

Apart from being a time of continuing economic and social problems in the UK, 2010 is also an election year. It is against this background that Gerry Mooney and Sarah Neal from the Open University have provided their view on the future of 'welfare' which makes for unsettling, challenging but also stimulating reading. Mooney and Neal use contemporary academic, real life and fictional narratives to both illustrate and deconstruct 'broken society' discourses as well as envisioning possible welfare futures in Britain. It will be interesting to see in just which directions post-election Britain will go.

The article by Sarah Dubberley and Odette Parry of the Social Inclusion Research Unit in Wrexham is firmly grounded in the here and now. It concerns a DofE-funded study into the involvement of young offenders in the secure estate (Young Offender Institutions and other secure facilities) in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The findings appear to provide grounds for optimism for such an approach, not only in terms of the prevention of re-offending but also in contributing to a positive self-concept and social inclusion for those involved.

Adult safeguarding is currently high on the social care policy agenda. However, arguably, it should be equally high on the agendas of other public services. The article by Shereen Hussein and colleagues is therefore both timely and highly relevant, focusing as it does on the perceptions and dynamics of multi-agency working in this area of work. Based on a survey, the study highlights the necessity but also the complexities, tensions and possible disadvantages of multi-agency working. It appears that much more needs to be done in this important area of policy in terms of clarifying roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

Along with safeguarding, 'transformation' is another important item on the social care agenda. Jacky Smith's critique of current information and recording systems is therefore also timely if the ambitious aspirations associated with this agenda are to become reality in a meaningful way. Smith's conclusion is necessarily uncertain about the prospects of information systems becoming sufficiently sophisticated to close the gap between rhetoric and reality.

The research study by Katie Riches and associates took place in the context of a policy agenda that seeks to promote children's emotional well-being. The team's starting point is that 'resilience appears to be integral to well-being'. Basing their paper on data from the annual survey of school children (Tellus), the authors first operationalize and then develop a 'scale of resilience' that, they argue, might be useful in shaping interventions which would enhance the potential for well-being amongst children in the future.

Lastly, the regulation and inspection of care services is a changing and dynamic area of policy which retains a high place on the Government's agenda for reform. Rob Pickford provides a reflective report using the situation in Wales as a case study. He invites the readership of *Research, Policy and Planning* to use the journal as a means of providing updates of this area of policy and practice. Hopefully we can rise to the challenge - your views are very welcome.

The book review section includes reviews of books on the topics of; regulation, research skills in social work, messages from research in children's services. All are of contemporary relevance. My thanks to the reviewers, all of whom have written informative reviews.

Peter Scourfield
Book Reviews Editor

‘Welfare worries’: mapping the directions of welfare futures in the contemporary UK

Gerry Mooney and Sarah Neal

Faculty of Social Sciences, The Open University

The state of welfare

If you were to open and read any newspaper or switch on and watch television news or read-watch online news in any day at any given time in any given week there would be a story, incident or crisis about welfare in some shape or form. Often the presence of welfare within the busy overcrowded spaces of the public domain relates to an anxiety about and/or a failure of welfare delivery and service impact. Usually it is both combined. For example, at the time of writing there is, in England, a news headline scandal about the poor standards of cleanliness in some foundation hospitals being such that they are contributing to the further ill-health and death of those people receiving medical treatment and healthcare. The scandal is not just about the lack of hygiene in the hospitals. The scandal is amplified because some of the hospitals involved had been checked by the NHS inspection system and passed as being of good and satisfactory standard. This is the double anxiety – the failure of the service and the failure of the monitoring of the service.

The compacted and multiple natures of welfare challenges and welfare anxieties in the contemporary UK (although this is not a nationally bounded anxiety), relate to sets of connections and often entrenched lacunae. Another example: in North London, the death of ‘Baby P’ in 2007 and subsequent enquiry, trial and conviction is about the horrors of violence against and harm of a child within the private spaces of families. The gap or lacuna here is, of course, between the endangered child and child protection. Baby P is about the failure of

safeguarding systems but the connection is that the case has very direct implications in terms of the recruitment, training and retention of social workers (see Ferguson & Lavalette, 2009). For example, Ed Balls who, at the time of writing, is Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, argues that, in social work, there “are high referral rates [of children] very high vacancy rates [of social worker posts] and a lot of variation in performance” (The Guardian, November 28, 2009). In other words, the few remaining and overworked social workers are fearful of mistakenly allowing children to stay within families and disproportionately referring them to state care systems. Ed Balls sees this situation as a result of the quality of welfare professionals themselves: “in the end this is a profession [social work] that has not retained the best people at the frontline for fundamental reasons about training, employment, pay”. For the Minister, the answer to this welfare crisis appears to lie in creating more rigorous and higher status ‘Royal College’ professional training and ‘bundling’ social workers with teachers, doctors and the police.

The dirty hospitals and the Baby Peter scandal are two distinct crises of welfare narratives that demonstrate some of the worries, contradictions and complexities of welfare in late modern societies. The common thread through them is the failure to protect the vulnerable and at risk and the failure of the various welfare checking systems to see the welfare failure.

However, there is another recurring ideology which circulates around and works to shape crises of welfare narratives: an

explicit anti-welfare perspective that draws on a century and more-old distinction between a 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor which, in the increasingly pervasive language of the early 21st century, talks of aspirational deficits, dysfunctional and deviant behaviours, an absence of social capital and a seemingly expanding range of moral and behavioural problems which have some of the poorest sections of contemporary UK society trapped in a, now rediscovered, culture of poverty.

If the Baby Peter case and stories of falling hospital standards speak to particular crises of welfare around service delivery and the failure of social services to provide care and security for the very young, the Karen Matthews episode speaks to other crises of welfare. Matthews' (and her partner's) conviction for the kidnapping of her nine year old daughter in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire in 2008, provoked a backlash which has all the hallmarks of a right-wing moral panic. Speaking shortly after their sentencing in December 2008, Conservative leader David Cameron commented that:

The verdict last week on Karen Matthews and her vile accomplice is also a verdict on our broken society. The details are damning. A fragmented family held together by drink, drugs and deception. An estate where decency fights a losing battle against degradation and despair. A community whose pillars are crime, unemployment and addiction. How can Gordon Brown argue that people who talk about a broken society are wrong? These children suffered at the very sharpest end of our broken society but all over the country are other young victims, too. Children whose toys are Dad's discarded drink bottles; whose role models are criminals, liars and layabouts; whose innocence is lost before their first milk tooth. What chance for these children? Raised without manners, morals or a decent education, they're caught up in the same destructive chain

as their parents. It's a chain that links unemployment, family breakdown, debt, drugs and crime'. (David Cameron, Daily Mail, December 8, 2008)

In the Charles Murray-esque landscape conjured up by Cameron a particular anti-welfare message is being invited. This invitation is that existing forms of welfare provision have not only failed to make any effective interruption in the 'destructive chain' but that they have been, more damningly, contributive and even causal of it. While Cameron's term the 'broken society' may be new, the state of the poor and the responsibility of poor people for the state they exist in is an old and persistent argument that has always been able to find a ready audience in sections of the popular media and among politicians across the political spectrum, and of course among some in policy-making and academic communities.

Such explanatory narratives are powerful. They offer an immediate and easy apparatus for making sense of inequality and human behaviour in complex social worlds. In the contemporary, intensely 24/7-mediated UK these narratives are particularly potent and work effectively precisely because the evidence that substantiates them – the Karen Matthews story for example – is so widely disseminated and deliberated on. In thinking about arguments about the future formations of welfare provision, what is clear is that the media will be involved and influential. Indeed, we suggest that it is important to acknowledge the media as a key policy player in social policy setting agendas and policy-making networks (Neal, 2003; McLaughlin & Neal, 2004). Given this, the future directions of welfare need to attend to the ways in which these media engagements inform, underpin, disseminate and challenge some of the dominant welfare narratives that are being valorised in Britain today.

Fear and distrust in early twenty-first century Britain

The three cases we have highlighted thus far all relate in different ways to a generalised sense that welfare is failing, and that the state is now failing to protect us from a seemingly growing and expanding range of social harms and risks in an increasingly precarious and uncertain time. Minton (2008; 2009) has talked of Britain as a 'distrustful and fearful society'. This modern 'social evil', she claims, results from growing social and geographical inequalities and from a media which has a vested commercial interest in promoting fear and insecurity. Minton is only one of a number of commentators who have highlighted the growing social and economic polarisation in contemporary Britain and the ways in which this corresponds with and contributes to rising levels of fear, distrust and anxiety (Young, 2007; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). For Minton, such inequalities are more and more visible, inscribed on the social landscape of Britain today. They are reflected in the twin and related processes of deepening social and economic segregation and homogenisation of communities. The Moorside estate where the Matthews kidnapping took place is not one, but many worlds apart, from the increasingly privatised and segregated enclaves of affluence that exist in parts of urban, suburban and rural Britain.

Minton is by no means the first commentator to suggest that late modernity is characterised by the failure of the modernist project. For Minton and others, there is a 'late modern relationship' which can be broadly aligned and understood in the following way: increasing social and economic polarisation = increasing social fear and mistrust = ontological insecurity = social retreat and individual securitisation. The failures of the welfare state in the modernist project are reflected and inflected in the shape that welfare's future forms are

likely to take. For example, in his seminal text *The Exclusive Society* (1999, p.4) the social theorist Jock Young reminds us that, for the modernist project, its 'ideal' intention was, "the greater and greater incorporation of the population into full citizenship ... of substantive incorporation into society ... of not only legal and political rights but social rights: a minimum of employment, income, education, health and housing". While this clearly was never part of its actual achievement, what Young reminds us of is the extent to which there was a moment of consensual politics as to the desirability of this. The passing of this intention and consensus in a haze of global economic restructuring, neo-liberalism, political dissolutions and realignments, migrations, new social movements, individualism, choice, consumerism, and so forth means that these intentions appear as far out of reach in the first decades of the 21st century as seemed within reach in the mid 20th century.

The failures and limitations of the 'Golden Age' welfare settlements became apparent as some groups were excluded from welfare entitlements, as welfare recipients became stigmatised and as social inequality, differentiation and poverty continued and, indeed, increased. It was in this context that modernist welfare intentions gave way to neo-liberalism. With its combined emphasis on less state provision, more markets, more individual responsibility, on pathologised poverty and 'difficult' populations, neo-liberalism became a key shaper of welfare approaches and transformations in Britain, the USA and other Anglophone countries from the late 1970s. The ascendancy of neo-liberalism and its successive discourses has meant that it has become increasingly popular to think of the end of state welfare or, at the very least, of an era of the decline of the welfare state. However, despite the influence of the neo-liberal agenda in welfare politics the 'end of welfare' is too general, too US/UK - and, perhaps, here with the latter case, maybe too England -

specific and too simplistic a rhetoric (especially when there is data evidencing the relatively consistent levels of state spending on social protection - see Clarke, 2008, for example). Rather than the *terminal decline* it is the nature of the strains and pressures for the *reformation* of welfare that we suggest require attention and explanation.

For us, and for other commentators, this reformation process has become shaped by the convergence between social protection concerns and crime control concerns in a development that Hughes (2009) refers to as 'hybrid policy making'. This hybrid relationship between the two sets of concerns emerges directly from the inevitable failure of the modernist cradle-to-grave welfarism to deliver full social citizenship. The problematisation of welfare recipients borrows directly from old notions of dangerous, unruly and deviant poor. The focus on an expanded and penalising criminal justice system and the juridification of civic interactions can be understood as a response to the (re)turn to the pathologisation and criminalisation of poverty. But the convergence also reflects the mood of social uncertainty and heightened risk which engenders less-forgiving and tolerant, and more defensive and fearful populations demanding penalties for, and protection from, those figures and populations who appear to threaten from the margins and outside. It is in this environment, in the Global North and in some parts of the Global South, where the correlations between increased material affluence, increased prison populations and increased residence within gated communities, all make a grim sort of sense. Not insignificantly, the convergence between the social welfare and crime control domains has also happened during a period of intense media-isation of politics and policy-making that we noted above. Future welfare policy has to contend with being generated in a fearful, mistrusting and non-consensual public domain. While the

media needs to be recognised as a key welfare policy actor, it is not a straightforwardly homogenised rightist and conservatively inclined blunt instrument. The media can work as an oppositional and exposing voice for social change too. What is clear, though, is that the media shapes welfare imaginations in entangled and multiple ways. For example, the idea that there are an increasing number of places in Britain today which resemble the crime- and drug-ridden world of Baltimore captured in the widely acclaimed and popular American TV drama *The Wire*, has been given political legitimacy by Shadow Conservative Home Secretary Chris Grayling:

The Wire used to be just a work of fiction for British viewers. But under this government, in many parts of British cities, The Wire has become a part of real life in this country too. Far too many of those features of what we have always seen as a US phenomenon are now to be found on the streets of Britain as well. ... It's a horrendous portrayal of the collapse of civilised life and of human despair. Neighbourhoods where drug dealing and deprivation is rife. A constant threat of robbery to fund drug dependency. Communities dogged by violence and by violent crime. (Cited in Watt & Oliver, 2009)

There is, arguably, some irony in the Conservatives drawing on *The Wire* given the programme's indictment of a racially polarised, impoverished, deeply divided urban United States characterised by an almost complete absence of welfare intervention and widespread corruption and compromise within the range of social governance systems. It is various characters' attempts to survive - and prosper - within a context of structural and social-spatial inequalities that are core to *The Wire*'s storylines. We do not want to over-claim the way in which the popularity of *The Wire* reflects the wider 'real world' social

concerns with welfare and social division, social disorder and economic disadvantage but it is clear that such programmes do tap into anxieties and arguments about what constitutes effective and legitimate social provision and what effectively creates social stability and inclusion in worlds which are lived in globally and locally. The popularity of *The Wire* may also be seen to reflect the proximity (and sometimes strange relationships) between the crime control and social welfare worlds (Cochrane & Talbot, 2008). For example, in the world of *The Wire*, it is police officers who sometimes offer welfare care, attempt radical drugs policies and where drug dealing systems are more effectively dealt with by a Robin Hood-esque gangster figure. But, these fictional twists aside, expressions of concern as to the well-being and stability of a society, it is the levels of social deviancy and criminality that present particular cornerstones of welfare imaginings and pre-occupations as we shall see in the next section.

Britain as a 'broken society': old wine in new bottles?

First popularised by Iain Duncan Smith and the Conservatives' Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) and regularly deployed by David Cameron, the sound bite label 'Broken Britain' and the broader notion of a 'broken society' has succeeded in entering wider and popular discourses about the social and moral state of the contemporary UK (Mooney, 2009). As with earlier anti-welfare narratives - such as Charles Murray's identification of a welfare-created and a welfare-dependent 'underclass' - part of the potency and pervasiveness of the broken society idea is that it is a very flexible notion, able to be deployed as an explanation of a range of social problems and popular social ills. It also speaks to the anxieties and fears highlighted above. In the hands of the Conservative Party, however, there is a clear argument that the broken society has its roots in 'broken families'.

Teenage pregnancies and increasing numbers of one-parent households caught, of course, in a 'dependency culture', feature prominently in this account. The institution of the family and approaches to families become a key site for political and policy argument and a target for policy formation. For example, while, for the CSJ, there are five poverty 'drivers': family breakdown, welfare dependency, educational failure, addiction to drugs and alcohol and serious personal debt, as is clear from the CSJ's report *Every Family Matters* (2009), marriage and a stable two-parent family life are key to mending Broken Britain and thereby reducing levels of poverty.

The idea that family life in Britain is increasingly dysfunctional provides the ground for a renewed familialism, with the Conservatives promising to bring back some recognition of marriage to the UK tax system if they win the 2010 general election. However, such familialism - that is, the idea that individual and public well-being are enabled through support for heterosexual nuclear families - are far from being a stock-in-trade of the Conservatives alone. New Labour has long made a distinction between 'hard working families' and others which are clearly not seen as such. More recently, Prime Minister Gordon Brown, in his 2009 Labour Party Conference speech and thereafter, spoke of 'problem', 'chaotic' and 'dysfunctional' families, 50,000 of which are seemingly a primary source of anti-social and other assorted deviant behaviours across the UK. But such familialism is finding renewed echoes elsewhere within political and policy-making networks. For example, in late 2009, political think tank Demos announced its latest project, 'Building Character':

Demos is building the case for 'character' as the key to life chances. Rather than seeing character capabilities - like empathy, application, and self-regulation - as 'soft skills' to boost

young people's chances in the work place or build pro-social behaviour in our communities, we should see them as key, foundational capacities which underpin children's future development in every area. ... We find that a combination of warmth, responsiveness, and consistent discipline leads to the development of strong character capabilities in children and that these qualities are best measured through proximal, micro-level interactions between parent and child in the home. Children essentially learn empathy, self-regulation, and application through interaction with trusted, loving adults. We also find that while traditional disadvantage – poverty, family structure, and educational background – still impinges on parents' ability to parent well, these effects are mediated and knocked out when parents possess high levels of competence, confidence, and self-belief: parenting is as much about parents' perception of their own ability as it is about their different backgrounds, dis/advantages, and particular circumstances. (Demos, 2009: http://www.demos.co.uk/projects/buildin_gcharactertwo.)

At the subsequent launch of the Demos Commission on Character in January 2010, Labour MP and ever eager welfare reformer Frank Field commented:

The major reason why Britain is rougher and more uncivilised than it was in the early post-war period has been the collapse of the politics of character. These politics dominated the debate from the mid-Victorian period up until the middle of the last century. ... The politics of character were hugely successful. England was transformed from a rough, uncouth and often cruel nation, into the modern age where citizens treated other people as they wished to be treated themselves. ... Look at Geoffrey Gorer's classic work 'Explaining English

Character' that was published in 1955. I agree with his analysis. It is totally wrong to claim that we were always a civilised nation. Far from it. But we did become a nation transformed. ... How? Gorer sets out to explain how this dramatic transformation took place. There are many subtleties to his argument. But he stressed one influence above all others.

England fell in love with becoming a nation of good parents. Child rearing practices were transformed. ... English parents, in increasing numbers, learned the art of how to live together as a family. By this route we also learned those qualities necessary to negotiate successfully a life in the wider community. Awarding respect to others became intimately bound up with gaining our own self respect. ... There can be no serious discussion about character separate from the role of families. Families are the crucible within which – for good or ill – character is forged. (Frank Field, January 11, 2010: available at: [http://www.politics.co.uk/mps/press-releases/party-politics/labour/demos-of-launch-of-its-commission-on-character-\\$1352720.htm](http://www.politics.co.uk/mps/press-releases/party-politics/labour/demos-of-launch-of-its-commission-on-character-$1352720.htm).)

While the political positions and the terminology differ around 'broken societies' and 'problem populations', what is broadly shared here is an emphasis on individual and family responsibility but, importantly, there is talk too of a need to encourage a revival of community 'spirit', civic interaction and mutuality. The deliberations and arguments about the reformations of welfare are not about the ending of welfare or no welfare. Nor are they completely about individualisation. There is a concern with social cohesion and stability.

This means that welfare reformation is likely to continue to look to a set of principles and policy approaches in which welfare is highly conditional and aims for

social inclusion (primarily through various work activation schemes) and not social equality. Welfare policy formations and interventions are likely to continue to work around an agenda that is to enable those on the margins of societies to maximise their resources for self-reliance and care. They will intend to provide opportunities for improvement - rather than solutions - and, the efficacy of these initiatives will rely largely on punitivity as these two headlines illustrate: ‘Get treatment or lose benefits, drug users told’ (*The Guardian*, February 27, 2008) and ‘‘Idle’ jobless could be denied council home’ (*The Telegraph*, February 2, 2008).

It is unlikely that there will be a return to a reliance on the centre to provide welfare in the UK. Welfare delivery providers will almost inevitably continue to work through decentralised systems and multi- and inter-agency approaches and public-private partnerships. In other words, the neo-liberalism of anti/state-based welfare remains. However, in the welfare reforming languages of both New Labour and the Conservatives, there is evidence of a collectivist sympathy in the shape of the calls made to (and for) more community-ness, the potential of the role of social capital and the necessity of civic citizenship. As we have argued elsewhere, the demands being made on the concept of community are many and wide and are likely to continue, as community becomes the modality through which social welfare provision and crime control strategies are to be conceived, designed and delivered (Mooney & Neal, 2009). While we have noted the strange paradox of identifying ‘problem populations’ through a notion of community - recall, for example, David Cameron’s condemnation of the whole estate in which Karen Mathews lived - we agree with Graham Day (2006, p.233) that “there is no sign that the term community is going to go away either from the discourse of ‘ordinary’ people or from the rhetoric of

those who seek to govern and manage them”.

If individualism, self-help and privatised welfare systems, family and community are to remain at the heart of welfare reformation agendas and flourish as the conceptual architecture for social security (in its broadest sense), we would like to finish with what the quote from Day highlights - the ways in which ordinary people imagine and work with notions of community, welfare, senses of entitlement, social care and mutuality.

Conclusion: welfare resistances in welfare reformation

We have argued that the directions of welfare provision in the future UK are likely to remain focused on social welfare defined by and delivered through a stable of regulative concepts such as individualism, responsibility and social order. We have also suggested that the convergent relationship that has emerged, in the UK and beyond, between social welfare and crime control worlds and which has resulted in hybrid welfare-crime policy-making and enabling-penalising welfare discourses is here to stay. The broken society discourse of welfare (in any of its guises) offers no sign of any alternative approaches to welfare reformation coming from Cameron’s Conservative Party. In the UK and globally, existing high levels of social fear, division and corresponding forms of social retreat into defensible, surveilled territory such as gated residencies are likely to lead to an intensification of the search for security and greater social polarisation.

