RESHAPING CHILD CARE PRACTICE

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL WORK
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It has been a pleasure to play a part in the various events and publications during 1998 in which Child Care 1948–98 has commemorated the 1948 Children Act and considered the development of child welfare policy and practice in the ensuing 50 years. As these conference papers well illustrate, the concern of the organising group was to show it ‘warts and all’. We all know that progress has been uneven and that there have been some tragedies and major disappointments in the story so far. It is equally clear that the passing of the 1948 Act (as of the 1989 Act) symbolised an acceptance in principle by the state of their responsibilities towards children who lived apart from their parents or whose parents did not care for them adequately. The formal acknowledgement of the principle gives us the right to be indignant, indeed angry, when it is not translated into good policy and practice. This in turn stimulates constructive action. It is gratifying to write this at a time when central government seems determined to ‘get a grip’ on child welfare policy and strategy. Indignation now has to be translated into systematic and patient activity – a renewal of the energy so much in evidence in the early years.

A note of sadness: Lucy Faithfull did not live to see the outcomes of the year’s programme, to which she was enthusiastically committed. Joan Cooper, who chaired the organising group, died this year on 15 January following a stroke before publication of these papers. Both contributed hugely to the dynamism of those post war years and we are indebted to them.

I hope that these conference papers will contribute a much needed historical perspective to our present dilemmas and challenges. They are in essence the same – how to give children in need a ‘good enough quality of life’. But the nature of the problems, the context in which service is offered and the skills
needed – all these shift in emphasis year by year and require whole hearted commitment at all levels, political, social and personal, to make progress.

Members of the Child Care 1948-1998 Co-ordinating Committee

Joan Cooper CB (Chair)

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INTRODUCTION

Keith Bilton

The Children Act 1948 became law on June 30th of that year. On June 30th 1998 Child Care 1948-98 held a conference entitled Reshaping Child Care Practice to mark its fiftieth anniversary. With the help of a grant from the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, the National Institute for Social Work is publishing the three papers given in the plenary sessions of this conference, which provide a valuable contribution to understanding how the issues now facing child welfare services might best be addressed. The publication does not of course replicate the actual conference: there were also seven workshops where contemporary models of good practice were discussed. These focused on race, disability, gender and examples of innovative work with children and families. Together with contributions from those who chaired the plenary sessions, they gave the conference the opportunity to address a wider range of perspectives than this publication would suggest. The interactive nature of the workshops, however, makes it impossible to do them justice in print.

The 1948 Act established a locally administered but nationally inspected and guided child care service. Local authorities had a duty to receive into their care any child under seventeen who was lost or abandoned, or whose parents were unable to provide for the child’s proper accommodation, maintenance and upbringing. They were also to receive and look after children committed to their care by the courts. The local authority owed to these children the duty of furthering their best interests, and of affording them opportunity for the proper development of their character and abilities. Where it was consistent with a child’s welfare, councils were if possible to ensure that the child’s care was eventually taken over by a parent, guardian, relative or friend. Fifty years later, ministers are once again directing local authorities’ attention, through the Quality Protects initiative and through their
response to People Like Us (Sir William Utting’s report on children’s safeguards), to this central task of looking after children.

The Government’s Response to the Children’s Safeguards Review remarks that ‘Parents bring love to their children. Public agencies cannot equal that.’ It then sets out the expectations of what local authorities will do for children in their care:

‘The government expects local authorities to:

- provide care, a home, and access to health and education and other public services to which all children are entitled according to their needs
- provide a mixture of care and firmness to support the child’s development, and be the tolerant, dependable and available partner in the adult/child relationship even in the face of disagreements
- protect and educate the child against the perils and risks of life by encouraging constructive and appropriate friendships, and discouraging destructive and harmful relationships
- celebrate and share their children’s achievements, supporting them when they are down
- recognise and respect their growth to independence, being tolerant and supportive if they make mistakes
- provide consistent support and be available to provide advice and practical help when needed
- advocate their cause and trouble-shoot on their behalf when necessary
- be ambitious for them and encourage and support their efforts to reach their potential, whether through education, training or employment
- provide occasional financial support, remember birthdays and Christmas or annual celebrations within the individual child’s religion and culture
- encourage and enable appropriate contact with family members - parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and siblings
- help them to feel part of the local community through contact with neighbours and local groups
- be proactive, not passive, when there are known or suspected serious difficulties.’

Whilst giving welcome attention to achieving positive outcomes
for looked after children, this statement may seem to lose sight of the 1989 Children Act’s message that local authority care has an important role as a family support service, supplementing not substituting for parental care. But it is undoubtedly a statement of determined commitment to do right by children in care, capturing some of the optimism of 1948, albeit necessarily tempered by the realisation that, to borrow the title of a recent article by Olive Stevenson, ‘it was more difficult than we thought’. If not a statement of the proper objects of parental love, it is at least not a bad substitute.

The recent history of child welfare services is a neglected field. Dr Barnardo is better known than his successors. Historians of the welfare state have dwelt substantially on social security, health, housing and education, but have written relatively little about the personal social services. Yet those who are concerned to make all things new and hasten the pace of change stand in particular need of historical awareness. Without it, new departures cannot be distinguished from the recurrence of past patterns: failed solutions will continue to be used to confront intractable problems in a spiral of desperation, while new opportunities pass by unnoticed. Roy Parker in his paper warns that ‘we should not allow ourselves to be the captives of yesterday’s assumptions’. To guard against this, we need first to recognise such assumptions for what they are.

Signs of impatience with historical analysis can also be seen in social work practice. There is a tendency to try to help families whose problems are clearly long-standing and persistent through a series of brief interventions directed at the relief of immediate presenting need, when a study of the file, of the ‘official history’ of the case, might well suggest that this approach is unlikely to succeed. Case histories of child neglect, compiled after the death of a child, illuminate not only the neglect of neglect but also the neglect of case histories. In the reshaping of child care practice, the art of historical analysis is applicable to practice itself as well as to the organisation, planning and management of the services which shape its context.

The three papers published here provide examples of different kinds of contribution to our understanding of the history and
possible futures of child welfare services. Dr Bob Holman combines his own personal experiences with his recollections of others who played significant roles between 1948 and 1971. His material is shaped by convictions validated by many years practice of community social work. Sir William Utting reflects on the years from 1971 to the present, with observations drawn from his experience as a Director of Social Services, as Director of the Department of Health’s Social Work Service and subsequently Chief Inspector of its Social Services Inspectorate and, finally, as the author of People Like Us, the review of children’s safeguards. His overview is personal but panoramic, and his conclusions far-reaching. Professor Roy Parker reviews the contributions of political activity, social administration, demographic change, the transformation of labour markets, the changing nature of social problems and the growth of knowledge to the shaping of child care policy and practice over the last fifty years. From this platform he suggests how socio-economic and child care factors may shape policy and practice in the fifty years which lie ahead. His paper amply demonstrates detailed familiarity with child welfare services, encyclopaedic social policy knowledge and years of fruitful distillation of experience.

The planning of the events which made up Child Care 1948-98 has been the result of the activities of a few people, with hardly any money, coming together, mainly in London, Wales and the North West of England, with the aim of celebrating and making some constructive use of this fiftieth anniversary year, in the belief that past experience can contribute to the formation of future policy. Many of those involved were people, often women, who were pioneers in the early days following the passing of the 1948 Children Act. A launch at the House of Lords was followed by conferences in Llandrindod Wells, London and Preston, and a workshop at the Social Services Conference in Brighton. Professor Roy Parker has assembled a mobile archival exhibition which continues to be available. There have been a number of publications, which are included in the Bibliography below. This publication marks the end of Child Care 1948-98’s activities.

We hope that these events and publications provide a tribute
both to the children and young people who were subject to the 1948 Act and to those who worked to promote their well being, and equally contribute to reshaping child care policy and practice into the new millennium.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Lucy Faithfull Memorial Lecture, Fifty Years of Services to Children in Need of Care: What Have We Learnt for Tomorrow, delivered by Professor Olive Stevenson on 15 March 1997, has been published by Barnardos.

The British Journal of Social Work devoted issue No. 1 of Vol. 28 (February 1998) to articles on child care, with a guest editorial by Ian Butler reflecting on the 1948 Act and current practice.

Child and Family Social Work devoted issue No. 3 of Vol. 3 (August 1998) entirely to 1948–1998 themes. Professor June Thoburn was the guest editor.


Child Welfare in the UK: 1948–1998, edited by Professor Olive Stevenson (Blackwell Science 1999) surveys trends and developments in child welfare services, with chapters on policy and practice in the delivery of various aspects of care and service and chapters setting the wider context. It appears in the series Working Together for Children, Young People and their Families, which contains a number of other relevant works.

The journal Practice Vol. 10 No. 4 (1998) has an editorial on the 1948 Act by Wendy Rose and an article by Naomi Eisenstadt on fifty years of Family Service Units. FSU was founded in 1948 from the wartime and post-war Pacifist Service Units.
FROM DICK BARTON TO EASTENDERS: FROM CHILDREN’S DEPARTMENTS TO CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY

Bob Holman

Some children’s departments were horrible. One new children’s committee, in order to save money, suggested that ‘the children’s officer should also act as clerk to the burial ground’ (Murphy, 1992, p.10). A number refused to appoint sufficient staff. When Val Scerri arrived to start as a child care officer in a county borough, he found that the only other field worker was the children’s officer. She promptly announced she was going on holiday and that Val could take the children’s committee next week. Many practices would now be considered racist. We looked for foster homes on the wall chart and written against some was ‘No coloureds.’ We accepted it. Qualified residential staff were always lacking. Bill Freeman concluded ‘The main limitation was what happened to children after 18 when they left care.’ But many more departments were magnificent.

In this paper, to celebrate the Children Act 1948 I will dwell upon:

• the adventure of the children’s departments
• their achievements: in this I will draw upon 20 interviews I had with former children’s officers
• the effects of reorganisation upon child care
• a proposal for the future.

A CLIMATE OF ADVENTURE

Despite economic problems, post-war Britain was characterised by a spirit of optimism, even adventure. The Education Act 1944 made it possible for working class youngsters to proceed to higher education. On the same day as the Children
Act became law, the National Assistance Act opened with its noble words ‘The existing Poor Law shall cease to have effect.’ Employment was high. The mood was reflected in popular culture. Do you remember rushing home for 6.45 pm to hear Dick Barton, Special Agent?

And child care was an adventure. The children’s departments were the first local authority service to specialise in the care of deprived children. Staff were enthusiastic and idealistic. When I started as a child care officer, I succeeded John Stroud. John also wrote brilliant novels and in The Shorn Lamb he captures the mood. The prospective CCO is at his last university lecture:

‘There was a tremendous crusading atmosphere about the new service. Our impression at the University was that the country outside was dotted with castle-like institutions in which hundreds of children dressed in blue serge were drilled to the sound of whistles. We were going to tear down the mouldering bastions.....Nobody seemed to have heard of me when I arrived at County Hall.’ (1960, p.8)

Nobody had heard of him because they were too busy. Caseloads were high, hours were long. All for £15 a week. Staff continued because they were caught up in a great child care adventure. They were Dick Bartons who rescued children. Mary Urquhart went from being Britain’s first woman police inspector to children’s officer for Aberdeenshire. With few staff and on public transport, she established child care in that rural county. She said ‘We had a camaraderie which does not seem to exist today. There was a sense of mission. I could not have left child care and gone to something else’.

CHILD CARE ACHIEVEMENTS

The spirit of adventure diminished but never disappeared. Achievements were accomplished. Let me highlight three of them.

Children’s Departments Wanted the Best for their Children

Two days a week, I look after our grandson. I love him, I want
the very best for him – just as most parents and grandparents do. The astonishing thing about the personnel of the children’s departments was that they wanted the best for other people’s children.

The change wrought by children’s departments can only be appreciated by understanding what went before. Prior to 1948, 32,000 children were under the auspices of Poor Law legislation which decreed that, on reaching school age, they be set to work. Higher education for them was ruled out because it would cost public money. 14,000 were the responsibility of education departments for whom child care was a sideline. Tom O’Neill’s autobiography (1981) reveals how a department’s lack of expertise and interest led to the disastrous boarding out of Dennis O’Neill who was beaten and starved to death by his foster parents. During the war, thousands of children were evacuated. I was one of them. The initial placement system was to be lined up in a hall while foster parents took their pick. Once placed, evacuees were rarely seen alone by child care visitors. There was nothing personal about the system.

By contrast, Section 12 of the Children Act 1948, in regard to the child in care, placed a duty upon local authorities ‘to further his best interests and to afford him opportunity for the proper development of his character and abilities’. Councillors often took this duty seriously. In Glamorgan, the children’s committee had members whose own lives had often been blunted by poverty, and Beti Jones recorded that they wanted more for the new generation for they possessed ‘a warm instinct towards children and a passion to see that their potential was fulfilled’. An Asian youngster had been in the care of Manchester. When he returned to Pakistan in 1970, he was desperate for legal help. The children’s committee underwrote his costs for he was one of theirs. Some here will recall how we applied to the committee for music lessons, bikes, holidays for the children we visited. When the committee hesitated, the children’s officer would point to Section 12. ‘Agreed, we want the best for them.’ The children’s departments created a new child care philosophy.
Children’s Departments Ensured Better Placements for Children

The Curtis and Clyde Reports had roundly condemned the huge, residential institutions. Most children’s departments set about humanising the establishments by improving staff ratios, by raising living standards, and by reducing their size. In Manchester, the department inherited the former Poor Law Institution, Styal Cottage Homes, whose 400 children had been isolated from the outside world. The children’s officer, Ian Brown, and the forthright, admirable and, I must acknowledge, Tory, chair of the committee, Nellie Beer, persuaded the council to abolish Styal and to replace it with 59 family group homes. The family group homes, located in council houses and run by housemothers whose husbands went out to work, had their drawbacks. But they were far better than the previous institutional barracks. Joan Cooper, a legendary child care figure, started as a housemother at Styal. Later as children’s officer of East Sussex she said of their family group homes:

‘The children were clearly much more at home. I remember some children from a small home going on a seaside holiday and when they returned they literally ran from the bus, up the stairs and flung themselves on their own individual beds. It really was quite heartening to see the show of emotion and pleasure at their way of life.’

