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Networks of Support

**Factors contributing to successful inter-agency work
with young people**

Caroline Roaf

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**This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of
Doctor of Philosophy**

May 1999

'Network guerillas can win battles'

Susan George

Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1999: Globalising Rights

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LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE TEXT

ACC	Association of County Councils
AMA	Association of Metropolitan Authorities
ACPC	Area Child Protection Committee
CG	Child Guidance
C.o.P.	Code of Practice
CYAR	Children And Youth at Risk
CYP	Children and Young Persons
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
DTP	Difficult To Place People
ECST	Elmore Community Support Team
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
GEST	Grants for Education, Support and Training
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationary Office
IT	Intermediate Treatment
JCC	Joint Consultative Committee
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LEA	Local Education Authority
LMS	Local Management of Schools
MA	Magistrates' Association
M.A.R.S.	Mobile Action Resource Service
MPA	Multi-Professional Assessment
NCB	National Children's Bureau
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
OECD/CERI	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/ Centre for Educational Research and Innovation
ROSLA	Raising Of The School Leaving Age
RRA	Race Relations Act
SDA	Sex Discrimination Act
TTN	Through The Net
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SENSS	Special Educational Needs Support Service
SLG	School Liaison Group
YST	Youth Support Team

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- Y Youth Support Team (Exeter YST, 1992)**

ABSTRACT

This study examines how agencies might work together more effectively to improve the life chances of young people who fall ‘through the net’ of agency provision. Whatever the situation, the failure to co-operate challenges a democratic society and basic human rights. The problem occurs when individual primary care agencies either:

- **try to do on their own what can only be achieved by co-operation, or**
- **fail to do anything because, in their view, the client’s needs should be met by some other agency, or**
- **only do what they can do on their own.**

The purpose of this study is to establish:

- **to what extent improvements in inter-agency co-operation would help agencies work more effectively with young people variously described as falling through the net, or on the margins of an agency’s responsibility**
- **what factors contribute to these improvements**
- **what characterises effective models of inter-agency practice.**

The study finds that over the last thirty years, the legislative framework surrounding inter-agency co-operation for young people provides few examples of structures or procedures requiring agencies to co-operate. Where these exist, they have been set up in response to needs or crises of pressing concern at the time. Research into the practice of inter-agency work shows that successful inter-agency projects set up to meet the needs of those at risk of falling through the net follow a characteristic pattern. This led to the construction of a model based on the idea that successful inter-agency practice depends on the existence of collaborative activity at three interconnected levels: policy and planning; implementation, case work, research and training; networking/liaison. Projects supported at all three levels are more likely to be successful and survive than those which are not. This pattern can be replicated in different contexts and with different client groups to ensure effective co-ordination and redistribution of resources, and that a balance is held between preventative and proactive work. The model’s key elements enable it to structure communication pathways within and between agencies, to co-ordinate activity in relation to a particular issue, to develop the interpersonal skills of participants and to provide feedback to policy makers. The research concludes that:

- **formal structures promoting inter-agency collaboration encourage agencies to innovate and to provide co-ordinated services for young people needing more support than can be provided by any one of them**
- **inter-agency work has become a new area of professional and para professional expertise**
- **models designed to help agencies meet the needs of people at risk can be applied to other projects set up to solve complex problems involving more than one department.**

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research and outlines its aims and rationale. It then gives an account of the research process which followed the researcher's own development through the stages from active practitioner to reflective researcher.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Many of those working in the statutory and voluntary agencies with children and young people know of some who need more support than can be provided by any one agency. These young people's needs arise from a combination of difficulties and they become involved with a wide range of professionals. Among these are paediatricians, police officers, educational psychologists, youth workers, social workers, health visitors, general practitioners, probation officers and police officers. Because these young people and their families need support and provision which cannot be met by one service alone, no single agency can easily accept responsibility for them. Despite this, however, in school, for example, teachers often find that when professionals can work closely together, young people are able to reach their educational potential. In contrast, when professionals engage in boundary disputes over responsibility for a child, enormous amounts of time and effort can be dissipated in bureaucratic activities rather than in combining efforts to provide a service which will ensure the young person's attendance and progress at school and well being at home. Experience of this collaborative endeavour, learnt in difficult circumstances, can then be used to help agencies work together more effectively to provide better services for all children.

1.2. The aims of the study

This study is about inter-agency co-operation in relation to children and young people. It aims to establish:

- what improvements in inter-agency co-operation would help agencies work more effectively with some of the most severely disadvantaged young people in society. These young people are variously described as 'through the net', or on the margins of an agency's responsibility
- what factors contributing to successful inter-agency work can be identified from the literature and current inter-agency projects
- what characteristics of effective models of inter-agency practice can be identified to inform future research, practice and policymaking.

1.3 Beliefs about inter-agency work

The motivation for the study came originally from beliefs that the researcher held about inter-agency work in relation to children and young people, derived from experience. Among these were ideas such as:

- inter-agency co-operation is essential in order to provide the variety of support and provision required by those whose needs cannot be met by one service alone
- successful inter-agency co-operation is an important means of maintaining community safety
- effective inter-agency co-operation has an important part to play in achieving social justice. Conversely, the failure to co-operate leads to injustice in terms of misdirection of resources and loss of opportunity
- 'problems' lie in the failure of agencies to co-operate rather than in the young people themselves
- successful models, methodology and process appropriate for one group can in principle be transferred to another group displaying similar features.

In practice, however, these beliefs sometimes appeared to conflict with reality. The research uncovered further beliefs held by agency members, such as that:

- inter-agency co-operation, however desirable, is very difficult to achieve
- the level of inter-agency co-operation in current agency practice is satisfactory as it is
- inter-agency co-operation is a dangerous concept since it encourages agencies to relinquish responsibility for clients they perceive as challenging.

In addition to the range of beliefs held by agency members about inter-agency work, there was some evidence available in the form of case studies of individual young people. This showed that some young people, whose personal circumstances might have been thought to require inter-agency intervention, seemed to have managed to overcome their difficulties and enter 'normal' adult life without it. In short, some of these young people were not seriously disadvantaged by the failure of agencies to co-operate, while for others this led to loss of life chances and in some situations was life threatening. It was therefore decided to focus the study on young people at risk of falling 'through the net' and test the effect of improving inter-agency working in relation to them, and secondly, to apply this experience to improve the circumstances of all children requiring agency co-operation.

1.4 Young people at risk

The inter-agency project featured in this study identified groups of young people who were not receiving appropriate support. These young people were variously:

- *carers*
- *on the verge of criminality*
- *having mental health problems*
- *homeless*
- *out of school for any length of time*
- *experiencing education difficulties while being looked after by the Local Authority*
- *from families in stress*
- *experiencing delays in assessment or provision through the process leading to a statement under the 1981 Education Act.*

(Roaf and Lloyd, 1995)

Estimating the size of the population of such young people at risk is difficult since there is no generally accepted definition. An OECD/CERI (1994) study of 17 Member countries, of which the UK was one, found an estimate of between 11 and 30% being reported as 'at risk', using criteria similar to those used above. However, behind each of the individuals in the groups listed, lies a history of personal need for care extending into, and emanating from, their families and the communities in which they live. The lessons learnt from attending to their needs could contribute greatly to agencies' understanding of how to work more effectively with everyone.

1.5 'Through the net'

The expression 'through the net' is sometimes used metaphorically of clients by agency workers in circumstances where they recognise the need for collaborative work between agencies to provide a network of support but have been frustrated in their attempts to achieve this. There is also concern about an unknown number of young people who are never referred to any agency for action but are nonetheless caught sight of fleetingly at some point in their careers, perhaps as persistent truants from school in their mid teens, or homeless. Later, when recounting their past histories it becomes clear that had they been referred, or referred themselves for professional assistance, they would have been considered eligible. It appears therefore that clients fall 'through the net' when individual primary care agencies either:

- try to do on their own what can only be achieved by co-operation, or
- fail to do anything because, in their view, the client's needs should be met by some other agency, or
- only do what they can do on their own.

In the first case the tendency is for too many practitioners to be involved, independently of each other, from a range of agencies. The help offered may be contradictory or involve duplication. The client may not be 'through the net' to begin with, but usually ends up becoming so. This might be because the young person has outgrown agency responsibility, for example, by leaving school, or agencies may give up through exhaustion, or redistribution of resources. For example, educational social workers tend to reduce pressure on truants who have turned 16 in order to increase it with younger pupils. The net effect of these problems is a waste of resources, frustration, 'case meeting rage' and lack of trust between agencies.

In the second and third cases, too few people are involved and the client loses. However agencies may gain. In the short term this is because no resources are used, in the long term they lose through lack of public confidence in their services. Society also loses, through the increased burden on taxation and insurance, in cases in which the failure of agencies to deal with potentially difficult young people at an early stage results in very expensive intervention and/or damage to property later on. At present there are no mechanisms to penalise agencies for what is sometimes seen as their failure to prevent the long term cost to society caused by short term failure to respond to initial expressions of concern. For example, the cost to agencies of a 16 year old in court for three substantive charges of theft and 100 offences taken into consideration might not exceed £1,000, but the cost to society, may be in excess of £100,000.

'Through the net-ness' and the frustration associated with it, is not a state ascribed to their clients only by agency workers involved with young people. Other constellations of agencies working with other groups experience the same phenomenon and similarly ascribe 'through the net-ness' to a minority of their clients. Although the main focus of this study is on the agencies involved with young people at risk, it is recognised that there are lessons to be learned from similar studies focusing on other agencies in relation to other groups which will be of mutual significance to all them, for example, adult, mentally disordered offenders.

1.6 Rationale

The reason for taking the subject of children at risk of falling 'through the net' seriously is grounded in an extensive literature going back more than twenty five years. This literature addresses agency purpose and society's concern in relation to the conduct and welfare of children and young people at risk. In much of the literature, the practice of inter-agency co-

operation is either specifically promoted, or inferred, as a means of overcoming agency difficulties in relation to this group.

The majority of the literature is to be found under the following headings. Examples only are shown here.

- **Legislation: Children and Young Person's Act (1969); Local Authority Social Services Act (1970); Education Act (1981); Children Act (1989)**
- **Government and independent reports: Kilbrandon (1964); Plowden (1967); Seebohm (1968); Warnock (1978); Fish (1985); Butler-Sloss (1988); Elton (1989); Utting (1991); Parsons (1994); Kendrick, Simpson and Mapstone (1996); Audit Commission (1992a; 1992b; 1994; 1996); Graham and Bowling (1995); OECD/CERI, (1994)**
- **Reports from special interest groups: McCluskey (1994); Johnson and Parker (1996); Devlin (1995); Manchester City Council (1992)**
- **Professionalism and interprofessionalism: Jaques (1996); Becher (1989; 1994); Bines and Watson, 1992)**
- **Agency co-operation: Arnold et al. (1993); Gill and Pickles (1989); Leathard (1994); Lacey and Lomas (1993); Hambleton et al (1995); Knapp et al. (1993); White (1993); Mitchell and Scott (1993); Kadel and Routh (1993); Clarke and Stewart (1997)**
- **Children and young people: Coffield et al.(1986); Coleman and Hendry (1990); Franklin (1986)**
- **Interpersonal relations, social and organisational psychology: Harre and Stearns (1995); Goleman (1995); Bruner (1996); Campbell et al. (1989)**
- **Collaboration and co-ordination, in human services and business: Kanter (1984); Huxham and Macdonald (1992); Vangen and Huxham (1997); Hodgkin and Newell (1996).**

Among issues addressed in the reports outlined above are homelessness, child protection, adolescent mental health, young offenders, special educational needs and children 'looked after', and leaving care.

1.7 Design of the study

This study proposes to achieve its aims through:

- an evaluation of the literature relating to inter-agency collaboration and a study of some examples of recent inter-agency activity
- a research process divided into three phases

- an introductory phase of participant observation
- the main research phase described in the case study and the subject of independent evaluation. This included a six month period of action research which was also separately evaluated
- a final stage of further enquiry and evaluation to establish what the first two stages had achieved in terms of the research as a whole.

Each phase consisted of a cycle of speculation and planning, action and evaluation, followed by a review leading to the next phase. This enabled issues which had been shadowy in earlier stages to emerge in sharper focus later on. The study is arranged, as follows, enabling the research questions to be reviewed in parallel with the research process and literature relevant to each cycle.

The literature in the following two chapters explores inter-agency co-operation from different perspectives and covers a number of agencies, notably Education, Health, Social Work, Criminal Justice, Housing and Probation. In Chapter Two, three post World War II phases are identified. These encapsulate developments in legislation and enquiry which have either a direct bearing on inter-agency work in relation to young people, or have affected the socio-economic and political climate in which agencies operate. Independent reports and enquiries are also reviewed to find out what part they played in informing government and public opinion and what strategies were proposed to resolve problems of agency co-operation. Chapter Three examines these problems from the perspective of children and their families and discusses the evolution and use of terms such as 'at risk', 'in need', or 'through the net'. The review covers agency and public perceptions of adolescents, seeking to understand how young people are reacting to changes in status, rights and responsibilities and how agencies are interpreting their advocacy role. The literature outlining the development of the role of professionals, professionalism and interprofessionalism in relation to inter-agency co-operation is also reviewed, seeking answers to questions about the extent to which professionalism and professional barriers have prevented the development of interprofessionalism and the skills of co-ordination. This review identifies when problems of co-operation were first noted and what these problems tell us about agency development and attempts at co-operation. Chapter Four summarises the findings from the literature, outlines its strengths and weaknesses and reviews the research questions.

Chapter Five discusses the choice of methodology used in the study as a whole, and the issues arising from this. Qualitative ethnographic methods have been chosen, using case studies, library search and active participant observation. These are described and evaluated. Chapter Six presents, as a case study, a summary of the activities and findings of an inter-agency project, set up by the researcher, to explore key issues of inter-agency co-operation in practice. Chapter Seven analyses the data and explores issues raised by the case study. It establishes what the case study achieved in terms of the research as a whole. In the light of this the chapter explores the literature on interpersonal behaviour, group, team and organisational psychology. These areas emphasise a dimension, discovered in the case study to be significant, which complements the systemic approaches adopted by government and others in their reports. The review discusses the extent to which problems of communication at an interpersonal level may subvert attempts by agencies and government to promote co-operation. It discusses the implications of this for training and research.

Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten consist of, respectively, comparative studies of other inter-agency projects with similar objectives, individual case histories and intra-agency teams. These are identified and analysed using documentary evidence in the form of published reports and evaluation and other project documents. This evidence is used to identify characteristics of 'good practice' according to the success criteria developed in the case study. The research findings follow in Chapter Eleven leading to a discussion of the main issues arising from them from which conclusions are drawn and recommendations for further action proposed.

1.8 Summary

The aims of this study have been designed in response to:

- the seriousness of the problem
- the range of beliefs held by agency members on the subject of inter-agency work
- the length of time the issues have been identified
- the extent of the discussion, research and decision making that has already taken place
- the need for effective models of inter-agency co-operation in relation to children and young people. This continues to be expressed in the most recent literature and from practitioners currently working in the field, in spite of all that has gone before
- the need to fill a gap in research concerning young people who fall 'through the net' of agency provision.

CHAPTER TWO

Policies for Young People

2.0 Historical perspective: the development of policy

2.1 The post World War II period to 1970: social welfare and cohesion

2.1.0 Introduction

Against a background dominated by reconstruction, a number of reports typify the post-World War II project to tackle class division, inequality and deprivation, beginning with the Beveridge Report set up to survey 'the existing national schemes of social insurance and allied services' (HMSO, 1942, Introduction). The end of the period is marked by the passing of two Acts which together represent landmarks in respect of developing welfare systems and positive attitudes towards disadvantaged groups. These were the 1970 Local Authority Social Services Act to reorganise the personal social services, and the 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act. This, for the first time, included *all* children, however serious their disability, in the education framework where previously, under the 1944 Education Act, some had been deemed ineducable.

This period also covers the rise of the comprehensive school, a structural change with implications for social integration and inter-agency work (DES Circular 10/65). The Children and Young Person's Acts of 1963 and 1969 similarly helped to reshape attitudes towards young people involved with, or on the fringes of criminality. Homelessness, including young homelessness also began to gain public recognition, attracting media attention in the sixties and early seventies. Together with drug abuse and child sexual abuse, these became the subject of documentaries such as *Cathy Come Home* (Sandford, 1976) and charitable endeavours such as *Shelter* (1969; 1972; 1973). Coffield et al (1986), referring to research carried out during the early eighties considered that:

... the unofficial unwritten contract between young people and society has finally broken down in most Western countries...this came rather suddenly with the alarming increases in youth unemployment in all Western European countries in the late 1970s and early 1980's. (p.203)

Public attention had, in fact, been drawn to this breakdown much earlier, in the sixties' awareness of disadvantage, deprivation, increased juvenile offending and concerns about the role of the welfare state in relation to families and communities (Kellmer Pringle, 1974; Rutter and Madge, 1976; Wedge and Prosser, 1973).

During the sixties, Reports, White Papers and Acts concerning the welfare, education and health of children and families, leap frog over each other, wrestling with these issues, attempting to examine root causes and to legislate for better practice (Kilbrandon Report, 1964; Children and Young Person's Acts, 1963; 1969; The Child, the Family and the Young Offender, 1965; Plowden Report, 1967; Seebohm Report, 1968). The rapid increase in juvenile offending acted as both an indictment and a warning - proof of the failure of what had gone before and the difficulties to be faced to improve matters in the future. Twenty-five years after Beveridge, the architects of the welfare state must have hoped for something better. The fact that Scotland differs from England and Wales in its administrative and legislative structure and organisation has contributed much to these debates which were, and still are, played out somewhat differently there (McAra and Young, 1997). This survey begins with documents relating to social services and juvenile justice and concludes with those relating to education.

2.1.1 Kilbrandon: The Report of the Committee on Children and Young Persons in Scotland (1964)

The Kilbrandon Committee was set up in response to concern over increased juvenile offending in the fifties and sixties, 'to consider the provision of the law of Scotland relating to the treatment of juvenile delinquents and juveniles in need of care or protection or beyond parental control' (1964, para. 1). Kilbrandon recommended altering the mechanisms of juvenile justice in Scotland to establish juvenile panels and 'matching field organisation' (1964, para.232). This led to the establishment of the Scottish children's hearing system, a system unique to Scotland. Kilbrandon's perspective can be judged from the following:

Delinquency is predominantly an activity of the young. On purely practical grounds it would therefore appear that emphasis ought to be given to preventative and remedial measures at the earliest possible stage if more serious delinquencies are not to occur. This implies above all the application of an educative principle which cannot hope to operate with any measure of success except under a procedure which seeks to establish the individual child's needs in the light of the fullest possible information as to his circumstances, both personal and environmental. (The Kilbrandon Report, 1964, para.78)

Its key principles, summarised in the Foreword to the 1995 edition were:

- separation between the establishment of issues of disputed fact and decisions on the treatment of the child
- the use of a lay panel to reach decisions on treatment
- the recognition of the needs of the child as being the first and primary consideration
- the vital role of the family in tackling children's problems
- the adoption of a preventive and educational approach to these problems.

The logic of the Report's perspective was that juvenile delinquency indicated a failure of upbringing and therefore of social education. Thus the Report recommended the establishment of a 'social education department ... recognised as the focal point for co-ordination of information about all cases of children in need' (para 235). The social education department was intended to become part of an enlarged education authority catering for 'the needs of all children requiring measures of special education and training' (para. 241(2) and would integrate a number of separate services.

Kendrick and Fraser (1993) comment that the Kilbrandon proposals, while seeing the need for reorganisation of social work and educational services for children, 'remained within a specialist, client based framework' (p.4). The proposal for a social education department was considered too narrow and was not taken forward in the White Paper, 'Social Work and the Community' (Scottish Education Department, Scottish Home and Health Department, 1966). Instead, in 1969, new one-door Social Work Departments were set up. These integrated the services of a number of different client based services for children, mentally ill, the elderly and offenders. It was hoped that this system would counter the perceived fragmentation of existing social services:

The main defects in the present organisation of the local authority social work and welfare services derive essentially from the fact that these services have been developed piecemeal and in response to the identification at different times of certain groups of people who needed social help, e.g. deprived children, handicapped persons, old people. When it was established, each service was naturally seen as aiming at the alleviation of a social problem different in kind from that dealt with by any other service. (Scottish Ed. Dept. 1966, para.8)

For Kendrick and Fraser (1993) the reasons put forward for setting up the new department included:

the fact that several agencies were often involved in dealing with the multiple problems which families had; the idea that the core knowledge and experience of social workers was the same for all client groups; the fact that the different agencies were competing for the same pool of trained workers; and because the number of different agencies and services were confusing to families in need of their help. (p.5)

Other pressures for change were identified by Hallett (1982) and included:

... the substantial expansion in the personal social services in the period following the structural changes brought about by the welfare legislation of the late 1940s ... the greater emphasis placed on viewing individuals with social difficulties in the wider context of their families and community ... increased recognition of the multiple and interrelated nature of the problems faced by many people in difficulty and, consequently, the need for a co-ordinated response... the emerging sense of common identity among some social workers working in the different agencies before Seebohm. (pp.18-19)

Kilbrandon's most far reaching proposal remains, however, that which led to the setting up of the Children's Hearing system. This depended on 'resources provided by health, social services and social work agencies. It therefore has an interest in the development of policies relating to the provision of these resources' (Kendrick and Mapstone, 1994, p.3). In the context of this study, the Kilbrandon proposals raise a key question. To what extent did the emphasis on preventative work in the development of the Scottish juvenile justice system lead to a system which was intrinsically inter-agency and to what extent has this contributed to Scotland's leading 'edge' in innovative practice in inter-agency work? According to Gill and Pickles:

It may be that the Scottish system of large regional authorities, child centred practices and the consensus framework of the children's hearings, have all contributed uniquely to a climate which is conducive to such [inter-agency] initiatives. (1989, Introduction)

2.1.2 Children and Young Person's Act (1969): The introduction of Intermediate Treatment

Meanwhile, in England and Wales, the 1969 Children and Young Person's Act arose similarly, from concerns about the care of juveniles through the courts, and the accommodation needs of children in care and foster children. This Act originated, like Kilbrandon, in the debates of the late fifties and sixties concerning juvenile delinquency, support for families and the care of children. These concerns found expression in legislation and reports of the period such as the 1960 Ingleby Report of the Committee on Children and Young Persons, the 1962 White Paper, 'Non Residential Treatment of Offenders under 21', and the 1963 Children and Young Person's Act, which sought to promote the welfare of children by helping them and their families in the community. Further reports through the sixties for example, the 1964 Longford Committee report, 'Crime: a Challenge to Us All', and the 1965 White Paper, 'The Child, the Family and the Young Offender', confirmed a rising political interest in juvenile crime. To an extent, this can be associated, against the political background of the 1964-70 Labour government, with the development of social services and social work increasingly involved, as a profession, with juvenile justice.