However, we have noted that we are not witnessing the terminal decline and end of welfare but, rather, complex and uncertain processes of shift and reformation. In these processes, an emphasis is being given to civic interaction, neighbourliness, and community. In other words, this is not a neo-liberalist, Thatcherite rejection of a

thing called ‘society’ but an attempt to call on the notion of society through very particular and managed modes of collective civic responsibility. Minton (2009) proposes, in her book *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First Century City*, that disrupting the drift into social retreat and privatisation and challenging the ascendancy of cultures of control could be most effectively realised by less regulation and less control and the reintroduction of public space, and an emphasis on sociality and convivial interaction. Arguing against the privatisation of public spaces in American and some UK cities and towns under auspices of increasing safety and security Minton asks us to look elsewhere:

Imagine trying to privatize a piazza. So many genuinely public places in towns and cities all over southern and northern Europe, in Italy, Spain, Greece, France, Holland, Germany and Scandinavia are thriving. Families and groups of people stroll arm and arm taking the passeggiata, children run around and old people sit together on benches. These places do not follow the American Clean and Safe agenda of the shopping mall, but they are not dirty and dangerous as a result. Far from it, they are happy and healthier’ (2009, p.196)

Minton’s arguments for more public-ness and more public spaces through which to re/create this as a way of building trust and civic interaction and care are not unique – nor straightforwardly unproblematic. The deep and enduring structural divisions that create and sustain patterns of social inequalities may require more than reinvigorated senses and spaces of public-ness. Nevertheless, the need to find ways to counter and challenge spatial and social polarisation and segregations is clearly important and likely, we would contend, to be crucial for imagining different, less punitive and less regulatory forms of welfare provision.

These are agency-based processes that are taking place anyway. Social welfare workers continue to struggle for better service provision and more investment, or fight to defend provision which is under attack, at times alongside a range of social welfare movements (Mooney & Law, 2007; Annetts *et al.*, 2009). Social welfare across the UK is a key arena around which the market driven and punitive political projects of recent times come to be contested. Further, people are not passive subjects and recipients of welfare policy. Personal lives and stories and events interact in more iterative and non-linear ways than are sometimes imagined. In the often turbulent and contested worlds of policy-making and politics welfare policy reformations are not straightforwardly top-down nor hermetically sealed from political pressures and strains. The ordinary lives and everyday acts of social citizenship do impact on the ways in which welfare is experienced and lived. Whether these are unremarkable, everyday micro acts of kindness, social care and resourcefulness (that Power & Willmot, 2007, have found in their research in very different housing estates in Leeds and East London) or more organised community- or grassroots-based activism and lobbying for local social resources and/or services (Taylor, 2003) or more explicit forms of political organisation and campaigning on a range of environmental, social justice, social harm concerns and issues or, even more dramatically, outbreaks of social unrest (Benyon, 1987), all of them contribute to unpredictable and unfixed welfare worlds and thereby more open welfare futures.

References

- Annetts, J., Law, A., McNeish, W. & Mooney, G. (2009) *Understanding Social Welfare Movements*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Benyon, J. (1987) *The Roots of Urban Unrest*, Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Cameron, D. (2008) 'There are five million people in Britain on benefits: how do we stop them turning into Karen Matthews', *Daily Mail*, December 8.
- Centre for Social Justice (2009) *Every Family Matters*, London: CSJ, available at: <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/default.asp?pageRef=266>.
- Clarke, J. (2008) 'Looking for Social Justice: Welfare States and Beyond' in Newman, J. & Yeates, N. (eds.) *Social Justice: Welfare, Crime and Society*, Maidenhead: Open University Press, pp. 29-62.
- Cochrane, A. & Talbot, D. (eds.) (2008) *Security: Welfare, Crime and Society*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Day, G. (2006) *Community and Everyday Life*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Ferguson, I. & Lavalette, M. (eds.) (2009) *Social Work After Baby P: Issues, Debates and Alternative Perspectives*, Liverpool: Liverpool Hope University.
- Hughes, G. (2009) 'Community Safety and the Governance of Problem Populations' in Mooney, G. & Neal, S. (eds.) *Community: Welfare, Crime and Society*, Maidenhead: Open University Press, pp. 99-134.
- McLaughlin, E. & Neal, S. (2004) 'Misrepresenting the multicultural nation: the policy process, news media coverage and the Parekh Report', *Policy Studies*, **25**(3), pp.155-73.
- Minton, A. (2008) *Why are Fear and Distrust Spiralling in Twenty-First Century Britain?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Minton, A. (2009) *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First Century City*, London: Penguin.
- Mooney, G. (2009) 'The 'Broken Society' election: class hatred and the politics of poverty and place in Glasgow East', *Social Policy and Society*, **8**(4), pp.1-14.
- Mooney, G. & Law, A. (eds.) (2007) *New Labour/Hard Labour?*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Mooney, G. & Neal, S. (eds.) (2009) *Community: Welfare, Crime and Society*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Neal, S. (2003) 'Scarman to Macpherson: how newspapers respond to race centred policy documents', *Journal of Social Policy*, **32**(1), pp.55-74.
- Power, A. & Willmot, H. (2007) *Social Capital within the Neighbourhood Study*, London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion.
- Taylor, M. (2003) *Public Policy in the Community*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Watt, N. & Oliver, M. (2009) 'Broken Britain' is like The Wire, say Tories', *The Guardian*, August 25.
- Wilkinson, R. & Pickett, K. (2009) *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, London: Allen Lane.
- Young, J. (1999) *The Exclusive Society*, London: Sage.
- Young, J. (2007) *The Vertigo of Late Modernity*, London: Sage.

Notes on Contributors

Gerry Mooney and Sarah Neal are Senior Lecturers in Social Policy, Department of Social Policy and Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, The Open University.

Gerry Mooney has written widely on social policy, Scottish devolution and urban studies. Among other publications he is co-author with Jason Annetts, Alex Law and Wallace McNeish of *Understanding Social Welfare Movements* (Policy Press, 2009); co-editor with Gill Scott of *Exploring Social Policy in the 'New' Scotland* (Policy Press, 2005); co-editor with Alex Law of *New Labour/Hard Labour?* (Policy Press, 2007); co-editor with Hazel Croall and Mary Munro of *Criminal Justice in Scotland* (Willan, 2010) and co-editor with Gill Scott of *Social Justice and Social Welfare in Contemporary Scotland* (Policy Press forthcoming 2011).

Sarah Neal's publications include *Race, Multiculture and Social Policy* with John Solomos and Alice Bloch (Palgrave, forthcoming); *Rural Identities: Ethnicity and Community in the Contemporary English Countryside* (Ashgate, 2009); *Community: Welfare, Crime and Society* edited with Gerry Mooney (McGraw Hill, 2009) and *The New Countryside? Ethnicity, Nation and Exclusion in the UK* edited with Julian Agyeman (Policy Press, 2006). She has published widely in a range of peer reviewed journals, most recently 'Researching Up? Interviews, Emotionality and Policy Making Elites', *Journal of Social Policy*, 2009, **38**(4).

Address for Correspondence

Gerry Mooney
Faculty of Social Sciences
The Open University in Scotland
10 Drumsheugh Gardens
Edinburgh
EH3 7QJ

Email G.C.Mooney@open.ac.uk

“Something we don’t normally do”: a qualitative study of the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award in the secure estate

Sarah Dubberley and Odette Parry

The Social Inclusion Research Unit (SIRU), Glyndŵr University, Wrexham

Abstract

The paper is based on findings from a qualitative study of the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award (DofE, 2008a) in the secure estate, drawing on focus groups with young people in young offender institutions in England and Wales (pre- and post-implementation of the DofE programme) and qualitative interviews with staff delivering the Award within the establishments. In exploring participant perceptions of the DofE, the paper focuses on the way in which programme participation provided young people with new experiences, arguing that it offers them some insight into alternative ways of existence, other than crime. At the same time, the programme was perceived by young people as instrumental to accessing this ‘existence’ and hence a possible route to realise their ambitions. Young people were acutely aware of having discredited identities as a function of their offending and the Award, by dint of attributes it was perceived to confer upon recipients, was understood as a way of repairing this damage and easing entry into, and acceptance by, mainstream society. Moreover, the skills and experiences imparted by the DofE were perceived as appropriate and useful for acquisition of social skills necessary to make this transition. The authors conclude that the DofE programme may usefully form part of a broader offending prevention programme because, based on the findings of this study of young people in custody, it may appeal to disadvantaged young people, disillusioned by mainstream education, who may be on the cusp of offending.

Keywords: The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, young offenders, secure estate and imprisonment

Background

Public concern in the UK about the anti-social behaviour of young people continues to increase (Liddle, 1998; Muncie, 2001; Margo, 2008). By April 2008, the number of young people in the secure estate had risen to over 3,000, of whom 85% were in Young Offender Institutions, and the remaining 15% in secure facilities (Youth Justice Board, 2008a). Dealing with these young people is challenging, particularly where the repertoire of offending is serious, variable, disorganised and acquisitive, and where custody followed by re-offending has become an entrenched pattern.

Systematic reviews of interventions tackling offending indicate that they have tended to rely on cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), be informed by North American approaches and comprise self-contained correctional interventions which are more amenable to assessment than wider multi-agency community-based or national level approaches (see Maruna & Liddle, 2007). The evidence of their successes is variable (Home Office, 2005). Whereas CBT programmes appear to do well in North American evaluations, in the UK the evidence regarding their effectiveness has been described as limited (Cann *et al.*, 2003; Falshaw *et al.*, 2003; Harper and Chitty, 2005; Hollin, 2008). Hence, a systematic review of the evidence indicated no

difference in reoffending rates of adults or young offenders in England and Wales who underwent Accredited Enhanced Thinking Skills (ETS) and Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) programmes, compared to individually matched comparison groups (Cann *et al.*, 2003). However, it is noted that, in both international and national research, those who complete intervention programmes do better than non-starters, non-completers and comparison groups, and that those who start and fail to complete do much worse than the other groups (see for example: Feilzer *et al.*, 2002; Cann *et al.*, 2003; Van Voorhis *et al.*, 2004). Notwithstanding this, there is some evidence that treatment is likely to have a short-lived impact on reconviction (Farrington *et al.*, 2002).

More recent research in the UK context suggests that a move away from the American model to a holistic, multi-faceted approach (involving, for example, job training and education) may prove more effective (Francis *et al.*, 2008). The literature indicates that repeat offenders typically face a variety of social problems, including addiction, mental health problems, lack of skills and poor employment records (Kemshall, 2008). Thus, interventions addressing these multiple needs are arguably most likely to be effective in overcoming the multiple disadvantages in young offenders' lives and assist them in desisting from lives of criminality. Accordingly, concepts of risk, which gained currency in terms of tackling youth offending have moved from narrow 'socially exclusive' models to inform more holistic, or inclusive, approaches (Case, 2007; Haines & Case, 2008; O'Mahony, 2009). In a review of offender rehabilitation, Andrews *et al.* (1990) argued that, overall, the inclusive type of initiatives appeared more successful. While their review was criticized for excluding what the authors deemed to be inappropriate studies (Logan & Gaes, 1993), the influential 'Maryland Report', *Preventing Crime: What Works,*

What Doesn't, concluded that the rehabilitation of offenders was most effective when interventions used multiple treatment components and focused on developing social, academic and employment skills, as well as using behavioural (including cognitive-behavioural) methods (Sherman *et al.*, 1998).

Indeed, evidence from a number of studies attests to the importance of approaches focusing on educational ability and skill development. In one study, for example, ex-prisoners with poor educational attainment, and those who had not taken part in education or training while in prison, were three times more likely to be reconvicted than those who had participated (Clark, 2001). Indeed, participation in basic skills has been linked in Canadian research to a 12% reduction in re-offending (Porporino & Robinson, 1992). Moreover, educational ability and oral skills have been highlighted as key to understanding 'what works' (Hayward *et al.*, 2004). The benefits associated with participation in initiatives aimed at rehabilitation, whilst in custody, include increased skills, self-confidence, motivation, work ethic and a sense of responsibility (Hunter & Boyce, 2009).

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIP), which target young at-risk people in the community, claim to have contributed to a 10% reduction in young people becoming involved with crime between 2007/8 and 2005/6 in England and Wales (YJB, 2008b). More recently, however, the Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) has challenged the YJB, local authorities and their partner agencies to engage more determinedly not only with a preventive agenda, but also with 'robust management' of offenders (HM Government, 2008). While the YCAP includes a raft of enhanced prevention and support measures to be delivered via new partnerships with Children's Services, to reduce further the overall incidence of youth

crime, it is recognised that those already in custody are likely to be amongst the hardest to reform (HM Government, 2008, p.4).

While the YJB plays a key role in implementing the government’s Action Plan, it relies upon a range of partners to deliver the required changes. The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award (DofE) is a UK-wide voluntary provider operating at the interface of the secure estate and the community. The DofE, established in 1956, was designed for all young people aged between 14 and 25. Participation is voluntary and its key features include: non-competitiveness; encouragement of self-discipline, self-reliance and a sense of responsibility to others; teamwork; enterprise and perseverance. Achievement of a Bronze, Silver or Gold DofE requires the completion of four or five elements depending upon the programme level. These are Volunteering, Physical, Skills, Expedition and Residential (Gold level only). The organisation and delivery of the DofE relies traditionally on schools and youth organisations, which are licensed to run the programme as Operating Authorities.

In 1998, the DofE in Scotland launched a pilot programme ‘New Start’ which promoted the DofE to organisations working with young people at risk of participating in offending and/or risk-taking behaviour. The project targeted young people (aged between 14 and 25) considered at risk of offending, serving custodial and non-custodial sentences, and those released from prison. Assessment of the scheme suggested that it had increased self-esteem and confidence among participants, fostered a sense of achievement and improved aspirations (Blake Stevenson, 2001). It was also understood as successful in actively engaging and retaining disaffected and/or vulnerable young people (Bitel & Campbell, 2005). This paper draws on a recent qualitative study of the DofE in the secure estate in England and Wales, to examine participant (young offenders and those

delivering the Award) perceptions of the scheme and their anticipations of ways in which it may assist young people upon release.

Methods

The study, which was funded by the DofE, examined young offenders’ involvement with the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, and implications for their future.

The study employed a longitudinal design, whereby establishments were visited at two research phases, pre- and post-intervention (the intervention comprised the delivery of DofE components). The study used mixed methods including focus groups with a sample of young people in the secure estate engaged in the DofE and semi-structured interviews with a sample of secure estate staff delivering the Award.

The sample was seven secure estate establishments in England and Wales delivering the DofE representing a range of different types of secure estate establishment including: Secure Children’s Homes, Secure Training Centres and Young Offender Institutions. Establishments were also sampled to represent geographical areas and length of experience in running the programme. Of the original eight establishments approached, three declined to participate and a further three were recruited to replace them. Of these three, access to two was successfully negotiated but access negotiations with the third (although agreement in principle was achieved) were not successful. Of the seven recruited, at one establishment access to young people - originally agreed - was not permitted, although the researchers were granted permission to interview staff who delivered the programme. Finally, while the research team approached three young women’s establishments, all declined to participate in the study.

The research team carried out focus groups with young people (n=60), aged between 14 and 21 years, in six establishments, on two occasions, with approximately a six months interval between visits. Focus groups typically involved the participation of 8-12 young people, a member of prison staff, one member of the research team and a DofE worker. Focus group discussion at phase one aimed to elicit young people's perceptions of the DofE prior to (or in the early stages of) delivery of DofE activities. At phase two, discussion focused on young people's experiences of the DofE activities in which they had participated during the preceding six months. Given the exigencies of prison life, it was not possible to maintain consistency in participants across the two phases in some instances. Sixty four young people (at a total of six secure estate establishments) took part in focus groups at phase one of the study and 46 at follow up.

At phase one, semi-structured interviews (n=15) were carried out with a sample of staff administering DofE at all seven participating institutions. These interviews focussed on staff perceptions of the programme, programme participants (including selection to the programme), programme structure, content and delivery, facilitators and barriers to successful implementation, perceived support and transition to the community. All staff interviews were digitally audio-recorded with respondent permission.

Audio-recordings were fully transcribed. Qualitative data (from focus groups, in-depth interviews and questionnaire responses) were analysed using a constant comparative approach. Transcripts were read by research team members and an analysis framework developed, based on emergent themes. Validity of themes was cross checked with the entire qualitative data set, and coder validity checks were made across the research team. In the report, themes are evidenced using data extracts (codes for which are provided below). All

names of people/places in the data extracts have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Ethical approval for the study was granted by Glyndŵr University Research Ethics Committee (GREC). The study adhered to good ethical research practice (as set out by the British Sociological Association) and observed the principles of informed voluntary consent, anonymity and confidentiality. Where young people were aged under 16 years, consent was sought from institution carers as well as from (all) the young people themselves.

Focus Group Coding: For individual quotations, the first digit indicates institution, YP indicates Young Person, the final digit indicates research phase (baseline or follow-up). For strings of group talk the first digit indicates institution, FG indicates focus group and the final digit indicates research phase.

Staff Interview Codes: First digit indicates institution, S indicates staff and final digit indicates individual staff identifier.

Findings

Institution staff delivering the DofE in the secure estate described young offenders in their care as having multiple problems associated variously with disadvantaged backgrounds, abusive relationships, drugs and illiteracy:

Whatever you think kids can do they've probably done ... a lot of the children are very damaged emotionally, physically, there's been no structure in their life, there's been no rules, no guidelines. By the time you get them here they've usually served a sentence and, if they're under a care order, they're very damaged. You know they've gone through the mill, that's why they're in here, this is usually a last resort. (4S1)

The majority of these young people had been poor performers at school and had few or no educational qualifications. Programmes such as the DofE were far removed from the prior (to imprisonment) experiences and expectations of these young people, who said they had either “never heard of it” (2YP1) or (if they had heard of it) perceived the DofE as being for other more “bookish” or “geekish” young people (4YP1).

It is unsurprising, therefore, that it was the DofE’s focus on practical activities and skills with which young people in the secure estate could most readily engage. Hence, they talked about liking “the practical side” (4YP2) of the programme, describing it as “the best bit of education in this gaol” (2YP). Likewise, staff emphasised the practical focus of the programme, highlighting the importance of “hands on”, and “goal orientated” learning:

We have to focus on hands on because ... they’ve been excluded from school and they don’t work well in the school environment. So I think the awards we’re doing have to focus on the more practical sides: you know your cooking, your wall building, your plastering, your drawings, your computer work. (3S1)

As well as describing a range of skills (including carpentry, plastering and cookery) offered through the DofE programme, young people talked about how the DofE involved them in a range of activities and responsibilities relating to prison life. This might be “cleaning on the wing” (2YP2), “keeping the gym clean” (2YP2), being “a wing rep” (5YP2) and “doing stuff in the garden” (2YP2). It also, in some cases, involved peer support such as:

... helping people to read, peer support and helping people who haven’t been in to prison before. They are more vulnerable, they get upset when it is their

first time. I used to chat with them, explain everything and give them the opportunity to familiarise yourself with someone. If they have a problem they can come and speak to us, if they feel they can’t speak to a member of staff. (CPY2)

The DofE also involved young people with groups from outside the prison, often with whom they had had little prior experience:

... the disabled people come in every Thursday morning and we play games with them, play football, just have fun with them. It is alright, it was a good laugh. They are alright. (1YP2)

However, for most young people, the expedition was the most important component of the DofE, and was an event anticipated with great excitement. In the secure estate a major issue for the implementation of the DofE is risk management so, for example, only those eligible for ‘Release on Temporary Licence’ (ROTL) are considered as eligible for the expedition. Because of this, most institutions visited provided the expedition experience, albeit inside the prison grounds.

The internal expedition which simulates the ‘real’ expedition as far as possible, involves a series of outdoor tasks and activities, including: setting up camp, cooking on the camp fire and sleeping overnight in tents. Young people were very enthusiastic about ‘internal expedition’, irrespective of whether or not they were deemed eligible for ROTL. Focus group participants described rigorous preparation for the internal expedition, setting themselves “targets” including “map reading” (5YP2) “orienteeing” (2YP2) and camp skills, such as erecting tents and “using the Trangia (camp stove)” (CPY2).

We had practised before we went out and practised everything in the pre-training. It all went alright; it was good on the day. (2YP2)

An important aspect was “a lot more team building”: particularly helping the other less able “lads to read maps” (CPY2), for example. Those who had already experienced an internal expedition talked about giving:

... advice to the others because I knew it a bit better because I'd done the other one like. I knew what was happening, what would happen through the day. (2YP2)

On internal expeditions, experienced participants (some of whom had previously been on external expedition) “try and improve things, make more things to make it more realistic” (1YP2). The types of simulated activities on internal ‘expeditions’ comprised “crossing a river, using planks of wood”, traversing “a mine-field blindfolded, where we could have got blown up” and simulated “rowing 1500 meters in set times” (1YP2). At one institution, on the internal expedition young people were given:

Co-ordinates and we had to find things around the field ... search techniques, what was it called again? ... you know the police when they are searching for clues and things, we had to find 10 pence piece. It was good. (1FG2)

Despite the internal expedition being a practice or simulation event, taking place within the prison walls, it was highly-valued as an ‘extraordinary experience’ by participants, some of whom had received lengthy sentences:

Compared to everyday it is something different. It takes you away from this prison environment. Even though we are in prison, you are staying outside. I remember the first time I got to go out, it was a cold night but I stayed awake all night just looking up at the stars. (CPY2)

The internal exercise is perceived as good preparation for the expedition ‘proper’.

Following the internal expedition, participants could “imagine doing it proper” and setting up camp “with no help from (staff member)” (1YP2). Despite rigorous preparation, young people reported being nervous and excited about the event, “it is something to look forward to. I was looking forward to the expedition; I couldn’t sleep before the night of the expedition” (1YP2).