Today we are learning of the abuse that went on in some – we don’t know how many – children’s homes. None the less, there were good homes and some outstanding staff. A number were in the voluntary sector, about which I can say little in this paper.

The limitations of residential care were recognised and fostering came to the fore. Of course, a minority of children had been fostered before 1948 by both education departments and the Poor Law. But the foster parents were often not chosen carefully, homes were infrequently visited, and in Scotland – where boarding-out dated back to the 1770s – children often went as cheap labour to distant crofts. The children’s departments pushed up the national proportion of children fostered from 25% to over 50%. It is true, as Roy Parker and Vic George demonstrate
(1966, 1970), that a significant number of long-term placements broke down within five years. However, around half of such placements endured and certainly the selection of foster parents improved, while most foster children were seen regularly by officers.

**Children’s Departments Put Values into Practice**

Children’s departments were proactive not just reactive. I have been reading Susan Van Dijken’s *John Bowlby: His Early Life* (1988). My daughter asked ‘Who is John Bowlby?’ She is an obstetrician and gynaecologist and had never heard of John Bowlby. Nor have many social work students. We owe Bowlby an enormous debt. I was fascinated to read that his views were shaped by his pre-medical training, while he was a residential teacher. As early as 1939 he wrote ‘I regard any substitute home....as an exceedingly poor substitute for a child’s real home’ (cited by Van Dijken, p.73). This developed into his theory of attachment, that children must have warm and stable attachments to parental figures.

Child care staff attempted to apply attachment theory. Initially they opted for fostering rather than children’s homes because it offered more chance of a stable relationship with a mother figure (Bowlby said less about fathers). Then they applied it to the children’s natural parents who had often been regarded as feckless, no-hopers from whom the children had to be rescued. I remember John Stroud advising me to read Weinstein’s study *The Self-Image of the Foster Child* (1960) because it showed that foster children did better in their foster homes if in regular contact with their parents. The next step was to prevent children having to leave their parents in the first place. The snag was that legislation did not allow local authorities to spend money on prevention. Thereafter the Association of Children’s Officers and the Association of Child Care Officers campaigned until amending legislation was passed in 1963. Prevention took off and by 1969 Scottish children’s departments were dealing with 40,735 children who were remaining with their parents.

Barbara Kahan was appalled at the emotional damage wrought
on children by some approved schools. She persuaded Oxfordshire magistrates to commit children to care as an alternative. One outcome was that numbers in care in Oxfordshire went up. Barbara was sharply attacked on the issue of costs. But for her, as for others, certain child care values were more important than public criticism.

EXPLANATIONS

Without wishing to exaggerate, I reckon that the priority given to getting the best for deprived children, the improvement in many placements, and the attempt to work out values in practice, constituted a child care revolution achieved in a mere 21 years. What explains these achievements?

Committed Staff with Specialist Skills

People did not join the children’s departments for money. In the beginning, a number were transferred from existing local authority departments but others were drawn by an enthusiasm about the new child care values. Enthusiasm was not enough. Skills were required. Roy Parker (1980) argues that child care expertise requires detailed knowledge about child development, law and procedures plus the repetition of basic child care tasks. Practice within the departments gave the experience. The objectives of the departments were limited yet definite and were largely contained within the Children Act which we almost knew by heart.

These skills were enlarged by training. In her Report on the Employment and Training of Social Workers, Eileen Younghusband (1947) stated that there had been no recognised professional training in child care field work. An interim report of the Curtis Committee urgently recommended it and the Home Office was soon financing courses. Here I must pause to pay tribute to Clare Winnicott who led the child care course at the LSE. As a student, I knew that Dr Donald Winnicott was brilliant but I could not understand him. Clare Winnicott was brilliant and a model of clarity. I am pleased that Joel Kanter, an American scholar, is writing Clare’s biography. In it, he cites Irmi Elkan who describes Clare as a:
‘...superb and inspiring teacher. She combined intense liveliness with sensitivity and thoughtfulness. Her ability, through vivid examples, to convey how children feel and how their feelings can be understood through behaviour, often made a lifelong impression on students.’ (forthcoming, p.27)

Clare was not alone. Other notable trainers are present here today. By the 1960s, over a third of all child care officers were professionally qualified. Training plus experience bred a child care expertise.

**Departmental Size**

Departments were not large. True, some were too small because some local authority units were tiny. By the end of the 1960s, the average number of child care officers was 25 per department but there were huge variations. This moderate size meant that child care officers were not swamped with administration. They knew colleagues and frequently were well supported by them. Hierarchy was flat and officers usually knew the children’s officer. As Rosalie Treece put it:

‘The departments were small enough to be able to develop sound communications between staff through regular meetings. Field, residential and administrative staff took children away on holidays. All this built up team spirit and made us feel part of an important concern.’

The outcome, despite the high caseloads and Saturday morning working, was high morale which enabled officers to accept a personal responsibility for all the children in their charge.

**The Backing of the Home Office**

The Home Office had wanted children’s departments to be under their wing. Home secretaries and civil servants wanted them to succeed. Their good intentions were backed with resources for, until 1958, a specific government grant went to children’s departments. Above all, the role of the Home Office Child Care Inspectorate was crucial. Today inspection is often
perceived as negative. The Home Office inspectors could be critical but they also gave encouragement and urged children’s departments to expand. A common theme amongst the children’s officers whom I interviewed was how much they owed to the advice and support of inspectors. Olive Stevenson rightly says ‘There is a case study waiting to be written about the Child Care Inspectorate’ (1998, p.17).

**Inspiring Leadership**

Fourth, and probably most important, was inspiring leadership. Eileen Younghusband, in one of her asides, purred ‘Social workers, like cats, are traditionally feminine’ (p.5). As far as children’s officers were concerned, women outnumber men by two to one, so let me mention one man and two women. Ian Brown, as a child, was dumped in the workhouse and he lost touch with his sister. He ran away from children’s homes but was later successfully boarded-out with his grandmother. As Manchester’s children’s officer, he knew what he wanted: small children’s homes and siblings to be kept together. Now in his 90s, he is still proud of the fact that Manchester had the highest proportion of children fostered with relatives. Like many children’s officers, he set high standards.

Margery Taylor was deputy children’s officer of a county while simultaneously children’s officer of a small borough. When an unstable mother withdrew her child from a home and threatened to kill her, it was Margery who waded out to the isolated caravan to negotiate the release. Like many children’s officers, Margery did not lose contact with the hard end.

Sylvia Watson seemed to know not only every child but every houseparent and every child care officer. Last year I called to interview her, not having seen her for years. She looked me up and down and remarked ‘Very faded at the edges but it is Bob Holman.’ Then she asked after my wife and children by name. Like many children’s officers, Sylvia treated children and staff not as economic units but as persons with whom she related.
A few children’s officers were duds. But the majority were sound and some were inspiring. Apart from those I have already mentioned, these names came to mind – Denis Allen, Gwyneth Wansborough-Jones, Beryl Watson, Frances Drake, Lucy Faithfull, Elizabeth Harvie, Harry Mapstone, Leslie Turner, Dick Poor, Kenneth Brill, Flo Valentine, young Brian Roycroft. Others are present today. Can you think of as many social services directors as quickly as that? Theirs was a long-term vocation, not a short-term job with a golden handshake. They were driven by a desire to improve the lot of deprived children. As Alfred Leeding put it, ‘The children’s departments were like a missionary enterprise’. At this fiftieth anniversary, we should not be ashamed about praising and thanking them. Their leadership, in combination with specialist staff located in humanely-sized organisations and backed by a government ministry, explains why so much was achieved.

CHILD CARE TODAY

The children’s departments were not abolished because of scandal or failure. The new wisdom became that super departments, which incorporated the specialist services, would be more powerful and effective. The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 created the social work departments and the social services departments. What kind of child care have they produced?

Comparisons are difficult because the social, economic and political climate has changed so much. Cohabitation and single parenthood are far more widespread than 30 years ago. Poverty, unemployment, inequality have magnified. Inner city areas and council estates where life revolved around the docks, mining, steel works, manufacturing, are now characterised by poverty-stricken bleakness. The Guardian published the bill for a meal for three financiers which totalled £13,091: in Easterhouse, a church has opened a breakfast club for children. It is not just that massive deprivations and inequalities have occurred but that so often they are met by a political shrug of the shoulders. Local government has experienced more reorganisations, has had
more duties placed upon it while being told to fulfil them through the mixed economy, and has faced financial restraints. None the less, children still require stable emotional and social attachments, so some brief comments are in order.

Beyond doubt, the social work and social services departments have contributed to social welfare. During the 1970s, they did secure budgetary increases which allowed the promotion of intermediate treatment, juvenile justice schemes, family centres and, briefly, community social work. In Scotland, the children’s hearings are a success story. Social workers have developed expertise in assessing and evaluating child abuse. These are just some of the achievements of hard-working staff. But, from a child care point of view, there is cause for concern.

**Child Care Skills Are Not So Evident**

As early as the mid-1970s, fears about the decline led the National Children’s Bureau to set up a working party under Professor Roy Parker. It concluded that there had been ‘a loss of the particular experience and skill generated by special and separate local children’s departments’ (1980, p.29). Of late, reports by the Social Services Inspectorate (1996) and the Association of Director of Social Services (Bulpin, 1997) have identified worrying standards within adoption and fostering. Around 10% of children in care are moved three or more times per year. Barbara Kahan has frequently observed that siblings in care are not being kept together, that children are not adequately prepared for moves, that social workers are not adept at communicating with children, that child care skills are at a lower ebb.

**The Decline of Family Support**

Despite the Children Acts of 1989 (England and Wales) and 1995 (Scotland), policies and practices for improving the quality of life of needy children and preventing family disruptions are frequently criticised. The leading researcher, Jane Gibbons, concluded in 1995:
‘So far, at least, the new approach to family support expressed in the Children Act appears not to have had a great deal of influence on the policies and practices of English local authorities.’ (1995, p.88)

The Neglect of Poverty

Children from low income homes are far more likely than others to enter care or to suffer severe disadvantages within their own families. Saul Becker’s research on poverty issues states that ‘the 1990s was characterised by a reluctance, indeed a withdrawal, by social workers and their departments, from doing anything substantial about these issues’ (1997, p.107). He instances that social workers lack welfare rights expertise, that departments have inadequate anti-poverty strategies and that the social work occupations ‘have largely failed to express and protest about the poverty and deprivations of their vulnerable clients’ (p.117).

The Failing System

The Bridge Report (1996) on Ricky Neave emphasised that social workers do not lack concern. But, in common with other inquiries, it noted:

- the low morale of social workers
- their lack of skills in understanding the situations of children and in communicating with them
- the poor communication within social services departments and with other agencies
- the lack of managerial support.

In short, it is the child care system which is failing.

WHY IS IT FAILING?

Amongst the reasons for the decline of child care within social services departments, the following seem important.

The Influence of Generic Social Work

Social services departments started with the idea that social
workers could deal with all types of problems. In Scotland, John Murphy, himself a director, recorded:

‘On the Friday night there were 305 child care officers, 281 probation officers, 276 welfare officers and 97 mental health officers. On the Monday morning there were 959 social workers with shuffled caseloads and naive assumptions that they had been transmuted into generic workers.’ (1992, p.181)

Child care skills were diluted. Later many departments did abandon the generic approach but by then many experienced staff, those who could supervise others, had left. Moreover, training remained generic. Professor June Thoburn recently declared that ‘Newly qualified social workers today are not equipped to work with children and families’ (1998).

The Creation of Huge Units

With staff sometimes numbered in their thousands and coping with a multitude of tasks, social services departments have become vast bureaucracies with complex systems and long layers of hierarchies. Social workers are immersed in paper, procedures and meetings, and so have less time for that direct and repetitious contact with users that sharpens skills. They are distanced from senior staff. The objectives of departments are so diffuse that it is difficult for social workers – let alone the public – to know what they represent. High morale, a sense of unity and purpose cannot be maintained. As Olive Stevenson concluded:

‘It is difficult to reconcile the needs of children and their families with the elaborate, hierarchical structures which have been created within the personal social services.’ (1998, p.21)

Further, within multi-purpose departments, different kinds of services compete for budgets and John Rea Price (1997) points out that child care has lost out to community care.

Child Care Itself Has Been Dominated by Child Abuse

Media attention and public inquiries have pushed social
services departments into making child protection the chief preoccupation of child care social work, which swallows up a large amount of resources. The result, as Jane Gibbons explains, is that the ‘provision of supportive services is relegated to a less important and even marginal role’ (1995, p.93). Further, as David Thorpe concludes from his significant research:

‘The new ideology appears to have succeeded in changing the role of child welfare agencies from predominantly one of service provision to one of policing.’ (1994, p.99)

A policing kind of social work gives less attention to welfare rights, to warm encouragement, to resourceful friendships with parents and children, which are the core of family support and child care casework.

The Loss of Leadership

Flo Valentine, the former children’s officer for Cambridgeshire, commented ‘Today the directors of social services do not stand out. You see one on the box and you ask if that was a director.’ Of course, there are industrious and able directors. None the less, it is difficult to name many who are figures of social work inspiration, who stand out as national advocates for deprived children. The personal social services are so large that a management rather than a social work ethos now prevails. Hardly surprising then, if the top posts, to cite Olive Stevenson again, are taken by those ‘without the same commitment to faith and enthusiasm about the child welfare values of an earlier generation’ (1998, p.23).