Jones and Kerslake (1979) consider that the emphasis in these documents:

was on providing a family social work service as an antidote to delinquency. The recommendation was that family councils should replace juvenile courts. This was intended to reduce the stigma attached to court attendance and to allow more flexibility in meeting the changing needs of children and young people. These proposals were implemented in Scotland as part of the Social Work (Scotland) Act, 1968, where there was not the same inter-departmental squabbles, and inter-party conflicts, over these radical proposals as there was in England and Wales. (p.3)

They point out that in England and Wales, responsibility for child care services and for penal policy lay with the Home Office, whereas other social work services were the responsibility of the recently created department of Health and Social Security. They also note the strength of Conservative opposition in England and Wales to the 1965 White Paper, 'The Child, The Family and The Young Offender'. This led to its revision in 1968, 'Children in Trouble', as a result, particularly, of pressure from the Magistrates' Association. None the less, the 1968 White Paper and 1969 Act represent a high-water mark of welfare and community led responses to juvenile delinquency. Thereafter, reaction set in which intensified in subsequent years.

In respect of children and young people up to the age of 17, the 1969 Act introduced the concept of Intermediate Treatment (IT) as a sentencing option, and as a statutory responsibility for social services. The courts were empowered, when making a supervision order, to include, the requirement that the child participate in 'specified activities'. These were limited to a maximum of 90 days in any one year and had to be of a type approved by the Secretary of State for Social Services and supervised either by a social worker or a probation officer. Intermediate Treatment, first described in the 1968 White Paper, was intended to enable children to be treated in their own communities with others of their own age, not necessarily delinquent. It was regarded as consistent with earlier proposals for a social work service which would 'secure an effective family service' (HMSO, 1965, para.7). There were, however, other factors at work. One of these was that:

*For those interested in achieving more fundamental changes than those just concerning delinquency, the issue of juvenile crime is useful as a springboard. By arguing that the prevention of juvenile delinquency is preferable to cure and that the former can only be achieved by a wide-spread improvement in social services, it is possible to construct a case for more general reforms. In the policy developments in both England and Wales, and Scotland, those interested in promoting a family service used the issue of juvenile delinquency to further their cause.
(Hall, 1976, p.33)*

Another factor was what Jones and Kerslake saw as a growing awareness of deprivation and disadvantage:

*The post war euphoria of the 1950's...was eclipsed by an awareness of poverty and inequality at a time when many had 'never had it so good'. There was an ideological bud-burst, this was the time of flower power and hippies, of love, peace and freedom. Man was seen as being restricted by his social and cultural environment...there was also a growing political interest by many young people. Campaigns against the Vietnam War, the riots of 1968 in Paris, the proliferation of pressure groups...
(1979, p.2)*

This was relevant to Intermediate Treatment for three main reasons. First, delinquency was a major political and media concern in the sixties, secondly 'what had to be done reflects the changing social values of the sixties' (ibid. p.2). In other words these values, expressed in the 1969 Act, were based on a perception of children as deprived rather than depraved. Lastly Jones and Kerslake draw attention to the changing social context of the sixties 'in which many of the young people who were to become social workers were socialised' (ibid.p.2), this work being phrased in terms of care rather than control and treatment rather than punishment.

At the time, Intermediate Treatment, as a sentencing option, encouraged many areas to produce local schemes and projects for young people and encouraged some community groups, already involved with young people, to include more challenging youngsters in their programmes. However, gradually through the seventies Intermediate Treatment began to be seen by powerful elements among the judiciary as a soft option. Instead, increasing numbers of juveniles were detained, social workers were regarded as being unrealistically soft on crime and magistrates were increasingly concerned by the number of children out of control while in local authority care. Nonetheless, by 1978, 'a survey by the National Youth Bureau found that ... 49% of local authorities had an IT officer responsible for the development and co-ordination of Intermediate Treatment' (Jones and Kerslake, op.cit.p.103). This involved selling the concept to local magistrates. In 1980, for example, a recently appointed IT officer in Oxford City in an explanatory pamphlet to magistrates wrote:

Magistrates must be sick and tired of hearing about IT but feeling that nothing is happening. At least when you send a child to attendance centre or DC you know what is going to happen and when. IT is the subject of courses, conferences and ministerial speeches, but apparently little action. I hope to be able to persuade you to take IT seriously because at last it is being given the injection of funds and personnel. Also financial stringency is making the need to find alternatives to custodial sentences more vital. What does this really mean for the City? It means that two people are to be appointed to develop intermediate treatment as their sole responsibility. They are to have a share of a £40,000 county budget...(Emerson, 1980)

The debate generated by IT at the time and subsequently, as to who should receive it and what part it might play in community based social work service for adolescents, is an issue no less live today than it was twenty years ago. Was it to be for a small minority of deprived children, or those who had been before the courts, or for everyone? Is IT a social work service or is it properly part of the social education programmes provided by the youth service or schools? For Jones and Kerslake, it was 'an umbrella term for a wide range of both actual and potential community-based provision for adolescents (and children) who are deprived or who are more

'at risk' of getting into trouble than their contemporaries' (1979, p.9). For them, Intermediate Treatment offered the adolescent:

a package that is more intensive in terms of time, impact, and effect. Day care, alternative schooling, and short term, focused, residential care might all be included in an intensive intermediate treatment programme. These more intensive programmes have been facilitated by the emergence of IT centres. (op.cit. p.11)

In spite of the demise of IT as a component in court orders, the continued development of the concept and its tenaciousness as a therapeutic strategy for agencies working with vulnerable and challenging young people has been notable. Jones and Kerslake (1979) suggest theories from the fields of criminology, social psychology and social work to explain some of this tenaciousness. In their experience, IT could help overcome problems of juvenile disaffection and offending behaviour because its psychosocial emphasis stressed the importance of working with the client in his or her environment, offering the possibility of involvement with a young person's family, friends, school and neighbourhood. By developing trust, respect and understanding through shared activities IT could help to overcome low self esteem and poor social relationships.

An unintended consequence of the 1969 Act was that IT introduced an instrument of change. Jones and Kerslake saw this coming about through day-care programmes jointly run by education and social service departments with youth service and social services promoting community projects. More fundamentally, they recognised that IT could bring together social workers, often of different status levels, in running groups for their clients.

All this 'bringing together' poses one fundamental dilemma - that of boundary crossing within a local authority system which is essentially constructed on a vertical/hierarchical model. It may be that residential workers and field workers rarely meet because of this system, or that contact between teachers and social workers is limited because this is regarded as a policy matter between area officers and headteachers. For intermediate treatment two options become apparent : either departments accept that by encouraging its catalytic potential, IT may change the fundamental ways in which they operate, or that intermediate treatment may have to change to fit in with the existing system. (1979, p.105)

The 1978 Joint Working Party of the Magistrates' Association, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of County Councils considered that the 1969 Act provided 'an appropriate framework for dealing with the majority of children who offend. We are not however in agreement on the major issue of the powers for dealing with the hard core of persistent offenders' (para 93). The Working Party was concerned by, for example, the 60% increase in arrests in London among 14-16 year olds between 1969 and 1974. Representatives of the Magistrates' Association felt that 'The 1969 Act has failed most notably in dealing with

serious and persistent offenders; and the solution should be to increase the powers of the court' (para.93).

The working party focused attention almost entirely on the 'serious and persistent' offender although some reference is made to preventative work and for 'ameliorating the factors which appear to be connected with the incidence of criminal behaviour: poor social, family and housing conditions; poor school attendance' (para.28). Their Report recognised that 'most children brought up in such conditions do not become habitual offenders' and considered that 'more study be given to the personal, familial and sociological factors which give rise to delinquency' (para. 28). Nevertheless, the tenor of the Report suggests that concern in the seventies was shifting away from prevention and rehabilitation and moving towards punishment and containment. In these circumstances, as juvenile offending increased, IT became absorbed into the general background of developing good social work practice for everyone and lost its edge as a specific strategy for the court. In the 1978 Report just quoted, IT is not mentioned once. Nor does it feature in the 1976 Observations on the Eleventh Report of the Expenditure Committee on the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 in spite of the concerns expressed in it with what was regarded as:

...a basic dilemma here in our policy towards juvenile delinquency ... On the one hand there is a strongly felt and understandable demand for the public to be protected from the serious and persistent, albeit, youthful offenders. On the other hand there is a widespread revulsion against holding young people in secure custody, especially custody of the kind that resembles prison. This reluctance is reinforced by the accumulated evidence over the years that custodial treatment has very disappointing results. (Home Office, 1976, para 4)

Nonetheless, adult time, energy and patience were beginning to run out for young people regarded as deviant, difficult or dangerous. One can infer that during the seventies, government and judicial thinking, locally and nationally on the subject of juvenile crime focused on more stringent conditions and tighter controls for serious and persistent offenders.

2.1.3 Social integration and welfare in the comprehensive school: DES Circular 10/65

The request in Circular 10/65 that LEAs submit plans for reorganisation led to the introduction of comprehensive schools in most areas. LEAs were expected to take the initiative and the government assumed common agreement locally. Widespread dissatisfaction with the system of selection by examination at 11+ ensured that local authorities were able, by common consent, to use this opportunity to re-organise. The development of the comprehensive school is significant for this study in a number of respects. The comprehensive school model, more than

any other, is a microcosm of society. A number of different professionals, working with young people across the full range of social background, have been brought together there and have had to confront difficulties of communication and co-operation and differences in professional culture.

A mid seventies study of four comprehensive schools (Johnson et al.1980) looked at how schools of this kind, and at this time, cared for their pupils. Their observations led them to question the balance to be maintained in school between the school's different functions. They identified these as providing a sheltered environment during the school day, nurturing pupils during their years of physical and emotional maturation and preparing them to participate in and contribute to adult life. 'What,' they asked, 'is an appropriate balance between these functions? ... What aspects of young people's needs are agencies organised to meet?... What is an appropriate balance between being part of a wider welfare network and providing the specialised professional service of secondary education?' (p.182).

The changes brought about by comprehensivisation highlighted these issues, rekindling anxieties among adults about their relationships with young people and encouraging them to question what secondary education was to achieve and how. Needs, in those pre-1981 Act days, are identified by Johnson et al. as being institution specific, maturation specific and future specific. The researchers were particularly interested in the 'special institutional arrangements', that is, pastoral care systems, which schools had set up:

to ensure that the social and affective aspects of secondary education have equal status with the cognitive...Through its pastoral system, the school becomes potentially a part of the welfare network, by which many agencies provide for the care and control of children of secondary school age. (ibid.p.15)

The study found that most agencies were particularly concerned with the maturation -specific need of young people. This included practitioners from all the primary care agencies as well as intermediate treatment officers and police officers. 'With the potential help of so many agency workers, in addition to his teachers, it might seem that no pupil could fail to emerge from his secondary school years as other than a well-rounded individual'(ibid.p.184). Few agencies were explicitly involved with children's future specific needs. The study stressed that the majority of children achieved maturity without any intervention from agencies and that the most sustained contribution to meeting these needs was made by parents. The study recognised that conflict could arise from the different theoretical perspectives which each professional brought to their assessment of a child's needs. Working together was perceived as an opportunity, albeit

demanding and time consuming, to explore the values underlying these perspectives. However, in this study, as in others of the time, for example, the 1970 Schools Council study of the education of socially disadvantaged children, while the need for co-operation and team work in the setting of the comprehensive school is recognised, there seems to be more concern for the effects of the proliferation of professionals on the professionals themselves than with its possible effects on their clients.

2.1.4 Seebohm and Plowden

The 1968 Seebohm Report, preceded by the Home Office White Paper, 'The Child the Family and the Young Offender' (1965), and the Plowden Report, 'Children and their Primary Schools' (1967) are products of a period during which many people still anticipated the future full flowering of the Welfare State as a reality (Pugh, 1993; Hutton, 1995). Seebohm's recommendations for the reorganisation of the personal social services and Plowden's for the setting up of Education Priority Areas are relevant on this account.

Unified family services: The Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Services (The Seebohm Report, 1968)

This report originated in the 1965 White Paper, 'The Child, the Family and the Young Offender' in which the Government sought 'to review the organisation and responsibilities of the local authority personal social services and consider what changes are desirable to ensure an effective family service' (Home Office, 1965, para.7). Seebohm, commenting on his Report considered that the Committee was asked 'to produce a blue print for social care ...which might well affect the pattern of the social services to the end of the century' (Seebohm, 1989, p.1).

The object was to 'invite discussion on possible measures to support the family, forestall and reduce delinquency and revise law and practice relating to young offenders in England and Wales' (ibid. p.30). The Committee's proposal, later implemented in the 1970 Local Authority Social Services Act, was to set up local authority social service departments under social services committees. These departments were to provide a unified service bringing together work previously done by children's departments, welfare departments, education welfare, home help services, mental health social services, adult training centres, other social service centres, day nurseries and some social work previously done by housing. Departments were to work at field level in units serving up to 100,000 people, thus ensuring a degree of decentralisation and local autonomy. Furthermore the service was to be acceptable and accessible.

Speaking of the report in 1968, Seebohm explained that his Committee's proposals arose primarily from concerns about the family and how this concept was to be understood. For Seebohm the family was 'everybody, whether of one or a large family' (Seebohm, 1989, p.3). Therefore the service had to be a comprehensive family-based service, not just a service dealing with children and old people.

...in a school, for instance, where the teacher sees a child who is apparently withdrawn, who is occasionally absent, who is badly clothed, who looks ill; here are symptoms. This could be referred to someone dealing only with children. But when you look into this...you may find the most appalling housing conditions...the parents estranged...or alcoholic...another child who is abnormal, and so on, causing stress to the family. This means a great number of departments will have to be involved...the housing department, the health department, the education department, the children's department...With that divided responsibility nobody is clearly responsible for this family problem. (ibid.p.4)

He goes on to comment on the waste of resources that resulted from fragmentation and overlapping: '...there could be three or four people coming into the home' (ibid. p.4).

Seebohm's other reasons for change concerned the inaccessibility of the services and ignorance among families unaware of their rights. Further concerns related to the career structure and training of social workers and to the need for the service to mobilise its own resources, if none were forthcoming from elsewhere, by greater efficiency and restructuring. In discussing their hopes for greater efficiency in relation to children and young people, the Committee paid considerable attention to the under fives but at the expense of services for young people. 'We felt we could not do everything in this field [children and young people]. I hope this is something which other people will take up' (ibid. p.7). They particularly noted child guidance services: 'These are almost a myth...in certain places they are more distinguished by their absence than by their presence' (ibid. p.7). Community development, regarded at the time 'as a new field...a new concept' was recognised as an area for experiment: '...you have to have team work from everybody' (ibid. p.11).

In two subsequent addresses, 'What went wrong?' and 'Seebohm twenty years on', Seebohm (1989) provides a succinct account of the main trends over the period. Among these were recession, inflation, increased demand for personal social services (and an increase in staff numbers from 17,500 in 1972 to 24,400 in 1975) from a population with an increased perception of need, for whom personal social services had become more accessible. He noted that demographic changes such as the increasing number of old people, unemployed and those living in poor housing, along with changes in family structure, reorganisation in other services such as Health and Education, and new attitudes to the mentally disabled and mentally ill, had affected the personal social services profoundly.

In his 1988 address, he asked, 'do social services departments in fact really, as Seebohm hoped, enable the greatest number of individuals to act reciprocally, giving and receiving service for the well being of the whole community?' (1989, p.33). In reflecting on the way in which the personal social services had developed, Seebohm draws attention to the question of resources and reciprocity. He stresses the importance of primary prevention to help overcome the inertia caused by poverty and the mobilisation of self help strategies on lines developed in rural Asia and Africa. He also shared the concern of some, whom he quotes, that:

... the development of the welfare state and the growth of the professional caring services seem to have reinforced the selfishness, diffidence and reluctance to get involved that we all display in some measure. We have come to believe that human problems demand expert care and professional counselling and that we ourselves have little part to play in alleviating distress, even when we perceive it. We are bewitched into inadequacy. (Volunteer Centre, 1976, in Seebohm, 1989. p.23)

Given that it was unrealistic to expect resources to meet demand, his view was that social services had a fundamental role in mobilising community resources and helping people help themselves. There was also the vexed question of specialist or generic social workers. Seebohm reminded his audience that the state of the services had not been good before:

It is in fact probable that the real specialisations have yet to be developed and that the soul searching that is now taking place in the economic recession may produce some quite new ideas and thinking on the modus operandi of the personal social services. (1989, p.25)

It is one of the purposes of this study to try to uncover what these new ideas might be and in what manner they might be implemented. Seebohm hoped that his report, far from making everyone 'generic', would ensure that:

...every area team would be generic in the sense that there would always be sufficient specialists and experienced social workers either in it or easily available in the department for consultation. There is, I am afraid, a certain nostalgia for the cosy smaller department with clearly defined duties, but leaving so many needs unmet. (ibid. p.25)

On the question of structural and professional reform, he quotes Cooper's view that the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 was purely structural and did not refer to the purpose or aim of re-organisation. This was in contrast to the social reform of the pre World War II period which had invested in social case work and had led in the fifties, according to Cooper, to the application of psycho-analytic theory, as a means of changing people rather than systems:

Here we have a cause for unease. Unease because there are rival claims to ideology and panacea competing for dominance in the amalgamated services. Social problems and private sorrows are not rooted exclusively in biology, character or personality. But the personal social services are a ready battle ground for the protagonists of either perception. (Cooper, 1976, p.648)

Other troubles had also been foreseen. Reorganisation in other services had caused disruption to the professions involved and to communication systems. People with private sorrows were left confused and unsure whether to seek or avoid help.

The hope of progress through structural reform has been severely tested in the short run by systematic and professional conflict which is diverting of energy, undermining of confidence and destructive of job satisfaction. (ibid.p.648)

Cooper's suggestions, as possible causes or partial explanations for this included much that we would recognise today:

...conflict between managerial and professional values; inadequate understanding of the mutual relationships between health and personal social service models; the resource demands needed to manage the exchange and bartering at the interface between all the social services; the degree of democratic involvement in the systems the stress caused by popular demand for services; unease over the marriage between therapy and concrete benefits; the concern about excellence and quality and the advance in knowledge and research ahead of practice. (ibid. p.648)

Seebohm identified housing, prevention, research and intelligence services, training and specialisation and a role for the community, including voluntary effort, as the foundations for an effective service. As regards housing, Seebohm was adamant that, as a basic principle, 'families should not be allowed to break up and children should not be separated from their parents just because they cannot have a home together' (1989, p..35). As to prevention, Seebohm was disappointed that the Committee's recommendations on social work in schools had not been implemented, 'Early identification is still an important element in prevention and it is in schools where much of this can be done' (ibid. p.36).

Finally, on the achievements in the twenty years post 1968, Seebohm comments that, 'No longer do half a dozen people descend onto a multi-problem family causing confusion and distress' (ibid. p.39). Sadly, it was not safe to assume that the then half dozen unco-ordinated personnel would be replaced by a single co-ordinated worker. Rather, cuts in provision have been so severe that there are no personnel in the first place. For some kinds of 'problem', the situation described above continues, as does the incidence of bureaucratic confusion, with families and individuals passed from agency to agency as frequently or more so than they were in the days before the social service re-organisation. In Oxford in the early 1990's, Lloyd (1995) reports that as many as 70 different agencies or groups with a role in relation to young people in difficulty could be identified in the area. Structural organisation in the personal social services alone has not been sufficient to remedy this situation.

Positive discrimination: The Plowden Report, Children and their Primary Schools (1967)

The Plowden Committee was set up 'to consider primary education in all its aspects and the transition to secondary education' (para.1). An underlying concern was:

the growing awareness...of the importance to the individual of his family and social background. The last three reports of the Council[Central Advisory Council for Education], and the Robbins report on higher education, have shown how closely associated are home and social circumstances and academic achievement. Is this just one of those given facts about which schools, and the community can do nothing? (para.3)

Plowden proposed the setting up of Educational Priority Areas as a form of positive discrimination in response to the educational needs of deprived areas. Positive discrimination 'accords with experience and thinking in many other countries, and in other spheres of social policy. It calls both for some redistribution of the resources devoted to education and, just as much, for an increase in their total volume' (para.173). The Committee argued for the redistribution of resources on the grounds that 'at the national level the government takes needs into account when distributing grants to local authorities for educational and other purposes' (para.147). It was of the opinion that:

...it would be unreasonable and self defeating - economically, professionally and politically - to try to do justice by the most deprived children by only using resources that can be diverted from more fortunate areas. We have argued that the gap between the educational opportunities of the most and least fortunate children should be closed, for economic and social reasons alike. It cannot be done, unless extra effort, extra skill and extra resources are devoted to the task. (para.173)

Initially, the Department of Education would designate the schools and areas most in need as educational priority areas. The purpose of this programme was partly to discover which measures best compensate for educational deprivation, for example, improved ratio of teachers to children, additional salary incentives, more 'teacher aides', extra books and equipment and improvements to buildings. In addition, 'sustained efforts should also be made to diversify the social composition of the districts where priority schools are so that teachers and others who make an essential contribution to the life and public services of the neighbourhood are not excluded from them' (Recommendation 20, p.466).