Those who had been on an expedition outside the institution valued the experience highly, and many recalled having new experiences such as “I’d never seen a waterfall before, I’d never seen a sheep” (2FG2). Some young people appeared greatly affected by the expedition and claimed to feel altered as a result:

When you do the expedition you learn to respect the nature around you. If you are in the city you eat a pack of crisps and throw it on the floor, but we carried it around with us. I know it sounds mad, but it is like a lesson in itself. (2YP2)

The importance attached to the experience of camping out (whether inside the grounds or outside) was not underestimated by the staff:

It’s something that the lads look forward to, you can appreciate some of these lads have never ever slept outside for the last however many years they’ve been inside, they have come from secure homes to go through the system, so for them to have to, experience camping out for even for one night is a big thing for them. (1S1)

Staff talked about “building up our relationship with the kids” (PS2) through the DofE. Development of trust between those delivering and receiving the programme, which was highlighted by many staff and young people across establishments, was perceived by staff as indicative of the development of young people’s maturity and responsibility:

You see a change in people. I, we always say we’ve seen them grow up, might sound, might sound like trivial to yourself, but, they grow from being a child into an adult ... and they accept what they’ve done, what they’ve achieved and where it can take them. And it might not be that it’s a qualification as in a certificate, but the underlying skills that they’ve learned, communication, being learned how to work as a team, all those kinds of things, the underlying things, they may have got more out of that than the actual award itself ... what we see, is they’ve gone from being Mr Angry, to someone that will listen to other people’s points of view. (1S1)

Staff described how, through the programme, young people were learning and “practising new social skills” (PS2). In this respect, they highlighted the importance of learning to think about other people and “working together as a team” (2S1):

They’ve never actually thought of anybody else before apart from themselves. Once they start thinking as a team, and working together as a team, some of them are finding it strange, or different, but they’re all putting a lot of effort into it. (5S1)

It was not simply the here and now which made the DofE appealing to young people in the secure estate. Many were focused on the future, and much discussion in the first phase of focus groups centred on how the young people might be perceived by others:

Once they find out you’ve been in prison you get pigeon holed. [They’ll think] ‘what’s going to stop him doing again what he did before’? They might think, ‘he might do it to me’. (3YP1)

At phase two of the study, it was clear that the DofE was perceived by some young people as a way of repairing or mending a discredited identity. Here, it was described

as an opportunity: “a chance to prove yourself” (2YP), and young people talked about feeling “good to achieve something positive” (WP2). For these young people, a sense of achievement was very poignant:

I think it is different, some of us come from backgrounds where it is not available to us and we have a chance to do something we don’t normally do and we can prove that we can do it, ’cause we have done it. (2YP2)

Young people described their experiences of DofE as giving them “more confidence” (1YP2), making them feel “more of a leader” (1YP2) and giving “a sense of achievement in here” (1YP2). In the focus group extract below, a young person talks about pride in his achievements:

When I got my [DofE section] signed off, I was really proud of myself. When I started it over nine months ago, I didn’t think I’d get here. I got it and it made me more proud that I got it. (2FG2)

Hence, one reason for sticking with the programme was that it was for “the benefits we see later on in life” (3YP) and “it might give me a chance when I’m released” (1YP2). Most importantly, it was valued as something to have:

... under your belt, especially when you have been in prison when it is difficult to get a job anyway. (2YP2)

Discussion

This paper is based on a qualitative study in selected secure estate establishments in England and Wales. Moreover, the DofE programme ran alongside regular education and training provision in these establishments. The authors make no claim, therefore, that the young people’s experiences described in this paper are either generalisable to all young offenders in the secure estate or a function solely of

their participation in the programme. Neither can the study provide any evidence of what actually works regarding rehabilitation. Notwithstanding this, there was a high level of agreement between the accounts of the DofE programme provided by young people and staff delivering the scheme. In addition, the findings support strands of the literature which identify key issues for the successful rehabilitation of young offenders.

The backgrounds and experiences of young offenders in this study were far removed from those of young people most typically associated with DofE participation. They were acknowledged by staff as being among the most disadvantaged and damaged of young people in society. The young people perceived themselves as worlds apart from 'typical' DofE participants, and prior to incarceration, if indeed they were in any way familiar with the DofE, had attached neither benefit nor relevance to the programme. This point is important because it signals how other young people who, for example, succeeded in education and avoided offending, occupied a social context so far removed from the experiences and social world of respondents in this study that access to, and acceptance by, that world had hitherto been perceived as unattainable.

Research suggests that repeat offenders typically face a variety of social problems (addiction, mental health problems, lack of skills, poor employment records, etc.). Therefore, interventions that are able to address these multiple needs will arguably be the most likely to overcome the multiple disadvantages in their lives and assist with desistance from criminality and addiction (see McGuire, 2002). Graham and Bowling (1995) argue that a range of factors, including: anti-social attitudes; poor self control, self management and problem solving skills; poor victim awareness; poor forward planning skills; pro-criminal role models and associates; involvement in substance abuse and addictions; poor school

attendance and non-employment; problematic inter-personal relationships; personal distress and mental health issues; and homelessness are associated with the onset of offending. Moreover, they claim that desistance to offending is associated with factors which are largely the obverse of those that relate to the onset of offending. These include: ceasing substance use; getting a stable education, employment and personal relationships; developing victim awareness and thinking skills; and adopting pro-social role models and associates.

The DofE provided young people in the secure estate with a range of skills and new experiences. The majority of young people participating in the study had no formal educational qualifications, and many had problems with literacy. While most were wary of formal education and traditional teaching and learning approaches, they responded positively to the hands on learning style as well as the physical activities, both of which characterise the DofE programme. Secure estate staff delivering the DofE likewise stressed the importance of using practical and applied methods of delivery, describing the programme as a 'back door' route for the acquisition of basic educational skills. This finding supports earlier research which suggested that offenders respond best to active and participatory programmes and highlighted the importance of extra-curricular activities such as sport and outdoor activities (McGuire & Priestley, 1995). In our study, the extra-curricular activities of sport and outdoor pursuits (the climax of which was the internal/external expedition) were an important source of motivation for young people to engage in and stay with the programme. The balance of more mainstream and extra-curricular activities is important as previous research indicates an association between the provision of long-term, extra-curricular, structured, physical activities and reduced rates of early dropout and criminal arrest

among high-risk young people (Mahoney, 2000; Margo *et al.*, 2006).

The findings from the study suggest that the involvement of young disadvantaged people in the DofE provides them with new experiences; a taste of social worlds quite alien to the ones that they currently or had previously occupied. In so doing, it rendered for these young people, the previously perceived inaccessible, accessible to them. Because of this, inside the secure estate, the DofE assumed a different purpose and meaning for participants. Not only was it perceived by these young people as offering an alternative future, it was also perceived by them as instrumental to achievement of that goal. This was because of what the certificate conveyed about or conferred upon the recipient. Inclusion of the Award on their CV was perceived by young people as conveying a range of positive attributes, including achievement, trustworthiness, effort and leadership. Tackling prejudice and stigma, creating opportunities and providing the motivation to change (and sustain that change) are key issues for the re-integration of young people who have offended (see Maruna & Immarigeon, 2004). Most of the young people in the study were acutely aware of having a ‘spoiled’ or ‘discredited’ identity, as a function of their criminal records. Related to this, they expressed fears about how stigma associated with their criminal past would affect their chances upon release, particularly in regard to employment opportunities. Young people were cognisant of the barriers they faced in ‘making good’ or reinventing themselves as responsible citizens. The DofE was therefore invested by young people with value in so much as it might mend or repair damaged identities and facilitate re-entry into and acceptance by mainstream society.

It was not only the certificate, and what it might portray about the recipient, that was important for young people in the study. Achieving the Award meant that

participants acquired the skills and competencies that most other young people, and indeed most of us, take for granted. Indeed, as has been noted in the research literature, as offenders desist so they need new skills and capacities appropriate to new life-styles; they need the human and social skills that many of us take for granted (Farrall, 2002, 2004). The DofE provided a way in which these skills might be acquired through participation in different activities, having new experiences, developing trust, negotiating and sustaining relationships with peers and significant others in the secure estate. Hence, the findings of our study suggest that participation in DofE activities can promote both the acquisition of new applied skills, new and enhanced social competences, trust - both earned and given - and increased self-reliance.

The literature suggests that young offenders who intend to desist from crime often devise plans and are optimistic they can make it work (Maruna, 2000). Moreover, those who are successful in desisting from crime are usually effectively motivated by staff towards appropriate goals, behaviours and attitudes (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Certainly, the findings from our study suggest that the DofE actively promotes and reinforces positive thinking by young offenders in their pursuit of achievements. The DofE reinforces positive attitudes through the provision of a programme which they can access in preparation for and following release, when they can be reintegrated back into school or work. Those leaving custody need accommodation, education and jobs (Lewis *et al.*, 2003), and DofE surveys (DofE, 2008b; 2008c, p.5) suggest that they are likely to be helped in getting and sustaining these through the sorts of skills and attitudes that they acquire from involvement in DofE activities.

Finally, the successful engagement of young people in the secure estate with the DofE, in this study, suggests that participation in

the programme may be a useful experience for disadvantaged young people outwith the secure estate, and particularly those disillusioned by mainstream education and/or on the cusp of offending. The new experiences it can offer these young people along with the appropriate and appealing style of practical, and hands on, delivery suggest that the DofE may have an important role in the prevention of offending behaviour.

Acknowledgments

This study on which this paper is based would not have been possible without the support of the Youth Justice Board who acted as gatekeeper to the research, participating institutions in the secure estate, their staff delivering the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE), and young people in the secure estate doing the DofE. To these organisations and individuals we are very grateful. We also acknowledge gratefully the support of Sarah Hadley, Youth Justice Project Worker for the DofE, who negotiated and eased our access into secure estate institutions.

References

- Andrews, D., Zinger, I., Hoge, R., Bonta, J., Gendreau, P. & Cullen, F. (1990) 'Does correctional treatment work? A clinically relevant and psychologically informed meta-analysis', *Criminology* 28(3), pp.369-404.
- Bitel, M. & Campbell, A. (2005) *Passport to Possibilities: The Evaluation of the DofE's Award New Start Project*, the DofE and Partners in Evaluation Scotland, accessed March 2008 at www.theaward.org/downloads/sco/Passport_to_Possibilities_Full_Report.pdf.
- Blake Stevenson (2001) *The Duke of Edinburgh's Award New Start Project*, Edinburgh: Blake Stevenson Ltd.
- Cann, J., Falshaw, L., Nugent, F. & Friendship, C. (2003) *Understanding What Works: Accredited Cognitive Skills Programmes for*

Adult Men and Young Offenders, Home Office Research Findings 226, London: Home Office.

Case, S. (2007) 'Questioning the 'evidence' of risk that underpins evidence-led Youth Justice interventions', *Youth Justice: An International Journal*, 7(2), pp.91-106.

Clark, D. (2001) *Effective Regimes Measurement Research*, London: Home Office (Prison Service internal management paper – unpublished).

Duke of Edinburgh's Award (2008a) *Fact Sheets*, accessed March 2008 at www.theaward.org/press/index.php?ids=1868&id=67.

Duke of Edinburgh's Award (2008b) *Policy Briefing - Youth Crime Action Plan*, London: DofE.

Duke of Edinburgh's Award (2008c) *Youth Crime Action Plan – Response from the Duke of Edinburgh Award*, London: DofE.

Falshaw, L., Friendship, C., Travers, R. & Nugent, F. (2003) 'Searching for what works: HM Prison Service accredited cognitive skills programme', *The British Journal of Forensic Practice*, 6(2), pp.3-13.

Farrall, S. (2002) *Rethinking What Works with Offenders*, Cullompton, Devon: Willan.

Farrall, S. (2004) 'Social Capital and Offender Re-integration: Making Probation Desistance Focused', in Maruna, S. & Immarigeon, R. (eds.), *After Crime and Punishment: Pathways to Offender Reintegration*, Cullompton, Devon: Willan, pp.57-81.

Farrington, D.P., Ditchfield, J., Howard, P. & Jolliffe, D. (2002) *Two Intensive Regimes for Young Offenders: A Follow-up Evaluation*, Home Office Research Findings 163, London: Home Office.

Feilzer, M., Appleton, C., Roberts, C. & Hoyle, C. (2002) *Cognitive Behavioural Projects in Youth Justice*, Centre for Criminological Research, University of Oxford.

- Francis, V., Liddle, M., McAteer, L., Watts, E. & Wright, S. (2008) *Reducing Offending: A Critical Review of the International Research Evidence*, Northern Ireland Office, Research and Statistics Services, No. 18, ARCS (UK).
- Graham, J. & Bowling, B. (1995) *Young People and Crime*, Home Office Research and Statistics Department, London: Home Office.
- Haines, K. & Case, S. (2008) ‘The rhetoric and reality of the ‘risk factor prevention paradigm’ approach to preventing and reducing youth offending’, *Youth Justice: An International Journal*, **8**(1), pp.5-20.
- Harper, G. & Chitty, C. (2005) *The Impact of Corrections on Re-Offending: A Review of What Works*, London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, accessed 5/8/09 at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hors291.pdf>.
- Hayward, G., Stephenson, M. & Blyth, M. (2004) ‘Exploring Effective Educational Interventions for Young People Who Offend’ in Burnett, R. & Roberts, C. (eds.), *What Works in Probation and Youth Justice*, Cullompton, Devon: Willan, pp.88-108.
- Her Majesty’s Government (2008) *Youth Crime Action Plan 2008*, London: HMG.
- Hollin, C. (2008) ‘Evaluating offending behaviour programmes’, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, **8**(1), pp.89-100.
- Home Office (2005) *The Impact of Corrections on Re-offending: A Review of ‘What Works’*, Home Office Research Study 291, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, February 2005, accessed 9/8/09 at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hors291.pdf>.
- Hunter, G. & Boyce, I. (2009) ‘Preparing for employment: prisoners’ experience of participating in a prison training programme’, *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, **48**(2), pp.117-31.
- Kemshall, H. (2008) ‘Risks, rights and justice: understanding and responding to youth risk’, *Youth Justice: An International Journal*, **8**(1), pp.2-38.
- Lewis, S., Maguire, M., Raynor, P., Vanstone, M. & Vennard, J. (2003) *The Resettlement of Short-term Prisoners: An Evaluation of Seven Pathfinder Programmes*, Research Findings 200, London: Home Office.
- Liddle, M. (1998) *Wasted Lives: Counting the Cost of Juvenile Offending*, London: National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) and The Prince’s Trust.
- Logan, C. & Gaes, G. (1993) ‘Meta-analysis and the rehabilitation of punishment’, *Justice Quarterly*, **10**(2), pp.245-63.
- Mahoney, J. (2000) ‘Participation in school extra-curricular activities as a moderator in the development of antisocial patterns’, *Child Development*, **71**(2), pp.502-16.
- Margo, J. (2008) ‘Make Me a Criminal: Preventing Youth Crime’, London: IPPR, accessed June 2008 at www.ippr.org/members/download.asp?f=%2Fecom%2Ffiles%2Fmake%5Fme%5Fa%5Fcriminal%5Fnew%2Epdf.
- Margo, J., Dixon, M., Pearce, N. & Reed, H. (2006) *Freedom’s Orphans: Raising Youth in a Changing World*, London: Institute of Public Policy Research.
- Maruna, S. (2000) *Making Good*, Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Maruna, S. & Immarigeon, R. (eds.) (2004) *After Crime and Punishment: Pathways to Offender Reintegration*, Cullompton, Devon: Willan.
- Maruna, S. & Liddle, M. (2007) *Reducing Offending: A Critical Review of the International Research Evidence*, Cambridge: ARCS Ltd.

McGuire, J. (2002) 'Motivation for What? Effective Programmes for Motivated Offenders', in McMurrin, M. (ed.), *Motivating Offenders to Change: A Guide to Enhancing Engagement in Therapy*, Chichester: Wiley, pp.157-72.

McGuire, J. & Priestley, P. (1995) 'Reviewing What Works: Past, Present and Future', in McGuire, J. (ed.), *What Works: Reducing Offending*, Chichester: Wiley, pp.3-34.

Miller, W.R. & Rollnick, S. (2002) *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change*, New York: Guildford Press.

Muncie, J. (2001) 'Prison Histories: Reform, Repression and Rehabilitation', in McLaughlin, E. & Muncie, J. (eds.), *Controlling Crime: Crime, Order and Social Control*, London: Sage, pp.157-200.

O'Mahony, P. (2009) 'The risk factors prevention paradigm and the causes of youth crime: a deceptively useful analysis?' *Youth Justice: An International Journal*, 9(2), pp.99-114.

Porporino, F.J. & Robinson, D. (1992) *Can Educating Adult Offenders Counteract Recidivism?*, Research Report, R-22, Ontario, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Sherman, L., Gottfredson, D., MacKenzie, D., Eck, J., Reuter, P. & Bushway, S. (1998) *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*, National Institute of Justice Research report, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, accessed 10/8/09 at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/171676.pdf>.

Van Voorhis, P., Spruance, L.M., Ritchey, P.N., Listwan, S.J. & Seabrook, R. (2004) 'The Georgia cognitive skills experiment: a replication of reasoning and rehabilitation', *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 31(3), pp.282-305.

Youth Justice Board (2008a) 'Youth Justice System: Custody Figures', accessed June 2008 at www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/yjs/Custody/CustodyFigures/.

Youth Justice Board (2008b) 'News: 25,000 young lives reached through the Youth

Inclusion Programme', accessed Nov 2006 at www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/News/younglivesreachedthroughYIP.

Notes on Contributors

Sarah Dubberley is a Lecturer in Criminal Justice at Glyndwr University, and is currently undertaking a PhD on the experiences of incarcerated young people.

Odette Parry is Professor of Social Justice and Director of the Social Inclusion and Research Unit at Glyndwr University (SIRU).

Address for Correspondence

Sarah Dubberley
Criminal Justice
Glyndwr University
Plas Coch Campus
Mold Road
Wrexham
LL11 2AW

Email: s.dubberley@glyndwr.ac.uk
o.parry@glyndwr.ac.uk

Working together in adult safeguarding: findings from a survey of local authorities in England and Wales

Shereen Hussein¹, Jill Manthorpe¹, David Reid², Bridget Penhale², Neil Perkins³ and Lisa Pinkney⁴

¹ Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King's College London

² School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Sheffield

³ University of Durham

⁴ Centre for Health and Social Care, University of Leeds

Abstract

At a time of policy review of adult safeguarding in England and Wales, this article provides an in-depth analysis of perceptions and dynamics of Multi-Agency Working (MAW) in adult protection and explores whether perceptions of its strengths and challenges vary in relation to the composition and decision-making processes of Adult Protection Committees (APCs). Findings are drawn from a survey of local authorities that took place during 2004-2005 as part of a wider study. The article highlights the complexities of MAW, the areas of tension for those with responsibilities for implementing it at local levels and the challenges arising from the composition of APCs.

Keywords: Multi-agency working, adult protection, partnership, policy

Introduction

The evidence base is growing worldwide about the extent of the abuse and neglect of disabled and older adults and the systems of protection and prevention that need to be developed to counter them (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2002; Cambridge *et al.*, 2006). To reduce the risk of abuse, different agencies need to work within co-ordinated protocols and integrated strategies. However, there are no set prescriptions of how different agencies can best achieve their aim of enhancing the right of vulnerable adults to live free from abuse. In England and Wales, policy and practice are under the political spotlight. Government is reviewing its guidance in the area of adult protection (now more commonly termed 'adult safeguarding' - this term is used hereafter) (Department of Health [DH] 2008; CSSIW 2009).

Policy-makers and practitioners frequently report the difficulty of multi-agency

working (Glasby & Dickinson, 2008) but this is, in itself, difficult to define precisely and can encompass various models such as decision-making groups, co-ordinated delivery, operational-team delivery or consultation and training (see, for example, Atkinson *et al.*, 2002). The motivations underpinning multi-agency work also vary according to different agencies' perspectives and priorities. Despite these differences, the ideal of multi-agency working is strong in adult safeguarding (see the full report of this study, Penhale *et al.*, 2007).

The wider policy context also influences adult safeguarding and multi-agency working. Over a decade ago, the process of modernisation of social care services in England (DH, 1998) identified the system of protection for adult users of social care services as needing reform or 'modernisation', in particular, to enhance public protection of people who might be identified as 'vulnerable'. The role of statutory agencies changed. Despite

recommendations to simplify the regulatory 'burden', promoted by the Better Regulation Taskforce (2000) in its report covering vulnerable people, regulation of staff and services increased in scale and coverage. The *Care Standards Act* (2000), for example, put in place: training requirements for social care staff, checks of employees' criminal record status and a vetting and barring list (POVA). This was despite claims that these were burdensome (Social Care Employers Consortium, 2004). Concurrent developments relating to agencies working in the fields of criminal justice, such as *Action for Justice* programmes (Home Office, 1999) and those supporting vulnerable victims within *Achieving Best Evidence* frameworks (Home Office, 2002), were also implemented, as well as community safety and domestic violence initiatives.

While the lead role in adult protection was given to social services departments (DH, 2000) - also charged with the lead role in matters of safeguarding children - a number of different agencies work in the broad area. These range from social services departments of local authorities (now termed adult services), to community safety agencies that may have a key responsibility in the area of domestic violence, to housing providers, and offices responsible for social security benefits and pensions.

Early guidance from the Social Services Inspectorate concerning elder abuse and adults with learning disabilities (ARC & NAPSAC, 1993; DH, 1993) was followed by national developments in England and Wales. The key policy initiative took the form of government guidance on adult protection in both England and Wales, issued in 2000 (DH, 2000; Welsh Assembly Government [WAG], 2000). Under Section 7 of the *Local Authority Social Services Act* (1977), this guidance gave social services departments lead responsibility for co-ordination of responses to the abuse of vulnerable adults, as noted above. However,

there was no requirement on other agencies to co-operate, or to share information or resources.

Since that time, concern has continued across the UK about the way different regulatory authorities, professionals and providers of care and support engage with each other to ensure that 'vulnerable' people are safe from abuse or neglect (Scottish Government, 2007). This article reports on part of a wider study which aimed to examine issues relating to partnership working arrangements in adult safeguarding across England and Wales and which explored perceptions of the impact of regulation (and regulatory practices) on adult protection systems. The study examined the extent and nature of inter-agency work and explored perceptions of regulation and legislation. This study was one of nine that collectively formed the *Modernising Adult Social Care Research Initiative*, established by the *Policy Research Programme* within the Department of Health (2003–2007). These covered different facets of adult social care, framed by the modernisation agenda (see Newman & Hughes, 2007).