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHILD CARE

The decline of child care skills and the loss of motivation has been accompanied by the withdrawal of social services from the very areas where poverty is most evident. But not all is gloom. Remarkably, it is within these very areas that residents have formed their own organisations. They are not recognised by central government, they are under-valued by local government,
yet the Community Development Foundation estimates that they have 2,500,000 participants. I call them neighbourhood groups, which I define as ‘the residents of a small locality acting together in projects for the collective well-being of members and their neighbourhood’ (1997, p.103). Examples are credit unions, food co-ops, day care centres, youth projects, welfare rights shops, community transport, community associations etc. They may have full-time staff or rely entirely upon volunteers. The nub is that staff and policies are controlled by residents.

For the last 21 years, I have lived in two disadvantaged locations and worked with local groups. All life is there. There are crimes, drug abuse, family disputes. A woman once called at our home with her two live-in lovers and asked my advice on which one to kick out. I am no Solomon. There are also good neighbours, devoted parents, resilient kids, and local people who are poor in money but rich in altruism and self-sacrifice. It is just like Eastenders.

Neighbourhood groups have many limitations. Committee members may argue and resign, staff may be accused of favouritism, money is always short. Yet neighbourhood groups are relevant to child care in the following directions:

- They modify family poverty. Cheap food, low credit, second hand furniture, local jobs, welfare rights expertise, do not abolish poverty but they can alleviate it.
- They are preventative. Youth clubs, day care, parent and toddlers groups, community cafes, holidays, play schemes, provide support for parents, improve life for children and can divert some away from trouble.
- They are participative. Neighbourhood groups exist because of local volunteers. The latter may also benefit from their involvement. At our project in Easterhouse, a lone mother, her daughter in care, started to help at our food co-op. Eventually she was elected its chair. She said ‘It’s the first time I have ever been shown respect’. Her new confidence was translated into her parenting.
Penny and her kids experienced many difficulties. One was allegedly abused by a neighbour who also threatened Penny with violence. The authorities moved the family into bed and breakfast for their own safety. The victims were punished. Then the housing officials announced she would not be rehoused for six months because she had been an unsatisfactory tenant. In one room, seven miles away from her neighbourhood, she was near to cracking up. She phoned our project. We arranged to collect her demanding son for the youth clubs. On Sundays we brought the whole family over. We helped her negotiate with the officials until she was rehoused near to our project where the abused daughter received help at one of our groups. Penny contacted us because she had known us over a long period and trusted us. She received personal support while her children benefited from the clubs. Neighbourhood child care.

A FAMILY DEPARTMENT

Government ministers are also critical of the personal social services. Sam Galbraith at the Scottish Office speaks scathingly about ‘the lack of a sense of urgency and immediacy’ amongst social workers and asserts that they are too preoccupied with meetings rather than action (COSLA, 1997, p.10). Paul Boateng, as junior minister for health, has indicated that reorganisation is on the way, involving a ‘re-configuration’ with social services departments possibly merging with housing or health services. Some local authorities, like private enterprise, are gripped by corporate expansion and have already linked social work and social services departments with other services overseen by super-directors who may know little about social work.

I believe this is the wrong track. Such reforms will reinforce the difficulties of bureaucracy, will make managers more distant from the hard end, will put child care budgets in competition with yet more powerful sections. They will not improve family support, child care skills or leadership. Indeed, they may dilute and undermine the very occupation of social work itself.

My proposal is in the opposite direction. No, it is not for a return to the children’s departments. It is for the creation of local
authority family departments. I want the family and child care responsibilities of social services departments to be separated from the adult and community care duties.

The Structure

Social services departments would be split into adult social work departments and family departments. The latter would take over existing duties towards children and families and would also embrace youth services. Youth work services are added because, as Baldwin and Carruthers conclude from their study, the lack of facilities and opportunities for young people in deprived areas pushes them into destructive behaviour which both harms them and also ‘makes the role of parents very difficult’ (1998, p.154). Further, family departments would have a particular responsibility for backing neighbourhood groups. Not least, it would be expected that the directors of family departments would periodically spend a year in the front line at the salary of a field or residential worker.

The Approaches

A family department could adopt the following approaches.

A family approach

The primary aim would be to enable vulnerable children to stay with their own families. The departments would offer home helps, family aids, day care and other supporting services. These would be co-ordinated by social workers – we’ll call them family workers – who would also be equipped with both:

- welfare rights skills in order to maximise family incomes
- child care casework skills, that is the ability to help parents understand their problems along with the resourceful friendship that can encourage them to persist as parents: when children do have to leave home, these skills would be used to communicate sensitively with them to explain what is happening, to prepare them for the move, and to maintain links with home.
I must add that foster homes and children’s homes can be of high quality. John Burton’s recent book *Managing Residential Care* (1998) is a valuable statement of faith in residential care.

**A community approach**

Family workers would be frequently based in neighbourhood teams. Their location would make them known to local families, allow them to be familiar with other officials, would enable them to understand more fully how social conditions shape family behaviour. As mentioned, family departments should regard neighbourhood groups as an essential service and be prepared to back them financially, while the family workers would co-operate with them.

**A facility approach**

Some services such as youth clubs, day care for pre-fives, family centres, whether run by the family department or voluntary bodies, would be open to whole neighbourhoods. These facilities are acceptable to residents. Well-run youth clubs can provide constructive leisure for a whole range of youngsters while, at the same time, steering a vulnerable minority away from offending. Family centres, of the type open to neighbourhoods, not only provide the services which residents want but also draw in locals as volunteers. As Karen Thomson (1997) shows in her doctoral thesis, this involvement often so boosts the self-image of deprived parents that their parenting improves.

Family departments would thus have a three-fold strategy:

- backing residents in organising their own groups so that the community is involved in services which support families
- running facilities which provide the services which strengthen families
- providing family workers, equipped with inter-personal skills, for those families who need more than support.

**Advantages**

Objections will be made to the concept of a family department.
It will be said that they will be too small, that they will have difficulties in communicating with other agencies, that they will lack status. I try to counter these in my book Child Care Revisited (1998). Here I have time just to point out its advantages.

A clear focus

The new family departments would have the straightforward aim of ensuring that the benefits of a satisfactory family life are available to as many children as possible. This would give a sense of purpose, even a sense of adventure, to staff. Further it would be understood by the public.

The benefits of moderate size

In terms of staff numbers and budgets, family departments would be between the children’s departments of yesteryear and the social services departments of today. Hierarchies would be less complicated. Managers would be nearer to field staff. Paper work would be reduced. Given that much activity would be in neighbourhoods, managers would also have closer links with users while teams would be small enough for members to relate with each other. Something of the personal element would be restored.

Family support a priority

Family support would be a priority in a family department which does not have to compete with community care for resources. Its approaches would improve the quality of life for families in deprived areas, have preventative services which are acceptable to residents and have family workers at hand. This would not ignore children who are ‘at risk’ for, as Baldwin and Spencer conclude from their review of the research:

‘Community wide strategies aimed at supporting all child carers are more likely to succeed in preventing child abuse than those based on identification of high risk groups.’ (1993)

Child care specialism

The benefits of child care specialism would be restored. Family
workers would spend most of their time with families in varying
degrees of need. Their continued contact would make them child
care specialists within the context of families.

John Bowlby, with Mary Ainsworth, is the founder of attachment
theory. He established that children thrive best when they are
securely attached to a loving parent figure. In later life, Bowlby
extended his theory to adults (1979). We all need attachments,
not only to other individuals but also, as the essays in Peter
Marris’s volume show (1996), attachments to institutions and
neighbourhoods. I believe family departments could promote
both kinds of attachment...from Dick Barton to Eastenders.

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BATTLES LOST OR WON?

Sir William Utting

INTRODUCTION

I begin this survey with the implementation of the Local Authority Social Services Act in 1971. My title reflects the sense of struggle which these years represent. Our experience of them includes tasting the bitter fruit of knowledge about the abuse of children and the incompetence of social institutions. It extends also to major reforms in the law and to developments in services, practice and policy. The underlying theme is the state as both protector and parent to children.

THE 1970s

The Seebohm Report on local authority and allied personal social services appeared in 1968. It recommended unifying the fragmented welfare services for children and adults in a comprehensive, family oriented service, organised on generic lines. It was to be community based, with community involvement. The Bill providing the administrative framework for this new service hurried through Parliament on the eve of a general election. The Act that emerged was limited to uniting in a single department the children’s, welfare, and some of the health services of local authorities. It was followed in 1974 by a sweeping reform of local government which reinforced a preoccupation with structure and process, and further sidelined the wider Seebohm philosophy of a community which both gave and received.

It was fashionable a few years ago to attribute all the failings in services for particular client groups to the effects of the Seebohm Report. This view overlooked the primitive and isolated state of some of these services before Seebohm, and neglected to consider what their fate would have been without the drive and
creativity of new departments with political and managerial clout, relatively rich in personnel and money. The standards of the newly combined services were so variable, however, that some robbing of Peter in order to pay Paul became inevitable. Unification would have been impossible if former client structures had been retained: genericism was initially a professional as well as a political necessity. Child care gave much more to the amalgamated services than it received. It had already established professional social work in local authorities; both its resources and its philosophy were now instrumental in improving services for adults.

The Local Authority Social Services Act was produced by a Labour government but fell to be implemented by a Conservative administration. An inspirational Secretary of State, Sir Keith Joseph, helped to increase funding at an overall rate of 10% a year in real terms for each of the first five years. Much creative energy was unleashed by the combination of idealism and resources. Even so, services were strained to breaking point by major new statutory duties and an unprecedented demand for services, fuelled by the impression that these new departments deployed the skills and resources to alleviate most human problems. The number of local authority social workers increased from 12,000 in 1970 to 22,000 in 1976, but even an expanded output from training had not increased the proportion of qualified workers from about 40%. This rapid growth made it commonplace for first line managers to be appointed within two years of qualifying. Able practitioners were prematurely ‘lost’ to management, and specialist skills and knowledge at field level were dissipated.

The statutory emphasis, moreover, was on developing services for adults. Implementing the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, and the White Papers on Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped and Better Services for the Mentally Ill transformed services for all adult clients. The intentions of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, in contrast, were hamstrung by the government’s unwillingness to implement major sections, gross
under-resourcing and the lack of commitment of key players. The most powerful of the circumstances which combined to hold child care back in the 1970s, however, was the drive to afford greater priority to the ‘Cinderella’ services for adults.

This was a chaotic decade – in resource terms, a roller coaster ride from affluence to famine after the monetary crisis of 1976. By 1979, loss of specialised knowledge of children’s services was evident in key managerial positions, and reversion to specialised working in some children’s services was clearly necessary. The process was accelerated by growing anxiety about child protection. The decade culminated in industrial action which, although confined to a handful of authorities, cemented the unpopularity of the personal social services and of social work in particular.

THE 1980s

The crisis expected for the 1980s was that growth in revenue would not match increase in demand. It duly arrived. Budget-led services became the norm, and the emphasis in management turned to controlling expenditure. Nearly 100,000 children were in care. Standards nationally were erratic. Poorly supervised and inadequately trained staff were called upon to operate policies which reflected the aspirations of the 1960s rather than the social and economic realities of the 1980s. We needed to develop community based services, modify a care system which no longer carried confidence as a principal method of dealing with delinquents, and improve child protection. The public scandals of the decade began with children killed or maimed by their parents and ended with sexual abuse in the home and in the care system itself.

The Barclay Committee on the role and tasks of social workers, reporting in 1982, had placed community social work at the heart of preventive work. The reaction of government and employers was muted, but at local level and in professional circles there was some effective re-thinking of community work methods to involve and make use of the strengths of the whole community. A similar philosophy (as well as the opportunity of recycling redundant
residential homes) infused the family centre movement. Money might be in short supply, but creativity, motivation and commitment remained. Family centres flowed from traditional day nurseries, children’s homes and community centres, pioneered by voluntary organisations and self help groups as well as by local authorities, working with both preventive and remedial methods. They set out to produce change: in the functioning of parents and children, in the community environment and in families’ material circumstances. They did best when local authorities and voluntary organisations set clear objectives, used a variety of methods and balanced the rights and needs of community, family and children. Developments in practice, changes in policy and reductions in the size of the child population contributed to a striking decline during the 1980s in the number of children in care.

The change in the balance of work with delinquents is illustrated by the dramatic drop in the use of care orders for criminal offences, from 4,400 new orders in 1979 to 300 ten years later. The 1980s also saw the apotheosis of intermediate treatment, from its enthusiastic and eclectic beginnings, to providing a range of non-custodial facilities and a framework for collaboration with all the local agencies concerned with young offenders. Both the crime rate among juveniles and the number receiving custodial sentences fell sharply. Other, major factors were of course at work; even so, I could tell a conference in 1991 that working with young offenders was one of the big success stories of social services departments.

It may seem perverse to say the same about child protection, yet we now have one of the most effective systems for protecting children in the industrialised world. Its weakest component is criminal justice, which is slow in adapting to the unfolding realities of child abuse. The history of child protection, however, is signposted by the names of children who were failed and should not be forgotten. The death of Maria Colwell in 1973 was the first in a sequence of damaging blows to the public’s confidence in our capacity to protect children and in the competence of social workers.
Olive Stevenson said in the first Lucy Faithfull Memorial Lecture, ‘I do not believe there is any more difficult work than that undertaken routinely by today’s child welfare workers. Small wonder there have been mistakes and failure; it is regrettable that so little credit has been given for good work’. Social workers in child protection deal continually with situations of ambiguous or conflicting interests. These raise powerful emotional and moral issues about parenthood, the family, criminal behaviour and the rights of children. Vacillation may only increase risk; decisive responses provide opportunities for dissent and scapegoating. Understanding the inverted values of the world of child abuse depends upon both uncommon sense and the capacity to suspend the experience and assumptions of ordinary family life. This requires formidable professional and technical equipment. On the other hand, if you take unqualified or inexperienced social workers, put them to work they are not equipped to do, in bad accommodation and without administrative back-up; if you then over-work them, give them inadequate supervision, incompetent management and eccentric political leadership; then you will sometimes get bad social work.