Seebohm's proposals were already anticipated when Plowden went to press. Plowden acknowledged its debt to Younghusband (1959), Ingleby (1960) and Kilbrandon (1964) and relied on Seebohm to make recommendations which would be compatible with its own in relation to health services, child care, probation and social services. It welcomed the introduction of an element of social work training in the training of health visitors and doctors. Plowden comments that, 'The children's departments of the local authorities were set up in 1948, to care for children deprived of a normal home life. But in the course of time they have

been drawn increasingly into helping families whose children are living at home' (para 221). This development was encouraged by other legislation, particularly the 1963 Children and Young Person's Act and the 1965 White Paper 'The Child, the Family and the Young Offender'.

Plowden's view was that a comprehensive social work service closely related to the schools would support children in their homes as part of an effective family service. The schools' interest in social work was considered to arise from their 'need to identify and help families with difficulties that lead to poor performance and behaviour' (p.243). The report concluded that there was a need for social workers who would collaborate closely with schools and be:

readily available to teachers, capable of assuming responsibilities for cases beyond the competence, time or training of the head or class teacher, and capable of securing help quickly from more specialised social services... teams should be established to include experienced workers from the relevant fields including social workers largely responsible for school social work. ...Experimental teams should be set up ...particularly in some of the educational priority areas, and linked with research designed to test their value. (para 255)

Plowden hedged its bets with the view that 'These conclusions would remain valid whether or not present services are unified within one social work service' (p.244). In connection with relationships and responsibility, Plowden concluded that:

Local circumstances and experiment should decide whether school social workers could be best based on the education office, or on the schools, or should belong to a more varied social work team, including social workers doing different jobs...Their administrative responsibility should normally be to a team leader located in a service having broader social work functions where a large range of specialist resources would be available to them. (para 255)

Critiques of Seebohm and Plowden

Looking back at Seebohm and Plowden, as they, in their generation, looked back at previous reports, one can acknowledge the desire, then as now, for the welfare of children and young people, and for effective services to families and communities which would break down the social barriers which trapped so many in poverty. Attitudes, and much else, have changed however. In the world of education for example, revised notions of school effectiveness, notions of achievement rather than ability, of normality rather than abnormality and the gradual abandonment of deficit models of need have created new opportunities for some. Any evaluation of current policy and provision needs to take these into account. This review has selected aspects of Seebohm and Plowden relevant to the issues and dilemmas of current inter-agency work. Among these are the social and political attitudes of the professionals involved to needs and rights, to children and young people, and opinion as to the effect of the market on the

development of public service provision. Tomlinson (1982) noted some of these problems in relation to parents:

Manual working-class parents have undoubtedly been placed in an invidious position in the education system generally. In the education literature the influence of the 'good home' on educational success has been extensively documented, and popular post-Plowden explanations have stressed the supposed failure of manual working-class parents to equip their children with the requisite skills for educational success... Add to this the whole history of the concept of 'defect', and the links made in the early twentieth century between defect, disability and a variety of social evils, and it is not surprising that professionals view parents as probably ignorant and incompetent. (p.109)

Banting (1979) in an extensive critique of Plowden's recommendation for Educational Priority Areas, comments that:

The EPA idea of 'positive discrimination' invoked another conception of educational equality. The aim was not simply to provide equal services but to achieve more nearly equal outcomes; and the narrowing of inequalities in educational attainment seems to dictate unequal services. In effect, the proposal implied a large change in the purposes of the educational system and the principles on which it was based. (in McNay and Ozga, 1985, p.291)

Positive discrimination implied redistribution of resources. This was rooted in the 1960's faith in the capacity of education to change society as pre-war views of the importance of genetic inheritance and its measurement were gradually superseded by environmental perspectives.

However Banting continued:

EPAs reflected professional faith rather than knowledge. Crucial assumptions were untested. The Council had not attempted to measure 'innate ability' and could not really demonstrate how important environmental influences such as parental encouragement actually were. There was little hard evidence that extra educational resources would in fact produce better results. Nor had the Council examined the geographic distribution of poverty to see if designating specific urban areas would actually cover most poor children. (ibid. p.295)

From an inter-agency perspective positive discrimination was, as was Seebohm's plan for a unified social work service, an undertaking overwhelming in its implications for all other agencies, whether or not they were involved with children and young people. The co-operation required seems to have been assumed, or is written into reports in the language of 'should' rather than 'must', with no recognition of the need for legislation operating across the boundaries separating government departments. Furthermore, between Report and Act was a world of difference. As Hallett (1982) notes:

...the [1970] Act was far removed in spirit from the sentiments expressed in the committee's report. The Act, a slim dry technical document, provided for the establishment of a social services committee in each authority to which were to be referred a motley collection of statutory duties hitherto performed by children's welfare and health departments. (p.22)

2.1.6 Summary

The post Beveridge generation saw young people and their families move from post war austerity, through to prosperity and an explosion of individualism - the 'doing your own thing' of the sixties. Patterns of work particularly in relation to women, their sexual freedom and growing economic independence had its effects on 'traditional' family life and child care. Education, health and the personal social services were developing in new ways both structurally and professionally, stimulated by the idealistic holism of government reports such as Kilbrandon, Plowden and Seebohm. Meanwhile, the professionalisation of welfare led to more rigorous and specialised training to the point that it was no longer possible to follow a profession without post graduate training. The relationship of agencies to their clients was also changing. Questions of accountability, responsibility and the use of public funds escaped public scrutiny less easily. Interest in research further sharpened popular and professional understanding of issues previously ignored, denied or unseen. Among these was an interest in the management and integration of public services.

The ethos of humanitarian concern for those in need or at risk was beginning, however, to be tempered by realism. Naive beliefs that problems would go away with sufficient welfare or that there were not difficult choices to be made could not be sustained. Could, for example, the general tax paying public be persuaded to pay more in taxation for better public services? Would the public tolerate the redistribution of wealth through taxation? Utilitarian considerations such as these were partly responsible for Plowden's view that new money would have to be found to support Educational Priority Areas, or Seebohm's concern not to waste resources. Why should three or more professionals descend on one family in need where one key worker would do? There has always been a proportion of people with multiple and complex needs in society whose needs had been addressed perhaps by a single agency such as health or the prison service. Basic care needs were met in ways which would now be regarded as highly undifferentiated. Alongside the increased specialisation characteristic of the sixties, within and between both agencies and professions, was an increasing awareness among professionals that co-operation was needed and could be achieved through teamwork. Specialisation could, therefore, be regarded as having contributed to 'through the net-ness', even though the concept itself did not emerge in any clearly articulated manner until much later.

2.2 1970 - 1988: Equal Opportunities

2.2.0 Introduction

During the 1970's concerns of a different kind emerged with some serious attempts to acknowledge difference and diversity in law and provision. The Race Relations Act (1975) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1976) followed by the 1981 Education Act, all assert the rights of minority groups, including children, to self determination and to justice and equality in law. The Swann Report (DES, 1985) on the education of children from ethnic minority groups, recognised, for example, that the extra deprivation caused by racial prejudice and discrimination led to an extra element of underachievement.

The raising of the school leaving age (ROSLA) to 16 in 1972, marked a step forward for equal opportunities and the assertion of children's right to education. Increased numbers of older teenagers had a significant effect on schools at a time of developing concern about their ability to prepare students for life in a contracting job market. This concern surfaced in Callaghan's Ruskin College speech of October 1976. The effect of the 'Great Debate' this speech engendered, of ROSLA, and of the equal opportunities movement more generally may have contributed to the concentration in education, in the late seventies and eighties, on its heartland, the curriculum (Lawton and Chitty, 1988; Raggatt and Weiner, 1985).

This might not, on its own, have withdrawn energy from the inter-agency project, evident in some schools after comprehensivisation. However, coupled with the 1974 Local Government and health services re-organisation, it may have been sufficient to jeopardise the progress of inter-agency co-operation during this period. The Warnock Committee was probably typical in remarking that 're-organisation made co-operation [between services], at a local level, which we seek to promote, more rather than less difficult' (Warnock Report, 1978; para.15.2). Reasoning of this sort may account for the shortage of inter-agency initiatives at the time and the near demise of Child Guidance. Notable exceptions are the 1976 Court Report on Child Health Services, the 1978 Warnock Report on the education of children with special educational needs, and the 1985 Fish Report.

2.2.1 The Court Report on Child Health Services : Fit for the future (1976)

The Court Committee sought 'to provide a health service which can facilitate close working relationships with allied services and in particular with local authorities' social services and education departments' (DHSS, 1976, para 3.32). The Committee's view was that 'Joint Consultative Committees should consider how best to ensure that particular needs of children

receive due attention and in this context they may wish to appoint a sub-committee of members of health and local authorities to advise on the development of services to children' (p.386).

The Committee also considered that 'high priority should be given to the establishment of district planning teams for children's services' (p.395).

Court recommended 'a child and family centred service, in which skilled help is readily available and accessible; which is integrated in as much as it sees the child as a whole, and as 'a continuously developing person' (p.368). The Committee were fully aware that, 'Many of the children with the most complex problems, and the most severe handicaps will require help from all three services [Education, Health and Social Services] ... The planning and development of an integrated health service must therefore be done in such a way as to facilitate at every level the closest possible working relationships with these other services' (para 5.25). Children, they declared, 'are full citizens with an equal right to health and to health services whatever their age and wherever they live' (para 5.19). Clinics should be provided in premises appropriate to their function and should have a social as well as a health component. Child health visitors 'should sometimes undertake health surveillance of children in nursery and play groups in co-operation with social workers, child care staff and nursery teachers' (p.372). Court appreciated that improvements in intra-agency provision and organisation were closely linked to co-operative working with other agencies, in a context which saw the child as citizen, with a voice to be listened to. The Report's introductory chapters quote the 1946 Curtis Report on the Care of Children, the 1948 Children Act which had set up Children's Committees to look at the physical and emotional needs of children, and the 1963 Children and Young Person's Act. They describe the latter as a response to the pressures caused by deprivation and as 'having extended local authority responsibilities to include the provision of advice, guidance and assistance to prevent children appearing before courts and being taken into care' (para 5.25). In many respects therefore, the Court Report provides an important link in the chain connecting Kilbrandon (1964), Warnock (1978) and the 1989 Children Act.

2.2.2 Child Guidance

The Child Guidance movement provides evidence of inter-agency co-operation taking place in practice as an undercurrent over a long period, outside the domain of formal government policy. Although the movement predates the period outlined in this literature review by a generation, it is included here because of its influence on the philosophy and practice of other policy movements taking place in Britain in the seventies and eighties. Its progress was similarly influenced by the political and socio-economic changes of the day.

Child Guidance originated in America as a largely voluntary initiative, and came to Britain in the 1920's via Scotland where its development by voluntary bodies and hospitals led to specific recognition in the Education (Scotland) Act 1945 (Warnock Report, 1978, 2.44). Its background influences were:

- the child study movement
- the work of early pioneering psychological methods of helping difficult or delinquent children and their parents
- the growth in public concern for delinquents or, to use the terminology of the day, the 'feebly gifted'
- an attitude that studied behaviour without prejudice, in the hope of discovering causes.

The first clinic in this country was opened in East London, by the Jewish Health Organisation in 1927, while Glasgow, in 1937, became the first education authority to establish a full time Child Guidance clinic. Sampson (1980) describes Child Guidance as 'a certain way of approaching problem behaviour in children... the movement was originally conceived and developed in America to deal with juvenile delinquency but was soon extended to cover other kinds of difficult or neurotic behaviour' (p.1). The movement recognised that psychological pressures had complex social, emotional and cognitive components: 'To unravel the tangle, a group of specialists, who would pool their expertise and come up with solutions taking all the essentials of each individual case into account, seemed the answer' (p.1).

This was the origin of the basic Child Guidance team of medical psychologist (psychiatrist), educational psychologist and psychiatric social worker. Sampson continues:

According to the classic model, each member of the trinity separately investigates the presenting problem according to his own particular approach but diagnosis is not complete until the viewpoints have all been assimilated and discussed in conference. Later each specialist plays his appropriate part in the treatment according to the decisions mutually arrived at ...The guidance idea represents a catalytic change in our thinking about the training of personality. Its provenance between medicine and schooling is challenging and difficult. (ibid. p.1)

Sampson distinguishes between 'clinical' and 'general' child guidance. The former implied a mental health orientation while the latter, according to Wright included 'the contribution of parents, teachers and others who come into face to face contact with children and help them in their development' (in Sampson, 1980, p.77). The development of the movement in this country owes much to the Underwood Report (HMSO, 1955) and its subsequent government Circular 347 (Ministry of Education, 1959). Wright considered that increasing numbers of children and

families with problems and increasing pressure on the clinical teams led Underwood to see child development as 'a learning process with education as a major contributor' (in Sampson, 1980 p.78). Thus Child Guidance was defined broadly, with the clinical team as just one of its components:

There are clearly many more children needing help than can be provided by a small number of basic teams. New ways have to be found to cope with the general problem, however effective the teams might be for certain individuals. (in Sampson op.cit .p.78)

Throughout the seventies, as part of local government re-organisation, 'government circulars developed the view of Child Guidance ... as a network of services provided to help maladjusted children, each having its own base and its own professional staff, and coming together in a variety of ways when problems of maladjustment or mental ill health demanded joint action...' (Wright, in Sampson, op.cit.p.78). Wright considered that the way forward for Child Guidance would be influenced by the professionals provided that consultative panels responsible to the joint consultative committees of health and local authority services were set up. Services, in his view and how they combine, are means to an end:

They are not ends in themselves. The ends will be the improved mental health of children and their better all round development. It seems unlikely that any one professional will ever command knowledge and the resources needed to resolve some of the more difficult problems that arise in helping some children achieve these goals. Professionals who make their contributions will need to know what others can contribute and when others should be involved. For some children combined action will be required for assessment and for effective intervention. The new Child Guidance, that should evolve should be inter-service, inter-disciplinary co-operation, with core teams continuing to play their part and joint planning becoming an integral part. (ibid. p. 86)

In the event, recession, confusion about the 'ends' of services and the dispersal of professional skills among an increasingly wide range of paraprofessionals has contributed to the apparent demise of the Child Guidance movement. However, to use a current metaphor aptly applied to the distinction between issues-led preventative measures ('upstream' work¹) and needs-led pro-active work on behalf of individuals ('downstream' work), subsequent developments in inter-agency co-operation suggest that upstream aspects of the movement remain influential.

¹This metaphor comes from the story of the women in a village who noticed that they were regularly pulling dead bodies out of their river. Eventually a group of them decided to go upstream to find out where they were coming from. (Dorfman, 1997).

For Sampson (1980) these were maintained by the movement's emphasis on

- early referral
- new forms of teamwork
- positive mental health propaganda
- improved recording and reporting
- research

Child Guidance thus helped to increase understanding of the causes of behaviour, spread a therapeutic outlook in dealing with this and a greater awareness of, and a more sympathetic attitude to individual differences of all kinds. This, in turn, 'shaped and promoted much of the special educational treatment given in schools, classes and special units' (Sampson, op.cit.p.75).

2.2.3 Schooling and Welfare

The movement for pastoral care in education was one aspect of the school curriculum which may, in effect, have held the inter-agency line in schools over the long period during which all three primary care agencies adjusted to local government, and political and economic change. Johnson et al's (1980) mid seventies study of secondary schools and the welfare network and Ribbins' (1985) essays on schooling and welfare suggest that this may have been the case. In a study of multi-professional approaches to welfare, Welton (in Ribbins, 1985) quotes an earlier research project (Welton and Henderson, 1980) which found that:

each profession sampled had a broad rather than a restricted view of its responsibility for children's needs, and that in general the respondents recognized the necessity of working in some way with members of other professions either in co-operation or by referring children to them. (in Ribbins, p.68)

There was also some evidence suggesting that when professions were unsure of their responsibility in relation to a particular need, children would be referred to another agency. Individual members of professional groups differed in their readiness to accept referrals outside their traditional core of professional work. Many professionals also failed to distinguish different types of professional response to need for treatment, referral or co-operation. The findings demonstrated the role of the education welfare service, pointing out that this 'inter-professional screening and referral role...does not always get the recognition and credit which it deserves' (Ribbins, p.70). They attributed this to the number of different policy, administrative and professional bodies involved. The study showed that 'the more contact which occurred

between professionals, the greater the degree of knowledge, trust, understanding, and willingness to co-operate in meeting the needs of their common client' (Ribbins, p.73).

Blockages to co-operation and communication between schools and other parts of the welfare network could be overcome, they suggested, by:

- raising professional awareness of the need for collaboration and joint action to meet children's needs
- developing informal contacts between members of each profession and service
- developing formal systems of welfare co-ordination at policy making, administrative and professional levels.

Finally, Welton saw signs of progress by 1985, in the development of co-operative care teams in schools and local areas, the development of welfare specialisms within schools and the greater recognition, engendered by the 1981 Education Act of the need for 'inter-sectoral planning and implementation' (in Ribbins, p.76).

2.2.4 Warnock Report (1978)

The terms of reference for the Warnock Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People (DES, 1978), were to 'review educational provision...for children and young people handicapped by disabilities of body or mind...' (Introduction). From the beginning, Warnock adopted a concept of special education 'broader than the traditional one of education by special methods appropriate for particular categories of children' (para.1.10). Chapter Three spells this out:

There is no agreed cut and dried distinction between the concept of handicap and other related concepts such as disability, incapacity and disadvantage. Neither is there a simple relationship between handicap in educational terms and the severity of a disability in medical terms or a disadvantage in social terms. (para.3.3)

The Committee found it 'impossible to establish precise criteria for defining what constitutes handicap' and deplored the idea that there were two kinds of children, the handicapped and the non handicapped (para. 3.6). Instead, a 'more positive approach' was preferred:

...we have adopted the concept of SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED, seen not in terms of a particular disability which a child may be judged to have, but in relation to everything about him, his abilities as well as his disabilities - indeed all the factors which have a bearing on his educational progress... (para 3.6)

Meanwhile in Chapter One, the Committee had declared:

we have not felt it part of our business to go deeply into the factors which may lead to educational handicap. We are fully aware that many children with educational difficulties may suffer from familial or wider social deficiencies. Whilst for most children their family life enhances their development, others show educational difficulties because they do not obtain from their families or their social circumstances the quality of stimulation or the sense of stability which is necessary for proper educational progress.' (para.1.2)

Finally, the Committee recommended that the term 'children with learning difficulties' should be used to replace the previous system of categorisation.

Thus a Committee briefed to report on handicapped children and young people, opened its terms of reference to cover all children with special educational needs, including those with educational difficulties arising from difficulties in their families or social circumstances, only to end by closing them down again in a definition based on 'learning difficulty'. (DES, 1981, Section 1). This definition, enshrined in law (1981 and 1993 Education Acts), has been a source of debate and dissatisfaction ever since. For some it came to be dismissed (Audit Commission, 1992; Thomas, 1995) as a 'non definition'. Others, while recognising the effectiveness of the Report for a proportion at least of its original target group of 'handicapped children', found it ineffective in ensuring access to education for those in most need of it, namely, children and young people 'in difficulty' for some reason other than 'learning'.

Not surprisingly therefore, the 1981 Education Act on Special Educational Needs failed to address needs arising from socio-economic disadvantage and racial discrimination, however long term, severe or complex these might be. Nor did the Act cope well with the confusion at that time over, on the one hand, definitions of 'learning difficulty', and on the other, treatment appropriate for expressions of emotional and behavioural difficulty. Too often this was reduced to a simplistic choice between punishment or help and, as a consequence, many children, especially teenagers, were failed by the education system.

Nevertheless the Warnock Report and the 1981 Act between them provided the only real mechanism for inter-agency co-operation in relation to children and young people until the publication of the Cleveland Report in 1988 and the passing of the Children Act (1989) nearly ten years later. Furthermore, despite unhelpful legislation, some schools soon, in practice, extended their minimalist, deficit and potentially exclusive definitions of special educational needs. In line with their developing policies for equal opportunities, they became more inclusive. Special needs teachers in ordinary schools, working closely with their pastoral care colleagues had a key role to play in this (Bell and Best, 1986).

