utting (1997) and the association between being in care and other statistics publicised by the Social Exclusion Unit (2003) on homelessness and rough sleeping, becoming a teenage parent, unemployment, criminality and prison. Jackson and Martin (1998) also verified a link between educational failure and quality of life for people who had been in care as children. For a group who had obtained few school qualifications, their post-care lives were more typically characterised by unemployment, early parenthood, welfare dependency, addiction problems and prison custody. In contrast, more academically

successful care recipients were all in employment, living in high quality accommodation, in stable relationships and with no contact with the criminal justice system.

In terms of health outcomes for children in care, Winter (2006) notes numerous studies that display higher prevalence rates of a range of difficulties including anxiety, phobias, depression, conduct disorders and other psychotic symptoms compared with the general population. Concerning the physical health of those children she concludes also on high levels of need on the basis of research reviewed.

All this multitude of correlational studies offers are static snapshots of the outcomes for children in care. Reporting survey data mainly, with some exceptions like Berridge and Brodie's more illustrative accounts of children's homes, they say little of the contexts in which the children find themselves nor anything of their responses to school processes that are mediated or realised through classroom interactions (Nash 1973). Garret (2000) cannot tell us from the studies he reviews of the lived experiences and processes whereby educational disadvantage "leads in turn" (p80) to other pernicious circumstances. Most importantly these studies record nothing of what the children themselves (nor their teachers or carers) say about their educational experiences. Some of the work reviewed in Section 2.4 does attempt to do this but before attending to that, it is useful to look at another way of conceptualising the educational failure of children in care which, rather than looking to the damaging effects of early experience, argues that provision for their education has been deficient and that systemic failure to adequately meet young people's needs holds more useful explanatory power.

## 2.3 Structural failure: six variations on a theme.

Jackson's (1987) suggestions were seminal in contributing to an alternative research discourse. Her conclusions, supported by an NFER report by Fletcher-Campbell and Hall (1990) which had examined the policies and social work practices of local authorities, centred upon the failure of Social Services and Education staff to work co-operatively and on social workers' neglect of educational matters, rather than upon any characteristics of the children themselves. Harker et al (2004b) and Jackson et al (2002) organise useful reviews around six themes of research and government reports since that time which have highlighted the structural features of care and education systems which are thought to lead to impoverished educational opportunities and experiences. Borland et al (1998) Jackson and Sachdev (2001) and Fletcher-Campbell et al (2004) comprehensively review that literature and a summary of these themes need only be presented here. They relate to:

- The failure of corporate parenting at policy and individual levels
- Inappropriate expectations
- Aspects of the care environment
- Placement instability
- Disrupted schooling
- Failure to prioritise education

*Failure of Corporate parenting:* Reports by inspectors in England and Wales (SSI/OFSTED 1995) and Scotland (Scottish Executive 2001) have highlighted the failure of local authorities to develop systems to ensure that all relevant departments work together to share information and to provide the best care for children. In particular the key departments of Education and Social Services have been found not to work collaboratively (Firth and Fletcher 2001) and turf wars and budgetary protectionism

(Borland et al 1998) with lack of co-ordination have seemingly led to fragmented responsibilities where individual children's needs become lost between these two bureaucratic machineries. Differing or incompatible information handling technologies impede more effective information sharing, and even where this is less evident, the accuracy of information held about children's educational progress may be limited (Fletcher-Campbell and Archer 2003). Schools may have only sketchy information concerning their pupils who are in care or who to contact to discuss concerns (Evans 2000) and liaison between schools and social workers can be sporadic (Francis 2000) partly due to turnover of social workers (Jackson et al 2002). Foster carers themselves have appeared unclear about responsibilities for their children's educational progress and practical help is rarely offered with no one having an effective overview of educational progress (Scottish Executive 2001a).

*Inappropriate expectations:* Targets to increase the educational attainment of children in care have been criticised as being too low (Jackson and Sachdev 2001, Glasgow City Council 2003) and Evans (2000) reported that young people themselves find them demotivating. Despite evidence that children have often reported their teachers' low expectations (Borland 2000), Berridge and Brodie (1996) reported that teachers had a good awareness of their care pupils' range of individual differences and needs. More ethnographic study might help elucidate on that theme and clarify that apparent privileging of teachers' over children's accounts. Francis (2000) reported on the unrealistically high expectations for educational progress held by social workers. Jackson and Sachdev (2001) consider these in relation to social workers' misconceptions about educational norms and their failure to prioritise attention to the education of children in care generally. Elsewhere, Jackson et al (2002) have noted the practice of some local authorities to automatically assign all children in public care to a stage on the SEN code of practice irrespective of their actual attainment levels. They note also a focus placed generally upon

attendance and behaviour, rather than learning, which might detract generally from attention to pedagogic matters.

*The care environment:* Berridge and Brodie's (1998) study highlighted deficiencies in the availability of appropriate materials and other supportive ideals such as quiet study areas and books. Residential staff had limited educational qualifications themselves and displayed poor awareness of requirements such as homework. Biehal et al (1992) reported on residential staff's acquiescence in children's non-attendance. Jackson (1987) earlier noted that some foster carers' ability to support children's progress may be limited and access to resources to support education variable.

*Placement instability:* Department of Health statistics show that 15% of children in care experienced more than three placements in a twelve month period. Jackson et al (2002) report that 10% of children in long-term care experience over ten changes. Berridge and Cleaver (1987) displayed how placement changes often reflected needs quite unrelated to the children's which Jackson and Thomas (2001) illustrated in describing the practice of some local authorities unhelpfully moving young people into independent living during their preparation for state examinations. The Social Exclusion Unit (2003) highlighted the association between placement moves and general stability and Francis (2000) identified an association with poorer school progress.

*Disrupted schooling:* Even when educational placements are readily available to children in care, seemingly a quite rare occurrence especially in rural areas (McKay 2002), their greater likelihood of exclusion and truancy (Meltzer et al 2003 and see above) and subsequent diversion to varieties of specialist provision to help manage behaviour inevitably disrupts educational continuity. Blythe and Milner (1994) noted that school exclusion of children in care could reflect their tendency to be more readily blamed for

incidents of misbehaviour arising from disputes over taunts or insults from other children. Without a parent to come to their rescue or advocate more strenuously on their behalf, schooling for children in care was regularly disrupted.

*Failure to prioritise education*: Here it has been suggested that continuity of schooling is not routinely prioritised by agencies partly because social workers tend to regard placement issues as more important than education matters (Fletcher-Campbell and Hall 1990, Francis 2000). Jackson and Sachdev (2001) noted a tendency for teachers to consider their obligations to the majority of their pupils to outweigh the obligation to the small numbers of children in care. Borland et al (1998) agreed that inadequate encouragement from teachers, social workers and carers, whose own education and training was often limited (Jackson et al 2002), was not conducive to educational success. These last authors highlighted also the inattention to the literacy development in homes and schools of many children in care and the impact that had on wider school learning.

These structural deficits have most typically been adduced from questionnaire surveys of local authorities. They have sought information and background details concerning services, training, policy development and other statistical data relating to children in care. Some have included structured interviews with key local authority staff and case studies of some authorities have featured. There is little evidence, however, either from direct or participant observation and few studies have set out from the start to seek the views of young people themselves. Where the views of children have been sought it has been regularly through the use of questionnaires or structured interviews. Sometimes these appear to be added on to studies where the more major focus has been on outcomes and the desire to offer suggestions for structural improvement or to evaluate the effect of new policy initiatives (eg Fletcher-Campbell et al 2004 especially).

## 2.4 The views of the children themselves

### i. Survey studies

Borland et al (1998) concluded some time ago that an understanding of children's views remained limited and Blyth and Milner (1997) too had commented that very few studies sought to ask care recipients directly of their educational experiences. Goddard (2000) and Winter (2006) echo more recently that omission.

Fletcher (1993) analysed 600 questionnaire returns by children in foster and residential care in a survey that covered various themes, including education, around what was good and bad about being in care and what would make life in care better. "Deeply disturbing" (p25) experiences of bullying, stigmatisation, non-attendance and failure are quoted as well as some positive examples of children's feeling increased motivation and performance due to the support experienced in care. For some, school seemed to provide a lifeline of constancy in otherwise uncertain circumstances. However, the children indicated the disruptive effect of placement instability and of the strain simply of coping with separation from family. Fletcher identified the effects of being in care as most clearly visible in relation to schooling. Key findings of a follow up survey (Shaw 1998) were said to include 25% of respondents' agreement that they were treated differently, and negatively so from other pupils because they were in care, although over half felt that the care experience had improved their school performance.

Baldry and Kemmis (1998a, 1998b) cite useful summaries by Hill (1995, 1998) of other general studies to that date which had identified the key needs of those in care as being for safety, security, choice, participation, continuity of relationships, availability of trusted people and privacy. They analysed 71 questionnaires from young people aged 6-16 in

residential and foster care, but very scant attention is given to educational matters other than the "picture of attendance" (1998a, p134) being interpreted positively.

My own postal survey of all children in the care, away from their families, of one Scottish Council (McKay 2002) achieved a high response rate (70%) from 70 children. 19% of the children reported having been excluded from school at some time, but other more positive data was reported, with over 80% stating that they always attended and enjoyed school and almost all (97%) stating that they had friends. Most (71%) reported having good educational support from carers and school and that they did not feel they were treated differently in a negative sense at school because of their care status nor that any less was expected of them (91%). Generally less favourable comments concerning the extent to which educational services supported carers' work was reported in a separate survey included in the same wide ranging report.

The views of a larger sample (170) of children and young people aged 7-18, but mainly of secondary school age living in foster and residential care, was reported by "Who Cares?" Scotland (2004). Most stated their aspiration for educational success and reported having positive relationships with some teachers as being a key motivation. 10% of respondents had become disengaged from school for up to one year and one seven year old had been without a placement for six months. The young people described episodes of bullying, exclusion and stigmatisation that had contributed to their disengagement. They made suggestions for increasing the support available to them in school by improved resourcing and levels of teacher understanding of issues they faced, including the effects of the stress and trauma of being in care.

The results of these surveys may have helped sensitise researchers and others to a range of responses to the issues raised by their designers. But the views sought are inevitably

constrained with their designers' perceptions of what might be important to ask. Inevitably then the children are positioned as passive consumers of their services and richer perspectives that might derive from methodologies that assume their more active constructing of meanings, for example of the relationship between their care and education, are not made available.

ii. Studies combining questionnaires and interviews

Dixon and Stein's (2002) Scottish study of care leavers which combined survey and more in-depth follow-up, whilst confirming outcomes' statistics reviewed above, and highlighting social workers' lack of knowledge of care leavers' qualifications, offered little further insight into the young people's earlier educational experiences.

In Northern Ireland, Save the Children (2002) reported on questionnaires and interviews of 52 children in care from a peer research project which highlighted the distress and uncertainty of losing contact with families that consequently impacted on school performance through young people's stark inability to concentrate in school.

Smith et al (2004) analysed themes from 59 questionnaires of boys who had attended a Scottish residential school. Interviews were carried out with 11 boys. In a rare example of work that focussed upon a particular type of care experience, the authors highlighted the importance of the relationships established with staff. It was these, rather than particular programmes or therapeutic techniques, which the boys considered to have contributed to their placements' success. The boys also foregrounded the significance of everyday events and routines. Farnel and Polat (2003) reported that of the 26 former pupils of a residential school for youngsters with behavioural difficulty whom they interviewed, most expressed a

view that it was the only place where they had felt listened to, encouraged to explore their feelings and generally supported.

Again in Scotland, Save the Children and "Who Cares?" Scotland (2003) reported on the views of children and young people elicited through questionnaire, focus groups and structured interviews with 24 young people mainly in residential care. The issues covered in the report are wide ranging with interesting summaries of key factors thought by the authors to be crucial in understanding some processes that led to non-attendance at school, being able to settle in school or not, and other matters that hindered or promoted school learning. Hence, for examples, the authors draw attention to the young people's descriptions of their competing priorities, their concerns not to be singled out as different, their teachers' insensitivity and stereotyping, their misgivings over breaches of confidentiality and their feelings of lack of control and overwhelment at reviews. The report offers numerous strategies for schools and authorities to consider in response to these concerns. Associated with the report is a video presentation by young people illustrating many of the issues covered.

iii. Studies of children's views based upon interviews

Some accounts of care leavers' responses to structured interviewing about their educational experiences were summarised by Stein (1994). These included the young people's reports of feeling different from others – as subjects of curiosity, teasing or bullying at school. Stein grouped other learning "hurdles" in terms of the labelling and stigmatisation that they reported as well as movements and disruptions in care settings that affected schooling. In another report of similarly structured interviews with 77 care leavers, this time conducted by their peers (Save the Children 1995), almost half spoke of being treated differently at school through bullying, punishment, over-sympathy or being given extra chances. As

Stein too had reported, some young people spoke of their discomfort at the family oriented content and method in classes and others spoke of trying to hide their circumstances. These accounts seem rather static and are generally uncontextualised by richer descriptions of what interviewees themselves might have raised in situations less structured by researchers' interests.

The Lothian study by Francis et al (1996) included reference to seven interviews with children in care (two primary age, five secondary). These perspectives, however, are referred to briefly only (pp68-69) in a 75 page report. The interview content is described dismissively as "somewhat monosyllabic and...revealed little of any significance" (p68). Structured interviews with nine young people of school age attending residential units featured in the study by Berridge et al (1997). Here again though, these perspectives are contained in three short pages of text (pp36-39) of a 90 page report. An important value may lie in its highlighting of the trauma arising from stresses in young people's lives that posed much more of a problem than features of the care process itself. However, only sketchy details are provided to help us understand how the children reacted to the stress.

The Scottish Executive (2001a) reported on the content of 21 interviews with children in care aged 9-16. Inspectors' descriptions of these children exemplified the way in which children's views are backgrounded, if not silenced. Some methodological and epistemological considerations do receive prominence however and thus these 21 children are said to be "not very representative" and therefore caution about "generalising" without "corroboration from another source" (whatever could that be?) is said to be appropriate. The patronising positioning of this group of children as "able to manage a 40 minute interview" being the "more settled" rather whets an interest in what the others might have reported! But, in any event, none of the so-called "rich material" translates into the report

other than where "useful for illustrating (the authors' it seemed to me) points". (All quotations p46).

Henderson (2001) provided a corrective in so far as her 16 semi-structured interviews with teenagers from a range of care backgrounds does focus on the least "settled". All had been excluded from school and the deliberate intention was to hear of "opinions, emotions and feelings of individuals...how they see the world of education" (p7). The study illustrates views about the value of having a "special person" with whom to share concerns; the necessity for school rules but their over-zealous implementation; the value placed on schooling yet the young people's self criticism and regrets concerning the part they played in becoming excluded; the difference between the experience of primary and that of secondary education.

Harker et al (2003, 2004a, 2004b) as part of a major longitudinal project in England and Wales designed to facilitate improvements in the education of children in care, reported on the views of 80 children and young people aged 10-18 living in foster and residential care. Eighteen months later they conducted repeat follow up semi-structured interviews with 56 of these young people to assess their perception of their progress and identify factors that might support or hinder their education. The "candid views" of the children were said to "reveal a mixed picture" (2003, p99). Claiming "grounds for optimism" they summarised what the children wanted as being: the recognition of their individuality rather than stereotyping, the wish that others could be helped to understand what it was like to be in care, to feel that their views were respected and their needs acknowledged, and their need for more information about their own entitlements including rights to adequate educational provisions. Very little evidence by way of direct quotation from the children themselves appears however. In these reports, the authors' judgement is based upon quantitative measures – for example of percentages of children reporting availability of a range of

"supportive factors" (2004a p281) – and the work generally situates children's views within and subordinate to discourses about policy implementation.

Semi-structured interviews have been the research tool of choice in other recent studies of care leavers' perceptions. Based on interviews with 36 young care leavers, Allen (2003) reported upon the hindering of educational achievement occasioned by all the factors already highlighted by other authors but also on the resilience and determination shown by those economically successful care leavers who had referred to their valuing professional, informal and emotional supports in enabling their relative success. Martin and Jackson (2002) reported on the opinions of 38 high achieving people from backgrounds of residential and foster care. Responses to four key questions highlighted the importance of supportive but unobtrusive adult help. Concerns were expressed about negative stereotypes and low expectation among professionals, poor resourcing of necessities for study and reduced opportunities. Most recently Jackson et al (2004) reported on a three year longitudinal study of 129 English ex-care students' university careers. Recommendations mainly focussed upon supports that should be made available to care students; but evidence was also reported of a deprivation of educational opportunity compared to young people not in care. The students' resilience in persisting with their studies despite poverty, ill health and family problems was highlighted.

## 2.5 Reasons to be cheerful - as a supertanker?

Harker et al (2003) remind us of the positive findings from some research: that where children have the benefits of supportive carers, a single significant adult who offers encouragement, stable care and school placements, opportunities to develop interests, then educational attainment can be high (Jackson and Martin 1998, Gilligan 1997, 1998, 1999a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001, Martin and Jackson 2002) and that some children have reported, as

we saw, that their educational progress was improved by being in care (Fletcher 1993, Shaw 1998). Winter (2006) too highlighted other benefits arising from more recent policy development – for example the use of personal education plans for children in care and protocols for inter-agency co-operation. Earlier, Pritchard et al (1998) reported on the positive value of the supportive relationship between educational social workers and disturbing children, many of whom were in care.

Gilligan (eg 2000c) argues that much can be learned from studies of those children who have done well despite their difficult home and life circumstances. He suggests that the concept of resilience and the adoption of a resilience led approach to policy and practice for children in care can direct services to consider the various protective factors that children can be helped, through educational participation and achievement, to develop. He defines resilience as

> the qualities which cushion a vulnerable child from the worst effects of adversity in whatever form it takes and which may help a child or young person to cope, survive and even thrive in the face of great hurt and disadvantage (1997 p12)

Highlighting some key concepts (2000c) he writes of reducing the relative stockpile of problems by building upon existing strengths; of considering the importance of how single experiences may become turning points in pathways of development; of the benefits of relationships or of even one such, or of a valued success, that can combat a wider sense of failure; and of the importance of that sense of self direction and self-efficacy – the purposive sense of where things are leading – as a compass to young people in troubled circumstances. His emphasis upon the promotion of these experiences and qualities through participation in hobbies, or sports or other pursuits, recognises the value of these

experiences both in and out of school. He highlights (1998) the potential value of teachers as potential confidants and the protective value of positive school experiences generally.

A resilience perspective acknowledges children's own qualities in their active encounters with adversity and challenges assumptions that schools make about the need for professionals outside school to sort out some of their students' problems: because school attendance itself should be helpful. A resilience approach could offer an "escape route from an exclusively in need/care identity or from the otherwise consuming effects of loss, separation or abuse" (Gilligan 2000c, p42). The perspective combats that research message that has positioned children as "passive receptacles into which negative experiences are poured" (Gilligan 2000a, p139). It would stress also that the task of professional systems and services for children in care should acknowledge children's and other adults' capacities within their culture and community to promote natural and informally supportive networks where strengths and restorative powers can be harnessed through their agency rather than only professionals' structured interventions (Gilligan 2000b, 2001).

Daniel and Wassell, for the Scottish Executive (2005) and Daniel et al (1999) have evaluated the potential of resilience based approaches and materials for child care practitioners, and at a more general level Newman and Blackburn (2002) reviewed literature on resilience and supported resilience promoting strategies in education and other settings. From specifically educational psychological perspectives, Dent and Cameron (2003) offer some rather general suggestions on how educational psychologists can contribute to identifying and enhancing the resilience of children in care, and Corrigan and Tolland (2005) have developed staff development materials for educational psychologists, teachers and carers to help promote resilience in children in care. They have high hopes of bringing about positive change for the educational development of children in care whilst

observing (p16) that instituting change in education – like turning around a supertanker – is "imperceptible, slow and requiring constant monitoring."

## 2.6 Where does this study fit in?

We have seen that the earliest research paid little attention to the effects of care and education systems on children's educational development nor illustrated pathways or the fuller contexts of children's educational experience to help us understand the processes that lead to educational disadvantage. Research concerning children's own views has been predicated upon their passive and consumer positioning and this has influenced the choice of methods to access their views. Where these have been sought, it has been through structured or semi-structured interviews so that as Winter (2006) observes, these are typically "constrained, defined and measured within a framework of outcomes and indicators imbued with the values of their definers." (p59) Thereby, research has sought to define children's needs for services, has sought evidence of the factors that contribute to the poor outcomes as defined by others – especially policymakers, and evaluated the policies designed to impact on these. There is a dearth of studies that focus on the lived experience of children and young people; that can speak of the processes they experience to illustrate the relation of their being in care to their school experiences. Studies seem not to have attempted to describe the effect of the psychological burden of being in care on educational experience – what Gilligan (2000a p145) citing Vincent (1998) describes as "the ongoingness of withoutness" often inherent in their separation and loss. Such a research agenda would be focussed upon a model of childhood that more readily acknowledges children as active negotiators and participants in directing their lives and constructing their social relationships (James and Prout 1997, James et al 1998).

Other limitations of the research include its tendency to treat children in care as a homogenous group. Whilst some works differentiate between foster and residential care, samples generally do not allow consideration of differences in experiences amongst groups. From within the positivist tradition itself, technical caution concerning interpretation of the survey data where considerable variation in response rates is evident, might be given. Also, most studies have reported on older children's responses and little information is available concerning the experience of younger children or of disabled children. Longitudinal research is very rare and research perspectives have most typically been social workers' and researchers'.

This study foregrounds children's experience in schools as children in care. It uses more case study detail and tries to report their views elicited in an unstructured way so as a more vivid picture of their world, as they experience it, might be depicted and understood. As such it is not unique. During the course of these interviews, Emond's (2002) study of the educational experiences of 16 Irish young people in residential care was published. It, too, offered a motion picture, rather than the static representations I have reviewed mainly in this chapter. Emond used multiple unstructured conversations, over a six month fieldwork studies period, with a commitment to understand young people's perspectives by relying upon what these children said. My own study aspires similarly but uniquely, it mobilises Foucauldian and other post-modernist ideas to explicate the children's experience.

Finally, this study avoids making the structural recommendations that have so often featured in the work of most of the authors reviewed above. These are very well summarised in numerous reports and publications. Rather, through the study I have tried to move beyond these to consider a few proposals at a micro, rather than systemic level, that might address some of the children's concerns and ways also that in my own professional occupation I could accommodate practice to the lessons they teach.

# CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Epistemology and theoretical perspectives: postmodernism and poststructuralist concerns.

My study draws extensively, if selectively, on the work of Foucault and post-structuralist thinking. Postmodernist thinking critiques the modernist claim to accessibility to knowledge that is reliable, universal and generalisable. The modernist period, that since the enlightenment, has been characterised by its notion that social, political and cultural conditions can be improved through the use of reason and scientific methods to develop knowledges that have appeared to be cumulative, progressive and where rules and other structures have dictated the ways that knowledge is legitimated. Postmodernism eschews these totalising theories and grand progressive narratives of science and reason as productive of universal explanations and bases for human action and enquiry. Rather it foregrounds the human, constitutive production of reality as being constructed out of a multiplicity of diverse and fragmented ways of making meaning where it is not possible to access "the real" or "the truth". Instead there is emphasis upon the contextual, acceptance of uncertainty and contingency, variety and difference.

Crotty (1998) writes of the many positions whereby the relationship between postmodernism and poststructuralism has been described. Some authors make no distinction it seems whilst others have variously regarded poststructuralism as a corollary, theorising, a synonym for or a type of postmodernism. Fook (2002) and Peters and Hume (2003) more helpfully discern post-structural thinking as most easily understood in terms of its concern with the centrality of language to human activity and culture. So rather than the structuralist assumptions of Freud or Marx, for example, that stress underlying structures in their explanation of intra-psychic, economic or social phenomena, the

poststructuralism of French theorists like Derrida and Foucault stresses that meaning is not fixed, because it is produced within language and discourse (see below.) Language is open to interpretation, produces meanings that are unstable and multiple and so meanings, interpretations, "realities" must be understood in regard to their political, social and historical contexts where discourses are situated. Peters and Humes (2003) expand further on poststructuralism's anti-realist position which suggests that understandings or knowledges of the social cannot be accurate, essentialist representations, because they are mediated through language. Fook (2002) provides other summaries that stress poststructuralism's suspicion over the human tendency to make meaning by reference to binary opposites where rigid oppositional categorisation disallows wider ranges of diverse meanings. For example, minority and marginal groups are positioned or defined in relation to mainstream others and their experiences or views "othered", ignored or silenced. Derrida (1978) used "différance" to refer to the meanings that lie within or out with such dichotomous categories.

## 3.2 A discourse on discourses: Foucault's archaeology and genealogy

In referring to discourses I am recognising the centrality of language in representing and constituting the social. But the meaning of discourse here goes well beyond linguistics. In Foucault's writing (eg 1972, 1980) discourses are seen as culturally and historically situated systems of power and knowledge (see below) that construct people and objects. They are not just bodies of ideas or ideologies though. They are "the practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (1972 p49) and within discourses could be included attitudes, terms of address or reference, even building design which might reveal a social logic that creates and reflects ways of interpreting people and the social spaces they occupy.

Discourses "world the world" (Lather 1993 p675) and act as "rationalised myths" (Allan 1999 p7). They frame and construct subjects as objects of particular kinds of knowledge and through discourses we understand, explain and decide things. Through discourse our obligations and expectations within systems such as family life, or to professional groups like doctors, social workers, parents and children, are regularised and our responsibilities judged. Discourses produce a "general politics of truth" (Foucault 1980 p131). Those we adopt and enact produce knowledge – as scientific discourses have produced knowledges – but they also produce the means to enable the distinguishing of what is to count as true or false:

> Each society has its regimes of truth...the types of discourse which it accepts...the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault 1980, p131)

Foucault's earlier work, characterised as "archaeological", examines the history of statements that claim the status of truth. Thus he traces the contingencies that occasioned changes in the way illness and madness have been thought about. Foucault accounts for new forms of knowledge arising from changes in discourse. So madness, for example, is something different in each discourse and its history cannot be written simply as the changing methods of dealing with definite phenomena. Discourses impose a representation on phenomena that have no non-discursive reality. So in contrast to those narratives that assume successive discourses to be steps towards the discovery of truth – as "part of one great, transcendental conversation that has led inevitably to where we are today" (Shumway 1992 p21), Foucault looks to what earlier discourses were trying to do

and the contingencies that led to their rupture and reformulation. So in education, for example, we should learn from asking not why a particular phenomenon like inclusion developed, but how inclusion – and not some other – became the dominant discourse (Allan 1996). This is the approach that I try to adopt in the analytic chapters of this thesis which focus upon the discourses that have produced knowledges and policies about children in care.

Foucault's later "genealogical" work focuses on power/knowledge, so written because of the intimate imbrication of the two. This approach informed the analytic framework of the empirical work reported here in later chapters. Allan (1996, 1999) describes that shift in Foucault's work as being from a macro to a micro level of analysis of relationships within institutions. Here (eg Foucault 1977b) the mechanisms of power are seen to construct and subjectify people, where new forms of knowledge are created as the result of techniques of discipline; notably through surveillance, where individuals are made knowable not only through discourse now, but by means of the flows of power that construct them as social subjects. Parallels between the disciplinary mechanisms of the prison and educational practices for example are drawn by Foucault himself. Whilst the development of approaches to the management and control of individuals in both types of institution might be regarded as progressively humanitarian, he argues that the effects of the mechanisms of power subjugate individuals not only through control or restraint but as subjects also – held to ascribed identities.

Using his methodological "box of tools" (Foucault 1977a, cited by Allan 1999), Foucault urges others to analyse the "microphysics of power" (1977b p29) where power, in his own analyses, meets resistances, and flows in not just one direction. That consideration informed the consideration in my last data chapter of the ways in which young people's

accounts could be analysed in terms of the challenges they posed to their own subjectification.

In this study, the tools of archaeology and genealogy have informed the description and examination of discourses about children in care. Understandings of policy and historical contexts have emphasised the effects of contingency, rather than the more traditional modernist accounts where assumptions are made about developments in the care of children as being continuous and progressive. The empirical data reported are analysed through the Foucauldian perspective on the dynamic interplay of power amongst the young people, their teachers and other professionals. The perspective appealed particularly because it not only allowed the privileging of the children's voices, but it offered to speak against the fashion whereby the more typical research construction was of young people as passive recipients of services. At relevant points in subsequent chapters of my narrative I reintroduce and expand upon the Foucauldian themes that the data illustrate because that approach, rather than offering more explicit analytic description here, seemed to assist the flow of my explication. Where appropriate, in other chapters, I also introduce other post structuralists' metaphors.

## 3.3. Research questions and the interview method

Thus far in this chapter I have tried to make transparent the study's epistemological and ontological foundations. In terms of Crotty's (1998) useful scaffolding of the underpinnings to the research process I turn now to other considerations of method whereby my empirical data were obtained.

The aim of this study outwith the empirical work reported was to examine the historical, policy and other current discourses surrounding children in care, with particular reference

to educational arrangements for these children. In respect of those whose special educational needs had been subject to special scrutiny through Local Authority Recording procedures, to which details I had "insider" access, I was able to focus upon these Records of Need and the fashion whereby that documentation constructed the children. In order to hear the discourses that young people in care themselves drew upon in describing their experiences of education as children in care I conducted an interview study. My knowledge claims are not made on the positivist assumptions that have characterised so much of the literature reviewed in the previous chapter where accounts were essentialised – treated as realist accounts of things. Trying to uncover the ways in which children became constructed subjects, and in exploring ways they challenged that, requires a more self-conscious and critical, reflexive, practice by the researcher (Allan1999).

Scheurich (1995) argues that since the emergence of qualitative research in education, research interviewing has been naively accepted as an unproblematic method for gathering information. From this conventional perspective the researcher can ask questions the meaning of which is assumed to be bounded and stable in terms of interviewees' understanding of questions in the same way, uninfluenced by context, delivery and setting. From that perspective too, the text and analysis of interview data is treated in quantitative terms. Even in the more open coding techniques of Strauss and Corbin (1990) or the "grounded theorising" analytics of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and other variants thereafter (eg Charmaz 2000), reductive units of meaning are assembled into discovered aggregates through the categorising process where, maybe hidden, but recoverable meanings are supported through generalisation. That kind of realist writing is what Stronach and MacLure (1997) characterise as the attempt to "subdue" (p35) the raw material of interviews, to bring data into a tidy and coherent regime via the privileged textual authority of the author - to "squeeze essence from the body of data" (p49) but where in Scheurich's (ibid, p241) metaphor "all the juice of the lived experience has been squeezed

out." In both these critiques the modernist researcher is situated in a God-like position, knowing his trade and possessing a communicative clarity allowing the delivery of the hidden, but recoverable meanings which interview texts are longing to reveal.

From the interviews that I conducted I present a certain reading that I acknowledge to be one of many possible. It is granted that my discourse on their content will squeeze or "tame the wild profusion of existing things" (Foucault 1973 p xv); but it is not a reading claiming the only proper and accurate interpretation of reality for those children and I do not resolve a knowledge claim through recourse to modernist notions of validity and correspondence to a revealed and captured world.

There are a very few of the 27 voices that are not heard by quotation in the final three chapters where I present my analyses and interpretations of their stories. This is only because I felt that these few did not add any more to my explication. But I should affirm here also that these views, nor indeed the words of others that I have chosen <u>not</u> to include, from a total of nearly 400 pages of transcribed text, do not detract from nor run counter to the explication I make on their behalf.

## 3.4 <u>The selection of children and conduct of the empirical work</u>

All 27children within a defined geographical area of the Council area in which I work who were living in care away from their family homes at the commencement of the study were invited to take part in this research. Accordingly, some (eleven) of those children were known to me already as an educational psychologist involved with their situations. I return below to some implications of adopting a dual role as researcher and psychologist for our relationship. Two young people who were attending residential schools in England were not included in the study. Although there did exist a children's residential home in the

area, there were no children in residence; thus all children and young people were in foster care at the start of the study although two later moved to residential provisions (Aaron and Lewis). The geographical area was chosen so as my travelling to meet the children might be minimised to within a 30 mile radius of my base. In all cases permission from the children's birth parents and current carers was sought prior to my establishing contact by telephone or letter with the children, all of whom agreed to meet me for an initial conversation during which I explained my interests in talking with them about their educational experiences and how being in care away from home affected, if it did, their feelings about school. Their social workers were all approached individually by telephone or directly as a courtesy to their involvement, so keeping them informed, and to allow discussion of the background to my research and its intended outcome. Prior to this I had met the relevant chief social work officer and received his agreement and cooperation in obtaining details of the children's placements and care status and had met also with local carers' networks to inform of my interest and research aims. The cooperation of social work officialdom seemed to me to be hampered slightly by what I interpreted as some suspicion over my interest in hearing children's views and I put this down to possible inter-departmental rivalries and sensitivities within the local authority at the time. Interestingly though, whilst I had anticipated that colleagues in Social Services would be especially interested to ensure that I had properly considered issues of children's confidentiality and permission, these matters seemed backgrounded to concerns, for example, about protecting carers from any sense of being intruded upon.

Following our initial discussion that typically took place in school, all children agreed to take part in the interviews that subsequently took place mainly over an eight-month period in year one of data collection. During these initial discussions I had explained to every child that I was hoping to write what I described as a book in which I would be explaining what children thought about being in school, about what it was like to be in care, so that

they might be able to help adults understand better the difficulties that children like them might be experiencing. I acknowledge that the relative power positions of researcher and younger informants is problematic here. Children consider their lives largely controlled by adults (eg Mayall 2000) and it would be illusory to believe that power issues between adults and children can be dissolved by efforts on researchers' parts to offer them choice in matters such as whether or not to participate. This would be especially so when the adult who was meeting them in schools would probably be perceived as a "teacherly" person and hence in some authority. Perhaps the consent obtained from those with whom I already had a client-psychologist relationship could be said to have been made where "demand characteristics" were already established and acquiescence made more likely. Aware of these potentialities and "voltage flows of power" (Roy, 2004 p298 and see also Chapter 8 here) I offered choice and tried to create opportunities for the children to decline to take part with phrases such as "I think I know about how difficult it can be to talk about personal things so you really don't have to meet me again to talk if you don't want." I stressed that at any point they could let me know if they no longer wanted to see me and that they did not need to let me know there and then but might wish to talk to their carers or others about my interest in talking again with them. I said that I had already spoken with their carers and, where possible their parents, and that they had agreed with me to have this first meeting. Some, but not all, said that they had talked with their carers about my interests and without exception the children agreed to meet me again. At these initial meetings and throughout subsequent interviews I reminded the children of their right to stop talking, of why I was talking with them and that I would be writing my book about their stories with their names changed. For those children I already knew, and for those whom I later had dealings, as an educational psychologist I asked if things that they were telling me could be included in my book. They agreed without exception.

In respect of four young people, additional interviews over a more extended period were possible since, unlike others, they had not moved from the area or returned home. Three of these four were current cases of the educational psychology service. Two interviews were conducted with carers because they had requested that, so there were a total of 36 interviews held. They were very typically of an hour's duration although in respect of the three youngest children aged under ten our conversations lasted about 20 minutes. Brief details of the children's ages and school placements also appear below, together with information about their care and educational histories

All interviews were conducted in an unstructured way. Having introduced myself as interested in hearing what they had to say, the conversations developed through my self-consciously wording early questions in as open-ended a fashion as I was able and I tried to follow their leads in what seemed important to them. I reminded the children of the book I would be writing about their stories so that adults could understand better and help when help might be needed. I wanted to offer the children as much control over the interviewing process as I could. I self-consciously tried not to have a list of topics that I wanted to "cover". Following a reassurance of confidentiality with a standard proviso concerning disclosure of harm and the steps that I might need to take with them to ensure their safety, a regular opener was, "Maybe we could start with you telling me about how it's feeling to be in school this week, what's been happening……what's been good….. what's been annoying you if anything." I would ask about the people they met and who was important to them in school, who they liked talking to or if they liked talking at all, where adults talked with them and about them; but my over-riding concern was to try to follow their leads and the cues they offered. With some this seemed less necessary because they seemed to open up readily, some to rant theatrically, others to share poignant and sad memories and I refer in Chapter 8 to the value that some placed upon these conversations.

With other more reluctant speakers I might "chunter" – soliloquise on experiences of being in care that I had awareness of from other informants or other researchers until it sometimes seemed that something struck a chord and helped my conversationist say something that I could pick up on and follow.

To my surprise all the children agreed to my tape recording of the conversations, which I assured them could be stopped at any point if they wished. This did happen on one occasion when a boy became upset and asked for a break but he was content for recording to continue. The children seemed content with my explanation that I would be trying hard to concentrate on what they were telling me and that it was important that I didn't rely on my "old" memory. I liked it when a young girl said, "that's because you're bald." Some were interested in replaying the tape and on one occasion a moment for growth seemed to occur when Jack said, "it was like that, it was, but I could make it different now." There were opportunities taken to establish a friendly rapport and occasional banter that I felt relaxed the children. At times I tried to reinforce expressions of their apparent confidence in me as a confidant by entering imaginatively their storying, offering a comment about how others might have felt in similar circumstances and adding an appropriate self disclosure such as, "I remember once feeling a bit like that when..., when that happened to you did you....?" Occasionally I entered imaginatively their strategies of conspiracy or coalition and whilst not overtly displaying approval for attitudes that teachers, for example, might have found disconcerting, a nod, smile or even laugh encouraged a permissive atmosphere.

In playing back tapes I became more aware of skills that I typically use with children in relationship building work and counselling situations. Thus I heard myself sometimes reflecting, paraphrasing and checking out - utilising skills of active listening. Reflecting upon the conversations I revisited the vignettes, trying to re-experience the interviews as

events, and can report that I tried to convey genuineness, empathy and to convey unconditional acceptance with consistency of verbal and non-verbal responses. These may have become personal styles after many years of getting on with children and they may be characterised and taught as counselling or "relationship skills" (eg Nelson-Jones 1986). They may not always be part of a repertoire of a researcher interested in hearing children's perspectives. My research interviews were not counselling interviews; but it is worth acknowledging that some of the data that has informed my explication and representation of these children's views beyond the 27 focussed research interviews, was obtained as their educational psychologist prior to or after. To that extent and to the extent also that in later chapters I draw on "insider" knowledge of case files, particularly Record of Need case files and also draw from attendance at review and other inter-disciplinary meetings, then some data collection should be regarded as participant observation.

In the subsequent interviews that were conducted with some children, and during data collection generally, I was aware of an iterative process (Rubin & Rubin 1995) where particular points of view had suggested new lines of enquiry. I conducted an extensive but simple content analysis of the data set of the first 22 interviews – after 6 months of data collection- in which I developed a schema of 12 "categories of talk" – e.g. "talk about teachers"; "talk about meetings"; "talk about peers ideas of my being in care" These categories were not made analytically explicit nor coded thereafter so as to arrive at a smaller number of integrated themes by a self-conscious attempt to reach "theoretical saturation" whereby a grounded theory could then be made explicit. Rather this was a means of getting to know the data – not to impose order un-self-critically – but to preserve my theoretical commitment to the open indeterminacy of an interview relationship and its transcribed textual ambiguity.