Inquiry reports from A Child in Trust onwards began to recognise more clearly that deficiencies in child protection arose from systems, policies, resources and the law, as well as from failures by individuals. The Cleveland Report, for example, was ‘impressed by the hard work and dedication of social workers ... in dealing with these difficult cases’ (of child abuse), but found that after management instructions for investigating alleged sexual abuse ‘social workers had no real opportunity to exercise their own individual professional judgement and responsibility’.

Even so, social workers and social work values remain easy targets for the sins and shortcomings of others. I do not defend carelessness, incompetence or criminal conduct by social workers; indeed, I urge robust disciplinary procedures on the proposed General Social Care Council in order to exclude people who are personally or professionally unfitted to practise. Scapegoating social work, however, deflects attention from the
failings of more prestigious and powerful players, and avoids the pain and cost of confronting the fundamental elements in society and in human nature which tolerate or promote the abuse of children.

Adjusting to the expanding knowledge of child abuse in the 1980s required rapid professional and organisational responses. I pay tribute to the individuals and the voluntary and statutory agencies which pioneered approaches to detection, investigation, prevention and treatment, and to helping abused children to speak for themselves. Some false starts were inevitable in a rushed phase of development in such a contentious area. Contemporary practice in the responsible agencies needed updating, largely through post-qualifying and in-service training. The principal response of government, however, was to the manifest need to secure effective interagency collaboration. I had regretted earlier guidance as signifying the decay of professionalism by replacing the individual professional judgement with sterile and bureaucratised procedures. I came to accept that a national framework was necessary, at least in the short term, in default of uniform professional and agency development locally. This framework ultimately became the majestic handbook Working Together under the Children Act 1989.

The Children Act itself, of course, encapsulated in legislative form the major policy developments of the decade. Fragmented and partial legislation posed particular problems for the children’s services. Serious discrepancies had been revealed and radical revision was indicated. The final impetus for this came from a report on children in care by the Social Services Committee of the House of Commons under its Chair, Renee Short MP, in the 1983–84 session. Bob Holman, in Putting Families First, says that the Short Report was also ‘the first major official document to pose a serious challenge to the doctrine of permanency’, which ‘had led to a disregard of practices which either enabled parents permanently to look after their own children or to retain links with them’.
My own views had certainly changed since I came to social services. In the 1970s I had embraced the prevailing paternalism of traditional local authority child care. Paternalism is today almost a forbidden concept because of its authoritarian and exploitative connotations, but in the 1970s it still retained the positive element of obligation to make proper provision for the people the authority was responsible for. Even then, however, it was under attack from libertarian and sometimes subversive philosophies. What really undermined it, however, was evidence not just of its failures, since even the best systems malfunction, but of the injustices arising from the cavalier way in which parents were sometimes treated: the Council, like the man from Whitehall, turned out not always to know best. The 1983 Act which sounds like a sneeze (HASSASSA) – the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act – ended the assumption of parental rights by resolution and extended the rights of parents to challenge local authority decisions to terminate access to their children.

By 1980 I was so concerned about the way in which children in the public care were brought up that I opened discussion of the subject with directors of social services. Much contemporary thought and practice in child care still lagged behind the legal requirement to take account of the wishes and feelings of children in care in coming to decisions about them. Promoting the constructive participation of young people in their programmes of care seemed to be the most exciting development in prospect. I was haunted by the comment a care leaver made to a working party:

‘When I look back at it all I think that I was a bit of a problem and was passed from one place to another until I became more of a problem. Yet it was them that made me who I was. I wonder who was the problem, them and their way of doing things, or me?’

I needed at the same time to hang on to the good things. Local authorities were increasingly pressed for money during the decade as the government’s need to control their expenditure spilled over at times into a ‘slash and burn’ approach. Sound
policies and good practice helped to reduce the number of children in care. Social work, family centres, intermediate treatment, home visiting schemes, drop-in centres, parent-toddler groups, playgroups, day nurseries, supported childminding, out-of-school and holiday schemes were all good in their own right and may have been decisive in stabilising individual families and keeping children out of care.

The DHSS, as it then was, initiated a programme of wide consultation on all the substantive issues involved in the proposed legislation. Few pieces of social policy in the last 50 years were so carefully prepared as the Children Act, or made so much use of research and other evidence and the experience of service providers, service users and professionals. Last minute lessons from the Cleveland Inquiry and from the disclosure of sexual abuse in boarding schools were absorbed to reinforce the essential messages of the legislation: that the welfare of children comes first, that their interests are normally best served within the natural family, and that measures to promote their welfare and reduce harm and abuse must complement the growing expertise in its diagnosis and detection. The Bill had doughty champions in the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, and other ministers, and was widely supported politically. It was not perfect, of course – legislation rarely is – and it has been less than perfectly implemented, but I remain firmly committed to its principles.

THE 1990s

I left the Department of Health on the eve of the implementation of the Act in 1991. Our inability to secure programmes of pre-school care and education for all those families who wished to promote their children’s development was a continuing disappointment throughout my career there. The Headstart programmes I had seen 20 years earlier in the USA provided models of moderately priced services which involved mothers and offered them career opportunities. The prospects of replicating them here were blighted by a pernicious combination of ideological disputes and economic alarm.
Effective pre-school experience promotes the social and intellectual development of children. Progress towards this in the DHSS, however, was possible only through the commitment of a group of officials and the support of interested ministers. It was limited to initiatives arising from specific needs identified among working parents, mothers alone at home, and black and minority ethnic families. The creativity and drive of voluntary bodies made these initiatives successful in their own terms, and many cash-strapped statutory authorities found the means to continue them. Overall, however, the nation missed the opportunity of improving the life prospects of a generation of children. Early experience shapes the whole of life: social workers and teachers have seen too many lives ruined for children before they have reached statutory school age.

My last job as Chief Inspector was to review residential care in the wake of the Pindown Report. The latter raised questions about both the management of institutions and, by extension, the whole process of bringing up children in care. Residential care had at this point already suffered an implosion of resources, propelled by the dramatic decline of over one third in the numbers of children in care and exacerbated by cost-cutting and prejudice. Neither the present state nor the future prospects of residential care can be evaluated out of the context of the values and resources of the entire child care system. Children in the Public Care, therefore, while claiming that residential care remained an indispensable service, pointed back – as well as forward – to some of the basics of caring for children under the auspices of a publicly controlled authority. Pindown was the harbinger of those revelations of past abuse in residential settings which have punctuated the last decade. Each seems to surpass its predecessor in horror, and the cumulative effect has been to compound the problems of the care system by shrouding children’s homes in scandal. Responsibility for what happened is not confined to the perpetrators; ignorance of the realities of institutional abuse, and inability to accept that colleagues were responsible for it, may explain but do not excuse the inactivity of the rest of us. People Like Us is in that respect aptly titled. Its brief did not include re-jigging the care system, but the report
emphasises both the fundamentals of the caring task and the ineluctable responsibilities of politicians and officials for establishing them.

The major business of the 1990s was implementing the Children Act. Preparation within government and by statutory and voluntary agencies had been exemplary. All that was lacking was a strategy to provide the resources for the term of 10 years it might take for the Act to be fully effective. In the event, the resources available for the Act have been unreasonably constrained, not only by the general squeeze on local authority spending but also by the effects within social services of the government’s failure to make proper provision for its policies of community care. Children’s services have suffered all round, but particular problems have been faced in launching new forms of preventive work such as those required for children ascertained under the Act as being ‘in need’. Nevertheless, there has been much progress: plans for children’s services, statements of purpose and functions for homes, training for heads of homes, planning for children, improved inspection and a renewed commitment among both elected members and senior officers.

A curious symmetry is now observable between the experience of the 1970s and that of the 1990s. The impetus of the Seebohm philosophy was lost by many authorities in the turbulence of local government reorganisation in 1974. Whatever the merits of the latest (and, one hopes, last) reorganisation, a potentially dangerous loss of continuity arises in returning the number of social services authorities to their pre-1974 levels. New members and managers have arrived with the new authorities, new priorities and problems take precedence, familiar problems with resources have worsened, specialist knowledge and facilities are more thinly spread.

I suggested last year that it was time for the Children’s Strategy Group at the Department of Health to:

- review progress in implementing the Act
• identify goals and timetables for the next phase of development
• mount a campaign for achieving all the purposes of the Act
• and secure from all local authorities a renewed commitment to its principles.

Among the themes which need re-visiting are the primacy of the welfare of the child, the concept of partnership with parents, enabling children to share decision-making, and what ‘meeting needs’ really means. Time permits me to make no more than a few crude points, from the experience of working on People Like Us, on subjects which require a monograph.

Putting the welfare of the child first means that all the factors affecting the child’s welfare as an individual must be taken into account. Authority, departmental or professional policies inimical to the welfare of looked after children should be over-ridden. Blanket policies – even policies which we believe to be good – may operate to the detriment of at least some children. In child care, policy should be a platform for decision-making, not a straitjacket. The welfare of the child takes precedence over our deepest personal convictions. None of us has the right to tailor children’s welfare to political, religious, bureaucratic, or professional templates. There is no substitute for thinking through everything that relates to the individual child. There are no short cuts.

A working partnership with parents is usually the most effective route to providing supplementary care for their children. They should be expected and enabled to retain their responsibilities and to remain as closely involved as promotes their child’s welfare. But ‘salvationism’ is also needed; it does not help the child to exchange one form of unsatisfactory permanency – with the local authority – for another shuttling backwards and forwards between the authority and abusive parents.

Talking to young people last year and reading inspection reports reinforced my sense of the difficulties children have in contributing effectively to decisions about their future.
may have changed, but their content is still sometimes
determined by the inertia of the old systems and by even older,
unthinkingly abusive attitudes. Enabling children to participate in
decision-making requires more than their mere physical presence
in statutory reviews.

Numerous submissions to the safeguards review commented
on the problems of meeting need in the context of restrictive
policies and reduced provision. At local level, the residential
sector is now too small and insufficiently specialised to meet the
full range of young people’s needs. Many authorities also find it
hard to recruit and keep foster carers. Assessment becomes
superfluous if the capacity to select a suitable placement is
removed, and ‘meeting need’ becomes a meaningless mantra. I
do not doubt – any more than I did as Chief Inspector – that part
of the problem can be resolved by better management of
resources overall and improved professional practice. I am also
convinced, however, that government, in refocussing children’s
services, must also re-resource the preventive objectives of the
Act.

I am desperately anxious, for example, for the concept of
‘children in need’ in the Children Act to be developed as widely as
possible. Firstly, however, a calmer political response is needed
to the panicky and prurient culture surrounding child abuse,
which has generated terrifying professional and institutional
pressures. Modifying that culture is essential if resources are to
be shifted from the so-called ‘crisis’ work of diagnosis and
detection into prevention and treatment. Policy should move from
its pre-occupation with process towards the more important task
of improving the content of work with children and families. All this
must occur in a context of collaboration between essential
services which extends to some sharing of resources.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

I end by discussing the responsibilities of some of our social
institutions. Discontent with local authority care of children does
not derive only from the disclosure of scandals which may be
discounted as originating in an era now thankfully ended. Discontent is abroad today, in courts frustrated by inadequate care plans, in neighbourhoods upset by acting out residents, and in families complaining of ineffectual help. People with axes to grind – including some whose sole concern is the welfare of children – ask if there is not a better alternative, or canvass new options.

My principal concerns in this are, firstly, that the parenting responsibilities of the state should continue to be discharged by bodies which are directly elected. The directly elected body both represents the community and can be called to account by it. Secondly, if these responsibilities continue to be discharged by local authorities, their integrity should be preserved. The care of children would not be improved by giving to the courts or third parties powers which diminished the local authority’s capacity to make all the decisions involved in discharging parental responsibility.

At the same time, the central government should at two levels reconsider and intensify its commitment to disadvantaged children. The Department of Health and the Welsh Office are responsible for the legislative framework for children’s services and for negotiating their financial needs in the public expenditure round. The Secretary of State answers to Parliament for the children’s services and, in addition, possesses significant powers over them of direction, general guidance, inspection and inquiry. These powers carry with them the responsibility for deciding how and when they should be applied. The policy informing their use should be reviewed to establish a more active role for the two Departments. The number of social services authorities in England and Wales has recently grown by 50% to over 170. Achieving minimum standards of safety and protection for children nationally, across this number of authorities, will require a strong overall grip from the centre. Securing consistent and satisfactory standards of service will need determined use of all the Secretary of State’s powers.

Action is also needed by government as a whole. The
complaints of poor co-ordination with which I was familiar as Chief Inspector were redoubled during work on People Like Us. An impression had been created that departments of state pursued their own agenda heedless of the priorities and policies of other departments. The present administration appears more willing than its predecessor to provide the political leadership to attack problems inter-departmentally. I have recommended that one way of cementing this in the business of government is to require all departments with responsibilities affecting children to adopt and actively pursue the aim of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

Another major recommendation to government from People Like Us was to define parental rights and responsibilities in legislation. I now believe that an authoritative description of parental responsibility which holds good throughout society would support parents in their role and provide a model for other people with parental responsibilities. I seek assurance here because my experience is of increasing uncertainty. Parental responsibility is interpreted and discharged over a bewilderingly wide range of behaviours and attitudes. The speed of social change has opened gaps between the generations in their understanding of parental responsibility, there are differences between social classes, muticulturalism has a fragmenting as well as an enriching effect, and global communication provides disparate and confusing images. We also need to take note of what has happened in Scotland, where the new Children Act defines parental rights and responsibilities in its first two sections. It seems desirable that families which move within the United Kingdom should possess the same basic rights and responsibilities in each of the constituent nations.