Six aspects of the Report are particularly significant for this study. The first of these concerns the *definition of terms*. However unsatisfactory the Warnock definitions have proved to be, they have promoted lengthy debate. Secondly, this has contributed to the enhanced *advocacy role* of those working with children in need which Warnock brought about. Thirdly, the Report was clear in its belief in *parents as equal partners* in the education of their children. Fourthly, the Committee's interest in *voluntary organisations* is significant. Warnock shrewdly observed that voluntary bodies 'still often reveal new and unmet special educational needs' (para. 17.1). The Committee concluded that an increase in collaboration at national, regional and local level between voluntary organisations and statutory services would be desirable, and that its evidence suggested that 'by no means all local authorities appreciate the contribution which voluntary organisations can make' (17.28). The Committee did not envisage any decrease in the importance of voluntary groups:

...rather we see an increased need for effort particularly on behalf of children with moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties who, though numerically the largest groups of children with disabilities or disorders, are supported by relatively few voluntary organisations. (para 17.29)

Fifthly, the *Multi-Professional Assessment (MPA)* has a particular resonance for this study. The 1981 Education Act provided for the multi-professional assessment of those with severe, complex or long term disabilities possibly leading to a statement of special educational needs being made on their behalf by the Local Education Authority. Wherever possible such children were to be educated in mainstream schools. The key point about the MPA and statementing procedure is that it has the force of law. It requires information about a child to be gathered and shared from a number of agencies. On occasion it can lead to the development of genuinely *inter-agency* activity and co-operation. Nonetheless, even though the interaction is frequently no more than a paper information exchange, the process emphasises the importance of inter-agency co-operation over children with special needs.

Finally, the Report devoted considerable attention to the *services* they expected to contribute to the education of children with special needs and the *co-ordinating role in this of Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs)*. The Committee believed its report made it 'evident throughout ... that children with special educational needs are often the concern of other services besides education and that a co-ordinated approach to their problems is essential at all levels' (para 15.52).

This is spelt out more fully in para.16.49:

...the machinery which we have proposed for the co-ordination of services at different levels should provide a framework which will facilitate day to day contact between members of different professions at working level on matters of common concern, make for greater efficiency, extend horizons and promote development. We hope by these means good relations between different professions, on which so many of our recommendations depend, will be promoted and consolidated.

Warnock was particularly interested in Joint Consultative Committees and recommended that they be asked to advise on the health and social services required to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of children with disabilities and significant difficulties coming into ordinary schools (para 15.51). 'Where they are effective, Joint Consultative Committees ... can play a significant part in influencing the provision of different services within a local authority area' (para.15.52). Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs), advocated by the 1973 National Health Service Act to promote a joint community approach, were set up 'to consider and advise the three services on the planning, provision and co-ordination of arrangements in their areas' (Warnock Report, 1978, para.15.49). Membership was drawn from members of area health authorities and elected members of the local authority some of whom would be members of education and social services committees. Warnock, as we have seen, regarded them 'as vital for the co-ordination and development of services for children and young people with disabilities or significant difficulties' (para 15.49). However Warnock also acknowledged that 'they vary considerably in effectiveness and some lack the status and prestige necessary to exert a major influence' (para.16.30). Nevertheless, 'despite these disadvantages, we consider that the existing structure of the JCCs should be utilised to promote the co-ordination of services for children and young people with special need' (para 16.31). The Committee duly recommended that:

*...working groups should be set up under the auspices of the JCCs to review the provision of and operation of services for children and young people up to the age of, say, 25 with disabilities and significant difficulties, with a view to identifying deficiencies in provision and practice, developing strategies and programmes to meet those deficiencies and, as necessary, recommending policies for improving the effectiveness of the separate services and of their co-operation with each other.
(para 16.31)*

In practice, it has been difficult for JCCs to take full account of young people with EBD, or of families suffering from stress, such as extreme poverty or homelessness. To the problems already mentioned, of effectiveness and status, could be added remoteness from practitioners and clients, and lack of funding. Furthermore, as a health service initiative, they were almost bound to favour health service agenda and mind sets. Warnock's observation that it would be

at the level of 'the individual doctor, teacher, nurse, social worker or other professional' that the report's recommendations on collaboration would stand or fall is perhaps not surprising (para. 15.52). Similarly, that the effectiveness of joint working arrangements for children with disabilities and difficulties would depend on 'all concerned being well informed and aware of each other's work and able to develop the means to deal with common problems' (para. 15.52).

2.2.5 Fish Report (1985): Equal Opportunities for All?

The Fish Report reviewed the Inner London Education Authority's provision for special educational needs in the light of the Warnock Report and the 1981 Education Act. Fish, in an introduction reminiscent of Plowden, but in keeping with the period's vision of equal access to the curriculum, declared itself :

... committed to the ideal that schools and other educational institutions should be open to all and to the principles of positive discrimination in the allocation of its resources, recognising that the most socially deprived should have proportionately the most support. (Fish Report, 1985, Foreword)

The Fish Report, too, had difficulties with the 1981 Act definition of special educational needs. Since many of these 'special' educational needs bore little relation to the concept of learning difficulty, as defined by both Warnock and the 1981 Act, special education practitioners in ordinary schools were faced with a dilemma. Loyalty to the definitions and recommendations of a Report which had greatly enhanced their professionalism and sphere of influence, implied loyalty to a poorly developed concept. Meanwhile, attempts at establishing more rational definitions were greeted with dismay: it had been enough trouble to introduce Warnock. Indeed, in subsequent years despite the attempts of many writers from Tomlinson (1982) to Thomas (1995) this issue has yet to be resolved. The problems with definition encountered by the Fish Committee provide a useful illustration of the confusion which can occur when the terminology being used is not fully thought through :

Schools and colleges currently have to meet a variety of special needs in their population, among which are special educational needs now defined by the 1981 Education Act. The Committee recognises special educational needs as one of a range of special needs which may include needs arising from giftedness, disadvantage and learning English as a second language. (1.1.46)

The Committee recognised that the degree to which the individual is handicapped is determined by the educational, social, physical and emotional situations which he or she encounters.

'Handicapping effects will vary from situation to situation and may change over time' (1.1.25).

In relation to social services, Fish was clear that 'the Authority should take steps to see that the social service departments are given relevant information about procedures, provision and

services' (3.19.34), and to Health services, of 'the value of multi-professional centres... and Child Development Teams particularly when they visit nurseries and schools and work closely with them in the assessment of special educational needs' (3.19.37). Equally, although the detail of multi-professional work was considered to be beyond its brief, the Committee's view was that it should be done well in order to meet special educational needs. It identified key issues as:

- **Complexity of services:** This was 'often beyond the scope of any one individual, be they professional or consumer, to cope with and understand...should we aim to make services less complex or provide more satisfactory ways of working with the complexity?' (2.14.57). The Committee was keen to avoid a situation in which 'the consumer is blamed for his or her failure to understand the systems rather than the systems blamed for being too complicated' (2.14.57)
- **Problems of geographical and age co-terminosity:** '...child health services stop at 16, children come out of care at 18, entitlement to full time education stops at 19, and so on' (2.14.58)
- **Resources:** should these be put into social services, such as day nurseries, or health service provision, such as child development centres?
- **Training.** The Committee's view was that:

For services to operate effectively through proper co-ordination, the professionals from each service need to understand each other better... professionals need to come together for some part of their training, both at initial and in-service levels. This would go some way to breaking down narrow definitions of professional roles and tasks which currently inhibit inter-professional collaboration and co-operation.
(2.14.59)

2.2.6 Summary

The period from the early seventies to the late eighties saw the transition from selection and segregation to integration

and inclusion, from a concept of equality which treated everyone as if they were the same, to a concept which valued diversity and social justice. Locally and nationally, society as a whole, and the individuals within it, had to grapple with the contradictions in these radically different positions. The rhetoric of equal opportunities wore thin as individuals and pressure groups began to confront the lack of social justice which made a mockery of 'opportunity'.

Underpinning these ideas was the philosophical premise that it is as unjust to treat unequals equally as it is to treat equals unequally. Positive action was regarded as an effective strategy to assert social justice, but attached to it was the disconcerting need to reinstate and use the recently dismissed techniques of categorisation.

Positive action implies the development of reliable measures and definitions of need so that resources can be targeted effectively. Some of the most heated debates of the eighties were about the ethics of ethnic monitoring and the categorisation of children with special educational needs (Tomlinson, 1982; Stone, 1981; Barton and Tomlinson, 1981; Taylor, 1981). In this context it became apparent that positive action was not in itself sufficient. Fish, echoing Warnock, for example, concluded that:

...services for all children should be provided within the same comprehensive framework and should only be special in the sense that it properly meets the needs of the child not special in that it is a different service or a service provided in a different place. (Fish Report, 1985, 2.14.60)

These dilemmas are clearly demonstrated in Education. Bringing children previously segregated under one roof revealed the continuum of need and the close relationship and impact of non educational problems on educational needs. This made nonsense of education legislation to separate these. In the event Education, as the agency with closest daily contact with all children did not fulfil its function effectively in relation to some groups of young people, notably those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, those suffering under stress at home or from mental health problems. Society began to reap the whirlwind from Seebohm's decision not to investigate the personal and social services in relation to children and young people in difficulty.

Given the problems first, over definition in relation to children with special educational needs, and second, the co-ordination of services, it became clear that the co-ordinating structure, recommended by Warnock and regarded as 'vital', was flawed. Children and young people with disabilities could expect some benefit, but those with other significant difficulties risked falling through the net. Fortunately for the latter, inter-agency activity began to develop its own momentum during the period to be studied next. Typically, this was instigated by practitioners working across a range of agencies, many of whom had no connection with education and were not, therefore, either constrained or confused by special educational needs legislation, terminology and practice. Finally, although co-ordinating structures at policy level were problematic, among middle management professionals and practitioners, the literature shows that multi-disciplinary and multi-professional teams were increasingly being used as a device to bring specialist professional services together to meet the needs of an ever increasing range of client need. This trend was accompanied by an increased interest in inter-professional training and inter-agency co-ordination and planning.

2.3 1988 - 1994: working together for social inclusion

2.3.0 Introduction

While practitioners and policy makers working for children and young people attempted to sort out difficulties of definition and the co-ordination of services, the socio-economic and political situation exerted its own pressure on all services. Resources were under threat, local government increasingly out of favour with central government, and local authorities, as major public spenders, were under scrutiny from a Tory government increasingly strapped for cash. Evidence was also accumulating concerning child poverty and young homelessness as well as the more familiar concern over young offenders (Kumar, 1993). In schools, there were concerns about discipline (Elton Report, 1989), exclusions (Parsons, 1994; DfE, 1992), and children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (Bennathan, 1992; DfE, 1994; Kurtz et al. 1994). There were corresponding concerns about the management of, and accountability for, resources (Audit Commission, 1992a; 1992b; 1994). In this climate the term inter-agency, as distinct from inter-professional, co-operation began to emerge. This section examines some of the issues which promoted this development, beginning with a stark example of agency failure to recognise both children's rights and their need for co-ordinated support and provision.

2.3.1 Child Abuse

The Cleveland Report 1988

The Report of the Inquiry into Child Abuse in Cleveland 1987 (Butler-Sloss, 1988) has a special place in this study for three reasons:

- Acceptance by agencies, and the general public of the reality of what can happen to children and young people. This was timely, in that the years under review had some further shocks in store (Sereny, 1995)
- Acknowledgement of children's rights and right to protection. The Cleveland Report coincided with the publication of the Children Bill (1988) on child law reform. This proposed that courts take note of children's wishes and feelings, that children should on occasions be able themselves to initiate court action on, for instance, custody and access, and that 16 and 17 year olds should be able to make many decisions for themselves, including where to live, who to have access to and whether to marry. 'If such a Bill logically pursues and implements consistent principles of children's rights, as in general advocated by the Law Commission and Lord Butler-Sloss, we could indeed be entering a new era for children' (Newell, 1988, p.199)
- Cleveland led directly to the publication of the DHSS guide, Working Together (1988). This proposed a standardised structure and format for new local handbooks recommending procedures to be gone through in local authorities concerning child abuse in their areas. It

led to the setting up of Child Protection Registers and Panels and outlined inter-agency processes to accord with good practice. All agencies involved with children and young people were affected by this and all were required to take part in appropriate training programmes.

Cleveland thus marks a turning point in public perception of services for children, and of children themselves as 'rights bearing'. It raised other issues too. For Newell (1988) while press coverage of the Cleveland affair saw it as a dispute between parents and professionals, the report itself wanted to put children back in the centre. To what extent, Newell asks, have 'they [professionals] respected children as people rather than objects of concern in all the talk of inter-agency teamwork and new training initiatives' (p. 200)? Child abuse, according to Newell, was a children's rights issue, 'it is not fundamentally a medical or social work or judicial/ penal issue (nor indeed fundamentally a feminist issue), although it may become all of these, and it should certainly be of concern to everyone... child abuse is the misuse of adult power over children, a failure to respect the child's rights to autonomy, physical integrity and privacy' (p.200).

Successful responses from the child's point of view, must therefore be based on respect for the child and for children's rights principles. Newell's concern was that:

The Cleveland affair was only the latest - although probably the most publicised - demonstration that the 'best interests' justification for intervention in children's lives can be sadly inadequate. No doubt everyone in Cleveland believed themselves to be acting in the 'best interests' of the children. But clearly in many cases - and in many, many cases outside Cleveland too - professional 'abuse' has in fact piled on top of the actual or suspected physical, sexual or emotional abuse of the child. (Newell, 1988, p.200)

Key Cleveland recommendations concern the need for

- adults and professionals to inform children of what is happening to them
- professionals to be honest with children as to what promises they can and can not keep
- consultation with children so that their needs and wishes can be taken into account.

Confidentiality was regarded as particularly problematic. Children need to know what will or will not remain confidential. The Children's Legal Centre wrote in its submission to the Inquiry:

We are very concerned that the desire for 'inter-agency co-operation' and 'multi-disciplinary team approaches' to child abuse can conflict with children's desire, need and right to speak in confidence to others about things that concern them...The Children's Legal Centre believes that children's right to and need for confidential advice and counselling has been ignored by many if not all the agencies involved in investigating and seeking to prevent child abuse... (Butler-Sloss, 1988, para 12.68)

Butler-Sloss regarded these concerns as extremely difficult to reconcile with the duties of professionals in relation to cases where offences may have been committed, lives might be at risk, or where professional practice required them, as a matter of duty, to share information. In addition, as Gieve (1988) points out, Cleveland had highlighted the imbalance of power between families and local authorities and the need for consultation and information. Without this, co-operation between parents and professionals could become almost impossible. In her view the Inquiry was welcomed for its message 'that parents should now count as people with something important to contribute to child protection case conferences' (p.233). Nonetheless, Cleveland stands as a caution against uncritical or over-enthusiastic claims for inter-agency co-operation as a panacea for young people's difficulties unless accompanied by attention to the, sometimes competing, rights of children and parents.

2.3.2 Children in need

The Children Act (1989)

The 1989 Children Act brought together child care law passed since the Children's Act 1948, incorporating a new framework for the care and protection of children and seeking to give young people a greater say in the decision making process. It was described at the time as:

the most comprehensive piece of legislation which parliament has ever enacted about children... It integrates the law relating to private individuals with the responsibilities of public authorities, in particular local authority social services departments, towards children...the Act strikes a new balance between family autonomy and the protection of children.. (DoH,1989, Foreword)

The Act's key principles are that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount. The child's wishes and feelings must be considered in any proceedings involving him/her
- the upbringing of children rests primarily with parents
- the statutory powers of local authorities are limited. Their main role is to help parents carry out their responsibilities towards children
- local authorities must work in partnership with parents. Statutory agencies such as Education, Social Services and Health are obliged to work together to promote the welfare of children
- authorities must respond as swiftly as possible in child care matters.

(adapted from Oxfordshire County Council Education Briefing , October 1991)

The Act's definition of 'children in need' is of especial interest. According to Section 17, a child shall be in need if:

he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority under this Part;

his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such a service or

he is disabled.

The Act defines 'development' as 'physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development' and 'health' as 'physical or mental health'. Here, after the false starts of the 1978 Warnock Report, was a universal definition of 'need' which all agencies could use and share. Section 17 also places a duty on the local authority:

to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need by providing a range and level of resources appropriate to meet those children's needs, and requires local authorities to 'take reasonable steps to ascertain the extent of need in their area.

Although Social Services are given the lead role in ensuring that children and young people in need are provided for, they are expected to act in partnership with other agencies, both in the statutory and voluntary sector and to act in partnership with parents and children (Section 27).

In the political climate of the time, the 1989 Children Act was something of an anomaly. It presupposes a strong role for local authorities and respect for the wishes and feelings of children, for welfare, for co-operation and the concept of 'society', and hit the statute book at the height of Margaret Thatcher's New Right attack on these structures and values. The United Kingdom was required, through membership of the European Union, to draw up a Children Act to commemorate thirty years since the international declaration on the Rights of the Child. The chance that legislation of this kind would have emerged without external pressure must be regarded as slim. In the event, it became, for all agencies involved with children, the focus for inter-agency training courses, seminars and conferences. It also provided a means by which practitioners, frustrated by government failure to support co-operative effort in society as a whole, could reassert their belief in such approaches.

What began as consolidating legislation, attempting to draw together the many diverse threads of child care law ... became more radical and reformist during its development, as attempts were made to use the legislation to address a range of identifiable problems within the child care system. (SIS, 1993, p.1)

In this context, the Utting Report, *Children in the Public Care* (DoH, 1991) was a response to public concern about standards and practices in residential child care following incidents such as the 'pindown experience' in Staffordshire in 1990. At the time of the report's publication, the 1989 Children Act was about to come into force and was expected to clarify 'the responsibility of the local authority for assisting children and families in need, and protecting and caring for children at risk' (DoH, 1991, para. 2). For Utting, 'The Act reflects a convergence of values about children as individuals in their own right, citizens enjoying legal protection (para. 3) ...The duty of public care is to deal with those children as if they were our own' (para. 4). In making his recommendations, Utting comments that those 'concerning staff and training require the co-operation of a number of agencies' (para. 106). The Health Service, who commissioned the report, were recommended to 'require local authorities to produce plans for their children's services and monitor their implementation' (para. 109). These plans were expected to reflect the role and contributions of other agencies such as education departments, health authorities and the police (para. 4.18). Utting recognised that this recommendation placed important and difficult responsibilities on local authorities. It is an indication of the slow speed of implementation of the 1989 Children Act that this was not put into effect until 1997.

2.3.3 Truancy and Exclusion

The Elton Report (1989) and Education Acts of 1988 and 1993

One aspect of the 1988 Education Act, best known for introducing the National Curriculum, is indirectly relevant to the present study. This was its alleged effect on motivation and attendance. Teachers were concerned that, in order to cover the full range and content of the National Curriculum, they would be obliged to resort to more formal types of assessment and pedagogy. This contributed to existing concern that students were becoming alienated, anxious and disaffected. The Elton Committee was established to enquire into discipline in schools 'in response to concern about the problems facing the teaching profession' (DES, 1989, p.11), such as increases in physical attacks upon teachers and increases in vandalism of school property. Although most of Elton's recommendations are specifically directed at members of the teaching profession and at LEAs, concern is expressed that 'local authorities should promote better co-ordination between the various local agencies dealing with pupils with behaviour or attendance problems and their families' (ibid. 10.19).

What could not have been easily foreseen in 1988 was how rapidly the figures for truancy and permanent exclusion from school would rise over the following years (University of North London Truancy Unit, 1994; Parsons et al. 1994; Lovey, Docking and Evans, 1993). The 1988 and 1993 Acts created the conditions for a market in schooling and relied on the rhetoric of

increased parental choice to achieve it. New types of schools were to be created and information about them made available to parents so that they could exercise their choice. The result was the publication, obligatory under the 1993 Education Act, of so called 'league tables' of attendance and exclusion records, as well as examination results. In some respects the publication of these statistics was helpful, leading to a better informed public and heightened awareness of the need to address problems of school effectiveness and student underachievement and disaffection. It was certainly helpful to researchers, to have access, for the first time, to data on school attendance and exclusion, much of which had previously gone unrecorded.

However, the notion of the market also 'reversed any continuing trend in government policy based on the strong theory of equal opportunity' (Little and Tomlinson, 1993, p.161). School budgets came to depend on the number of pupils enrolled and schools therefore had to recruit to survive. Schools tended to take the view that non-attendance, disruptive students, students with emotional and behavioural difficulties and those unlikely to succeed in public examinations would tarnish their image in the market place. In its report on provision for children with special educational needs the Audit Commission, for example, found that,

Pupils who are excluded from school do not necessarily have an emotional or behavioural disturbance. Some are disaffected from the schooling they are offered and some headteachers are reported to be anxious to improve the disciplinary image of their school and hence are readier to exclude difficult pupils. (1992a, para.109)

The 1981 Act definition of special educational need, perpetuated in the 1993 Act, did not help since it allowed schools scope to be selective about whose needs they met. As a consequence, schools learned to use a number of avoidance tactics. They could decide that a child with needs did not have learning difficulties and therefore had no need of additional resources. Even if it was agreed that there were learning difficulties, the school could still decide that meeting them in an ordinary school is incompatible with 'the effective use of resources' (1981 Education Act, Section 2).

Meanwhile, a growing body of evidence pointed to the continued rise through the nineties in the number of children excluded from school for disruptive behaviour either temporarily or permanently. Worrying trends were the proportion of boys excluded compared to girls (4:1), the proportion of young people with statements excluded (12.5%) and the disproportionate number of Afro Caribbean pupils excluded (8.1% of the total) (DfE 1992).

The question of permanent exclusion raises a number of issues relevant for this study. Permanent exclusion leads to the removal of the student from the school roll. Alternative

provision then has to be made by the LEA. There are sometimes lengthy delays in completing exclusion procedures and in securing alternative provision for excluded pupils. Given that the peak age for exclusion is 15, this often means that a young person does not receive any significant education during the crucially important run up to GCSE.