I have acknowledged that the relative power positions of myself as interviewer, or sometimes as the previously known educational psychologist, and the children are problematic. Many interviews were conducted in schools or in carers homes or, more exceptionally, in other familiar surroundings; but these efforts to seek to ensure the familiarity of known surroundings may equally underscore a continuing concern about the nature of consent to participate in these environments where cooperation is generally expected of children – schools especially. "Asymmetry of power" Scheurich (ibid, page 246) seems to characterise the modernist conceptualisation of interviewing where the spotlight and conducting, like a score, is on the "subject". That very term underlines the controlling nature of interviewers' activity in a positivist paradigm. To consider as an antidote some "empowering" strategy, as some do, might miss the point a Foucauldian perspective reminds us of: that the less powerful find means to resist and reflect the flow of power. So interviewees, I was aware, could resist questions, answer different ones from those asked, and would generally participate in an active way – often using the interviewer, subverting my purpose or enlisting my support as one example later displays. So whilst being aware of these asymmetries I also tried to avoid a theoretically and patronising approach of trying to empower-as if power were something to be given through the researcher's beneficence.

Aside from considerations about the elision of researcher and psychologist roles touched on so far, it is important to acknowledge the other more tacit understandings that I held on some of the children. Scott et al (2004) identify tacit knowledge as a distinguishing feature of the Professional Doctorate. This knowledge, acquired through informal workplace learning, is recognised as a valid and valued source, and as one that alters the nature of the knowledge being produced by the thesis. I referred earlier to case files and previous contacts and that these perspectives informed and would become more or less self

consciously part of the corpus of data that I draw upon. In later chapters in explicating the themes that relate to my research questions I have stated the status of interpretations or commentary where these are derived from knowledge I had constructed as an educational psychologist and as observer and actor.

## 3.5 Children and young people's details

I acknowledge that this stark information omits the facts of lives that might speak far more eloquently of the children's situations. I hope to rectify this in subsequent data chapters but it is worth observing that this level of detail is rather typical of what has often been offered by some researchers mentioned in Chapter 2.

| Name | Age at Interview | Years in Care | Number of school changes whilst in care (other than stage transfers) | Number of changes in domicile whilst in care |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mark | 6 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Judy | 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Alysson | 9 | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| Carl | 10 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Donny | 10 | 4 | 8 | 5 |
| Lewis | 11 | <1 | 4 | 4 |
| Bill | 12 | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| Luke | 11 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Gary | 12 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Iona | 12 | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| Kevin | 12 | <1 | 0 | 1 |
| Aaron | 13 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Jack | 13 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Nathan | 13 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Angus | 14 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Darren | 14 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Greg | 14 | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| Barra | 15 | 8 | 2 | 2 |
| Lucy | 15 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Ross | 15 | <1 | 1 | 0 |
| Tracey | 15 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Becky | 16 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| Canna | 16 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Hannah | 16 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| Rory | 16 | 15 | 0 | 0 |
| Thea | 16 | 10 | 1 | 1 |
| Collette | 17 | 8 | 3 | 3 |

# CHAPTER 4 DISCOURSES THAT MAP THE CHILD IN CARE

## 4.1 In public care – a contested constructed category

As a construct or category of the social, the child in public care in Scotland, or anywhere for that matter, might not be or have been regarded as requiring care in different societies or different times – past or future. Quite simply, being subject to measures of care is relative to changing social practices and regimes of governmentality (Parton 1991); so as with childhood in general (James, Jenks and Prout 1998) or child rearing practices (Stainton-Rogers 1989), being in public care is a socially constructed phenomenon or status for children to enter. As a social category, being in care shares with other categories – eg disability (Barton 1988, Fulcher 1989, Allan 1999) a contested relevance instantiated in the competing views within welfare literature and public/media opinion as to just which children should be recipients of public care. The same rhetoric of "benevolent humanitarianism" (Tomlinson 1982 p177) that, on the surface, seems to characterise the motivation driving special educational philosophy and policy (i.e. providing maximised informed adult attention, pedagogic expertise and environment for maximising potential of disabled youngsters) but which submerges the economic necessity and pragmatic/logistical convenience of special education practice, is evident too in respect of children in public care. What appears as benevolent humanitarianism toward victims of unfortunate circumstances might mask the fear or even moral opprobrium that the child in care engenders. Notions of revenge and punishment are regularly mobilised more or less openly against children because, it seems, they are seen as symbols of social havoc or because of feared or actual delinquent behaviour. Sometimes these notions become more hypocritically recast, in discourses mobilised, but only ostensibly, to provide for therapy, care or protection.

That dualism or tension between children being seen as either victims or threats is one of three that Hendrick (1990, 2003) identifies to guide his analytic account of developments in child welfare in Britain. I consider these dimensions of mind/body, victim/threat and normal/abnormal as useful navigators in this cartography and characterisation of the various discourses that position children in care. As contingent with these changing discourses they disturb some of our taking for granted of the fashion whereby discourses and certainties have become dislodged, sometimes more by accident or economic necessity rather than by their following an inexorable path of human progress. This resonates with Foucault's use of historical investigation as a tool for "diagnosing the present" (Kendall and Wickham 1999 p4) whereby the contours of the present are made strange – rather than the past familiar. For Foucault the task of the historian was to "show that things are not as self evident as one believed" (Foucault 1988a p155) rather than to excavate strata of sameness that explain the present as a natural and inevitable progression from the past. Foucault's own projects displayed the fragility and contingency of the present rather than its inevitability and homogeneity.

## 4.2 Dominant discourses about children in care

Writers concerned with disability issues have usefully identified powerful discourses that frame and construct disabled people as objects of knowledge. Fulcher (1989) nominates medical, charity, rights, lay and corporate discourses which Allan (1999) expands to include a market discourse. In respect of children in public care some similar discourses might be adumbrated here. I include also a discussion on the discourse of risk and child protection that has most recently dominated policy direction.

A *medical discourse* in relation to children in public care has drawn on the deficit theorising that individualises and professionalises the doctorly perspectives that prioritise

attention to organic or presumed organic dysfunction. Its language is of doctor and patient; therapy and cure. In this mapping, the boundaries of the body are circumscribed and mind, whilst recognised and certainly afforded central priority in growing concern about the mental health needs of looked after children (eg Mount et al 2004), is conceived as an entity where disorder and dysfunction is adduced, for example, from the "strict impairment criteria" required for reaching diagnostic threshold via the ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders (Meltzer et al 2004). In that Scottish government survey for example, children in care were found to be up to six times more likely to have a "mental disorder" compared to private household children. These disorders are categorised as emotional, conduct, hyper-kinetic or pervasive-developmental. Beyond questionnaire survey and reliance on classificatory regimes such as ICD-10, other methods which serve these normative purposes and make visible the children constituted by this discourse, include self report inventories and rating scales to be used by parents and teachers eg Conners Rating Scales (Conners 1997) and Child Behaviour Inventory (Eyberg 1999).

In addition to the psychiatric scrutiny of these children (see also Richardson and Joughin 2000), paediatric and general practice doctors' and nurses' discourse has produced techniques of surveillance that always, sometimes spectacularly, constitute or produce the objects of their scrutiny. The case of reflex anal dilation as the controversial diagnostic technique practised in Cleveland in 1987 where children were admitted to public care on the basis of its unproblematised implementation was one such (Collins et al 1988). Health visitors and child health nurses too have written of their disciplining practices (Peckover 2002, Wilson 2001). The Medical Group of British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering have written (BAAF 2000) of the general health needs of children in public care and Payne (2000) produced training exercises for doctors and other health professionals to acquire skills to promote the health, well-being and protection of looked after children. Thus the

operation of the medical discourse or "gaze" serves to create and make visible dangerous individuals and groups – i.e. those whose presence might pose a threat to orderly governance (Foucault 1988a). It is interesting to note the sense in which that medical gaze is extended through other generalised networks of surveillance. Thus Heaton (1999) has written of the fashion whereby a new spatialisation of illness incorporates not only sick, but healthy bodies as subjects of attention (hence a focus on preventive medicine). For children in public care, screening, early intervention, maximised accessibility strategies, all of which are inscribed in the medical discourse, are characterised by the diffusing of the exercise of surveillance, extending and proselytising the discourse. Further, missionaries in the personages of school staff and foster carers are recruited as relays of that gaze and are encouraged to monitor, report and cooperate in the scrutiny of the body. The discourse produces such devices that extend these networks as the Looked After Materials (Scottish Office 1999). These are voluminous sets of action and review forms which are completed by numerous agencies involved in making provisions for children in public care in Scotland with equivalents throughout the UK. The children and young people too are encouraged to cooperate in the completion of these forms and thereby cooperate in the surveillance of the precarious normality of their own bodies. The Looked After Materials, although not coercive in a violent or overtly authoritarian way, exercise a moral authority over children. Like the medical surgery's apparatus that allows doctors to see patients and constitute their ailments, they explain individual problems and difference and offer solutions. Thus social work practice shares with medicine a hegemonic authority the coercive character of which, as Turner (1997) observes, "is often disguised and masked by their normative involvement in the troubles and problems of individuals. They are coercive, normative and also voluntary" (p xiv).

The above noted benevolent humanitarianism is evident also in the *charity discourse* that positions children in public care as worthy of care and protection. The Chief Executive of

Barnardo's, the UK's largest children's charity with the motto "giving children back their future", wrote, "children have only one chance of childhood. They deserve to be protected from harm...but...it is never too late to offer a helping hand." (Singleton 2001). Barnardo's, National Children's Home and Quarrier's are major charities working with children in care. Their institutional bases were the former orphanages, cottage homes and sheltered environments. These "total institutions "(Goffman 1968) were the one time product of the charity discourse inscribed in the moralising aspirations of the early philanthropists and reformers. Today the discourse merges with a more professional welfare discourse shared with state social services; but in the public perception or *lay discourse* of children in care, echoes of an altruistic care for unfortunates offers some support to the visible symbols of the charity discourse: by donating to the collection boxes that recreate the image of the idyllic cottage home. Here too there is ambivalence though as media commentators infuriate tabloid readership with stories of foreign holidays being offered young people in the care of their local authorities. The lay discourse seems to vacillate between positioning children in care as worthy or unworthy of largesse.

Notions of inclusion and equality sit uncomfortably with the themes of victimhood and need for rescue or punishment that fashion the discourses so far mentioned. The emergence of themes of rights evidenced in the United Nations Charter; models of entitlement, rather than needs; inclusion rather than exclusion and marginalisation; and self-determination rather than control all delineate a fourth *rights discourse*.

The rights discourse frames an overtly political position now being adopted by some charities and pressure groups concerned for children in care eg The Who Cares? Trust. NSPCC, for example (2000), produced demands signed by fifty charities concluding that although young people under 18 form one quarter of our population, their rights and well being were not being prioritised. They quoted a litany of depressing statistics: that one

third of children in the UK live in poverty, over one quarter of recorded rape victims are children, 4000 children are annually placed on child protection registers and ten times that number are killed and injured in road accidents yearly. Up to three quarters of care leavers leave school without formal qualifications, are fifty times more likely to spend time in prison, even more likely to be homeless and nearly ninety times more likely to be involved in drug misuse. Noting these statistics also, Hendrick (2003) claims that New Labour has shown scant concern for children's rights because of their feared threat to family life, discipline in schools and citizenship through the potential for a rights discourse to promote selfish individualism. He considers that government approach to the socialisation of children as investments for the country's future – for their "becomings" without concern for their "being" (p253) therefore requires their systematic monitoring and control. The investment in futurity is regularly openly and passionately underlined by top politicians and the economic imperative encapsulated in government stress on education and training as a key to global economic competitiveness is especially evident in current educational policy (Tomlinson 2003). Moreover, the link between education and combating "social exclusion" is made explicit – eg in the Prime Minister's words, "the best defence against social exclusion is having a job and the best way to get a job is to have a good education" (quoted in Jeffs and Smith 2002 p3). Government, it seems, desires a passive child citizen – brim full of responsibilities but with few rights, favouring and attaching investment criteria to every welfare agency, strategy and input. This commodification of our children as investments seems applicable to all children not just children in public care.

Before concluding this brief tour of the discourses that frame and construct children in public care, another powerful discourse of *protection of children at risk* of, or subject to actual, abuse should be interrogated. Framed in this protective discourse, children generally are positioned as vulnerable innocents to be shielded from the adult world. Superimposed upon this concern has been increasing anxiety about risk generally which

some writers – eg Scott et al (1998) have in turn related to the celebrated conceptualisations of risk anxiety as a pervasive feature of the social condition brought about by lack of trust in expert knowledges (eg Giddens 1991, Beck 1992). Others eg Daniel and Ivatts (1998 ) refer to the moral panic that followed the headline grabbing child abuse enquiry reports such as those featuring the tragic deaths of Jasmine Beckford, Tyra Henry and Kimberley Carlisle in the 1980's, and the sexual abuse cases in Cleveland at that time too. These analyses usefully help to identify the conditions of possibility that allowed the child protection discourse to emerge. But, as Hendrick (2003) reminds us, the innocence of childhood stressed by the discourse held its obverse presence in the public reaction, for example, to the murder by two ten year old children of the infant James Bulger in 1993; because the destruction of Bulger's innocence marked the perpetrators' innocence – the innocence of childhood generally – equally destroyed. It allowed the more open flaunting of a growing hostility to children – "the ideological whiff of child hate" (Haydon and Scraton 2000 quoted in Hendrick 2003 p240) or, at least, confirmed an ingrained pessimism of adults' views about children.

So this protective discourse and its associated construction of at risk, requiring shielding from that risk, expresses not just the fear for children but the fear of what they might do if not restrained within the confines of acceptable conduct. In these contours of risk, children's sexuality looms large – as a threat to their own innocence or as a signpost to their precocious danger to others – especially adults as is later reported in this thesis.

The discourse's developmental and adult centred positioning of children as adults in waiting is challenged by the sociological writings of James and Prout (1990) and James, Jenks and Prout (1998). Products of the discourse, like guidelines that advise upon the age at which children should be deemed competent to do certain things, attempt to formalise and reduce to calculability the uncertain space between protecting children and allowing

their autonomy (see Scott et al 1998 for more examples). The boundary between childhood and adulthood is patrolled rigorously in order to protect childhood from its loss – or even theft, to the point that risk anxiety might limit children's opportunities and help sustain their dependence upon adults.

Parton (1998) identifies contingencies that allowed, indeed required concerns about risk. He displays how the management of risk operates in terms of prudent self-management and as a technology for the government of others. Thus child welfare practices became concerned to divide the prudent from the imprudent; those who could manage themselves from those who are to be managed. Risk assessment and management, identification and reduction of the potential consequences of harm became the goal of the practice of all welfare workers. Currently, the managerialist response of audit replaces a previous contract between state professionals and the state. Herein altruistic zeal is eclipsed by other forms of subjectivity that replace an earlier semblance at least of trust between professionals and clients. New managerialist procedures for audit and a cloak of accountability masquerading as quality and best value sustain the culture of calculability. Here vectors of <u>defensibility</u> of decision making override the <u>rightness</u> of decision making and a whole panoply of procedures and forms and assessment regimes are manufactured to scientise areas of the human condition that are uncertain and ambiguous. As he puts it:

Rather than seeing a commitment to uncertainty as undermining and lying at the margins of practice, I would suggest it lies at the heart, and that its recognition provides an opportunity for valuing practice, practitioners and the people with whom they work. Notions of ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty are the core of social work and should be built upon and not defined out. A commitment to uncertainty opens up creativity and novel ways of thinking which are

> in danger of being lost in a climate obsessed with concerns about risk, its assessment, monitoring and management. (Parton 1998 p23)

Discourses produce; be it charity boxes, techniques of surveillance, questionnaire surveys, tests and measurements or risk assessment schedules. They constitute and position their subjects. Particularly through policy formulations we see the operationalisation of discourse to which developments I now turn.

## 4.3 Policy discourses prior to 1997 relating to children in care

Ariès (1962) considers that prior to the medieval period no concept of a social space defined as childhood existed. Frost and Stein (1989) consider that feudal society did at least support obligations for the care of illegitimate and orphaned children. Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969) locate the boarding out system of apprenticing Poor Law children – usually the deserted or orphaned – to whoever would take them, as the first seriously enacted social policy for deprived children.

Hendrick (1990), identifies the changing social constructions of British childhood since the late 18th century. Thus what he calls "the romantic child" was a dominant if short-lived construction that was propagated by such optimistic writings as Rousseau's "Emile" (1762), wherein the innocence of children and respect for their natural progression was portrayed. But the conditions of possibility that might have allowed the growth of a discourse based upon a view of children's innocence and vulnerability changed with the growing dominance of counter revolutionary spirit in Britain responding to the rupture of the French Revolution and other insurrectionary threats. Accordingly a desire for order and obedience drowned other discourses and allowed to flourish writing such as Maria Edgeworth's "Practical Education" (1801) when, during what Hendrick terms the age of

"the evangelical child", the error of considering the innocence of children was castigated and, instead, the "great end of education" seen as the quest to correct and rectify children's "corrupt nature and evil dispositions" (Edgeworth quoted in Robertson 1976 p421).

The reclaiming, later in the 19th century of "the factory child" which caught the concern of reformers and philanthropists of the time reflected of course the altruistic concern for children's status as the victims of exploitation. The anti-slavery discourse and revelations of appalling working conditions supported that construction; but the conditions of possibility allowing the emergence of policies to limit children's working hours and allowable forms of employment were supported equally by fear of a reactive politicisation of the working class (Rosman 1984) and the potential threat that children's debasement might pose to public order, moral and sexual propriety and family sanctity. As Hendrick's (2003) thesis suggests, a proper understanding of the so called protective legislation of the 19th century should recognise that the concern for children related to their "presence as threats rather than their suffering as victims" (p7).

By the mid 19th century the establishment of acceptable conditions for child labour were contingencies that implied the existence of a condition of childhood itself. In 1833 the period of childhood had been declared by a royal commission to cease at age 13. The production of a state of being called childhood was served by a growing discourse on vagrancy and delinquency where the tension between victim and threat was articulated by writers such as Mary Carpenter (1853), a pioneer of the reformatory system, who aspired to mould the factory child through a family home experience. Micaiah Hill (1855), comparing street children to "the ownerless dogs of Constantinople" spoke of the delinquent as:

"...a little stunted man...self-reliant, he has so long directed or misdirected his own actions and has so little trust in those about him, that he submits to no control and asks for no protection. He has consequently much to unlearn – he has to be turned again into a child..." (pp1-2 quoted in Hendrick 1990 p43 my underlining)

Hill's sentiments reflected a rupture or turning point because delinquency was here regarded as a distinctive social problem. It became possible to talk of children who could be thought to be in need of care and protection. A state of childhood and a legal space where courts could construe children as having special characteristics whilst not necessarily sharing adult responsibilities was created. The creation of reformatory and industrial schools for children in need of care – whose parents were seen as inept – was made possible by the growing discourse of the universality of the nature of childhood. But Hill's "true position of childhood" required acceptance of dependency to which restored position the vagrant child, in need of proper parenting, would discover only through finding wisdom from adults and God.

The felt need for alternate parenting and training for children in public care – in institutions like the industrial schools established in 1861 – did not yet produce the foster child who was to be domiciled in alternative family homes. Even by the First World War the vast majority of boarded out children were in institutional care although the Scottish experience of boarding in cottage homes had displayed the potential for a cheaper alternative. The Mundela report of 1865 (cited in Heywood 1978 p89) did use the term "fostered" and sanctioned the extension of such arrangements; but once fostered, the severance of any connection with natural family was to be seen as vital. "Rescue" by the voluntary societies such as the Cradle of Rescue was to provide deliverance for dissolute and degenerate parents who the children were proclaimed to be better off without. So as victims of

degeneracy and threats to public order were the children – so too were their parents threats to their restoration.

The evolution of "the school child" – imposed by the 1870 Education Act was also contingent with the presumption of the value of education in preventing the threat of disorder. Without the threat of disorder, there would have been no childhood and without childhood no schools. The reconstruction of the factory child and the delinquent in the forge of increased dependency made possible the transformation of wage earner to pupil. Schooling required a universal childhood, a passive and ignorant childhood whose agency and knowledge of itself was subordinated.

During the 50 years preceding the First World War the imposition of adult will upon children's bodies was evident through not only reformers' zeal but through doctors' and scientists' activities. Bodies rather than minds concerned such campaigns as those for free school meals, medical inspections and the establishment of the NSPCC. Whilst the salience of mind may not have been entirely ignored through an emerging psychology that began to promote notions of the symbiosis of mind and body, "character" was still evidently to be determined by such bodily practices as cold showers and excellence on the playing fields of England.

Compulsory schooling opened a space wherein evidence about children's bodies – the effects of ill health, poverty, poor nutrition – was to become studied and charted. Contingent here was the imperialist concern over depopulation. The establishment of "milk depots" (Parton 1991) was an example of policy made possible by the economic discourse that stressed the wastefulness of trying to educate defective bodies. Economic and imperialist concerns too allowed the promotion of doctors' interests in extending their gaze through routine medical inspection and the development of a school medical service to

preserve the vigour of the working class. Alongside the production of surveys and the construction of knowledge about children's bodies there developed an interest in feeble mindedness and, accordingly, its measurement by IQ testing – coinciding also with concern for racial purity. Research was disseminated and a whole new language and emphasis upon the value of understanding childhood was created when, at the same time, measures like the 1908 Children Act enabled adults to limit children's freedoms by extending jurisdiction over new categories of non offenders such as destitute children or those with criminal parents. Parental responsibilities to police children generally were extended at the same time echoing an economic discourse which stressed the need for investment in children as the citizenry of the future. As the Lord Bishop of Rippon thundered:

> Where parental responsibility is not understood and not acted upon we must for the very sake of the preservation of the state, step in...we are bound at all costs to see that the children grow up in such a fashion that they may become useful, serviceable and profitable citizens of this great empire. (cited in Hendrick 2003 p86 )

Prior to and during the inter-war years the proliferation of psycho-medical constructions of childhood continued apace. It had become possible to talk in a new and scientific way, it seemed, about children's minds. The work of Cyril Burt (eg 1927) and the establishment of the child guidance movement and clinics under the influence of the "new psychology" (eg Crichton Miller 1921) all laid claims to this territory. Indeed the period was characterised by the growing knowledge claims and practices of these new human sciences that Foucault (1980) describes as the "psy-professions."

Rose (1985) explicates this as the development of the "psychological complex" and shows how new knowledge and techniques of government, stipulating norms for behaviour,

instituted new regimes. In this period too was emerging what Foucauldian scholar Donzelot (1980) termed "the social" – the new set of discourses that governed the family and which produced techniques of "moralisation" – the use of material assistance to encourage families to overcome their deficiencies and "normalisation" – the zealous proselytising of norms for living via child guidance and education backed up by legislation where necessary and offering means of entry to the home. Such a complex of governmentality – allowing government at a distance – is referred to as *tutelage* in Donzelot's thesis. In the first half of the 20th century the influence of psychiatry, psychology and psychoanalysis promoted and legitimised interest in the emotional adjustment of children and hence some blurring of the boundary between depraved and deprived. It allowed the "knowing eye of psychosocial scrutiny" (p86) to treat rather than just punish wrongdoing. But although the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act did lead to some improvement in the brutal and penal regimes of the reformatory and industrial schools that were by now providing for children in public care, very little change in the care of institutionalised children was evident until the late 1940's. So again the view of state childcare policy as characterised by progressive humanitarian reform is inadequate. Rather there is a sense of neglect, insensitivity and violence that aimed to readjust, claim or reclaim on behalf of a rigidly structured society its children by way of the inculcation of habits of obedience and discipline. Hendrick (2003) suggests further that it was the experience of evacuation during World War 2 and the observation of children's attendant difficulties that opened the space for children to be seen as both mind and body.

Rose (1985) describes the repertoire of disorders – eg of behaviour, personality and habit that the modernist project mapped and allowed to be seen by their being brought into existence. Thus Armstrong (1983) commented that by the end of the second world war children were constituted by problems from within – the solitary, the delicate, the "neuropathic". This "psychological child" heralded much of the deficit theorising to follow

in more recent times and the delineation of abnormal states of childhood from the normal. Conceptualising the normal in opposition to the abnormal produced activities and social practices to distinguish and make more visible these groups. Thus the feeble minded of the late 19th century were constituted by the development of IQ testing that had arisen from the military's requirement to obtain a justifiable method for selecting out cognitively unfit soldiers and Binet's concern to address the administrative issue of how to separate children into special schools. Also the maladjusted became constituted by the development of Child Guidance (Rose 1985). Rose develops that theme and illustrates the fashion whereby psychology colonised a space where a major concern was the adaptation of the subject to social and pedagogic requirements and the development of techniques for the administration of individuals. Today these corresponding groups are constituted by practices of educational psychologists, social workers and doctors who hold an armoury of sophisticated normative techniques that facilitate and illuminate a gaze of welfarism. But not only has that medical/psychological discourse produced British social welfare policy in the second half of the 20th century. Of huge influence also has been emphasis upon family and it is the construction of "the family child" whose current dominance is evident and that has given stock to the concern for the home environments of children in public care.

The psy-professionalism of Cyril Burt which had propagated techniques for therapy and institutionalised study of childhood in the new child guidance clinics of the inter war years had opened also a conceptual space for family as well as individual treatment. Growing encouragement too for a view of the importance of family was provided by Bowlby's (1956) work on the deleterious effects of maternal deprivation; so a new regime of truth supported the concerns that were to develop around the environments being provided for children in the care of local authorities (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 1973, pp638-55). That concern for their living contexts was a focus of the Curtis Committee on Child Care (1946) and its Scottish counterpart – the Clyde Report (Holman 1996) which also reported upon

the poor conditions and apparent unhappiness of children resident in Children's Homes. Lack of nurturing and affectionate alternative parenting was described. At the same time, public opinion is said (eg Daniel and Ivatts 1998) to have been galvanised toward the making available of more positive experiences for children in public care by the wide awareness of unhappy experiences of children undergoing wartime evacuation, as mentioned earlier, and by extensive reporting of the death of a boy, Denis O'Neil, at the hands of brutal foster parents and the censure of authorities that followed his death. What is important here though is to note how, by this time, it had become possible to consider such issues as the lack of coordination and supervision of services in providing more adequate substitute care. So it was in that context that the 1948 Children Act established local authority children's departments to be staffed by the new trained social workers, extended a duty to receive into public care all people under 17 whose welfare required it, and placed a high priority on the development of fostering services for those whose own families of birth were unable to look after them.

Parton (1991) notes the very evident emphasis upon the family and the context for supportive social work practice in the post war years. Resolution of childhood problems was thought to lie with the family and family modification should be on the basis of normalising techniques of counselling and therapy. An optimistic consensus which underscored post-war reconstruction and the development of the Welfare State emerged. An identity between social work practice and the interests of the state was assumed and an unproblematised expectation that the interests of individual family members did not differ from those of the family as a whole. An emphasis on childcare and preventive measures to combat neglect and delinquency (Daniel and Ivatts 1998) occurred alongside a trend toward family based approaches to social work and childcare practice. Butler and Shaw (1998), noting also the optimism of the time up to the early 1970s, write of the legitimised expansion of childcare professional services and the development of technologies –

including the development of foster care "where the magic of the family might still have scope to work" (p66). These normative opportunities reflected a deficit view that stressed a processual view of childhood as preparation for adulthood rather than that "independent place with its own folklore, rituals, rules and normative constraints" (James, Jenks and Prout 1998, p29).

Foucault's work on governmentality (eg 1991) is useful in considering the development of the practices of state professionals in social services which mushroomed from this time. His analyses of the arts of government in regulating populations resonate with the mobilisation of social work in allowing government at a distance. Following Foucault, Parton (1998) observed that the central question for liberal government had been to devise the legal basis for intervention in the private affairs of family so as to optimise children's development and protect their interests without undermining families to the extent of their becoming clients of state sovereignty. The emergence of social services' practice provided one such technology so that the ideal of sustaining autonomous individuality whilst governing and regulating could be met. The unification of professionalised social work training that was enacted in 1970 can be seen in the context of an extension of the state apparatus of surveillance. This occurred slightly earlier in Scotland where the 1968 Social Work Act brought together social services for people irrespective of age and incorporated a newly professionalised discourse of social work expertism (Tisdall 1996). That Act ushered in the new system of Children's Hearings, unique to Scotland, separate from the judiciary, whereby decisions on the care of children were to be made in an intended supportive and holistic context and the welfare of the child was to be considered paramount. In Scotland too, there was an intended preventative thrust to the duties imposed upon local authorities to diminish the need to receive children into care; but as Asquith (1996) points out, that preventative rhetoric has rarely translated beyond the focussing of attention upon within-

child issues or permutations of deficit theorising, to more genuinely preventative social measures to help families actually support and care for their children.

A modernist chronology and interpretation of the reconstruction, evident by 1989 in the Children Act, of the post war liberal welfarist project would stress those strains that had been exerted upon its earlier rationale. Thus, commentators Daniel and Ivatts (1998) and Hendrick (2003) share observations about the impact of growing pressures evident from the mid 1960's. In economic terms these were slow growth, growing unemployment and inflation and reduction in the private productive sector. In social terms they are said to include growing poverty and awareness of deprivation, growing perceptions of social indiscipline and traditional family values and impatience with social theorists' perspectives. Thatcherism and the New Right argued welfarism to be outmoded. From within social work practice itself came important concerns about the increasing numbers of children entering care and "drifting in care" (Rowe and Lambert 1973 p3).

Seeds of that discontent with welfare practice were nourished via other contingencies operating at the time. Hence the rediscovery that family life could indeed be violent for women and children and the growth of women's movements made it possible to separate the interests of family and consider the interests of individual family members, allowing the embryonic children's rights discourse to emerge. A growing discourse and lobby against state intervention made it possible to speak of state child abuse. In the wake of the enquiry into Maria Colwell's killing in 1973 by her stepfather following shortly upon her return from care, there developed increasing panic about violence being done to children in the UK. Between 1973 and 1981 there were no less than 27 inquiries into the deaths or injuries of children caused by carers. Cases like those previously mentioned of Jasmine Beckford and Kimberley Carlisle led to furious criticisms over lack of intervention. In almost all cases, local authority professionals were already involved at the time of abuse.

Focus upon abuse scandals and declining confidence in welfare professionals through the early 80's was portrayed too during the Cleveden case in 1987 when 121 children had been taken into care following investigations that had used the controversial paediatric technique referred to earlier. Here, the paradoxical lesson seemed to suggest that there had been too much rather than too little state intervention. In Scotland too, shortly after, the Kearney Enquiry into childcare policy in Fife (1992) and the Clyde Enquiry into removal of children from Orkney (1993), outlined procedural and organisational failures in childcare practice that led to recommendations for reforming procedures for the protection of children and social work training. Clyde reflected the growing protection and rights discourses in recommending that reforming principles should include those now enshrined in both European and UN conventions.

Alongside a discourse of protection, the emphasis in childcare generally was shifting from the earlier and broader child welfare services to the establishment of failsafe technologies for monitoring those children who had been perceived as at highest risk. The need for assessment and surveillance generally to serve societal concern to detect and identify those at risk displaced a rhetoric of a universal child welfare system.

The current legislative context governing much welfare practice in Britain is provided, in England and Wales, by the 1989 Children Act, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. Tisdall and Plumtree (2002) provide a useful comparison of the three pieces of legislation. The 1995 Act is based upon the legal principles that:

- The welfare of the child shall be the paramount consideration in making decisions affecting the child.

- Due regard shall be given to children's views, subject to their age and maturity; while any child has this right, children aged 12 or older are presumed to have sufficient age and maturity.
- No order should be made unless it is better than making no order.
- Due regard shall be given to a child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.

Fox Harding (1996) proposes that in these principles can be discerned four competing perspectives on childcare. She locates the minimum intervention principle as the laissez faire perspective evident in the "no order" imperative; the strengthening of a parental rights perspective in regard to rights to their contact with children in care and to parental consultation over alterations to care arrangements; the paternalistic perspective focussing upon the paramount importance of children's welfare and the strengthening of a children's rights perspective through the consultative requirement.

Each country's legislation refers to the concept of children suffering "significant harm" as a new threshold for compulsory state intervention, subject always to the welfare principle though and, under the 1995 Act, the definition of local authority is a corporate one with such services as housing, education and leisure sharing corporate responsibility for looked after children.

Roche (2002), argues that the cause of children's rights can be said to have been advanced by the Children Acts to the extent that their welfare rights – to care and protection, shelter etc. – were indeed endorsed. But with respect to "liberty rights" which far more controversially challenge adultist assumptions, the Acts' thrusts related to children's rights only in relation to their local authorities. He contends that the Acts promote expectations, responsibilities and a re-establishment of the family from its positioning as violent and

irresponsible rather than conferring children's rights. Roche claims that the use of the threshold of "significant harm" or its likelihood, to trigger state intervention, shifts policy focus from normal to abnormal family relations and therefore serves to remove the child from an autonomous rights position to one which positions children's rights in relation to adult freedoms.

In what Parton (1998) refers to as "advanced liberal" as our current times, the strategies of government are no less regulatory both of clients of state services and of the service providers themselves. Market rationalities have been superimposed on public domains and the activities of welfare professionals are governed too by machineries of audit, budgetary responsibility, codes of practice and so on. Rose (1996) discusses the shift as allowing continued government at a distance by way of the regulation of the bureau professional and through imbuing individuals with choice and responsibility for their own welfare and their relationship with experts and institutions. It is in that sense that the ostensibly generous sentiments of negotiation, family, partnership, agreement set a new balance for the relationship between the individual and the state.

# CHAPTER 5 CHILDREN'S ISSUES: CURRENT POLICY CONTEXT IN SCOTLAND AND UK

This chapter considers current policy discourses and how children are positioned within them. It focuses on the post 1997 years which have been dominated by New Labour in the UK and Scottish Labour with the Scottish Liberal Democrats who have formed the administration in Scotland since 1999.

In terms of Labour's educational policy since 1997, Paterson (2003) warns against failure to acknowledge the ideological diversity in government as evidenced by discontinuities amongst policies made in Whitehall, the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales. The analysis offered here will comment upon some differences. However, although education, health and social work are indeed matters devolved to the Scottish Parliament, and although since its establishment in 1999 there has been said to have been unprecedented levels of activity and allowance of time for debate and legislation concerning children's issues (Cohen 2003) and a more sophisticated form of policy making (Allan 2003), Westminster does retain control over financial and economic matters. These obviously impact upon child welfare provision throughout the UK and the scope of Paterson's comments are not necessarily applicable to other, wider policy areas that affect children's issues.

## 5.1 The raised profile for children's issues

The raised profile adopted towards children's issues in the new Scottish Parliament was evidenced even in its planning stages when the consultative steering group (1999) quoted in Cohen (2003) acknowledged the aspiration to encourage young people "to make their voice heard" (but note the stress upon the potential arduousness of their task) and the

introduction of a child strategy which required all departments to take full account of young people's interests in developing policy (although Hughes et al 2001, quoted by Cohen, gives examples of the strategy not being implemented). It does seem to be a feature of the Scottish Executive's consultative exercises (eg 2004b) for young people to be included.

The establishment of the position of an independent Children's Commissioner in 2004 with the general function of promoting and safeguarding the rights of children and young people also reflects a participatory agenda. The Commissioner is remitted to promote awareness of children's rights, having regard also to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), to promote best practice by service providers in relation to children, to take account of children's views and to keep under review policy and practice concerning children's rights. It is notable that "rights" are not defined other than in relation to pre-existing common law rights or those already enshrined in existing legislation. UNCROC provides a broad international framework to children's rights. Its key principles include acknowledgment of the importance of children's views, the need to prioritise children's best interests, and the avoidance of discriminatory policies. It was ratified by the UK government in December 1991 and places obligations on it. However the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2003 makes it clear that the Commissioner will not have regard to articles on which the UK government has entered reservations and that she must interpret the Convention in accordance with the declared interpretation of the UK Government.

Other legislative imperatives that reflect a rights and participatory discourse include the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 which affirmed children's statutory right to education, established a qualified presumption in favour of mainstream education for all children in Scotland, conferred children's rights of appeal against school exclusion and

required education authorities to give "due regard" to children's views on matters that affect them significantly.

## 5.2 Desperately seeking fusion: The joined up agenda

Alongside the participatory policy agenda, an integrative agenda was quickly established by the Scottish Executive. In a newly created Scottish Executive Education Department, three prior divisions of responsibility for education, childcare and child and family welfare were brought together and hailed as mirroring the vision for better integrated children's services within local authorities. That vision (Scottish Executive 2001c) opened with a commitment to children as "our future" and a Scotland "in which every child matters." It concluded that badly co-ordinated services had failed many children and now required to regard themselves as a single and holistic system. It remains unclear however just how committed the Executive itself has been to "joined up thinking." In May 2005, at a national meeting of local authority officers involved in making provision for looked after children, the senior civil servant encouraging our efforts was herself unable to comment upon the implications of the most recent Additional Support for Learning Act. Indeed she disclosed that the responsible section leader had not liaised with her own section!

There is a rather simplistic logic to the "joined up agenda" that Allen (2003) articulates well, arguing that the official view of joined-up thinking presents a teleological and linear view of its inherent progressiveness but without evidence of positive consequences. A new variant of professional power is being legitimised and extended by the joined up agenda. Regularly we discern how discourses produce new practices. The case of The Integrated Assessment Framework is one such that is legitimising an all embracing gaze and likely to extend a disciplinary power over looked after and other vulnerable young people.

Scottish Executive guidance (2004a) on the Integrated Framework for the Assessment of Children acknowledges failure of agencies to have collected and shared information about needy, particularly abused children and it proposes new processes and mechanisms to address that lack so as "high quality assessments" (p4) can be prepared by workers and so that young people are not required to undergo multiple assessments. The paradigm for assessments which will require all agencies "to use similar language and tools" is applicable throughout the UK (Department of Health 2003 p3) where domains of family, child and parent inform and define the child's functioning. The framework makes claim to evidence-based applications which are said to be "grounded in knowledge" (Rose and Aldgate, p1, cited in Garrett 2003) and thereby promote the technicist and rationalist practice typified by other products that preface their subject with "What works in..." (eg Sebba and Sachdev 1997) as if the complexities of human social and individual behaviour could be reduced to a static prescription for action. The language used eg the adduced requirement for "a standard infrastructure around technology and datasets" (Scottish Executive 2004a p5 ) suggests the promotion of an objectification and scientisation of childhood and a new politics of governance with the family and assessment of "parenting capacity" enlisted to explain deviations from and the promotion of a stable and responsible citizenry. Within my own Council's Integrated Assessment Framework some areas of assessment are said to take place within "a militarised zone" which means that only certain professionals can access the information. The combative metaphor resonates with other dividing practices.