Methods

This article reports on in-depth quantitative analysis of the responses to a survey of Councils with Social Services Responsibilities (CSSRs) in England and Wales (here called local authorities), not reported in the final report. The survey constituted the first phase of the study referred to above and reflected the mixed-methods research design (Bryman, 2001). This allowed for collection of quantitative data through the use of a mapping exercise - using an adapted version of the Partnership Assessment Tool (PAT) (Hardy *et al.*, 2000) - which enabled the study to take on board data relating to many agencies and to have a framework for the analysis of partnership in this area of public services. As Dickinson (2008) observes, tools such as PAT are

useful in assessing the key features of partnership processes and as developmental aids. The survey was followed by collection of qualitative data, which included focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The mixed-methods design was chosen in order to strengthen the validity of the results by using more than one method to study the same phenomenon (Patton, 1990; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The survey was central to the investigation as it was designed to meet the aims of the wider research questions, in particular, to provide an understanding of the extent and dynamics of partnership working in adult protection across England and Wales. This perspective was important because many accounts of adult protection systems have come from a few areas that may be distinctive in terms of profile or activity (see, for example, Cambridge & Parkes, 2006). By exploring the views of local authority representatives in relation to the 'strengths', 'barriers' and 'disadvantages' of multi-agency approaches, and by asking about the extent of multi-agency practice, the ground was laid for the further investigations of the study.

After reviewing the literature, the research team devised a questionnaire designed to map partnership working arrangements in adult protection and to gain an overall impression of perceptions of the impact of the guidance, within the limits of a survey method (Edwards *et al.*, 2002). The development of the survey included: 1) consultation with an adult protection co-ordinator (manager of the service in a local authority) and an adult protection training officer; 2) consultation with researchers; and 3) consultation and initial testing of the questionnaire with the study advisory group, consisting of professionals and stakeholders with an interest in adult protection and research. Following revisions, it was piloted in two randomly selected areas and further amended. The final version was mailed out, with information leaflets and covering letter,

to all 172 local authorities (addressed to the Director of Social Services) across England and Wales. The questionnaire was also downloadable from the project website. Ethical permission for the survey was granted by the University of Sheffield and the Association of Directors of Social Services gave approval for the survey. The survey offered pre-coded options, in addition to a free text option for all questions (details of ethical permissions and a copy of the final survey are included in the full report, Penhale *et al.*, 2007).

A response rate of 84% (n=144) was achieved (100% from Wales) – this is high for organisational survey research (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Some of the early descriptive findings of the survey are presented in Perkins *et al.* (2007). Here we provide findings from further, in-depth quantitative analysis investigating whether views and perceptions of local authority representatives significantly differ according to how the Adult Protection Committees (APCs) in their areas are constituted, how they are led, which agencies are members of the Committees and the dynamics of the decision-making processes. We used a range of statistical techniques, such as Chi-Square Fisher's Exact Tests of significance, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Z) Two Sample Tests, non-parametric tests (Kruskal-Wallis H), and Mann-Whitney (U) tests.

Findings

We divide our findings into two areas: first, those related to **context** and second, findings related to **process**. Of the 144 responses, eight were from local authorities with joint Adult Protection Committees (APC) and three declined to take part in the survey, thus the actual number of authorities included in the analysis was 133. Nearly two thirds of respondents (60%, 80) were adult protection co-ordinators/managers and 39% (52) were social services managers who held responsibilities for adult

protection (one respondent did not provide this information).

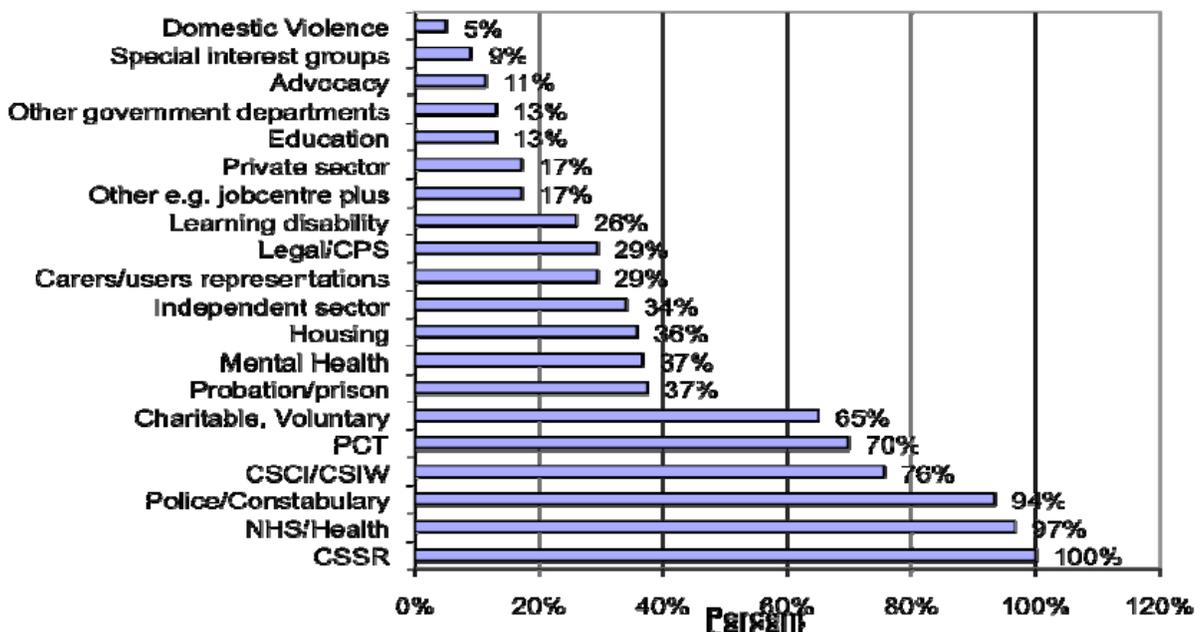
Five participants stated that they did not have a functioning APC at the time of the survey, with three aiming to establish one shortly. Among the 128 with APCs, five did not provide any information on how their Committees were constituted or which agencies were members of the Committee. In this analysis, we focus mainly on data from the 123 fully-completed questionnaires.

Contextual findings

Figure 1 presents the percentages of APCs citing the different agencies listed as members. Unsurprisingly, all 123 APCs had local authority representation and very high proportions (97% and 94% respectively) included the NHS and Police. Representations from other agencies varied, from 75% with involvement of the social care regulators (Commission for Care Standards Inspectorate (CSCI)) in England or the then Care Standard Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW) in Wales (in 2007, this changed to the Care and Social Services

Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW)), to 9% with special interest membership, such as domestic violence agencies or black and minority ethnic groups’ representatives. An important complexity arises because the NHS has several organisational ‘identities’ at the local authority level. For example, the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) in England or Local Health Board in Wales is the provider or commissioner of primary healthcare services for the local population (and there may be one or several serving any one local authority); hospital services may operate through NHS Trusts (covering one or more local authority areas) and secondary or tertiary level mental health and learning disability services may be organised as a specialist Trust covering a geographical area wider than a local authority. Since the time of the research, this variety of NHS ‘presences’ has been further complicated by the arrival of NHS Foundation Trusts - organisations with greater autonomy (DH, 2005) - and a small number of Care Trusts, combining Social Services and NHS commissioning and provision.

Figure 1 Percentage of APCs including representations from different agencies



Respondents were asked to state the strengths of MAW (if any). Responses were recoded into categories, based on themes developed from the free text responses and the qualitative element of the research, highlighting four main strengths:

- 1) *Shared expertise* (81%, n=108) included sharing knowledge/information with other member organisations, as well as sharing resources and training. For example, some respondents indicated that MAW provided the opportunity to widen their views and understanding through considering other agencies positions;
- 2) *A more effective approach to adult protection* – 72% (96) of respondents

listed different ideas in support of this, such as the potential for MAW to increase capacity and thus the effectiveness of safeguarding;

3) A further strength identified was a *sense of shared responsibility*, cited by 69% (92). Respondents stated that MAW provided a vehicle to reach consensus, accelerated decision-making and reduced duplication as well as demonstrating commitment;

4) Finally, there was the view that MAW provided a *strategically effective* approach to adult protection (56%, 75). Those who cited this strength thought it facilitated consistency and promoted planning and development (see Table 1).

Table 1 Percentage of respondents identifying different strengths, barriers and disadvantages to multi-agency working in relation to protection of vulnerable adults in England and Wales

Perceptions of multi-agency working	Number of responses	%
Strengths		
Shared expertise	108	81.2
More effective approach	96	72.2
Shared responsibility	92	69.2
Strategically effective	75	56.4
<u>Number of responses #</u>	<u>133</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Barriers		
No Barriers	12	9.2
Difficulties in commitment	76	58.0
Discrepancies in priorities in relation to AP	56	42.7
Lack of clarity	52	39.7
Time/resource difficulties	45	34.4
Finding the right people to join committee	17	13.0
Unsuitable for some clients	4	3.1
<u>Number of responses #</u>	<u>131</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Disadvantages		
No disadvantages	57	44.5
Delays in reaching a decision	54	42.2
Different degrees of involvement	36	28.1
Leave too much to individuals/difficult to find 'key players'	9	7.0
Financial/resource commitments	7	5.5
<u>Number of responses #</u>	<u>128</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Number of responses varies due to missing values

All respondents were then asked to identify any barriers to MAW. Again, the free text answers were recoded into different themes or categories. Around 9% (12) felt there were no barriers to MAW, while others identified at least four main barriers (see Table 1 for details). The most common concern (58%, 76) was *difficulties in commitment*, whether due to the reluctance of an agency to participate in the APC or its work, or some uncertainty about disclosing information beyond an agency, in addition to practical difficulties in maintaining continuity. An overlapping concern was the *discrepancy between different agencies in terms of the priority given to adult protection issues* which led nearly half the respondents to conclude that other agencies varied in their degree of ownership of, and responsibility for, adult protection (43%, 56). Some of the tensions around priorities were highlighted in the free text:

We need an agreed protocol from the Police re ABE [Achieving Best Evidence] interviews. The decision to do it needs to be taken early. Some first line officers do not pick up the need for this type of interview. (LA 19)

Lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities and objectives, as well as role and personality conflicts, were also thought to constitute barriers (40%, 52). Such lack of shared vision and aims echoes general debates around partnership working in the NHS (Hardy *et al.*, 2000; Goodwin & Shapiro, 2002). There were further concerns around *time and resource pressures* in relation to MAW (34%, 45). Other barriers noted were *identifying the 'right' people to join the APC* (13%, 17) and the feeling of a very small minority that APC involvement was not always appropriate for some vulnerable adults or service users (3%, 4).

Nearly half (44% of respondents, n=57) reported no 'disadvantages' to MAW, but those who identified disadvantages

highlighted that these were mostly issues needing to be addressed in improving MAW rather than inherent problems. Nevertheless, among those who indicated any, two main 'disadvantages' were recognized while two further issues seemed to be of more minor concern. The most frequently cited disadvantage was that MAW might *delay reaching a consensual decision* (42%, 54), being time consuming and hard to co-ordinate. The second perceived disadvantage was that different agencies necessarily have variable *degrees of involvement* in the process (28%, 36). Perhaps this reflected different cultures and priorities among different agencies, or a choice not to be fully involved, or that some agencies do not 'own' the issue. Various suggestions were offered, for example:

DWP-Job Centre Plus, refusing to share info [information] in AP [adult protection] cases unless the police request it. Serious case review process needs to be statutory requirement.
(LA 50)

A smaller number of respondents identified two additional disadvantages; nine respondents indicated that MAW left too much to individuals and that sometimes it was difficult to find 'key players' in the team, while seven respondents felt that MAW imposed additional financial and/or resource commitments.

As shown in Figure 1, the membership of different APCs varied, with some agencies only represented in a small number of Committees. This went hand-in-hand with the variation in the number of members, ranging from three to sixteen agencies, with an average of nine different agencies per Committee. Such variation is likely to affect how a Committee operates. However, it is also apparent that not all members contribute equally to the work. Some of the free text comments in the survey highlighted the view that some members' contributions

are limited, either because they do not attend many meetings, or because they do not give much time or priority to adult protection.

We explored whether the composition of an APC affected respondents' views on strengths, barriers and disadvantages of MAW. We analysed differences between responses in respect of each of the perceptions of MAW as detailed in Table 1 and by Committee membership (see Figure 1). Since local authorities, the NHS and Police were members of nearly all Committees we could not test for their effect due to the lack (or very small size) of a control group. Similarly, some sectors (in particular domestic violence agencies) were represented in so few APCs that statistical differences could not be tested. Although the proportion of APCs with special interest groups as members was relatively small (9%, 11), we attempted to explore if there were any differences in views. However, in most cases, these observations were not statistically testable due to the small base number but they may be an area for future investigation.

We used Chi-Square Fisher's Exact Tests of significance to examine any such variations and some interesting results emerged from the analyses. However, since we only sought the 'views' of respondents, these results should be regarded as points for further exploration. Below we report the statistically significant findings: these relate first to *process* and second to the *dynamics* of working together.

Finding 1: Outcomes: APCs with members from 'Learning Disability' (LD) specialist agencies were significantly more likely to report that MAW is a '*more effective approach*' than those without LD members (84% vs. 67%; $p=0.049$). Respondents whose APC included representation from a PCT/LHB were significantly more likely to perceive that one of the disadvantages of MAW is '*delays in reaching a decision*'

with 48% of them citing this in comparison to only 26% among those with no PCT/LHB representation ($p=0.021$).

This may, perhaps, be understood from some of the comments:

Some health providers find it difficult to 'open' up processes/procedures to external scrutiny especially health settings. (LA 23)

Finding 2: Strategy: APCs whose memberships included 'housing', 'other governmental departments' and the 'private sector', were significantly more likely to regard MAW as '*strategically effective*' than those Committees who did not include these agencies. Around 70% of APCs which included 'housing' reported this strength, compared to 47% that did not ($p=0.011$). An even sharper difference was found for the private sector: the proportion of respondents that considered MAW to be '*strategically effective*' was significantly higher when the APC included members from the private or commercial sector of care – 86% in comparison to 50% ($p=0.002$).

Finding 3: Adjustment: Respondents with PCT/LHBs in membership of their APC were significantly less likely to feel that there were '*no barriers*' to MAW, at only 5%, in comparison to 18% among those with no PCT/LHB representation ($p=0.032$). Similarly, those with 'charitable/voluntary organisations' on board were significantly less likely to report '*no barriers*' (7% vs. 10%; $p=0.021$).

Finding 4: Commitment: Respondents who reported that PCT/LHBs or Mental Health (MH) services were members of their APC were significantly more likely to cite '*difficulties in commitment*' as a barrier to MAW. Around 67% with MH agencies as members cited this problem, in comparison to 51% of those without members from MH agencies ($p=0.051$, border-line significance). A total of 63% of those APCs

including the local PCT/LHB as a member cited the same problem, compared with 42% ($p=0.026$) that did not have PCT/LHB representation. Additionally, respondents from Committees that had representation from 'other government departments' were significantly more likely to cite 'discrepancies in priorities in relation to adult protection' as a barrier (66% vs. 34%; $p=0.001$). In relation to citing 'different degrees of involvement' as a disadvantage to MAW, this response was significantly less likely among respondents whose APCs had representation from MH agencies, compared to those with no representation from this group. Only 16% of respondents from APCs including MH agencies reported this, compared with 36% from APCs not including MH agencies ($p=0.014$).

Finding 5: Resources: Respondents from APCs including 'carers/users representation', 'special interest groups' and 'probation/prison services' were significantly more likely to report 'time/resource difficulties' compared to those with no representation from these three agencies/groups. The percentage citing this varied, from 46 to 64% when any of these groups were a member of the APC compared to 24 to 29% when each was not ($p=0.007$, 0.026 and 0.013 respectively). The problems of commitment were illustrated by two respondents:

Resource issues – 'No Secrets' is guidance of limited usefulness. It helped raise the profile but has been ineffective in securing the involvement of other agencies. Lack of dedicated resources leads to a situation where most of the work done is as a result of managers doing it as an add-on rather than a securely prioritised care function.
(LA 29)

Funding remains an obstacle... (LA 35)

Finding 6: Leadership: The analyses showed few significant differences in terms

of how the APCs were led. Using non-parametric tests (Kruskal-Wallis H), APCs led by more agencies were significantly more likely to agree with the statement 'there is a clear commitment to multi-agency working from the most senior levels of each member organisation on the Adult Protection Committee' ($p=0.039$). Using Mann-Whitney (U) statistical tests, respondents reporting that their APC was led solely by social services were significantly more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'there are clear lines of accountability on the Adult Protection Committee' (U=880.5, p -value=0.001).

In summary, the findings show that PCT/LHB membership of an APC posed some challenges for local authorities. Respondents with PCT/LHB membership were significantly *less* likely to believe that there were 'no barriers' to MAW and significantly *more* likely to be concerned about 'difficulties in communications' and 'delays in reaching a decision' than respondents who did not have any representation from PCT/LHBs. Moreover, they were also *more* likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'there are clear lines of accountability from the adult protection committee to other bodies'. Such disagreement can be linked to their general view regarding some of the perceived challenges (noted above). It links well with the findings obtained from the focus group discussions with members of APCs, as part of the wider research study, where many participants considered that local NHS Trusts and PCT/LHBs were absent from or not fully engaged in APC work (Penhale et al., 2007). Likewise, having a representative from a Mental Health Trust was significantly associated with an increase in the perception of 'difficulties in communications'.

It is evident from the analysis that representation from a small non-statutory group on an APC, whether that of a special

interest group or of service users/carers, also introduced challenges for the local authority respondents, particularly in relation to time and resource difficulties. Similarly, qualitative findings from the wider study identified that service user participation in APCs presented challenges in a number of areas. These included the difficult and delicate process of seeking to contact and then engage with people who had experienced abuse (Pinkney *et al.*, 2008) and making this a positive experience. What the survey shows is that these difficulties are not confined to achieving membership but also shape the processes and dynamics of involvement. APCs had no models or frameworks to draw upon in order to facilitate service user involvement.

Although representation from the private sector seemed to enhance the perceived value of MAW as ‘strategically effective’, respondents with private sector representatives on their APC were significantly less likely to cite ‘*shared experience and expertise*’ as an advantage. This suggests that issues around sharing sensitive or private information may become more manifest when the private sector is involved and commercially sensitive information may be part of discussions (for example, in respect of a proposed care home closure). However, when private sector members or other government department members were included, respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement ‘*there is a clear commitment to MAW from the most senior levels of each member organisation on the APC*’.

Respondents were less clear about the role of different members in the Committee (as well as believing that members themselves are not clear about their own roles) if they are from the voluntary sector, carers/service users or special interest groups. Having a representative from the voluntary sector was also significantly associated with a decline in the perception that MAW has ‘*no*

barriers’. Respondents in APCs with representation from the voluntary sector, as well as service users’ representatives, were less likely to agree/strongly agree with the statements relating to ‘*clear lines of accountability on the APC*’ and ‘*there are clear lines of accountability from the APC to other bodies*’. Putting these together, the findings suggest that inclusion of members from these specific organisations does affect the perception of local authority representatives about the clarity of the role and accountability of the APC. Such strong associations support the findings from the focus groups and interviews with local authority managers (Manthorpe *et al.*, 2010). The value of involving the independent sector was recognised but issues remained about the timing of their involvement or the nature of engagement. Others felt that attendance levels were problematic or that the role deserved enhancement. APC members welcomed voluntary sector representatives although questions were raised about whose interests were being represented (Pinkney *et al.*, 2008).

Discussion and Conclusion

Limitations of the study: this study reports the views of local authority members of the APCs and these may differ substantially from representatives of other agencies. It was not possible to link the perceptions with other data about adult protection referrals or outcomes, as these were not collected systematically at the time of the study. There is also the perennial difficulty of distinguishing ‘real’ issues from perceptions, particularly when collecting information at only one point of time. However, many of the issues identified are consistent with other research on partnership working. The study also asked about issues in a variety of ways, for example, by offering tick box alternatives and free text options. The strength of the study lies in the national perspectives recorded and high response rate achieved,

the depth of analysis and the multi-method design that facilitated linkages across different data sources. The survey was conducted in 2004-05 and, because views may have changed since then, the findings should be interpreted within the processes and contexts pertaining at that time.

It is logical for policy-makers to urge partnership working and to set in place structures that appear feasible at 'surface level'. APCs are just one example of the 'key phenomenon' in multi-agency working (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002), that all such activities require similar organisational structures. The analyses reported above enabled aspects of multi-agency working to be scrutinised and the following three points emerged. First, that working with the NHS is not simply a matter of crossing health and social care divides but, for social services and other partners it involves working with a number of NHS agencies at a local level. This may explain our finding that more involvement with NHS bodies does not 'cure' problems; it may indeed increase the perceptions of barriers and disadvantages of MAW. This may help us understand the seemingly paradoxical finding that, when NHS bodies are members of an APC, then this may render problems of commitment more explicit. Concerns about levels of commitment in partnership working seem perennial and in line with those reported by previous research (Glendinning *et al.*, 2002; Hudson, 2002). In addition, this study highlighted that, when PCT/LHB or MH agencies are involved, there was an increased perception of delays in reaching a decision and less clarity about lines of accountability from APCs to other bodies. Such findings are coherent with longstanding issues around the 'lack of co-ordination' in partnership work between health and social care services (Clarke & Glendinning, 2002; Rummery, 2004).