In too many cases, the educational provision made for pupils excluded from schools has failed to meet their needs. The aim for all excluded pupils should be to secure their early return to mainstream education. Where for whatever reason, that is not immediately possible or practicable, the provision of effective alternative education...is of great importance... without it... their personal happiness, fulfilment and job prospects as adults may also be adversely affected and some of them may drift into crime. (DfE, 1992 para.18)

Guidance on 'pupils with problems' including exclusion from school, (DfE, Circulars 8-13/94) included reminders that various legal provisions required collaboration between services and that some pupils might have special educational needs requiring attention in the context of the Code of Practice (DfE, 1994). Once again, there were concerns about the variation in the amount and quality of provision for excluded pupils (OFSTED, 1993). Since Section 262 of the 1993 Education Act provides for money to follow a pupil permanently excluded from a mainstream school, the new arrangements were designed, at least in part, to prevent schools retaining funds for students, on roll but not present, or off roll and on no-one else's roll. With age weighted pupil units (AWPU) running at approximately £1500 per secondary aged pupil, and inner city areas in the early nineties reporting numbers of young people not on roll in tens and hundreds, the sums of money either not spent at all or misappropriated was considerable. Suddenly inter-agency work to support these young people seemed as if it should be financially viable.

Excluded Primary School Children

Exclusion from primary school tends to be overshadowed as a matter of public concern by the more widespread concern about exclusion from secondary school. Nonetheless, in 1991/92 permanent exclusions from primary schools accounted for 13% of all permanent exclusions (DfE 1992). Parsons et al. (1994), in view of 'the age, state of dependence and vulnerability of these children' examined the reasons for permanent exclusion and its effect on the children themselves and their families (p.5). 'The prospect of what these children might become and what might happen to them, without appropriate provision, is frightening' (p. 51). In studying the impact of exclusions on other agencies and the costs to them and society as a whole, the researchers' view was that, 'exclusion as an option exercised by schools and the education

service can have results which counter the intentions of other legislation concerning care of children, most particularly the Children Act 1989' (p.5).

Of the eleven children studied in depth, only four were restricted to the involvement of school personnel and LEA officers. The others were involved with a range of professionals who did not necessarily know about the involvement of the others. On the basis of these case studies, the researchers concluded that:

There is an urgent need - recognised by the agencies themselves - to co-ordinate the efforts of all the various professionals involved with a single family, many of whom have problems requiring assistance and support and find their excluded child an additional problem. (Parsons et al., 1994a)

However, although the researchers recommend greater support for both families and schools, and improved inter-agency working, they do not explain how this is to be achieved, or how, in practice, the problems they identify are to be solved.

Social services, health services and educational services must liaise more harmoniously and less competitively, with less cost-shunting than is presently the case. At present this rests apparently on good personal relations, or otherwise, rather than formalised procedures. (Parsons et al. 1994, p.50)

Threading through the report is a concern for children's rights. The average delay, the researchers found, in setting up home tuition was 14 weeks. The average amount of home tuition provided was 3 hours a week, compared with the standard 25 hours in school. From evidence such as this they concluded that the law protecting children's rights to education and to special educational provision was weak. Ultimately, the researchers hoped that their evidence would guide future law making to guarantee 'an absolute minimum of quantity and quality of education to be provided for a child who is educated otherwise than at school' (p.50).

Apart from its subject matter, this report's most innovative aspect is its attention to the cost of exclusion. 'Costing public services, and more particularly child care services, is a relatively recent development ... one of the aims of addressing the cost of exclusion is to give an account of where the cost burden falls' (p.41). Once a child has been excluded, the cost is then shunted on, either to other parts of the education service, or to other agencies, or to the community, or all three. 'Many', the report states, 'may remain "hidden" ' (p.41), as when a mother is happy to keep an excluded child at home, thereby adding to the risk of educational failure later on or involvement in crime. Clearly, agencies 'must liaise' to minimise cost-shunting of this kind, but they need incentives for this. It cannot be motivating to sit down with another agency if you suspect costs will be shunted in your direction as a result.

2.3.4 Accountability and Co-ordination

1992 Audit Commission Reports: Getting in on the Act/ Getting the Act Together

Accountability for the resources spent on children with special educational needs in the education service was already a concern. In 1990/91 approximately £1.5 billion had been spent on the 1.2 million pupils with special educational needs including the 170,000 pupils with a formal statement of special needs (Audit Commission, 1992b, p.1). The Commission had been asked to find out how this money was being spent in view of the 'serious deficiencies in the identification and provision for pupils with special needs' (1992a p.5). These had been caused by lack of clarity about what constitutes special educational needs, lack of accountability by schools and LEAs for the progress made by pupils and resources received, and lack of incentives for LEAs to implement the 1981 Act.

The Commission's recommendations centred on greater clarity of definition and detailed target setting to achieve the aims of the 1981 Education Act. Both these reports established the extent of the delays in service response and provision. Their exposure of poor practice led directly to the development of the National Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs (DfE, 1994). This accompanied the 1993 Education Act (Section 157), and schools, LEAs and other relevant bodies were required by law to have regard to it. With respect to inter-agency work, the Code acknowledged that:

Effective action on behalf of children with special educational needs will often depend upon close co-operation between schools, LEAs, the health services and social services departments of local authorities. The Children Act 1989 and the Education Act 1993 place duties on these bodies to help each other.
(DfE, 1994, para.2.38)

The Code quotes the 1989 Children Act and the 1993 Education Act from which it is clear, however, that the duty to co-operate is by no means an unqualified duty. Thus:

District health authorities, LEAs, grant maintained schools and City Technology Colleges must comply with a request from a social services department for assistance in providing services for children in need so long as the request is compatible with their own statutory duties or other obligations and does not unduly prejudice the discharge of any of their functions. (Children Act, 1989, Section 27(2))

Social services departments, subject to a qualification similar to that in Section 27 above, and district health authorities, subject to the reasonableness of the request in the light of available resources, must comply with a request from an LEA in connection with children with special educational needs, unless they consider that the help is not necessary for the exercise of the LEA's functions.
(Education Act 1993, Section 166)

Given that the duty to co-operate frequently places demands on individual agencies which are likely to be perceived by them as both incompatible and prejudicial to them in the discharge of their functions, these injunctions seem naive. The Code's advice on this matter is that:

In order to achieve full collaboration at both school and local authority level, representatives of the LEAs, social services departments and the health services may choose to meet on a regular basis to plan and co-ordinate activity. Such arrangements will vary according to local circumstances, but the principles of partnership and close working relationships between agencies, supported by meetings to discuss both strategic and operational issues, will have general application. (DfE, 1994, para. 2.40)

One of the purposes of this study is to examine what these 'principles of partnership' and 'close working relationships' amount to in practice, whether meetings to discuss strategy and operations take place, and what transpires as a result.

Seen But Not Heard : Co-ordinating Community Child Health and Social Services for Children in Need (Audit Commission 1994)

The Audit Commission was established in 1983 to appoint and regulate the external auditors of local authorities in England and Wales. In 1990 its responsibilities were extended to include the National Health Service. With this report the Commission acknowledged:

it breaks new ground in that it looks across the agency boundaries between community child health and social services. New legislation has changed the framework within which these services operate. The report reviews the problems this poses for the agencies concerned, and the actions they are taking to change from traditional patterns of working to a much closer collaboration which focuses on individual requirements of families and children in need of support. (1994, Preface)

However, the report did not cover Education, and does not explain why, even though the education service as the only service involved with all children daily, might lay some claim to be considered the front line agency for children and young people. The Commission found that progress towards more effective inter-agency working is hindered by lack of a common language and local structures to implement legislation collaboratively. This issue is commented on frequently, as is the need for education to be involved.

The Commission acknowledged that 'responsibilities are fragmented across a wide range of services. In the case of the 1989 Children Act, local authorities are urged to ensure that education and social services work together and that both combine properly with health services' (para 5). Nor does the Act 'provide any specific machinery to ensure that services co-ordinate, nor (except for reviews of services for children under eight) does it set any specific requirements for them to do so' (para 5). To fulfil the expectations of the 1989 Children Act

and the NHS and Community Care Act, the Commission suggests that services must respond to, and be focused on, need.

The Children Act requires authorities to identify 'children in need'. In areas such as education and primary preventive health care, the main task is to ensure worthwhile and well organised universal provision and encourage universal uptake. In others such as child protection, the task is to identify and provide services on a selective basis. In the latter case, failure to target means not only a waste of resources but also a failure to ensure the well-being of those children who slip through the net of universal services, or for whom universal provision is insufficient. (para 10)

This line of thinking follows the trend we saw developing through the eighties in which the emphasis on positive action led to more precise definition and target setting.

The first task is to define the 'needs' that authorities should be addressing and to target them accordingly. Some services are being offered to everyone when a selective approach would be more appropriate; but even targeted services may be provided unnecessarily. They may be imprecisely focused, or miss those who need them most because they are focused inaccurately. Authorities must also identify 'risk indicators' in order to guide targeted support accurately to where it is most needed. (para. 43)

Other requirements were that services should only be offered where there is likelihood of beneficial outcomes for the child and the family and that the provision of services must be jointly co-ordinated and based on a partnership between agencies and parents. A number of problems with the services currently being provided were identified. It was acknowledged, for example, that parents, health authorities, social services, education authorities and voluntary bodies share a common concern for the well being of children but that:

...despite these common concerns and overlapping responsibilities, progress towards an inter-agency strategic approach to the full range of children's services has been disappointing except where it is mandatory. Only two out of eight authorities visited had a common strategic approach to planning for children in need. (para 41)

Health and social services authorities had not yet determined the extent of needs in their areas and could not therefore allocate resources effectively. Service objectives were vague and outcomes unclear particularly in community child health services, but also for children looked after by the social services. This view was supported by the evidence of research undertaken by Social Information Systems (SIS, 1993) who found 'little consensus was demonstrated in giving priority to children in need beyond those for whom authorities had some existing responsibility' (SIS, 1993, p.9). SIS identified six core elements of a framework for responding to children in need, one of which was the 'development of a mechanism for defining case priorities within the local definition of children in need' (p.10). Finally, there was little sign of collaboration between services, or of the development of an inter-agency approach to strategic

planning for children. For the future, a needs led rather than service driven approach was proposed with the recommendation, echoing Utting (1991), that a joint children's strategy published by health, social services and education authorities, be developed and set down in a children's services plan. These plans were expected to have clear, targeted and timed objectives related to outcomes which can be evaluated. The Commission did not, as it might have done, suggest that English and Welsh authorities seek advice from Scotland, where joint youth strategy was already well developed (Gill and Pickles, 1989).

2.3.5 University of Humberside/ Oxfordshire Housing and Community Care Research Project (1993)

An account of this project is included as an indication of the thinking taking place in other parts of the community also wrestling with the difficulties and frustrations of inter-agency co-operation. This project explored the housing implications of community care to identify and quantify current and future housing needs, having recognised 'the need for a greater understanding of the role of housing agencies in community care and their interaction with other providers' (Arnold et al. 1993, Preface).

This project is relevant for what it reveals about the part inter-agency co-operation plays in ensuring that agency clients get the services they prefer. The report illustrates features common to other inter-agency projects such as the tendency for local initiatives to take place in the vacuum caused by government (local or national) inertia. In this case, this was in addition to distractions caused by local government review.

Over the last twelve months, partly influenced by potential local government review, signs are emerging that some of the structural problems in linking together health, social services, housing and voluntary sector interest in community care are being overcome. In some areas the cumbersome structures of joint planning have given way to more creative, action oriented inter-agency forums seeking to develop new principles of joint working and co-ordination on a range of housing and community care issues. However for the most part, these initiatives have been taken without clear guidance from central government and very much in the style of 'do it yourself.' (p.5)

The project identified ten factors compromising the aims of community care from a housing perspective of which five are equally relevant from the perspective of young people at risk of falling through the net.

- Joint, or shared training as a means of breaking down traditional professional attitudes.

Where joint training has taken place it has quickly exposed weaknesses in legal and technical understanding, professional attitudes, policies and procedures. If new and creative methods of working are to be put into action, sooner or later the significance of joint training will have to be taken on board. (p.6)

- **Data base dilemmas.** The researchers questioned databases and information systems as prerequisites of effective planning for community care, on the grounds that this approach perpetuated outmoded approaches to user's needs. They argued that demands for reliable estimates of 'special needs housing' are premature because full consideration had not been given to user's preferences, and inappropriate because some forms of special needs housing were anachronistic.
- **Less-than-ordinary housing for 'special needs'.** Many people were having to settle for either less adequate accommodation and/or support, or more supervision than they needed. They could have too much care in residential homes or none at all. Had they been asked where they wanted to live they would have opted for ordinary housing with additional support.
- **Users and carers.** The researchers regarded the switch from service-led to needs-led assessment as a device which could

...narrow the gap between what has long been best practice and what has sometimes been shamefully poor practice. It presents an opportunity and an ideal which appeals to the best traditions of public and voluntary service. (p.23)

Throughout the project, the researchers came across people who were well aware of their housing and care needs but had not been listened to. Sometimes expensive and damaging 'total care solutions' had been foisted on people. 'Practitioners and planners have been notoriously resistant to make use of their knowledge. Care services had been locked into care solutions and housing need are someone else's concern' (p.24).

- **Seamless teams.** Inter-professional and inter-agency differences and defensiveness interfered with the development of a coherent approach to community care. This included difficulties in the assessment process and frequent 'buck-passing' between agencies. There was little understanding of what each individual agency could offer and there was tension between agencies when what one agency considered appropriate could not be delivered.

The transitions to new ways of working which all agencies are facing offer a golden opportunity for a collaborative rethink of mutual problems and joint ownership of common principles. The development of multi-agency teams, including the housing authority and housing associations, provides the locus for change. (p.27)

Most of the cases studied involved a mixture of poor housing, ill health and unmet care needs, with little sign of the agency co-operation needed to produce a solution to suit the individual's needs. Rather, people were selected to fit existing schemes. In this scenario, agencies, weighed down by scarcity of resources, were discouraged from a consideration of the creative solutions

which would help them mitigate the effect of financial crisis. In some parts of the country, joint planning teams, made up of housing, social services and health had developed a means of integrating their care provision. 'Resource problems', they found, 'were not the whole story. Housing authorities have their own kind of tunnel vision. They have readily adopted the buck-passing strategies of hard pressed practitioners, to keep unmeetable needs at bay' (p.37).

The existence of 'voluntary sector trouble-shooting agencies like the Elmore Community Support Team in Oxford City'² provided:

a measure of the unwillingness of statutory authorities to take on the taxing needs of the most vulnerable people 'in the community'. The Elmore Team counts success as persuading one or other statutory authority to take on a 'difficult' person whose complex needs defy easy solutions. (p.37)

The Elmore team interested the researchers because it supported their theory that the community care process at ground level could 'generate information for planners and managers that would be more appropriate to the needs of the 1990's and more consistent with the ideals of the 'new' community care than conventional data base approaches... (p.37). Furthermore the Elmore Team demonstrated

how responsive to individuals community care can be. It has also shown that ground level intelligence about needs can be effectively channelled into the planning process. The team's success, albeit on a small scale, could be more widely replicated as a model for service planning. (p.37)

Findings such as these from voluntary sector research and community action demonstrate the strength of commitment and 'do-it-yourself' initiative that began to emerge in the nineties.

2.3.9 Summary

The 1989 Children Act and its implementation dominates the years covered in this section successfully shifting attention from juvenile delinquency to wider concerns about the environment in which children and young people live. In spite of the lack of congruence between the Act's aims and contemporary British political ideology, the Cleveland Report (Butler-Sloss, 1988), ensured that it received a favourable response. At a practical level agencies supported extensive training for their members in the implementation of the Act. For many, these initiatives awakened memories of previous practice in connection with Intermediate Treatment or Child Guidance. Added impetus came from the Act's origin in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child. Supporters of the Act had the additional confidence,

² discussed fully in Chapter 6

therefore, of being part of an international movement to improve children's rights and welfare (Kirst,1991).

This period also saw increased emphasis on economy, efficiency and effectiveness, stemming from increasing government concerns about public spending. In this respect the Audit Commission, whose reports are an important feature of this period, appear to exemplify Seebohm's third 'foundations of an effective service' : research and intelligence.

Social planning is...an illusion without adequate facts; and the adequacy of services a mere speculation without evaluation. It is a continuing process and must not be allowed to lapse. Information from the bottom up must be systematised, collated and analysed. (1989, p.36)

The Audit Commission reports (1992a; 1992b; 1994) demonstrated, when there was little political encouragement to do so, considerable commitment to local authorities and to the welfare of the young people themselves. The reports are notable for the examples of good practice detailed in them in statutory and non statutory sectors, as sources of factual information and for an emphasis, as yet unquestioned, on needs led rather than service driven provision.

Finally, these years saw an expansion in research activity in the area of children's services ranging from small scale action research by MA students studying for further professional qualifications, or by pressure groups, to large scale enquiries funded by major fundholders. Before 1988, inter-agency collaboration tended to be construed in terms of inherently difficult multi-disciplinary or multi-professional work. Tomlinson, for example, asks whether 'The development of extended multi-professional assessments, advocated by both the court and Warnock Reports...assumes an unrealistic degree of communication, co-operation and absence of professional conflicts and jealousies' (1982, p.31). However, the combination of Cleveland and the 1989 Children Act established that children's welfare had to come before the difficulties and inconveniences to professionals of co-operation. This time whole agencies were involved not simply disciplines or professionals. What followed became a search for effective solutions to this problem.

2.4 1994 onwards: the search for solutions

2.4.0 Introduction

By 1994, the idea of inter-agency collaboration was well accepted as was the idea that children and young people might 'fall through the net' of provision. By the mid nineties, however, the welfare project of the sixties and seventies had been superseded by the ideology of the market. Prime ministerial statements such as 'there is no such thing as society only individuals and families' (Thatcher, 1988), and 'we must condemn a little more and understand a little less' (Major), set the tone. In this political climate, the problems and difficulties experienced by young people, already severe, became more so. The level of taxation required to increase public spending threatened privileged groups while more and more under-privileged children and young people were deemed to be 'at risk' (Kumar, 1993; Kempson, 1996).

The desire to promote inter-agency co-operation in this period can be viewed as a theoretical, problem solving response to this situation, a device to help practitioners and policy makers close the gap between a government seeking to secure services which will do more for less, and a voluntary sector seeking to ameliorate conditions for the least well off. However, with primary care services unable to maintain their establishment for core activities it became an almost impossible task to promote inter-agency collaboration in practice. In these circumstances, intra-agency services took precedence over inter-agency work. This section discusses the findings of some reports relating to groups of young people frequently cited by agencies as needing their co-operation. It ends with a Scottish report on agency co-operation and an OECD report on children 'at risk'.

2.4.1 Young People and Crime (Graham and Bowling, 1995)

This Home Office research study examines offending by young people during the period of transition from childhood to adulthood to assess whether young offenders do actually grow out of crime and if so, why. In this study it is relevant first, because it focuses directly on one of the groups of young people identified by agencies as being particularly at risk of 'falling through the net'. Secondly, it is written by policy makers, and the findings emphasise policy implications which it will be for others to translate into practice. Thirdly, although the study does not consider the implications for inter-agency co-operation, the four factors it finds strongly correlated with offending, are among those that other research, for example, Parsons et al. (1994) suggests would require it. These are low parental supervision, truancy and exclusion from school, having friends and/or siblings who were in trouble with the police and poor family attachment.

The research found that 80% of males exposed to all of these risks were also offenders and that peer, family and school factors were the main influences on starting to offend. The offending

careers of males and females tended to follow different paths with females, unlike males, 'tending to grow out of offending as they pass a series of landmarks on the way to adulthood' (p.84). Improvements in the quality of relationships within families and the capacity of parents to supervise their children effectively would be 'one of the most important components of any criminality prevention strategy' (p. 85). This, it is anticipated by, for example, Utting (1991) and the Audit Commission (1994), could be addressed through multi-agency Children's Service Plans. To prevent the onset of offending Graham and Bowling recommend strengthening families, schools and the partnership between them. At a practical level they suggest developing and evaluating, for example, the French system of foyers and New Zealand's Family Group Conferences. The research thus appears to support Parsons (1994) who considered that:

There needs to be clear understanding that the legal provisions being made for these [excluded primary school] children are made in the knowledge that the majority of them come from family and socio-economic circumstances which are unable to take on the responsibility for managing their behaviour in school. The problem of primary exclusion needs to be seen as one which is almost entirely male, is about aggression, disruption and disobedience and is located in disadvantaged family settings. (p.50)

Much would be achieved, it seems, if strategies could be devised at a local level to support family life.

2.4.2 Audit Commission: Misspent Youth (1996)

This report reviews the 'implications of the arrangements for young offenders provided by public services' (1996, p.3). Concern arose from the increase in crime against individuals, its concentration in a few areas and the fact that a disproportionate number of crimes were committed by young people in the age group 10 - 17. In 1994, for example, the study notes that two out of every five known offenders were under the age of 21, and a quarter were under 18. The report examines offending behaviour and makes recommendations for tackling youth crime before discussing the development of local preventative strategies.

The report stresses the importance of developing a co-ordinating strategy. Present arrangements for preventing youth crime were inefficient and expensive, leading to 'waste in a variety of forms, including lost time...lost rents...lost business... and the waste of young people's potential' (para.152). A strategy requires a framework however. The report considered that local government already provided one such structure but that it might be necessary 'to establish some wider forum that brings together local government and the youth courts with the police, probation and health services' (para.157).

Local authority chief executives were recommended to initiate forums in which all relevant local authority services and other agencies participate, to develop strategies for addressing and preventing youth crime. The local forum should be translated into action at strategic, management and practitioner levels. 'As a minimum, local authorities should ensure that they have strategies, formulated and agreed by all the relevant services, in the context of children's services plans, for encouraging children in their areas not to commit criminal offences' (para.158). Joint training of practitioners was recommended as a strategy to promote shared understanding and identify shared problems. All agencies were recommended to share relevant information with others dealing with young offenders. Central government was asked to help 'by giving local authorities a duty to convene inter-agency groups [and] requiring other agencies a duty to co-operate with such groups' (para.168). Finally, the Commission recommended co-ordination between government departments.