## 5.3 SID, MUD and RID The social inclusion agendas

Social inclusion has been a concern dominating current welfare policy throughout the UK. New Labour's Social Exclusion Unit defines the concept as a shorthand for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from "a combination of linked problems such as

unemployment, poor skills, low income, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown" (Social Exclusion Unit 1998). The notion is mobilised particularly in regard to education policy throughout the UK. It is worth noting that in Scotland the more positive idea of promoting social inclusion with the establishment of a social inclusion unit has been promulgated. Hill et al (2004) note overlapping meanings of social exclusion and the sometimes unhelpful elision of the term with others, such as unemployment, and the attendant simplistic view or focus upon outcomes or conditions that tends to ignore the forces that produce it. They cite Levitas' (1998) critique where three discourses of social exclusion are identified:

SID – where the condition of poverty through unemployment locates employment as the antidote (social inclusion discourse).

MUD – where the cause is an individual or community moral failing requiring re-education (moral underclass discourse).

RID – the view that locates poverty as a result of structural and process inequalities that require radical alteration (radical income distribution discourse).

The dominance of SID in UK is reflected also in Scotland where, for example the Executive's summary report "Everyone Matters – delivering social justice in Scotland" (2002) reiterated the aspiration to end poverty within a generation, promoted the "New Deal" to help lone parents into work and mothers into employment by providing cheap childcare. The policy aspiration is to close the "opportunity gap" assisted by the provision of such additional targeted support services as Surestart, provision of childcare grants for lone parents in full-time higher education, higher rates of benefit and new taxed based support.

Recurring throughout the references to children's well-being – which is to be fostered by the eradication of poverty – are positionings of children as investments, with the dividend payable to adults. As Prout (2000) comments:

> The central focus is on the better adult lives that will, it is predicted, emerge from reducing child poverty. It is not on the better lives that children will lead as children. (p305).

## 5.4 Delinquency and youth justice

James and James (2001) quote Scraton who noted that during the 1990's, when children were positioned as "spiralling out of control":

> A litany of deviants has been constructed providing evidence that the social and moral fabric of British society is collapsing, infected at its childhood foundations. The streets, it is argued, are inhabited by drug users, runaways, joy riders and persistent young offenders. Schools suffer the excesses of bullies, truants and disruptive pupils. Families have become "dismembered" replaced by lone mothers, characterised by absent fathers. (Scraton 1997 p7)

That crisis of social regulation depicted in tableaux of disruption and indiscipline fostered a communitarian policy discourse that emphasises duties and responsibilities with its proponents arguing that the causes of civic decline were related to the fragmentation of community neighbourhood, high levels of crime and the break up of the traditional family. The provisions of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act included explicit measures of control

over children such as anti-social behaviour orders, parenting orders, allowed imposition of child curfews and other preventive measures which allowed actions to be taken against young people irrespective of whether a crime had actually been committed or not. There are very few references to the welfare of children in the Act despite all the evidence of the social disadvantages, difficulties and distressing circumstances that these young people suffer (Goldson and Peters 2000).

In Scotland, however, not all provisions of the pre-devolution legislation applied (although it is interesting to remember that curfew schemes were in operation in some areas of central Scotland before this time) and the welfarist spirit of the Children's Hearing system generally remained. There is reason to believe that this may be eroded. The Anti-social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004 has most recently provided for the imposition of anti-social behaviour orders to prohibit, for example, young people's association with others or entry to specific areas and communities. Police powers are now available to disperse groups of young people whose behaviour is deemed a nuisance or alarming and confidential help lines have been established for the public to report suspicion of anti-social behaviour. In my own recent experience of trying to help a boy who had not been attending school I discovered that his single parent mother had been served with a 24 hour curfew, a home arrest effectively although her guilt of any misdemeanour had not been proved. Accordingly, a prisoner in her own home, she was unable to do her shopping which duty fell to my client whose welfare in these circumstances had simply been ignored by the court. Children as young as 12 can now be electronically tagged by the very security firm that was vilified for its accidental release of prisoners in Scotland. Despite the lack of any evidence to support the assertion, the Scottish Executive has supported tagging as "an opportunity to break the cycle of criminal behaviour and to allow offenders to remain with their families" (quoted in *The Scotsman* Dec 9 2004). It is also of course a far cheaper response than imprisonment.

Children are subject to the increase in the surveillance of childhood thereby. James and James (2001) note additionally of the legislation that it "reflects the extension of psuedo-parental responsibility to the community as a whole...and...works to deny children's autonomy and their right to be responsible to govern their own behaviour." (p221). That zeal to re-impose parental control, responsibility and authority over children, thereby also reducing the children's own agency through parenting schemes or orders, has most recently also been reflected in the rubric of the review of the Children's Hearing system. Therein (Scottish Executive 2004b) is introduced need for "greater consistency of decision making", of concern for lack of "overview of the intervention in a child's life" raising the question of extending the length of time a Hearing could be involved with a child. It also raised the issue of whether Hearings could exert more "direct influence over parents by requiring them to do certain activities" (p7). A system of family hearings was also proposed for consideration. These techniques of tutelage where relayed governmentality is improved and assured will not of course address links among delinquency, poverty, inadequate housing and poor recreational facilities. The recruitment of parents as resident envoys for their children's surveillance, and technologies of subjectification including their compulsory attendance on courses of anger management, health education, managing indiscipline, setting parameters and ensuring daily school attendance will all divert attention from these links. Rather there is a new paternalism which aims to reduce poverty and other problems by direct supervisory means where compliance, as a central feature of conditional welfare is a prerequisite to state aid.

## 5.5 Education, education, education...

This had been New Labour's priority in its manifesto of 1997. It assumed that as the key to employment, education would combat social exclusion – hence the raising of attainment

under the banner "Standards not Structures" underlined its belief in the economic significance of education.

Numerous eloquent critiques of New Labour education policy (Tomlinson 2003, Tomlinson et al 2000, James and James 2001) testify to what these last authors describe in their title as the "tightening of the net" around children via policies that explicitly identify educational objectives whilst implicitly fostering regulation and surveillance. Normative standard attainment targets affect all school pupils in England and Wales where together with these league tables they emphasise and provide the basis for parental (not children's) rights and choices. Testing, of course, dictates curricular content and balance not to mention the negative experience of the testing itself for at least some children. The necessary focus on maths and literacy, bolstered by the introduction of mathematics and literacy hours, reduces the time available for other creative and aesthetic activities. Citing the previous Conservative Prime Minister's "anti-humanist and anti-intellectual" pronouncement and reinforcing observance of the continuity between both governments' educational priorities, the critics are mindful of these echoes within New Labour:

> Children don't go to school for an experience. They go to learn the basic skills that they are going to need in later life – being able to read and write and do sums. (Major 1994, cited in Hendrick 2003 p221).

The net of surveillance and control is cast to include the disruptive via the introduction of behaviour contracts emphasising parental obligation – to the extent of parental imprisonment for failure to comply in reducing truancy. Meanwhile disciplinary techniques like "Assertive Discipline" and behaviour "support" policies and practices proliferate. Cosmetically these address only the symptoms of disenchantment and alienation. One such

currently in vogue refers to "skating on thin ice" implicitly suggesting horrific consequences of failure to comply and deliberately encourages the humiliation of classroom offenders by publicising on the school notice board their accumulation of red and yellow cards. The enlistment and enmeshment of parents is also fostered by very prescriptive homework guidelines (DfEE 1998).

Although education for citizenship is promulgated – so as children are to be able to play their parts in school, neighbourhood, community and society – their rights as children and the facilitation and exercise of their own agency is subjugated to the rhetoric of their duties and responsibilities. In that regard, the new Connexions Strategy in England (DfEE 2000b), which is defined as part of the education service, aims to build on citizen education and prevent teenagers' social exclusion through a network of personal advisors who will mentor, consult and counsel young people to ensure that "no young people falls through the net of support" nor becomes "lost to the service" (p6). Its aims include reducing truancy, school exclusion, criminality, drug usage, pregnancy and improving levels of employment. Electronic databases will help track the young people referred whose general positioning as requiring close supervision and surveillance is obvious.

In Scotland, the tenor of the options raised in the review of Children's Hearings certainly reflects a similar aspiration to track young people and to make parents more responsible for their children. Paterson (2003) notes other more distinctive features of Scottish educational legislation and quotes surveys, for example, that suggest the English public's greater support for a return to selective schooling. New Labour's most recent White Paper in which plans for independent self governing schools are proposed and parental rights extended are not applicable in Scotland where a reduction in parental involvement in school management is actually proposed. The English legislation may well extend the market orientation that led to league tables of exam success and attendance, further raising managers' concerns to

promote schools without encumbrance of the slower, the disruptive or other detractors from their schools' market attraction. In Scotland too it is very evident from experience of working alongside schools that Head teachers place their first duty to children already attending and so the requirement for children to be looked after by the corporate authority is undermined by local decision making about enrolment of the troubled, disabled or less quick to learn, where as Gewirtz (2000) observes, children generally:

> ...have become objects of the education system, to be attracted, excluded, displayed and processed, according to their commercial and semiotic worth rather than subjects with needs, desires and potentials. (p315)

A thrust to provide a more specialised curriculum is evident in Scotland through the "Schools of Ambition" programme whereby private finance is being sought to promote specialist schools similar in ethos to "beacon" schools established elsewhere in the UK. Further curricular narrowing is anticipated in the "Curriculum for Excellence" (Scottish Executive 2004c) where literacy and numeracy is stressed throughout and the promise to "de-clutter" curricula by removing "unnecessary detail" such as expressive arts from existing guidelines is made (p16). Equally, clear statements of the intended outcomes in literacy, numeracy and "other essential attributes and skills" are to be issued for secondary school pupils for whom setting (partial steaming) from S1 onwards is now to be entirely acceptable. Robust new methods of assessment are to be devised so as a "passport" to further learning and work can be created. This wide-ranging programme, includes the recommitment to public private partnerships for the renewal of Scotland's school estates, the strengthening of inspection by HMIE, leadership development for Heads for whom more rigorous standards and enhanced CPD for all teachers will be expected, the conducting of yet another survey of indiscipline and promotion of "better, more flexible

parental involvement" with a focus on "what works" with enhanced information for parents on individual school performances. These all reflect the same interventionist, managerialist, authoritarian and market oriented educational vision typical of the Westminster agenda where children in general are positioned as investments, with tenuous agency, with incompleteness in their becoming, as empty vessels awaiting their filling and subject to a work ethic to be encouraged through a narrow curriculum of academic content.

## 5.6 What's special about special education?

It is important to offer some analysis here of special education practice within whose discourses, particularly of inclusion and need, provision for minority groups like the looked after is typically understood. According to Lloyd (2000), official documentation and policy for children since the Warnock report (DES 1978) for children identified as having Special Educational Need (SEN) has been preoccupied with location. The route to excellence for all children has been mapped within the familiar territory of mainstream schools where inclusion for the odd-one-out, for whatever reason, has been mainly presented as an issue requiring some curricular modification, additional classroom support, improved institutional organisation and increased parental involvement. In this, as she and numerous others – eg Slee and Allan (2001), Slee (2001), Thomas and Glenny (2002), Ballard (1999) – have emphasised, none other than passing lip service is offered to the implications of social and economic disadvantage, discrimination and oppression and resultant differential access to educational entitlement. School inclusion, as the successor to integration where, put simply, the aim is to bring about schools' accommodation to all children and their difference, rather than helping children fit into existing systems, is still too often seen as a simplistic matter for relocation. There is failure to acknowledge the moral activism (Marquand 1996) inherent in inclusive practice – inclusion as work we do on ourselves (Allan 1999). Thus, Thomas and Glenny (2002) reflect Marquand's (1996) insistence that

inclusion goes beyond righting wrongs, perpetrated against a particular group, or simply bringing about re-distribution of resources. Indeed emphasising redistribution of resources, say to special educational budgets, is only to become "entrapped within a compensatory model of distributive justice" (Slee in Corbet and Slee 2000 p138) which may doubtless help some to pride these budgets as proof of their inclusive intentions and policy armament, yet leave unchanged the politics of difference in schools. How included does a child with cerebral palsy or Downs Syndrome in her primary classroom feel when constantly attached to her minder as an agent of dependence, "interacting" with the same diluted "differentiated" curriculum but isolated from her peers and teacher by the distance created through prejudice, lack of empathy, or teachers' perceived/feared lack of "specialist knowledge" (whatever that might be) to deal effectively with difference? And how included might feel those with "social, emotional and behavioural difficulties" whose difference has been translated into a similar deficit terminology – labelled, and hence explained – in a school context which pathologises their difference and rejects their culture?

Dyson and Millward (1999 p164) suggest that the "preoccupation with place" has substituted the need to develop educational curricula that could help marginalized students to challenge rigid educational (and wider social) structures. They oppose the technicist construction of sophisticated pedagogical methods obsessed with assisting all to participate in the curriculum, regardless of its nature, quality and purpose. This is a central dilemma. How are we to avoid that "more of the same" policy making that simply reshapes provision for difference into a bewildering panoply of specialist advice availability, curricular flexibility opportunities, rigorous monitoring arrangements and so on without bringing about real attitudinal and structural change? Upon that change the removal of barriers will depend so as to allow all children to share in the means of learning and culture to which they have right.

The construction of inclusion without the centrality of a rights perspective allows policy makers to "concentrate on tinkering around with and adjusting organisational factors" (Lloyd 2000 p143) rather that looking to the issues of social injustice and inequality that schools perpetuate. Equally so, unless there can be exposure of the exclusive practices underpinning so called inclusive educational policies then, as Slee and Allan (2001) critique it, inclusion discourse might simply be characterised as:

> posture(ing) as an element within the modernist project of schooling...little more than an epithet for assimilation, a quest to stem the difficulty of critics by rendering the less than docile bodies (Foucault 1977) flaccid within the cosmeticians' adjustments to traditional schooling. (p176)

They reflect Slee's (2001) and Ritzvi and Christensen's (1996) observations that ideas of justice are rarely clarified and always contested. The requirement is for more sustained analyses of how these considerations relate to education so as to identify how excellence and equity for all could indeed be achieved. One such consideration would be the fashion in which the language of <u>needs</u> in SEN and related policies for marginalized young people has diverted attention from rights and <u>entitlement</u>. In this sense, entitlement is not just to the additional resources of the more simplistic redistributive rights paradigm, but to the right to <u>recognition</u> and <u>respect</u> that are seen to be negated through the "routine malignment or disparagement and being rendered invisible by the dominant cultural practice" drawn attention to by disability theorists (Thomas and Glenny 2002, p365). The language of needs is of course referential to a medical model of deficit which is individualistic and fails to acknowledge the context in which children learn (Fulcher 1995). Sadly it is not clear how the introduction of "Co-ordinated Support Plans" in place of Records of Need and the change in terminology to "additional support needs" from "special educational needs" in

the new Scottish Additional Support for Learning Needs Act (2004) will change any of this. That legislation presumes an individual pupil assessment, planning and resourcing; ties central resourcing of this planning to the local authority or its psychological service and thereby reinforces the view that the ownership and resourcing of pupils who display inequalities in behaviour, bodily or mental functioning resides outwith schools. It is supported by a new mediation system where the role of expert witnesses advising upon pathological defect will continue to be enlisted by parties battling over scarce resources.

## 5.7 Learning with care

Since the SSI/OFSTED (1995) report and its Scottish counterpart "Learning with Care" (Scottish Executive 2001a), both referred to in Chapter 2, which highlighted the structural failures thought to contribute to the poor outcomes for children in care, their low educational performance has been raised in numerous official publications. In England and Wales the "Quality Protects Initiative" (DoH 1998) was launched in the wake of the Utting Report (SSI 1988) which had criticised arrangements for the protection and planning for children in public care. Under its banner, specific guidance was given to local authorities giving direction on how local authorities should fulfil the role of corporate parents. It extended government control through targeting and standard setting and requirement for formal educational planning and introduction of designated teachers in all schools for children in care. The Scottish guidance introduced similar performance targets and improved planning requirements for local authorities. Additionally central funding was made available to every looked after child. Only some local authorities actually consulted with the children as to how their funds should be spent.

The Scottish Executive sponsored the production of information booklets for carers, teachers and social workers concerning the education of children in care (Hudson et al

2003). That set of training materials referenced in Chapter 2 and the guide to self evaluation and audit for teachers, social workers and also carers were produced at the same time too. These are cross referenced to the National Priorities for Education and also to National Care Standards that relate to residential and foster care services. Here again can be seen the technicist logic and managerialist concern for audit that pervades the objectifying account of children's failures.

Yet more attainment targets for children in public care were set in the report by the Social Exclusion Unit (2003) in which the familiar perceived need for integrated service position was stressed and the need for carers to be more effectively recruited in supporting children's homework. In Scotland, other policy initiatives have included the establishment of the Care Commission, improved national standards for foster care, the development of childcare qualification structures for residential care workers and a de-institutionalising thrust questioning the value of residential care compared to foster and community care. It is not clear though that any higher profile for the voice of the children and young people themselves will be brought about by all of this. Munro (2001) critiques the performance measurement criteria that have dominated policy directives to the extent that the freedom of local authority management is hampered in responding to children's preferences and taking into account the young people's perspectives – for example, in relation to the looked after children system of documentation, and what she sees as its emphasis upon "standardisation and specified goals" (p134) which reduce the opportunity for children themselves to contribute to the articulation of their own best interests. Children and young people are generally positioned thus as lacking in agency or, at best, simplistically dichotomised through binary perspectives: as Tindler (1997) bemoans: "As either subjects or objects, competent or incompetent, reliable or unreliable...wanting to participate or not" (p301) whilst policy making jumps to quick conclusions and the perspective of development as a continuum and the facts of individual variation obfuscated.

Garrett (1999) considers "the reigning paradigm" in child care assessment and monitoring to be represented by the Looked After Materials which exert a moral authority on children. Munro (2001) shares the concern that their checklist format marginalizes children and young people's right to identify the issues that they consider relevant, further signalling their objectification and reduced competency. Garrett (1999, 2002, 2003) shows how the value judgements inherent in many of the questions asked reflect a style and ideology (for example of the work ethic) that might be alien to the young people. Gilligan (2000) makes the practical point that their generation of additional work for social workers is one of the impediments to the building of a social work service with sufficient vigour to respond to the complex needs of children in state care but whose key role is often neglected. The materials seem to threaten to reduce the social worker's function to a collector of data and through their associated software facilities allow potential for hugely advanced digital surveillance and control. Indeed the chronic shortage of social workers in Scottish authorities does not reduce the zeal with which policy making assumes staff availability to take forward the agenda. Neither does that agenda acknowledge the shortage of foster carers to which at least some of the concerns about placement instability and associated school transfers might be attributable (Harker et al 2003).

It seems that policy measures have been entirely concerned with modification to aspects of schooling, parenting, assessment and monitoring. There has been little attention to interactionist perspectives that might seek, for examples, to understand and respond to children's difficulties in relation to their, and others', construction of schooling or to give more weight to individual agency. There has been little concern to understand aspiration, motivation and entitlement. Rather, regulation and surveillance of children in public care is extended by policy and thinly disguised, not least to the children themselves by, for example again, the introduction of "designated teachers" in all schools to monitor the

progress of looked after students. Children's views have been subordinated to policy discourses that are quick to suggest seemingly benign solutions but which construct children through their exclusion, assumed incompetence and investments for futurity and which manufacture mechanisms for their control, and subjectification.

# CHAPTER 6 THE EFFECT OF THE GAZE

This data chapter and the following one seek to illustrate some of the themes touched upon earlier, using as far as possible the language used by the young people during our conversations. The aim is not to offer a realist account (the one true picture) of their experiences but to create a display of the effects of these themes and processes as they have played upon them. This chapter considers those themes that a Foucauldian perspective can illuminate. In the next I borrow from the Deleuzian cartography (Roy 2003) in describing the spaces the young people inhabited and, where it appears apposite, I try to relate an aporetics of experience in terms of the young people's articulation of the double edged tensions they feel when experiencing what appeared to be contradictory imperatives.

## 6.1 Surveillance, power and the gaze

For Foucault, surveillance is the underlying mechanism of a disciplinary power that had emerged from the seventeenth century onwards. His concept of disciplinary power was not of sovereign domination or overt coercion. Rather, his understanding of disciplinary power is concerned with people's management and organisation; their shaping, determination of their conduct, and their becoming subjects. People's construction as subjects by means of the mechanisms of power and technologies for shaping themselves are evident in two ways; as being subject to others through control and restraint and as being subject to their own identities by way of their own self-regulation, conscience and absorption of injunction. Always Foucault regards power not as a repressive force but productive of social practices. In this schema: in education, social work and medicine, the flow of power determines how problems are framed or constituted, how people are classified and how their conduct is regulated. That regulation – the facilitation of the

development of certain characteristics and the elimination or minimising of others in its population – is, for Foucault, the rationale of government (Foucault 1976). In his later writings an interest in how people regulated themselves, how the "technologies of the self" assisted them to "transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, wisdom, perfection or immortality", became Foucault's focus (1988b p18).

Foucault describes the disciplinary power that permeates western culture and operates subtly to produce regulated and "docile" bodies. "It is not a triumphant power which because of its own excess can pride itself on its omnipotence; it is a modest, suspicious power" (1977b p170). Of central importance in the disciplining and regulating of social life are the dominant discursive regimes or "regimes of truth" (1980 p131) that structure our experience, govern what we see as truth and influence our thoughts and actions. These conventions shape and direct our way of construing the world, the way we order and name things. In other words these discourses reflect the sense in which the language we use always directs the way we understand the world.

Foucault writes of "the gaze" as a way of comprehending the world and a major technology of power. The gaze facilitates the identification and definition of particular human subjects, gathers information and creates discourse about them. The gaze both creates and applies a particular discourse to the seen object or institution so that objects are constituted by the seer in terms of that discourse. Thus, in The Birth of the Clinic (1973), for example, Foucault illustrated how changing medical paradigms produce knowledges and practices by and through which the body was experienced, understood and constructed, so that:

> A body analysed for humours contains humours; a body analysed for organs and tissues is constituted by organs and tissues; a body

> analysed for psycho-social functioning is a psycho-social object.
>
> (Armstrong 1994 p25)

In Discipline and Punish (1977b) where the issue of the power of the gaze over its subjects is described more saliently (Shumway 1989) the concept of the gaze is widened in the representation of Jeremy Bentham's *panopticon* which offers an example of constant surveillance by an automatic and invisible operation of power. In this work Foucault describes the prison and other institutions as institutions of normative coercion. They are conceived as coercive in so far as they discipline individuals and exercise forms of surveillance over everyday life thereby both producing and restraining action. But the coercion is not necessarily violent nor overtly authoritarian. We all cooperate in our own subjectification. The institutions of normative coercion – religion, medicine, education – are experienced as having a moral authority by explaining problems and offering solutions. Thereby, their coercive nature might typically, although not always, be disguised by the normative calculation of individuals' problems and aspirations. Thus, for example the power that a social worker, psychologist or teacher has in relation to a looked after young people or her family can be thought of as a resource whereby subject positions are created, bringing that young person into a field of visibility – creating a case and the casework that will individuate, define and objectify her situation. But from the Foucauldian perspective, power is not a possession on any one source; rather it is relational – a strategy that invests in and is transmitted through each actor. Further, as will be illustrated by the children and young people's practices reported here, where there is power there is inevitably resistance and the existence of strategies of power does not always imply the successful exertion of power because disciplinary strategies may be subverted or otherwise resisted (Allan 1999).

The gaze is not fixed but, rather, has a dynamic capability to identify new objects and methods of surveillance. Foucault argues (1977b) that in modern times, the disciplinary

gaze depends upon its interiorisation by the objects of its attention. Thereby the gaze does not just function in one direction. It is directed by some over others but is reflected and diffused through a network of hierarchical relationships so that the functioning of modern surveillance methods is:

> ...that of a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network "holds" the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another: supervisors, perpetually supervised. (1977b pp176-177).

Further, the gaze can be conceived of as utilising not only subjects in their own disciplinary mechanisms but by recruiting remote relays or missionaries to its cause. So within the matrix or disciplinary web, people can exert, be subject to, and resist, power. They mediate the gaze and its effects because even although, as the quotation suggests, power may tend to flow more strongly in some directions, it does flow in all; through numerous networks of surveillance ranging from panoptic state hierarchies to less structured, but more generalised eg, family networks. In the same way as the devolution of the medical gaze to families could be said to be evident in the identification of parents as the guardians of their children's health, so too are substitute families for children in public care apportioned a devolution of the welfarist gaze. For those children the focus of that gaze can be burningly intrusive as will be shown. As Foucault, describing "the rather shameful act of surveillance" (p172) wrote of disciplinary (like welfarist) regimes:

> ...individualisation is descending; as power becomes more anonymous and more functional, those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualised...in a system of discipline, the

> child is more individualised than the adult, the patient more than the healthy man. (1977b p193)

To that could be added that other subordinated subject position – the child in a home rather than the child at home.

Foucault (1977b) identified three important mechanisms of surveillance in respect of each one of which the voices and experiences of the looked after children involved in this study are now introduced and explored. They are:

*Hierarchical observation*

*Normative judgement*

*The examination*

## 6.2 Hierarchical observation

The young people's experience of surveillance at home and at school seemed especially prominent in their thoughts and they seemed ready to talk about it. It was most often expressed in terms of their exasperation over public intrusion into their private lives and the fashion whereby it appeared to them that information could be readily sourced and circulated.

Becky was in fifth year at secondary school and had been living with the same foster carers for six years when we first met. She was hoping to go on to further education but had recently been excluded for four days from school for being insolent to a teacher and refusing to apologise. She was anxious that school staff would have turned against her- "not want to help her learn" on that count, she said, and was especially concerned about the

level of direct and obtrusive supervision she received. I had learned that Becky had previously made sexually provocative remarks to men and boys – which "sexualised behaviour" referred to in her childcare review meeting by a psychiatrist, was thought by her carers and social worker to place her in moral danger. Perhaps as much a reason for the full-time supervision which she received at school ostensibly on that count might have been teachers' concerns, voiced at a previous meeting, that they were vulnerable to potential accusation of misconduct since on a previous occasion Becky had made an unsubstantiated complaint alleging assault by a family friend. A series of proven sexual offences against her had been the reason for her initial reception into care six years previously. As a dangerous individual, either to herself or to others' reputations, Becky was shadowed almost throughout the school day although most recently some relaxation of these restrictions to which she referred had been allowed:

> I've got an auxiliary at lunchtime, people in subjects because I'm having trouble with subjects...I used to have supervision on first and last break...up in a room...but they decided to take first break off to see how I got on with it. I've had my first break for ages now.

Becky's restrictions affected her life outside school too:

> They don't trust me...I'm not to go down the town. Their (foster parents') words were "you're going to do it gradually". You see what I've done so far is I've been to youth theatre which is on a Sunday which is for three hours but that's, you know within a thing when people are watching me. And then there's study support on Tuesday and Thursday night and there's still people watching me. Whereas I feel I'm under pressure with people watching me because

> it feels to me they're still not trusting me even though they say they are.

Themes of isolation and difference seemed to pervade our conversation. Becky spoke of how she felt like a "Norm" when she was so regularly left out of ordinary social experiences. I had had to ask her about the use of that term (which ironically I had initially totally misunderstood as having the very opposite connotations) and she explained: "Well basically Norm means that you're left out, that you're on you're on your own that basically there's no-one around you."

She described how, after sitting prelim exams when other students were allowed to leave school premises, she was the only one required to attend classes. Her attempted transgression out of the identity that the coercive marker of her isolation so clearly signalled is returned to later. Meantime, Becky implicated other agencies in her restrictions and prohibitions:

> ...social services too 'cause see if I go on a trip or I went to Safeway's as part of a school course...school has to phone social services about it every time I leave the school. Even if it means for going out for meetings, to the doctor's, hospital whatever.

Becky felt that the only opportunity to state her frustration and impatience was in a childcare review: "That's really the only time I get to put up my point; but they still feel I'm not ready." She reasoned that this made little sense since "If I wasn't ready, why did they give me the first break?" She regretted not having seen a social worker other than at the review, to discuss matters and reflected that as a younger child, when initially placed in a children's home, staff:

> allowed…trusted us to do whatever we wanted…I was allowed to go a walk down the town, go to the market say with my pocket money and spend it on whatever.

Yet the degree of hierarchical observation focussed upon Becky did not always produce the form of individualisation that Becky and her foster parents might have actually welcomed. Sometimes her foster mother was referred to by Becky's surname which she found exasperating:

> All the teachers that I've got so far or that I've had; they all know I'm fostered and yet they still call my (foster) mum Mrs….. and yet she's explained to them plenty of times that it's Mrs…..

Concerning that annoyingly regular occurrence I enquired whether teachers might not all have had access to the appropriate information. Becky summarised her impression: "…or basically they're just not listening, or don't want to listen." Moreover she explained that her mother had regularly tried to discuss with teachers the problems that Becky felt she had in understanding some of her school work:

> But for some reason they don't catch on that I'm having such troubles…like they go 'She's fine, she'll pass'…I don't feel I'm getting enough support from the school because I'm feeling that I'm being let down because of the teachers saying that I'm coping when I'm not really.

and the paradox within which she felt so bound was evident:

> The only reason (they think I'm coping) is because I'm not asking them questions because I don't want to. Because basically I feel I'm being a nuisance to them if I keep asking questions over and over again...if I keep asking them then I keep annoying them.

Becky evidenced a previous teacher who "just branded me thick because I wasn't like everybody else and that he was wasting time because I wasn't learning."

Even more ironically, the privileging of the school's focus of its gaze had obscured an opportunity for Becky's recent exclusion to have been avoided. If only its individualising effect had served to remind teachers to a strategy previously recommended by parents and social workers, which had actually been used successfully previously then, as Becky explained, things wouldn't have escalated:

> If mum **had** been called into school **she** would have calmed me down and then I **would** apologise right away. Because it's mum that can keep my temper under control. She can calm me down. My mum was quite angry...all she has to do is take me away for a couple of minutes and I'd be fine. (original emphases)

Other young people who were attending secondary schools spoke of their experience of the regulatory practice of being issued with behaviour and/or attendance timetables ("a skiver chart" as one referred to these). Nathan described his as:

> Just paper that the teachers write on every period how good your getting on in class, if you're being cheeky, if you're doing your work and if you're arriving on time.

He theorised that the contribution of this method of surveillance and control only contributed further to the vamping up of opposition and spread of disruption. I'd enquired of his experience of having a behaviour timetable:

> Well it's like people think it's big because you've got one because you've been cheeky to teachers...I think folk think that it's good to have a timetable that it's going to make them, like badder to their pals. They think they're going to get on well with all their pals if they're on a timetable.

Canna and Rory were acutely sensitive to their surveillance in the context of their encounters with professionals – especially during the many meetings they had experienced when information about their situations was shared and discussed. Foucault (1967) wrote of the metamorphoses of discourses and spaces wherein the gaze – eg the medical gaze – operated, leading eventually to the modern hospitalised spatialisation of medicine. Similarly, he traced the treatment of madness and of prisoners through the birth of asylums and prisons by way of the punitive and juridical spaces they occupied (1973 and 1977b). The spatialisation of many of the young people's concerns related to these meetings as areas where they were judged and where their fragile ontological status – their normality – was threatened and this is returned to later as an aspect of the other techniques of surveillance. Meantime can be noted the tenor of almost panic and incredulity that Rory spoke of in discovering how common was the currency of his own personal biography that others might easily come to possess at review meetings:

> At one point they actually got my teachers to come from school, and I was just, it put me right off. See I thought it was just, ken, my personal feelings about it and it turned out they were getting information from everywhere, that I didn't know about, and it's a bit frightening thought that people who I don't know can telephone my school and find out information about me when I don't know about it. And I didn't like that at all. See I would have preferred if they had just asked me and I could have told them.

Rory trusted his guidance teacher as "an honest woman – she'll tell the truth if I'm doing things I shouldn't be." He had never told her about his own domestic circumstances and said that he would have been most uncomfortable in doing so; but he accepted stoically, it seemed, that "she just knows that's the situation and that's the way things are...she has to know because of the day to day duties."

Rory's attempts to conceal the gaze of others in everyday encounters are later conceptualised as transgressions out of the identity he preferred to screen from others' scrutiny.

Canna too appeared perspicuous but uncompromising about people "noseying in and out of (his) private life." His guidance teacher "who was really looking into my life at the time I went into care" would only hear "what I'm going to tell them and what I want them to know" even when "she tried to dive into some, like, deep and meaningful stuff." He expanded:

> That's the way it is, like, I'm not having it. I don't know, it really depends, I mean say you're just sitting there having a normal conversation and you gradually get deeper and deeper into things, there would get a point in that conversation where I would say no, I don't want to do it. But it just depends what questions they're asking and when and how they're doing it.

For Canna there were concerns that the "word of mouth" that could "spread like hot cakes" (sic) would enable staff and students at school to act like his carers: "They know your secrets and they can use them against you."

Rory had voiced a view held by four others that teachers might sometimes need to know that a child or young person was in care but not the reasons for their removal from their homes. Two girls suggested that teachers would not want to teach them "if they knew the whole story" (of sexual abuse) as Colette had put it. Becky echoed a similar worry: "I feel they wouldn't want to teach me because of what happened to me when I was younger." The burden of that sense of shame which is carried by victims of sexual abuse is well documented elsewhere (Sanderson 1995).

The youngest children construed teachers as allies. Alysson, aged nine, for example had told me that teachers should know "all things about me" and I'd asked why:

> Because when you're in school...if you're upset or anything, they could ask you and they could understand and they'd know if you're having problems; they could talk to you about it and help you, know like about what you're thinking.

But even so, she spoke of having been "embarrassed" when her teachers had attended meetings about her. She expanded:

> Well it was like...in case they would tell, like, kind of scared in case they would tell somebody else – that shouldn't – that I don't want to know – that I don't want them to know about. Private things yeah.

Mark, aged six, had only started school but was already aware of differences in his school treatment compared to others. He said it made him sad that whilst other boys and girls could stay at school all day; he had to go home before lunch because "they say that I'm bad but I'm not bad." Other primary school aged children who had spoken of their feeling comfortable with their teachers knowing of their situations and of contributing to discussions about them appeared to associate that level of satisfaction to their belief that this at least had not led to their being treated differently: "Like they (teachers) know stuff," said Alysson, "but I'm not treated un-normal." Iona too, when I first met her in primary school, had been content that her teachers met with social workers and recorded her progress carefully so that "...if anything goes wrong they know who I live with and how best to help if there's anything the matter." By second year at secondary school she spoke of negative effects of the surveillance that she, and even her friends – by association, were under. She was talking about the different treatment generally that she felt she had received compared to others and I had failed initially to understand her reference to "sleepovers... you see I can't go to a (friend's) house. Well I could but they need to be police checked then to see if they're okay." Her remark struck me vividly. What a spectacle to feel! How embarrassing to have it be required in one's name that a friend's parents be subjected to such judicial inspection. How impossible to proceed indeed.

Gary had recently transferred to secondary school from a succession of primary schools. Here, mechanisms of surveillance had let him down. On the one hand he said that his guidance teacher should know:

> ...what my carers' names are, and teachers at previous schools and my records of achievements. She's got a big, like a briefcase full of stuff – a big massive wallet full of stuff.

He referred also to "the big ginormous booklet" that his social worker had been asking him to contribute towards completing – hence contributing to his own surveillance by way of these materials critiqued earlier. Yet on the other hand Gary's record of achievement in testing had somehow not followed him between schools. He bemoaned such inefficiency:

> They couldn't find my English and all that...so I canny get my grades...ye canny get on with your work 'cause you're coming out another school. You weren't at that stage in another school and they put you onto a different workbook and then you canny do it.

## 6.3 Normalising judgement

Writing of normalising judgement as the second means of surveillance Foucault summarises its function as that which "supervises every instant...compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenises, excludes. In short it normalises." The homogeneity he refers to is the "whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principal of a rule to be followed." It is the "constraint of a conformity that must be achieved" (all references 1977 pp182 – 183). Later he writes:

The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements. (1977b p304)

The young people involved in this study objected to their positioning in the homogenising space of "looked after" that sought to define their status. Canna's and Rory's replies to my invitation to comment upon the appointment of designated teachers to supervise the interests and education of looked after children generally, are relevant. Rory could discern advantages and possible drawbacks:

I would say that that would be probably very, very, negative to a child's education. 'Cause if they, if, like I know I would feel pretty strange if I knew that because I was in care I had to go and see a certain teacher. I know that myself, and probably most other looked after children prefer just to be the same as everybody else. We want to be as, instead of being an individual we want to be as part of a team, ken, just the same as everybody else, not to be treated any differently, not to be treated any stranger. But I suppose it could be helpful in some ways that if they're moving about constantly and they don't really have anybody to talk to, apart from obviously their social worker, but that's kind of intimidating because it's somebody you don't really know, you only see and that's a really formal situation. Like because you're in school everyday of, well, a lot of days in the week, that it's somebody you're familiar with and you

know them and well you think they know you so it would be somebody that would be good to talk to. I suppose if you look at it like that it would be quite good but in my situation, I would, if I had the choice I would say I wouldn't like that at all.

Canna was less equivocal:

No that ain't going to work, simply because you need more than one teacher. You can't go through all the school, you can't do what you want to with one teacher...I mean yes one teacher – you could sit down with him – if he's qualified – and you could say this is what's wrong, blah, blah, blah. But it still isn't going to stop another five or six teachers from having a go at you or not understanding anything about you. ...I mean most of these teachers need to go on training courses, I'm sure, to teach them about pupils who are in care and what they need...I mean they have to be able to understand people better than what they do...you know, they don't take the time, they don't find out what's wrong or what could be done to help you...they can't see past a straight line...I think if they did quite a lot of them would become better teachers for it, they'd be able to understand themselves better as well, you know, as well as other people...but they won't, it's all tied in money shite, it's not going to make the difference.

The proposals for the appointment of designated teachers are an example of how looked after children are positioned as a homogenous group – as if somehow an ontological or essential status could be defined from their care experience into which field of comparison, amongst each other and measured against others not in public care, they are subjected. The

proposals illustrate how looked after children are produced – made visible and standardised – by the regime of truth that today's policy requires.

We saw earlier too how Gary's guidance teacher's "ginormous booklets and massive big wallets", whereby reference to the looked after children materials was made, enlisted the children's support in their own recoding of routine personal biographical information. The reign of the normative extends via these materials to all the realms that Foucault brought attention to – body, behaviour, aptitudes and achievements.