Second, the findings show that a broad membership seems to help when developing local strategy and that local authority

respondents believe that possibly organisational boundaries decrease as a result. The perception that the involvement of agencies with expertise in learning disability services leads to more effective outcomes suggests the value of drawing on this background for wider adult safeguarding policy and practice – given that such work is often more highly developed within learning disability services than for other user groups. The challenges of meaningful user involvement or representation need further consideration (Bochel *et al.*, 2008; Hernandez *et al.*, 2008).

Our third finding was that local authority respondents whose APC membership included the private sector were less likely to feel that 'shared expertise' was evident and those with 'charitable/voluntary' or 'independent sector' membership were more likely to have a perception of 'lack of clarity' within APCs. The strong indications that sharing information and expertise become significantly more of a problem when the private sector is involved may reflect general issues around client and business confidentiality and risk. Tensions often arise from conflicts regarding the values and aims of different agencies in relation to data held (Bellamy & Raab, 2005; Bellamy *et al.*, 2005). In particular, the risk of conflicts appears to heighten when traditionally unengaged agencies, such as the private sector, become more active in the decision-making processes of adult protection. In the often highly confidential area of adult safeguarding, data sharing can be a particularly problematic issue; moreover, local authorities may become even more guarded when the private sector is involved if data protection regulations are perceived to be compromised (Perri *et al.*, 2006).

Respondents whose APC members included 'service users', 'special interest groups' and the probation service were more likely to perceive '*time/resource difficulties*' as being

a disadvantage of MAW. The involvement of agencies outside the local authority and the NHS remains a common aspiration (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2008) but it is evident from the above analysis that this creates additional work or perceived complications for local authority staff. Such perceived 'difficulties' may encompass issues around respondents' willingness to be influenced by service users and other special interest groups' views (Young, 2006).

Arising from this study is the policy message that the engagement of health agencies with adult safeguarding needs to be understood organisationally. While there is much debate about health professionals' work in adult safeguarding (see Jenkins *et al.*, 2008), this is likely to be shaped by the context of their employing organisation and further NHS reconfigurations may affect this in the future. Overall, the issue of accountability, as experienced in other partnerships (Glasby & Dickinson, 2008), remains to be resolved in adult safeguarding because the 'fractures of accountability' identified by Cambridge (1998) or the 'dispersal of accountability' (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001) characteristics of partnership working remain.

Analysis of the survey data has yielded valuable insight into the complexity of multi-agency working and how perceptions of its strengths, barriers and disadvantages vary depending on which agencies are involved. The issues identified are by no means unique to adult protection multi-agency working; they are similarly evident in children's safeguarding and multi-agency working where professional identity and perceived position become fundamental in the perception of the roles of other partners (Reder & Duncan, 2003; Garrett, 2004).

For policy-makers, the analysis reveals the importance of clarifying what is and what might be expected of different agencies working together in APCs and the need to explore and address the perspectives of

different agencies. Accountability and leadership are, likewise, easy subjects for exhortation but are harder to enact. Whatever the result of the policy reviews of adult safeguarding in England and in Wales, the need to focus on local implementation will remain, especially if the responsibility for leadership becomes more diffuse.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to all the respondents of the survey for the time and trouble they took in communicating their views and to members of the study advisory group for their assistance. This study was funded under the Department of Health Modernising Adult Social Care Workforce Initiative (MASC) but the views expressed here are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the Department of Health. We thank the referees for their helpful comments.

References

- Association for Residential Care & National Association for the Protection from Sexual Abuse of Adults and Children with Learning Disability (1993) *It Could Never Happen Here! The Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Abuse of Adults with Learning Disabilities in Residential Settings*, London: ARC & NAPSAC.
- Atkinson, M., Wilkin, A., Stott, A., Doherty, P. & Kinder, K. (2002) *Multi-Agency Working: A Detailed Case Study*, London: National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Baruch, Y. & Holtom, B. (2008) 'Survey response rate levels and trends in organizational research', *Human Relations*, **61**(8), pp.1139-60.
- Bellamy, C. & Raab, C. (2005) 'Multi-agency working in British social policy: risk, information sharing and privacy', *Information Policy*, **10**(1), pp.51-63.
- Bellamy, C., Perri, G. & Rabb, C. (2005) 'Joined-up government and privacy in the United Kingdom: managing tensions between data protection and social policy, Part II', *Public Administration*, **83**(2), pp.393-415.
- Better Regulation Task Force (2000) *Alternatives to State Regulation*, London: Cabinet Office.

- Bochel, C., Bochel, H., Somerville, P. & Worley, C. (2008) 'Marginalised or enabled voices? User participation in policy and practice', *Social Policy and Society* 7(2), pp.201-10.
- Bryman, A. (2001) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cambridge, P. (1998) 'The physical abuse of people with learning disabilities and challenging behaviour: lessons for commissioners and providers', *Tizard Learning Disability Review*, 3(1), pp.18-27.
- Cambridge, P. & Parkes, T. (2006) 'The management and practice of joint adult protection investigations between health and social services: issues arising from a training intervention', *Social Work Education*, 25(8), pp.824-37.
- Cambridge, P., Beadle-Brown, J., Milne, A., Mansell, J. & Whelton, B. (2006) *Exploring the Incidence, Risk Factors, Nature and Monitoring of Adult Protection Alerts*, Canterbury: Tizard Centre, University of Kent.
- Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) (2009) *Protection of Vulnerable Adults Monitoring Report 2007-08*, Cardiff, CSSIW, accessed 2/4/09 at <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/cssiw/publications/adultprot rpt09/090331adultproteng.pdf>.
- Clarke, J. & Glendinning, C. (2002) 'Partnership and the Remaking of Welfare Governance', in Glendinning, C., Powell, M. & Rummery, K. (eds.), *Partnerships, New Labour and the Governance of Welfare*, Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 33-50.
- Department of Health (1993) *Services for People with Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviour or Mental Health Needs: Report of a Project Group (Chairman: Prof. J.L. Mansell)* London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Department of Health (1998) *Modernising Social Services: Promoting Independence, Improving Protection, Raising Standards*, London: Crown Publications.
- Department of Health (2000) *No Secrets: Guidance on Developing and Implementing Multi-Agency Policies and Procedures to Protect Vulnerable Adults from Abuse*, London: Department of Health (www.doh.gov.uk/scg/nosecrets.html).
- Department of Health (2005) *A Short Guide to NHS Foundation Trusts*, London: Crown Publications.
- Department of Health (2008), *Safeguarding Adults: Consultation on the Review of 'No Secrets' Guidance*, London: Department of Health and Criminal Justice System.
- Dickinson, H. (2008) *Evaluating Outcomes in Health and Social Care*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Edwards, P., Roberts, I., Clarke, M., DiGuseppi, C., Prataap, S., Wentz, R., & Kwan, I. (2002) 'Increasing response rates to postal questionnaires: systematic review', *British Medical Journal*. 24(7347), pp.1168-89.
- Garrett, P. (2004) 'Talking child protection: the police and social workers working together', *Journal of Social Work*, 4(1), pp.77-97.
- Glasby, J. & Dickinson, H. (2008) *Partnership Working in Health and Social Care*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Glendinning, C., Coleman, A. & Rummery, K. (2002) 'Partnership, performance and primary care: developing integrated service for older people in England', *Ageing and Society*, 22(2), pp.185-208.
- Goodwin, N. & Shapiro, J. (2002) 'The road to success', *Health Management*, 6, pp.20-2.
- Hardy, B., Hudson, B. & Waddington, E. (2000) *What Makes a Good Partnership? A Partnership Assessment Tool*, Leeds: Nuffield Institute for Health.
- Hernandez, L., Robson, P. & Sampson, A. (advance access) 'Towards integrated participation: involving seldom heard users of social care services', *British Journal of Social Work*, 2008, Doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcn118.
- Home Office (1999) *Action for Justice - The Action Plan on Speaking up for Justice*, London: Home Office Justice and Victims Unit.
- Home Office (2002) *Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on Interviewing Victims and Witnesses, and Using Special Measures*, London: Home Office.
- Hudson, B. (2002) 'Interprofessionality in health and social care: the Achilles' heel of partnership?' *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 16(1), pp.7-17.
- Jenkins, R., Davies, R. & Northway, R. (2008) 'Zero tolerance of abuse of people with intellectual disabilities: implications for nursing', *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 17(22), pp.3041-9.

- Johnson, R.B. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2004) 'Mixed methods research: a research paradigm whose time has come', *Educational Researcher*, **33**(7), pp.14-26.
- Kemshall, H. & Maguire, M. (2001) 'Public protection, partnership and risk penalty', *Punishment and Society*, **3**(2), pp.327-64.
- Lindsay, C. & McQuaid, R. (2008) 'Inter-agency co-operation in activation: comparing experiences in three vanguard 'active' welfare states', *Social Policy and Society*, **7**(3), pp.353-65.
- Manthorpe, J., Hussein, S. Penhale, B., Perkins, N., Pinkney, L. & Reid, D. (2010) 'Managing relations in adult protection: a qualitative study of the views of social services managers in England and Wales', *Journal of Social Work Practice*. iFirst article, pp. 1-14, Doi: 10.1080/02650531003651109.
- Newman, J. & Hughes, M. (2007) *Modernising Adult Social Care – What's Working?*, London: Department of Health.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, Newbury Park: Sage.
- Penhale, B., Perkins, N., Pinkney, L., Reid, D., Hussein, S. & Manthorpe, J. (2007) *Partnership and Regulation in Adult Protection: The Effectiveness of Multi-Agency Working and the Regulatory Framework in Adult Protection, Final Report*, Modernising Adult Social Care, University of Sheffield; Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King's College London, London.
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH-081553>.
- Perkins, N., Penhale, B., Reid, D., Pinkney, L., Hussein, S. & Manthorpe, J. (2007) 'Partnership means protection? Perceptions of the effectiveness of multi-agency working and the regulatory framework within Adult Protection in England & Wales', *Journal of Adult Protection*, **9**(3), pp.9-23.
- Perri, G., Bellamy, C., Raab, C. & Warren, A. (2006) 'Partnership and privacy - tension or settlement? The case of adult mental health services', *Social Policy and Society*, **5**(2), pp.237-48.
- Pinkney, L., Penhale, B., Manthorpe, J., Perkins, N., Reid, D. & Hussein, S. (2008) 'Voices from the frontline: social work practitioners' perceptions of multi-agency working in adult protection in England and Wales', *Journal of Adult Protection*, **10**(4), pp.12-24.
- Reder, P. & Duncan, S. (2003) 'Understanding communication in child protection networks', *Child Abuse Review*, **12**(2), pp. 82-100.
- Rummery, K. (2004) 'Progress towards partnership? The development of relations between primary care organisations and social services concerning older people's services in the UK', *Social Policy and Society*, **3**(1), pp.22-42.
- Scottish Government (2007) *Working Together to Improve Adult Protection: Report of Phase 2*, Joint Improvement Team (JIT), Edinburgh: Scottish Government.
- Social Care Employers' Consortium (2004) *Social Care: The Growing Crisis*, London: Social Care Employers' Consortium.
- Welsh Assembly Government (2000) *In Safe Hands Implementing Adult Protection Procedures in Wales*, Cardiff: WAG.
- World Health Organisation (2002) *The Toronto Declaration on the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse*, Geneva: WHO.
- Young, R. (2006) 'Introducing role and service changes in health and social care: the impact and influence of user involvement in England and Wales', *Social Policy and Society*, **5**(2), pp.249-68.

Notes on Contributors

Shereen Hussein is a Senior Research Fellow at the Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King's College London. She is a statistical demographer and her research interests include adult protection, long-term care provision and workforce dynamics.

Jill Manthorpe is Professor of Social Work and director of the Social Care Workforce Research Unit at King's College London. She has a longstanding interest in adult safeguarding research, policy and practice and is a member of the *No Secrets* review governing board.

David Reid is a lecturer at the School of Nursing & Midwifery, University of Sheffield. He has a specific teaching and research interest in relationship-centred dementia care and currently represents the Higher Education for Dementia Network (HEDN) on the Department of Health's working group for the implementation of the National Dementia Strategy's Objective 13.

Bridget Penhale is a Reader in Gerontology at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Sheffield. Her academic interests are in issues relating to older people, and those that relate to mental health and violence and abuse: specifically elder abuse, institutional abuse, adult safeguarding and domestic violence. From 2008-2011 Bridget is acting as scientific advisor to the Department of Health and Comic Relief funded Research Programme on Preventing Abuse and Neglect in the Institutional Care of Older Adults (PANICOA).

Neil Perkins is a Research Associate at Durham University. His research interests include partnership working, 'race' and community cohesion and social exclusion. Neil is currently engaged in a study determining how partnership working can contribute to tackling health inequalities and improving health outcomes.

Lisa Pinkney is a Research Officer at the University of Leeds. Her research interests include patient safety and complexity in health care. She is currently working on an NIHR funded study, which examines severe pressure ulcers in patients from a health care systems perspective.

Address for Correspondence

Dr Shereen Hussein
Senior Research Fellow
Social Care Workforce Research Unit
King's College London
Melbourne House (5th Floor)
Strand
London
WC2R 2LS

Telephone: 0207 8481 669

Email: shereen.hussein@kcl.ac.uk

Coping with transformation: how will social care information systems change in response to changing requirements?

Jacky Smith

Community & Adult Care Directorate, Gloucestershire County Council

Abstract

Plans to transform social care in England are well advanced but the implications for information management have not yet been thought through systematically. This paper lays a theoretical foundation for the development of a new kind of information system that will be required if this transformation is to succeed where previous ones have failed. In a world where evidence of success has to include more than just numbers, systems will need to have the capacity to summarise and report from documents as well as databases; and if person-centred, outcome-focused working is to mean more than simply additional and different boxes to tick, we must use better ways to collect and analyse information about people.

Such changes in information systems will inevitably feed back into the structure and culture of social care organisations, so it is important that they reflect the best possible use of technologies such as 'text analytics', as well as reflecting the real world in which social care operates. To achieve this, they will need to be designed by people who understand complexity and can build systems that do more than make over-simplistic assumptions for the convenience of computer programmers.

Keywords: Complexity, information systems, outcomes, transformation

I have been attending Social Services Research Group meetings for many years, and in all that time there has been one consistent topic of conversation between formal sessions: failures in information systems. Areas of concern include the time taken to record case details, the difficulty of obtaining timely and accurate information to support management decision-making, the costs involved in purchasing, licensing and maintaining information systems and the need to keep up with changing requirements relating to corporate and governmental performance frameworks.

Information exchange with other organisations is another problematic area. The majority of social care information available is held in case files rather than databases; some of it could be described as semi-structured, that is, held in forms where there are a number of named fields

containing free text on specified topics, but much is in running records of events and conversations. Electronic case files have improved communications within social care but have made systematic exchanges with, for example, health services almost impossible.

Putting people first?

The changes proposed in *Putting People First* (DoH, 2007) which are designed to produce significant advantages for service users, potentially demand an entirely new approach to the process of assessment, care management and service provision. In the new world of social care, assessors should be helping people articulate their aspirations, and design service plans that take account of those aspirations and eligibility criteria. Service users will specify their desired outcomes and the review

process should then see whether those outcomes are being achieved and whether there are further needs that also meet eligibility criteria. This process will mean that it will not be possible to collect hierarchically-structured, categorical data on key aspects of service provision such as desired outcomes, which will by definition not fit into neatly categorised boxes. There is evidence that some elements of strategic planning in social care are turning away from the focus on outcomes for individuals towards ‘population outcomes’ which are much easier to measure; it would be a shame if another opportunity to improve the quality of social care were to be lost in this way.

On the other hand, the recent green paper (DoH, 2009) on social care proposes that there should be a single national standard assessment, as if the interaction between social worker and service user could be usefully forced into a standard format, so as to make the bureaucratic process of resource allocation easier. This is proposed with little supporting evidence beyond the statement that “people have told us that they want a system where they are not at risk of losing their care and support just because they have moved somewhere new” (p.48). There is no real discussion of the paradox between the standardisation of assessment and the development of a system where “local authorities are able to respond to local needs and local priorities” (p.48) – how are authorities to understand changing local needs from a standardised assessment? What if there are local needs that are not sufficiently covered by this standard assessment? There is also no real consideration of the implications for person-centred practice, for example there is a statement that, “you will only need to have one assessment of your needs to gain access to a whole range of care and support services” (p.55), as if all possible categories of need can be specified in advance, rather than discovered over time, in line with the principles laid down in *Putting People First*.

Changes in the performance assessment framework

At the same time, the new performance criteria being developed are based on multi-layered evidence structures that include strategies, policies, anecdotal evidence of outcomes for individuals and public and service user opinion surveys as well as standardised national performance indicators (CSCI, 2009). This is forcing local authority social care departments to consider new ways to compile not only the tightly-categorised data in rigid structures that characterise conventional databases, but also textual information, with ways to track its content and meaning. Commercial organisations have been experiencing similar challenges for some years, and seeking solutions; the sheer volume of textual information available both within organisations and from the internet is creating huge problems, illustrated by this quote from an SPSS executive white paper published as long ago as 2002:

... in the last few years an increasing amount of essential business information is being held in unstructured and semi-structured formats. Letters, emails, documents, news feeds, and presentations etc. are forming the backbone of most companies' information systems. Accurate retrieval and organization of this information is becoming an enormous challenge for all large companies. (SPSS, 2002)

Software developers and information specialists have been working to develop solutions to these problems, and techniques developed to power search engines have been applied to what is known as text analytics, with some success. People like Seth Grimes of Alta Plana are leading the way and the 5th annual *Text Analytics Summit* has reportedly been a great success (see <http://www.textanalyticsnews.com/usa/> for more details).

Papers are beginning to appear in peer-reviewed journals which make use of software to analyse free text, for example Sweeney (2008). Such software has been found to provide reliable summaries of textual data in the form of a dataset that can be analysed statistically, and the process is described as very quick compared to traditional qualitative research methods. Since this analysis can be carried out without initial human intervention, it is also arguably less prone to distortion by researchers' preconceptions, if the document selection is based on genuinely random sampling.

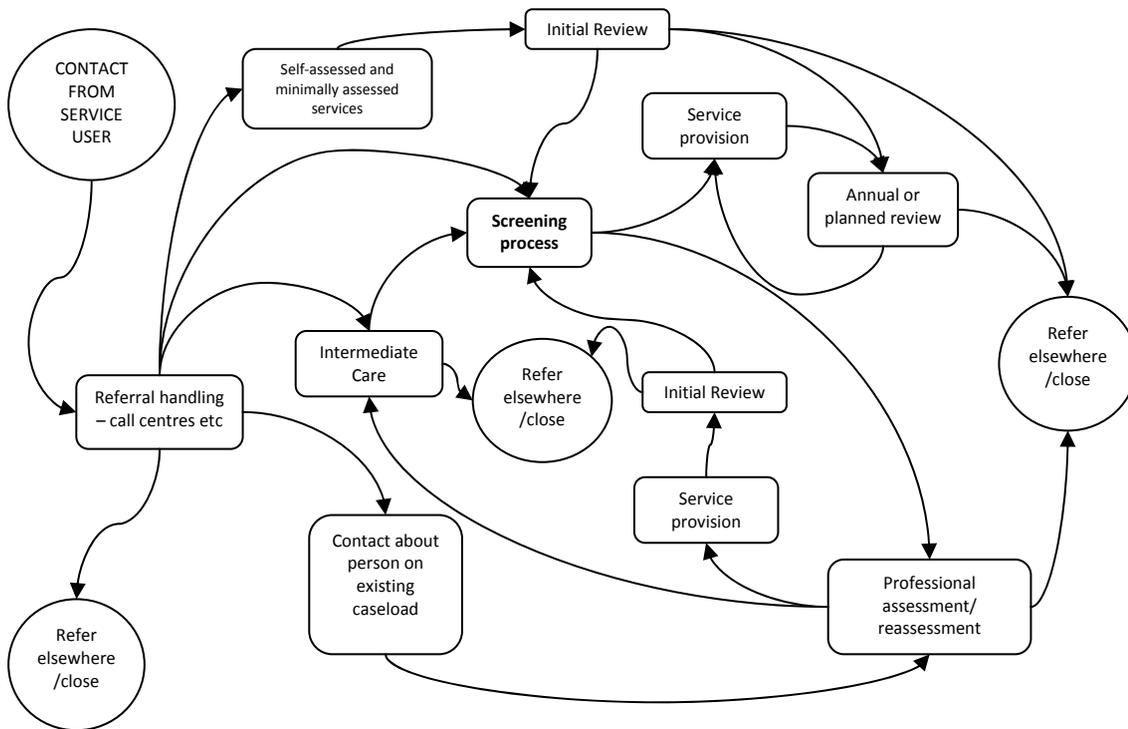
Theoretical frameworks

Academic studies going back as far as Norman (1988) suggest that the most easily used and therefore effective information systems are designed so that the structure of the system mirrors the way that the users perceive the situation that is being monitored. This is the basis of 'object-oriented' programming, where the information system contains a virtual model of real 'objects' which interact in the same way as the real ones. The application of this principle to a fully transformed social care department would mean operating a 'person-centred' information system, probably an extension of the electronic case file, which would make the derivation of aggregate information and national performance indicators a hugely complex problem. But the operation of this sort of system would be easier for social workers than conventional databases, since this is the way that they have always recorded their work, and would be, by definition, more flexible and adaptable than existing systems. So, although systems designed on object-oriented principles for a fully transformed social care service would present major technical challenges, they might also offer an opportunity to deal with some long-standing problems in unexpected and fascinating ways.

Information systems for social care

Information systems for use in social care have historically been designed as typical management information systems, that is, as hierarchical databases. The implicit assumption is that there is a similar structure in the information being stored and in the organisation as a whole. However, the move towards partnership working in recent years has made this assumption less safe, and many parts of local government are finding that their existing systems make sharing information within local strategic partnerships, for example, very difficult; the 'respect' website (<http://www.respect.gov.uk>, accessed 15/2/09) had many pages explaining what can be shared and what needs to be done to make this safe and legal.