Unfortunately, the Commission could not provide many examples of effective strategy in action. Of the two offered, the example with the most detailed multi-level structure was in France, the other, less thoroughly structured was in Salford. Thus once again, an exhortation to agencies to work together is presented as good advice in theory only. Although, five years after the implementation of the 1989 Children Act, convincing examples of how this should be translated in action were scarce, Scottish experience of Youth Strategy development is once more overlooked.

2.4.3 Housing and young homelessness

For a number of years, data has been accumulating demonstrating the extent of homelessness among young people. In 1989, Booth's study for Shelter estimated that 'women and children account for two thirds of those accepted by councils as homeless' (p.12) with '55,000 sixteen - nineteen-year-olds homeless in the capital' (Booth, 1989, p.43). Lloyd (1994) records a report published by the Oxford Housing Aid Centre in 1991, giving a detailed account of young homelessness in an urban area outside London in the early nineties. Between 1.8.90 and 31.7.91, Oxford Housing Rights saw 69 homeless 16 and 17 year olds of whom 31 were 'roofless', 263 homeless 18 - 24 year olds of whom 99 were 'roofless'. Over half these were women. In 1993, in a report (Appendix A) carried out for the inter-agency project Young People in Difficulty, a total of 1015 young people between 5 and 17 were recorded as having run away in the Thames Valley area between July 1989 and July 1990. Both reports emphasise the importance of agency co-operation and networking, highlighting the significance of the 'Network'³, a local initiative which 'tries to ensure that agencies in both the voluntary and statutory sectors co-operate, communicate and complement each other. This involves an elaborate structure of referral and support which has grown up over the years' (Spafford, 1993,

³ see Chapter 6

p.45). These reports also indicate other factors which play a part in improving services but which inter-agency co-operation of itself can do little to improve. These include the need to enforce existing legislation and to support pressure groups promoting new legislation, for example, a new Housing Rights Act. Also highlighted are some difficult issues for service providers. For example, running away is often a hidden problem:

Although services exist, children and teenagers may not know about them and may not feel they are appropriate, or that they will help. At what stage should agencies be involved? Agency involvement is often not necessary, and might make matters worse. On the other hand... many young people who run away are returned home without any serious attempt to establish whether there is something amiss in the young person's home environment. (1993, Under 16s who run away in Oxford)

McCluskey discusses the findings of a survey of social services in England and Wales designed to assess 'how the Children Act is being implemented to meet the needs of young homeless people' (1994, p.2). According to this study, the 1989 Children Act and its implications for young homeless people is surrounded by misconceptions about the roles and responsibilities of a range of agencies, policy and practice issues, the implementation of legislation and the use of resources.

The survey found that at least one third of the social service workers considered that, 'Homelessness among 16 and 17 year olds is purely about a lack of housing' (p.3), with no account taken of the underlying problems explaining why young people became homeless and the risks they face once they are homeless. In relation to legislation, the view was that:

There will always be conflict between housing and social services departments because they are operating under two separate pieces of legislation - the Housing Act 1985 and the Children Act 1989. (p.19)

McCluskey quotes the judgement of Sir Thomas Bingham M.R. in Rb North Avon DC ex parte Smith (The Times, 4 August 1993) which found 'clear parliamentary intention that children in need should not fall between them [the Acts]. If children in need do not command protection under one code, they will command it under another' (p.21). Lack of trust, strained and difficult communication, lack of awareness of each other's roles and responsibilities and entrenched, parochial attitudes had all contributed to what were described as 'traditional hostilities'. Some authorities overcome these difficulties by reaching a common interpretation of the two acts and implementing them positively. Methods included joint training, closer involvement of practitioners in joint policies and assessment procedures and the legal expectation that housing and social services would work together. Evidence that joint working could develop trust and benefits for both agencies and their clients is reported from a survey of housing authorities. This found that, where joint working is being developed successfully, there had been improvements.

However, many social services departments found that 'since the Children Act came into place, there is an expectation that they are fully responsible for meeting the needs of young homeless people' (p.25). In fact, the report points out, corporate working is fundamental to the Children Act, encouraging a range of agencies to work in partnership to provide services but taking the first step towards co-operation with another agency was difficult and might never happen with agencies waiting for each other to make a move.

*We have been waiting for the impact of the Children Act and have expected social services to refer people and ask us for assistance but this has not happened. There has not been a single case referred and they have not asked for help.
(Housing department worker, Cumbria, p.22)*

Finally, the study found that 'Finances are a huge issue for social services departments. Not only was the Children Act underfunded, but authorities are having to cope with cutbacks, possible rate-capping and increased responsibilities (Community Care, the Children Act)' (p.51). Would Social Services have the resources to meet the needs of homeless 16 and 17 year olds?

... there is concern that many departments are using a lack of resources to justify doing nothing for young homeless people. Many departments could use existing resources in different ways... some authorities are using resources in more imaginative ways... by working with a range of agencies, it can be possible to maximise the scarce resources that are available. (p.51)

McCluskey considered that the greater the financial constraint, the greater the need to reprioritise, to look elsewhere for support and to use resources creatively. Examples of multi-agency partnerships demonstrated positive models of service delivery, sharing organisational characteristics such as one-stop agencies providing 'a fully integrated service, incorporating advice, support and access to accommodation within one service' (p.51) and networks of agencies offering, for example, joint assessment, permanent housing and peripatetic support. Key factors ensuring that multi-agency policies work were:

- having top management support
- clear definitions, policies, guidelines and procedures on working with young homeless people understood by all involved *within* social services
- joint policies and procedures *between* social services and housing departments
- joint training to clarify roles and responsibilities within and between departments
- specialist teams to work with care-leavers and young homeless people
- the development of providers
- the involvement of young people
- priority given to the review, monitoring, evaluation and co-ordination of policy and practice, possibly through a specified post holder.

2.4.4 Getting it together: Changing services for children and young people in difficulty (Kendrick, Simpson and Mapstone, 1996)

This Scottish study followed previous work undertaken to 'consider services contributing to the mental health of children growing up within their families, schools and neighbourhoods and to the part which statutory and voluntary services may play' (Mapstone, 1983, p.5).

Representatives from health agencies, education, social work, the Reporter's Departments and the voluntary sector were all involved in what was:

the first [report] produced by an official UK agency which encompassed the wide variety of services involved in the field of mental health services for children and young people. It laid particular emphasis on the relationships between the services and professions. (Kendrick et al. 1996, p.1).

Kendrick et al. (1996) revisit Mapstone to consider the impact impending structural and legislative change would have on the 'inter-agency co-ordination in planning and collaboration in service provision' (p.1) which had developed in Scotland since the original report. In Scotland, as in the rest of the UK, the report notes that changes affecting services to children must be placed in the context of deteriorating public policy treatment of families with dependent children. Factors contributing to this in Scotland included rising unemployment, economic change leading to low paid employment, erosion of state benefits and the rise in inequality (Utting, 1995; Child Poverty Resource Unit, 1995). In Scotland one third of children live in poverty and one quarter of those under 16 live in households dependent on income support. Young homelessness was a particular problem.

Structural differences between Scotland and the rest of the UK are noted, in relation, for example, to the juvenile justice system. In Scotland increased awareness of child abuse, non attendance at school, special educational needs, particularly among those with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties or who are offending, led to the development of Youth Strategies. These, which could be regarded as precursors of current Children's Services Plans, brought together Social Work, Education, Police, Health and Children's Panel Reporters. Local Management of Schools and the Children Act have both been implemented later in Scotland (1996) than in the rest of the UK. Local government re-organisation likewise did not take place until 1996 and was expected to create a number of smaller unitary authorities. Overall, because the research was timed to coincide with major and rapid change, the Report conveys the feeling of uncertainty and stress felt by practitioners and policy makers alike in trying to maintain and develop services under these conditions.

In general however, inter-agency and inter-disciplinary work in relation to families and children in difficulty had improved and professional groups and organisations understood each other

better. Children's Services Plans provided an opportunity to develop this work further but would not be effective 'unless policy commitments being made in relation to children and young people ... make explicit reference to inter-agency and inter-disciplinary working' (p.29).

Factors contributing to successful inter-agency working included many already identified, covering similar areas. For example:

- comprehensive assessment of need by the different agencies and organisations providing services accompanied by common definitions of need and the sharing of information between agencies
- strategies for joint training
- ensuring that the voice of the child and the voices of voluntary groups and pressure groups campaigning for children and young people are heard
- ensuring that social work departments, while maintaining their lead role, adopt a corporate approach to the development of Children's Service Plans.

There was concern about the piecemeal way in which services had developed so that these were not consistent with each other. In the face of impending local government changes 'even within the same local authority, defensiveness about departmental budgets has created major tensions, particularly in relation to education and social work' (p.30). Therefore it was essential to provide services for children and young people in difficulty from a common pool of funds. 'Joint commissioning mechanisms and multi-funding of services will be essential in avoiding the artificial division between "health care" and "social care"; between "social care" and "education"' (p.30). Joint purchasing arrangements between agencies and areas were suggested as a means of making smaller, more specialist services available. The study concluded that while there was commitment to inter-agency and multi-disciplinary work locally and there had been major improvements in the last ten to fifteen years, support from national government was required to resource integrated policies for children and young people.

This research focuses on the effect of imposed structural change on the motivation of practitioners and agency managers. While recognising the opportunities and threats in the new situation, the comments of some of the interviewees demonstrate the interaction between the structural and interpersonal dimensions of their work. Their comments reflect stress, grief and anxiety at the impending change and concern as to how the whole-sale change to unitary authorities would affect carefully built up local inter-agency networks. The 1969 Wheatley Commission had recommended that, in respect of social work departments for example, authorities should serve a population of 200,000. In the event only 8 authorities would have

populations over 200,000, 24 would have populations below 200,000 and 12 would have populations below 100,000. Thus cross boundary co-operation between the new councils was expected to be complex with a large number of providers having to deal with a number of purchasers. It was also expected to be more expensive and to result in job losses. There were worries about the inevitable loss of economies of scale. Interviewees were sceptical about improvements in a change they regarded as politically motivated.

In some cases the future for inter-agency work looked promising. In the case of Fife for example, services had been grouped into three sectors each headed by a corporate manager. The sector of 'social strategy' encompasses education, social work, housing and community services. Against this however, was the anticipated shortage of specialist services which a small unitary authority could not easily provide. Education psychologists were generally given as an example of a profession in which a number of specialisms work together in teams. If these are disbanded the specialism would disappear, some of them having taken a long time to build up.

The coterminosity of boundaries between health, police and local authorities, highlighted by Fish (1985) as being a prerequisite of effective inter-agency work was recognised as a serious difficulty in the reorganisation planned for Scotland. Strathclyde Police would, for example, have to negotiate with 12 different unitary authorities, Greater Glasgow Health Authority with 6. There was also concern about the operation of child protection registers in small unitary authorities, since this would increase the cross boundary movement of families. In general there was agreement that when unitary authorities had settled down, and got over the initial euphoria of 'we'll go it alone', there would be some return to joint working across local government boundaries. Structural issues were widely acknowledged as important. Would unitary authorities stick with traditional structures or try something new? Most had stayed traditional though in the smaller ones social work had merged with housing. As McCluskey (1994) suggests, this could be an advantage for homeless young people.

Devolved school management appeared to be of less concern to Scottish educationists than their counterparts in England. It was anticipated that headteachers would remain loyal to local authority policies. There was uncertainty however as to how to secure inter-disciplinary working where this was not already happening since schools varied in how willing they were to support young people in difficulty. In implementing Youth Strategies for example, the attitude of the headteachers was regarded as a crucial factor. An overriding concern was that the

smaller unitary authorities might find themselves unable to run a full range of services and this would have implications for child care and child protection. There could be advantages in this if contracts produced a sharper focus on target setting and evaluation and engendered a stronger focus on individual needs.

The study found the voluntary sector playing an increasing role in relation to children's services, no longer seen as synonymous with the private sector. In the contractual world of purchaser /provider agreements, the voluntary sector can compete and offers distinctive and local services, particularly in relation to children with learning difficulties and youthwork. Voluntary sector organisations also seem to function as publicists for the public sector services who can not easily be seen to look for custom themselves:

we after all have to raise a proportion of our funds from the public as a voluntary organisation and the best way of doing that is by telling the public that we are doing something of genuine value about the most acute and biggest needs that exist in society. (Voluntary agency representative in Kendrick et al. 1996, p.27)

There was some concern that big voluntary agencies might become outposts of the public service empires, and in so doing, become as bureaucratic. Meanwhile, smaller campaigning groups could find themselves diverted from this by the funding arrangements they had entered into with local services.

This Scottish research undertaken at the point of major structural change catches practitioners and policy makers in all sectors and agencies at their most speculative and vulnerable. At this moment they can be seen coping with the genuine possibility of setting up a new order for children and families in difficulty. The two dimensions of the structural and interpersonal are made explicit in a way that is too often concealed behind the rigid structures of established systems. In the sixties Scotland led the way in co-operative working through its adoption of Kilbrandon's proposals for Children's Panels. Perhaps it will lead the way again with its development of corporate Children's Services Plans which effectively turn plan into action.

2.4.5 Children and Youth at Risk: OECD/CERI (1994)

This report brings together country reports and 42 cases studies from 17 Member countries and three Foundations. Its introduction states that 'It attempts to clarify the meaning of the term 'at risk', determine the prevalence of those said to be 'at risk' and to analyse practices and policies aimed at improving the education and social integration of these students' (p.2). The rationale for the report stems from the challenge children at risk (CYAR) present to society in terms of

social justice and of society's need for young people to develop high level skills 'in order to maintain employment and productivity levels and economic prosperity' (p.3.). The report covers issues related to pre-school, school age and transition to work periods. Factors affecting school failure are therefore emphasised. The country reports gathered information on who was at risk, intervention strategies for different age groups, transition to work and 'cross cutting' issues. The case studies covered programme aims, target population, specific context and programme operation, evolution and evaluation.

The report had some reservations, which recent analysts such as Moss and Petrie (1997) and Swadener and Lubeck (1995) would share, about the use of the term 'at risk'. It was chosen however, on the grounds that the term emphasises preventative rather than remedial approaches to the problem. The report identifies a number of factors associated with 'at risk' status. These are:

- Poverty
- Ethnic minority status
- Aspects of family arrangements (e.g. single parent status, level of education, housing adequacy, home-school breakdown, child abuse)
- Poor knowledge of the majority language
- Type of school
- The geographical location of the school
- Community factors such as poor housing

The report found that 'at risk' factors are cumulative. 'One factor is associated with school failure with the same probability as no factors. But 4 factors is associated with a 10 fold increase in negative outcome' (p.47). As to prevalence, although figures between 15 and 30% were frequently quoted there was substantial variation between Member countries.

National policies to tackle the problems of CYAR were varied but the emphasis was on:

- Placing the child at the centre of the system
- Individualising teaching approaches as well as those of other support services
- Developing flexibility in provision to meet child and family needs.

The Report recognised the implications for change across the whole system and that the way resources were targeted and policies co-ordinated was vital. In relation to policies and programmes to improve schooling, there was agreement among Members that 'inter-sectoral co-operation' was essential but that it involved collaboration between government departments and other agencies, pre- and inservice teacher training and effective communication between home, school, the community and other services.

Innovative multi-agency 'cross cutting' strategies were reported from a number of countries, including Scotland, though not from England and Wales. All countries identified a need for increased co-operation between agencies, and current practice showed a great variation in the extent to which this had been developed. 'Taken as a whole' the report concluded, the study :

points to the need for substantial change to be introduced, if the education and other services involved are to make an appropriate response to CYAR. No general view emerged that this challenge requires a dismantling of the present system; rather that developments are required to make it more responsive to the needs of children, their families and the communities in which they live and work. (p.46)

Although a culture of co-operation was developing, and many countries recognised the need for this in order to 'harmonise policies to increase the effectiveness of services and to avoid overlap between them', developing co-ordinated services was not straightforward. It involved substantial change in the way systems currently operate but 'exactly how co-operation has developed and can be encouraged would be worthy of further study' (p.46).

2.4.7 Summary

'Choice and diversity' are the concepts with which politicians of the day sought to characterise the late eighties and early to mid nineties. Unfortunately although there is little evidence that this advantages more than the prosperous few, the rhetoric has been powerfully populist. This trend has been countered by pressure group activity and growing self determination in some sections of society by, and on behalf of, disadvantaged groups. Integration, having superseded segregation, has itself now given way to inclusion as the overriding notion among those interested in offering choice and diversity to all, not just the 'chosen' few. The last Tory government continued unremittingly to use legislation to enforce a different outcome towards less inclusion while promising more. As the purpose of much of the legislation was to reduce public expenditure, it has resulted in dramatically increased polarisation of society between rich and poor. This polarisation is reflected in the response of agencies and practitioners. In some cases, services have, with some justification pleaded the need to protect their own essential services, rather than reduce these to the point of extinction by contributing to a shared enterprise. Others have seized on the opportunities provided by structural change, and the developing policy vacuum noted by Arnold et al (1993), to develop more co-operative ways of working.

2.5 Historical perspective on the development of policy: summary and conclusions

2.5.0 Introduction

In the thirty years since Kilbrandon, Plowden and Seebohm, what has legislation, and government and independent enquiry achieved for children and young people in difficulty and the agencies responsible for helping them? From the evidence in the literature covered so far, four themes have been chosen as a framework for discussion.

2.5.1 Government policy

Political commentators, educational theorists and philosophers such as Hutton (1995); Gewirtz et al. (1995) and Warnock (1998) note the shift from welfare state to market economy, and from needs to rights as the political pendulum has swung from Left to Right in recent years. This has been accompanied by legislation gradually reducing the power of local government and rendering government support for the public sector more dependent than previously on the skills of agencies as purchasers. Changes in employment patterns and taxation alongside recession and increasing unemployment have led to a widening gap between rich and poor. These in their turn have increased the stress endured by families, many of them headed by a lone parent, on a low income in an employment market where risks previously taken by the employer have been transferred to the employee. Among the worst affected by these changes have been children, one third of whom now live in poverty (Kumar 1993). Furthermore, the proposal that 'child impact statements' become obligatory on all policy makers (Freeman, 1987) has not been put into practice (Hodgkin and Newell, 1996). Meanwhile, environmental and public health issues have increased the risks all children are exposed to (Holtermann, 1996). Any legislative attempts to create a better life for children in difficulty must be judged against these basic facts.

Nonetheless, although the post war welfare project lost support during the years of conservative supremacy, it has continued to inspire research and enquiry leading to influential reports and legislation concerned with the welfare of children. Warnock (DES, 1978), Cleveland (Butler-Sloss, 1989), the 1989 Children Act and research groups in both statutory and voluntary sectors continue to influence attitudes and practice in support of efficient and accountable public services capable of meeting children's needs. However, although the arguments put forward for improved co-operation as a means to this end remain compelling, the end itself has changed. The documents and reports covered in this review reveal a cycle moving from the universal provision of the sixties through positive action of the seventies, identification and assessment of needs in the eighties, with a reworked version of universal

provision once more emerging in the late nineties. This reworking is based on the concept of children as citizens, deserving a decent environment, rather than as objects to receive benefits if 'need' can be identified. In a different dimension, practitioners have held the line through this cycle in their practice, seen in this review in the Intermediate Treatment and Child Guidance movements and, latterly, in the movement to promote inter-agency co-operation.

2.5.2 Concept of inter-agency co-operation

The concept spans the period from Beveridge's 'seamless web' to the present day plethora of inter-agency training opportunities. Despite the exhortation to co-operate put forward in legislation and reports there are few examples to demonstrate how this is to be achieved in practice. This has led to some demoralisation and loss of confidence in government generally by those employed in the public sector. It has also led to attempts to restore morale through pressure group activity, now developing into a research industry of its own through the support of high status charitable trusts who are then able to direct some pressure on central and local government. Lack of direction locally and nationally has, however, resulted in struggles at practitioner level between the vested interests of those who do not want to engage in inter-agency activity and those who do. Both can manipulate and subvert the legislation to their own ends. Lack of resources, can for example, be used with equal ease as an argument both for and against co-operation.

Nonetheless, the concept has developed over the years in response to crises attracting media or professional attention. In relation to children, these crisis points have accompanied fresh revelations of the extent of trouble and difficulty faced by children and their families in our society. Hence the steady development from Kilbrandon's concept of social education as a means to prevent juvenile offending, Seebohm's concern for the family and Plowden's for positive action for children's educational and social needs, to the exposures of child abuse in Cleveland and more recently reports such as Elton, Parsons, Utting and others concerned with issues such as school exclusion and young homelessness.

Over the period as a whole, legislation and government reports have moved from the Olympian overview and patrician manner of Kilbrandon, Plowden and Seebohm to the pragmatism of Butler-Sloss, Utting and the Audit Commission. Mismatches between legislation and report, between different pieces of legislation and the definitions used in them, for example the 1989 Children Act and the 1993 Education Act, have exacerbated the problems inherent in the

implementation of both. Questions of definition in particular have been shelved, even though this issue has become more important, challenging and problematic.