Normative judgement of course pervades the assessment processes that looked after young people experience. Gary, quoted above, referred to "the levels" that he had achieved and which would have helped teachers classify him. Measuring students against the norm, or average, or whatever other level is deemed appropriate continually creates rankings as Foucault observed in relation to the military academy where a pupil's "honorary" rank might be made visible through variations in uniform worn (1977b p181). Equally, the disciplinary judgement on the looked after rewards achievement. Schools are urged to "celebrate" the achievement of children in care to the extent, in some local authority areas, of holding celebratory ceremonies with attendant razzamatazz, the presence of local dignitaries and elected councillors and a role call of honour.

Broken records

Five of the young people had had Records of Needs opened for them. The normalising judgements to which these students were subjected homogenised their status as Recorded and thereby classified them as having Special Educational Need requiring ongoing review. At the same time the judgements within the Records individualised the students in terms of their descriptions and alleged needs. Within Records, stated needs are officially

describable within the four categories of "Intellectual/Curricular"; "Sight/Hearing/Communication"; "Social/Emotional" and "Physical/Medical." Three young people – Thea, Tracey and Colette had had Records opened that specified both Intellectual/Curricular and Social/Emotional needs. Luke's Record specified Intellectual/Curricular needs only and Becky's, Social/Emotional only. Hence these five young people were caught twice in the cone of visibility created by the twin education and social services' spotlights of the regulatory mechanisms of special needs and looked after procedures respectively. These major bureaucracies of education and social services impacted deeply upon their lives. Moreover, many looked after children are of course subject to supervision orders from a Children's Hearing and hence subject also to that disciplinary regime's scrutiny.

From a Foucauldian perspective the bureaucratic and pseudo-legalistic processes involved in the creation of a Record, and the construction of the Recorded pupil, involve all the techniques of surveillance which necessarily constrain by their very selection the descriptions of adduced need – with rare reference to rights – and subjugate children's and parents' felt needs or desires. Lip service is paid to a framework of accountability and consultation but the power of decision making – personal experience assures – rarely flows from the client of the process to its manipulator, whose own needs to construct needs within budgetary demands compromises the semblance of the primacy of children's needs in determining provision. Its language purports to an objectivity that psychological opinion might aspire to, yet cannot sustain, and alternates between pseudo-scientific terminology, often pathologising its subject by homing in on deficit, and a deliberate ambiguity that conflates cause with effect, label with aetiology and provision with cost.

I was once offered in-service training on "How to Fudge Record of Needs" by a senior administrator in the education service whose wording of Part Five of those documents,

where provision to meet the adduced needs detailed in preceding sections was deliberately vague and anodyne. It read:

> Efforts to meet the needs detailed herein will be made wherever possible and within the cost restraints applying to the education service at this time.

Ward (1990 p154) describes the use of these clauses of conditionality as "pernicious ...and wholly inappropriate."

Becky's need for "constant supervision at school at all times" (sic) was heavily reinforced throughout her Record of Needs. It was stated that any future proposed reduction should be "considered with the greatest caution." Supervision "particularly during out of class activities" was to be "central" to her educational programme and all this was to be provided, ironically, in "a normal school context" allowing "full access to the breadth of the secondary curriculum." Becky's own failings were referred to in the generation of this need. As a "profoundly damaged" girl she was said to be:

> Capable of very self-centred behaviour and she often lacks the capacity to appreciate the feelings of others, invading their personal space and participating in intensive attention seeking behaviours. At present she seems incapable of taking responsibility for herself and her actions. She appears to have a continued desire to remain as a child. All these problems mean that (Becky) requires constant supervision both within and outwith school.

The stark contrast to what Becky had told me about her own aspiration for increased independence is obvious. The pathologising language of damage, its "origins", its being "derived from" her past and prognostication of the longevity of her need for supervision all further subverted her own desires. Despite the intended focus of a Record of Need on educational planning and assessment, considerable emphasis in Becky's Record was given to reports from other agencies:

> Reports from her foster parents, Social Services and the Clinical Psychologist elaborate on the difficulties she is experiencing because of the damaging aspects of her past history...she is a danger not only to herself and her peers but also to adults, including teaching staff.

The school doctor's own sole contribution was to mention Becky's slight eczema. Yet a medical discourse seemed very salient. The intended medicalisation of Becky's difficulties later appears overtly as a need for "psychiatric monitoring and treatment as felt appropriate." By Part Five of the Record her difficulties have become translated into "learning difficulties" and her status transmogrified into having "special educational need":

> Becky will have her Special Educational Needs met in a mainstream school where she will follow an individualised educational programme reflecting the nature of her learning difficulties.

The circularity of the determining of this provision is obvious. Aside from a final reference to her need for supervision, no elements of the programme referred to are actually specified.

Thea's Record of Need had first been opened when she was new to care. At that time, aged nine, a small increase in learning support provision had been sought to help her become a more fluent reader and improve her "restricted writing skills." She was said to "crave attention" and to have a "generally low level of natural ability." Her curricular needs included "maximised teacher attention" with a "concerted and consistence approach by all" being required. "Splendid levels of tolerance" that were said to have been afforded her by school staff up to now were to be sustained. Slee, in Allan (2003 p216), quotes a colleague who told him that if anyone told him that they would tolerate him then he would "kick their fucking head in!" The reportage is not intended as gratuitous but as a reminder of "tolerance" as a term of oppression and the obliviousness here of Thea's Record's author's apparent insensitivity to the impact of careless language. Thea was indeed tolerated during her primary schools years it seems; although the additional provision was never made despite rather acrimonious sounding correspondence between school and education headquarters.

Thea's Record of Need at the time of her transfer to secondary education stated that recent psychological reassessment had "revealed" her to be "intellectually uncomplex" with "presentation not indicative of either a specific learning difficulty or a learning difficulty underpinned by emotional causes." Rather, her "learning and performance style was characterised by a degree of carelessness and stylised posing." Further, "poor listening" and difficulty in "deferment of gratification" added to her catalogue of deficiencies. Thea's emotional and physical "vulnerabilities" were referred to in subsequent minutes of Record of Needs review meetings. She had been subjected to repeated sexually abusive experiences prior to coming into care. In adolescence her "sexual precocity" was noted by school staff and an urgent plea for her "perpetual supervision – even at toilet breaks" is noted. This adduced need was met more quickly than the unmet request for additional learning support. Perhaps that lack of teaching support contributed to Thea's not sitting any

examinations at school as a result of which her carers made the not unreasonable observation that the exam leave allowed for school pupils was, in her case, a redundant and meaningless provision. School, however, did not feel that its staffing exigencies would allow her attendance for the period of weeks concerned and made another urgent request for a special staffing adjustment. On this occasion a swift and positive reply referring to "the education department's vulnerability over this matter" (but not to Thea's vulnerabilities this time) was forthcoming.

Colette's Record of Needs had described her too in the familiar deficit terminology. She too was an "uncomplex slower learner" who did "not relate well to others" for whom full-time special needs auxiliary assistance at school was sought. That level of help was never provided during her primary years however – again despite repeated requests being made by her head teacher. I had met Colette shortly before she left school to commence a special needs course at college. She spoke of being frightened at the prospect of change and how she was currently being "tried out" in mainstream classes. It seemed that she perceived that any change that was to be effected would need to come from her own resources: "It's to get used to it and I'll try 'cause I've got special needs as well." Despite the rhetoric of the "pacing and differentiation" of the curriculum that would be required to allow Colette to proceed "at her own pace", it was directly at her that provisions in the Record were specified: "She cannot benefit from the ordinary curriculum unless she receives additional help to keep her on task."

Luke's "uncomplex restricted intellect" had led to his placement in a learning centre attached to a mainstream primary school. His pre-care (but unspecified) "history of social deprivation" was referred to in the Record. His carers spoke positively to me about the help he had received in primary school. A similar learning centre provision was made for him on transfer to secondary school where he spent much of his time with a small group of other

youngsters with Recorded learning difficulties where he followed a restricted timetable but with opportunities to experience some mainstream subjects with support from peripatetic staff. During this study Luke's behaviour became a concern to school staff and to his foster mother. He spoke with me about his dislike of the learning centre where, he said, "they dinnae learn you nothin' an' treat you like a wean." Surprisingly, a clinical psychologist to whom he had been referred, attributed Luke's misbehaviour to "insufficiently identified learning difficulties." His foster mother explained:

> You just go along with what they say, ken, learning difficulties – whatever, but nobody explained just what he would be able to do and what he wouldn't.

For Luke and his family, the weight of writing and reams of reports had apparently not situated him where it was sought. The Record had not brought about that shared understanding and inter-disciplinary agreement which it is intended to provide.

Tracey's Record had been opened when she was aged nine. Its wording underscored the subjugation of parents' understanding of their children to those of the "experts" and the power of the norm. Her parents thought her to be clever; but: "Parental imputation of her characteristics are not confirmed by test results" is rather imperiously stated in the Record. Tracey is written as "simpler, with little academic power and vision" and as one who "will fabricate for effect" and the parental aspiration is put down to "evidence of their denial and unhelpful antipathy to professional judgement." "Innate factors" defining Tracey's cognitive capacity and intelligence quotient as "a reliable result" are all given prominence. Even her "wish to please others" is pathologised as "the exaggerated impression she hopes to create." Tracey's Record stated that additional teaching help would be made available but yet again this was not forthcoming. Indeed correspondence from education headquarters

seemed to belittle the educational psychologist's and parents' recommendation for her continued mainstream schooling which was stated (incorrectly) to have been predicated "as a result of parental aspiration only." Clearly the Authority favoured her transfer to the alternative non-mainstream setting which would not have required additional financial resourcing. Her head teacher's request for implementation of the terms of the Record, vague as it eventually was in specifying the amount of additional teaching time required, led at last to a compromise position being agreed but without parental involvement in that negotiation.

Later, in her secondary schooling by which time she was in care 40 miles distant from the school she attended, her foster carers described an alteration to Tracey's transport arrangements that had been effected as part of a cost efficiency drive. Our conversation is worth reporting in full:

**Carer:** We've had to fight tooth and nail to keep her at ... with the department, because all the department think about is money.

**RM:** Do you mean the Education Department?

**Carer:** Well the Education Department don't agree with us, because Education Department came up with the bright idea of putting (Tracey) on the bus in the morning.

**RM:** Uh huh.

**Carer:** Right. I was against it from the start, knowing what she's like. Now the bus that comes into ... at quarter to seven in the morning so the arrangement was that the bus would stop at the top and pick her up, so we had to trundle up there every morning at quarter to seven, pitch black. The bus didn't stop you had to flag it down, em...one day it just didn't stop at all. I phoned the Education Department. I said look I thought you fixed it up that the bus drivers knew they had to stop. Oh no, no, it's up to you to make it stop. Get a torch and flash it down. I said I don't think that's very safe for lorry drivers and things and I said if we don't know the bus till it's nearly on top of us, you know the headlights of trucks. Anyway she went on the bus, she stripped off on the bus, she got changed on the bus, in front of workmen, she used to get off wherever she wanted. So the bus was a total disaster...we kept trying to explain it's dangerous, it's really dangerous. I wouldn't place my own kids up there...flag a bus down in pitch black when it's getting chased by half a dozen articulated lorries...

Eventually Tracey was returned to her taxi provision but the gulf in understanding between carers and the education official concerned could not be wider. Indeed he had, during that period, written to congratulate the junior member of staff who had secured the arrangements on her "ingenuity in securing best value for what are very often extremely challenging placements." When these were overturned, I observed an inter-departmental

dispute as to which budgetary manager, in social services or education, would pay the costs. A query over the potential utility of Tracey's re-enrolment at another, closer, school was shortly thereafter successfully resisted by her carers who, in advocating Tracey's continued placement at her existing school observed:

> ...there's a serious variation in tolerance levels between schools. Some are very, very highly tolerant of kids and they understand the kids come from poor backgrounds in some cases, so they're aware of that in the back of their mind and they'll accommodate them to the best of their ability. Other schools they don't look at the child's background at all.

These five vignettes disrupt the "official" version of Record of Needs procedures as seeking consensus amongst parents and agencies in delineating need objectively and targeting appropriate interventions in the best interests of the child. They illustrate, to the contrary, that the bureaucratic gaze can be self-serving, privileging consideration of financial cost over adduced need. Its normalising judgement can be based upon precarious evidence – eg of the validity and reliability of intellectual measurement – and it subjugates, in the process, children's and family wants or desires over the expertism which uses judgemental, even pejorative, and deficit language that pathologises its subjects. The apparent reliance upon psychological testing in most of the records is entirely consistent with and instantiates Foucault's description of the "dividing practices" he described in relation to the functioning of power in hospitals asylums and prisons utilised to differentiate, categorise and exclude.

Allan (1999 pp85-86) also observes the Record of Needs system as ensuring that its subjects are "perpetually scrutinised within a hierarchy of professionals" for whom its

techniques function as a "decisive economic operator, both as an internal part of the production machinery and as a specific mechanism in the disciplinary power" (Foucault 1977b p175). These vignettes display how parental and children's voices were marginalized: in fact once their birth children had been received into care, parents were not invited to contribute to the children's assessment and consideration of outcome. The subjugation of alleged parental opinion to professionals' was, in Tracey's case, very obvious; but the impression of it being economic necessity that drove decision-making was compounded by its being situated in opposition to professional advice. Had parental aspiration for the cheaper option been voiced then one wonders whether it would have been silenced so readily.

Despite its semblance of legal status and authoritative power, meeting the actual terms of Record of Needs has never been made mandatory upon authorities. Accordingly, even in this small sample, we see the failure to meet adduced needs in three of the five children's respects. Notwithstanding there being no legal imperative to implement records, a development has occurred that Allan (1999 p87) referred to as "the auspicious gaze." That view has gone some way to detract from the stigmatising effect of being identified as a "special needs child" to the extent that some parents regard it as the gold standard of the acknowledgement of their child's difference and requirement for prioritised funding. Such seemed to be the case in respect of Lewis' mother who argued strenuously for a Record of Need to be opened and for its recommendation of residential school provision. Her request for the production of a Record of Needs was denied, following statutory assessment, on the first occasion of its making – on the ground that Lewis' needs could be met within existing/routine educational provisions although the decision was reversed later. Thus, in times of resource stringency "distance form the norm has become valued and the Record of Need has become a form of power which is coveted rather than resisted." (Allan 1999 p87)

The judgements made of these young people, we have seen, had the individualising effect that comparison to the norm allows – the measurement and highlighting of deviations or gaps, the determining of levels, their marking and definition via their difference. At the same time the normalising gaze seeks their homogenisation or attempted eradication of difference by assimilation – eg within mainstream school experience and, for these youngsters, their intended normalisation through the provision of alternative family, rather than institutional, care. Often, though, the degree of individuation experienced by the children and young people was unbearably intense and all were sensitive to their being regarded by others as different. Typically dominant expressions of concern during interviews had centred upon the potential for or their actual construction by others as abnormal, together with repeated assertions of their own normality:

Donny's: "I'm not treated un-normal. I'm just the same"

Carl's: "I said I was normal, I was, I said to them that I was still as normal, that I was."

Judy's: "I get treated the same, I am the same – not different"

Alysson's: "I'm just the same, I'm a normal kid"

Iona's: "That's normal, that's me"

The young people's identities were being forged through their experience of the criteria used by others; especially by teachers in Canna's case. Coming into care had affected the attitudes of people at school, he had said and he repeated thrice to me the mantra that one

teacher had expressed: "I don't want you in this school, I don't want you in this classroom, and I don't want you on the planet." Its impact on Canna seemed especially evident through its recapitulative recital. He had tried hard at his subjects:

> I was keeping up with them because it was really good work, I was right happy about it and all the rest of it and eh, I don't know I just got really depressed. I'd overworked myself and I figured it was all a waste of time and I got really depressed. ...I didn't want to be at school anymore because I didn't know what I was doing. All the time I was confused.

But there were teachers at school who "didn't cast an opinion....who see you for what you are" who "took the time to find out."

Not only teachers, but friends used implicit criteria to judge him once Canna had come into care. Friends became:

> ...like mortal enemies because you know I'm in foster care, it's like you know, it's like what's fucking changed I haven't changed, you know, my surroundings have changed but that's it you know and like loads of people couldn't understand it...you know the whole view of foster care from the outside world is a bad place for bad people and only like bad people are in it, you know you have to do something really bad to be in there. ...before I came into foster care it was like they'd all be good friends and all the rest of it. As soon as you go

> into foster care it's like oh you must have robbed a bank or something or like killed someone.

For fear of others' anticipated reactions to such knowledge, Becky and Thea had wanted it kept from others – from the teachers who might not want to teach them and from friends who "wouldn't like you anymore."

Becky seemed to have accepted one teacher's opinion of her:

> **B:** She thinks basically I've got low self eh what's the word, she used a word eh that I've got no confidence in myself.
>
> **RM:** What do you think?
>
> **B:** Well basically the same. Worth. No self worth.

She had been "branded thick because I wasn't like everybody else."

Gary spoke of his peers:

> Making a fool of you because you're in foster care and you don't like have any parents and that. So they keep on nagging you so you can't control your temper... 'Ha ha ha you're in foster care. We have mothers and you dinnae.'

For Gary this became all too frequent and its impact upon its sense of himself insidious and long-lasting because, as he explained, there were so many times when the verbal bullying "wasn't sorted out properly." "Everyone just backs these people up", he said. In moving around a lot of schools, as he had, Gary rarely had had time to make friends:

> There was a lot of times, a lot of times...they made all their friends back up each other and that. I don't have anybody to back me up.

Could foster parents provide that back up? How could they:

> They just tell me to ignore them. But I cannae do that...I do just try to stay out of the road...I'll keep looking at pictures of my wee brothers and that...wondering how they are.

That haunting image contrasts to Thea's bubbling excitement over an examination success and her expression of quite different dimensions of possibility that school had been able to offer her:

> I've made a lot of friends, so I have, and teachers say that I'm pleasant in class, that I'm polite, when they give me something I say thank you and stuff like that. They think I'm pleasant and quiet when I'm doing my work. So I am...and like when my certificate came in the post and I was really excited to open it up and I just looked at it and I went zoom straight down to music and looked

across and it was a 2. I sat there and I thought 'Oh my God' and I was jumping around the lounge and mum came in and said what are you jumping around for and I says mum I just passed I just got a Credit 2 for my music and she went 'Oh that's brilliant' and I went 'Yeah it was' as well. And Mr. M. who used to be my music teacher he was pleased with me as well so he was – over the moon.

The children and young people's awareness of these dimensions along which they could be judged and the coordinates that defined their situations, which acted as disciplinary markers of their status, plotting their circumstances and delineating their horizons of possibility, are discussed in the following chapter as are the fashions whereby they could be described as accepting or transgressing these boundaries. Here, I turn to that remaining disciplinary technique referred to as *The Examination* that Foucault (1977b pp184-192) identified which, utilising both hierarchical observation and normative judgement "establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them." (p184)

## 6.4 The Examination

Allan (1999) considers that in education, the examination has taken a less ritualised form that in medicine where the medical examination allows doctors to construct a narrative, a record, of the patient's body – an account of its functioning or malfunctioning that connects cause with effect, symptoms with disease. In this sense too, for example, the procedures that lead to the opening of Record of Need and their contents, as we saw, and the assessment frameworks proposed for use in relation to child welfare work are examples of the disciplinary technique that:

Leaves behind it a whole meticulous archive... The examination that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing. (Foucault 1977b p189).

Here also Foucault writes of how the examination introduced individuality into its field of documentation by way of normalising judgement and that its principle of compulsory visibility – eg via statutorily mandatory psychological or paediatric reviews in our case – held its subjects in a "mechanism of objectification" (p187) whereby individuals become established as cases, subject therefore to casework and thereby:

> described, judged, measured, compared with others in (their) very individuality and (as necessary...) trained or corrected, classified, normalised, excluded. (p191)

Earlier, Foucault (1973) had described how the character of the medical examination changed as doctors began to look for different things – ie how changing discourse had structured the gaze. Later he suggests that medical knowledge became determined not just by its structuring discourses but by the practices of the institution that itself produced knowledge through examination of the body (1977b). The hospital became an "examining apparatus" and school too has since become "a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination" (p186) where the provision of constant knowledge by teachers of their pupils made possible the beginning of pedagogical study. Under disciplinary, rather than sovereign, power, the visibility of its practice is reversed: "the subjects of power become visible, whilst those who exercise power become invisible" (Shumway 1989 p131) in contrast to the more ancient visibility of the symbols or personage of monarchy compared to the invisibility of the population. Foucault also argued that discipline reversed the

"politics of individualisation" (Shumway 1989 p132) so that whereas, under sovereignty the monarch would be the most individualised (by visual or written record), disciplinary power, more anonymous and functional, individualised the less powerful whose subjugation and objectification was assisted by those networks that involved tabulations, files, tables and records – all the documentations that compiled knowledge of groups and individual cases.

So the examination is characterised by a "ceremony of power" (Foucault 1977b p185) sourced from the focus of the gaze on its less powerful subject. Clearly formal school examinations of traditional and ritualised style are of that nature. The bureaucratic trappings of child care reviews, Children's Hearings and the range of assessment meetings, child protection meetings and Area Review Groups serve also the examining purpose and set the scene for these ceremonies of objectification. Here, these will be illustrated under the more general heading of the children's encounters with adults in these settings.

<u>Great big decisions at the big table</u>

I had asked Judy about the meetings that boys and girls went to. Did she go to these?

Yes, in the big blue house. There's a big table that people sit round and ask questions and that's all I can tell you really. ...they're very boring. People like mummies get upset.

Rory had been frightened. Earlier we heard of his panic that his private life could be the subject of such public intrusion. His description of his first encounter at the big table was vivid:

> It was in a big kind of board room in M. Street in S. And I, I was quite young at the time but I didn't like that, it scared me sitting round a huge big table, at least fifteen feet away from the people I was talking to, constantly asking me questions, people I didn't know wanting to know every detail of my life. I didn't like that. It actually physically scared me.

Rory had been able to request fewer meetings with fewer people attending and for those to take place at his home:

> Which I actually, I preferred that a lot better because, ken, obviously I know the people. It's a more comfortable setting, see I don't like a lot of people there asking me questions that I don't think they need to know. And it was like it felt kind of pointless as well because I was being asked obvious questions. They were asking me what my name was what my date of birth was I ken that maybe it had a purpose like but I didn't feel it needed it.

In attending Children's Hearings I too have been struck by their ceremonial commencement that must necessarily, legally, mark from the outset their subjects'

domiciliary details and admission to whatever grounds of referral have mapped their route to the Hearing table.

For 14 year old Angus, though the intrusive nature of the Hearing had mellowed. "They're fine now – just have to answer the same questions. It's easy 'cause I've had a lot of them so I get used to them." Gary too said that the experience was getting easier. "Because I've been to about 90 or something"; but even so, there were embarrassing aspects that will be referred to soon. Carl had not found his encounters troublesome; indeed perhaps they could serve a longer-term heuristic purpose for him:

> I don't mind going to meetings because, like, I've probably got my future planned. I want to be a teacher, and teachers have to go to meetings and all.

A willing and cooperative participant in his own surveillance he added:

> The members of the Panel, that like jot everything down and tell me, like just to see if their notes are the same and like date of my birthday and if they've got it all down right.

Aaron was keen to attend another Hearing. "To tell them how I think and how I feel what's changed." Because:

> I think at the last Panel I never expressed myself clearly to them because I think I was too confused at that time and I never knew what I wanted, you ken what I mean, and they had to make that decision for me.

Describing the dilemma that is discussed in the following chapter as an aporetic experience, Alysson had mentioned to me that her head teachers at seven schools had

attended meetings with her. She felt that teachers knowing about fostered children's circumstances would help them to "understand" to "know more about what you're thinking" and to "help you" as we had heard earlier. As filters of the scope of the gaze she had told me that social workers and her carers should be the judges of the extent of the information about her circumstances that should be made available to her teachers generally. Yet their attending meetings where that filter was of course removed clarified the teachers' gaze. I had asked her how that felt:

> Embarrassed...Well it was like...in case they would tell, like, kind of scared in case they would tell somebody else somebody else that shouldn't, that I don't want to know. That I don't want them to know about it...Yeah, private things.

Carl's faith in the Hearing members – the "people in charge" as he described them, seemed unwavering: "Usually the decisions they make are the ones that I would have made", he stated and cited his being kept on the roll of a school in which he had become very settled although his carers had moved from its catchment area. He attributed that decision to the Panel. I wondered how they got their decisions right. It helped if they had experience:

> Well there was this lady at the Panel and she also fostered and she probably would know how it is and all. And the rest of them write it down in a kind of a way and then at the end the people write down what they think and they put it up to a great big decision.

Even so Carl valued the support of the adult he called his "family worker" who came to meetings to "comfort" him. I was interested in that word:

> Well it means...to make you more comfortable...to make you nice and settled...to give you a hug – 'cause – it's nearly every Panel that

> I get upset...Mummy not appearing for the contact...like every second time I saw her she doesn't appear.

So there seemed to be a cost to Carl's acquiescence in his own scrutiny.

Lucy's experience of meetings seemed to be of performance of ritual but no less difficult for that:

> They listen to my Mum and Dad, they never listen to me. They listen to what my Mum and Dad said to them, they never took anything I said. My faither would gaun to a meeting and he would start shouting, like I had to go to a Panel and they brought my Dad doon fae the jail to gaun to the Panel and he just sat there shouting and I never got to say a thing. I never got to say a thing about it. My mum had to gaun into a meeting at school aboot me being in the Support Unit. And she sat there and she put on a' that polite voice, ken, the snobby voice that she can dae because my Mum acts like that. And she gauns in and she sits and talks all polite to them and they agree with everything she says.

She had found teachers' attendance at Panels unhelpful:

> Because they went back and shared it with the other teachers, which made it worse, because the other teachers knew what was going on and they would ask me if everything was okay at hame and it wis nane o' their business.

She was angry that she had not been consulted about what teachers might get to know about her and about what should be said by teachers at meetings they attended. She felt that rather than being "kept in the dark" there should be an opportunity provided to discuss who, from the school, would attend Hearings and Reviews and what would be disclosed.

Hannah was determined, she said, that teachers shouldn't attend meetings about her. "I don't see that teachers have any right to come into your life" she said. She had accepted, however, that the hierarchical position of Head of Guidance was entitled to collate a "view from all my subjects of how I was getting on" for her annual Hearings and six monthly reviews. A "new cool Australian guidance teacher" had most recently, and for the first time ever, consulted with her prior to submitting the school's report:

> The cool thing was that he came to me and he asked me if the report was okay – for me to have a look at...that's never happened to me before, nobody ever asked me before. It's like why? Because I know that Mr. W. (Head of Guidance) does the reports but no-one's ever asked me before and that's quite cool that he did that.

Hannah described a feeling of dissociation that derived from the examination at Panels and the intrusion of strangers to whom the apprenticeship of the gaze was to be offered. She experienced a bind when submitting to its voyeuristic compass:

> Well when you feel that you're not really part of what's happening in your life, you know that everything's being just being done for you, sometimes, like there's things that you maybe don't really want to be part in. Like to do with like my Panels that I don't want to be part of them, but I have been. You know some people have to be there and other people don't and I didn't really have much say in people that won't be there. Like my social worker sometimes has asked me if, you know those people who'd sit, like at my reviews and my Panel. Like new people. It's like maybe they have to learn the job, but why me? It's like they ask me because they know I won't say no. Like I don't want to turn them away. But I don't really want them knowing my business.

Aaron too had expressed the wish for the restriction of the teacherly gaze to what he termed "the educationally why" of his background:

> I don't think (teachers) should be allowed to know other people's background. I think they just should know educationally why... but nothing like other reports from other professionals. It's nothing to do with the school. They should only be allowed...ken...their records from different schools, their maths, or the stages in English. All educationally-wise. Levels for other teachers to know what level is this person so as they can learn. But I don't think they should be allowed any other things.

The extent to which all aspects of children's development and their relations can be brought under the aegis of the examining, documenting gaze was revisited time and time again by the children and young people in the course of their child care reviews, many of which I attended during this study. Lewis began to cry on one occasion when he was asked to describe a visit from his father that had ended unhappily. A kind of violence had been perpetrated. Later he told me that he had felt sprung upon to talk about events, especially in front of his PE teacher who was standing in for a guidance teacher. He would much rather had been given warning: "I'm thinking not this; not her – if only they'd said she'd be there." Other times I witnessed the most personal of details being paraded in front of teachers – from the frequency of bed-wetting to alleged lack of hygiene in its graphic detail; the litany of the faults of parents and siblings and the disclosure of a myriad of day to day personal characteristics all of which were to be written up in Review documentation – papers that were widely disseminated, invariably to schools, but never with the consent to their content by the young people who became subjects dissected by their authors, constructed and concretised by their papers. How unlike the experience of

our own children who cringe with embarrassment – even at their parents' appearance and for whom the prospect of a teacher visiting their home would generate dread or panic.

Well Sir I'm maladjusted

Many of these young people had been subject to psychological assessment and psychiatric evaluation. Aaron's experiences of six examinations by different psychiatrists and his aspirations for a status to be constructed around him will be considered later in discussing the nature of the spaces through which he passed in his care career. Generally, psychiatric knowledge seems in my experience to be regularly privileged over others. Many teachers especially appear to value that deficit theorising which characterises psychiatric diagnosis and treatment, where the postulate of individual dysfunction and pupil pathology obfuscates and diverts attention from the distorted school practices when considering the genesis of disruption, school failure and youth alienation. Slee (1995), commenting on the linking of misbehaviour at school to the deficient pathologies invented by psychiatric discourse, observes that the cusp of the epidemic of "Attention Deficit Disorder" or its more common British variant when accompanied with "Hyperactivity" (ADHD) on which we currently stand, leads to the appropriation of the school behaviour agenda by "a new generation of professionals moving across from their segregated areas of interest." (p75) These border crossings and expansionist projects spearheaded by some professional troops can be evidenced by the growing demand, for example in the assessment reports for Lewis' Record of Need. There, increased support and treatment from Occupational and Speech Therapy services to help ameliorate his "core motor defect" said to "underlie the depressing behavioural symptoms" was sought. Recommendations included numerous inventive strategies such as bench walking and other "balancing and proprioceptive-sensory integration type" activities.

Three other children in this study had been given diagnoses of ADHD and one other rather obstinate and defiant boy as described by his teachers had been confirmed by a psychiatrist as suffering from the recently created "Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome."

Kevin's account of his "maladjustment" prior to the commencement of the study displayed his interiorisation of the concept. A seemingly docile acceptance of its construction around him is evident in the following vignette:

I had been visiting Kevin at his residential school where I'd enquired, to open our conversation, why he attended the school:

> K: "Well sir I'm maladjusted"
>
> RM: "That's an interesting word. What does it mean?"
>
> K "Well can I put it this way if you don't mind. If I see my pal across the road and he shouts 'you're a bastard', I'll shout back, 'ya bastard' and if I wasn't maladjusted I wouldn't say nothing."

The imperialist hold of the psychiatric examination and its exclusive attempts to monopolise the construction of subjects was illustrated when, in discussing Aaron's situation at a child care review, I had talked a little about my understandings of the changing historical contingencies and cultural specificities of mental illness. It was minuted that I would later meet with him –"the educational psychologist will.... discuss with (Aaron) the nature of mental illness." I was subsequently informed of the psychiatrist's anger that I had claimed such misplaced and unestablished expertise from her professional fiefdom.

Sometimes it seemed that the certainty with which a psychiatric judgement was expressed, clad in the powerful jargon of unassailable medical expertise that had classified indiscipline or bad behaviour of whatever other description as sickness, appealed to parents or Children's Hearing membership. One Panel member had little time, I felt, for my own description of one of the young people's situations which I had characterised as his desire "simply and overwhelmingly to be taken more seriously by us all." Rather she proposed "No…Let's get a proper assessment. We'll ask Dr. (Psychiatrist)."

Lewis' mother's experience of the psychiatric examination had been an auspicious one in so far as it legitimised the residential placement she was seeking. Canna though found his encounters with many of the "psy-professions" representatives far less helpful:

> …. They just sit and stare…. It's like what's the point of even being there. So I stopped going to see them – all my doctors all the counselling…they're all just a bunch of tits.

The regulatory potential of the examination and its discovery, "revealing" and construction of cases through the application of psychometric testing and psychiatric evaluation has principally been explored and identified here as serving the normative pursuit of sustaining that flow of power whereby the docile bodies of looked after children are to be maintained: "looked after" indeed. School exclusion can be regarded of course as testimony to the regulatory imperative. Less overt, if more insidious, are those technologies such as the burgeoning requirements for record keeping, behaviour charts, coordinated planning, target setting via rating scales and other:

...profiles of aberration against which students are first compared to establish the legitimacy of their behaviour and, second, referred to the 'appropriate' therapeutic intervention or institutional setting. (Slee 1995 p34).

# CHAPTER 7 REFRACTING THE GAZE

This chapter illustrates the ways that the children and young people displayed their awareness and manipulations of the flows of disciplinary power that circulated around them – how they utilised their own agency. Here, the way of thinking about agency is of the young people's active construction of selves and their ability to resist rather than inevitably to accept the ascribed. Our conversations revealed these agentic struggles to combat the labelling that seemed to violate their personal circumstances. Later in the chapter, some of these challenges and resistances to the constructions of difference that were built around them will be described as transgressive in respect of those children who seemed to utilise their agency in a more obvious or overt fashion than others. But although their strategies of defence, alliance, countermine and countercheck varied in intensity and subtlety, they all described circumstances that testified to their, sometimes acute, awareness of these constructions. Thus they may have varied in their levels and techniques of resistance but they knew of their othering and the controlling, defining effect of adults' discourse and power.

Sometimes they seemed to be caught in a matrix of undecidability, a dilemmic space where their struggles could be identified or worked out in action. I try to illustrate this aporetics of experience with reference to that Derridean notion. I borrow also from the metaphorical eloquence of some Deleuzian concepts in describing the topography of the social spaces they spoke of encountering. The purpose here is to map or describe the paths they make in, for example, seeking to avoid the densest concentrations of the gaze.

## 7.1 Not wanted on this planet

We hear first from a group of young people who seemed to use their agency in that less overt fashion. Of them, Canna's story is featured firstly and at some length partly because, like two others whose stories also feature at relative length he had been a client of my services as an educational psychologist and also a research informant. It offers a vivid account of his awareness of surrounding disciplinary discourses and his efforts to resist their encapsulation of his status. Also, as one who had chosen to return to school and who, in the final interview, had finally left school, his story is unique and provides an articulate reflection and hindsight not available to others in the study.

Canna had agreed to take part in the study from the commencement of data gathering at which time, aged 16, he had recently left school although, as I discovered, he hoped to return to improve his qualifications. He had not been in care when I first met him - actually two years previous to the data gathering for this study. Then I had met him not as a researcher but as educational psychologist to the school he attended. At that time school had been concerned that he appeared very unsettled and angry. He had talked sadly to his guidance teacher about his home situation where he felt his happiness was marred by father's rejection of him following his recent re-marriage and adoption of his stepson. According to Canna this stepson was significantly favoured over him by both father and stepmother. Meanwhile his natural mother, living far away with Canna's sister, had not been able to take him to live with her following acrimonious divorce proceedings. Canna spoke with me at the time of referral about how his unhappiness was compounded by his mother's showering of gifts and opportunities such as foreign holidays on his sister the like of which contrasted strongly with the deprivation of material and affection he felt keenly. Secured in a bind or knot (Laing 1959) Canna had received a letter from mother to say that she could not accommodate his wish to live with her and that should he persist in that

aspiration then she predicted that his father would never again speak to him and that her own life would be blighted. Canna had begun to self-harm in school. It seemed that he was caught amongst competing loyalties and expectations.

Canna and I had spoken regularly during that school session. His father and stepmother had joined some of these conversations as had a social worker to whom I had made referral. Both she and I eventually concluded that Canna was so unhappy at home and that his carers were manifestly unable to empathise with his feelings, that measures of care should be considered. To that end a Children's Hearing was convened and Canna was received into foster care. School staff for a while thereafter became happier with Canna's behaviour at school and he agreed that I should no longer stay involved.

In my subsequent research role he greeted me warmly at our first interview and recalled some of his earlier unhappiness. He was vituperative in his criticisms of his treatment at school prior to his leaving and railed against a maths teacher's inability to understand that his work was behind only because he had missed some lessons due to his having attended a grandparent's funeral. He was vitriolic in his condemnation of his head teacher who, he said, had insensitively agreed to him dropping that subject having earlier stated that this would mean that he could not remain at school. He recalled, as we heard in the last chapter, being told: "I don't want you in this school, I don't want you in this classroom, I don't want you on this planet." Canna felt that anti-depressant medication had been making him very ill and confused but that most teachers had only been interested in classroom performance – not in him.

He reflected upon the changes in others' attitudes at school that he considered to be a result of his becoming looked after. He did not feel his academic progress had been affected:

"It's just the attitudes of people at school about me which pisses me off...because of people pissing me off about being in care." But two teachers in particular were helpful:

> ...they helped me a lot...they really did help. I could talk to them, it was like they were the kind of people that would actually sit down and listen to me. It was like they really knew me well, I could speak to them easy, it was like I was a nice person.

With the exception of these teachers Canna preferred to seek the counsel of "independent" others; friends and doctors who he hoped would not use his secrets against him. He developed the theme that teachers paid insufficient attention to what he felt to be his personal substance and drew a sharp contrast to teachers who "didn't cast an opinion, who see you for what you are...who take the time to find out" with the "maths teacher from hell" who "didn't give a shit about my situation." Yet there seemed to be some ambivalence about people "really knowing" him. The liminality, or undecidability of the dilemma seemed salient on account of that very "in between-ness" of his status. I had asked Canna to try to say more about how talking with a teacher had helped:

> I don't know, I don't really talk to (carer) all the time about anything. They know your secrets and they can use them against you. So it's like I talk to my friends or talk to an independent body outside of the home.

But the benefits of non-directive neutrality were questionable:

> I mean I've tried talking to psychiatrists and everyone else and they just sit and stare at walls and shit it's like what's the point of being here. I stopped all that you know.

Most others had not met his hopes: friends had become enemies, doctors and counsellors too were dismissed as "just a bunch of tits" as we heard and when school guidance staff offered a counselling role he "snarled back" – especially it seemed when he was being positioned as needing special attention. He would have no truck with that discourse he said. Indeed Canna experienced the need to be counselled as an intrusive coercive marker of his difference that he contrasted with school experience prior to coming in to care: "Before they knew what was going on in my life, they just let me get on with it.... Didn't ask me any questions" whereas in care: "They would sit you down and have my problems opened."

For Canna there seemed to be a contradiction between these prying activities and the "nervous as Hell" experiences of care reviews when:

> You're the youngster there and you've got all the adult people talking around you, talking about you and just ignoring you completely out of the conversation. It's like, hey I exist – I'm sat right here...it's very unnerving.

So it seemed that again the liminality of his status was highlighted and it was a very unsettling experience.