In my experience, there is no natural hierarchical structure that can be generally applied to the data we collect on social care, even before the implementation of *Putting People First*. There is no 'absolute truth' about a service user, only how things appear at the time, and, while simple descriptions of the process (referral, assessment, care planning, service provision, review) seem to offer a neat linear model, the reality for service users can be very different – Diagram 1 illustrates the sort of non-linear workflows that are common in social care. Service users are often carers for other service users, with existing support packages provided by friends, neighbours and other organisations; problems within this network are often invisible during the initial assessment and needs change rapidly once a new element (such as a social care service) is added. This problem makes the use of conventional information systems difficult for social care practitioners, because they cannot see how the work they do can be recorded accurately in such a framework, or how the information produced from it could possibly reflect their experience.

Diagram 1: The care management process

Complexity theory

This sort of situation can be described as ‘complex’ within the usual definition of the word. Complexity science looks typically at situations where a number of issues interact in such a way that they cannot be dealt with in isolation. This is often described as looking at situations where the whole is more than the sum of its parts, so that a bit-by-bit analysis of the whole destroys the most important elements. There are often non-linear aspects to such situations – a small change to the starting conditions, often too small to be easily visible to an observer, may have an enormous effect on the outcome. Apparently similar situations may proceed in entirely different directions. Complexity science represents an attempt by conventional science to develop a deeper understanding of the real world, without the

simplifications and generalisations of the laboratory, and its application in management science is producing some fascinating ideas.

As suggested in a paper by Downs (2007), there are aspects of complexity theory that might offer useful insights for organisations offering social care. Complexity science includes areas such as the many forms of systems theory, cybernetics, fluid dynamics and chaos theory, with applications in systems analysis, computer science, mathematics, engineering, meteorology and biochemistry – but also in organisation theory and the social sciences. For example, Checkland and Poulter (2006) propose an approach to problem-solving called ‘soft systems methodology’. This grew from techniques developed for requirements specification in the design of information

systems, and led to the development of structured systems analysis which has largely been replaced by more flexible methods. However, the original model can be used to develop action plans to deal with situations where even the precise definition of the problem cannot be agreed – surely something that should be of interest in social care environments.

The terminology in academic papers referencing complexity is often specialist and difficult but there are examples of useful concepts among the jargon. For example, in his paper ‘Multi-ontology sense-making: a new simplicity in decision making’, Snowden (2005) suggests that managers and decision makers should be able to choose from a diverse range of techniques and frameworks to cope with the variety of situations they face. He rejects simplistic approaches and management fads while proposing a two-dimensional analysis of situations, with the degree of order as one dimension (defined as the extent to which cause and effect can be reliably understood and used to predict the future) and the other as “more of a continuum between the low ambiguity of rules that can easily be made explicit and the more ambiguous use of heuristics or rules of thumb which provide guiding principles but have high levels of ambiguity” (p.5). This can also be described as a ‘rule-based against pattern-based’ dimension. This is illustrated in Diagram 2.

Snowden suggests that most situations can be classified as ordered or un-ordered, and rule-based or pattern-based. He characterises process management as being appropriate in an ordered rule-based situation, systems thinking as useful in ordered systems which work on heuristics, computer simulation as one of the useful approaches in an un-ordered but rule-based situation (such as traffic management) and calls un-ordered systems with heuristics rather than rules ‘social complexity’, and identifies this as the location of the most difficult problems.

The paper goes on to identify that human societies are able to operate in different quadrants as a result of conscious choice or even simultaneously, and that this is what makes most normative management techniques unreliable – just when the approach seems to be working, the situation changes state and success slips away.

The provision of social care can credibly be located as more ‘pattern-based’ than ‘rule-based’. However, although in the process of assessment and care management, there is an implicit assumption that cause and effect are understood and therefore this ought to be amenable to analysis using the ideas of systems theory, much of the time this is an optimistic assumption rather than solid fact. Much of social work practice therefore really operates in the area of social complexity.

Diagram 2 Snowden’s classification of complexity

Un-Ordered or Ordered	Rule-based and Un-ordered - use simulation & modelling	Pattern-based and Un-ordered ‘Social Complexity’
	Rule-based & Ordered - use business process engineering	Pattern-based and Ordered - use systems theory
Rule based or Heuristic (pattern)-based		

Snowden's model is pragmatically useful in this situation, since it can be used to explain why business process re-engineering has failed to deliver the expected improvements in the management of social care. The majority of information systems targeted at this area of work are based on the assumption that social care is ordered and rule based. Early work by CSED (2008a) on *Putting People First* looking at business process re-engineering show the characteristic simplistic approach that underlies this model of thought, while slightly more recent work (CSED, 2008b) on care pathways begins to show signs of moving towards a more systems-based approach, with discussion of the application of systems dynamic models and recognition that a simple linear model is unlikely to deliver the required quality of service management.

Systems dynamics

Systems dynamics were developed in the 1950s by Jay Forrester at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to address failings in the application of Taylorist techniques to manufacturing industries. Forrester showed that the linear models used to manage production lines were unsatisfactory, and introduced ways to take account of stocks of raw materials and components in such circumstances, including the modelling of feedback loops. Over the next 30 years, systems dynamics developed into a technique which enabled computer simulation to be applied to such problems, as complicated equations were developed, tested and applied to social and financial problems.

On Snowden's model, therefore, systems dynamics represent an anomaly; the combination of computer simulation (which implies rules rather than patterns) with systems theory seems to suggest that the distinction along both axes in Diagram 2 is perhaps less clear than Snowden claims.

Snowden does suggest that the horizontal axis is more of a continuum than a clear division. On the vertical axis, it is interesting to note that the modelling techniques of systems dynamics seem to involve assuming that one can trace patterns of cause and effect when using systems techniques to posit equations, and then run simulations based on probability and random factors to test their utility. Systems dynamics therefore do not in themselves invalidate the Snowden model but they do illustrate that real world situations can be placed in different quadrants when analysed in different ways.

The work by CSED represents a rare explicit application of systems theory in the form of systems dynamics to social care strategic management, and this represents a significant change in approach from their previous focus on business process improvement. Snowden's wry observation that a management fad is only marketed to the public sector when there is no opportunity to get a better price for it from the private sector – that is, when it has been largely discredited – might seem to suggest that there may be some cause for concern for systems theorists here.

Systems theory and critical systems thinking

Before the general adoption of care management, social work training often included some elements of systems theory, with some disputes about its value and effectiveness (e.g. Forder, 1976; Leighninger, 1977). The change from 'social work' to 'care management' in the 1990s seems to have coincided with systems theory losing its place on the curriculum. For example, a search of the SCIE library for items relating to social work training and systems theory for adults resulted in 64 items, only 10 of which were published between 1994 and 2002 (an average of less than 1.7 per year), while the average for

1989 to 1993 was 3 per year - and it is interesting to observe that the average since 2003 has been 5.6. Anecdotally, social work training became less about empowering and understanding service users and more about managing resources at this time. It is possible that the recent interest in systems theory may have contributed to the change of direction implied by *Putting People First*.

There are a number of branches of systems theory, many with obvious and explicit applications in social work theory and practice.

Critical systems thinking is being developed by Werner Ulrich, from the work of C.W. Churchman, one of the founders of operational research and management science. Ulrich, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Fribourg and a visiting Professor at the Centre for Complexity and Change at the Open University, is a champion of reflective practice, concerned about the need for a new definition of the rights and responsibilities of the citizen in a world where global corporations limit the power of the democratic state to influence the social and economic environment. He suggests that systems theory, and in particular an understanding of the effects of boundaries on systems, could be of assistance to people in understanding the workings of the world they live in – Ulrich seeks “to increase their critical competence *vis-à-vis* the rationality claims raised by vested interests or by the experts in their services” (Ulrich, 2003, p.3) – which is particularly of interest given the intention of *Putting People First* to enable people in receipt of social care to be regarded as experts in their own care by the professionals assessing them.

Boundaries, in systems theory, are the distinction between the ‘system of interest’, the elements of which are being studied, and the environment in which the system is operating. There will usually be a high level of interaction between the system and

its environment, and the definition of the boundary is usually a subjective choice made by the observer, rather than an absolute or objective reality. Ulrich’s argument seems to be that people should be helped to understand that they need to look carefully not only at what the expert opinion is but also at whether they are talking within the boundaries of their expertise, and whether the opinion they offer is influenced by unsafe assumptions or tunnel vision. This could provide a framework within which service users are encouraged to think holistically about their situation and make independent judgments about proposals being made for their care.

Complex responsive processes

While critical systems thinking offers useful insights into interactions between professionals and service users, many aspects of complexity science have been used to describe and theorise about organisations as systems. Books such as Morgan (1986) and Senge (1990) offer a variety of metaphors and investigate the power of such images to influence patterns of thought. Another aspect of complexity science – the study of complex responsive processes – provides a novel view of organisations that might give a sound theoretical basis to the planned transformation in social care.

In the introduction to ‘Complexity and the Experience of Managing in Public Sector Organisations’, Ralph Stacey and Douglas Griffin (2006) describe organisations as ‘patterns of interaction between people’, ‘the simultaneously co-operative – consensual and conflictual – competitive relating between people’ rather than as objects with stable characteristics and independent reality (p.4). They go on to say that this produces a situation where the view of an organisation as a system ‘affected by patterns of power and economic relations in the wider society ... over and above the organisation and its individual members’

cannot be valid, because interactions happen between individuals – there is no single entity that can be influenced. Another significant consequence of this model of organisation is that there can be “no overall programme, design, blueprint or plan for the organisation as a whole”. Such things:

... exist only insofar as people are taking them up in their local interactions. Any statements that the powerful make about organisational designs, visions and values are understood as gestures calling forth responses from many, many people in their local interactions. The most powerful can choose their own gestures but will be unable to choose the responses of others, so their gestures will frequently produce surprising outcomes. (p.9)

This idea represents a significant development from Senge’s learning organisation, and one which provides an attractive explanation for some of the problems with change management in health and social care in recent years.

The development of the outcomes framework in *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* (DoH, 2006) and the multi-layered evidence model proposed by CSCI (2009) would seem to be a more effective response to this theory of organisation, and the proposals in *Putting People First* clearly fit with this model as well. But there is as yet no information system that can provide the flexibility required to match this view of organisation and still provide the statistical data required by the recently introduced National Indicators. Maintaining the two in parallel would continue the conceptual dissonance that has caused so many problems in recent years.

How does all this theory link to the everyday problems of administrative and information systems?

Most importantly, it offers a way to make progress on the vexed questions of process, performance and information management in social care. The design of systems in the widest sense to organise the provision of social care has been for many years driven by quantitative targets set largely without understanding of the likely unintended consequences. This paper has summarised evidence suggesting that such systems are structurally unsuitable to monitor the person-centred services required to meet new government policies. Achieving the transformation of social care will require the implementation of new systems that are designed to capture person-centred information.

Snowden’s model confirms that where systems are required to deal with issues that can reasonably be regarded as amenable to process engineering – for example in financial systems – then the techniques of process engineering are entirely appropriate. But the collection of information on individuals’ needs and the outcomes they desire requires an approach that is less structured and more flexible; the data are, by definition, not amenable to simple categorisation and will resemble semi-structured free text. This will require the application of relatively novel technologies, applying ideas such as emergence and techniques like concept and content analysis, to ensure that evidence of individuals’ needs and aspirations is collected and used both to demonstrate adequate performance and to ensure that commissioning decisions are made on the best available information.

A possible way forward may be found in the design of the electronic social care record. Systems such as this tend to be flexibly-

structured collections of documents, reflecting the content of the paper case file but also the underlying structure of the information being collated. However, there is no software marketed as suitable for social care that enables this information to be analysed statistically without a great deal of manual coding and effort; authorities will need to look at packages aimed at market research and academic disciplines such as anthropology to find suitable products. Such systems will also reflect the cultural changes that are required in the transformation of social care and reduce the dissonance between the structure inherent in social care provision and the structure of existing information systems.

In a transformed social care organisation, evidence of good performance will include anecdotal as well as statistical information, showing that policies are being implemented. It will also be possible for transformed systems to identify areas where policies may not be having the desired effect and monitor the effectiveness of remedies as they are applied; they may therefore become ways to evaluate the quality of management and leadership in a much more effective way than the purely numerical systems applied in the Performance Assessment Framework.

However, the process of assessment and care management makes an intrinsic assumption that it is possible to understand the effect of the work or inputs agreed; during an assessment, the social care worker evaluates the needs of a potential service user and agrees a package of care intended to meet those needs and achieve agreed outcomes. This places the assessment and care management system in the 'systems theory' area of Snowden's model, suggesting that it should be possible to model the process via diagrams such as Diagram 1, looking at the flow of work around a social care organisation. This allows simple operational information (number of referrals, number of assessments

completed) to be viewed in context rather than in isolation and offers a way to track the constantly changing state of the organisation.

But for all the worthy intentions of policy makers, the reality of organisational life is that, as Stacey and Griffin state, the blueprint may be good but individuals in each organisation will decide for themselves how to respond to the demands made on them. Well designed, robust systems based on an understanding of the complexity of the task could encourage good practice but may also be seen as intrusive and overbearing. It will be important to ensure that the different components of the system work smoothly together and that the boundaries between them are placed in the correct locations; otherwise the unintended consequences of the new systems will be no better than those causing difficulties in social care at the moment. Practitioners will find it hard to believe that change could at last be change for the better.

References

Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) (2009) *Performance Assessment Guide 2008-09*, accessed 21/7/09 at http://www.cqc.org.uk/_db/_documents/20090130%20PAG%20final.pdf.

Care Services Efficiency Delivery (CSED) (2008a) *Assessment and Care Management Process Improvement*, accessed 12/2/09 at <http://www.csed.csip.org.uk/silo/files/sbpi.pdf>.

Care Services Efficiency Delivery (CSED) (2008b) *Integrated Care and Support Planning efficiency delivery – Supporting Sustainable Transformation*, accessed 21/7/09 at http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/_oldCSEDAAssets/sbcpp.pdf.

Checkland, P.B. & Poulter, J. (2006) *Learning for Action: A Short Definitive Account of Soft Systems Methodology and its Use for Practitioners, Teachers and Students*, Chichester: Wiley.

Department of Health (2006) *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say: A New Direction for Community Services*, London: HMSO.

Department of Health (2007) *Putting People First: A Shared Vision and Commitment to the Transformation of Adult Social Care*, London: HMSO.

Department of Health (2009) *Shaping the Future of Care Together*, London: HMSO.

Downs, C.G. (2007) 'Complexity, connectivity and management information systems: new possibilities for understanding social care?', *Research, Policy & Planning*, **25**(2/3), pp.93-102.

Forder, A. (1976) 'Social work and system theory', *British Journal of Social Work*, **6**(1), pp. 23-42.

Leighninger, R.D.(Jr.) (1977) 'Systems theory and social work: a re-examination', *Journal of Education for Social Work*, **13**(3), pp.44-9.

Morgan, G. (1986) *Images of Organisation*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Norman, D. (1988) *The Design of Everyday Things*, New York: Doubleday/Currency.

Senge, P. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Doubleday: New York.

Snowden, D. (2005) 'Multi-ontology sense-making: a new simplicity in decision making', *Management Today Yearbook 2005*, also available from <http://www.cognitive-edge.com>.

SPSS inc. (2002) *LexiQuest Mine (executive paper)* accessed 9/2/09 at www.spss.com/downloads/Papers.cfm as SPSS_LQMineWhitePaper.pdf.

Stacey, R. & Griffin, D. (2006) *Complexity and the Experience of Managing in Public Sector Organisations*, Routledge: Oxford.

Sweeney, A.D.P. (2008) 'Electronic government-citizen relationships - exploring citizen perspectives', *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, **4**(2), pp. 101-16.

Ulrich, W. (2003) 'A brief introduction to critical systems thinking for professionals & citizens', accessed 2/1/09 at http://www.geocities.com/csh_home/cst_brief.html.

Notes on Contributors

Jacky Smith is Principal Information & Research Officer in the Community & Adult Care Directorate in Gloucestershire County Council. She has been involved in social care for many years and is currently responsible for the development of a data warehouse providing social care information for Gloucestershire. Her research interests are in complexity, systems theory and text analytics. The views in this article are her own and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the directorate.

Address for Correspondence

Jacky Smith
Performance Information Team
Community and Adult Care Directorate
Bearland Wing
Shire Hall
Gloucester
GL1 2TR

Email: jacky.smith@gloucestershire.gov.uk
jwsmith@phonecoop.coop
Telephone: 01452 427058

Measuring resilience in childhood using data from the Tellus Surveys

Katie Riches^{1&2}, Mary Acton¹, Graham Moon³ and Hayden Ginns²

¹ University of Portsmouth

² Portsmouth City Council

³ University of Southampton

Abstract

An adequate population measure of the emotional well-being of children and young people has long been a gap in the portfolio of outcome measures. This paper considers the potential utility of the concept of resilience. Resilience has been described as the capacity of individuals to negotiate challenges successfully without experiencing long-term harm. The concept of resilience was operationalised drawing on existing literature and a scale of resilience was developed from questions in the national Tellus survey. The relevance and utility of the scale was explored using data from Tellus for a case study city. Scores on the resilience scale were compared with factors or behaviours that the literature suggests are likely to be present in resilient children. It was found that children with higher resilience scores were more likely to present with characteristics and behaviours consistent with positive emotional well-being.

Keywords: Resilience, outcome measurement, children and young people

Introduction

One of the aims of the *Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework* is for children to be emotionally and mentally healthy (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2008). The National Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007) confirms the centrality of enhancing children's emotional well-being:

Emotional well-being and good mental health are crucial for every aspect of a child's life. ... Good social and emotional skills are vital for healthy personal development. They build resilience and reduce the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviour. (p.35)

Until recently, through the Annual Performance Assessment (APA), central government requested that Local Authorities provide data on process measures related to specialist mental health services e.g. waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental

Health Services (CAMHS) and referrals from the Youth Justice Service. These measures considered the adequacy of the service response to the children who are referred to CAMHS but did not address nor attempt to measure the emotional well-being of the majority of the population of children and young people in a child-centred manner.

The roll out of a national, annual survey of school children (Tellus) provided an opportunity to develop a population level, outcome-focused measure of emotional well-being. The government saw this opportunity and developed a single performance measure of the emotional health of children from a combination of responses to the Tellus survey for the National Indicator Set (NIS). The NIS measure is described as the percentage of children who enjoy good relationships with family and friends (Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), 2008). The definition of 'good' was not determined. Although good

relationships are integral to emotional well-being, there are arguably many other important aspects which can protect a child's emotional well-being.

This paper focuses on resilience as a measure of child emotional well-being. The importance of resilience to childhood well-being has been highlighted by Newman (2004). Tellus survey data provide information on several factors that contribute to a child's resilience. The paper explores the concept of resilience before considering the utility of Tellus data for measuring resilience and presenting an empirical illustration of that utility.

Resilience

Emotional well-being can be defined as "*the emotional and spiritual resilience which allows us to enjoy life and survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and other's self worth*" (Mental Health Foundation, 2005, p.8).

Resilience appears to be recognised as integral to well-being. It has been strongly developed in the psychological sphere (Masten & Powell, 2003) but has also been used in relation to children in need in social care (Gilligan, 2001), as a predictive factor for offending behaviour in youth justice through the risk and protection model (Rutter *et al.*, 1998), and in the field of education, where it is termed academic resilience (Martin & Marsh, 2007). The risk and protection model is particularly relevant to a focus on childhood and services aiming to promote child well-being. The model links risk factors that increase the likelihood of negative outcomes, to protective factors that decrease that likelihood (Durlak, 1998). Both factor types can eventuate at different levels - child, family, school or community - and both factors and levels interact in a complex and multifaceted way to promote or challenge resilience. Interventions can

focus on particular combinations of risk and protective factors.

Resilience can be defined as "a process, capacity or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenges or threatening circumstances ... good outcomes despite high risk status, sustained competence under threat and recovery from trauma" (Kumpfer, 1999, p.181). This ability to cope positively or to be resilient can be confidently regarded as a contributory factor to emotional well-being in children, because "resilient children are better equipped to resist stress and adversity, cope with change and uncertainty and to recover faster and more completely from traumatic events or episodes" (Newman & Blackburn, 2002a, p.3). Ungar (2004) provides a timely reminder that resilience among young people need not always positively reflect social norms; some groups may survive and achieve resilience through antisocial activity.

In trying to understand the factors that contribute to resilience, research has tended to focus on children who have experienced good outcomes despite suffering adverse circumstances and high risks (Kumpfer, 1999; Schoon & Bynner, 2003). As a consequence, those children perceived as resilient are defined by the outcomes associated with the presence of resilience. This is problematic because of the myriad of factors associated with those outcomes and the difficulty in separating out the influence of each. To confuse matters further, some of the 'outcomes' of resilience are also factors that promote resilience. The presence or absence of resilience may also only become observable once a person is required to deal with a negative event. This does not mean that those who do not experience negative events are not resilient: the idea of 'everyday' resilience has been introduced by Masten (2001) and explored in the field of education where it is termed 'academic buoyancy' (Martin & Marsh, 2007).

It is generally agreed that resilience is not an objective item that people either have or do not have. It can be created through the dynamic interaction between a person and their environment. Children will act to increase their resilience by seeking out attachments to caring others. Resilience is also dynamic rather than static and thus should be able to be influenced through intervention. It is not, therefore, simply the resilience factors that are important but the interaction between those factors and the environment, as well as the experiences of responding positively to challenges, which build resilience.

In measuring resilience, it is important to consider the factors and processes that tend to co-exist within people who have shown themselves to be resilient and to use these as a guide to predict whether people are likely to be resilient. While there is no definite agreement, there are a number of factors that most would agree are common to

resilient people (Kumpfer, 1999; Newman, 2004). These include both internal characteristics and external or environmental characteristics (Table 1).