I trust that at the same time efforts will continue to make the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality for all children in the United Kingdom. I have spoken and written about the needs of the children who are looked after by the state for education and health care, employment and preparation for adult life. I remain concerned about the rights of all children to be protected against abuse and serious harm of all kinds. Violence must be confronted
wherever it arises and whatever form it takes; the harm it does to its victims is accompanied by a fear which renders normal social controls ineffective and may incapacitate social agencies. The privacy of the family is no longer a proper impediment to intervention to prevent cruelty.

Establishing and exercising rights for children, like all political activities, involves controversy and occasionally conflict. The interests of children and their families are in general compatible, if not always identical. But the world we live in is governed by adult power; the welfare of children needs persistent advocacy, sometimes in the face of adult interests. Voluntary organisations must continue to represent the rights of children independently of the vested interests of central and local government, parents and the professions. Of course, parents, the professions and even government will often represent those interests adequately, but they do so from the limited vantage point of their own roles and responsibilities. Voluntary bodies which act as an independent force in concerns about children play an immensely important social and political role. Their resources of plant, people and creativity will always be fundamental to good services, but their capacity to represent the interests of children and to help children represent themselves is ultimately more significant.

The theme of battles lost or won runs through my experience of child care: in practice, management, and national policy. Every development resulted from the interaction of various, sometimes complex, pressures. The process means that we do not always come out where we intended. Every advance seems to produce a reaction. Victory is not final – but neither is defeat. It is right for me to end with the political process at national level. The social services cannot meet all the needs of families with children for social support. Good social work may help them to cope with and even overcome some of the disadvantages of an impoverished environment. But the resources of an entire local authority may prove inadequate in the face of inter-generational poverty, educational disadvantage, unemployment and the social disintegration evident in the worst of our housing. Much of the risk children run is the product of society’s malfunctioning as well as
individual pathology. We look ultimately to the government’s social programme for progress and, in particular, for definite and specific commitments to the children who are tomorrow’s citizens.
SHAPING THE 1948 ACT

New Directions

The 1948 Act\(^1\) was both a point of arrival and a point of departure. It embraced many features of previous legislation and, in that sense, it represented a consolidation of developments since the last decade of the nineteenth century\(^2\). However, the Act also marked a notable re-direction of policy. It created the profession of child care officer\(^3\), training courses in several universities having been inaugurated in anticipation of the impending legislation. Trained ‘boarding-out officers’ were seen as a precondition for the important new requirement that children in care should be placed in foster homes unless there were good reasons to the contrary. Right up to the outbreak of war foster care had been regarded with considerable misgiving in many quarters, not least amongst the central inspectorate. A major concern had been the poor quality of supervision. The new courses were expected to increase the proportion of skilled social workers and thus facilitate a shift from the institutional care of children to foster care.

The Act also introduced the idea of reception centres\(^4\), where certain children who were admitted to care could be properly assessed before decisions were made about their placement. This reflected the growing significance of what might be termed the ‘scientific’ approach to child welfare which owed much to the increasing influence of psychology and psychological measurement, an influence strengthened during the war by the lessons learned in the provision of special units for children who
had been found to be too disturbed to remain in their evacuation billets⁵.

So, the Act heralded various new initiatives, not least in requiring local authorities to establish separate children’s committees and appoint a chief officer to lead the new departments. However, despite its reforming character the Act failed to address the issue of ‘prevention’; nor did it cover the disposition and care of juvenile delinquents (although courts continued to be able to commit them to the care of local authorities on ‘fit person orders’). These functions remained subject to the parallel 1933 Children and Young Persons Act.

What, then, were the main factors that shaped the 1948 Act; and why should it have reached the statute book in that particular year? There were four principal influences: the war; the dismantling of the Poor Law; pressure group influence; and tragedy.

The Exigencies of War

The outbreak of war was accompanied by the large-scale evacuation of children from urban centres. This had many consequences. There was the exposure of the poor condition of certain children from the slums and a better appreciation of the ill-effects that separation and upheaval could have. However, the evacuation ‘issue’ that later came to preoccupy central government, and which contributed to the origins of the 1948 Act, arose from the conviction that perhaps as many as 10,000 children would not rejoin their families when the need for evacuation had passed⁶. What arrangements ought to be made for their care? Could they stay in the ‘reception areas’? Could they be taken into the care of the local Poor Law authorities; and would this be feasible and politically acceptable? The conclusion was that it would not: other solutions had to be found outside the realm of the Poor Law. Ideas about what these might be were already circulating within government as early as 1943.

However, this was a minor domestic issue compared with war
strategy, a strategy in which both sides came to believe that victory ultimately depended upon the state of civilian morale; hence the blitz on London and the blanket bombing of German cities. The appointment of the Beveridge Committee in June 1941 was a reflection of the desire to bolster civilian morale by demonstrating that plans were being made for a post-war Britain that would be secure against the ‘five giants’ of poverty, idleness, squalor, ignorance and disease. Furthermore, air raids caused civilian casualties and this obliged government early on to establish a free emergency hospital and health service. However, other social legislation which was not of an ‘emergency’ nature was prepared or implemented during the war; most notably the 1944 Education Act (‘Secondary Education for All’) and the Family Allowances Act of 1945.

Thus, the many advances in social welfare (not least those experienced by the armed forces and their families) that resulted from the exigencies of war created powerful precedents and these, in their turn, gave rise to expectations for the post-war era. Indeed, ‘post-war reconstruction’ was a recurrent theme throughout the war, a reconstruction that went well beyond the repair and replacement of the buildings that had been damaged or destroyed. It was politically impossible for any government to return to the pre-war structure of partial and inadequate social provision.

Dismantling the Poor Law

Events were accelerated by the rapid publication of the Beveridge report in 1942 which mapped out in considerable detail what would come to be called ‘the welfare state’, the broad outlines of which were accepted by the war-time coalition government. A cardinal feature of the report was the dissolution of the Poor Law system (which, in any case, had been largely suspended during the war). Plans for its final dismantling had begun to be made even before the Beveridge Report. Certainly, by 1943 it was taken for granted that the Poor Law had to go, to be replaced by a system of social insurance that would provide cash benefits as of right in unemployment, ill-health and
retirement. The crucial feature of these schemes was that they separated the payment of cash from the provision of care; the organisations responsible for the one would no longer be responsible for the other. The National Insurance Act was passed in 1946 - as was the National Health Service Act - but both waited upon later implementation.

That implementation depended in part upon a solution being found to how the care functions of the Poor Law were to be carried out - primarily the care of the dependent elderly, the disabled, and deprived and vulnerable children. The first two categories did not present too many political difficulties, their public care being legislated for together with residual social assistance in the National Assistance Act 1948. Children caused more problems, principally because of the intense conflict between the Home Office and the Ministry of Health as to which department should have central responsibility. Nevertheless, a solution had to be found before the rest of the awaiting social legislation could be implemented and the Poor Law finally dismantled. The Home Office eventually won the protracted battle and the Children Act was passed only just in time to meet the deadline for the appointed day - the 5th of July, 1948 - on which all the related legislation was to come into operation. The Poor Law could not have been abolished without some new system being created for the care of separated children.

**Pressure Group Politics**

On the face of it, provision for children in care after the abolition of the Poor Law could have been made in a number of ways that did not call for any radical change in existing patterns of local authority administration: either the education or public health departments could have been given the responsibility. Both had assumed a measure of responsibility for aspects of child care in some authorities during the 1930s. Given its other social policy preoccupations the government might well have settled for this, but for two things. The first, as noted, was the determination of the Home Office to retain control (it had a child care inspectorate and was responsible for the approved schools, the juvenile courts
and probation). The second obstacle to the ‘obvious’ solutions as some termed them at the time was the pressure exerted on government by a group seeking to have a comprehensive review of child care undertaken that would ensure a co-ordinated, free-standing and integrated service.

Lady Allen of Hurtwood’s\(^8\) name is commonly associated with the mobilisation of this pressure. However, its origins lie within the membership of the Women’s Group on Public Welfare, an alliance of notable and ‘progressive’ women in the various fields of welfare, health, education, housing and politics\(^9\); women such as Margaret Bondfield, Eva Hubback, Mary Stocks and Susan Isaacs. Marjory Allen’s famous letter to The Times in July, 1944 was by no means the first strike. She had already written to Herbert Morrison at the Home Office several months earlier to ask for a committee of inquiry on child care to be appointed, but without success. However, her persistence and determination together with a well-orchestrated barrage of letters to The Times from leading figures and the publication of her influential pamphlet Whose Children?\(^10\) eventually had their reward, and the government grudgingly set up two committees of inquiry: one under Myra Curtis for England and Wales and the other under Lord Clyde for Scotland, although the important issues of ‘prevention’ and central responsibility were carefully omitted from the terms of reference. These were both matters that Lady Allen had wished to see included.

Thus, a campaigning group’s concern with the standard of care being provided for separated children (initially for those in residential care), together with political astuteness and useful political connections, came together in an almost classical piece of pressure group politics to move a reluctant government to expose the reform issue to a much wider public consideration and debate than had been intended\(^11\). The future of the child care service could no longer be simply the outcome of rather narrow consultations and the resolution of conflicts within central government: it was now firmly in the public arena.
Tragedy

Myra Curtis had already served on a small committee of inquiry before her appointment as chairman of the Care of Children Committee in March, 1945. This earlier committee had been set up to look into charges that young girls had been placed in an LCC remand home together with older girls who were sexually experienced and some of whom suffered from venereal disease. However, even as this committee was completing its work the death of Dennis O’Neill at the hands of his foster parent was to cause a public outcry of much greater magnitude. Dennis died of starvation and beatings early in January, 1945 after, it should be noted, the Curtis committee had been announced but before it had started its work. Newspapers from The Mirror to The Times carried extensive coverage, not only of the coroner’s report which severely criticised the serious lack of supervision of the foster home where Dennis had been placed with his brother, but also of the trial of the foster parents that followed. Once the trial was over the Home Office’s own inquiry under Walter Monckton could proceed, its report providing yet a further occasion on which the deficiencies of the existing child care system could be excoriated by the press. The Curtis committee was asked to take Monckton’s conclusions into account, but its terms of reference remained unaltered.

Thus, throughout the first part of 1945 the public visibility of the ‘child care’ issue that had already been sharpened by the campaigning activities of Lady Allen and her collaborators was not only sustained but accentuated. Neither the Curtis nor the Clyde committees’ reports specifically referred to the death of Dennis O’Neill but, clearly, the recommendations for the closer supervision of foster homes and their more careful selection were influenced by what had happened. Certainly, the interim report of the Curtis committee on training was prepared swiftly in order to address these problems. Indeed, had it not been for the rapid establishment of courses for boarding-out officers it may well have been difficult, in the light of the tragedy of Dennis O’Neill, for the committee to give such prominence to the use of foster care in its recommendations. These recommendations were, as we have seen, incorporated in the 1948 Act. Indeed, most of the
recommendations were reflected in the legislation. However, the committees’ reports were not the principal antecedents of the Act. The major shaping forces had begun to exert their influence much earlier and continued to do so right up to 1948.

THE INFLUENCES DURING THE LAST 50 YEARS

A span of 50 years hardly lends itself to a rapid review. However, several of the broad social changes that have affected child care practice and policy can be identified, as can some of the factors that have influenced this field more directly. There are three ‘broad trends’ that must be included. They are: the changing nature of ‘social problems’; demographic change; and the transformation of labour markets. Three other factors should be recognised as being more closely connected with child care itself: public visibility; the growth in knowledge; and administrative reform.

The Changing Nature of Social Problems

After the war the housing shortage was a dominating concern. Not only had the housing stock been devastated by bombing but virtually no new building had occurred and there had been little maintenance. Overcrowding was widespread, housing waiting lists were long and very slow moving, and family homelessness became a pressing problem. Only a modest start had been made in clearing the slums in the 1930s, and this had come to a halt in 1939, not to be begun again until the second half of the 1950s. For a decade after the war building materials and building labour were both in short supply and tight controls were imposed on capital spending. The centrality of the ‘housing problem’ was reflected in the way in which the demands upon the new children’s departments were recorded and interpreted. ‘Homelessness’ figured prominently in the reasons for children being admitted to care, as did ‘mother’s confinement’. Until the 1960s most births occurred at home, but poor housing conditions and overcrowding made it necessary for the other children to be cared for temporarily elsewhere, if not by relatives or friends then by the local authorities.
Where children were considered to be vulnerable for more deep-seated reasons these were much more likely to be couched in terms of neglect than physical or sexual abuse. Indeed, ‘ill-treatment’, which had been a dominant child care issue around the turn of the century, had all but disappeared from the debate during the war and afterwards until the emergence of concern about baby battering in the mid-1960s. The idea of neglect, as well as its manifestations, was closely related to the squalid living conditions of the slums and in part to the ill-health, exhaustion and poverty of mothers. Despite the establishment of the National Health Service the legacy of earlier ill-health and untreated conditions remained. Under the limited pre-war health insurance scheme women and children had been almost wholly excluded, and the maternity and child welfare services had achieved only so much. It was notable, therefore, that parental ill-health (mainly mothers’) was also an important reason given for children being admitted to voluntary care for many years after 1948\textsuperscript{17}.

The war years and the immediate aftermath also saw a dramatic increase in the number of illegitimate births, giving rise to the so-called problem of the unmarried mother and her child. Many of the babies were placed for adoption, some having been admitted to care for that purpose. Indeed, ‘illegitimacy’ was yet another category in the official list of reasons for children coming into local authority care\textsuperscript{18} until its disappearance from the statistics in 1977.