Canna talked about other perceived status changes that seemed to come about as a result of coming into care. Strangely, some previous good friends became "mortal enemies": "It's like

what fucking changed. I haven't changed. You know you're surroundings have changed...but that's it." He extrapolated:

> The whole view of foster care from the outside world is it's a bad place for bad people and only like bad people are in it, you know, you have to do something really bad to be there.

His ambivalence toward people knowing his secrets extended to friends: "Most of them don't know why I'm here" and his girlfriend who, despite going out with for four months, was not to know his status: "It's nothing to do with anyone else, it's personal."

I was interested to hear, since Canna had told me of how he hoped to return to school, what might make it easier the next time. He singled out teachers again:

> Yeah. I mean most of these teachers need to go on training courses I'm sure to teach them about pupils who are in care and what they need...I mean they have to be able to understand people better than what they do, and they just, you know they look at you as a normal pupil, which, okay, is probably the way to do it... they don't take the time, they don't find out what's wrong or what could be done to help you it's like they don't realise what's going on. It's like they're wearing a set of blinkers all the time. They can't see past a straight line. You know, bend the rules every now and then, and they just don't and they just don't understand that. I think if they did quite a lot of them would become better teachers for it, they'd be able to understand themselves better as well, you know, as well as other people. Better for everyone not just people in foster care. If they went on a course a three day course or something like that to

> find out more about the people with problems, you know, it would be a better place all round.

I picked up on the tension between teachers knowing too much, on the one hand, but needing to know something so as to help them understand. Canna put it this way:

> They need to know you to a degree, the point where they need to know you to, there is a point like beyond that, you know, and it's like they know too much then. What they need to do is just need to find out selective things about you. But the school should actually know this. Because the school should give them the information needed.

Canna explained that he thought there should be some written records of his situation available to teachers. He seemed content that some report to state these "selected things" should be available to teachers to help them understand better:

> If they do know selective information, if you're having a bad day then they should realise that they can, that they should back off a bit, you know not go off the head. Because if you have a bad day the last thing you want is the stupid cunts sitting there shouting at you for an hour.

Canna's articulation of the tension that existed for him between, on the one hand, teachers and carers knowing secrets that could be turned against you yet, on the other, their having that knowledge that might help their understanding and treatment of young people, is the aporia that arises from the status of in between-ness, of being still me, but not me (because I'm not in the care of those who shaped me) that we will hear expressed by others also-often in terms of their concern to be treated normally; for teachers and others to know that

they were in care but not to know the details of why they were in care. Canna observed that the imprimatur of the head teacher would need to accompany the disclosure of any selective information because without such, teachers would not pay sufficient attention. Yet he seemed to recognise the impossibility of the aporia in his acknowledgement of those who would "never change anyway" those who were "wearing a set of blinkers all the time", those who couldn't "bend the rules." In other words he was describing those who could not or would not leave the striated space (see below) of certainty and regulation.

Canna's view on recent central government proposals for the nomination of designated teachers for looked after children was interesting. He commented:

> No, that ain't going to work, simply because you need more than one teacher. You can't go through all the school, you can't do what you want to do with one teacher I mean yes one teacher... it still isn't going to stop another five or six teachers from having a go at you or not understanding anything about you.

By the end of the study, Canna was undertaking a catering and hospitality course at college. He compared his enjoyment of the college course to his school experience: "I love it down there because they treat you like a person – not a bloody number." He vividly described the depersonalising and monolithic space of domination he had experienced at school:

> They see you as a number...that's where schooling fails. If you had a headmaster that got to know people, and actually helped them instead of standing there like a mass dictator on the top of a footstool, screaming and

> yelling that he's right. (If you could) voice an opinion.... Then it would be really good.

Looking back over his school career and the period when he returned after his year out (when he had "partied for ten months", he said) he continued to fulminate at perceived injustices by teachers. He recognised that his more recent positive experience of some other schoolteachers might have reflected their awareness of his status or changes that had taken place in himself. Of those more positive experiences he commented:

> I...don't know if that was because I was being put through care or if it was because I was an adult student returning to the school and it was easier for me to talk to a teacher.

So his borderline status was still evident.

Even at the end of the data collection when he was attending college Canna repeated that having been in care affected his relationships with other youngsters particularly in relation to intrusive questioning by others. He stated:

> I mean even now people still ask me you know this and that about it...the people you do say to, they're a bit shocked... it's like well, hey, why did it happen.

When I asked him to reflect on his experience of returning to the same school where he had attended as a youngster in care he commented:

...back to one of your old questions. I do think that the teachers' attitude changed, but it's not very noticeable unless you're looking to find it. I mean they act the same but it's like just subtle differences of how they would have handled a situation.

He reflected that he'd "never really had a problem" with "people noseying in and out" of his private life... "but I'm only going to tell them what I want them to know aren't I?" and he expanded, echoing what he had said over two years previously and explained how he might further resist by confronting others with his own silence:

> I mean everyone's got their own mental issues and mental boundaries...That's the way it is...it really depends...you're just sitting there having a normal conversation and you gradually get deeper and deeper into things. There would get a point in that conversation when I would say no. I don't want to do it.

Canna considered that "overstepping the boundaries" might be avoided by teachers:

> They could go back to their superiors and dig out my records and stuff and find out, you know, what to avoid saying to me...they sit and read the rest of the file so they learn quite a lot about you.

A particularly "huge meeting" stuck in his mind where he felt "unnerved and put in the spotlight." He had not felt consulted before meetings:

> I mean they don't really let you in on all the information you need to know, they don't tell you about things until it's been done, I mean you

> could sit through it and witness it all and still don't have a damn scooby what's going on.

I asked him what might have made a difference:

> Maybe if they'd sat there and told me you know this is a meeting this is what it's about, this is going to be basically the gist of it. These people are going to be there you know this is the purpose of them being here you know they should just let you know everything everything you need to know. They could settle your nerves about it.

Canna's nerve settling had been made easier, he said, through having a supportive girl friend. He described a space of apparent sanctuary to which, with her, he might retreat when burdened by feelings of anger toward school staff and his father who, I was informed, had tried to kill him. Others as we shall hear described places of privacy which have some of the characteristics of what Deleuze and Guattari (1987 cited in Roy 2003 pp58-59) call smooth space. In contrast to the closely governed "gridded" or "striated" spaces of regulation where hierarchies exist and impose their projected imprint; smooth space is nomadic, rhizomatic, with the accumulation of a multiplicity of beginnings which are opportunities for nomadic exploration. Roy (2003) compares the contrast to that between felt and fabric, where the smoothness of felt is created by the entanglement of countless micro fibres cascading throughout the material's space, unlike the defined and regimented – tartan-like – patterns and sub-patterns reproduced in the warp and weave of the loom's fabric. Thus fabric is analogous to striated space.

In a similar fashion to the distinction that Canna made between the school as a space of domination and the sanctuary of his girlfriend's home "where there I can be settled, she can

see me," another young man, Barra, spoke of his feelings at the time of coming into care: "I just felt I wanted to run away and get back to my home because there I didn't have to do anything, I could do what I wanted." Barra had actively tried to treat his carer like his mother and to adjust to his in-between positioning:

> I got on really well with my foster parents and I started treating Mrs. K. like my Mum. I got further and further away from my real parents till eventually there was no contact with them at all.

Other children's queries about his status brought back memories:

> I used to start and not do what I was asked...when I wasn't seeing my Mum I used to get moody. I was always, like, hyper. I didn't want to do anything because I hadn't seen my Mum and I had a right to see her. I was just missing her.

Barra was aware of being under scrutiny at home and school because of his bad behaviour but his mind was on other things. Quite simply, he said: "I was more interested to see if I was going to get home or not." So I had enquired how his settling in with Mr. and Mrs. K. had come about. Barra said:

> I realised that what I want and what I'm going to get were two different things. I thought there's no point in messing about because I'm only going to get what they think is right for me; so it's just like I can't win.

He seemed to have begun to accept his care identity by his last year in primary school, he said, by which time he'd been in care for four years. But transfer to secondary school

posed a threat; maybe because then he encountered those playmates who remembered him from his earliest primary schooling but from whom he had been separated through his attendance at school in a different community since then. It was as if his borderline status was revisited: "It brought back memories...all the folk that I knew from (G) were in first year as well. You're supposed to be with your mum so they were wondering what happened." Barra described another period of turmoil, of feeling different and being bullied because he was in care and he said he regularly "lashed out." At Mr. and Mrs. K's home, the situation deteriorated. "Things were getting worse by then, because, with being with all the folk I'd known at (G)." Then, in second year at secondary school, Barra's sister, who had remained with their mother and her new husband, transferred to the same secondary school. Barra hardly knew her. I'd wondered if he harboured resentment. Barra answered: "No, I didn't mind her being at home; it was just I wanted to be there, not in foster care." His sister's presence seemed to remind him of, and to underline, his shifting status.

Thereafter "things just got worse...I wasn't achieving the grades...they couldn't control me anymore because I used to take my anger out. They just couldn't control me." Eventually Barra was removed to new carers to a new space of undecidability:

> Well on one side I felt upset because I'd been with (Mr. and Mrs. K.) for six years and on the other side I felt good 'cause I was going to have a fresh start at a new school. I could do better.

My conversation with Barra had taken place after he had attended that new school for over a year. Then, aged 15, he told me of how well he felt he was getting on with new carers and teachers. Shortly after his change of circumstances he had again spoken with the new carers of his interest in regaining some contact with his mother. That had followed quickly and she had telephoned. To his astonishment he learned that she had tried repeatedly to

contact him through Mr. and Mrs. K. but they had blocked that, telling her that he did not wish to speak to her. His anger was palpable but he proudly spoke of his plans to return to her care in her new home now furth of Scotland. He spoke of his joy at becoming reunited with his family and of their successes. Of his oldest brother he said: "It's so good to know him, I can't get over he's the spitting image of me. It's just good to see him and good to find out about him." He spoke warmly of the supports he felt he'd had. Talking with people had helped. But if only he'd had the contact he had sought: "Just having contact with my parents, somebody to help. I felt abandoned when I thought I couldn't speak to them."

These stories reveal then pain that accompanies the children's insights into their circumstances. They convey eloquently how irrelevant the system's injunctions, for example for Barra to behave, better must seem. Greg, aged 14, became so upset in talking of how teachers couldn't seem to understand how he had been bullied that we turned off the recorder and spoke of different matters. Carl, aged ten, spoke of matters on his mind at school:

> When I had moved to the other family that I was lived (sic) with, my Mummy had a three days chance to see, they were testing her, to see if she could actually look after us. Then she could have kept us. But she went out that night and left us in the house. So that's how I was kept.

It is interesting that Carl's passivity is underscored in his use of language. He is "lived" and "kept."

Lucy had been seriously physically assaulted when aged nine by her mother during a visit to her father in jail immediately prior to coming into care six years before I met her. Now aged 15 she was staying with foster carers with her own baby of 13 months. She described

a school career during which she had suffered many taunts over her father's criminal status and her mother's drug taking. She could only remember one teacher who had "cared enough to listen" to her and she echoed a view voiced by others that teachers were "only there for the money." The teacher concerned had helped somewhat because Lucy had been able to tell her "everything that went on anywhere, I was able to tell her. But it didnae mak it any better, and that was how the skivin' started." Meanwhile her sister had been spreading stories of how her mother had been the innocent party to the serious assault. Lucy said her peers and sister "just turned things completely roon aboot" and her behaviour at school, during second year at secondary became truculent and aggressive to the extent that repeated school exclusions had occurred. Her care plan had anticipated her re-integration home - to the family "that I always knew I wasnae part of", a move she didn't wish, and so she had run away. But even although not part of that family, others' perceptions of its alleged failings were to haunt her. At school, drugs had been confiscated from her sister and Lucy recalled one teacher saying to her, "You're just going to be like your sister and mother – you're going to turn out to be a druggie."

Lucy described a growing dilemma in the light of her mother's apparently changing view:

> I wanted to gaun home, and I didnae want to. I wanted to gaun for yin night to see what it would be like because she telt me that she'd changed and she wouldnae hit me ony mair an' everythin else. And I wanted to come home for the night to see what it would be like. But they telt me that because if I put myself in voluntarily I either went hame for good or a didnae gaun home at all. They should have let me gaun hame for the night to see what it was like. To see if she had changed. But they never.

For Lucy, teachers' well-intentioned pastoral concerns were obtrusive and insensitive. We heard in the last chapter how teachers attending her meetings had shared information promiscuously:

> It made it worse, because the other teachers knew what was going on and they would ask me if everything was okay at home. But it wis nane o their business. They ask you in front o' the whole class an' it makes you even worse. An' the class gets to fin oot everythin' because o' the teachers. It didnae make it ony easier.

Lucy wanted to be able to express opinions – especially at meetings, but she felt she needed time and more help to understand what the scope of their decision-making might be. She said that she often felt "kept in the dark."

Since having her baby boy, Lucy had received no education. She considered that at this late stage "it would be a waste of time, because I've got nae interest now" to engage with a tutor or some other educational provision. But she sadly reflected that her angry outbursts at school and the exclusions that ensued would rebound on her son:

> I mean, when he gauns tae school I'll no' be able to teach him onythin' because I don't know nothin'. I ken nothin' so a cannae dae it.

But if she couldn't read or write, Lucy had other practical skills that she felt she could transfer and which testified to how she could care for her child on her own:

> I ken I can. I done it for two an' a half year for my Nana. I done everythin' for her. I cashed her book, I done her shoppin', I done her

> hoosework, I done her washin' an' cooked for her tae. So I ken I can dae it...but they'll just no' let me.

So here was another aporetic dilemma. Though Lucy wanted to care for her son, she recognised that there might not be the assistance she required:

> But they'll no' help me to dae it. I ken they cannae let me do it the noo – but they'll no' help me to dae it. They want me to stay in care for as long as possible an' I don't want to.

Sometimes it seemed that these children and young people had inhabited different worlds at differing times of their lives and their descriptions of the contrasts in terms of these spaces' more or less gridded or rule bound texture has been illustrated. In terms also simply of their adequacy for growth, some of their experiences had been traumatic. Prior to care, brothers Jack and Luke had been locked in rooms with little adult contact or nurturance, sleeping on bare boards with no toilet facilities. It seemed that their high profile abusive experiences had attracted sympathy from teachers during their primary schooling, but by secondary it was as if these earlier circumstances no longer mitigated their behaviours, which, occasionally aggressive and disruptive, earned their school exclusion. Their carer complained that despite their massive social and emotional progress during their time with her, the head teacher persisted in drawing to her attention "wee silly things" that she found inconsequential:

> Like for instance, he sat on a table instead of the floor. The teacher says he tried to be a big man - she wrote it down. But he told me that the last time they had been told to sit on tables in that class. So what's he to do. He just assumed...I thought, do I really need all this.

As we've seen, some of the children found it easier to separate these worlds -to cross the border and, like Jack and Luke try not to look back. Both these boys, like Thea and others, had spoken of their feeling safe at last. For Jack the difference was that you "could look up to them (his carers) and say I love you and all that."

The cost of Becky's struggle against the untrustworthy image which teachers held of her was her exclusion from school. Earlier we learned that she had not been allowed the privilege other students were accorded during the period of certificate examinations when requirement for school attendance was generally reduced. Becky explained that since she was going to be alone in classes accordingly, she pretended that she had permission to go elsewhere in the school. On being challenged the escalation that ensued led to her exclusion. Ironically, it seemed, her attempted transgression served only to reinforce the already ascribed image:

> I got one ginormous bollicking outside the classroom and their words were that I was dangerous. They were her words, I was dangerous, because I had told one lie.

Other pupils sometimes joined Becky in the canteen to which she was directed to eat so as even that activity could be supervised. But these friends found it irksome that they had to behave less spontaneously when entering Becky's more striated social space:

> You see my friends that I hang around with, they're always going on 'It's no' fair 'cause you can never come to the same canteen.' Every time they have to make an exception. They're saying 'We can hang

> around and sit and talk and things like that.' They feel it's no' fair them having to leave their other friends to come and join me.

Becky understood that the exceptions they made, whilst welcome to her, highlighted the fragility of her status: "If we sometimes watch a video together (during lunch break) it's because they've got nothing better to do."

## 7.2 Active transgressions

Other young people's responses to the gaze appear to represent a form of transgression involving their more overt challenging of imposed boundaries. We can think of these challenges as active technologies of the self (Foucault 1988b) which enable the social construction of personal identity where identity is understood as dynamic, multiple and transformative. As Hall (1993) observes:

> Identities come from somewhere. But...far from being externally fixed in some essentialist past, they are subject to the continual play of history, culture and power...are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within (the) narratives. (Hall 1993 p394, cited in Vincent 2003)

Foucault described in his later writing (1988a, 1988b, 1991) the technologies of the self which involved the exercise of micro powers in everyday interaction and which displayed the resistance generated by that struggle - against the ascribed, against docility - in forming our selves. Transformative, in shaping and reshaping the self, these technologies are the practices that:

> Permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and a way of being so as to transform themselves in order to attain a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality. (1988a p18)

Lewis' self practices will be discussed first in this section. His situation was one that I came to know as a researcher as well, later, as caseworker psychologist. He had only recently moved from another area of the country at the time he and his mother agreed for him to be part of this study. A Record of Need had been opened by his previous local education authority which described his emotional and behavioural difficulties; but on arrival from his previous primary school he was not then a looked after child. He had been diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder together with Oppositional Defiance Disorder and was prescribed Ritalin. His special needs were said to exist in relation to literacy, behaviour, impulsivity, self-confidence/self-esteem, social skills and concentration: which one teacher had stated to be "zero." Various objectives had been set including his becoming less impulsive, more considerate and calm. A structured behaviour programme had been recommended and although Lewis was said to require a full curriculum its accessing was to be "differentiated to take into account his learning style and weak auditory and visual memory."

Lewis's mother had previously sought his placement in a residential school on account of her view that mainstream schooling was not property addressing his needs. His behaviour was very difficult for her to cope with at home where she described unruly and demanding characteristics including verbal and physical threats and actual assault. His grandparents spoke of their "horror" at his arrival in their home area.

Before long Lewis became known to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Social Services as well as the local Educational Psychology Service. The CAMHS worker was alarmed by what he described as Lewis's "severe and dangerous presentation" and sought a psychiatric opinion. Whilst Lewis's school based behaviour was at least initially not reportedly exceptional, relationship problems at home did seem to escalate and within four months of his arrival, at age 11½, a plan was agreed that he be looked after in short-term foster care with the stated aim being to explore whether a different management arrangement at home could significantly improve his behaviour. By that time Lewis's school behaviour was said to be deteriorating. Whilst described there as "clearly very personable" he was at times also said to be "distracting, noisy and manipulative." He seemed to cope well with "particularly structured activities" but at other times could be "loud and overbearing when routine structure and surveillance is less salient."

On those grounds the local education authority agreed to fund additional adult presence in Lewis's classroom via the appointment of a classroom assistant; but did not at this stage consider that the Record of Need which had accompanied him on transfer from his previous authority should be kept open. The educational psychologist, not then myself, who reported on behalf of the authority concluded that although a boy of at least average intellectual ability whose understanding of abstract ideas was a significant strength, Lewis displayed difficulties in certain areas of cognitive and social functioning which prejudiced his learning and behaviour.

I met Lewis for the first time within two weeks of his coming into care. He seemed very happy to talk about his new experiences and of his earlier background. Lewis seemed a little unsure about who had taken the decision that he would go into care; but clearer about the reasons he was no longer staying with his mother:

> ...she can't cope with me hitting her and, swearing at her...and I don't think she can cope with me. So she told social services to assess me and people came round and then I was still carrying on so I went into foster care.

Lewis thought that the assessment "found the problems...me and my mum just can't really get on." He understood that decisions would be taken by others concerning how long he would remain in care and felt that decisions would most likely be the right ones:

> ...because you see my mum used to take all the decisions and some of them were not the right ones...but now the man's taking them I think he makes the right decisions.

At this time in his care career, Lewis did not feel that going into care had had any effect on how he was getting on at school nor how he felt about himself. Everything at school was "really the same." I wondered if other boys and girls asked him lots of questions "...well I told them, but they're fine with it...and they just carry on like normal really."

Lewis did not seem bothered that teachers at school knew he was in foster care and that his head teacher attended meetings about him. Neither did he appear to object to the long journey between his foster home and school - a round trip distance of 66 miles. Although it had been accepted that Lewis's retention in the primary school to which he had become accustomed would be in his better interests, rather than transferring to a school far closer to his foster home, the local educational authority did become increasingly anxious about the associated transport costs (£100 daily) as it became clearer that his placement might last longer than the initial expectation. Indeed the extension of Lewis's care experience at that time was predicated on agencies' views that Lewis's behaviour was moderating in response

to the parenting style to which he was now being exposed. Despite that, however, his relationship with his mother seemed no better; and the consultant psychiatrist, having by now taken him off his medication for ADHD and discounted earlier diagnoses, was considering an inpatient psychiatric assessment. That was never effected, however, and close to the end of the school session Lewis returned to the full-time care of his mother where it was felt that both needed another opportunity to discover whether their relationship would permit of this, possibly final, opportunity to live together.

During all this period I had been party to information, not only as supervisor of the responsible psychologist but as co-chair of the inter-agency forum that had met to share discussion and offer joint recommendation to the Council concerning Lewis's situation. I had had the opportunity to speak with him as researcher, as chair of some meetings he had attended and, on his transfer to secondary school during the second year of data collection for this study, I became the responsible educational psychologist. At all times Lewis was friendly and, I believe open and honest with me. He clearly perceived me as a person with authority in his school and having gravitas that I might not always have sought:

> You're not like some teachers - I can speak to you and you understand and I know you are trying to help and to write some book or other...the nice suits you wear, not like an ordinary teacher, you know – not scruffy – you're more important, a boss aren't you?

Teachers had predicted a "honeymoon period" on Lewis's transfer to the secondary school and one had expanded: "He'll keep his head down for a while but then you'll see his true colours." Actually, within four weeks of the new school session, Lewis's guidance teacher wrote his mother to inform that since the first week of term, he had been:

> reasonably well behaved...he constantly interrupts, makes loud comments and plays to the audience. Some pupils think he is funny and this encourages him...he is apologetic afterwards but nothing improves.

Quite shortly thereafter, twice in succession in fact, he was excluded from school for disruptive behaviour, hitting pupils and shouting loudly - repeatedly failing to follow the instructions of teachers. Within two days of his return to school he was re-excluded for a third time on similar grounds. The Education Authority meantime decided to revisit its earlier decision not to open a Record of Need and statutory reassessments were initiated. At this time also the consultant psychiatrist sought an additional specialist psychiatric view. Lewis had been said by his mother to be hearing voices and stating that "time sometimes stood still."

In conversation with me around this time Lewis had stated:

> I do think that it's as if things around me go faster sometimes – I can't stand it at home and I'll do anything to get away. My mother is like my headache and I want to go back into care – that's the Paracetamol.

The consultant psychiatrist was supporting a view that Lewis and his mother could no longer live together. Social services again sought a foster placement for Lewis who became excluded yet again from school whilst still resident with his mother and for a short period thereafter he received his educational provision via home tuition at the premises of the local educational psychology service. During that period a foster placement was being sought. Thereafter Lewis was again received into care with carers who found his behaviour to be unruly and unmanageable and the placement broke down within two weeks. He thence returned to the carers with whom he had first been in care and

transferred to another secondary school which hosted a support unit for difficult to manage pupils. He was excluded for a fifth time during this his last term of S1. The carers he was placed with were unable to commit to a longer term fostering arrangement and eventually another foster placement was found for him 90 miles distant. Four months passed before educational arrangements could be made since the local catchment area school was filled to capacity during which time his fragmented educational experience comprised short periods of home tuition and part time attendance with a tutor at a children's home 15 miles from his new carers' home. He was eventually enrolled at his local Academy where an additional classroom assistant was employed to support him and his teachers. Lewis found that level of "policing" as he described it to be too intrusive and his behaviour became increasingly difficult to manage there and at his carers' home. A residential school placement was sought.

During one of our later conversations Lewis spoke of the difference with which he felt that teachers treated him compared to other students:

> ...if they accidentally think up a subject like family, or something, they kind of look at me and think 'Oops maybe I shouldn't have done that'.

So here Lewis was being positioned within a protective discourse that assumed his sensitivity to "family" matters. He went on to explain that in a social education class where family had been the topic, he'd been given the choice to stay or to leave because, he theorised, "the teacher felt alright for me to come but didn't want me to feel kind of embarrassed because I'm not with my family."

He explained that he believed the teacher to have acted sensitively. In terms of that issue then he offered no resistance nor transgressive wish. He spoke warmly of other teachers who had allowed him to display his talents:

> I kind of want to be the same but I want to show people the good things in me. And the only way I can do that is show them how I can do things like dancing or sports or things like that.

He spoke of his peers' ambivalence toward his status as a young person in care:

> 'Cause they kind of, they don't really care, they're not like 'You're in foster care that must be the worst thing ever' they just go alright is it nice, and I'm alright with it, they're quite fine with it, 'cause my class aren't bad at all, they're really nice people my class, they're really kind of supportive, they all tell me to be good and things like that, if I've been naughty, or silly, so there's just one or two in the class and kind of, I go along with but, when I tell them they're not...I just like it so they know. They think it's weird that I can't live with my mum, they think it's a bit odd they don't know how that can happen, 'cause it's your mum, then they don't really…

Lewis had cried at a recent Looked after child review when he had spoken of a visit to his father's home which had been upsetting to him. He had trusted the teacher who had attended and "didn't feel embarrassed at all 'cause I knew she wouldn't tell anybody." He offered other examples of teacherly behaviour that he valued, and of teachers to whom he could speak without getting embarrassed. One favourite teacher had the ability to empathise with his situation:

She says everything right, everything, like every answer that I ask it's always the right one. She never says anything that I think, oh no that's wrong...like how, how are you getting on with your mum, oh I'm not doing too well, she'll say something like, 'oh you need some breathing space' or 'you need, just some time apart' or 'maybe you need to stay there for a long time' or 'maybe it's better...' and she just says the right things, just makes me happy, when she says the things, she's not sticking up for me and she's not sticking up for my mum... .

Lewis did not feel that any teacher had been particularly unsympathetic. Concerning teachers' attendance at review meetings, though, he did say that he would like prior notice of what they might have to say:

> I wouldn't like to know everything 'cause that'll just, what's the point in going to the review then. But I'd like to know kind of what they're saying, what they're going to say, in case I want to say anything, for getting set up for it.

He exemplified the problem by expanding on his concern that it was a teacher who had raised the matter of his visit to his dad and which had been so painful to him.

The overwhelming sense that Lewis's school experiences were burdened by many pressures, concerns and seeming insecurities was heightened by his acute awareness of his mother's antipathy toward current arrangements and his sense that she undermined these:

...mum tries to get (foster carer) into trouble. She wants me into residential school...she wants me away somewhere, she doesn't want me near her, she doesn't want me in a foster home...because (carer) does well with me (she) succeeded and I think she's kind of jealous. Envies (carer) so she kind of puts (carer) down.

Lewis's mother had on her own initiative taken him to visit a residential school that made provision for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Lewis approved of the establishment and its regime:

> I actually wanted to stay there because everything just looked so good. Everything was fit, everything was scheduled, everything was planned out from the moment you wake up like everything was organised. You have to do this to get in this, if you earn so many points in each lessons you get £6 pocket money at the end of the week and there's activities to do and it's a nice house, a big house they stay in. And the behaviour problems aren't, you know, they're not as in, they are, you know, people who are being expelled and all that go there but they're not like bad in a way.

And even though some "methods" seemed unusual: "they used methods like sitting on the boys to stop them being bad", he was "not really bothered" because he did not expect that would happen to him. Lewis seemed to be seeking a space of greater certainty.

He spoke of how his mother had tried to persuade him to "perform" at an imminent review meeting so as to persuade the meeting and me in particular to arrange his placement in the residential school:

…she kind of told me what to say at the review. She wanted me to say all those lies like... it's fantastic, so you have to persuade him that I want to go there. She told, 'cause she kind of told me what to say... 'I'll write some notes down for you so as you know what to say so we can both persuade him to go there'.

But in his own mind he was really far from sure. In this extract we were talking about placement possibilities and I was speaking as the educational psychologist:

**L:** So it could be a residential school?

**RM:** That's still theoretically possible, yes.

**L:** But I don't want that to happen, really. It was nice where I went but I probably won't be going there it would be a different one, like if I do go.

**RM:** It always depends on who's got places, and it depends on all sorts of other important issues and...

**L:** So if I'd be good at school then can I stay at school?

**RM:** Yeah,

**L:** Good.

**RM:** As long as things at home are okay as well.

**L:** Can I just check with this, 'cause I don't want to go home to (carer) and tell her lies about you, I just don't, I just want to check what we discussed yesterday

**RM:** right.

**L:** Because I don't want to say the wrong thing

**RM:** right.

**L:** Did you say that if I be good at (carers), and (carer) wants me then I can stay at (carers) but go to the high school. Because I've not told her yet I just wanted to check over with you.

**RM:** Right, I think that's right. If (carer) wants to look after you, and if the social worker thinks that that's in your best interests.

**L:** Oh, so it's up to the social worker as well.

**RM:** It's up to the social worker and, and myself to agree with you that that's where you want to stay and that (carer) can do that.

**L:** Mm hmm.

**RM:** Then if everybody were agreed then I would think of course that should be possible.

**L:** It's just there's not many foster carers in Dumfries and Galloway.

**RM:** That's the problem, there's very few foster carers.

As noted above, Lewis had seen numerous specialists and, most recently, had been subject to various medical investigations. His perception of their outcome suggested his resistance to the deviant identity being prepared. I had asked him how he felt about doctors not having found any "nerve things" as he had described them:

> ...well at the end of it when I know there's nothing wrong I feel kind of smug about myself... 'cause I've got one over on mum, because my mum's the one who thinks that I've got a chance to put a label on my head so she can go – 'Right, Lewis has this thing so you have to put him in a residential school now you've got no choice'.

Lewis is exerting real control here – feeling smug that he has transgressed mother's ascribed role. But the struggle to transgress had to be regularly repeated. It sometimes seemed ambivalent and the transgression only partially achieved. As we have heard, he regularly pushed the boundaries of others' tolerance of his actions that had been described as inconsequential, defiant, manipulative, oppositional - even sociopathic by those who had known him. His behaviour had been a puzzle to himself sometimes: "...Mum tells me to do something and I'll disagree but if someone else tells me I could do it, and I don't know

why that is." Of school he'd said: "some days are fine – others I just don't know what gets into me. I tell myself I'll behave but it doesn't happen."

Lewis recognised many ambiguities and tensions in his circumstances. He had told me that he knew his mother loved him but that she couldn't cope with his "hitting and swearing." He'd said that when he left his mum he thought he would "cry every day, but when I got there (in care) I was really happy." At the same time he had felt "excited...and sort of disappointed." He felt his mum took decisions inconsistently "Like sometimes she might send me to dad's when it's not necessary. She'll promise, like, I promise you'll never go again and then she'll send me." Lewis believed that his mum wanted him in a residential school rather than in foster care where, he had explained, she would not wish to see alternative parenting succeed and reflect badly thereby on her own abilities by comparison.

He appeared to enjoy the spectacularisation of his difficulties. On the one hand he had enjoyed "putting one over on Mum", had "felt kind of smug" that her aspiration to label him so as to ensure his education would be provided residentially had not been confirmed by the results of a neurological examination. On the other hand, he described to me excitedly how, at a conference, his mother had sought advice from a special educationist of international repute and they had spontaneously arranged to demonstrate assessment techniques, using Lewis as a subject, in front of a large audience. His mother had arranged quickly for Lewis to travel to the conference, which was a two-day affair, so as he could take part. His circumstances seemed to reflect a confusing aporetics, or undecidability of experience. He experienced competing messages about his status in school and care.

Lewis has attended a residential school over the last year. Teachers and carers' descriptions are unrecognisable from the previous pejorative panoply. There, Lewis is described as "a lively person, confident and eager to learn showing pride in his

achievements." He is polite and considerate, accepting the consequences of any misbehaviour and relaxed and comfortable in his placement. It is as if the space he now lives in has smoothed some of the competing striations of his earlier experience. As he put it to me himself:

> In (previous area) I had to do something - you had to do what you were told, or do something even if it was stupid. Whatever you always felt like driven...they're in charge. Here I can settle to things – there are so many opportunities to do things. It's like for my own sake.

Rory's self-practices seemed to have a brittle, precarious quality and a shameful aspect. His attempted transgressions were against the coercive marker (Allan 1999) of his status as a foster child whose appearance he sought to hide. He had told me that he wasn't aware of all the circumstances that had been precursors to his coming into care years previously: "...if someone offered to tell me I don't think I would actually want to know" and he added:

> I'm happy with the way things are, with things going so well the way they are just now. I don't see the point in finding out something that's maybe going to tarnish it.

It seemed that too much knowledge might have tarnished also the pride that Rory had in his elderly carer: "in a mental sense she's the parent I've always had...she's done it to a better extent than from what I've seen my mother and father could have done." That same fear of tarnishing was highlighted in the preceding chapter where his concern over how teachers could "get information from everywhere" was described. Rory said that he was "perfectly happy" that his teachers and friends assumed that he lived with his grandmother when, in fact, his elderly carer was no relation. But some people knew differently:

Well the people that do know it differently are, they're either my closest friends or people that have became inquisitive and I've just kind of took them to the side and asked them, ken, will you please just ken, try and as far as if anyone asks then she's my grandmother. But from what you've been asking of me ken, yes I am in care. And I'll say it's just something that's happened over a long period of time. And most of them understand but some of them...they're a wee bit 'oh you're in care'. It's as if something's wrong with you because you're in care. And you ken, usually you can get through to them. You've got to stand and explain to them that you yourself haven't actually done anything wrong. You see some people automatically assume because you're in care you have done something wrong – you've maybe run away, you've hit somebody or you've hurt somebody or you've done something that you shouldn't have done. And once you can explain to them that it's not actually you're fault. It's something that just happened, they kind of come round to the idea that 'oh maybe he's not such a bad person after all. Maybe it's his privacy, so I'll just agree with him' and they can be quite happy with that.

Rory's guard wasn't to be let down even when he was playing his favourite sport. Recruiting a good friend (Jim) had helped him patrol these times when the camaraderie of the shower room led to "things being said...maybe jokes about families". If these got too close to the mark:

> Jim will just say 'Look it's not something he's happy with' and if they ask why he'll say 'Just don't go into that" and they'll say 'Alright, fair enough'. You see he can take them to the side.

He summarised the value of confidantes:

> You see it's handy having people friends that do actually know; because then you can, they can, tailor situations to go away from things that might concern you.

Another incident from his sporting life had involved recruiting the coach:

> For example I was selected to go away on a training course...and we were asked to fill in a questionnaire on our family and who we lived with...what we do, various things. So C (coach) took the representative of the (organisation) to the side and told him about my situation. I went into a wee side room and explained. And they said 'that's fine, you don't have to fill out the questionnaire. I'll take some of the boys in your group to the side and explain to them - tell them not to ask any difficult questions. I'll not tell them details just that it's a sensitive situation and they are not to do that'.

The geography of these spaces – the wee room and the side areas where identity was fashioned and negotiated for Rory contrasted vividly with the imagery of the big table where, in the previous chapter, we saw how the uninterrupted gaze could penetrate.

Thea's use of physical space, like Rory's, helped her transgress her teachers' positioning of her as someone in need of help. She had, it seemed, internalised the official version of her learning difficulties and had perhaps found this helpful:

> I do know that I've got learning difficulties and I didn't actually know that until I first came to live with R and B. I thought, 'What's learning difficulty?' They told me that there's something wrong with me, that I can't think, and I usually start getting aggressive and stuff. But when they did tell me that I had learning difficulties then I knew what it was, so I did.

But whilst the learning difficulty aspect of her narrative was gladly shared with teachers, school staff were not to know of her care status nor of the "worries" that she sometimes experienced: "If I had a worry at school I wouldn't speak to anyone here 'cause they wouldn't understand what I was talking about."

Like Rory, constantly vigilant in patrolling the public boundaries to her identity, Thea didn't seem to feel the need for teacherly intrusion and intervention. I had asked her if teachers tried to help out with the worries:

> T: Em, yes there has but em, there has been teachers that have tried to help me like when I've had a worry they tried to get it out of me but I says no I can't tell you I've been like scared to even tell them because I think that's nothing to do with them. But they just keep saying now tell me what's wrong and I say no I can't I'm keeping it inside me so that when I get home I'm going to tell my mum because I don't want them to know what's wrong with me inside. And so, I just say if you don't

mind I don't feel like telling you because I think it's up to me if I want to keep it to myself and go home and tell my mum.

RM: Has it always been like that Thea, looking back over all the time you've been at school whilst you've been in care, would you say that you've always wanted not to speak with teachers?

T: I do speak with teachers sometimes. Like have a chat with them, but I don't talk about like that I'm in foster care or stuff like that, I just like talk about the animals that we've got at home and like what we've been doing at the weekend and stuff like that but like I haven't like told them that I've got like a worry and there's something wrong with me. I usually say to a teacher if I can go to the toilet 'cause I've got a sore throat and if I could go for a drink and they let me do that. And that's all.

The evasive space of the privacy of the toilet was one to which that Gary too had told me he withdrew when children's hearings became difficult for him.

Thea contrasted the smooth space her carers opened and shared with her at home to that in which, it seemed she felt more confined at school:

Yeah, 'cause like if ever I had a worry, mum and dad said 'well Thea if ever you have a worry just come and speak to me', but like if I had a worry at school I couldn't speak to anybody here 'cause they wouldn't understand what I was actually talking about, but I would wait till I get home and would say to mum and dad or like I would say to mum if I could speak to mum on her own, I'd say mum I've got a

worry and then she'll sit down and let me talk to her and then she'd try and help me. She'd say right you know like such and such and that and then she'd say you don't have to worry you're in foster care and we will always look after you. There's nothing to worry about, you know, and she sits there and puts her arm around me and gives me comfort so that I know I'm safe and I'm loved, like when she's sat next to me I think mmm I've got comfort here and I'm loved and she actually sits down and talks to me so I'm glad that my mum's there whenever there's something that I've got that's worrying me inside. At least I can talk to a parent. 'Cause like I can't talk to anybody here because if like if I told them they would think what's she talking about and they wouldn't know so then I'd keep it inside me until I got home and then explain to my mum and then she'd help me.

Iona told me that she was able to ignore the sometimes unkind remarks made by her peers on account of her care status. We heard in the previous chapter of the marker of her difference which had resulted in her not choosing to stay overnight at friends' homes. She explained that if asked to stay she would typically fabricate an excuse, or deny her own wish on account of the embarrassment she felt in making the explanation. She spoke of her sisters' adoption and how that precluded her dream that she and all her three other siblings might be reunited in one family home. Here again was a sense of the aporetic struggle experienced by these young people – this time between competing possibilities for care and parenting.