Numerous research studies have considered the factors that have enabled individuals, often children, to achieve positive outcomes when the odds seem stacked against them and in circumstances where their peers have fared less well (Masten *et al.*, 1990; Luthar & Cushing, 1999; Goldstein & Brooks, 2005; Condly 2006; Schoon 2006; McMurray *et al.*, 2008). The resulting observation that some children are more resilient than others in the face of risk has meant that studies exploring resilience frequently include measurements of risk, often using metric scales. Risk factors tend to co-exist and have a cumulative effect; scales are therefore more useful than a single indicator as they seem to account for more variance in outcomes than any individual indicators.

Table 1 Contributory factors in resilience

The Child	The Family	The Environment
Temperament (active, good-natured)	Warm supportive parents	Supportive extended family
Gender: Female prior to adolescence Male during adolescence	Good parent-child relationships	Successful school experiences
Age (being younger)	Parental harmony	Friendship networks
Cognitive competence	Valued social role	Valued social role e.g. a job, volunteering, helping neighbours
Social skills	Close relationship with one parent	Close relationship with an unrelated mentor
Personal awareness		Member of religious faith
Feelings of empathy		
Internal locus of control		
Humour		
Attractiveness		
Physical well-being (health, diet)		

(Adapted from Newman & Blackburn, 2002 a&b, and Kumpfer, 1999)

Once the presence of risk has been confirmed, the focus shifts to the measurement of protective factors that contribute to resilience such as those in Table 1. A summative scalar approach is again often used for the same reasons that scales of risk are useful: they account for more variance in outcomes. Care must always be taken to explore the separate components of such scales to ensure that critical trends are not obscured by the aggregation.

A further general issue with the measurement of resilience is that research studies tend not to have a reference group against which to compare the results of the sample so the sample is its own reference. This means that researchers can not be certain whether those who seem to be resilient are objectively resilient or are simply the most resilient among that sample (Luthar & Cushing, 1999, p.140).

Resilience research has made much use of data from longitudinal cohort studies (Schoon, 2006). Early studies include analyses of data from the National Child Development Study (Pilling, 1990) and the Child Health and Education Study (Osborn, 1990) which considered the factors that appear to have the most influence on a child experiencing successful outcomes or adjustment. Experiences of the cohort at a younger age and their situations in later childhood or adulthood were explored to identify the most common and strongest influences. Osborn (1990) suggested the most powerful influence was the behaviour and attitude of the parents although, for families of low socio-economic status, this needed to be supported by strong marital relationships and friendship networks. Pilling (1990) also identified a supportive family as a highly influential factor, particularly support for education. Opportunities for positive experiences as well as some personal characteristics e.g. gender and temperament, have also been found to be significant (Newman &

Blackburn, 2002b, p.11). Schoon (2006), in more recent work, has significantly extended these conclusions through a comparison of the National Child Development Study and the later British Birth Cohort Study, noting how resilience can be undermined by problems of social care and educational service provision and delivery.

Method

The above research suggests that any population measure of resilience would need to be summative and points to factors identified as important in resilience. Attention now turns to the utility of the Tellus survey for the identification of resilience.

Data

Tellus is an annual survey of school children in years 6, 8 and 10 in England that is administered by Ofsted and DCSF and completed online by children during the school day. The responses are used to inform inspection judgements and commissioning. Tellus2 was conducted nationally in 2007 and Tellus3 in 2008. The national sample for Tellus2 was 111,325 children from 141 Local Authorities. The data provided for Tellus is not used to measure the performance of schools (data is anonymised when it is fed back to the Local Authority) so there is no incentive to select brighter or better behaved children to complete the survey. The questions cover a variety of areas of children's lives including diet, exercise, aspirations, feelings about the local area, participation in activities, substance use, worries, enjoyment of school and bullying (OFSTED, 2007). Though the questions in Tellus were not developed to measure resilience, close examination suggested that responses to questions in the 'emotional health' section could be combined with questions from other sections to develop a scale for measuring resilience.

Tellus2 asked 9 questions that could be seen as directly relating to emotional health: feeling happy, feeling sad, having friends, being looked out for by family, getting angry, feeling anxious or stressed, worrying a lot, being nervous and asking for help. Tellus3 removed several of these questions so they were not considered for inclusion in the scale. If a scale is to have utility as a population level measure there needs to be the possibility of year-on-year comparison.

The questions directly relating to emotional health that are common to both versions of Tellus relate to feeling happy and having friends. A question is asked in both surveys that can be interpreted as feeling supported by, or close to, family. Having friends and being supported by one's family are undoubtedly central factors in resilience but a measure comprised of these two factors neglects the important influence of the wider environment and school. Feeling happy could also be seen as an outcome of resilience rather than a component and thus to combine the outcome with influences does not make for a logical measure.

Tellus asks a number of other questions that relate to factors important in determining resilience. Factors common to both Tellus2 and Tellus3 were:

- Gender
- Age
- Temperament (generally happy)
- Physical health (and diet)
- Good parent-child relationships
- Successful school experiences
- Friendship networks
- A valued social role.

Children can be proactive in negotiating to increase their resilience, for example by seeking out help from others. Several questions in Tellus also addressed how safe children felt in various situations – home, school and while travelling. It could be

argued that, if a child felt threatened or unsafe at school, then a response characteristic of building resilience would be to seek help from responsive adults and, in so doing, increase her or his feeling of safety. In this way, some questions could be used as proxies for interaction with the environment.

Developing the measure

It was important that the measure of resilience was a scale because the more resilience a child possesses, the more likely it is that they will cope positively with exposure to risk or adversity (Newman, 2004). In considering which factors should be included in the scale, it was essential to include where possible the factors that have been identified in research as being present in resilient children and as being influential. Another key issue was the utility of the scale as an indicator. If the factors included were not open to intervention, if they could never potentially be impacted upon by services, then, in this instance, they were deemed less important.

Of those factors highlighted above, several, e.g. age, gender and temperament, are not open to intervention and, instead of being part of the scale, can act as a reference point by which to consider the face validity of the scale. The suggestion would be that, when explored by age and gender, a valid scale would show that younger children were most likely to score highly for resilience and that younger girls would be the most resilient (Newman & Blackburn, 2002b). The factors eventually included in the scale (Table 2) were therefore proximal factors that contribute to resilience.

Table 2 Tellus questions included in the scale and the corresponding resilience factor

Question	Response	Corresponding Resilience Factor
I have one or more good friends	True	Friendship networks
My parents and family look out for me (Tellus2)/ When I'm really worried about something I can talk to my Mum or Dad (Tellus3)	True	Good parent–child relationship
I enjoy school	Always/most of the time	Successful school experiences
How safe or unsafe from being hurt by other people do you feel at school?	Very/quite safe	Ability to actively engage with environment
How healthy are you?	Very/Quite	Physical health

When operationalised into a scale, the responses listed in the table were weighted equally, with the exception of the self-reported health question where 'very healthy' was allocated two points, and 'quite healthy' was allocated one. There were only three possible responses to the healthiness question, the third being 'unhealthy'. The lack of a 'little bit unhealthy' response meant that children were less likely to categorise themselves as unhealthy and more likely to say they were quite healthy. The middle category is therefore likely to encompass a wide range of perceptions of health, including some who may not be particularly healthy. It was, therefore, felt necessary not only to differentiate between this category and those who definitely felt they were healthy but also to recognise that being quite healthy could potentially contribute to resilience. To resolve this, the 'very healthy' group were ascribed an additional point. Any child could, therefore, reach a points total within the range of 0-6, 0 meaning that they have no resilience factors in their life, and 6 meaning that they have all the identified resilience factors. For reporting as a scale, these point scores were collapsed into three categories according to their distribution – poor resilience (0-3), fair resilience (4) and high resilience (5-6). As

the majority of observations concentrated in the 'fair' or 'high' groupings, this grouping of scores into a three-fold categorisation was felt to be an appropriate approach to identifying lower levels of resilience while at the same time ensuring an adequate sample size within that part of the overall distribution that was skewed towards higher levels of resilience.

Results and discussion

The Tellus2 sample in the case study city was 403 children. This was considerably smaller than the target sample of 1300 but, despite this, Ofsted stated that the respondents were representative of their peers in the case study city based on gender, ethnicity and receipt of free school meals. The schools that took part were located in different areas of the city and varied in the proportion of children with special educational needs on their roll from 15% to 52.4%. Two pupil referral units also took part.

The majority of the respondents registered as having either fair or high resilience (a score of 4 or above) (Figure 1). It would be expected that the 46% who have high resilience (scored 5 or 6) would be in a good position to maintain positive emotional

well-being when they experience adversity. For the 30% who had fair resilience (score of 4), their emotional well-being could be negatively affected by difficult circumstances of long duration but, in most situations, they should be able to cope successfully (Newman, 2004). This leaves 23% (score of 3 or below) for whom resilience was at a low enough level to suggest that they might struggle to cope positively with life’s challenges, so jeopardising their emotional well-being.

Literature has suggested that resilience is likely to decrease as adolescence progresses and to differ by gender (Condly, 2006; Schoon, 2006). When looking at the influence of age and gender separately, the pattern of resilience within the case study city respondents seems to concur with that predicted by the literature. The resilience levels decrease with age (Table 3) and girls are generally more likely to report higher resilience than boys (Table 4). In both cases, the differences between the groups were statistically significant.

Figure 1 Resilience categories for case study city respondents

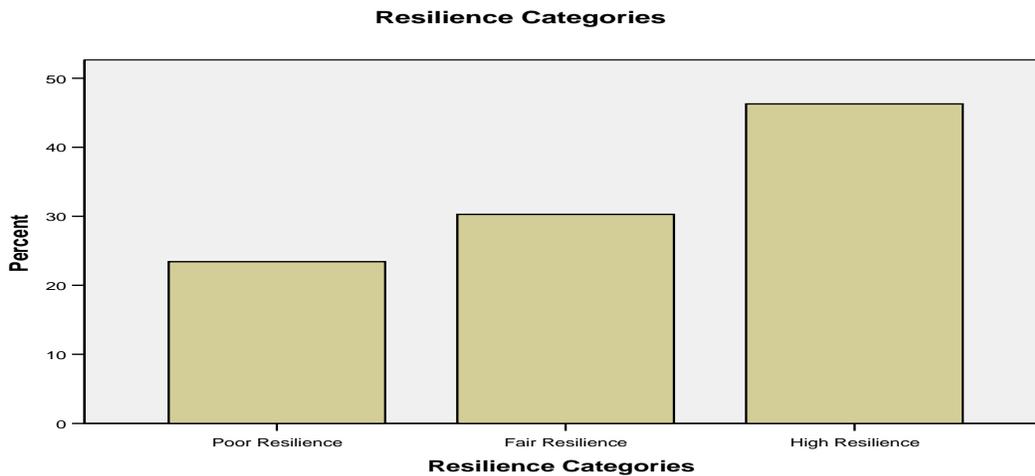


Table 3 Resilience score by age (Column percentages)

Resilience Score	Year 6	Year 10
Good (5-6)	54.3%	32.3%
Fair (4)	27.8%	34.6%
Poor (0-3)	17.9%	33.1%
N	223	127

Age differences in Resilience scores are statistically significant $p < .01$ (Chi Sq.)

Table 4 Resilience score by gender (Column percentages)

Resilience Score	Girls	Boys
Good (5-6)	46.8%	45.8%
Fair (4)	34.1%	26.5%
Poor (0-3)	19.1%	27.7%
N	173	177

When the resilience scores were computed by age (cohort) and gender together (Figure 2), it emerged that younger children were more likely to have high resilience. Low resilience was much more common in year ten girls compared to year six girls; year ten girls had the lowest levels of high resilience. These findings are consistent with expectations from previous work (Newman & Blackburn, 2002b; Rutter, 2007).

Associations between resilience and outcomes

Tellus does not provide objective information on outcome measures as its aim is to gather the views of young people. It is, however, important for the face validity of the scale to explore whether the children that the scale is highlighting as resilient are the ones who are engaging in less risk and who are reporting themselves as emotionally healthy. It is possible to compare the scores on the resilience scale against self-reported risk taking behaviour and against the responses to the relevant emotional health questions. The strength of relationships was tested for statistical significance using the t-test in SPSS version 16 (SPSS for Windows, 2007). Table 5 shows the presence and strength of associations between outcomes of alcohol use, substance use, reports of anxiety and stress, management of emotions and happiness and resilience levels for each cohort. The results are presented by cohort

in recognition of the influence of age and gender.

Although not all of the associations reach statistical significance, a clear trend can be seen in both tables suggesting that higher levels of resilience are associated with self-reports of good emotional health and less likelihood of engagement in risky behaviour. For both boys and girls across years six and ten, there is a degree of certainty that resilience is associated with being happy with life.

Conclusion

The analysis of data available from the case study city Tellus survey suggests that Tellus can be used to provide a population measure of the resilience of children and young people. The factors included in the scale have been identified through research as being important for resilience and are also factors that are open to influence from service interventions and activities. If services are put in place that aim to improve the factors included in the resilience scale e.g. parenting programmes to improve parent-child relationships or the continued use of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme in schools, then it could be hypothesised that the outcomes will move in the desired direction. At the same time, however, it is important to acknowledge, following Ungar (2004), that there can be negative aspects to resilience.

Figure 2 Levels of resilience by age and gender

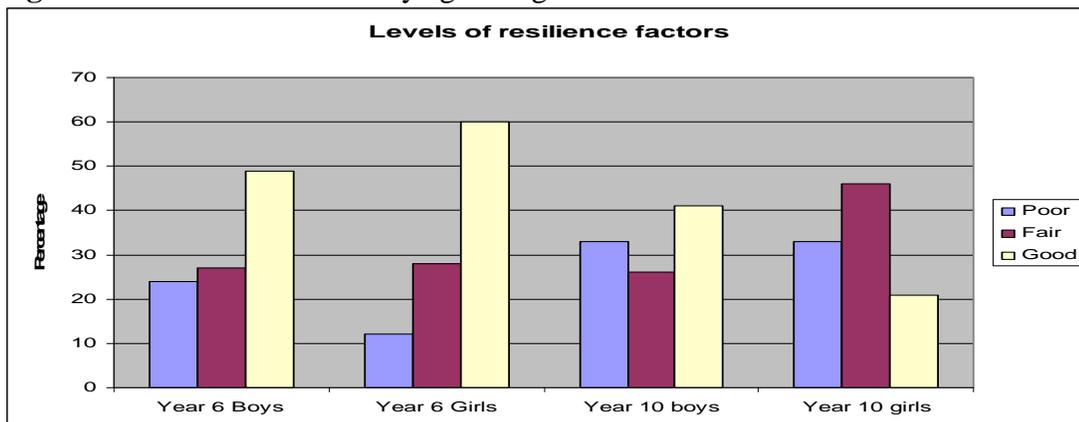


Table 5 Association and pair-wise t tests between average level of resilience and outcome/behaviour

<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Year 6</i>		<i>Year 10</i>	
		<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
Happy with life	True	<u>5.03</u>	<u>4.68</u>	<u>4.29</u>	<u>4.58</u>
	Not entirely true	<u>4.4</u>	<u>3.86</u>	<u>3.39</u>	<u>3.4</u>
Worry a lot	Not True	<u>5.17</u>	4.56	3.95	<u>4.4</u>
	True or a bit true	<u>4.64</u>	4.23	3.61	<u>3.74</u>
Sad	Not True	4.85	4.51	<u>4.67</u>	4.2
	True or a bit true	4.71	4.21	<u>3.54</u>	3.76
Often lose temper	Not True	<u>4.87</u>	4.47	3.85	4.2
	True or a bit true	<u>4.35</u>	4.17	3.44	3.76
Drunk alcohol	No	4.86	<u>4.9</u>	4	4.28
	Yes	4.36	<u>4.12</u>	3.78	3.96
Smoked	No	4.76	4.42	3.83	4.28
	Yes	4.67	4.00	3.63	3.93

x.xx underlined italics indicates statistically significant difference between cells ($p > 0.05$)

This study has limitations that must be acknowledged. An examination of contributory factors to resilience based on secondary data can only be a partial measure of emotional well-being. It cannot be used to state definitively which children are faring well emotionally but it can provide an indication of those who are likely to struggle with remaining emotionally healthy. Neither does the scale cover all aspects of resilience due to the limits of the information contained within the questions and responses to Tellus - such are the difficulties of developing measures from secondary data. This also means that there is little scope for enhancing the survey to provide better validity checks. The resilience scale was not developed in response to a particular risk or negative outcome and, as a result, testing it against specific outcomes may not be particularly informative. For example, outcomes such as smoking and alcohol use may not be valid as the particular aspects of resilience that mitigate against substance misuse may not have been included in the scale (Luthar & Cushing, 1999). The statistical associations

found between the resilience scale and the substance misuse responses do not pretend to explain the patterns in substance misuse, merely to indicate that the scale itself has some predictive validity. It is possible that these associations may not remain as expected across a wider range of outcomes (e.g. educational achievement or good behaviour) but, unfortunately, the relevant data is not available to consider such associations and the confidentiality and anonymity promised as part of the administration of the survey means that record linkage to establish such connections is not possible.

The empirical work described in this paper has been undertaken using a relatively small sample of data from one city. It is hoped that agreements can be reached with other Local Authorities regarding access to the Tellus data in their areas to enable explorations of patterns of resilience in different Local Authorities and investigate whether their distributions of resilience by age and gender are as predicted by the literature. It would be particularly

interesting to explore further the associations between resilience scores and self-reported outcomes and, if enough Local Authorities share their data, then it may be possible to consider the impact of resilience levels on other standard outcomes such as educational attainment.

In summary, this paper has considered the utility of Tellus data for the measurement and identification of resilience among school-age children. It has shown that it is possible to develop a simple index that captures resilience and is associated in expected ways with age and gender and with a range of outcome indicators. The potential for interventions that draw on ideas of resilience and have the potential to enhance child well-being is clear.

References

- Condly, S. J. (2006) 'Resilience in children: a review of literature with implications for education, *Urban Education*, **41**(3), pp.211-36.
- DCSF (Department for Children, Schools & Families) (2007) *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures*, Cm 7280, London: HMSO, accessed December 2009 at http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/downloads/The_Childrens_Plan.pdf.
- DCSF (2008) *Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework*, London: DCSF, accessed December 2009 at <http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00331-2008.pdf>.
- DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government) (2008) *National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions*, London: HMSO.
- Durlak, J. (1998) 'Common risk and protective factors in successful prevention programs', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, **68**(4), pp.512-20.
- Gilligan, R. (2001) 'Promoting Positive Outcomes for Children in Need: The Assessment of Protective Factors', in Horwarth, J. (ed.), *The Child's World: Assessing Children in Need*, London: JKP, pp.139-50.
- Goldstein, S. & Brooks, R. (2005) *Handbook of Resilience in Children*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.
- Kumpfer, K. (1999) 'Defining Resilience', in Glantz, M. & Johnson, J. (eds.), *Resilience and Development: Positive Life Adaptations*, New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, pp.179-224.
- Luthar, S. & Cushing, G. (1999) 'Measurement Issues in the Empirical Study of Resilience: An Overview', in Glantz, M. & Johnson, J. (eds.), *Resilience and Development: Positive Life Adaptations*, New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, pp.129-160.
- Martin, A. & Marsh, H. (2007) Academic buoyancy: towards an understanding of students' everyday academic resilience', *Journal of School Psychology*, **46**(1), pp.53-83.
- Masten, A. (2001) 'Ordinary magic: resilience processes in development', *American Psychologist*, **56**(3), pp.227-38.
- Masten, A., Best, K. & Garmezy, N. (1990) 'Resilience and development: contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity', *Development and Psychopathology*, **2**(4), pp.425-44.

Notes on Contributors

Katie Riches qualified as a social worker in 2002. She worked in Child Protection teams for two Local Authorities before managing a Knowledge Transfer Programme project between Portsmouth City Council and University of Portsmouth.

Mary Acton was Senior Research Fellow in the School of Health Sciences and Social Work at the University of Portsmouth. She has worked as a practitioner, lecturer and researcher in Social Work over many years, with a particular interest in the application of research to social work practice.

Graham Moon is Professor of Geography at the University of Southampton. His research interests focus on the use of secondary data for the measurement of needs and outcomes in health and social care.

Hayden Ginns is Partnerships, Policy and Commissioning Manager within Children's Services at Portsmouth City Council. He has a background in service development and management for vulnerable children and families. He now leads on the Children and Young People's Plan for the city and developing the Children's Trust and its approach to commissioning.

Address for Correspondence

Professor Graham Moon
Centre for Geographical Health Research
School of Geography
University of Southampton
Highfield
SOUTHAMPTON
SO17 1BJ

Email: g.moon@soton.ac.uk

An integrated inspectorate – a time and a place Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales: a case study

Rob Pickford
Health and Social Services Directorate
Welsh Assembly Government

What follows is a personal comment and my views are not necessarily those of the Welsh Assembly Government where I recently occupied the post of Chief Inspector of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales. Much of what follows stems from a paper I presented to the 3rd Annual Cambridge Conference on Regulation, Inspection and Improvement in 2008. It sets out the position of inspection of social services in Wales and illustrates a number of key changes that mark out a new direction for the culture, structure and operation of inspection. It is very much hoped that this paper and the many issues and challenges discussed might be of interest to RPP's wide readership and whose comments and constructive criticisms would be very welcome to the author and the inspectorate in Wales.

The roles and the place of inspection and regulation in securing improvement continue to be the subject of much discussion across the UK. Whilst there seems to be relatively little debate that public assurance and protection are appropriate roles (somehow self-evident?) there has been more debate about how these roles are carried out and how inspectorates play the role increasingly expected of them to contribute more widely to the improvement agenda. This paper examines how one inspectorate has tackled the creation of an integrated inspectorate.

Since 2002, there have been two inspectorates in Wales for social services and social care. For some years the Social Services Inspectorate Wales (SSIW) focused in particular on local authority social services accountabilities. To this was

added the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW), a new social care regulator, itself an amalgamation of 27 registration and inspection units. In July 2006, proposals to integrate these two inspectorates were announced and, on 1st April 2007, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) was born.