The most significant shift in the nature and orientation of the children’s service did not come until 1963 with the Children and Young Persons Act of that year. This, for the first time, allowed local authorities to spend money on the prevention of children coming into care or appearing before the courts as delinquents. Its origins lay in the ‘alarming’ rise in juvenile delinquency that had begun in 1954\textsuperscript{19}. The Ingelby committee was set up in 1956 to make recommendations about how the problem should be tackled but, at the last minute, its terms of reference were extended to cover the question of how best to prevent so many children from coming into care, an amendment largely attributable to the intercession of the Home Office Inspectorate,
pressure from a number of local authorities and from the Association of Children’s Officers\textsuperscript{20}.

Indeed, concern about levels of juvenile delinquency has been one of the important shaping influences in child care policy throughout most of this century, exemplified in the report of Lord Longford’s committee (Crime – A Challenge to Us All)\textsuperscript{21} which led fairly directly to the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 that sought to close the gap between the treatment of the delinquent and the deprived, on the assumption that the same social and family circumstances gave rise to both phenomena.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of a new scenario of ‘social problems’. The Family Law Reform Act of 1969, for example, led to a rapid increase in divorce, a contributory factor to the growth in the number of lone parents and thence to more family poverty. The Maria Colwell inquiry in 1974\textsuperscript{22} drew public attention to child abuse, an attention that has continued unabated. The oil crisis of the mid-1970s and Denis Healey’s need to go to the IMF cap in hand placed severe restrictions upon public expenditure from about 1976 onwards, a necessity embraced by the incoming Thatcher government a few years later. Social welfare became much more obviously affected by such financial considerations, with the capping of local authority spending, rising levels of expenditure on social security payments and the concern to ensure that ‘value for money’ was being obtained throughout the whole range of public services.

**Demographic Change**

One of the reasons why the issue of child neglect (rather than ill-treatment) was slow to emerge as an issue of public policy until the 1930s was because so many children were physically deprived through poverty and ill-health that it was difficult to distinguish these conditions from deliberate neglect. It is significant that in this country the rate of infant mortality did not begin to decline until the early part of the 1920s. Similarly, chronic child illnesses such as TB and physical disabilities attributable to malnutrition still remained significant for several years after 1948.
The eventual disappearance of the children’s sanatoria, schools for ‘delicate’ children and homes for those who were ‘crippled’ not only signalled changes in the approach to child care but also in the pattern of childhood illness and disability, changes that have contributed to developments in the way in which the ‘problems’ of child care are perceived. Now the physical health of children occupies a less prominent position, certainly less prominent than their emotional and behaviour disturbances.

The demography of childhood – and there are many aspects – is, however, not the only population issue to have influenced child care. It was not until the late 1950s and early 1960s that Titmuss and Townsend drew attention to the social rather than the pensions implications of an ageing population. How were more and better care services to be organised? What steps needed to be taken to abolish the large old institutions for the elderly? New and more urgent claims came to be made on local resources, claims that would begin to compete with those being made on behalf of services for children.

However, the question of an ageing population had another side to it which affected services for children. The vast casualties in the 1914-18 war had left a generation of women without marriage partners. Faced with a weak position in the housing market and in the market for their labour many had made careers in residential care, especially for children. They lived in and devoted lifetimes to their work; but, by 1960 or thereabouts this cohort of spinster ladies was finally disappearing into retirement. Residential child care could no longer rely on full-time, live-in and low paid vocational labour. Of course, new staff had already been recruited but this loss hurried along the radical changes in the staffing of children’s homes that occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s: greater unionisation; more part-time employment; more men; and the virtual end to live-in arrangements.

Other demographic changes were also important in setting the context in which child care developed; particularly changes in the family. As noted, lone-parenthood became common (23% of all families with dependent children are now headed by a single
parent\textsuperscript{25}; re-marriage following divorce began to create complicated family structures\textsuperscript{26}, reflected in part by the increasing frequency of step-parent adoptions, of half and step-sibling relationships and more than one set of grandparents. Currently, two-fifths of all marriages are second marriages, and that takes no account of sequential unmarried partnerships\textsuperscript{27}. These are now familiar issues; but they were not always so and their emergence has modified the way in which certain aspects of child care practice are interpreted: for example, in respect of the possibility of recruiting single people as foster carers or adopters, in deciding about the placement together of step or half-siblings, or in the more general issues of a child’s access to parents without custody.

**The Transformation of Labour Markets**

The most obvious transformation in labour markets is, of course, the growth in unemployment; but, more specifically, the transformations which have most directly affected child care are to be found in youth employment and in the employment of women, especially married women. Both have witnessed a revolution in the last half century.

If one looks back at the statistics of, say, the 1950s, one important ‘disposition for children in care’ was ‘residential employment’\textsuperscript{28}. There were, of course, all kinds of drawbacks associated with the practice, but it did provide work and accommodation for youngsters after they left school. Some girls still went into service (as almost all of those who left the care of the Poor Law had done) whilst boys were still recruited to the armed forces as boy entrants and many more later on as national servicemen. In Scotland one of the reasons for the prevailing high rates of boarding-out (around 60% for most of the first half of this century) was the placement of children on the crofts in the Highlands and Islands, an issue to which the Clyde committee had paid particular attention. Likewise, as is now widely appreciated, children in care had been emigrated to Canada and Australia in considerable numbers at different times between the 1860s and the 1960s, largely for agricultural employment. Indeed, agricultural
employment for the young was still readily available in this country for at least the first decade after the 1948 Act, as the existence of places like the Wallingford Farm Training School testifies.

In short, there were niches within the labour market, often providing accommodation as well, for the young people in care when they left school and these niches also provided the children’s departments of the day with a ‘solution’ to the ‘care’ of their older adolescents, and even the more troublesome amongst them. For some there were even the remnants of the apprenticeship system which, when it was good, not only offered training but a measure of mentor protection and commitment. Virtually all these options have disappeared and instead youth unemployment faces youngsters whilst in and upon leaving care more starkly than other young people.

However, it is not only in this sphere that the transformation of labour markets has left its mark on the child care services. The last 30 years has seen an explosion in the employment of married women, albeit much of it on a part-time basis. There are now over 2 million more such women at work than there would have been, say, in the 1960s. It is likely, therefore, that the pool of potential foster carers has diminished as work and the care of extra children appear to be incompatible.

Hence, if one is to understand the influences that have shaped child care policy and practice since 1948 one has to take into account certain of the broader socio-economic changes that set the scene and defined the context, changes such as those that have been illustrated. Nevertheless, there were more direct influences, and at least three of them are worthy of note: the growth of relevant knowledge; greater visibility; and administrative reform.

The Growth of Knowledge

The body of knowledge available to those who struggle with today’s problems of child care is still rudimentary compared with
the physical sciences; but it is by far and away greater than what could be called upon in the past. The mid-1960s probably marked a turning point: the Social Science Research Council was established in 1963 and around the same time there was the rapid expansion of higher education linked with the foundation of the new universities. In particular, that expansion occurred in the social sciences. Departments of social policy or social administration were created, often alongside social work. No university worth its salt could do without a sociology or psychology department. The basis was laid for the development of social science research. Hitherto, there had been the Home Office Research Unit and some research elsewhere funded by charitable trusts; but studies were few and far between and contributed little to finding answers to the many practical problems of child care. The Department of Health’s programme of research was still in the future, as were local authorities’ research units.

Gradually, however, the amount of relevant research began to increase, receiving considerable impetus from the programmes initiated by the Department of Health and the Scottish Office, often associated with matters that assumed particular political prominence, such as the rise in the number of children in care in the 1970s, the urgent need to respond to issues of child protection, or to child placement. The establishment of the customer-contractor principle following the report of the Rothschild committee in 1971\textsuperscript{29} was an important factor in these developments, since it brought the potential users of research into the process of its commissioning. Furthermore, in the last ten years in particular the Department of Health has also invested in the dissemination of research results, the important first initiative being Jane Rowe’s so-called ‘pink book’ – Social Work Decisions in Child Care – published in 1985\textsuperscript{30}.

However, it is not simply the greater availability of research that has influenced the way in which policy and practice have developed, since there is still the difficulty of engineering its practical application, despite impressive initiatives\textsuperscript{31}. Yet certain studies have had a considerable impact, albeit of a more general
kind: for instance, Jane Rowe and Lydia Lambert’s Children Who Wait, published in 1973

Alongside studies such as these, however, there have been other developments which have led to improvements in the provision of basic data. The ‘children in care’ statistics first appeared in 1952 but have gradually become more extensive and comprehensive, enabling important trends to be identified and various rates to be monitored. The work of the Department’s Inspectorate has increasingly involved research-like inquiries and, what is especially important, their publication. The Audit Commission has now covered children’s services in several of its reports and local authorities have improved the ‘performance’ data that they collect and analyse. Furthermore, the stream of public inquiries into child deaths and other abuses of children for whose welfare local authorities are held responsible have also contributed to our knowledge of how services can fail and what steps have to be taken to secure improvements. These inquiries date from 1974 (Maria Colwell), since when there have been some fifty others.

Thus, we now know much more about the trends, the costs and the activities of the children’s services than ever before; but much of this has been more readily incorporated into policy than it has into practice, although the considerable increase in the proportion of trained field staff that occurred from the early part of the 1970s has made this somewhat easier, as well as raising expectations about the quality of service to be provided. Indeed, social work today is expected to be ‘evidence-based’, something that would have been an unrealistic aspiration in, say, the 1950s, when there was virtually no evidence upon which to draw.

Visibility

The various inquiries into tragedies and ‘scandals’ that have reported since 1974 have not only furnished additional information but also served to increase the public visibility of the child care service, and that has also meant raising its political visibility. This had occurred briefly as a result of Dennis O’Neill’s
death in the 1940s, but for some 20 years after the 1948 Act the work of the children’s departments remained a largely unnoticed and private affair. The media were little interested, the age of the consumer’s voice had yet to arrive, and no special machinery for complaints existed. Certainly, there were episodes that caught the attention of the press, but these occurred in the approved schools and were essentially interpreted as problems of disorder: those at Standon Farm School, Carlton and later Court Lees were perhaps the best known. In any case most approved schools were run by voluntary bodies (albeit almost wholly financed by public monies) and, in that respect, the local children’s departments could distance themselves from what went on, though not the Home Office and its Inspectorate.

The Maria Colwell inquiry was however a turning point, after which the children’s services of the new social services departments were subjected to close scrutiny of all kinds. Of course, one of the expectations of the reforms heralded by the Seebohm committee’s report in 1968 was that the personal social services would become more readily accessible, open and less fragmentary. Nevertheless, the speed at which the children’s services attracted public attention, and had to respond accordingly, needs some explanation. One might be found in the changing character of the media. The face of journalism was being refashioned. New technologies were being introduced, the syndication of news developed, local radio expanded rapidly and the newspapers’ battles for circulation intensified. The change in the journalistic ‘climate’ is exemplified in the comparison between the sober coverage of the Dennis O’Neill murder and the clamorous ‘shock-horror’ approach that the tabloid press adopted in reporting Maria Colwell’s death.

This kind of coverage may also have been encouraged by the lack of skill with which social services departments dealt with the media. Unaccustomed as many were to being the subject of journalistic interest they tended to react defensively, further stimulating media interest. Today, most are adept in their relations with the press, radio and television. Even so, the children’s services have continued to claim considerable public attention, an
attention that has been enlivened by the ‘consumer movement’, exemplified in this case by such organisations as the National Association of Young People in Care, or the National Foster Care Association and by the establishment of complaints procedures and public statements of objectives and standards.

One of the most important consequences of the high profile acquired by the children’s services during the last 20 years or so is that revelations of actual or supposed ‘failures’ have exercised a strong influence on the policy process, most notably in the field of child protection. However, not all aspects of the work of the children’s services have received equal public exposure: child neglect and child disability, for example, have rarely captured the headlines. Likewise, the achievements of the services have hardly even been regarded as newsworthy: for example, the work of successful prevention; rehabilitation; or the finding and support of permanent family placements. In short, although greater, the visibility of the children’s services has been incomplete, and that incompleteness has led to a certain unevenness and sometimes distortion in the choice of priorities and in the formulation and re-formulation of policy. One might conclude, rather crudely, that what has been out of sight has been out of mind.

**Administrative Reform**

Since the late 1960s there has been a powerful assumption that a major source of the ills in the social services was to be found in the inadequacies of administrative structures and processes. It followed, therefore, that the remedies for these ills were sought in structural reform. Much of the analysis was influenced by what came to be called (rather loosely) ‘managerialism’, essentially a belief that better services resulted from better management operating within more appropriate structures; but it was a conception of management borrowed largely from practices in the industrial and commercial world. It was not often ‘home grown’.

Certainly, much deserved to be changed: lines of responsibility and accountability needed to be made clear, public accessibility
improved, inefficiencies ironed out and the control of spending tightened. However, major administrative reform creates upheaval, uncertainty and insecurity amongst staff: there are usually losers as well as winners. The modification of administrative structures reshuffles responsibilities, moves staff around and challenges familiar (and sometimes cherished) ways of doing things. It takes time for the dust to settle and longer for people to feel comfortable in their new settings. Experience grows from the work that is done, and when this changes some of that experience is lost and a new start has to be made in building it afresh. Re-training becomes important.

Since 1970 the children’s services have been subject to all these repercussions of administrative reform and, it must be said, many gains have been made. However, there seems to have been a growing tendency for senior managers and governments to believe that deficiencies in the services were best dealt with by administrative reform. In a political sense this was understandable, and for at least two reasons: first, because it offered a convenient way to show that decisive action was being taken; and, secondly, because it seemed to avoid the necessity of making other kinds of changes that were believed to be more difficult to introduce or more costly in the long run.