Kevin struggled in desperately missing his grandmother whose care he had recently left on account of her fragility and difficulty in managing his behaviour. He had felt, he said, that no one had listened to his unhappiness – his homesickness and taunting by classmates

about being in care. Like Thea had, he contrasted a description of a loving and nurturing background – provided in his case by granny – to the regimented space of his new domiciliary experience. One after another he listed the activities he was no longer able to undertake – partly on account of the distance from the town he had left, like swimming and karate – but otherwise, he said, on account of a differing parental style that precluded other activities too such as being given help at home with his homework. He complained further that an unwanted holiday visit to the Lake District was being forced upon him.

Kevin tried to enlist me to support his wishes to return to his grandmother's care. Following our conversation he sought another meeting, through his teacher, asking for "the man who talked to kids in care." "What would you like to talk about?" I had asked. "Trying to get me closer to granny," he said. Later it was interesting to hear his carers' description of their understanding of their role. In their words, it was to "tighten the reins...in the past he's had free rein." I had asked whether they recognised the resentment that Kevin seemed to feel; but they felt sure that their "hard-line and consistency" would induce change and his understanding of the need for rules to be applied in his best interests. After all, "He understands when he wants to." They were concerned too over his threat to report them to social services. Kevin had indeed sought that agency's support too in transgressing against the expectations found in this new space. It seemed though that there was a sense of hopelessness - from Kevin, if less so the carers - over how he was ever to take up the opportunities the new family felt they were offering. His attempt to enlist my agency had not helped. He had told them of my interest in his story and may have made much of my offer of confidentiality. The foster parent explained:

> He drew reference to the fact that he could speak to you in confidence, that you'd be having words with social services and you'd be having

> words with us. I just thought, that's okay – let's see <u>him</u> then. (Original emphasis).

I gained the impression that there was little chance of Kevin's carers effecting their stated aspiration:

> to bring him into our family ways, to be part of the family...to consider that he lives here and will be here once he fully accepts the terms...as opposed to going on about granny's as an excuse.

These seemed lives – worlds even – apart. Kevin's teachers too spoke of his dissociation from his carers: "It was ages before he even referred to the fact that he was there, he referred to 'That house where I stay now.' He was in denial almost." I learned sometime later that Kevin harmed his carers' young child and I wondered if, increasingly desperate, he had felt driven to commit such action so as to secure the outcome that followed – his return to his grandmother's care.

An older informant, Hannah, had spoken of her awareness of her carers' preferential treatment of their own son and daughter over her:

> You see they've got the princess, the prince and me. Like when it comes to Christmas I'll get a teddy but she'll get mountains of stuff – perfume, you name it. I'm not a selfish person but when that kind of thing happens, you know, it's upsetting.

Hannah's "easygoing" nature, she said, had stopped her from complaining to them. It hadn't precluded her "giving a battering" to an ex-boyfriend, who had, in the company of

others, declared that she was "going to turn out on the scrap heap like your mum." When difference markers like these arose, Hannah felt torn between ignoring them or reacting more overtly but thereby letting others know they had hurt her. She didn't wish her vulnerability to be evident and described other incidents when cruel comments had led to her running out of classes in tears. Sometimes she had enlisted teachers' help, which she did appreciate - even, like Lewis, to the extent of valuing their excusing her from undertaking lesson based activities around sensitive areas such as family life or "personal stories". Here too was a sense of the aporia of Hannah's transgression; because in order to conceal her difference, to protect her sensitivity to it, her teacher needed to know it.

Sometimes enlisting support of friends had resulted in unexpected events. Hannah described how a conversation with a friend had been overheard by that friend's mother who reported its substance to a teacher. Subsequent actions, in the light of that information, led to police enquiries and the extent of the abuse perpetrated against Hannah uncovered. These accidental events so often seemed to shape the lives of the young people. In that connection Hannah described also how, whilst hiding in a caravan, she had overheard her mother, during an organised search for her after she had run away, state that she hoped Hannah would never be found. Later, aged 12, she had been confronted with that rejection formally:

It was at a Panel, she (mother) had something to tell me but she couldn't tell me in front of the others. So the social worker took them out. I was on my own with her. She told me. She didn't want anything more to do with me ever again and that was her washing her hands of me. To tell a 12 year old...taking this in, it's hard...no one likes you, you think, that's the end of you. To hear that from your own mum...

At the end of a long interview during which Hannah had revealed a lot of painful memories, I'd asked her how she was going to move on from it all.

> **RM:** I get the feeling you must be a strong person. You've been through so much, you seem to have such a sense of yourself. How do you see yourself now?

> **H:** Some folk think I have no purpose in life - you know, like my mum – she's just never got a life. I know what I'm going to do with my life I know that what's happened to her and her family is never going to happen to me and my family. I know that I can do better than she has I'm going to do things.

I asked her what had made the difference. She had no hesitation: "My boyfriend – he knew everything about me but still takes me for who I am. Some people judge me because my mother's in jail. He doesn't do that."

Ross talked about his border crossing from home to care as an experience during which he tentatively "came out" – shared his care identity. Initially anxious that others might reject him, he patrolled their reactions and observed that often people seemed to want to ask questions "but didn't have the courage to ask you." He'd experienced that with one of his girlfriends:

> Her pal wanted to know what I was in foster care for. And she never even asked me. It wasn't until we were talking that I asked her 'Do you ever wonder why I'm in foster care?' And she said 'Yes of course'. But she had never ever asked me.

For Ross, that sensitivity to the "funny looks" he might receive; the concern that others were wondering about his status, was "always at the back of your mind". Sometimes he felt the need to edit the story - to omit what he called "the gory details" and he was adamant that these more personal details of the reasons for coming into care should be disclosed to nobody without his full agreement. He expressed very well the sense of fragility to his own normality, the shifting sands of the journey that so many had talked of:

> You could be sitting in class, you could be doing your work and somebody could be talking about moving or visiting somewhere. And you're thinking 'Am I going to be staying here?' Or you're pals could say 'Are you coming out at the weekend?' And you're thinking 'Well will I be here at the weekend?' So you're not concentrating on your work. You kind of sit daydreaming - thinking 'Will I stay, will I move again, will they put me in a home?' You're in a world of your own.

Ross did eventually achieve membership of a new social world. It took effort but he found it worthwhile:

> When I first came into care I didn't kind of...come out...I more or less kept myself to myself, so I did, because it was hard in the placement and how folk would react. I eventually kind of thought to myself there's no point sitting in the house all the time because you're going to have to go to school at some point and folk will find out that you're in care anyway. So after that I kind of started. I went out and it made it easier and I was wondering whether they would accept me because I'm in care. I kinna put

> a down on myself. I didn't present myself like I would any other time when I would be lively and cheerful. I kinna kept myself to myself and thought folk were looking at me funny because I was different. But now I don't it's not like that. I can open up so I can.

In this section I have tried to show how the efforts of these comparatively more agentic young people used their resources to transgress coercive markers of difference. These transgressions often had a brittle or liminal quality and their efforts had regularly to be repeated and achievements patrolled and monitored. Aaron's story that now follows is one where a greater degree of self-transformation seemed to be achieved - almost of transcendence to a life-space where he seemed at last to find comfort.

## 7.3 Aaron's story

Aaron was in care at the start of data collection for this research. He had been received into care some 30 miles from his home around the time of his transfer to secondary education. He was in 1st year of the secondary school in which he would have been a pupil had he remained at home - this on account of its hosting a support unit for children felt, like him, to need maximised levels of adult supervision. Accordingly Aaron passed through his home village daily as he travelled to and from school by bus and taxi.

He had been a client of the Psychology Service long before his transfer to secondary education and I had learned of his situation from colleagues and met him at meetings where I had represented the Department for Education. Although I had not spoken with him at any length prior to the start of this research – by which time, as a pupil now transferred to a school for which I was the responsible educational psychologist – I was aware accordingly of some of his background.

Aaron's earliest schooling had been disrupted due to family moves which had led to his attending three different schools in his first three years of schooling. Concerns for his difficult to manage behaviour – running away from school and displaying aggression to other children had been raised by teachers during his primary two year and an educational psychologist to whom he had been referred felt that at that time Aaron might be experiencing feelings of displacement and loss through the recent birth of a sister. The educational psychologist also commented upon a "hyperactive family style." Referral for psychiatric opinion was later made when Aaron was aged nine at which time his fascination with TV soap opera characters with mental illness was becoming a concern at school as were his unabated aggressive tendencies. The educational psychologist also reported upon Aaron's:

> ...disjointed chatter, self-doubting and seemingly general anxiety, erratic concentration, lack of emotional integration that prejudices his learning and potential, his confused and confusing presentation that seems neither malicious nor aggressive but which is needy of attention and his generally changeable and personally disjointed emotional immaturity.

The psychiatrist's formulation was to centre upon the behaviour of those close to him in affecting Aaron's "sad and anxious presentation." She paid particular attention to the bullying that Aaron complained of at school and which was evidently perpetrated by his brother at home, his father's heavy-handed treatment of him and his mother's depression. She did refer to some behaviour of Aaron's as bizarre but felt able to discharge him from her outpatient care within five months of her seeing him.

Shortly before Aaron's tenth birthday he was excluded from school on account of episodes of aggression, stone throwing and running away. Shortly after, he was again excluded from school on account of an alleged sexual assault of indecent exposure to a girl classmate. By then, Aaron's brother had very recently been taken into care, his mother had been hospitalised due to her depression and father was seeking re-housing on account of the hostility shown to the family by other villagers – largely on account of Aaron's most recent misbehaviour. The psychiatrist, to whom re-referral had been made, concluded that Aaron's increasing pre-occupation with things to do with mental illness, and his saying that he was hearing voices that made him do the things he did, was reflective of his anxiety and obsessional nature rather than diagnostic of a psychotic state. She did however state unequivocally that Aaron should be received into foster care where she felt he could be nurtured more effectively.

Meantime Aaron's educational provision had been reduced since the first period of exclusion. Despite additional classroom assistance being sought by his school and educational psychologist, the Director of Education's representative had come to a view of his own, despite advice to the contrary, that Aaron might pose a danger to other children. It was decided that he should receive home education via five hours weekly tuition instead of school teaching. It was during this period that I had become apprised of and acquainted with Aaron whose needs had been discussed at a joint liaison group of the Council chaired by myself. Despite that group agreeing with the recommendation for Aaron's school to receive enhanced staffing to help his head teacher feel more confident in his safe management and supervision, the Council continued to refuse to reverse the decision to provide tuition for him at home. Also, despite the decision by a Children's Hearing in support of the psychiatrist's recommendation for his foster care this was not put into effect owing to the unavailability of a suitable placement. In response, and on account of Aaron's "increasing agitation and anxious presentation" the psychiatrist admitted him to a child

psychiatric facility 70 miles distant from his home for a period of assessment. Aaron voiced some satisfaction at that decision and stated that he wanted to be locked up.

Periods of in-patient assessment at children's psychiatric units generally last no longer than six weeks. In Aaron's case he remained in hospital for seven months – almost until his 11th birthday in fact. There, his emotional state was said by staff not to "allow him to retain his learning. He is defiant and confrontational." The teaching staff was adamant that he could not be discharged to a mainstream school. Nurses noted that he indulged in "hospital oriented play, with himself in the role of the psychiatrist." Aaron seemed in these pre-adolescent times to be forging or experimenting with an unusual identity where themes of mental illness appeared to be very salient.

Aaron did eventually resume part-time attendance at his mainstream primary school where additional classroom assistance was this time provided. His discharge summary from hospital offered no firm diagnosis. It was stressed that his emotional state had impeded educational progress and concern was noted too that he had showed signs of becoming dependant on the psychiatric unit and that he might not be able to readjust to living at home.

The educational psychologist's notes suggest that Aaron did manage to reintegrate to mainstream school. Staff shortages in social services meant that Aaron experienced two changes of social worker at this time, each of whom aspired to retain him within his community. An interchange between the educational psychologist and a social worker is noted in papers held in the educational psychology case file wherein Aaron's difficulties are referred to by a social worker as "educational" whereas the educational psychologist attempts to frame the situation in terms of Aaron's:

> …very significant personal and background problems which come out in various settings including educational contexts and which must not be seen as simply educational...there can be no simple educational fix here.

During Aaron's last year at primary school (he stayed eight years, having repeated primary one due to lack of progress then) he sometimes harmed himself at home and school by causing superficial lacerations on his arms with a craft knife. His psychiatrist put this down to his fear of physical violence from his brother who, by then, was visiting the family home more often from his care placement. At the time of his transfer to secondary education a suitable foster care placement was eventually identified and Aaron moved there.

By the time of my first research interview with Aaron, I had chaired another inter-agency forum meeting at which his referral to a youth support service run by a national volunteer agency had been agreed as had been the recommendation for his school placement within the support unit attached to his secondary school. His psychiatrist was confirming his self-harming behaviour as "pseudo-psychotic" and "attention seeking" whereas his new foster parents viewed it as a response to being thwarted. Aaron himself wanted to return home and said to me, "Things have improved at home and I've improved and I've been going to school and managed to stay in school now." He did not want to talk about his previous experiences of schooling in the psychiatric unit, but he was happy to describe his experience of the support unit at school:

> Well it's just – it's normal, just as normal as nine o'clock to 3.35pm except...you're in the same class. It's based on children that can't conduct themselves in a civilised manner in mainstream...or are getting into trouble...who do bad things like bullying. I got put into the support

> unit because I was not going to school properly...but I'm getting back into mainstream.

Aaron was clear that his education was suffering:

> It does affect my education, being in foster care it does. It has been affecting my education for a long time and I don't want it to affect my education anymore. I want...back home...sometimes I come here anxious and worried and confused. I don't want to be like that, I want to be happy.

He spoke poignantly of how passing his home each morning impacted upon him ambiguously:

> I actually quite, ken, look forward to coming here in the morning, because I come past where I stay, and this is my local area...When you leave here at 3.35pm it's not time to go home and you feel, well I sometimes feel upset and I don't want to go but I just have to go.

He felt things had changed:

> I've stopped harming and going on about mental illnesses and all these kind of things. Getting myself into school and doing what I'm told and into mainstream and these kind of things.

He recognised that things had been worrying people in school:

I think maybe it worried some people when I had an obsession with mental illness. I think people started to get very worried about me...it was the way they were acting...they were acting in a kind of strange way when I used to mention mental illness or just feel, ken, kind of panicky. And then they would just go away or if they were in that kind of panic way then they changed to something else. I think they would have been a lot happier and so sometimes I did stop and they did like that.

Aaron was aware that at least one teacher knew of his background. He spoke strongly saying, "This is the kind of thing that annoys me." He was adamant that teachers should only be able to access information about educational matters "the educational why" as he called it – but not any information or opinion held by other agencies.

Aaron considered that the support unit and especially the teacher there had helped him to change in the ways in which he desperately wished would allow him to return home. There was to be a Children's Panel imminently and he understood that Panel members could make important decisions about him and about his education. He said that he'd been concerned that at his previous Panel he had been confused and that he had never expressed himself clearly. He now looked forward to telling the Panel what his wishes were. It seemed to help Aaron's feelings about the impending Panel that he had made up his mind and did not feel anxious or distressed, he said. But he reiterated how his care experience was affecting him:

> It's really affecting my education it is and I don't want that. Because being away from my family is affecting me and making me anxious and that and I really want to be at home. I actually really look forward to coming here in the morning because I'm going past my family and

> the area where I know everybody. If I was to move somewhere else and away from this school then I think I'd be very, very sad I would.

Whilst social services staff agreed that Aaron's home leave should be increased and that his care plan should be to work towards his return there, Aaron remained deeply resentful that he had to remain with foster carers to whom he had such antipathy. "We have not got a good relationship, and that's one thing that does annoy me because I've got to live in the same house as them" he had said. Perhaps in desperation and in order to bring about change, Aaron took an overdose of analgesics some months later. He was discharged to his mother's care by a psychiatrist who had not met him before, despite the advice of social services' staff.

Aaron's new psychiatrist came to a different recommendation than had been made hitherto. In a written recommendation to a reconvened Children's Hearing she focussed upon Aaron's "bizarre behaviour" and potential for violence. She referred particularly to his self-harming and brandishing of a knife at his mother which incident had occurred recently. She interpreted these as attempts to provoke professionals into seeing him as mentally ill and affirmed a view that residential schooling would be more likely to succeed than foster care in promoting his mental health.

Both his psychiatrist and I attended Aaron's Children Hearing. I spoke of my concerns that the therapeutic experiences the like of which my colleague assumed would be available in residential school could simply not be guaranteed. Indeed I stated that a residential school regime might militate against Aaron's interests, as I understood them. I spoke of my experience of residential schools as offering provision for boys and girls with more anti-social and delinquent histories – sometimes referred to as acting out or conduct disordered as opposed to neurotically disordered in psychiatric parlance – that were not evident in Aaron's case. I suggested that if placed with such youngsters with whom he would have

little in common then Aaron might become even more unhappy, frightened and very vulnerable to bullying and ridicule by his peers. Nonetheless, the Hearing ordered that Aaron be placed in a "therapeutic residential school" as soon as possible despite my plea that I knew of no such facility that would accept a 14-year-old boy. I had ventured to suggest that any one such that did accept Aaron would more likely be acting out of interest in fee income rather than helping Aaron. Aaron himself stated clearly at the Hearing that he did not want to attend a residential school and wanted to be placed in hospital.

There followed a flurried interchange of correspondence among education, social services and health board staff at a very high level. Being made aware of the Education Department's view having been discounted at the Hearing, the Director for Education's representative maintained that his department would not accept financial responsibility for Aaron's placement. Indeed he suggested that since the Hearing's decision had been predicated upon the psychiatric recommendation, then the Health Authority should fund the provision and reconsider placement in a national psychiatric unit where educational provision is made on site anyway. In further conversation with him, the decision maker in the Department for Education expressed concern that the Hearing's view had favoured the psychiatric view over education's and social services', which had been to return Aaron to foster care with continued schooling where he was still enrolled. He requested that if my view remained that the specialist therapeutic residential school was unavailable to Aaron, for whatever reason, that this be represented to a reconvened Hearing. Meanwhile, staff in social services went ahead without the support of education staff in directly approaching some residential school managers to seek Aaron's placement which, on discovering, the Director for Education's representative made clear his estimation of the unsuitability of these providers' facilities for Aaron. What a squabble had resulted! Meanwhile Aaron was pleased to return to the care of his father which the reconvened Hearing approved whilst the placement issue rolled on. His educational provision was minimal and he rarely

attended for the short periods he was expected to. When challenged about attending more regularly he stated to another worker: "There's no point, you're getting rid of me anyway. Just put me in a residential now and get rid of me." To me he reiterated his goal to "get a bed in a (National Mental Hospital) and get sectioned criminally insane."

The workers at the alternatives to school project where he was attending wrote:

> Aaron has proved to be an intelligent and vibrant young person with a vivid and creative imagination. He can engage well with other young people and staff members, taking pleasure from making other people laugh and has demonstrated a depth of concern for other people's welfare. The manner in which he has faced this previous year and a half has demonstrated courage and strength of character. He continues to engage well with us.

Aaron sought another psychiatric opinion on account of his disagreement that he was not suffering from a mental illness. He took to walking around his home area in bare feet (emulating a TV soap opera character who had a mental illness) and was reported by father to have wallpapered his bedroom with slogans and messages testifying to his having mental problems. Despite these actions, which were regarded as naïve efforts to persuade agencies of his illness, Aaron was not felt to be mentally ill by the third psychiatrist who interviewed him at his own request. Perhaps accordingly Aaron subsequently was himself the cause of a near severe road traffic accident when he grasped the steering wheel of a care worker with whom he was travelling and a tussle for control of the car had ensued.

As a result of increasing perception of risk that Aaron was posing (he had begun also to talk of killing babies) he met his fourth consultant psychiatrist from a UK National

Forensic Mental Health Service for young people. This service too concluded that he was not suffering from a severe mental illness but presented "developing personality problems the genesis of which remained unclear." Placement in a "therapeutic community environment with psychotherapeutic intervention" to "effect a change in the trajectory of his personality development" was recommended; although it was felt important that "his wish to be considered mentally unwell not be unduly enforced (sic) by admissions to mental health services." Thereafter yet another Children's Hearing ordered that Aaron be placed as soon as possible.

Aaron's daily attendance at the alternative to school project had become quite alarming to staff there as he made threats to harm himself and others. His social worker engaged a national organisation to search for a suitable care placement and eventually one such in a newly opening young people's home where education was to be made available on site made an offer to accommodate Aaron. His social worker and I visited the proposed resource, furth of Scotland, and recommended that Aaron be offered a trial placement there. We commented to our Directorate that it was unfortunate that our own Council could not provide a similar resource locally. There followed another flurry of correspondence in which our agency decision maker observed that the annual costs of the proposed placement, at £450 a day, would be the most expensive placement ever made by the Council. He advised upon a cheaper resource which, he felt, could offer further "assessment" of Aaron's needs. In replying, I pointed out that Aaron had seen numerous psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers and had been subject to considerable assessment by professional agencies. I reiterated that I understood Aaron's need to be for:

> Consistent and firm nurturance with maximised opportunity for routine activity, to include physical activity, of a broadly educational focus, so as his opportunity for morbid dwelling upon his fascination with

mental illness and how to convince others of his otherness is minimised. I see his need to be taken seriously as paramount but with a refocused emphasis upon aspects of his personality and skill development that will distract him from the attempts he has made so strenuously to date to convince people of his importance...I am not at all convinced that he will benefit from psychotherapeutic interventions of a verbal nature – indeed I suggest that such intervention will serve only to reinforce his unhealthy preoccupations.

My manager contacted social services at a high level once more to discover whether there was unanimity in assenting to the proposed placement and on hearing from colleagues stated that he "very reluctantly agree(d) to accept the financial burden of Aaron's placement." Aaron removed to his new care home in Ireland where workers reported two incidents of fire-raising and one of self-harm and yet another psychiatric view was perforce sought. During his stay there we kept in touch by e-mail and I visited a few times. On one occasion he told me that he had given up on psychiatrists and "everything to do with mental illness." On another, when I was visiting, he appeared not to recognise me, stated that staff was recording all his conversations and later pled with me to take him back with me to his home area.

Aaron's attempted transgressions appeared different to others' – and in a direction that seemed unusual. Two themes dominated our conversations – his desperate wish to be home with his family and his fascination with mental illness and the seeking of his own psychiatric diagnosis. There were times when his aspiration to assume the identity of patient and being mentally ill became less marked and, as we heard, for a short time whilst in residential care in Ireland, he became adamant that he wanted no further truck with psychiatry.

Eventually, on reaching his school leaving date, Aaron did return to his home area. He has very recently telephoned me to say that a recent stay in an adult psychiatric ward has re-convinced him of his own psychosis. He takes anti-psychotic medication and is looking forward to taking over a tenancy in supervised accommodation. He has asked that I visit him there.

My construction and commentary upon Aaron's obsessions, as his regular colloquies about both themes were described by the people who knew him – had led me into some conflict with one of his psychiatrists as I explained in the last chapter. Then, and now, I construe Aaron's wanderings as a quest to be taken more seriously by adults whose actions confined him in spaces where he felt frightened and alone. His poignant description of the ambivalent feeling that came from passing his family home on his way to school each morning suggested that even his physical proximity to that smoother space might help release the tensions he felt in his carer's home where he was said to spend long periods on his own "brooding" or, when interacting, "simply the most obnoxious and self-centred child we've ever had. He has no ability to comply with our rules." Did we see here the genesis of the divided self (Laing 1959) that has now been labelled as Aaron's paranoid schizophrenia? Officially inhabiting that space now, Aaron had been seeking the opportunity to become nomad. Freed from the despotic gridded space of despair he will now soar through opportunities for becoming. He has achieved his transgression to immanence.

# CHAPTER 8 SO WHAT? REFLECTIONS ON POLICY AND PRACTICE

## 8.1 "The Glass Children," looked after, looked into and looked through.

In "Discipline and Punish", Foucault (1997b) wrote of the carceral city that, modelled on a prison, seeks to know everything about the inhabitants whilst hiding itself. Most of the children whose voice we heard in the last two chapters have experience of a carceral network, in school and beyond, where just as within Foucault's city there were:

> insidious leniencies, unavowable petty cruelties, small acts of cunning, calculated methods, techniques and sciences that permit the fabrication of the disciplinary individual. (p308)

The children and young people demonstrated the rejection and marginalisation that schools can impose. They spoke of their turmoil and panic at the public intrusion into their lives – "the rape of privacy," (Kundera,1999 p113) and of how they tried to fashion selves sometimes by their relative acquiescence to school's assimilation of their difference – like Canna's acceptance of teachers' "selective" knowing of him or Becky's docile acceptance of her "learning difficulties." At other times, self-fashioning seemed brittle, like Rory's, but he too was typically alertful and patrolled the imposed boundaries of his inclusion, seeking opportunities to transgress beyond the coercive markers at the borders to his difference. The children's rejection and marginalisation in these senses therefore adds to that evidenced by the outcome statistics for looked after children that was reviewed in Chapter 2 and hence they are excluded, generally achieving low levels of attainment, subjected to a gaze that highlights their difference adding to their burdens of emotional and social disadvantage and requires self-practices in circumstances of personal and domestic upheaval that most children will never experience. The disrespect and rejection that

accompanies some of their experiences in and out of school point up their inequality and the inequalities amongst children generally. I think of them as "glass children" not only because of a brittleness or fragility to their self esteem but because of the sense in which they are so intrusively looked into. Moreover though, their transparency to the ever watchful eye of education and social services' gaze paradoxically renders them occasionally invisible as they are looked through and their interests subordinated to others'. Their status of "looked after" reflects that ambiguity of adults' responses. Albom (2003) refers to the way children, like glass, will absorb the prints of their handlers: "Some parents smudge, others crack, a few shatter childhoods completely into jagged little pieces, beyond repair." (p109)

## 8.2 The research relationship

During this research I was often reminded of the personal satisfactions that derived from spending time with young people; trying to hear their concerns and, where they were already clients of the Educational Psychology Service, trying to negotiate ways of improving their well-being. With Canna, Aaron, Lewis and Thea, the research relationship was also one in which I was relating to them as a helper and I remain in touch with them at this time – well beyond the data gathering stage of my study. Canna recently wanted to let me know of his satisfaction with his now independent living arrangements. Lewis has told me of his delight in achieving recognition at school as an actor, shared his plans to seek a career in dramatic arts and, in the shorter term, to stay on at school – even over the coming Christmas holiday – where he says he feels valued and respected. With these others with whom I was conducting interviews as a researcher I was struck too by their spontaneity of apparent self-disclosure, their apparent construction of the talking process as one in which they seemed to trust my engagement as an opportunity for enlisting to a cause, like Kevin's plea that I tell others of his sadness. Hannah had appeared very nervous at the start of our

conversation and said that she'd actually been physically sick before our appointment. At the end she thanked me for the opportunity to talk about her feelings and said she felt so much better for just being able to speak them. Lucy spoke to me while her little boy played with the tape recorder. She spoke of the insensitivities of teachers and distrust of older men, like me, but told her story in a way that she said she wanted "the education" to know. With all of those young people the research relationship seemed so similar to the relationship building of my "casework." I think it is the opportunities to make these engagements with children and young people that have allowed my tolerance of the ambiguities of working in a local authority for nearly thirty years, of the adults who get in the way of children's better development and of the compromises that might otherwise totally eclipse a zeal for being an educational psychologist.

It seemed that the research relationship made a difference, or at least an impact that contrasted with the negativity of some of their experiences with other adults in their lives of whom they had spoken sometimes so vividly. That impact reverberated to Iona's carers who complained to their social worker shortly after my second meeting with her because they felt that our discussion concerning Iona's apparent puzzlement as to why she had not been adopted, unlike her brother and sisters, had caused her to become upset. They contended that I ought not to have pursued such line of conversation in a research interview. I subsequently felt that I need defend her position since it had been Iona who raised the issue as a matter of concern to her and who appeared to me to have valued the opportunity to ventilate her feeling on the difference she experienced from her siblings.

I took a simple message from these examples; of the power of trying to listen to children and young people with respect and the value they might attach to that style of relationship work (Taylor 2003). Educational psychologists may have recently neglected making these encounters with children in the zeal to free time for other activities thought to be more

effective or relevant in effecting change in the systems that impact upon children in the long term.

## 8.3 The case for moral activism

Eliminating inequality and an emphasis on social justice are themes that echo with the project of inclusive education where aims to enable a more tolerant pluralist democracy and respect for others' well being are evident. Whilst Rawls (1971) argued famously for the elimination of inequality through redistribution of resources, other writers like Rizvi and Lingard (1996), Thomas and Loxley (2001), Thomas and Glennie (2002), Slee (2001), Slee and Allan (2001) convincingly argue that redistribution alone is not enough to achieve equity since that logic serves to obscure and thus sustain and perpetuate injustice in existing institutional organisation. Merely to shift resources into one area of education will not bring about change to a more just system and society and ignores consideration of disability as an outcome of cultural or identity politics. Hence the technical and assimilationist imperative of fitting defective students to schools eclipses attention being paid to the pathology of schools in the production of disturbing students and their misbehaviour. In the case of children in public care that technicist imperative is instantiated through the policy discourse that fixes schooling for these children as a policy problem requiring technical and bureaucratic solution. In these connections Lee (1996) cited in Thomas and Loxley (2001 pp113-114) has written about equities that promote "diswelfare" and similarly Roaf and Bines (1989) were early commentators on the inadequate emphasis upon needs in special education – sadly re-inscribed in our most recent ASN Act – that detracts from a more rigorous consideration of children's rights.

A consideration of rights and entitlement rather than needs informs a moral activist position. To offer children recognition and respect rather than their devaluing, rejection

and blame is a moral imperative. Its recognition as such extends beyond material resourcing: it provides what Thomas and Glennie (2002) describe as "the seedbed for recognition and respect by providing chances to be included by sharing in the common culture of the school" (p366) and it locates us all as individuals in schools and in the wider community to seek to renew and enact trust in moral values of tolerance, recognition and respect through example and the building of organisations or services that reflect these values in the treatment of children.

A basic premise for schools would acknowledge their influence and resourcefulness in the production of order and regulation (eg Slee 1995). Schools promote capacities and commitments and most children report that they value school (Jeffs 1995). So the capacity of schools to promote equity and social justice should be encouraged. Debate over Bernstein's famous question (1970) about schools compensatory powers over society cannot be rehearsed here but it seems reasonable to suppose that children will grow up being more likely to value diversity, to be sensitive to and have respect for difference if their schools model that moral stance. For children to model their behaviours on the organisation's and to develop a shared assumption with society at large would help promote bottom up change through changing expectation and aspiration which is likely to be so much more effective than top down imposition of policy directives toward inclusivity. But to develop that shared assumption will require not just schools' promotion. The encouragement of active citizenship, democratic values, including the valuing of diversity must be reflected also in our other public institutions.

## 8.4 Inclusion as a done deal: A stranger in paradise

If inclusion implies a moral activism, requires the protection of rights for all, begs for our becoming "cultural vigilantes" then:

> exclusion must be exposed in all its forms; the language we use, the teaching methods we adopt, the curriculum we transmit, the relations we establish within our schools. (Corbett and Slee 2000 p134)

These authors (see also Slee and Allan 2001) consider that central to that constant vigilance is guarding against the reduction of inclusion as the latest version of integration where the task would still be to do with the regulation of people and management of resources. An alternative inclusion discourse, rather seeks the enfranchisement of difference – for people's voices to dominate rather than professional expertism. It cannot be conditional – there cannot be variants or extents of being included – locationally, socially or functionally. Its aspiration is political and social and so no less than a cultural paradigm shift that entails risk and "thinking otherwise" (Ball 1998 p81) with disruption to certainty or decideability is required. We need firecrackers to expand and explode our thinking well beyond the units in special education for teachers where they learn the typical lexicon of handicap, how to manage it in their classes and the prognosis for looked after children. These are mere damp squibs and dull cosmetics – tips for teachers – by comparison.

So how can inclusion ever be the "done deal" that we have been advised remains only to be unpacked and rationalised (Brown 2005). What value for us to ask only the "how"? That is akin to what Humes (2003) described as an insidious tendency of recent governments to separate "first order" questions to do with the aims of education, from

"second order" questions that have more to do with the implementation of approved policies. In its wake, process issues are subordinated to the fore-grounded concern for outcome. "Daring to think otherwise" (Ball ibid) acknowledges the destination and the journey but not the route (take my hand I'm a stranger to paradigms). And the route will be wandering with faltering and confusing sign posting in places that might lead back to where we thought we once were.

Therefore, school inclusion is not just about localised academic entitlement. A young girl in a residential school for the blind once spoke to me of her relief at being able to experiment with her make-up in front of other partially sighted pupils – to laugh with them and at each other – without fear of ridicule from sighted friends at home. Felicity Armstrong (2000, cited in Slee 2001 p115) in her doctoral research heard of a similar challenge to "inclusionism" (Allan and Brown 2001 p119) and reflected:

> We forget about all the other possible entitlements ...inclusion may not always be everyone going to their local school, it would be about a whole lot of different processes which might sometimes be contradictory. Inclusion could be a number of different things. This is why children's own views and wishes are so important. (Armstrong 2000 p143)

As Allan (forthcoming) laments:

> If inclusion was recognised, not as a fixed entity, practised on a discrete population, but as a continuous struggle, which, like the rhizome, was never complete, there would be less frustration and guilt among teachers about their apparent failures, children who

> were still waiting to be included...if the participants in the inclusion struggle were able to do so as practical philosophers, experimenting with and experiencing inclusion, difference could possibly become a source of interest rather than a problem to be defined and managed.

Later I return to Deleuze's metaphor of rhizome, but meantime, taking up an overarching theme that young people have so regularly bemoaned (Jeffs 1995) – their perceived lack of being respected by adults in schools – that this study too has highlighted and which evidences our failure to act in accordance with any such moral imperative, I turn to an exploration of how to encourage this moral activism beyond the policy issues adumbrated so far.

## 8.5 From moral activism to practical philosophy

Rather than managing difference by defining its essentialist characteristics, the practice and struggle to include all in the workings of our public institutions should inform and be informed by closer questioning of the intended purpose of inclusion and the effects of exclusion. "Inclusive for what?" ask Slee and Allan (2001 p176) and cite Knight's (2000) and Bernstein's (1996) declarations of inclusion as a precondition of democratic education albeit with misgivings over our alliance upon that grander narrative. To ask the question, in schools, would mean helping children, as well as teachers, to talk and to listen, to share their experiences and feelings of segregation, exclusion and inclusion; to hear what gets in the way – the pain of separation, the panic over privacy laid bare, the turmoil in the space of undecidability, the exhaustion of the constant vigilance required to patrol the boundaries of self formation and negotiation, the reign of the normative, the tyranny of language and the ceremonies of objectification. All this goes well beyond the arid curriculum of citizenship and social education. It means taking risks – for teachers and children, to share

experience and for school communities to give themselves permission to focus upon difference rather than airbrush its status for fear of highlighting its stigma. It means to take the risk of trying to "walk the mile in his shoes" as one head teacher put it to me. Even to ask the question of himself, whether it might be tokenistic or voyeuristic, to spend the day in a wheelchair or evening in a residential unit – as that head teacher asked himself – offers the very attitudinal openness that empathy demands.

To want to listen to children and become interested as adults in trying to share experience would entail a seismic shift in the power imbalances that youngsters in this study have often spoken of in relation to themselves, their teachers and other adults. Paradoxically maybe some special residential schools have led the way in allowing the smoothing of that rigid relationship space that seems to permeate children's relationships with adults in school (Neill 1968). Lewis, as we heard, seemed to value particularly that smoother space. Seldom are school pupils seen as examiners and evaluators of their own schooling. Ruddock et al (1996) convincingly displayed how, without listening seriously to children, the school improvement agenda would be hopelessly flawed. Her studies demonstrate how young people are very well capable of developing constructive and analytical accounts of strategies for school improvement generally. The simple observation, like Becky's in this study, that pupils' experience of seemingly well-intentioned efforts to provide additional adult help can be quite contrary to the stated policy objective of inclusion, should alert us to the value of listening far more sensitively to these voices. Typically though these are tokenistic and intermittent hearings, less sensitive to frequencies where matters other than boringly cosmetic issues such as the introduction of cash cafeteria or the positioning of notice boards is to be heard. Gardiner (2005), working in the same schools where the present study also focussed, shows the range of issues on which school students, when asked, are very competent to voice sophisticated opinion. She offers students' accounts of improvements that might be made in such diverse areas of school life as negotiating

conflict amongst pupils and between pupils and teachers, means of providing feedback and encouragement to pupils' learning, methods of improving approachability and communication generally between pupils and teachers, refocusing discipline policy from punitive and negative observations to positive strategies to reward learning and effort and a new commitment to partnership with parents and carers that could emerge from re-designed parent evenings.

The following are glimpses of the opportunities in some areas of their lives that might be taken to help satisfy some of the aspirations and concerns of the children we have heard from. They are not to be taken as cook-books of practice. Rather, they are possible stirrings and eddies – practical tacks that might steer our inclusive journeys with these young people toward a more just outcome. Fundamentally, they involve altering the "voltage flow" of power (Roy 2004 p298) inherent in the imbalances of control and authority between children and adults. So I consider firstly the area of adult child relationships for looked after children.

## 8.6 Adult child relationships: "The whys go down; they don't come up"

Reference was made above to the generally cosmetic fashion whereby schoolchildren's opportunities for involvement in decision-making has been operationalised. This reflects the ambiguities and the contested status of children's rights reflected by that head teacher who dismissed Canna's querying of the school hierarchies decision on a timetabling matter with:

> "tell him the why's go down; they don't come up!"

We saw how others like Becky and Lucy felt disempowered by pejorative comment upon their circumstances and of how almost all displayed transgressive practices against the coercive markers of difference instantiated and enmeshed in such striated relationships with teachers. Children generally are well known of course for their inventiveness in subverting these social hierarchies. Far less experimental are teachers in changing their patterns of verbal or non-verbal engagement with children. Safer are their traditional and over-practised responses where, rather, "the dark sarcasm of the classroom" (Waters 1979) eclipses children's spontaneity and reciprocity and where the encouragement of order and self-discipline is reduced to a technology of control or perhaps something called "anger management" – to be done to, of course, rather than with, children.