What drove this particular process of integration? Perhaps crucially it was not crude resource-optimisation. The two inspectorates were already part of the Welsh Assembly Government in which 'back office' functions were already shared. The key driver was to create an integrated view of social services and social care.

There was recognition that there is not somehow a 'right' or 'wrong' way to re-configure inspectorates. Integration is a nice warm and affirming word. The point, however, is that integration is not free standing; it has its meaning in the context within which it sits. It is the particularity of the context in Wales that defined the nature of this integration process.

Social policy in Wales had already diverged significantly from models that pre-existed and also from those that were emerging elsewhere in the UK. Central to this was a belief in the concept of social services as an integrated service and with an equal emphasis on voice and choice in public service reform. The Assembly Government also had responsibilities for health services and for education and lifelong learning. The inspectorate architecture needed to mirror that policy matrix. Wales had recently created a health service inspectorate, Health Inspectorate Wales, and had an education

and training inspectorate, Estyn. The aim, therefore, was to create an integrated inspectorate for social services and social care. The inspectorates would mirror the policy groupings of the Assembly Government.

We wanted, to quote part of the benefit realisation statement, “a still stronger view of social services and care – from strategy to delivery - and of the pathways followed by citizens of all ages through the public independent and voluntary sectors”. The aim of the new arrangements was not simply an integrated inspectorate but, rather, an integrated approach to the way in which inspection contributed to the delivery of services. The aim was not merger of two inspectorates but a tool to support the delivery of integrated services that met the policy agenda for Wales.

For shorthand, we called this model the ‘circle of care’ i.e. one inspectorate that could have overview of social services and care from commissioning through contracting to assessment and care management, to provision and into leadership and management. The immediate effect has been to begin dissolving the boundary between the traditional activities of regulation and inspection. These are themselves key parts of this circle rather than discrete identities that need interface management.

The most obvious change is at a practice level. Previously, as a regulator, when faced with a problematic service a number of tools were to hand, from persuasion through to enforcement. These were, however, actions taken about that *individual* service. At times this is right and proper. There are, however, issues that encompass a number of services in an area or indeed a number of services owned by an individual authority. They often prompt questions about the quality of commissioning, the quality of contracting and of the care management activity. The integrated inspectorate is more able to

deliver an effective intervention strategy across these domains. We are able to focus more effectively on the underpinning causes of the problem and less on the symptoms, thereby achieving longer-lasting improvement.

This approach is one based on a systems view of the world. It understands that the right lever to pull to achieve change is not always the one immediately to hand. This was articulated in our aims which address the realm of providing ‘professional advice’. This aim recognises that it is likely to be more effective if advice is “based on a whole systems approach to services generally”.

We have also looked at how we integrate knowledge. We all know that inspectorates hold very large quantities of information. The challenge is how we turn that information into knowledge. The information we have held has been boxed up in a way that reflected our previous separate responsibilities. The regulator held details based around settings e.g. on the quality of care plans in children’s homes, on individual services. SSIW held considerable information about the work emanating from local authorities e.g. on individual planning for children. By looking at this information in a new, integrated way we are increasingly able to look at the quality of care planning from assessment through to plans within the children’s home i.e. not just the intent but the delivery to the service user. We are also able to look at that local authority’s delivery of care planning and aggregate that for Wales as a whole. That knowledge itself is able to drive our inspection priority setting. It enables us to become a knowledge-led inspectorate. This was another core aim of integration, “a larger capacity to analyse patterns and trends identified through regulatory and inspection activity and to provide suggestions to help shape policy”.

We have also been driven by what we have termed the ‘limits of regulation’. In the six

years since the Care Standards Act and its regulations came into force in Wales, we have seen real and measurable improvements in care services. The framework of regulations and the actions of the regulator have undoubtedly played a part in that. This has been achieved because a framework of public- and politically-driven expectations has been set, because of regular inspection and by the active pursuit of these regulations through compliance and enforcement action. Experience has taught us, however, that change that sticks, including the tackling of serious service deficiency, often requires a strong partnership between providers. This means primarily those who have a statutory duty to meet regulations, the commissioner and contractor, including care management who have their own duty of care, and the regulator. It has been too easy in the past to see tougher regulation as the answer to the latest crisis. The discussion in Wales has been around developing a more mature partnership between these three roles. This requires an understanding of the powers and limitations of each and, in particular, a much closer understanding between the contractor and the regulator. Where this has not been secure, change has proved problematic.

As we began to work through this concept of the circle of care it became increasingly obvious that we needed to think differently about how we were organised. It became clear fairly early on that the circle of care would be best delivered if we started to 'live' this circle of care in our own structure. Hence, we modelled the behaviour we believed was needed. We have now moved to a regional model that is responsible for the delivery of most of our work. Small national teams undertake national studies and inspections and act as the focus for professional advice.

Integration also helped us clarify our purpose. An examination of our statutory duties revealed that they were not, at core,

about regulation and inspection; they were to 'encourage improvement'. The title on the tin, 'inspectorate', was misleading. We had a wide range of tools, including regulatory powers, inspection, reviews, studies, appraising the evidence base and relevance of research findings and professional advice roles with Ministers, but these were there to encourage improvement. Thus, whilst we had a public assurance role this was now very strongly matched by an improvement function.

'Encourage' is a positive word. It means a number of things but central to its meanings are "to give somebody hope, confidence, or courage". Giving confidence and courage are interesting concepts to tease out for an inspectorate. It is an active word, also meaning to motivate somebody to take a course of action or continue doing something, to assist something to occur or increase. It is not however a word that is about taking over, doing for someone or standing in their place. It links well with words like support, persuade and promote.

We concluded that we needed to look at our programme of work in this light. Regulation was already some way down the road of major reform, shifting from a one size fits all model to a more proportionate approach. Local authority inspection had been dominated by Joint Reviews. Joint with the Audit Commission and latterly the Wales Audit Office, these JRs were a standardised, five-yearly rolling programme. Whilst in England they had stopped after the first round, in Wales we were almost half way through a second round. They were supported by annual performance evaluation. Their scale and size had driven out thematic work. We concluded, therefore, that they were a child of their time: a time in Wales where there were significant concerns about the quality of provision across our social services. Social services had not fared well in the aftermath of local government reorganisation in Wales.

Our analysis suggested that times had now changed. There was evidence of improvement; local government had a clearer grasp on social services and on performance management. The Welsh Assembly Government (2006) had published a new ten-year strategy for social services – *Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities*. The context had changed. We concluded therefore that the way in which inspection and review should work should also change.

This required thinking through our role in performance management. Ten years ago social services in Wales lacked a performance management framework. SSIW led the creation of a performance measurement and management framework and, in particular for children's services, the national data set to underpin it. The last couple of years have seen these labours come to fruition. Local government social services have, in the main, taken control of their performance measurement and management roles. This allows CSSIW to move away from inspection as largely oriented towards performance management. Inspection is much less the vehicle by which the authority finds out how it is doing. The development of ICT-based solutions has also helped in laying out this path. For example, the development of an ICT solution called 'Ffynnon' which holds performance data giving simultaneous access across Wales, within local authorities from front-line to senior management. We also have access to this. The inspectorate is no longer the major holder of information. Four major implications for the role of CSSIW flowed from this.

Firstly, time, energy and resources are freed to allow us to focus much more on the citizen/service user's experience of services - what it is like on the ground. This provides a much stronger basis for our public assurance role.

Secondly, we can concentrate more on the quality of practice. This is forcing us to think through the professional basis of our work, the need for inspectorates to have the expertise to consider and encourage the improvement in *practice*.

Thirdly, it allows us to concentrate more on the meaning of the information. This provides us with a much stronger basis for our role in providing professional advice to Ministers. The information is free; the value we add is through interpretation.

Fourthly, and crucially, it has given us the confidence to locate clearly the responsibility for reporting on performance and owning of that performance with those accountable for running or commissioning that service. This is a key change. This change is underpinned by the Welsh Assembly Government's proposed Local Government Measure that will impose this duty and also Welsh Government's clarification of the role of the Director of Social Services.

Our joint review programme is halted and is being replaced by a modernised model of review for local government. We are currently consulting on a new model in which the authority reports itself annually and publicly on progress and on plans to tackle the issues faced by the local authority. We will review this plan and produce a bespoke inspection plan for each authority, using the authority's own statement but also the knowledge that we have put together from our work with regulated services in the area, plus other experiences we and other regulators may have had. The outcomes will also feed into the Wales Programme for Improvement, which comprises a wider regulatory plan for the authority.

The integrated CSSIW reflects a fundamental reorientation of our relationship with local authorities; it is a significant repositioning of the role. In

essence, the environment that inspection and regulation once occupied has changed, allowing the nature of inspection and regulation itself to change. It is more than a simple adaptation to that environment. The inspectorate has played a major part in changing that environment.

To repeat, the relationship between the inspectorate and the inspected bodies has altered, and so has the nature of inspection. Underpinning that is a shared understanding that, in the field of social services, there is an inherent complexity and challenge in supporting people who are often not well placed to articulate their needs or defend their interests. The damage of service failure is well known, not only to the service user, clearly the paramount concern, but also to the organisation, its leadership and to the professionals within it. There is, therefore, a shared interest and expectation of external scrutiny. Robust challenge has to be a normal part of our service.

We also agreed that, at the end of the day, change has to come from within, that improvement is likely to be more self-sustaining if it is embraced by those who have got to deliver it. This has allowed a move away from the sterile debate about burden, to one of proportionality. A proportionality model not based on burden to the provider but one based on proportionality to citizen need has driven the thinking. The discussion has not been about less or more inspection but what is necessary, at this point in time, to encourage improvement.

The strategic changes outlined above are also being integrated within a much wider set of partnerships. The Care Council for Wales has played a key role in building up the confidence and skills of the workforce. Our WAG-sponsored Social Services Improvement Agency (separate from CSSIW) has provided practical support to assist change across Wales. The development of increasingly confident

professional leadership through the Association of Directors of Social Services (Cymru) and the Assembly Government's ten-year strategy for social services, *Fulfilled Lives and Supportive Communities* make up a whole systems strategic response. We have positioned CSSIW as an integral partner in these arrangements, not as an external and separate body but as a member of the social services 'family'. We have positioned ourselves as a particular family member, however, with a distinct role. We see ourselves as a member who has particular knowledge of what services are like on the ground and also one who sometimes has to say difficult things and deliver challenging messages to other family members.

The opportunity presented in Wales to deliver what Sir Jeremy Beecham's review team called 'small country governance' has informed the debate. Wales is a country where people know each other and, if that can be combined with mechanisms that build in challenge, then what at times can be difficult conversations can happen in a constructive way. The wider recognition of the importance of engaged leadership is echoed in the engaged nature of inspection.

The final aspect of integration comes from our location as part of the Welsh Assembly Government where we have an explicit role in providing professional advice to Ministers on social services and social care. One of the aims of integration was "more resilience over sustaining and deploying independent professional advice". Integration must not, however, be absorption. It has been important to define the particular contribution of CSSIW, taking care to avoid the twin bear traps of becoming simply another policy advisor or of falling back on (challengeable) claims to privileged viewpoints by dint of professional expertise. Our particular contribution, therefore, comes from our ability to share with policy-makers the reality of service user's experience.

CSSIW's immersion within Assembly Government policy networks has provided closeness to decision-makers which lends this aspect of our integration significant power.

The integration agenda has also required much closer working with other inspectorates. This is a theme worthy of its own consideration. Suffice to say, a growing use of joint inspection and also the development of joint inspection frameworks, for example in children's services, are key parts of the strategic change being delivered.

Regulation and inspection are an integral part of the wider processes of public service improvement. They have their own accountabilities for public assurance, for safeguarding and for improvement. These do not, however, stand alone; they exist in relationship with others. Their roles are not static, they are constantly being negotiated and changed as the environment inspectorates create and exist in changes. This brief reflective note provides an outline of one inspectorate's recent journey through a particular and dynamic landscape. There may be similar or different developments across the other countries of the UK – it would be good to hear about them – perhaps RPP should have a regular spot in their journal for updates from the world of inspection and regulation?

Notes on Contributor

Rob worked as a Social Worker and has held a number of management posts in social services in Wales. He was until recently the Chief Inspector of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales and is now Director of Social Services Wales in the Welsh Assembly Government.

Address for Correspondence

Health and Social Services Directorate
Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Book Reviews

Public Services Inspection in the UK

Davis, H. & Martin, S. (eds.)

London: Jessica Kingsley, 2008, pp.160,
ISBN: 978 1 84310 5275, £18.99 (pbk.)

Are public service inspections having any impact? Should there be a greater inspection emphasis on the outcomes of services? Do the public believe what inspectorates say? These are some of the questions raised in this provocative and self-critical publication on public service inspection. The editors are Steve Martin, Professor of Public Policy and Management at Cardiff University and Howard Davis, Research Manager at the Local Government Centre, Warwick Business School.

There are nine chapters. The first gives the history of public service inspection along with definitions and theories of inspection drawing on the wider regulation literature. This sets the scene for the next five chapters which examine respectively the inspection of local government, adult and children's care, education and skills, health services, and the inspection of criminal justice agencies. The chapters have a common structure intended to analyse the evolution of inspection in each sector, the current arrangements, the impacts of inspection, and the direct and indirect costs. The final three chapters take a wider view. Chapter Seven (Bundred and Grace) looks to a more holistic form of public service regulation. Holistic, they argue, in anticipating a common set of principles and methods shared between inspectorates. Clarke, in contrast, explores the paradoxes in the 'evaluation' of public services, doubting the claimed political independence of the inspectorates. The final chapter attempts to bring together this wide-ranging and sometimes contradictory collection of viewpoints on inspection. A valuable feature of the book is that it has a truly UK-wide scope, the devolved systems of inspection

are described for all four jurisdictions and there are active comparisons between the evolving systems.

Since the book was published, events such as the crisis in the banking sector (which arguably might now be termed a public service) and the failure of safeguarding in a local authority children's service have reinforced the importance of its central issues.

The first of these is the concern over inspection methodology. Bundred and Grace describe the problem as between collecting data on "managerial characteristics rather than ... reflecting improvements in service outcomes or in user satisfaction". These two approaches to inspection data can be termed as *process-driven* (is the process there?) or *outcome-driven* (what are the outcomes of this service or organisation?). Ideally, one would want a mix. However, what Bundred and Grace appear to be saying is that process-driven assessment has tended to dominate; that is, checking a process is present has been of greater significance than checking if the right outcome has been delivered.

Each contributor to the volume concedes that "evaluating the impact of inspection is extremely difficult" (p.140). Evaluation of inspection and regulation is difficult. Regulation is often about risk control and prevention and, as Sparrow points out (2008), if you prevent something happening, to the extent that there is no sign that it happened, it is then difficult to be sure if it is your intervention and not another that is the cause.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of measuring the impact of inspection and the doubts over the methodologies used, the conclusion of the authors is that it has led to improvement. The 'improvement focus' of inspection was

formally introduced through *Inspecting for Improvement* (Office of Public Services Reform, 2003) which explains the purpose of inspection as being to seek continual improvement in the performance of services rather than simply to establish 'compliance' with the regulations or standards. Evidence of improvement is shown through the increasing number of local authorities achieving better grades and ratings.

A recurring question, or possibly anxiety, in the book is the extent to which those inspected might be reproducing what they deduce inspectors are looking for, playing a game to ensure all parties are winners. The chapter by Downe (p.30) reports on the findings of a survey of local government staff revealing their view that they have improved their management of inspection in order to get a more positive inspection report. This is, of course, what has been called in other places 'creative compliance' (McBarnet & Whelan, 1991) or, more recently by Braithwaite, 'ritualistic compliance' (Braithwaite *et al.*, 2007). That some inspectees may be 'amoral calculators' should not come as a surprise (Kagan & Scholtz, 1984).

In dealing forthrightly with the issues of inspection, this is a valuable collection of writings that develops a critical awareness and overview. The contribution from Clarke creates a broader analytical view of inspection that fits well within the frameworks of regulatory and political scholarship. For those wanting to understand more of the origins, theories and practice of inspection, this book is a good place to start.

John Brady

Principal Lecturer in Regulation Studies
Anglia Ruskin University

References

Braithwaite, J., Makkai, T. & Braithwaite, V. (2007) *Regulating Aged Care: Ritualism and the New Pyramid*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Kagan, R. & Scholtz, J. (1984) 'The Criminology of the Corporation and Regulatory Enforcement Strategies', in Hawkins, J. & Thomas, J., *Enforcing Regulation*, Dordrecht: Kluwer-Nijhoff, pp.67-95.

McBarnet, D. & Whelan, C. (1991) 'The elusive spirit of the law: formalism and the struggle for legal control', *The Modern Law Review*, **54**(6), pp.848-73.

Office of Public Services Reform (2003) *Inspecting for Improvement*, London: OPRS.

Sparrow, M.K. (2008) *The Character of Harms: Operational Challenges in Control*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Research Skills for Social Work

Whittaker, A.

Exeter: Learning Matters, 2009, pp.137, ISBN 978 84445 179 1, £16.99 (pbk.)

Research Skills for Social Work is a welcome addition to the growing body of work which makes information about doing research directly available and relevant to social work students and practitioners. It is aimed at final year students to support them in the requirement for small-scale original research that is often associated with projects and dissertations. It is full of examples of research carried out by and for social workers which by their inclusion, makes the application of research to practice relevant and real. One of the most valuable aspects of the book is the analogy made between social work practice and the research process.

The structure of the book is accessible with clearly set out headings and subheadings. The eight chapters cover the stages of the process of doing research for a final level dissertation. The first chapter outlines the skills and knowledge necessary to plan effectively for a dissertation. The important distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches is explored early on and illustrated with case studies from the perspective of a student who is considering how to explore a research question. Examples of research that are directly relevant to social work are included with discussions of research methods and findings.

Chapter Two addresses the literature review which is an essential skill in and of itself whether or not it leads to original research. This chapter will be helpful where students are asked to evaluate existing research rather than carry out original research. Chapters Three to Six introduce students to the four most popular research methods used by social workers: interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and documentary analysis. Direct, practical advice is given

throughout in straightforward language. Balanced discussions are provided regarding the practicalities, advantages and disadvantages of each method. Students will find Chapter Eight on writing up the dissertation very useful. Some of the suggestions are relevant to issues that commonly arise for students in the broader process of writing and are thus applicable beyond the dissertation. It would have been helpful to say at the beginning of the book that the terms 'dissertation', 'project' and 'study' are used interchangeably, rather than explaining this in the introduction to the final chapter, but it will be clear to the reader that the book is intended to be a comprehensive guide to undertaking the research component usually required in the final year of a social work degree - whatever it is called. A glossary is included which explains research terms in user-friendly language.

The place of research in social work practice could have been discussed in more depth, i.e. beyond the presentation of QAA standards, but this was probably beyond the scope of this book. However, the book makes it clear that, as professionals, social workers have a responsibility to engage in the debates about research and reflect on research findings that inform practice.

Research Skills for Social Work will be a must on any research module designed for social work students. Ideally, students should be advised to read it the summer before their final year so they can begin thinking about their dissertation before the pressures of the final year take hold. It will also be an essential introduction to research for any social worker wanting to know the basic elements of the research process and could be useful in encouraging practitioner research.

Dr. Donna Dustin

Principal Lecturer

Department of Applied Social Sciences,
London Metropolitan University

Quality Matters in Children's Services: Messages from Research

Stein, M.

London: Jessica Kingsley, 2009, pp.159, ISBN: 978 1 84310 9266, £19.99 (pbk.)

This book is the latest in the *Messages from Research* series, all of which have brought together key findings from national research studies with the aim of making research evidence both accessible and relevant to children's social care practitioners and managers. It offers an overview of key messages from nine research studies conducted between 2001 and 2007 that were commissioned to examine the impact of the *Quality Protects* programme. This was a five year government initiative launched in 1998, which had an overall aim of improving outcomes for children and young people in need, and particularly looked after children.

The book initially provides contextual information about the *Quality Protects* and the subsequent research programme. It then goes on to describe policy and legislative developments which usefully relate the research findings to the current social care environment. The main content of the book presents the key findings from the research programme and is structured in a way that reflects objectives of the *Quality Protects* programme. The content and findings from the individual studies are presented in separate chapters that, put together, cover the following themes: ensuring stability; safeguarding children; improving life chances of looked after children; and user involvement. All of the chapters on the individual studies briefly examine key issues from the literature, recent policy developments, the main findings from the study, implications for policy and practice and integrated working. They end with a 'Questions for Children's Services' section, designed to promote reflection and thought about issues raised by the studies and their possible relevance for improving outcomes at strategic, operational and practice levels

in organisations. The final chapter discusses the findings and ideas that cut across the studies and that have wider implications for the development of quality services. This is also related to the *Every Child Matters* agenda. A brief summary of each of the research projects is contained in Appendix One.

The author clearly acknowledges the changes in children's social work and children's services since *Quality Protects* and the commencement of the research programme. He presents and explores the findings in relation to the current context. As such, the content, issues and questions raised in this publication have relevance not only for children's social care but also for practitioners, managers and commissioners across Children's Trusts.

As with previous publications in this series, I find the presentation of research evidence in this type of overview format to be really useful. It offers information in an easy to digest way alongside both analysis and discussion of key implications for practice. The incorporation of the 'Questions' sections encourages some real interaction with the text. It also offers a helpful tool for readers at different levels in organisations to consider how the quality of their service might improve to bring about better outcomes. What I particularly like about this publication is the fact that a real effort seems to have been made to link the research to the current children's services context. I also liked the fact that additional materials have been produced and made freely available, designed to help promote and support the implementation of the key messages into practice. These materials can be found on the *Every Child Matters* website: www.ecm.gov.uk/qualitymatters.

Janet Gadsby Waters

Project and Research Manager
Children and Younger Adults Dept
Derbyshire County Council