Perhaps the lesson of Seebohm is the most significant. No matter how agencies group or re-group, the need for co-operation remains and without it clients are no more likely receive a co-ordinated response from agencies than they were a generation ago. We need to go back to Seebohm, Kilbrandon and Plowden and reinterpret them for the future. Seebohm's intention was for a team approach, Plowden's for a whole community approach and Kilbrandon's for co-ordination. In every case, the reports recommending best practice, and policy guided by that, were superseded by legislation narrowed to something more simplistic. In the event, practitioners work in the rough marginal ground between ideal and reality, between report and legislation and best and worst practice. Children continue to be vulnerable in these circumstances with little attention paid to their wishes and feelings.

2.5.3 Effective management systems and training for co-operation

With the advent of the market, money has become the tool of management rather than people. This has led to the replacement of professional control by managerial control. This, as many locally managed schools have discovered, can be an advantage, but is not easy, unless some professionals are prepared to turn manager or are able to call on expert advice. The reports of the Audit Commission (1992; 1994; 1996) stress the need for accountability and for the structures, communication and co-ordination. Management consultants from the world of business have also been influential in training public service managers. For example, Handy (1984); Coopers and Lybrand (1996) and the Audit Commission (1993) have contributed to the understanding of how recommendations in reports and the requirements of legislation can be put into effect. This has been helpful to those working across agency boundaries. Changes in information technology and communication systems have also been significant. Clients have higher expectations of agencies than previously and demand better communication and more information. There is too, greater understanding that services are interdependent and that many in society are vulnerable. However, management systems to support co-operation are required.

2.5.4 Resource implications

Increased interest and demand for accountability to ensure tax payers' money is targeted appropriately has meant that auditing, data collection and analysis, and concepts such as 'value added' have become part of everyday life for most managers in the public services. Although many of the government reports cited mention resource implications, legislation rarely does.

The implication is that local providers will redistribute resources to meet the demands placed on them by the legislation. This has unfortunate consequences for other equally essential services at the local level. As an example, it was not foreseen that the detailed procedures put in place to cope with child protection would mean a transfer of resources and energy to this group and away from equally vulnerable groups such as young carers or homeless young people. Methods such as the ring fencing of money jointly held on behalf of agencies which can then be used flexibly to promote inter-agency practice are unusual, and often depend on private sector initiative. Studies of the costs to agencies and society of, for example, residential care, exclusion, juvenile crime or truancy are, as Parsons et al. (1994) point out, a relatively new field. This approach is proving however, to be an effective tool in analysing the relative merits of agency co-operation or the lack of it.

Agencies are now more complex, both statutory and non-statutory, with the voluntary sector booming. 'Care' has become big business with more jobs, increased managerialism and enhanced status, if not pay, with a corresponding increase in vested interests. In both sectors, the tendency is for purchasers to employ professionals and para professionals on short term, part time contracts. This makes it harder for professionals to exercise an advocacy role in relation to their clients. Their need for the support of well co-ordinated co-operative structures is correspondingly increased.

2.6 Factors contributing to successful inter-agency practice

2.6.1 Government Reports and Legislation : inter-agency structures

It is tempting to conclude that the main factor contributing to best practice is the discovery of some fresh abuse or difficulty sufficiently compelling to ensure a humanitarian response from a reasonable government. Young offenders and 'handicapped' and abused children have been the main groups so far singled out for the attention of legislators. In each case the reports and legislation acknowledged the need for agencies to work together and made some arrangements to suit the circumstances. From these we inherit the Scottish Children's Hearing, the special needs Multi-Professional Assessment and the Child Protection Panel. Each has contributed to the development of effective inter-agency co-operation and demonstrates that legislation leading to inter-agency protocols can be effective.

Of these, the most reliable and long standing inter-agency practice is associated with the Scottish Children's Hearings. Also effective in promoting inter-agency working has been the protocol set up in response to the Cleveland Report, and recorded in Working Together, A

Guide to Arrangements for Inter-agency Co-operation for the Protection of Children from Abuse (DES/DoH/Welsh Office, 1988 and 1991). The 1981 Education Act, although influential, has had more success in promoting effective intra- rather than inter-agency work. The multi-professional assessment never quite achieved that objective, being an example of 'paper' co-operation rather than active co-operation between practitioners.

Other aspects of government activity have influenced the deep structures of how agencies go about their business. The restructuring of Social Services following Seebohm is one of these, the development of the comprehensive school and the move away from segregation towards integration, and now inclusion, of children with special educational needs is another (DfEE, 1997). These initiatives have broken down or readjusted boundaries and have helped to create the climate in which protocols for active inter-agency co-operation can be developed. The Joint Consultative Committees set up under the 1973 Health Service Reorganisation Act represent an inter-agency initiative involving senior policy makers and elected members with considerable financial and executive power. Warnock rightly attached great importance to these because of their role in the planning and co-ordination of local provision.

It is no accident that training emerges as a key factor promoting effective inter-agency work during the eighties and nineties. Fifty years ago, as management manuals point out, for example, Evans and Russell (1989), management development was virtually non-existent. Management training now helps business and public services respond to the rapid pace of change, increased professionalisation and cultural and trans-national diversity. Many disciplines have contributed to this, not least psychology. Training, like 'care', has become big business and is identified in this study as an important factor because it can bring about the changes in attitude and behaviour needed to work across agency boundaries. Plowden insisted on an element of social work training in the training of doctors and health visitors. A decade later, Warnock emphasised training within the teaching profession, as well as interprofessional training.

2.6.2 Independent Reports: inter-agency processes

By comparison with the more formal Government reports, reports from independent bodies and the voluntary sector focus more narrowly on particular groups of young people and possible solutions. There is on the whole less theory and more pragmatism. They tend to be local and specific, following a more varied format and style ranging from small case studies to large scale surveys. Many are driven by committed researchers with a tale to tell. The insights gained

from them tend to be unexpected and take time and re-reading to absorb and set in context. Because they are written from a more personal perspective, they are less constrained by the possibility of ending up as legislation. Consequently they are free with their recommendations and paint a picture somewhat closer to the realities of practitioner and client life than the government report. Given that the motivation for them comes from pressure groups or other charitable endeavour this is hardly surprising. Their usefulness lies in the attention they give to process, to the voice and experience of young people and to the face to face workers closest to them. The detailed examples they give, or practical suggestions they make, provide a useful accompaniment to the full scale government report for whom in any case, many of them would have provided evidence. Finally, recent reports have consistently built on the principles laid down in the 1989 Children Act for joint children's services plans to be drawn up and implemented in every area.

Among the factors promoting effective inter-agency work emerging from this source is firstly, support for joint training to develop jointly agreed definitions, terminology and procedures. Secondly, each agency must operate effectively itself before embarking on work with other agencies (Kendrick and Fraser, 1993; Parsons, 1994). Intra-agency work needs as much attention as inter-agency work and should precede it, with agencies ready to enforce existing legislation and support pressure groups promoting new legislation. Thirdly, good relationships are required and should be fostered at all levels with the support of senior management. These relationships should be systematised and not left to chance.

So far, the literature has focused on policy and structures. The next chapter focuses on process and outcomes by considering those who work for, or are served by the agencies, and who are therefore in the position of either carrying out legislation or are its subjects.

CHAPTER THREE

Agencies, Professionals and Young People: Inter-agency Perspectives

3.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at the implications of inter-agency work for agencies and practitioners in meeting the needs, and promoting the rights and opportunities of young people. What is it about agencies as organisations, and professionals and their co-workers as individuals, which promotes or inhibits the collaboration which so many of them profess to want and their clients appear to need?

3.1 Agencies

3.1.0 Historical background

Primary care agencies in this country have their antecedents as public services in the Victorian period. Although this period is now associated in the public mind with charitable motives and benefaction, this was not necessarily the case.

...the Victorians eschewed the charitable approach as being too sporadic and soft centred. In the construction of the major public services in which the professionals now ply their specialisms they were moved by harsher more earth bound motives. (Midwinter, 1977 p.104)

Self interest then as now ordained the expediency of preventative work to avoid mass disease with consequent loss of working hours leading to economic ruin nationally, or more cynically, for the ruling classes. With the continued development this century of the professions, in this context notably medicine, teaching, police, probation and social work, specialisms have increased. Gyarmati (1986) has drawn attention to the contradiction which has intensified between growing specialisation among the professionals and the corresponding need for synthesis. In his view the progress in knowledge aimed at understanding complex phenomena requires synthesis. Yet this has led to 'an opposite tendency, the fragmentation of disciplines, which, in the long run, obstructs our capacity to understand the world we live in' (p.33).

Reports studied earlier, such as Kendrick et al (1996) and Parsons (1994) suggest that children need the specialist help of a range of professionals who are strongly motivated to co-operate. John Ruskin, the Victorian moral philosopher, suggests that humanitarian motives need both agencies and an enabling legal framework.

I hold it for indisputable that the first duty of a state is to see that every child born therein shall be well housed, clothed, fed and educated 'til it attain the years of discretion. But in order to the affecting of this, the governments must have an authority over the people of which we do not now so much as dream. (Ruskin, Letter xiii, March 21, 1867; 1994 edition, p.79)

Motive, in professional and agency development, whether utilitarian or charitable, political or philanthropic, affects outcomes and mode of operation. A comment from Warnock (DES, 1978) serves as a reminder of the manner in which voluntary and state provision has evolved.

As with ordinary education, education for the handicapped began with individual and charitable enterprise. There followed in time the intervention of government, first to support voluntary effort and make good deficiencies through state provision, and finally to create a national framework in which public and voluntary agencies could act in partnership to see that all children, whatever their disability, received a suitable education. (para 2.1)

Subsequent writers have found this analysis somewhat simplistic. Tomlinson quotes many examples to substantiate her claim that:

...special education did not develop because individuals or groups were inspired by benevolent humanitarianism to 'do good' to certain children. The idea that the development of special education was solely a matter of 'doing good' and was civilised progress can possibly be traced to eighteenth-century humanism and nineteenth-century Christian reform. But humanitarianism can itself become an ideology legitimating principles of social control within society. (1982, p.7)

An example is provided by the Charity Organisation Society, founded in 1869 to co-ordinate charity. Its activities included campaigns for special schools for the feeble minded (Warnock Report, 1978, para. 2.18). Among its patrons were those who had interests in the control of defective groups and their separation from normal groups in the interest of social control. Thus it would appear that if humanitarian ideals can be distorted within single agencies, they could, in principle, become even more seriously distorted through agency co-operation. Welton (1989) examining the post 1988 Education Act framework of social policy saw the 1981 Education Act on Special Educational Needs as 'a survivor from the broader welfare project which had its symbolic foundations in the Beveridge Report followed by three decades of development in social legislation' (in Roaf and Bines, 1989, p.21). The immediate post war period under a Labour government, through the need for economic and social reconstruction, brought to fruition principles which had been developing throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. World War II served to heighten awareness of the needs of the most vulnerable in society, including children. The 1981 Act illustrates the further development of this general post war trend towards universal provision and welfarism, not least in its emphasis on inter-agency co-operation.

Although the Act was from education, its provisions laid responsibilities on the health and social services. Thinking around the Beveridge Report had envisaged a seamless web of services delivered inevitably by different but closely co-operating agencies and professions. But the social division of welfare and well chronicled tunnel vision of welfare bureaucrats and professionals in different sectors led to a disintegrated rather than an integrated welfare system. (Welton, 1989, p.23)

This may have been true, but the Warnock Report and the 1981 Act are not only survivors of the previous welfare project. They can also be seen as front runners in the equal opportunities legislation which was part of the seventies discourse on social justice. If 'needs' could no longer be asserted through the welfare project, as came to be the case during the eighties, then rights would have to be demanded, ultimately through the courts.

In discussing the distributional effects of the markets in education and notions of choice, equity and control, Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (1995) suggest that:

One of the key arguments deployed in favour of markets in education is that educational systems which have choice and competition as their organising principles are more equitable than those which are bureaucratically planned and controlled. Indeed education markets have been advocated on the grounds of equity by left-wing academics and politicians as well as those on the right. ...Broadly speaking, the arguments of those on the right seem to be predicated on a desert-based definition of equity while those on the left appear to be using a needs-based definition. (p.9)

Inevitably relationships between agencies and their clients and the form in which the advocacy role of agencies is played out is sensitive to the terms of the definitions they use and the principles on which they are based. Advocates select strategies and adopt terminology according to the circumstances in which they find themselves: it is of little use to appeal to welfare needs in a society which only acknowledges rights.

For some philosophers (O'Neill, 1986) the concept of need is a useful vehicle for bringing together those who assert rights and those bound by duty or obligation to fulfil them. Although the Tory government of the late eighties did not feel bound by either duty or obligation to consider the special needs of individuals (the 1988 Act makes no mention of the principles of the 1981 Act) the 1989 Children Act reaffirms the previous welfare project, couched in the language of needs, obligations and duties. At a time of mounting disillusionment and alienation among public sector workers, the Children Act brought them together just as the concept of agency collaboration was beginning to be more generally understood. Thereafter, encouraged by pressure group and research opinion and support, a movement among dissenters from the government project was engendered which eventually, government could not withstand. In this, the role of organisations such as the National Children's Bureau, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Save the Children, the Children's Legal Centre, Child Poverty Action Group, Family Policy Studies Centre and journals such as Community Care, Child Right and Young Minds played a vital part.

3.1.2 Definitions: agencies and inter-agency work

In common parlance 'agency' suggests power and action in relation to certain tasks: agencies are represented by 'agents' with a clearly defined purpose. Whether in business, international diplomacy or care, 'agency' has similar connotations. Hornby (1993) defines 'agency', from the perspective of the primary care agencies as:

a helping organisation which has its own intake system with 'agency domain' as the area in which it provides a service... This is determined geographically by the catchment boundary; and functionally, by the purpose which the agency has been set up to fulfil - agency function. (p.151)

Children, she points out, are at the centre of different domains and different discourses and have, on this account, more professionals involved with them than any other group, not including the family, the archetypal child care agency. The majority of these professionals are employed by separate agencies although they may share skills and training. For example psychologists and social workers are to be found in the three primary care agencies of Health, Education and Social Services. Most agencies also employ staff at different grades and many are not professionals in the traditional sense of the term. Increased differentiation among agency workers has led agencies to employ large numbers of para professionals and ancillaries to work alongside professionals to carry out routine administrative and practical tasks.

'Inter/multi-disciplinary', 'inter/multi-professional' and 'inter/multi-agency' are terms which tend to be used somewhat loosely among practitioners, sometimes interchangeably. Writers on the subject usually feel obliged to stake out their own claims for definition, as in for example, Gyarmati (1986). Parsloe (1981) notes a range of terms used to discuss the integration of services and relates these to sets of actions associated with key agency relationships, while pointing out the general lack of agreement over definition.

Huxham (1996) discussing relationships between public and non profit organisations uses a more extensive vocabulary than is usual among child care agencies, with terms such as partnership, participation, inter- and cross- organisational, mixed sector. Furthermore, this vocabulary is applied to voluntary and community organisations, co-operation between groups and agencies, across the public and private sectors and among local authority, government and business organisations. Local, national and international perspectives are also considered.

Inter-agency activity, for the purpose of this study, embraces all those forms of relationship subsumed under the heading collaboration. Again, Huxham (1996) uses words such as alliance, bridge, network and coalition, to distinguish between different forms of inter-organisational relationship and comments:

While such distinctions may have value in principle, there seems to be little consensus in the field about how the terms are used either in theory or practice, so they do not provide a consistent and helpful practice... In this article therefore, the term collaboration will be used to refer to all kinds of inter-organizational relationship. (p. 240)

From the evidence of a number of texts since the late seventies, it seems that while the vocabulary being used in the discourse of inter-organisational collaboration is not new, definitions are still relatively fluid. In fact this heady mix of mainly Latin origin nouns and verbs used to elaborate the simple Anglo Saxon derived term 'working together' is a remarkable feature of past and current literature on this subject. Amongst a number of possible reasons for this might be the number of professionals and para professionals now employed by an increasing number of agencies, and the greater ease, promoted by the pragmatism of the market economy, with which such workers can and, indeed must, cross boundaries between profession and organisation as well as between public and private sector.

This trend is reflected in a burgeoning literature on all aspects of the management of inter-organisational activity. Examples are the North American literature on the collaboration of the human service professions (Knapp et al., 1994; Adler, 1994) and literature emerging from business management schools. Huxham and Macdonald (1992, p.53), for example, distinguish between:

Collaboration - when participants work together to pursue a meta-mission while also pursuing their individual missions.

Co-operation - when organizations interact only so that each may achieve its own mission better.

Co-ordination - in situations where there may be no direct interaction between organizations, but where an organization aims to ensure that its own activities take into account those of others.

In these terms, the development of Local Authority Youth *Strategy*, a concept developed in this country as a response to the 1989 Children Act, would be an example of strategy-level collaboration. This would lead to the formulation of a shared *meta-strategy*, defined by Huxham and Macdonald (1992) as:

a statement of strategy for the collaboration, consisting of a meta-mission and meta-objectives. Such a statement will presumably be most useful where the collaborating organizations have a commitment to ends which are outside the direct remits of any of them. Though it is by no means impossible that this could occur in the private sector, it seems much more likely to be the case in the public or voluntary sectors. (p.53)

In formulating these definitions these writers emphasise the 'need to pay deliberate attention to developing collaborative relationships' (p.53). In their view the notion of meta-strategy distinguishes between what individual organisations can do on their own and what can only be achieved through collaboration. The authors acknowledge that these ideas arose through their involvement with the Glasgow Development Agency which required the collaboration of a large number of organisations. By contrast to the literature examined in the last chapter in which inter-agency co-operation was construed in terms of problems, studies across a wider range of organisations seem to have led to the development of a rich vocabulary expressing a variety of relationships stemming from proactive solution focused approaches to collaboration.

Given the breadth of activity undertaken by the statutory agencies involved with the care of children, inter-agency activity goes far beyond multi/inter-disciplinary or inter/multi-professional activity. It is concerned with the manner in which each agency operates as a whole at the levels of both policy and practice. It is also concerned with the operation of these agencies at national as well as local levels and with their links with other agencies in both statutory and non statutory sectors.

3.1.3 Agency purpose

Expressed in the simplest terms, the statutory primary care agencies carry out a particular brief ordained by government. The exact nature of the brief is an evolving one and in some instances arbitrary. In the case of children and young people, the agencies concerned, in addition to health, education and social services, could include probation, police, housing, employment and transport. In some cases their services overlap. For example, the question of who pays for transport to school or hospital, who funds speech therapy and who employs education social workers or youth workers have been, and continue to be, matters for dispute and, in some cases, litigation. Professionals trained in a number of disciplines can find employment in a range of statutory and non statutory agencies involved with children. The ease with which they can cross agency boundaries is, in reality, a matter of how the agencies concerned choose to interpret their purpose and these interpretations vary between and within countries. Norway, for example, has a tradition of school as a key support to families. 'Once a child enters school, it is the teacher who is relied upon to work most closely with the parents to promote the child's welfare... educators ideally serve as the human link between families and other services available at the municipal level' (Hagen and Tibbitts, 1994, p.21). This tradition has arisen in a country characterised by a strong commitment to child centred policies and to equality of opportunity and outcome.

By contrast, the same writers suggest, in the United States:

The organization of pupil personnel - that is, school health personnel, social workers, child psychologists ... is ... a matter of administrative practicality. Such staff may be attached to a centralized bureaucracy or decentralised within the region or to individual schools. Although demand for these services should dictate where and how personnel are assigned, departmental divisions, lack of co-ordination and resource struggles can undermine the delivery of effective services for children. (p.29)

In general terms agency purpose consists of a core of responsibilities, translated in a range of services decreed by government and tradition. These services have developed and have become differentiated over time in response to a range of political, organisational and societal needs. Each one, as it develops, gradually enters the mainstream or 'core mission' of the agency concerned, complete with an entourage of employees. These individuals then develop, through, a combination of internal agency culture, management and pay structures, a loyalty to the agency employing them.

Agency strategies promoting a more flexible response to client needs and allowing for rapid reprioritisation have been slow to develop. From their work with people involved in inter-organisational collaboration, Huxham and Vangen (1996) identify six key themes. These can be divided into those concerning agency goals and priorities and those concerning the manner in which these expressions of purpose are communicated. Over the question of goals, Huxham and Vangen quote the experience of a child care specialist from the local economic development organisation who commented on the 'extreme differences in values with her counterparts in local authorities' (ibid. p.7). Given that Social Services and Health prioritise life threatening situations as opposed to Education's concern with life chances there may be little common ground on which to base collaboration. Ultimately, the dilemma for agencies centres on how they prioritise the marginal at the expense of the core, the risky at the expense of the routine. To resolve this, inter-agency work has to prove that successful work with the marginal and risky brings improvements for all. The key question becomes how to secure collaborative advantage, defined by Huxham (1996) as happening when 'something unusually creative is produced - perhaps an objective is met - that no organization could have produced on its own and when each organization, through collaboration, is able to achieve its own objectives better than it could alone' (p.241).

Agencies appear to be faced with a paradox. Among those on the margins of their responsibility are some of the most vulnerable young people in society. How do agencies

firstly, recognise the significance of these young people and identify them, and secondly, having identified them, how do they transfer them from the margin to the core of agency responsibility? What factors distort or deflect agency purpose in this respect? It seems probable that if agencies were to focus more closely on the margin, a natural consequence would be to see collaboration as a central agency activity rather than one which is marginal. This reversal of the usual emphasis would counterbalance the general tendency of agencies to marginalise those whose needs might oblige them to depart from traditional ways of working.