Allan and I'Anson (2004) have documented the progress in one Scottish school where all adults were encouraged to change aspects of their typical engagement scripts with children. Children were taught about their rights and responsibilities. Changes were noted quite contrary to what might be the cynical observer's phobic expectation that the school would descend into chaos and child rule. Indeed the school's head became even keener to extend the children's rights to involve and invite their observations concerning staff appointments and to chair their own care or educational reviews. Interestingly there is a growing literature (eg Hayes 2004) on how to help young people prepare for and chair these meetings thereby taking some control of the intensity of the gaze and its focus and direction that the young people here – like Rory, Canna, Lucy and Hannah – spoke of. Thereby, looked after and other children of course could be helped to redirect the gaze on others – their teachers and social workers. Similarly, in their formal educational planning meetings, the familiar quest for SMART targets could be made applicable to other adults: targets that they, rather than just the children, should aim to meet and whose progress towards which could be scrutinised. For my own authority I have now adapted a draft pro forma educational planning protocol for looked after children. It offers suggestions for the active

involvement of the children and it deliberately avoids the technicist language of curricular target setting and levels of attainment. Rather it asks adults to hear from the children their dreams and aspirations, of how their schooling might be improved or made happier, of who might be able to help them, who hinders them. It asks adults to think more seriously about how educational progress, stability and predictability might contribute to children's resilience and it assumes that the young people are well able to talk of all these. (See Appendix 1)

Shifts in the directions and flow rates of power will require acknowledgement of children's competences and disruption to certainties over their inadequacies that have tended to restrict their opportunities to engage in decision making. Suggestions that might possibly risk their own ridicule, the heretic voices that challenge the familiar and unsettle the calm indifference or denial of children's agency, might include efforts to foreground and focus on children's views of what is important to them, what they feel they need in making assessments of their care and educational needs. Such child led assessments, rather than Gary's "big ginormous booklets" could complement child led care and educational review mechanisms which could open up creative rather than bureaucratic responses. Extending their right to advocacy might help young people deal with adult led systems and help ensure a source of support so often lacking from the absence of contact with their social workers that Canna in this research has highlighted. Equally, of course, the system's management of itself – the prioritising and protecting by management of teachers and social workers time to be with children, hear their concerns and maybe develop empathic understandings and a level of mutual trust beyond Canna's – could signal a determination to do policy, to enact all the well-intentioned child focussed advice of policy makers rather than simply speaking and generating more policy. Practice rather than emblem: the shift is to start with and to stay with the child, to help create spaces where children's requirement and expectation to perform – despite the chaos in their lives, can be subordinated to efforts to

promote their resilience, accepting their need for dignity, to expect well, to "hang on in there" and somehow, I suppose, to stay optimistic.

To help create that space, significant adults – like teachers, social workers and carers need courage in risking ridicule. They might need to turn the spotlight and the tables on themselves and their own authority; but not their responsibility. Roy (2003) writes in that connection of the need to loosen the division between teacher and taught, of the novel, uncharted and nomadic space then created when innovation in methods, relation and content of curriculum and being alongside others can pervade the field. Here working alongside young people will not imply a checklist of skills but an openness of approach – "a certain mode of perception – a gestalt" (p95). Allan (forthcoming) takes these injunctions further by urging new creativities – "to play with words and to invent new forms of expression" so as the familiar can be made strange and orthodoxy unravelled: maybe the composing of raps and shared dramatic productions around Kevin's "Well Sir I'm Maladjusted" or charade and role play activities in the classroom and social workers' repertoire could help make salient the mechanisms whereby each are positioned. The creative "murmurs" (Roy ibid), slips of tongue and hesitations might help free up a relationship space where leads could be taken for exploration. One such occurred to me when, in drafting this section, "so as to prize respect" was typed as "sop to respect" and promoted a useful personal reflection. In an effort to create another form of expression I authored and produced a PowerPoint display featuring a shrinking looked after child whilst a dramatic narrative told of her repeated marginalisation and demeaning by the squabbling amongst local authority bureaucracies. (See Appendix 2)

## 8.7 The spaces where adults and children meet

In earlier chapters the hierarchical and rigid, striated space of school as experienced by the students was illustrated. Therein, where the "whys?" were said to be able to travel in one direction only, a smoothing of relationship space could be created. There were other spaces that the young people in this research experienced as equally bounded and territorialized – by professionals at Children's Hearings round the "big table" where encounters could be frightening, and at reviews where the scrutiny of their personal biography was often overpowering. Even in friends' homes the regulation of risk precluded Iona's overnight visits. For Canna, care space was simply conceived by others as a "bad place for bad people" whilst for Barra the characteristics of that space lay in its ambiguity and undecideability. Aaron's poignant journey through the smoother space of proximity to his home when journeying to and from school highlighted too the attention that could be paid to smoothing these topographies.

The way children's progress through care has been considered by adult dominated surveillance and use of bureaucratic devices could be changed by inventing ways to seek children's views. Canna was certain that his social workers had not paid sufficient attention to issues that he felt needed to be dealt with and that the matters in which he would have valued discussion were ignored. Elsewhere too (Voice for the Child in Care 2004) is reported that the mechanistic completion of assessment schedules leads young people to regard assessments as too narrow or predetermined with their individuality being ignored and their deficiencies highlighted. Perhaps, if we are to translate a belief in children's competencies into action, then we could invent more creative opportunities by storytelling assessment vignettes – to seek their opinions on how their stories might match or differ; by using drawings or photographs to assist their sequencing of situations that they might have found difficult or helpful; by scaffolding and storying their experiences in a way that can be

agreed – rather than the dip-stick assessments we so readily feel compelled to take – "running the measuring tape around their experience" as one colleague had ambitiously and arrogantly suggested he saw his role as. A more child led journey of assessment will doubtless take longer and lend itself less readily to the categorisation inherent in the Shared Assessment Framework of course. It would eschew the mythology of objective data gathering and demand more skill in striving to adopt the child's perspective – by again subtracting from the tyranny of alleged professional expertism. Opportunities like these might help build up understandings with children that respect their positions and value their involvement in fashions where they would more willingly cooperate.

Mention earlier too was made to young people actually chairing and having more say in the format of and attendance at formal review meetings; but attention might equally be paid to whether the myriad of formal meetings are actually required and whether their rigid and formulaic nature could be reinvented to become more accessible to young people. In an educational context, for example, Hayes (2004) developed that notion through holding "visual annual reviews" – the structuring of these meetings through graphic cues that helped facilitate the children's engagement, interest and active collaboration in discussion of issues that they reported as being grounded in their own experience. Consultation with young people about their own wishes about topics to be covered, those people to attend and issues they do not feel comfortable in being raised could become the standard practice in developing child led planning tools. A prototype of such a tool entitled "making action plans" was evaluated by McCloskey (2001) in a residential care context where the young people reported increased satisfaction in their levels of participation and enjoyment. Opportunities to celebrate success and achievement could far more readily be taken if the timing of meetings was not set by slavish adherence to an artificial bureaucratic timetable nor in response to crisis. Maybe young people could be invited to distribute invitations to their own meetings and, indeed, to invite attendance for a review of their carers' or other

adults' progress in meeting their needs and expectations. At the end of all meetings perhaps adults could learn useful lessons by encouraging feedback about their performance from the young people.

Children's appreciation of the physical spaces – where they live – could benefit also from their more active collaboration in design. Two looked after young people from the area I work in recently joined local authority officers in visiting "model" children's homes in a neighbouring authority. Their reactions were interesting: "I wouldn't want to live in this posh, like hotel" said one. The intentions and determination of the planners to buy the best might have been exemplary. "No Ikea stuff here" was their proud comment; but the kids saw it differently – as un-homely, as clinical and unwelcoming. This contrasts with Mannion and I'Anson's (2004) description of the involvement of school age consultants in a refurbishment project and the positive impact upon architects' planning and execution of that collaborative brief. Kemp (2006) reports, however, that pupils' consultation over building design may only be paid lip service under the current system of public private partnership.

## 8.8 Learning

The point that an appreciation of messiness, rather than an obsessive desire for order and geometry that characterised the state of the art children's homes, resonates with the need for certainty, outcome and measures of performativity that characterise how we have come to structure how, where and what children learn. Just as an impressive Georgian staircase in the children's home we visited had had to be encased in safety glass, so our closed conceptions of pedagogy seem to have prejudiced us against more inventive thinking about the kind of learning and teaching that allows for surprise and spontaneity, innovation and engagement with an un-centred and un-standardised curriculum that the modernist

education project eschews. Roy (2003) calls for no less than an epistemological and ontological shift in the conceptualisation of schooling so as to open these "leaky and indeterminate spaces" (p83) where "border" youth could be better accommodated. He too uses Deleuzian concepts to theorise these curricular spaces where rhizomatic learning that moves in messy and unpredictable ways, never attaining a final condition, can be encouraged. All of the young people in this study knew of their bordered status encoded by the examining, normalising and hierarchical function of the gaze. It regularised their conditions of learning. Lewis, particularly, seemed to thrive in his residential school where these conditions were flexible: with opportunity to opt out of some subjects and experience a wider range of activities. His engagement seemed to be made easier by the school's adoption of "social mentoring" where evidently a closer opportunity between teacher and taught was achieved and where community group meetings seemed to encourage self-reflection in circumstances of decentred authority where teacher talk did not dominate discussion and different ways of thinking could be perceived.

But although Lewis' experience is maybe a foil to the depressing regularity with which residential school placements are regarded as the placement of last resort (because the certainty seems to persist that any local alternative is preferable) this is no apology for sending children away. And it would be pretentious here to call for the entire dismemberment of the current techno-bureaucratic educational body. Rather, what can be proposed beyond the usual list of structural recommendations that leave untouched the system's perpetuation or re-inscription of prejudice and self-assurance, are the fissures in policy and the sniffing out of new trails and discovery of new lines of flight, in the Deleuzian metaphor. We need to become sneaky in subverting policies and telling them against themselves. Small changes might create conditions for larger ones. An example was the introduction of the rights agenda in the school described by Allan and I'Anson mentioned earlier. Another is the example of introducing, under the guise of expressive

arts, projects where stories and myths have been used successfully to help improve the self-esteem of children who have suffered trauma (Roberts 1997). Weare (2000) describes a raft of opportunities that can be taken to help promote what she describes as emotional and social health through existing subject based curricular repertoires. These might help promote a shift to teachers' and learners' engagement with ideas beyond the routinised acquisition and ceremonial display of content; they could be Trojan horses that could allow some curricular invasion.

Sniffing out learning events where the unplanned encounters with something new can be trailed should be the nose of all of us caring for looked after children. Barra's social worker took him to the zoo where he made a tentative suggestion that some animals might remind him and others of people in their lives. What a hilarious projective technique and what "creative writing" at the children's own instigation ensued – with photographic illustration too!

Some teachers have reported that their more actively seeking these learning opportunities outwith the conventional academic – content mode has actually allowed them to find more time for the technical requirements of the curriculum, since the children have become more involved in their learning and a tone of cooperation and self-management of potentially disruptive events has developed (Elias et al, 1997, cited in Weare, 2000). Other examples, Luke et al (1999) cited in Allan (forthcoming) suggest that engagement with problems, beyond the traditionally curricular, to include justice, equity and inclusion were actually centrally associated with <u>high</u> levels of student achievement. That finding detracts from the more jaundiced view that achievement and inclusion are mutually exclusive which seems to be a teachers' unions' discursive manoeuvre despite other contradictory evidence (eg Ballard 1999). Equally though we should beware of the simplistic notions of causality that

would offer certainty and closure through sloganistic appeal instanced in the title of "Better Behaviour-Better Learning" (Scottish Executive 2001b) for example.

## 8.9 Behaviour

The difficult and challenging behaviour of children in care that so often leads to school exclusion or placement breakdown is judged in these relationship spaces: where children encounter adults and where their learning and teaching is formalised. But these judgements rarely admit the implication and the "entanglement" (Roy 2003 p117), even of the pathology, of the adults in generating their conclusions. Hence, from the young people in this study we heard of Becky's dangerousness in the judgement of her teachers; of Lewis' spectacularisation by his mother; of the regimented home-life that Kevin compared so unfavourably to his grandmother's care; of Hannah's carers' preferential treatment of their own children and of the obnoxious taunts that Lucy received from teachers. In their accounts, an apparent one-dimensional story of their alleged deviance had dominated with scant attention from adults to look to their own roles in the production of the very behaviours they bemoaned. I have argued also, that the attributional monocularism, a selective imperception to context, is reflected in policymaking where the privileging of traditional adult authoritarianism remains. That is not least instantiated in the classroom management and control industry. Troubled schooling and troubled care has, it seems, been theorised and understood with less reference to the entanglement of not just those in children's immediate relationships spaces but to an unwillingness to consider the wider economic, cultural and political problems that impact upon disturbing behaviour. The policy agenda has rarely acknowledged wider issues to do with socio-economic privilege and the narrowing of the labour market, changes in family and patterns of authority generally and status marginalisation that detaches young people's adherence to traditional

values. These caustic effects are overlooked in the reductionist vision of behaviour challenge as personal trouble (Wright Mills 1959).

Earlier I wrote of the invention of such explanatory fictions as Attention Deficit Disorder and Pathological Demand Avoidance syndromes which fix control requirement and causal attribution on the child. The epidemic of so-called Autistic Spectrum Disorder similarly medicalises personality by patholigising eccentricity and quirkiness (Selfe 2004). A seemingly voyeuristic desperation to understand individual difference as pathological and the intellectual dishonesty of equating description with explanation is not just confined to educational loci though. Social work practitioners regularly seek the advice of an army of mental health professionals who claim a special expertise in the psychopathology, and in particular of the "plight", of looked after children and their special psychological and emotional needs (eg British Psychological Society Division of Clinical Psychology 2004). It may be that in a generally under theorised social work practice such referrals potentially undermine other wider conceptualisations of looked after children's difficulties. Meanwhile social work practice seems increasingly to rely on attachment theory to locate the explanation for looked after children's relationship difficulties, and almost any other angry or unsettling interaction with others, in a diagnostic matrix of early attachment problems and disorders where alleged early failures of bonding between care givers and children explain subsequent developmental deviance. But there appear not to be useful methods of assessing reactive attachment disorders, so-called, nor clear implications for intervention. Rather, there seems to be implied a hopeless fatalism that might close down a search for alternative narratives or options for change because of the explanatory power of its discourse.

Slee (1995, 2001) argues for a far wider scope for the analysis of behaviour problems in schools than we seem to have achieved; one beyond concerns of just control and welfarism

to the acknowledgement of some of the wider factors referred to earlier and a reflective engagement with the complexity of troubled schooling. Here, the suggested value in considering children's "hidden injuries" perhaps as exemplified through their objectification shown in this research, would resonate with a project that more deliberately sought children's views and valued their expression.

## 8.10 Some self work for educational psychology

In Chapter1 I touched upon some dilemmas of educational psychology practice. Norwich (2000) describing one such suggests that educational psychologists differ from other professionals in our defining of occupational identity in terms of the discipline or discourses of Psychology whereas other professions use knowledge from various disciplines that seem relevant to their aims. His concern seems to be that working at a systemic level detracts from the potential to offer a more distinctively "psychological" contribution because there will be other groups of people, like educational advisors and consultants, who can do such work. Conversely, if we adhere to an individual child-focussed perspective then there is less opportunity for intervention in the wider systemic issues that impact on children.

It is not clear to me that educational psychological practice and professionalism needs to be defined in terms of a body of knowledge in contrast to other workers who appear quite content to use knowledges from various disciplines that seem relevant to their aims. Extending the list that Gersch (2004) made of educational psychologists' skills I would claim these:

- being able to convey interest in helping children
- displaying effective interpersonal and relationship skills

- retaining a sense of proportion
- trying to offer practical help and solve problems
- assisting when things seem to get stuck
- being able to make connections between research and real life problems
- being able to evaluate interventions
- working directly and through others

The fact that few, if any of these individually could be said to be distinctive to psychologists should really not matter.

Few of them, so worded, chime with the model of technical rationality that Schon (1983) has described and that seems to have dominated psychological practice (Moore 2005, Lunt and Majors 2000, Gergen 1973) where problem solving is undertaken through the application of scientific theory and techniques that claim a knowledge base that is specialised, firmly bounded, scientific and standardised. Schon asserts that such a positivist epistemology of professional knowledge is mismatched to actual professional practice situations which, rather, are characterised by complexity and uniqueness. He refers to a "crisis in confidence in professional knowledge" (p3) thereby created, because the definition of professional knowledge subordinates ways of responding to situations and problems that professionals *learn in action* as central to their practice to other standardised practices resting upon the positivist epistemology of modernity. Scott and Usher (1996) suggest these to include the realist determinacy that holds to the truth of expert knowledge, its unassailability from alternative formulations, its value base of assumed objectivity and search for predictability and generalisability. Slee (1995) has charted the fashions whereby that epistemology of educational psychological practice has contributed to the isolation of children as measurable, knowable and often pathological hence needing help and rendered docile. The expanding behaviour industry franchised and developed by many educational

psychologists has extended our intrusive and dividing practices. We have convinced ourselves that there exist standardised solutions to complicated and dynamic real world problems (Lunt and Majors 2000); hence there have been attempts to identify "core competencies" for practice and faddish calls to display "evidence based practice" (eg MacKay 2002, p248) but where the "gold standard" remains the systematic review of randomised controlled trials with qualitative and interpretive study at the foot of the research hierarchy (Fox 2003). Some faltering steps toward a more constructionist epistemology are proposed by Monson et al (1998) and Woolfson et al (2003) in a much vaunted practice model taught to educational psychologists in training in Scotland (University of Strathclyde 2005). That problem analysis framework acknowledges the messiness of practice situations and attempts to identify shared understandings with other actors in transforming case details into problem maps and hypothesis testing. But here too is the language of positivism, the aspiration to "reduce" and "manage" complexity (Woolfson et al 2003, p285) – the attempt to essentialise what will always be contingent, ambiguous and subjective. In its encouragement to seek evidence for hypotheses generated through discussion, it fails to consider what is to count as evidence. Practitioners' practice, like research rarely makes explicit its ontological and epistemological underpinnings.

Calls to focus upon children's experience as the bedrock of such underpinnings are usefully made by some high profile educational psychologists (eg Baxter and Frederickson 2005). These authors find it in the UN convention of the rights of the child and propose, as its supporting contribution to radical reform, the entering by educational psychologists into a "compact" with no less than "the children of this country and those who represent them" (p94). But the illustrations of practice offered fail to offer anything more radical than importing a business model to evaluate how educational psychologists and schools might estimate their co-production of added value and the identification of children as the negotiating customer rather than passive client recipient. The values (other than the

seemingly market driven and self seeking injunctions to secure a brighter future for Educational Psychology) that might commit us to compacts with children remain unexplored.

Can we engage more radically than this? I believe we can but this will need our heeding more seriously Burden's (1997) call for "new paradigm ways of thinking and writing" which might "speak eloquently for more complex ways of understanding" (p xii). We might find these in an epistemology of practice where relationships with our clients could be more evidently grounded and when we accept that we have much to learn <u>together</u>, where our view of practice reflects an engagement with uncertainty and ambiguity, where decisions are taken on partial information and indeterminacy hence built in. In this reflexive model of praxis there needs to become a concern to research our own acts of understanding as a major concern and the acknowledgement of the enactive, constitutive nature of practice relationships. Moore (2005) finds these to be encompassed within a social constructionist epistemology where an appreciation of the importance of the context of the relationship between practitioner and client is vital. So the self-work that educational psychologists might undertake could be said to require an active questioning engagement with the epistemology of practice. The subtractions we must make are to our "knowing instrumentalism and self-assured certainty." We should question the beliefs explicit or, more likely otherwise, that have legitimised practiced ways of understanding. Thus during this work I have come to recognise the expertism or the touchstone of valuable practice to lie more in a process of interpersonal interaction and how to foster relationships with sometimes unhappy children by trying to convey an attitude of interest and respect for individual difference. Here I am reminded also of other suggestions from psychotherapy that techniques or methods are far less powerful than the context and the power of the <u>relationship</u> between the listener and the being listened to; for that is the crucible of personal change that my research learners appeared to value. So the expertise and

professionalism of a psychologist within the education system cannot rest upon our usefulness to that system as, say, definers of resource-worthiness or internal consultants and quality control officers. The problems we encounter daily involve the inter-relationship of individuals and systems.

Educational psychologists and others therefore share with schools and other institutions of a civil society a duty to promote respect and caring for others; because we live in relationships, not in isolation. Jung wrote of the ways he thought that children transfer to adults some of the feelings they have for their parents and were influenced in turn by adults. These relationships are more important than any method – of casework or teaching or any form of childcare practice, and our ability to learn is continually hampered if the relationship is unsatisfactory:

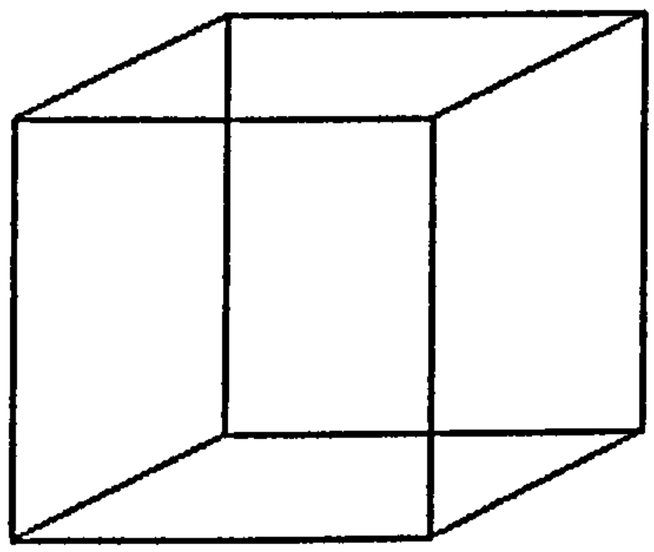
> The vision of justice and care, the ideals of human relationship – the vision that self and others will be treated as of equal worth, that despite differences in power, things will be fair, the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no-one will be left alone or hurt – these visions in their tensions reflect the paradoxical truths of human experience-that we know ourselves as separate only insofar as we live in connection with others. (C. Gilligan 1982)

As I complete this chapter I hear of a secondary school's teaching staff demand for staff development on how to speak to children. I hear a boy in care complaining to me that in responding to his teacher's correction he had observed that "we all make mistakes." His teacher had replied "Yes, just look at your parents."

So much is still to be achieved.

**Afterwards and Forwards: after words and forewords.**

Here is a picture, the well known "Necker Cube" illusion:



What do you see? One moment you might see the cube coming out of the page, another it might appear to go into it. It might even oscillate in different planes. But most times if you centre on one option the other disappears. The shifting from one awareness seems to push the alternative into the background. It seems impossible to perceive the two at the same time. Lois Shawver (internet site) explicates Derrida's term "differance" as how being aware of one pattern of differences backgrounds, distracts us from the deferred one- but the other way is still there. Differance is not only the existence of the deferred but also the process that causes the deferment.

This helps me to understand the notion of aporia, the existence of seemingly contradictory injunctions and the madness or the inexplicability, even the impossibility of choosing. Derrida thought of justice, hospitality, gifting-to give and really not count the cost, or the reduction to calculability- in this way.

I think we have responsibilities to find new lines of flight as Deleuze urged us to. The flights need not mean we must strive to resolve apparent contradictions between binary opposites that our language of segregation versus integration or cost versus efficiency or systems versus case work or community versus residential care direct our attention to. The Third Way (vide Mr Blair's) or the n minus one way might be like trying to herd cats. We

might manage, I suppose, if we're lucky or we're kidding ourselves. Some of us will oscillate. Some of the dilemmas (just) don't seem resolvable. So what? The other way might still haunt us. Just maybe we have a responsibility to both ways.

I will resist a summing up, a closure. "So much is still to be achieved" I said.

A list is too easy! The invitation to do so is itself aporetic!

I know what I'll do to "take this forward", how I'll help the murmurs produced in this thesis travel. I'll try not to forget how intimately involved, imbricated, I am in children's failure-by careless language and, worse maybe, careful language that tyranises and highlights patterns of differences that backgrounds what children want. And I want to share what these children have been saying to me. I made a stab at a summary of that in section 8.1. It should stab us. I have a new task in the incoming school session – to lead on interagency staff development about improving the educational opportunities for looked after children. One message to travel with me? Don't jump to quick solutions, the sound byte and the easy fix. The children are all different. I want to tell some of the stories of these differences, their uniqueness, of how they can manage in the face of upheaval, distress and abuse and of how irrelevant some of our talk and take is to them. I want to try to persuade these people to whom I'm being asked to deliver staff development to look to themselves and to ask themselves some difficult questions:

1. What part have professionals played in children's subjectification?

Cough up. On one hand we are required to deliver services, on the other that very "delivery" positions and so often objectifies children.

2. How might professionals avoid adding to the stock of children's problems?

On one hand we should try to empathise with children's situations, on the other we should avoid patronising and adding to their sense of difference. Try to background the angst about all the negative experiences that have been poured in to them. The children are more complicated than that. Learn from what they've told us of how they cope. Look at Hannah's resilience. Who helped her? Trusted people. Her boyfriend and the cool Australian guy who actually asked her what she thought.

3. Can professionals find ways of expecting well that contradicts all the over rehearsed rhetoric of failure?

On one hand we seem to work in contexts where discourses of failure abound, on the other we must sniff out opportunities for children's success. Look at Thea's bubbling excitement at getting her Music Standard Grade pass. Ask yourself how you can help these children discover talents, nurture interests, build confidences, leave care with something they didn't have before. Lucy had managed her Nana's books and done her shopping and was proud of that. School had entirely failed to help her find other things she was good at. Be vigilant for the moments of growth that can arise from the unexpected and let's all be mindful that in communities, school communities where the children spend so much time, there are sources of interest from and refuge to in janitors, secretaries and the lollipop man. We heard that a single adult's interest can make the difference. Can that be sustained so as Barra can actually apply for his provisional driving license now. Because it was being held up since he needed a signatory of someone who had known him continuously for two years, but there was no one who did – this despite having been in care for so much longer. Can our responsibilities to secure

Iona's safety if she sleeps over at friends be foregrounded and at the same time acknowledge her and our dilemma in caring for her expressed need not to be embarrassed by pals' parents being police checked?

4. Will we try to avoid quick fixes that the children see through- the designated teachers, the integrated frameworks, the looked after materials and the coordinated support plans that construct their needs, pathologise their difference and subjugate their hopes and dreams?

On one hand we see need to invent policies that could make a difference, but the difference is made for children when they feel involved and their wishes heard and responded to.

5. Can we dare to glimpse more often at the opportunities for creative addition and subtraction to our work and responsibilities?

On one hand we are busy caseworkers or carers or teachers, maybe with over-rehearsed standardised responses. On the other we should regularly be interrogating our practice epistemologies in the dilemmic spaces these take us to.

6. Can we bear to ask ourselves what experiences we have had that compare to those that these children have spoken about here?

Remember Hannah's reference to "the prince the princess and me" and her accidentally overhearing that her mother wished to have nothing more to do with her. Imagine

Barra's living with the lie that his family didn't want him and being denied the contact they had wanted all along.

7. Will we be mindful that our exclusions, from our schools and other institutions of these children reminds them of their marginalisation?

On the one hand we hear how others' equilibrium can be disturbed by the behaviour of some, but the responsibility to all children must include those for whom we have particular duties of corporate care. Remember Canna. During one of his many exclusions he vandalised the property of someone with whom I was very close – a very elderly lady whose panic and dread of its repetition preyed on her mind. Our actions resonate well beyond the confines of classrooms.

There could be more. I think these all touch on the central aporia that the children so regularly expressed – of their desire to be seen as ordinary, not to be treated "un-normal" as Donny put it but to be understood or recognised as dealing with issues in their lives that few of us have ever had to. Gary could put up with some other kids' taunts about their having mothers when he didn't. Lucy and others couldn't stand the promiscuous sharing of information-their personal details becoming the common currency of the classroom. Remember Canna's not being wanted on the planet by the headteacher from Hell, but those who took the time to make the difference; Becky's requirement for constant supervision and how friends tired of helping her suffer it; Rory's panic at what others knew of him and his tailoring and enlisting of allies when, like Ross, he needed to edit his story.

Questions not answers. For the sake of our common humanity, for ideals of humanitarianism can we take time to listen instead of only demanding that of our children.

Re-read the last chapter. I was taught in undergraduate psychology about the "risky shift phenomenon". It had nothing to do with children's experiences nor their construction by adults' power and knowledges but I've written there about risky shifts we could consider making. For me the shift, the process that makes the optical illusion change, is discovered through relationship work. It leads me to value patterns of difference and to seek them anew. That reminds me to seek the patterns in myself and to try to value ways that children's voices can be heard, their participation encouraged and their own agency encouraged.

Now that might make a difference.

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## APPENDIX 1 – Learning Plan for Looked After Children

This is the draft learning planning document prepared for Dumfries & Galloway Council. In developing the proposals I borrowed from material provided by other Councils, especially Liverpool. At the time of writing, responses to a consultation about the process by head teachers and social workers have been very positive and plans to implement arrangements from August 2006 are being made.

Dumfries & Galloway COUNCIL

# Draft

# Learning Plan for Looked After Children and Young People

**March 2006**

## About the Dumfries and Galloway Learning Plan for Looked After Children

The background to and need for improved educational planning for looked after children includes the Scottish Executive's "Learning With Care" (March 2001) – the report of an inspection undertaken jointly by HM Inspectors of Schools and the Social Work Services Inspectorate. First in the recommendations of that document was that:

*Local Authorities should carry out a full, multi-disciplinary assessment involving education and social work personnel, and others as appropriate around the time a child becomes looked after. This assessment should provide a baseline for future educational progress. Points for action should be identified in the care plan and placement agreement.*

The Inspectorate noted that it was very unusual for any form of assessment to have been carried out on the children they sampled at the time of this publication. It was even more unusual to find an assessment which addressed educational needs and where educational progress had been described it was often found to have been inaccurate. Although care plans have been a statutory requirement since 1997 they had not always been in place. These must now be in place and ought to address educational needs and goals as part of the drive to improve the attainment outcome for looked after children.

Up until recently Dumfries and Galloway in its guidelines on the Education of Looked After Children (November 2002) has not made the production of a formal education plan for looked after children a mandatory requirement. Rather, it had been required that social services personnel ensure that care plans fully address educational needs and progress by liaising with education services appropriately. For its part, the education service had undertaken to prioritise planning for all looked after children and where necessary contribute to formal reassessment around the time a child becomes looked after.

It is now the view of the reference group which reports to the appropriate tactical group of the Council that more formalised education planning for all looked after children, not just looked after and accommodated children should be instituted. The proposed format provided herewith is designed to ensure that all important decisions about the education of looked after children are made jointly by the corporate parents – the teachers, the social workers, carers, educational psychologists and other professionals who may be involved with the child.

The proposed plan has two sections, it separates some essential information from the actual plan – My Learning Plan – which separation aspires to make the process more obviously child centred. My Learning Plan itself can be reproduced in two versions: one with graphics for primary school aged children and in a plain style for those of secondary school age.

The sections of the education plan are:

**Section 1 – My Learning Plan**
This is the section for the child, and is for the child to keep. It focuses on strengths and positives, identifies targets and comments on strategies for the future. This section is completed at a learning planning meeting with the children and the adults who help their learning and look after them.

**Section 2 – Essential Information**
This section is for the adults involved with the children to keep. It brings together some essential information about the youngster in one document. The child does not need to be present when this section is completed.

**When do looked after children have Learning Plans?**
From Nursery until leaving school.

**Who should initiate the Learning Planning Process?**
The social worker is responsible for initiating the learning planning process and in practice this will probably be a joint responsibility with the designated teacher. Either one can ask for an learning planning meeting for a looked after children to be arranged. So too can parents and carers.

**How often should Learning Plans for looked after children be reviewed?**
The minimum requirement is once every six months, immediately before the child's LAC Review. If a child has recently joined the school or just entered public care a new My Learning Plan should be written within fourteen days. Section 2 must already have been completed.

**Who needs to be present at a Learning Planning meeting?**
The young person, the carer (if applicable), parents (always if the child is looked after at home), the designated teacher and the social worker would be the minimum expectation. Schools may wish teachers other than the designated teacher to attend and head teachers may also wish to attend sometimes. It is vital however that the young person is consulted as to which members of teaching staff should attend – with whom he or she will feel comfortable in discussing the plan. He or she may also suggest other friends or advocates who may be interested and able to attend the Learning Planning meeting.

**Where should the Learning Planning Meeting take place?**
In school usually, but not necessarily. The child should be consulted about the selection of venue. A time of day must be chosen that minimises disruption to schooling.

**Who keeps the Learning Plan?**
The children keep their own originals of My Learning Plan and should be given a ring binder to collect routine updates in. We have proposed also that a folder for youngsters to keep particular pieces of school related material be included and such might include, for example, keepsakes, notes from

teachers, particular pieces of work of which they were proud etc. All adults involved with the child should have a copy of Section 2 – Essential Information. The designated teacher and social worker ought to have a copy of Section 1. At the meeting the child should decide who else receives a copy beyond them.

## The Learning Planning Procedure

If previously available, essential information sections should be checked prior to any Learning Planning meeting. In general a Learning Planning meeting should be called as soon as possible before the LAC Review and as soon as possible after a youngster actually enters care for the first time.

1. Essential information is provided to schools by the social workers who should:

   • meet with the designated teacher so as he or she could fill in these sections
   • or complete the forms and send them to schools
   •or simply check any changes of detail by telephoning the school.
   The child is not present when this information is checked.
   When a child first joins a school the head teacher will be the most appropriate person to be given this essential information.

   **All staff, Social Workers and others must familiarise themselves thoroughly with the additional arrangements for securing continuity of educational provision for looked after children which appear in the existing Dumfries and Galloway Guidelines. It is not at all clear that staff have been following that protocol. The responsibilities of all staff involved are very clearly laid out in that documentation.**

2. Guidelines will be revised to include the requirement for educational planning in this format for looked after children and schools must receive all of Section 2 completed before a child is admitted. A starting date cannot be advised prior to the scrutiny of this basic information. Guidelines make clear the exigencies where consultation with the Educational Psychology Service would also be required and of head teachers' requirements to seek further advice in cases where doubt of a school's ability to absorb a new entrant, for whatever reason, is apparent.

3. Once essential information has been checked, a Learning Planning meeting is initiated by the social worker on one of the days immediately prior to a LAC Review i.e. every six months. The Learning Planning meeting will usually be held in the school, is attended by the child, carer, parents, designated teacher and social worker and others as agreed. Only My Learning Plan is discussed at the Planning meeting. Adults should note that some children might feel more comfortable if the Learning Plan and the possible content of Section 1 is talked though with them beforehand.

4. The child keeps the originals of My Learning Plan and has a say on who others (with the exception of social worker and school who must routinely receive a copy) should also receive one. Adults should bring both sections of the Learning Plan to LAC Reviews.

**Enabling the child or young person to participate**

There may be a fine balance between helping the child voice his or her views and encouraging them to make informed decisions, and overburdening them with decision-making procedures where they have insufficient experience and knowledge to make appropriate judgements without additional support. Such anyway is the advice within the Children Act; but concern for balance ought not to detract from very serous consideration being given to helping youngsters inform decision-making procedures. Equally, ways in which emotionally damaged or youngsters with very significant additional support needs can be helped to contribute to meetings offer scope for imaginative planning.

My Learning Plan should be a child-centred procedure. The discussions involved should be completed in a setting where there can be maximised security and closeness between the child and the adults. As mentioned above it might be better for the plan to be talked about beforehand with the child in case the Learning Planning meeting is too daunting. The child may have a preference about the best time of day for the meeting, particularly in secondary schools. Adults and children should be helped to feel free to articulate their thoughts and feelings and to listen and learn from others.

It might be best if the child is asked to choose who should do the recording or the scribing within the documentation. Some children will wish to do that themselves and indeed even relatively young people have been helped to learn to chair and run meetings like this themselves. Social workers and schools are encouraged to consider that with the young people and hence help model democratic and citizenship procedures that go beyond an otherwise relatively sterile "values curriculum".

**Formulating targets**

The items in My Learning Plan have been carefully chosen because they arise from research into successful educational outcomes for looked after children. Accordingly every section should be involved in helping formulate targets.

# Completing My Learning Plan

## My Learning Plan Page 1

**Achievements**
The aim is to help increase young people's sense of self efficacy and positive sense of self image as learners. It's not about test scores and levels of attainment, but about the child's strengths. It's also a recognition of the effort needed to succeed in school when life is stressful. If the child does have something to celebrate academically, of course this should be included.

Achievements could be something like these:

> Ralston has come to school on time every day
> Kate has been very helpful to the school secretary
> Stewart has joined in the homework club
> Sean has become better behaved and polite
> Alistair has made a big effort to improve his spelling

**Attendance and punctuality**
These are included because they too might lend themselves to target setting such as:

> I will get to classes on time. This is my responsibility and Mr. Brown will check every day.

## My Learning Plan Page 2

**Looking back at our last targets**
This is a review of the previous Learning Plan if there has been one and it helps to update the targets. So the narrative documents what has happened about these last targets, how they have been met or not met.

**Thinking ahead I would like to**
These are longer term learning goals and are to be expressed here. This is a record of a child's hopes and dreams.

**My interests and hobbies are**
Research suggests that looked after children who have interests or hobbies are more likely to be successful in education – probably because these activities are a focus for motivation, bring structure into weekly routines and provide contact with other children. To become or to be helped to become involved in activities could be one of the child's targets. These need not be school related activities and they might involve a friend in the wider

community who might be asked to attend the meeting to talk about the child's achievements. But school should not try to appropriate any such contact or hobby that the youngster has.

## My Learning Plan Page 3

**I am good at**
Many looked after children have low self-esteem. They may need to be reminded of their strengths.

**The best things for me in school are**
This indicates what the child has been able to tell us of what matters to him.

**If I have a problem in school**
Research suggests that an important factor in successful education outcomes for looked after children is having even just one person in school with whom they can always talk. This does not have to be the designated teacher but should clearly be someone of the child's own choosing. If they cannot name anyone then that would be an important issue to follow up with the youngster and could indeed become one of the targets for the school to try to meet.

**In school I get bothered about**
This offers an opportunity for it to be recorded whatever the youngster has been able to talk about that may be a source of worry or something which could be going wrong in school.

**If I could change something at school it would be**
And here again is another opportunity – perhaps a way to draw out any problems that the child might be experiencing.

## My Learning Plan Page 4

**Our targets**
Note the stress on <u>others</u> having targets to help the youngster make the most of his educational provision. These are not just targets for the youngsters. This part of the plan identifies needs, sets some targets and tries to agree strategies for the future. Please note though that targets here need <u>not</u> be "SMART" in the sense of being specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time scaled. There is an artificiality sometimes to that wording which is not child focussed nor child centred. Where possible the child should be helped to record those in line with these criteria, but they ought primarily to be about what, when, and who. They should relate to each of the preceding sections and so will cover issues of attendance, punctuality, hobbies, changes and of course curriculum areas. Looked after children may well have other Education Plans such as an Individual Education Programme or a Co-ordinated Support Plan. It is **not** appropriate or necessary to list all the targets from these other plans as these will have been noted in Section 2b. The four areas for discussion will be linked no doubt during the meeting. The idea is that each person, probably starting with the child, will come up with ideas for targets. Other adults will then help to add to these and say how

they might help in a way that the child agrees will be useful. They should be set for any aspect of the children's education. In that regard issues around how schools can help promote resilience in children are hugely important to consider. These include the role that schools should adopt in helping young people to manage difficult emotions, to develop positive relations with peers and staff and to develop conflict resolution skills.