Partly because the children’s services have been the object of so much public scrutiny and criticism they have also been subjected to a good deal of rather piecemeal administrative reform, and this has had a disruptive effect. It has absorbed resources and created discontinuities, whilst its inappropriate and too ready use has tended to obscure the benefits that have been derived from its appropriate and more frugal use.

Of course, administrative reforms have also been linked with legislative reforms, since these have placed new or different responsibilities upon children’s services that have required modifications in their organisation: witness the 1989 Children Act. However, much administrative reform (albeit at local levels) has occurred independently of changes in child care legislation and in response to a mixture of other forces which have originated
beyond the realm of child care itself: for example, changes in political representation or the influence of management consultants.

It may seem somewhat surprising to pick out administrative change as one of the significant influences on child care during the last 50 years, but it has generated an almost constant ripple of repercussions upon the way in which the services have been provided and have been perceived, both from within and from without.

THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS

Obviously, more factors have been at work in shaping child care in the 50 years since 1948 than have been discussed in the last section: they were an illustrative selection. A similarly selective list of those forces that may come to mould child care in the next 50 years is more difficult to compose. However, let me suggest four socio-economic factors and four child care factors before drawing together some conclusions.

Economic Issues

The future evolution of the national economy will almost certainly be as influential a factor in child care as it has been during the last 50 years. We are already experiencing the exposure of child care to market forces in the growth of ‘the mixed economy of welfare’. Contracting out to private for-profit agencies is now reasonably common: how far will it go? What ‘balance’ will emerge between the public, private and voluntary sectors, and with what positive or negative consequences? What proportion of the available resources will have to be devoted to regulation and integration, and how effective will this be in any case? To what extent will children’s services (amongst others) be affected by the increasing globalisation of economic activity, especially through the influence of the multi-nationals, some of which are already investing heavily in health and welfare services?

Although the relationship between poverty and the demand for
child care services has not been established at the macro-level it is plain that the poverty of certain families (or certain categories of families) imposes such additional strains that the care of their children suffers, not necessarily to the point of them having to be ‘looked after’ but certainly in terms of the quality of their lives and futures. Will Britain continue to widen the gap between the rich and the poor, or will government introduce policies that effectively re-distribute both income and wealth? If so, how will this be achieved? By new policies in the fields of social security, taxation, wages, employment or non-cash services?

What, in any case, will be the pattern of employment over the next 50 years? Will it follow a cyclical course, become increasingly discontinuous or be stabilised? And how will it differ for men, women and young people? Perhaps the sharpest contrast with the 1940s and the Beveridge analysis is the present uncertainty about what will happen or about what can be made to happen.

Demography

Just as demographic changes have had an influence in the past so they will in the future. Four in particular are worthy of continuing attention. First, the pattern of morbidity will almost certainly change, not only in terms of childhood illness and disabilities but also in terms of parental health. New problems will emerge and new treatments will be found, and some of the most important of these may be in the sphere of mental health.

Secondly, the age structure of the population will be different in 50 years time. For example, the growth in the proportion of elderly people will have reached a plateau and then have begun to be reversed. Some of the competitive pressure upon the children’s services from this quarter will be reduced.

Thirdly, there may be a different pattern of geographical mobility and, indeed, in external migration. The availability of support from social networks has some relation to prevailing levels of mobility, but the nature of this relationship may well differ
as between different groups. The distribution of employment as well as the operation of the housing market will affect what happens. It remains to be seen, for example, whether housing tenure will become more or less secure for the poorest households. Over and above this aspect of geographical mobility the effects of various levels of immigration may well modify questions about race and ethnicity. Indeed, global inequalities are already affecting patterns of migration and, not least, the migration of unaccompanied young people – whether legally or illegally.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the changes that occur in the structure of families and in assumptions about the nature of kinship will have significant consequences for child care. Will the upward trends in lone-parenthood and re-constituted families continue? If so, for how long and with what consequences? Will the growth in the number of mixed-race partnerships continue, and how will child care decide to approach the issue of the identity and needs of mixed-race children? Will the increasing number of step-relatives (particularly perhaps grandparents – eight instead of four, for instance) increase the amount of secondary care available or reduce it because of tensions or hostilities?

Social Control

Fear of crime and social disorder have played an important part in shaping social policy, and not least policy in child care. The rates of juvenile delinquency have formed an ever-present backcloth to other aspects of policies for children, just as concern about gangs of disorderly youngsters on the streets encouraged the nineteenth century provision of industrial schools (fore-runners of the approved schools). The case for ‘prevention’ too has been argued partly on the grounds that vulnerable children should not graduate to criminal careers, an argument only slightly modified in Keith Joseph’s famous reference to the dangers associated with the ‘cycle of deprivation’ (some claim that the draft formulation was the ‘cycle of depravation’).

The directions that penal policy (especially with respect to
young people) take over the next half century will have important consequences for child care, reflecting as they will popular perceptions of the nature of the threat of social disorder and attitudes towards its causes, particularly those that are considered to be located in deficient parenting.

**Technology**

Developments in medicine may become one of the most important technical influences upon child care in the coming half century, not only in modifying the pattern of childhood illness but in other fields such as behaviour-controlling drugs, genetic engineering or the closely associated prevention of congenital disabilities, all of which are already clearly discernible trends.

Yet this is not the only area of technical advancement that is likely to bear upon the child welfare services. Information technology will almost certainly come to the aid of professional decision-making as well as providing a more rapid access to the kinds of ‘housekeeping’ data without which neither the questions that policy needs to address nor evolving trends can be identified. Much will depend, of course, on the quality of the data and here schemes like the Looking After Children project could begin to lay a valuable foundation.

The possible contribution of such new technologies to better communication should not be under-estimated. Ways of helping children to express themselves, other than by the spoken word, are already available, but there could be dramatic technical improvements during the next decades. Likewise, systems other than the telephone for arms-length interactive communication between families and social workers could well be introduced. The possibilities are many and potentially far-reaching.

However, such influences are amongst those that will operate at the macro level; there will be others that are more specific to the child care services but which will nevertheless be themselves shaped by wider socio-economic forces. Four examples follow next.
New Categories

The 1948 Children Act virtually created the term ‘children in care’ and those to whom it was applied came to be regarded as a largely undifferentiated group, not least because they were assumed to have experienced a common adversity (separation) which had similar consequences and created similar needs. Although one of the criticisms which was levelled at the reforms that led to the absorption of the old children’s departments into the new social services departments was that there was a loss of ‘specialisation’, that specialisation amounted to hardly more than the general experience of working with families and children. Within that field little, if any, specialisation had been developed. Later, what specialisation there was was diluted by the way in which the idea of generic social work was initially interpreted in the new departments. It was not until the issue of child abuse came to occupy such a central position that some measure of specialisation within child care began to emerge.

What is now clear is that the children for whom social services departments carry responsibility (whether they be at home or ‘looked-after’) cannot be and should not be treated as a broadly similar group. Indeed, one of the important contributions of recent research has been to show that better understanding and better practice will depend upon the disaggregation of some of the categories that, hitherto, have been the stock-in-trade of child care; for example, abuse, neglect, disability, foster care, adoption, prevention, need and so on. This process has already begun, but the manner in which it develops in succeeding years will be of the utmost importance. The categories that we employ shape what we see and what we do; they constitute the framework within which interpretations are made.

A more precise way of approaching issues in child care will not necessarily mean that training has to be provided for numerous new specialisms (although some will certainly be required); but it will mean that social workers have to understand the way in which more precisely defined categories of children are likely to respond to more precisely defined settings, and be responded to in them.
The speed, direction and effect of such changes will undoubtedly
serve to shape child care in the future, professionally,
organisationally and in terms of the kind of service that families
and children receive.

Working with Children

It is already apparent that one of child care’s shortcomings is
the inability or lack of opportunity for social workers to work
effectively with children in a direct fashion. If this is to become
more common it will demand a radical reappraisal of training, of
the nature of the social work role and of the place of special
residential or day care in the range of services. As the recent
Department of Health’s review of residential care research argues:

‘Residence should be brought closer into the continuum of services
for children in need in order to ensure that the right children come into
the sector and find their way to places that are right for them.’

More emphasis may come to be given to play in the process of
assessment, or to visual aids in communication. A better working
relationship with teachers may become important; indeed, during
the next 50 years we could well see the child care dimension of
education and the educational dimension of child care becoming
more clearly associated.

The Relationships Between Children

If one looks back over the last half century it is remarkable how
little attention has been paid to the relations between children,
rather than to their relationships with adults. Yet what occurs in
schools, residential establishments, in foster or adoptive homes
or, indeed, in children’s own homes is considerably influenced by
the manner in which children interact with each other, and how
they experience these interactions. Admittedly, questions about
the best placement arrangements for siblings and the impact of a
newly placed child on those already in the home have been the
subject of both research and practice guidance; but the
consideration of other, more general, child-child relationships has
been largely ignored.
Of course, the recent interest in bullying, or in children as abusers, has drawn attention to certain negative aspects of these relationships; on the other hand their positive and supportive potentialities have been little explored: for instance, the importance of friendships, loyalties, mutual ‘defence’ and other forms of solidarity. Indeed, one of the handicaps that children who have been rejected or abused may suffer is the inability to form (or maintain) such relations with other children. If they fail to do so in childhood they may find it hard to forge those relationships that are so central to a fulfilling adolescence and adulthood.

The emerging recognition that, in child care, much may turn upon how children get on with other children could well develop into an important aspect of work with those who are vulnerable and damaged, influencing group care, placement policies or treatment strategies.

**Collective Care**

The image of ‘collective care’ for children has been sullied by its institutional legacy and, more recently, by the revelations of abuse in children’s homes. Yet certain forms of collective care are mostly well regarded – nursery provision and boarding education, to mention but two. Furthermore, if one looks at other countries (such as France or the USA) one sees many more situations and occasions when it is taken for granted that children will be looked after together outside their families: for instance, during summer camps and other ‘holiday’ initiatives. As well as the possibility of these forms of collective care becoming more common in this country (by way of certain forms of out-of-home respite care, for example) there is also the prospect that various kinds of ‘residence’ may come to be viewed as essential for some children who have suffered such severe deprivations that they cannot be placed in family settings, at least until their profound emotional and behavioural problems have been ameliorated. Much will depend upon the quality of any such residentially-based provision – a quality that has been reflected in the success of some of the therapeutic communities over the years.
However, there is another sense in which ‘collective care’ may come to occupy a more important place in the realm of child welfare: that is, by a development of existing ideas and practices about ‘shared care’. The extent of this at the moment should not be under-estimated. We have mentioned day nurseries and respite care, but the care of many children is ‘shared’ between two family units as those whose parents are divorced or separated move back and forth between them. Furthermore, an unknown proportion of better-off families depend upon au pairs or mothers’ helps. It is rather easy to believe that the amount of ‘shared care’ has diminished drastically because of the geographical fragmentation of extended families; but other forms may have increased and, given the encouragement of public policy, they could become more widespread and diverse. The problem has been, and will continue to be, that unless deliberate steps are taken shared care will remain unevenly available and, more importantly, not necessarily accessible to those in most need of it.

The connection between the development of collective or shared care and an improvement in the social skills of children should not be overlooked, especially if it can reduce some of the distance and separation between adults and young people. Couched in the most aspirational terms, we may come to regard the better social integration of children as a proper objective of public policies, policies that could well spill over into the more circumscribed world of child care.

Some progress along these lines is now promised with respect to disabled children, but their better social integration, as that of other children with ‘special needs’, will be greatly assisted if more general policies to secure an improved integration of all children are also adopted and vigorously pursued. In the past, perhaps, insufficient attention has been paid to the connections between the general and the special provisions for children.

**BRIEF CONCLUSIONS**

There are at least five very general conclusions that this rapid
review has suggested and which should inform the discussion and formulation of future child care policies and practices.

- Looked at historically, child care is scattered with both significant continuities and notable discontinuities. It is essential to recognise each for what it is and not be misled into confusing one with the other.

- We can learn from the past: indeed, unless we do we will be culpable of acting in blatant disregard of ‘the best interest of the child’.

- Nevertheless, child care will continue to be bedevilled by uncertainties and unpredictabilities. At the very least, therefore, that implies that any ‘plan’ should contain a provision for ‘contingencies’, and should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate new information.

- The future of child care will, in part, be shaped by its past; but we should beware of the ‘conventional wisdoms’ that stultify imaginative thinking. We should not allow ourselves to be the captives of yesterday’s assumptions.

- Finally, child care services may be radically recast in the next 50 years if the establishment of a ‘social policy for children’ comes to be taken seriously; if, that is, all policies are routinely evaluated against their likely impact upon children – whether these be policies in the fields of social security, housing, town planning, transport or public health.

NOTES


2 For example, Section 2 of the Act enabled local authorities to assume parental rights, under certain circumstances, without recourse to the courts, a measure that had been introduced in 1889 in virtually identical terms. Likewise, although certain changes in the boarding-out
regulations had been introduced in 1946 other aspects remained unchanged from previous formulations of 1933 and 1889. It is noteworthy that the Children Bill 1908 was introduced into Parliament almost exactly 40 years before the Children Bill 1948.

3A point first made by David Donnison in Health, Welfare and Democracy in Greater London, Greater London Papers, LSE, 1962. The urgent need for more trained personnel was reflected in the fact the the Curtis committee produced an early interim report dealing specifically with Training in Child Care, Cmd.6760 in March, 1945. It had become clear to them during their investigations ‘that large sections of the staff caring for ... children [deprived of a normal home life] were without any special training for the task and that this circumstance was in part responsible for unsatisfactory standards where they existed’ (p.1).

4Reception centres did not develop as intended or expected, mainly because of the limitations imposed upon capital works but also because the slow turnover of children led to a shortage of places.