Some examples of targets might be as follows:

## Target Examples

**Child: Things I could improve soon**
I will get even better with my reading. Ms. Jones, will keep working with me three times a week.

I will catch up with my Maths coursework. Mr. Smith, Maths teacher, will help me at lunchtime once a week from next week.

I will get to lessons on time. This is my responsibility and Ms. Brown will check every day. To start today.

If I get angry with people I will try hard to go to Mrs McKay to tell her about it and she will help me to know what to do.

**Ways people will help the child's education**
**School:**
To help my reading and maths to improve, Ms. Green, my Learning Support Teacher, will keep working with me on my IEP.

To help me to settle better in school, every break-time and lunchtime from tomorrow I can stay with Ms. Harris.

To help me decide on my future education, Ms. Grey, my Pupil Support teacher, will arrange for me to see my careers officer by the end of next week.

I will have a little white card that I can put beside my work so as Mr Clarke knows that I'm a bit stuck and he'll come to help me.

**Social Worker:**
To help me go on the school holiday, Steve, my social worker, will apply for funding.

To help me get less upset in school, Steve will arrange some more counselling with Crannog next month.

To help me stay settled in school, Steve will let the school know as soon as possible about anything which could affect how I feel in school.

**Carer:**

To help my reading to get better, Sue, my carer, will listen to me read four times a week.

To help me make friends, Sue will let a friend come round on Saturdays.

To help me do my homework, Denise, my key worker, will arrange somewhere quiet just for me to work.

Dumfries & Galloway COUNCIL

# My Learning Plan

**Name**.....**Date**.....

**Age**.....

**School**.....**School Year**.....

# My Achievements

.....

.....

.....

*Congratulations!*

**Attendance:** Excellent ☐ Very good ☐ Good ☐ Not good ☐

**Punctuality:** Excellent ☐ Very good ☐ Good ☐ Not good ☐

## Looking back at our last targets

.....

.....

.....

## Thinking ahead, I would like to

.....

.....

.....

## My Interests and hobbies are

.....

.....

.....

**I am good at**

.....

.....

**The best things for me in school are**

.....

.....

**If I have a problem in school the best person to talk to is**

.....

**In school I get bothered about**

.....

.....

**If I could change something at school, it would be**

.....

.....

# Our Targets

**Things I can improve soon**

.....

.....

.....

**Ways my school will help me**

.....

.....

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**Ways my carer will help me**

.....

.....

.....

**Ways my social worker will help me**

.....

.....

.....

**My next Learning Plan meeting will be on:**

**Signed by:**

How to complete Learning Plan for Looked After Children. Section 2 Essential Information

## Section 2a

**General:**
Schools need to keep Section 2. New pages are written only when basic information changes and out of date information can simply be discarded.

**Known as:**
Some Looked After Children prefer to be known as a different name to their birth name so it is important to have a record of both.

**Ethnicity Codes:**

**White**
Scottish
Other British
Irish
Any other White background

**Mixed Parentage**
Any mixed background
(Please be specific)

**Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British**
Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Chinese
Any other Asian Background
(Please be specific)

**Black, Black Scottish or Black British**
Caribbean
African Any other Black background
(Please be specific)

**Other ethnic background:**
(Please be specific)

**UPN:**
This is the Unique Pupil Number which remains with the child throughout education. It never changes regardless of changes in name. However, the government intends to introduce a new single identity number for children which all agencies will use.

**School Year:**
Circle the appropriate year.

**Important Medical Information:**
This section must be completed. If there is no medical information please indicated this.

**Local Authority:**
It is important for schools to know the child's legal status.

**Current Legal Status:**
Please indicate the current legal status as known.

Accommodated under Section 25
Parental Responsibilities Order
Supervision Requirement at Home
Supervision Requirement away from Home (excluding Residential Establishment)
Supervision Requirement away from Home (in a Residential Establishment but excluding Secure)
Supervision Requirement away from Home with a Secure Condition
Warrant
Child Protection Measure
Criminal Court Provision
Freed for Adoption
Other
Statute group not known

**Type of Placement**:
Children can be Looked After by any of the groups of people listed. Please indicate the type of placement.

At home with parents
With friends/relatives
With foster carers
With prospective adopters
Semi-independent living
Own tenancy
Other community
Residential children's home
Residential school
Close support unit
Secure
In custody
Other residential
Other accommodation
Homeless
Not known

**(The information in all 3 sections above is taken form the latest CLAS Returns which the Authority has to report on for each Looked After Child.)**

## Section 2b Responsibilities

**General:**
Schools must keep this updated.

**Contact details:**
It is essential that schools are informed by Social Services of any contact details and changes.

**Medical Consent:**
All Parental Responsibilities continue for the parent's of looked after children, unless the child is subject to a Parental Responsibilities Order or Freed for Adoption.
Clear arrangements for medical consent should be discussed with the placing social worker at the time of admission or at any change in the child's legal status. It is imperative that an individual protocol for medical consent is agreed and recorded, including contact arrangements for medical emergencies.
In emergency situations the need for medical consent is the same as for other children attending schools and children will be automatically taken for emergency treatment.

**Other education plans in place:**
It is necessary to make a note of any other plans in place but do not fill in the detail of the other plans. Attach a copy (?)

## Section 2c: Life Changes

**General:**
The information here is vital to understanding the child.

**Number of Placements:**
These simple facts give all the professionals and carers a picture of the enormous stresses and pressures which the child has experienced.

**When a child leaves your school add your details to the list.**

## Section 2d National Attainment/Accreditation

**General:**
*It is important* to update this section prior to a LAC Review.

Text cut off in original

# Section 2a Information for Schools

**Name:**

**Known as:**

**Date of birth:**

**Ethnicity:**

**U.P.N.**

**First Language:**

**School year:** (please circle)

Nursery Primary 1 Primary 2 Primary 3 Primary 4 Primary 5 Primary 6 Prim 7

Secondary 1 Secondary 2 Secondary 3 Secondary 4 Secondary 5 Secondary

**Name of carer(s):**

**Telephone:**

**Address:**

**Important medical information:**

**Current medication:**

**Local Authority:**

**Legal Status:**

**Type of placement:**

with parents
Foster care
Relative or Friend
Residential care

**Social Worker:**
Telephone:
Fax:
e-mail:

**Contact if social worker absent:**
Telephone:
Fax:
e-mail:

## Section 2b Information for Schools: *Responsibilities*

**Emergency Contacts:**

**Emergency medical consent:**
Contact child's social worker:

Out of office hours ring Out of Office Hours Service on:

**Other education plans in place:** (e.g. R.O.N., C.S.P.,I.E.P.)

Are there any issues with parental contact?

| **Who will.....** | Record name and contact details |
|---|---|
| organise transport arrangements? | |
| receive day to day information? | |
| attend home/school meetings? | |
| give permission for school trips? | |
| receive report cards/written communications? | |
| Take responsibility for health issues? | |

Other agencies involved: detail contact names and telephone numbers

## Section 2c Information for Schools: *Life Changes*

**Number of placements at each age:**

| **Age** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No. of moves** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| **Mainstream Non-mainstream Residential M/N/R** | **Schools attended Names and telephone numbers** | **From** |
|---|---|---|
| **M/N/R** | | |
| **M/N/R** | | |
| **M/N/R** | | |
| **M/N/R** | | |
| **M/N/R** | | |
| **M/N/R** | | |
| **M/N/R** | | |
| **M/N/R** | | |
| **M/N/R** | | |
| **M/N/R** | | |

## Section 2d Information for Schools: *National Attainment/Accreditation*

**5 – 14 Attainment Levels, Standard Grade and other accreditation**

Please use the following categories:

- 5 –14 Levels of attainment
  (e.g. Working towards Level B, should achieve level by June 2006)
- Working at Standard Grade/Intermediate/Higher Still
  (e.g. Standard Grade -Foundation/General/Credit. Should achieve Grade 3)

| Subject Area | Current Level | Projected Achievement |
|---|---|---|
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## APPENDIX 2 – PowerPoint Case Vignette

This power point presentation, with associated acting by three adults taking their own roles of head teacher, social worker and educational psychologist was presented at a conference in Dumfries & Galloway when guidelines for the education of looked after children were launched. The 18 slides are not numbered but appear left to right and the order is indicated in the script which is of a series of telephone conversations. The slide presentation followed the script as the actors made these telephone calls.

The young person's thoughts, and her shrinking size as depicted in each slide, follow the action as shown. The intention was to depict her growing marginalisation and frustration until she disappears whilst professionals debate the hurdles in her way. The simple message is that agencies have failed to prioritise her needs which have been overtaken by their consideration of bureaucratic matters.

## CASE VIGNETTE

*Display slide 1*

*Display slide 2*

**Introduction:** On day one, a girl, Amy, becomes a looked after child because of family breakdown and is moved from one end of the Council area to another, this being the only available placement. At the point of transfer, she is on exclusion from school, has been discussed at SARG and gets support from Crannog.

*Enter cast with slides 3-5*

The following scenario unfolds:

| DAY | PHONE CALL |
|---|---|
| Day 2 – *slide 6* | Social Worker to Carer: - *slide 7 green bubble*<br><br>"Just 'phoned to see how Amy settled in last night…that's good to hear…if everything seems okay, I'll 'phone the school today to make arrangements about her transfer and enrolment."<br><br>Social Worker to Head Teacher: - *slide 7 yellow bubble appears*<br><br>"I would like to meet with you, today if possible, to enrol Amy, who has just become looked after and has come to live with a foster family in your area last night. She apparently had some problems at her last school but we hope this is a fresh start for her."<br><br>Head Teacher to Social Worker: - *slide 7 pink bubble appears*<br><br>"We need a little more information than that so let me speak to her previous school and to the Education Offices and let me get back to you." |
| Day 3 – *slide 8* | Social Worker to Head Teacher: - *slide 9 green bubble*<br><br>"Hi, I'm calling you again with some more information about Amy. Yes, she did have some school difficulties and was actually on exclusion at the point of admission to care. No, I don't know much about her subject choices or her timetable but will try to find out and get back to you."<br><br>Head Teacher to Social Worker: - *slide 9 yellow bubble appears*<br><br>"Let me talk to our Psychologist before agreeing to anything. Amy will be the fourth looked after youngster that we have admitted this term – that's quite a burden for this school. She would also be transferring to a much larger school than her previous, small rural secondary. Perhaps her needs would be better met in a smaller school – could she not be taxied back to her old school to offer some stability?" |

| DAY | PHONE CALL |
|---|---|
| Day 4 – *slide 10* | Head Teacher to Educational Psychologist : - *slide 11*<br><br>"About this girl, Amy…so you are telling me that she's not known to the Psychological Service? And why does this area attract so many foster children? – We've had four already this year; should the Authority not try and spread this load equitably across all the schools? Is there a policy on this somewhere? Anyway, do you think transport will be issue? Can you find out and get back to me? She's also going to need some support in school if she comes here – is that possible?" |
| Day 5 – *slide 12* | Educational Psychologist to Head of Service: - *slide 13 blue bubble*<br><br>"I could not get you yesterday but we've got an issue about that girl, Amy, who has become looked after. Mrs. Trellis in Special Services thinks that Social Work should fund her taxi to school because they moved her and Social Services feel that it is an Education matter. Apparently it's too expensive to contemplate taxi-ing her back to her own school so I would suggest that we should be seen to be helpful by getting her to her new school for a week or two and some auxiliary time would also be helpful."<br><br>Head Teacher to Social Worker: - *slide 13 pink bubble appears*<br><br>"Thanks for calling back with the information about her timetable. I had already spoken to her own school and we have a problem here because we can't match her timetable. She did German and we only do French, and she was doing Credit Level History and our class is full. We could only offer Foundation Level Modern Studies and she's missed half the course."<br><br>Social Worker to Head Teacher: - *slide 13 yellow bubble appears*<br><br>"Does this really matter? Is it not more important to get her back into school as soon as possible and sort out a timetable then? She is getting no schooling at the moment." |
| Day 6 – *slide 14* | Educational Psychologist to Head Teacher: - *slide 15*<br><br>"The costs of transporting Amy back to her old school are prohibitive (between £100-£150 per day) so it looks likely that she will be coming to your school and Education will lay on a taxi for the first month to help her settle in. Some behaviour support from a temporary classroom assistant would also be available and her Crannog worker would also offer ongoing support. The boss has also asked me to convene a planning meeting to pull all this together – can you offer me any dates? I've not got anything until the end of next week." |

| DAY | PHONE CALL |
|---|---|
| <u>Day 8</u> – *slide 16* | <u>Social Worker to Educational Psychologist</u>: - *slide 17*<br><br>"Have you got anywhere yet with the school placement for Amy? She is starting to get twitchy with her foster carers and they are all getting on each other's nerves. If we don't get a school placement soon, the placement could break down. I can make your planning meeting next Friday but that's a bit far away – another week without schooling. Couldn't she just go into school and we can sort things out at the planning meeting?" |
| <u>Day 13</u> – *slide 18* | <u>Social Worker to Head Teacher</u>: - *slide 19*<br><br>"Just calling to say that we should cancel that planning meeting for Amy in 2 day's time. She has run away from her carers and when she's found, they are reluctant to have her back. The pressure of having her at home all day for the past 12 days has been too much and, as we feared, the placement has broken down. We'll have to find another placement for her.<br><br>Thanks for all your help." |

*Music from "The Weakest Link" – slide 18*

*VOICE-OVER:* "Colleagues, you are all the Weakest Link."

Department for Education

On day one, a girl, Amy, becomes a looked after child because of family breakdown and is moved from one end of the council area to another, this being the only available placement.

At the point of transfer she is on exclusion from school, has been discussed at SARG and gets support from Crannog.

The following scenario unfolds……

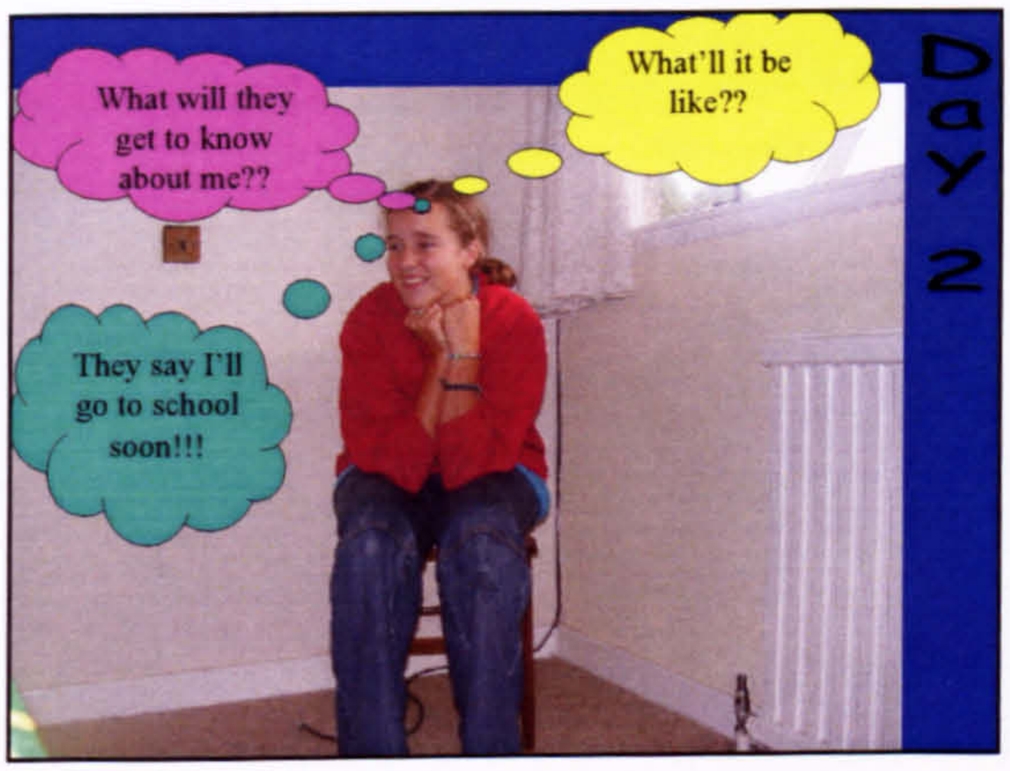
Day 1

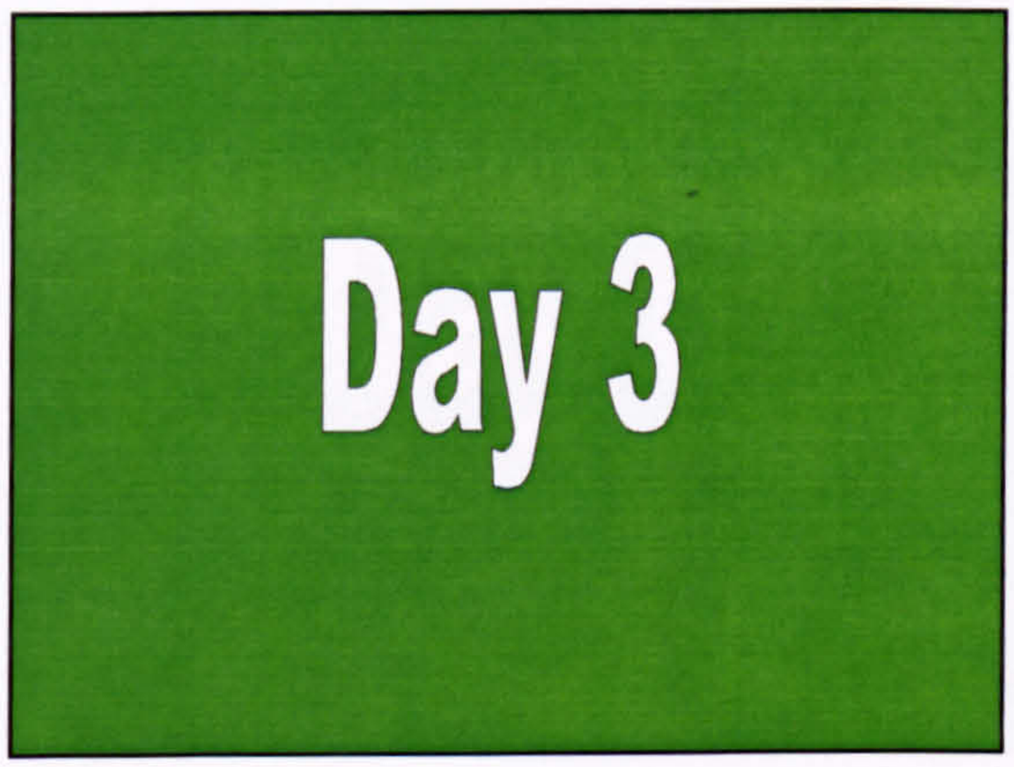
Enter Head Teacher

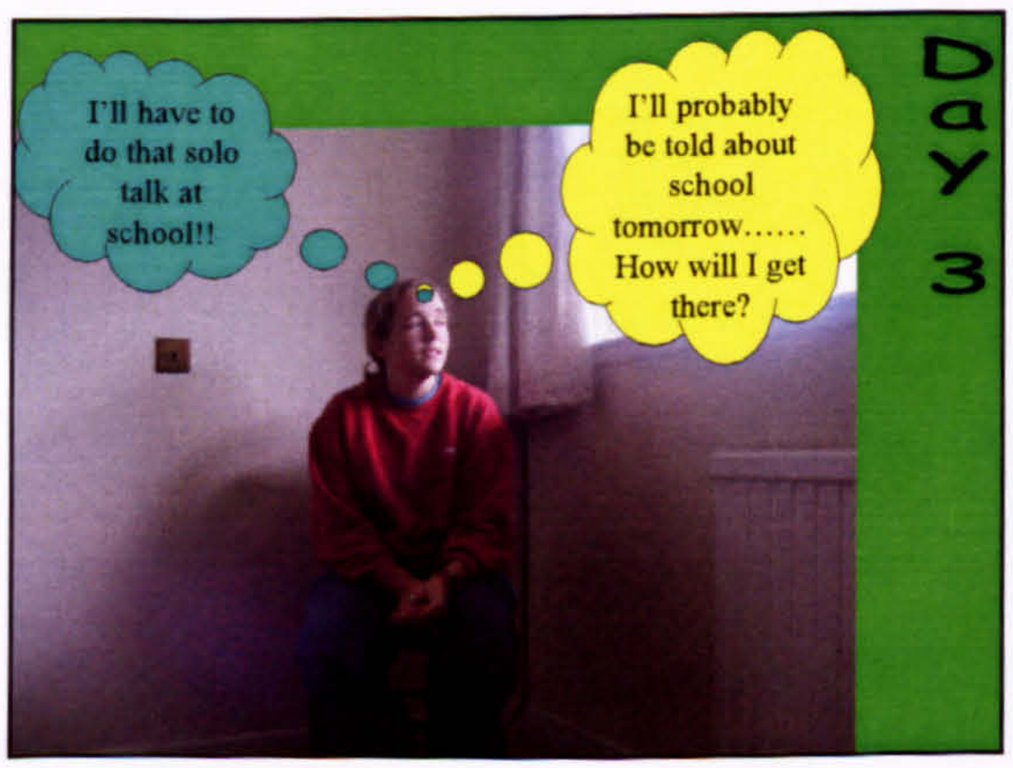
Enter Educational Psychologist

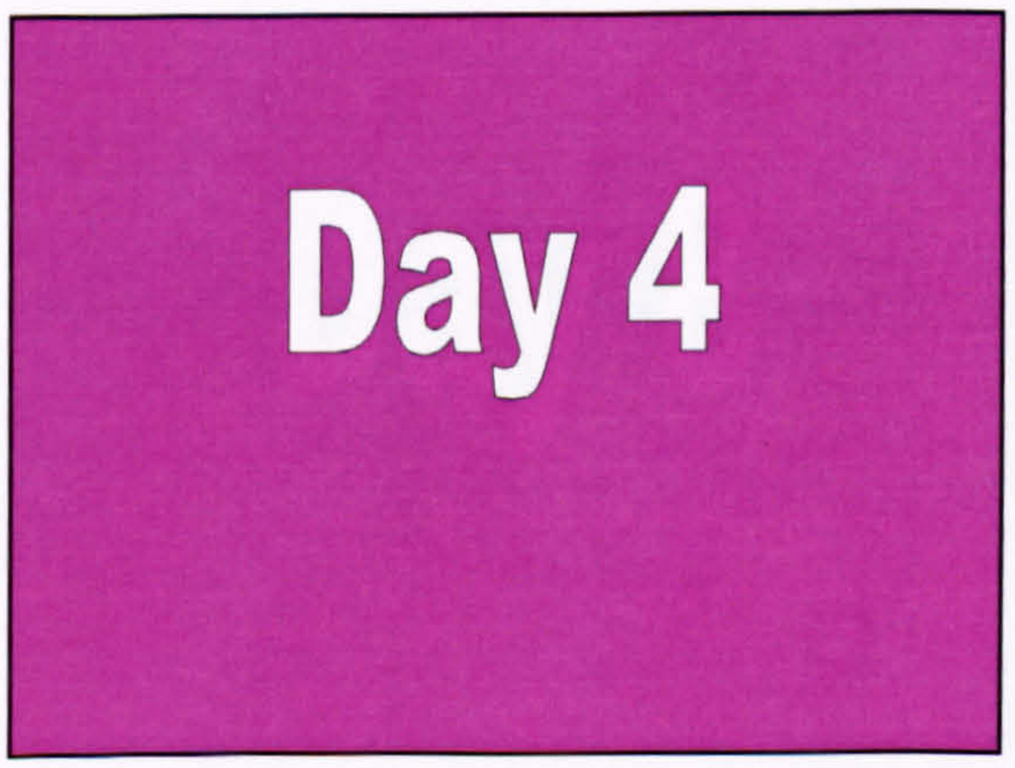
Enter Social Worker

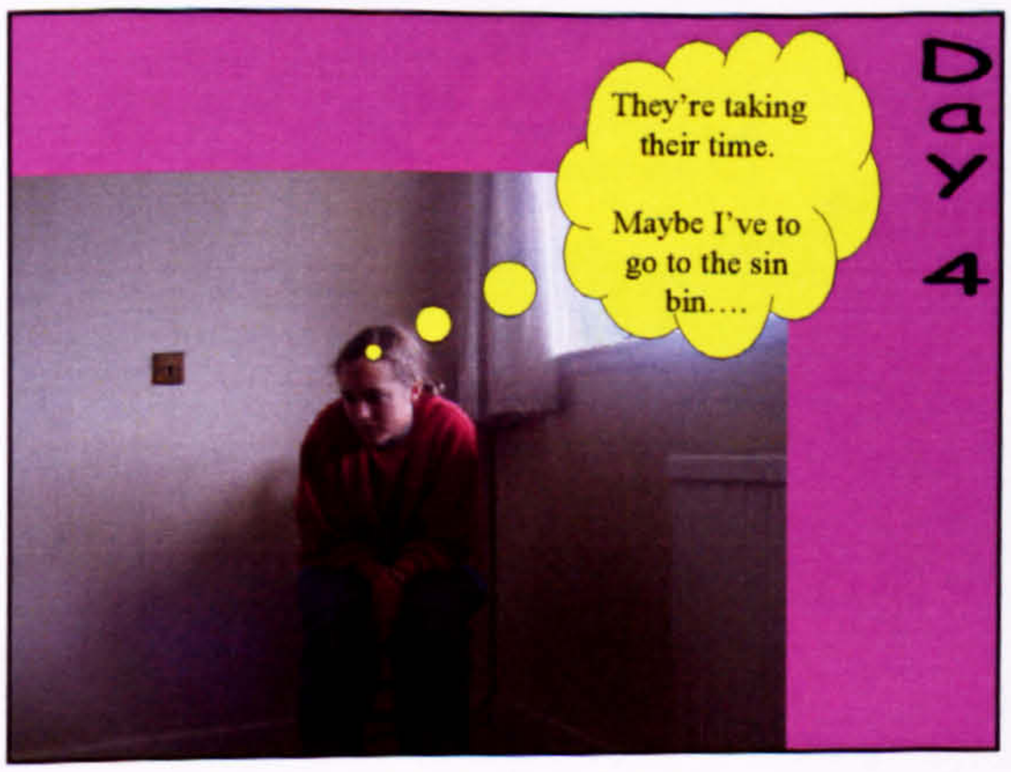
Day 2

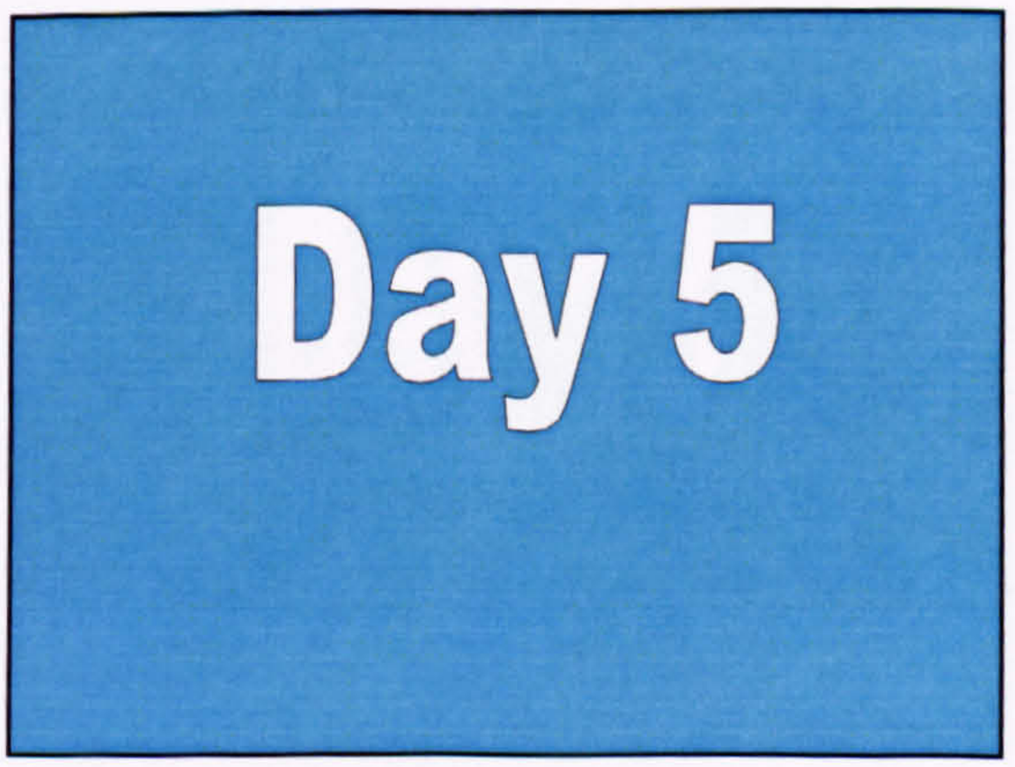

What will they get to know about me??
What'll it be like??
They say I'll go to school soon!!!
Day 2

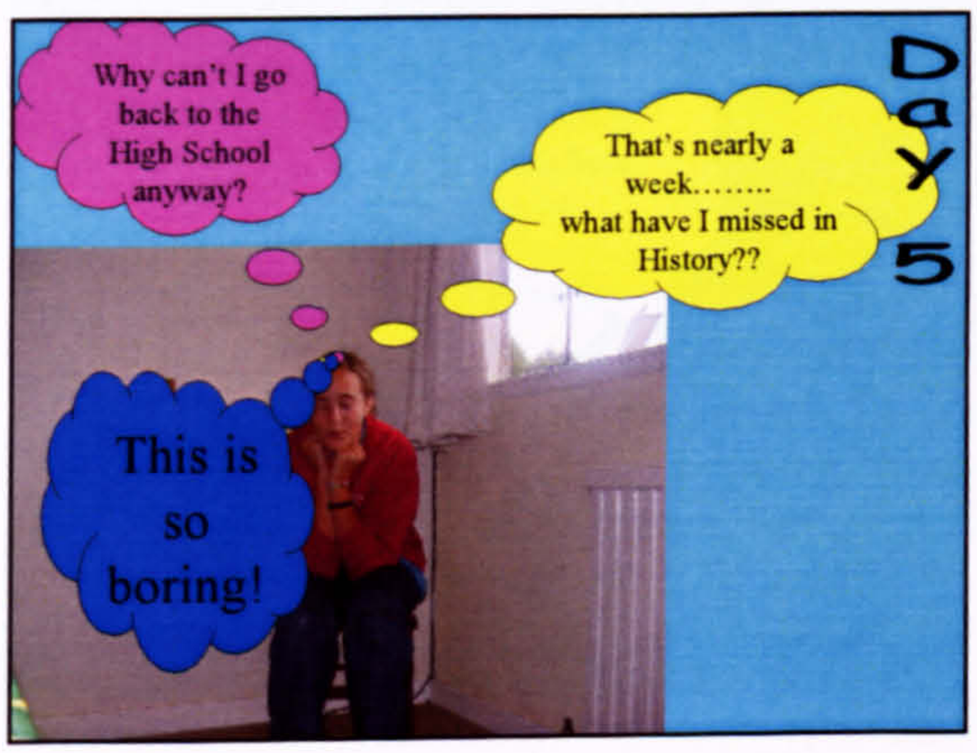

Day 3


I'll have to do that solo talk at school!!
I'll probably be told about school tomorrow..... How will I get there?
Day 3


Day 4


They're taking their time.
Maybe I've to go to the sin bin....
Day 4

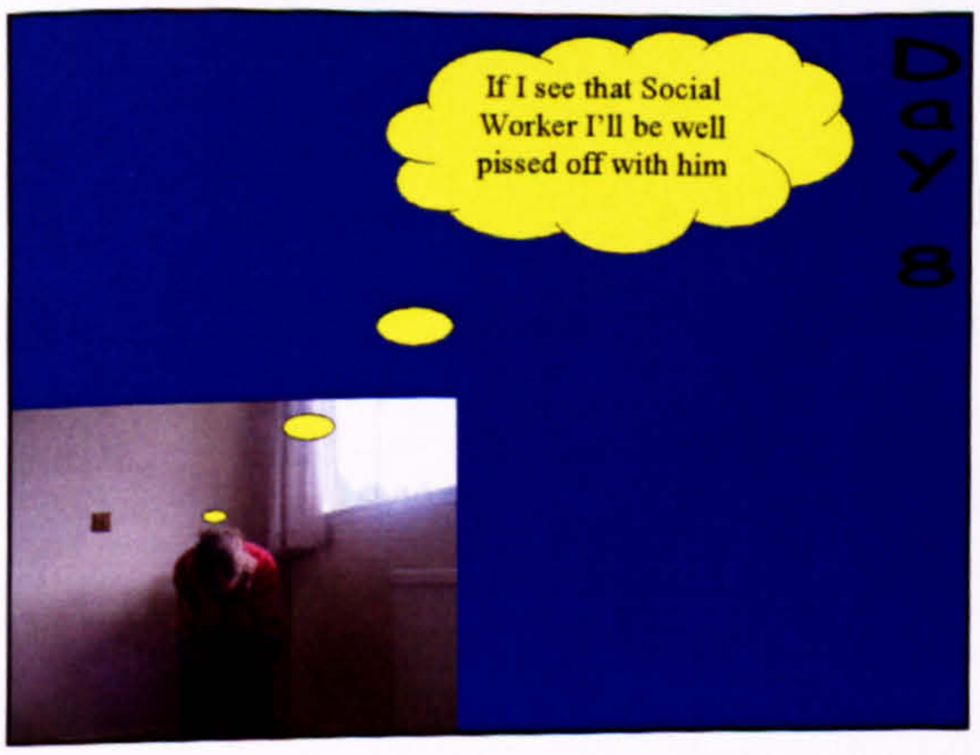

Day 5


Why can't I go back to the High School anyway?
That's nearly a week…….. what have I missed in History??
This is so boring!
Day 5

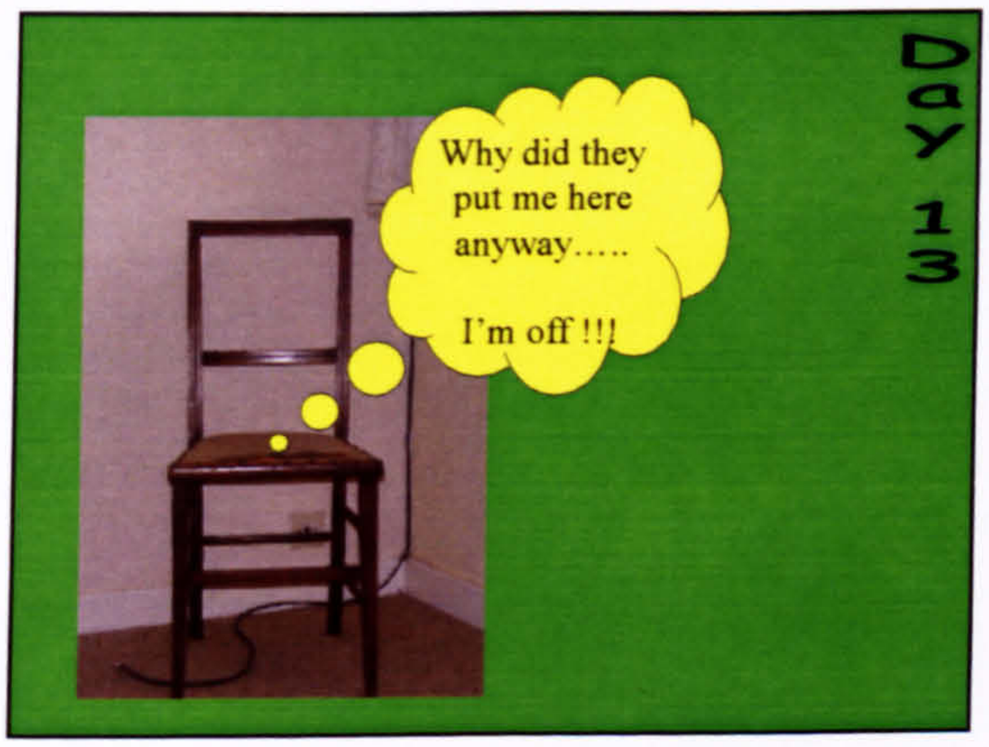

Day 6

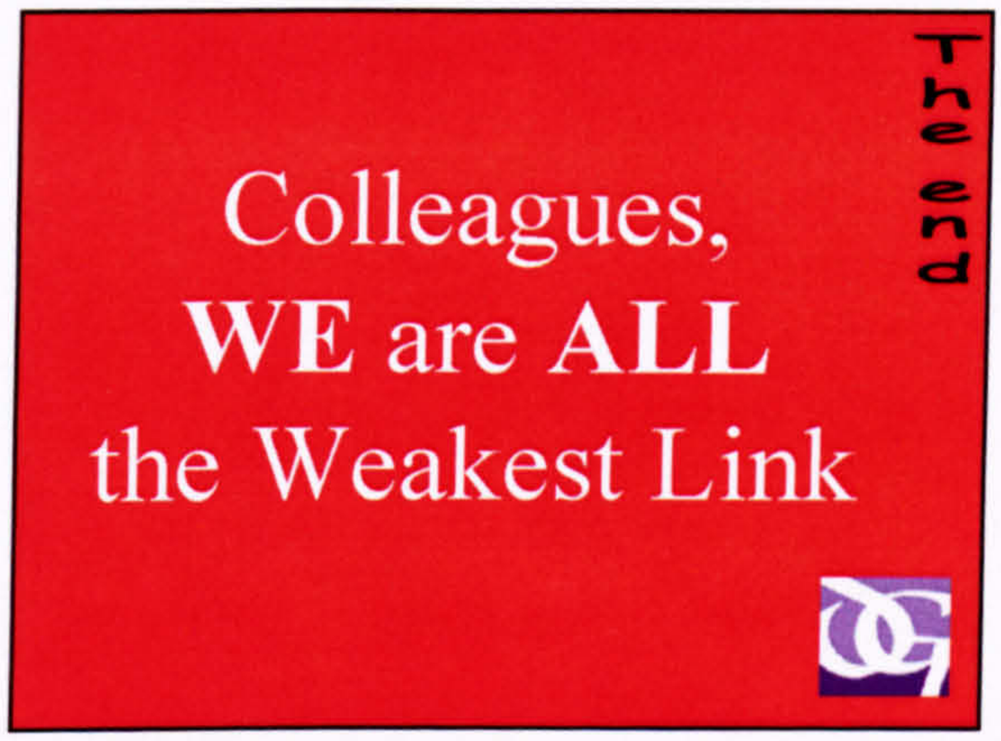

Why am I still waiting….. Get a move on…..
Another stupid meeting!!
Day 6


Day 8


If I see that Social Worker I'll be well pissed off with him
Day 8


Day 13


Day 13
Why did they put me here anyway…..
I'm off !!!


The end
Colleagues,
WE are ALL
the Weakest Link