5See, for example, Ministry of Health, Hostels for ‘Difficult’ Children: A Survey of Experience under the Evacuation Scheme, 1944; also D.Burlingham and A.Freud, Young Children in War-Time, Allen and Unwin, 1942.


11The parallel to be found in the history of the 1908 Children Act is worth noting. In his autobiography Viscount Samuel (then Home Secretary) wrote that: ‘a Scottish lady, Mrs M. R. Inglis, recently interested in social work, came to see me in order to urge that the Government should establish a new Ministry to be concerned with all matters relating to children ... the proposed remedy did not commend itself ... However, I found that the Home Office itself was concerned with a number of subjects closely affecting the well-being of various classes of children; that in the preceding years many definite reforms had been proposed ... and that it was clearly the duty of the Government to prepare legislation’ (p.55), Viscount Samuel, Memoires, Crescent Press, 1945.

12Home Office, London County Council Remand Homes: Report of
Committee of Inquiry (under the chairmanship of Geoffrey Vick, KC), Cmd.6594, 1945.

Report by Sir Walter Mockton on the circumstances that led to the boarding out of Dennis and Terence O’Neill at Bank Farm, Minsterley, and the steps taken to supervise their welfare, Cmd.6636, 1945.


For an excellent coverage of the first 25 years however, see J. Packman, The Child’s Generation: Child Care Policy from Curtis to Houghton, Blackwell and Robertson, 1975.

Even as late as 1963 20% of all admissions to care in England and Wales were attributed to ‘confinement of mother’ and 7% to the family’s homelessness. As a proportion of all voluntary admissions the rates were, of course, higher: 22% and 8% respectively. (Home Office, Children in Care in England and Wales, March, 1963, Cmd.2240, 1963)

Again, ‘the long-term illness of parent or guardian’ figured prominently in the list of reasons for children’s admission to care. In 1963 this accounted for 5% of admissions (ibid). The parents’ ‘short-term illness’ was a much more common reason for taking children into care: 31% of all admissions in 1963.

Taking 1963 again, ‘child illegitimate and mother unable to provide a home’ made up 4% of all admissions to care (ibid).

The upward trend in juvenile delinquency began in 1954 and accelerated swiftly during the latter years of the 1950s and the early 1960s. See, for example, Criminal Statistics for England and Wales, 1962, Cmd.2120, 1963 and for Scotland Cmd.2011, 1963.

It reported four years later: Report of the Committee on Children and Young Persons, Cmd.1911, 1960


Department of Health and Social Security, Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Care and Supervision Provided in Relation to Maria Colwell, 1974.


This was a competition that been muted, not least because there had been no Old People’s Act in 1948 comparable with that for children. Nor had training for the care of the elderly been accorded the priority that had been given to child care training.


As Murch wrote nearly 20 years ago: ‘Divorce is not simply to be
understood in terms of ending marriage but also as a licence to remarry. The resulting changes in the family’s social structure, as old relationships are given up or modified and new ones established, are not well understood’. M. Murch, Justice and Welfare in Divorce, Sweet and Maxwell, 1980.

27 See, Social Trends, op cit.

28 In 1956 for example, 1,286 of the children in care in England and Wales were in residential employment and this represented 10% of those over school leaving age. Home Office, Children in the Care of Local Authorities in England and Wales, March, 1956, Cmd. 9881, 1956.


30 Published by HMSO.

31 Initiatives such as the Findings publications of the Joseph Rowntree Trust or Research in Practice at the Dartington Social Research Unit.

32 Published by the Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies.


34 In 1964, for example, only 27% of the field staff of English and Welsh children’s departments were recognised as qualified by the Home Office. By the time of the Barclay report in 1980 over 70% of social workers employed by social services departments were qualified, whilst today the proportion exceeds 90%. (See Chapter 4, R.A. Parker, Safeguarding Standards, NISW, 1990.)


36 Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services, Cmd. 3703, 1968.

37 For a wide-sweeping review of the evidence see, M. Rutter and D.J. Smith (eds), Psychosocial Disorders in Young People, Wiley, 1995. See also, NHS Health Advisory Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, HMSO, 1995.

38 See, T. Modood et al., Ethnic Minorities in Britain, Policy Studies Institute, 1997.

39 It is fascinating to look back only 20 years to a report such as that
prepared by J. Sleigh et al., The Manpower Implications of Micro-Electronic Technology, Department of Employment, 1979 – suggesting, for example, that electronic mail will come to be used quite extensively.


42 ‘Parents needing relief’ was the reason given for nearly 8,300 of the 31,400 children being looked after who started to be looked after in the year ending March, 1997; that is, 26% (Children Looked After by Local Authorities, Year Ending 31 March, 1997, England; A/F97/12, Department of Health, 1998).

43 For a flavour of the issues in this field see Therapeutic Care and Education: The Journal of the Association of Workers for Children with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders.
Conference Programme

10.00  Welcome
Paul Boateng MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of Health
Chair: Rita Stringfellow, Chair of the Social Affairs and Health Committee, Local Government Association

10.30  Plenary
From Dick Barton to Eastenders: From Children’s Departments to Children in the Community
Bob Holman, Community Worker
Chair: Moira Gibb, Chair of Children and Families Committee, ADSS

11.25  Plenary
Battles Lost or Won
Sir William Utting
Chair: Professor Olive Stevenson

1.30  Workshops
Celebrating Good Practice
A choice of seven workshops providing examples of and models for good practice, with pointers to future development and emphasis on partnership between children, parents and professionals.

A. Providing for children’s emotional needs in schools – Joan Baxter, Benita Refson and Brenda Meldrum, The Place To Be
B. Enquiries into alleged child abuse: translating the wishes of children and families into policy and good practice – Jane Sadler, PAIN and Ilan Katz, NSPCC
C. Empowering children, shared care and preventing family breakdown: a model of residential care for the future – Adele Jones, The Bibini Centre
D. Good practice in work with disabled children and young people: implications of research – Jenny Morris
E. Redeploying resources to create a local
community-based scheme - Kevin Bingham and Julie Clarke, Newcastle upon Tyne Social Services Department

F. Leaving care: what works? Messages from research into practice – Professor Mike Stein, University of York

G. Fostering: past, present and future – Chérie Talbot, National Foster Care Association

3.30 Plenary

**Summing up**

Professor Roy Parker

Chair: Professor Daphne Statham, Director of the National Institute for Social Work
Delegate List

Ms L Atkins, Head of Public Policy, NSPCC
Mr S Attwood, Head of Service, Children, Rutland Council
Mr D Ayers, Director, Castle Homes Ltd
Cllr. D Bamford, Vice Chair, Children Subcommittee, Stoke on Trent City Council
Ms S Bamsey, Tutor, Brunel University
Ms J Baxter, Workshop Leader, The Place To Be
Mr N Berbiers, Senior Manager, Social Work, ISP
Mr K Bilton, Steering Group Member
Mr K Bingham, Workshop Leader, Newcastle upon Tyne Social Services
Mr B Bishop, Regional Director, Peper Harow Foundation
Mr P Boateng, MP, Under Secretary of State, Department of Health
Mr D Botting, Family and Child Care Officer, The Salvation Army
Mr A Bunyan, Service Manager, Leicester City Council
Mr M Burrows, Principal Officer, Medway Social Services
Cllr. P Byrne, Chair, Social Services Committee, Wolverhampton City Council
Ms S Cheal, Director, The Who Cares? Trust
Mr A Christie, Assistant Director, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Mr P Clarke, Head of Training and Development, Glebe House
Ms J Clarke, Workshop Leader, Newcastle upon Tyne Social Services
Mr R Clough, General Secretary, Social Care Association
Mrs A Cole, Service Manager, Telford and Wrekin Council
Ms J Cooke, Service Manager, Middlesborough Council
Ms J Cooper, Researcher
Ms SA Copeman, Reviewing Officer, St Helens Borough Council
Ms V Cuddy, Unit Business Manager, Tameside Borough Council
Ms J Daintith, Assistant Director, Greenwich Council
Ms M Dennison, Assistant Director, Hull City Council
Ms S Desai, Subject Leader in Social Work, University of Derby
Ms E De’ath, Chief Executive, NCVCCO
Cllr. A Dobson, Social Services Committee, Redcar and Cleveland Council
Cllr. J Edwards, Chair, Social Services Committee, Stoke on Trent City Council
Ms J Edwards, Team Manager, Wandsworth Social Services
Mrs W Ellis, Administrative Officer, Social Care Association
Mr M Emberson, Head of Children’s Services, Reading Borough Council
Ms S Everitt, Assistant Director, Homestart UK
Mr R Fall, Social Worker, Thurrock Social Services
Ms S Fasht, Director of Family Services, Norwood Ravenshead
Ms R Gardner, Child Protection Manager, Hackney Social Services
Mr M Gast, Service Manager, Worcestershire Social Services
Ms Y Gayford, Director, Parents and Children Together
Ms M Gibb, Chair, Children and Families Committee, ADSS
Ms J Greenwood, Lecturer in Social Work, Havering College of Further Education
Ms S Guest, Deputy Head, Pastoral Care, Nugent House School
Mr AF Haines, Chief Executive, Boys and Girls Welfare Society
Ms K Henderson, Development Manager, ISP
Prof. R Holman, Speaker
Mrs E Horton, Head of Children’s Services, Bournemouth Borough Council
Ms E Houseman, Course Director, Brunel University
Ms A Jamieson, Director, NCB Early Childhood Unit
Mr M Jarman, Director of Children’s Services, Barnados
Mr T Jones, Assistant Director, Bedfordshire County Council
Mr D Jones, Training Officer, East Sussex County Council
Ms A Jones, Workshop Leader, The Bibini Centre
Cllr. I Jones, Deputy Spokesperson, Social Care, Welsh Local Government Association
Ms E Jones, Project Supervisor, Children’s Society, St Gabriels
Ms I Katz, Workshop Leader, NSPCC
Mrs HR Kegie, Retired
Cllr. G Kenyon, Social Services Committee, Redcar and Cleveland Council
Mrs K Lane, Consultant
Mr CJ Lee, Head of Children’s Services, Buckingham County Council
Ms M Lewis, Family Centre Manager, Brighton and Hove Social Services
Mr M Lindsay, Group Manager, Bath and North East Somerset Social Services
Ms J Lindsay-German, Service Development Director, The Bridge Child Care Development
Ms P Lloyd, Social Care Group, Department of Health
Mr B Luckock, Lecturer in Social Work, Department of Health
Ms T MacDermott, Research and Information Officer, Child Poverty Action Group
Mr G Mason, Assistant Director, Wolverhampton City Council
Ms L Mattai, Principal Officer, Children, Nottinghamshire Social Services
Ms G McAndrew, Executive Director, National Foster Care Association
Ms L McCalmont, Service Manager, Redcar and Cleveland Social Services
Mr P McEntee, Service Manager, Children, Nottingham Social Services
Ms B Meldrum, Workshop Leader, The Place To Be
Ms D Metcalf, Commissioning Manager, Milton Keynes Council
Ms J Morris, Workshop Leader
Mr G Mullins, Senior Care Manager, Nugent House School
Mrs PM Munir, Retired
Ms S Noakes, Project Manager, Childcare, CCETSW
Mr G Norman, Head of Children’s Services, Torbay Council
Ms H Oakley, Assistant Director, Stoke on Trent City Council
Dr J Packman, Retired
Prof. R Parker, Speaker
Ms J Pedley, Assistant Director, Children and Families, Nottinghamshire Social Services
Cllr. B Piggot, Councillor, Bedfordshire County Council
Mr M Pim, Head of Operations, Norfolk County Council
Mr A Poyser, Social Care Group, Department of Health
Mr N Press, Children’s Services Manager, Surrey County Council
Dr G Pugh, Chief Executive, Thomas Coram Foundation
Ms B Refson, Workshop Leader, The Place To Be  
Cllr. Mrs L Rhodes, Councillor, Bournemouth Borough Council  
Ms R Roberts, Senior Manager, Wrexham Social Services  
Ms W Rose, Senior Fellow, University of Leicester  
Mr B Ruddock, Training Manager, Wiltshire County Council  
Cllr. P Ruhemann, Chair, Social Services Committee, Reading Borough Council  
Ms J Rust, Social Worker, Thurrock Social Services  
Ms J Sadler, Workshop Leader, PAIN  
Ms C Salvadori, Planning and Development Officer, City of Plymouth  
Cllr. Mrs B Siberry, Councillor, Bournemouth Borough Council  
Mr M Simm, Commissioning Officer, Oxfordshire Social Services  
Mr R Singleton, Chief Executive, Barnados  
Ms T Smith, Acting Team Manager, Thurrock Social Services  
Prof. D Statham, Director, National Institute for Social Work  
Prof. M Stein, Workshop Leader, University of York  
Prof. O Stevenson, Steering Group Member  
Mr C Stogdon, Programme Coordinator, Bretton Hall College  
Cllr R Stringfellow, Chair of Social Affairs Committee, Local Government Association  
Ms C Talbot, Workshop Leader, National Foster Care Association  
Ms M Taylor, Retired  
Mr P Tempest, Assistant Director of Social Services, Suffolk County Council  
Dr J Thomas, Chair, Steering Group  
Ms D Tonkin, Policy and Standards Manager, Kent County Council  
Mr D Tuohy, Director of Operations, Boys and Girls Welfare Society  
Sir W Utting, Speaker  
Mr I Vallender, Information Officer, NCVCCO  
Ms S Virgo, Project Worker, Children’s Society  
Mr B Waller, Director, Home Start UK  
Mr P Welply, Family Centre Manager, Oxfordshire Social Services  
Mr P Westland, Steering Group Member  
Mr W Whillock, Policy and Standards Manager, Kent County Council  
Ms A Willins, Social Care Group, Department of Health