3.1.4 Agency factors influencing inter-agency work with children and young people

A number of factors are regularly put forward to explain the difficulties agencies have in collaborating with each other in the interests of the most vulnerable. The problem has a long history and the same litany features in almost every study. Mapstone's study of services contributing to the mental health of children exemplifies the main factors usually considered to stand in the way of inter-agency collaboration. The report considered that conflict between agency approaches:

compounded by organisational fragmentation (in particular, separate budgets, different administrative hierarchies, procedures and priorities and employment of the various administrative and professional staff to different authorities and agencies) can defeat the best intentions of those involved in providing mental health services to children and young people. (1983, p.92)

Since the eighties this list has been added to by factors such as the speed of legislative change, local government re-organisation, the introduction of the market into human service provision and an increased demand for accountability, all accompanied by increases in bureaucratic intervention. These factors have caused particular frustration to those employed to carry out aspects of, for example, Care in the Community, as they experience the gap between the expectations raised and the disappointing reality.

...as a result of legislative changes, most multi-professional services are under threat or uncertain about how they are to develop...There is considerable concern that in the transition to the new internal marketing system, many well established teams will be dismantled and will prove difficult or too costly to rebuild. (Wilson, 1993)

Other writers emphasise the 'moral agenda of social reconstruction in a "societyless society"' (Welton, 1989, p.26) which in itself has exacerbated anxiety levels already raised by financial constraints, job losses and legislative change. Kendrick (1996) has drawn attention to problems in Scotland caused by changes in local government administrative boundaries which constrain agencies previously willing to collaborate.

A number of writers, while extolling the benefits of collaboration, draw attention to its difficulties. Mawhinney (1994) in arguing for ecological perspectives on collaboration, cautions against too facile assumptions that:

...collaboration will result in more efficient and effective services for the public. Yet, if past efforts at co-operation are taken into account, it is evident that sustained collaboration will raise problems of communication, control and power... Moreover, if the purpose of collaboration is to better serve the needs of 'at risk' children and youth, then a major underlying cause of risk, that is poverty, cannot be ignored. Co-ordination or even collaboration cannot overcome poverty, nor will they resolve all the problems of fragile families. (p.43)

Lacey and Lomas (1993) in their study of collaboration among support services for children with special educational needs echo Mapstone by citing factors such as separate funding, management, hierarchies, training and philosophy which make understanding between professionals difficult. Collaboration, it is suggested, is time consuming and requires joint training. Hornby (1993) cites factors such as the growing number of families in need, new social policies, undervaluing the user as self helper and 'unwitting input', lack of trust and narrow vision.

Holistic, ecological approaches to service provision for children have been advocated since the sixties in legislation and reports in this country, and in the United States. Programmes such as Head Start received the combined support of government, practitioners and academics (Bronfenbrenner, 1970). Community based provision in areas which are administratively and geographically coterminous is discussed by Mitchell and Scott (1994). This factor affects communication, and the development of continuity, loyalty and commitment to young people and their families and is easily overlooked. The school catchment area is quoted as an example in which 'Thinking geographically, educators can easily imagine comprehensive and integrated service delivery systems' (p.85).

In spite of their enthusiasm for collaboration, Huxham and Macdonald (1992) caution that there is a fine balance to be struck between gaining the benefits of collaborating and making the situation worse. Individualism and collaboration, they stress, each have their own pitfalls. Associated with individualism are the risks of repetition, omission, divergence and counterproduction. Associated with collaboration are losses, of control, flexibility and glory, as well as direct resource costs : 'costing the benefits of collaboration will, of course, be difficult, but some kind of weighing up process is necessary to ensure that the costs do not far exceed the benefits - or conversely that the benefits are recognised as outweighing the costs' (p. 52).

Thus the potential pitfalls can result in a degree of agency inertia with respect to inter-agency collaboration. Huxham (1996) finds that

the rhetoric surrounding inter-organisational relationships is so positive, emphasizing mutual benefit through co-operation and partnership, that those involved seem often to be taken by surprise when difficulties surface because they have had no warning that they have entered complex territory. (p. 239)

For Huxham, the term 'collaborative inertia' describes the situation when the progress of a group set up to achieve 'collaborative advantage' slows down compared to what a casual observer might expect it to achieve. Huxham's experience of this phenomenon led to an exploration of the management of relationships across organizational boundaries. She concludes that collaborative situations are inherently complex '...there are no easy prescriptive guidelines, but ... sensitivity to the areas of difficulty and to the ways in which they can be minimized is essential' (ibid.p.240). These she identifies as:

- *Multiple, often hidden, goals*
- *Differences in professional language, culture and procedures*
- *Incompatible collaborative capability*
- *Perceived power imbalances but no authority hierarchy*
- *The tension between autonomy and accountability*
- *Time involved in managing logistics. (p.240)*

These are balanced by success factors. Huxham cites Mattessich and Monsey's compilation (1992) of these:

- *mutual respect, understanding and trust*
- *appropriate cross section of members*
- *open and frequent communication*
- *sufficient funds*
- *skilled convenor*
- *members see collaboration as in their self interest*
- *history of collaboration or co-operation in the community*
- *members share a stake in both process and outcome*
- *multiple layers of decision making*
- *established informal and formal communication links*
- *concrete attainable goals and objectives*
- *shared vision*
- *flexibility*
- *development of clear roles and policy guidelines*
- *collaborative group seen as leader in the community*
- *political/social climate favourable*
- *ability to compromise*
- *adaptability*
- *unique purpose*

Huxham points out that in all collaborative situations there is an inevitable tension between these sets of factors. Developing a shared vision, for example, might require some masking of goals, at least initially. There may also be mistaken beliefs about the ability of collaboration to reduce costs to each partner in the collaboration. This is regarded by Huxham as questionable :

... experience suggests that successful collaboration is highly resource intensive. Nevertheless, our own perspective on the value that can be aimed for in collaboration sets, in some respects, a much more demanding expectation. Rather than focusing on particular forms of benefit, we simply pose the question, "how can advantage be gained by collaborating?" (ibid.. p.241)

If the point of collaboration is to achieve something important that can only be achieved that way and shortage of money is a major agency constraint, then a clear logic to back the purpose of collaboration is an important pre-requisite.

Studies such as Parsons (1994), and Kendrick (1996), complemented by statistics available from organisations such as the National Youth Agency, suggest that the cost to society of those at the margins of agency responsibility has become so great as to be damaging to everyone. If the concept of collaborative advantage is successful as a strategy enabling agencies to accept and share responsibility for policy making in relation to those on the margins, then developing meta-strategy in relation to this group is of central importance to the way the agencies function for all. Conversely, to neglect the marginal is to lose the opportunity to think creatively about strategies which would benefit everyone.

3.2 Professionals and interprofessionalism

3.2.1 Professionalism

Agencies are made up of individuals whose personal and professional needs and aspirations interact closely with agency purpose and to a large extent determine its outcome. Factors influencing professionals towards or away from collaboration are therefore closely related to those influencing agencies. In the period under review, agencies, professions and disciplines have become more highly specialised and developed a greater sense of professional identity and accountability. This is reflected in the growth and development of professional associations and the investment in training and staff development. The limited training across agency and professional boundaries recommended in the reports of the sixties and seventies has thus assumed greater importance and sophistication in the nineties.

3.2.2 Specialisation

Researchers such as Jaques (1986) discussed the way in which professional training ensures the acquisition of particular values, expertise and identity. This effectively marks the professional and tends to emphasise rather than blur professional boundaries which are later overlain and further reinforced by agency boundaries. Thus, when professionals move from one agency to another, they show a remarkable capacity to 'go native' as they move.

The boundaries are further reinforced by differences in methods of training, supervision and lifestyle, as well as the various habits of dress and behaviour that students develop as they model themselves on their professional mentors. (Jaques, 1986, p.3)

Similarly, Bines (1992) found:

...considerable potential for conflict and territoriality, especially since the history and development of the professions has largely been based on securing status through exclusive knowledge and occupation demarcation. (in Bines and Watson, 1992, p.126)

Pilkington (1993) writing of Arnold's 1993 study of housing and community care in Oxfordshire notes, as an added difficulty, a distinction between 'caring' and other agencies:

...poor housing, ill health and unmet care needs were inextricably linked. Yet the agencies persisted in responding to this mixture by acting unilaterally. Rarely were demands for care and accommodation considered jointly; in some cases housing departments appeared openly reluctant to seek the support of other agencies. This was not a case of simple bloody-mindedness, but of dogged demarcation between professions. Housing officials saw themselves as separate from the caring services, and vice versa. (p.6)

The Thamesmead Interdisciplinary Project uncovered three main categories of expectation when professionals from different disciplines were brought together for training. These were:

- *Cognitive: overcoming problems, exploding and creating myths, perceiving roles*
 - *Practice: discussion, role play, participation, visiting families in a team...*
 - *Affective: 'alarming, but exciting', 'feeling slightly coerced', 'hope not going to be dominated by health visitors', 'many people will feel threatened'.*
- (Higgins and Jaques, 1986, p.14)*

This is reiterated in the interviews carried out as part of an inter-agency project (Roaf, 1991, Appendix B) in which those interviewed spoke of their experience of inter-agency work. They spoke of 'parochialism and people wanting to keep their patches safe' (p.9) and of a general lack of confidence in working collaboratively. Those involved were unclear as to its aims and confused about roles and gate keeping.

Different professionals have difficulty defining what they do. People do not want to be rigid, but cannot do everything and need to accept their and other's limitations. Having accepted a clear set of principles about this there is then the need for anxiety management and to avoid blaming oneself and others. (p.10)

Feelings of insecurity thus appear to underlie inter-agency and inter-professional relations, affecting the ability of individuals both to separate and to integrate the personal and professional in their working relationships. For Lloyd (1993, Appendix C) 'It was often down to personalities as to whether staff work closely or separately and this needs to be formalised' (p.36). Thomas (1992) found applications of attribution theory and personal construct theory useful in elucidating the effect of interpersonal relations on those who work across agency and professional boundaries.

According to Becher (1994) the ideal concept of the professional is of

a particular sort of full time occupation, the practice of which pre-supposes a specialized (and possibly scientific) educational background. Specialised education allows the professional to secure practical and theoretical expertise relevant to his or her field as well as to acquire general knowledge and a sense of ethical values. Knowledge that is utilized 'selflessly' for the common welfare regardless of person and guaranteed through examination and licence. Therefore only experts are, properly speaking, in the position of fulfilling certain functions and providing particular services. (p.4)

In the literature, for example, Johnson (1984), and Becher (1994), the professions tend to be construed more generally along a continuum, with the impartial, altruistic, highly skilled and educated professional at one end and the power and wealth seeking, self interested mystifier of professional knowledge at the other.

Moves towards inter-agency collaboration are being made in a world in which an increased range of professions and increased specialisation run alongside increased demand for accountability from the consumer. Furthermore, accounts of inter-agency projects and reports of enquiry suggest that consumers and agency managers may in some circumstances be exerting pressure jointly on the professions to collaborate in the interests of the consumer thus weakening the professional lobby within agencies. Individual agency members in the statutory and nonstatutory agencies, backed by their respective research communities, do, in fact, recognise that many in society have complex needs requiring the co-operation of a number of professionals. Nonetheless, professional identity and differing value positions have long been regarded as threats to inter-agency co-operation. In Johnson's view:

...professionalism has become an occupational ideal in a society in which its attainment becomes less and less likely as more and more work is routinized through technological advances and occupational practice increasingly finds its typical setting within bureaucratic organisations of various kinds. (1984, p.19)

In the years since this was written this trend has increased, with the agencies now being the key players rather than the professions. Mawhinney (1994) notes that:

Throughout North America there is a groundswell of interest in holistic approaches to overcoming structural barriers to the integration of services for children. It is generally agreed that these barriers have been created by the interactions of the myriad agencies that comprise the interdependent complex of federal, state/provincial, and local levels of government. The resulting fragmentation across services is seen as contributing to the precarious conditions of the growing number of children living in poverty... (p.33)

Mawhinney suggests that social and demographic trends and ecological perspectives have added force to the movement toward greater collaboration. He concludes that 'policy making to support this vision [of collaboration] must acknowledge the power of public ideas and must incorporate processes that allow members of a community to discover shared values' (p.34).

However, while the professions may be experiencing a loss of credibility in the eyes of the consumer and to a lesser extent the agencies, there are important differences of status between them which may affect their readiness to submit to public opinion, including the exhortation to collaborate with others. Parents, in common with children, have increased rights but few advocates. Advocates for children, especially disadvantaged children, are often disadvantaged themselves in the work place and are accorded low status, for example classroom assistants, counsellors and youth workers. Teaching and social work score badly in terms of status compared with medicine. Ironically, this differential is exacerbated by the desire, for professional reasons, of teachers and social workers to de-mystify their practice in the interest of their clients. They could thereby, according to the arguments of some commentators (Henkel, 1994; Taylor, 1994), be contributing to the loss of public respect which is damaging them professionally. In the context of Huxham's (1993) discussion of collaborative advantage, it is suggested here that if meta-strategy and a sense of meta-mission is required to promote collaboration, meta-cognitive abilities among the participants are also required. Since these abilities do not appear, from the evidence of inter-agency projects and reports, to be associated intrinsically with any particular professional skill or status, it may be deduced that the skills associated with the ability to be a successful interprofessional worker are significantly different and have yet to be formulated.

3.2.3 Interprofessionalism

Education, Health and Social Services are exhorted, in much of the legislation, to collaborate over the heads, so to speak, of the strongly demarcated professions within and between them. One solution is to encourage participation in inter-agency training at initial and post experience stages of professional life. At the same time, a strong sense of professional values, identity and skill is required by client and agency. According to Johnson (1984):

...professionalization and state formation have been intimately linked in the development of modern Britain, to the extent that what the state has become is in some measure dependent on its relationship with occupations whose practices generate those social definitions (of health and illness, deviancy and normality, educational success and failure etc.) and categories which are relevant to state functions. (p.20)

Thus the expansion of occupations sharing the goal of professionalisation accompanied by an expansion in interprofessional education and research may now be helping to lower the barriers between one profession and another, between academic and practitioner, and between expressions of what clients want and what they are considered by the professionals to need.

Nonetheless, a necessary tension exists between society's need for increasingly high levels of specialist professional expertise and individual consumer/client's need for a holistic, accessible service. This requires, as noted earlier, a response from the professions who are likely to gain their most useful insights in how to resolve these tensions from among their most vulnerable clients on the margins. In formulating the key skills and abilities of interprofessional and organisational collaboration, a number of researchers in human service professions and business management such as Huxham (1996), Knapp (1994) and Mawhinney (1994) draw attention to a range of factors affecting the ability of professionals to collaborate. Some of these are discussed next.

3.2.4 Factors standing in the way of effective interprofessional practice: necessary and unnecessary constraints

According to Gardner (1991) 'It is constraints that make possible genuine achievements, including human innovation and creativity. In the absence of constraints, where all is theoretically possible, it would not be possible to make and recognize advances' (p.262). Gardner considers that 'the existence of constraints in human thought make possible...the cherished moments when humans overcome a prejudice, a bias, an entrenched way of thinking...' (p.262). Disciplines he declares, are organised sets of constraints. He sees the fact that they advance and are transformed as proof that these constraints can be freeing as well as

limiting. In relation to the disciplinary expert he considers that the term 'constraints' may seem inappropriate:

After all, in some ways, experts are empowered to overcome constraints, to stretch their skills and concepts in new and unanticipated directions. This state of enablement, however is possible only because of a mastery that has been obtained, often quite painstakingly, over a number of years. (p.8)

Gardner suggests that when individuals or groups confront what they consider to be a limit, openings or new configurations appear. One possible way of construing the development of professionalism over the last half century is to see it as a series of confrontations with constraints of various kinds. Distinguishing between necessary and unnecessary constraints then assumes great significance. Using the school as an example, Gardner describes them as bureaucratic institutions within communities subject to powerful pressures from, for example, legislation, the public, and professional organisations. It can be difficult for schools therefore to 'balance and integrate the mission of the school with the practices of the wider community' (p.139). Knapp et al.(1994) in an article on university-based preparation for collaborative interprofessional practice accept both the need for specialist professional skills and interprofessionalism.

Given that disciplines exist, in part to distinguish areas of special expertise from one another, it is natural that there should arise separate - and often competing - service philosophies ... On the other hand, in the world where professionals do their work as teachers, nurses, social workers, therapists, or administrators, they are confronted by challenges that are non-specific, that are related to whole individuals, complex families and communities. At a minimum, these challenges invite and often require co-operation or co-ordination among educational, health and social services. (p. 139)

Knapp et al. found that on the whole, although barriers stood in the way of collaborative instruction and the development of a curriculum transcending disciplinary boundaries, 'Most of the barriers ... appear to be passive, involving a lack of specific incentives to collaborate, rather than active opposition' (p.140).

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is frequently cited as one of the potential stumbling blocks to collaboration between professionals (Warnock, 1978; Fish, 1985). This appears to be especially marked in relation to professionals working with children. Confidentiality raises subtle questions about professional ethics, traditions and etiquette. However it can also be used as an excuse to cover agency inertia and vested interests in maintaining the status quo. In this respect confidentiality can be a good example of an unnecessary constraint. Kadel and Routh (1994) found that

'record sharing among service providers is usually necessary for providing co-ordinated services to families, but most agencies have confidentiality policies which restrict access to records' (p.126). Their strategy was to obtain parental consent to share information between agencies. Since parental consent was required anyway to obtain access to any service, this permission could be sought at the same time. Other strategies were to maintain limited access to highly confidential information (such as mental health treatment) but to include broad statements about referral and recommendations in central files that are accessible to parents and practitioners, to give access to records by those who had sworn an oath of confidentiality, and to reconsider the regulations as part of new co-ordinated record-keeping systems.

The Cleveland Report (Butler-Sloss, 1988) raised important issues of confidentiality and information sharing in the area of child abuse. Subsequent guidance issued for the conduct of inter-agency work in relation to child protection suggests that:

Ethical and statutory codes concerned with confidentiality and data protection are not intended to prevent the exchange of information between professional staff who have a responsibility for ensuring the protection of children.

*In child protection work the degree of confidentiality will be governed by the need to protect the child. Social workers and others working with a child and the family must make clear to those providing information that confidentiality may not be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the child.
(Home Office/ DoH/ DES/ Welsh Office, 1991)*

Warnock (1978) linked confidentiality to the development of trust between professionals:

..guidelines and codes of practice on the sharing of information cannot be a substitute for personal knowledge on the part of individuals of their professional colleagues who are also concerned with meeting a particular child's needs and appreciation of their colleagues' professional expertise. Indeed without such personal knowledge and trust it is unlikely that any exchange of information will be as useful as is possible. (para. 16.17)

Thus confidentiality and information sharing exemplify the kind of issue, initially construed as a necessary constraint inhibiting co-operation, which can, when subjected to analysis, yield creative solutions without compromising necessary ethical constraints. Lloyd (1994), in her work with families of young people 'through the net' of agency provision found, for example, that parents were happy to agree to agencies sharing information about their children if it would lead to better co-ordinated services for them.

Professional jealousy

Kadel and Routh (1994) suggest that 'turf' issues in inter-professional practice arise from, for example, fear of job losses, funding limitations or uncertainty over breaking new ground. This is an important factor where children and young people are involved, since new challenges to agencies are continually being presented by clients who are not the exclusive responsibility of any one agency, for example, young people bereaved, pregnant or acting as carers. Accounts of inter-agency projects suggest that agency attitudes towards 'through the net' adults and 'through the net' children differ (Lloyd, 1994; Vagg, 1987 (Appendix D)). The former have few champions, no 'Ah' factor and agencies are more willing to relinquish responsibility to another agency or inter-agency group. By contrast, practitioners sometimes have difficulty giving up responsibility for a child even where this would be helpful, rather than suffer the opprobrium of relinquishing it. To do so would appear to constitute a personal affront, or worse still, a dereliction of duty. This is reinforced by public opinion, in the subtle differences in attitude towards professionals involved with neglected children compared to those involved with neglected adults. Professional jealousy may also be a factor inhibiting collaboration when professionals within agencies share case loads with others of lower status or working at their agency margin.

Inertia

According to Weatherley and Lipsky (1977), 'street level bureaucrats', that is, public employees who interact with the public and make decisions calling for individual initiatives and routines, 'have substantial discretion in the execution of their work' (p.172). These are often middle managers squeezed between the need of their superiors to delegate authority, their own need to maintain credibility and accountability as middle managers and the demands of their clients. For them it becomes professionally almost unthinkable to do otherwise than make the system cope whatever the demands. In exceptional cases this can result in innovation, but too often, 'bureaucratic coping behaviours cannot be eliminated' (p.196). Although originally observed in the seventies, the same phenomenon still exists:

Community Care's original premise - that individuals' desires and needs come first - has become partially obscured under a mountain of bureaucratic inertia and inadequate resources.' (Arnold et al 1993)

Bowman (1990) sees symptoms sometimes described as 'inertia' in terms of 'momentum': 'Organisations have a strong tendency to continue doing what they have done in the past' (p.108), thus introducing a more dynamic quality to the concept. Inter-agency work, for example, is a field associated with innovation and risk taking. Participants can become used to being involved with the new and the creative. This provides a motivating factor in their work at the expense of the need for stability, and settling to longer term strategy and more permanent

inter-agency relationships, once the desired innovation has been achieved. It is not yet known how inter-agency innovators will manage in such circumstances.

Brooks and Bate (1994) in their study of agency reaction to impending change, consider that a number of features of agency culture can combine to cause not simply actively negative responses, but 'an indifference to change at the local level - indifference on the grand scale' (p.181). Even though people knew about the change and could talk about it, they lacked practical understanding of it and it seemed irrelevant. In a related context, Adler (1994) points out, 'Organizations can constrain or enable interorganizational efforts, but collaboration is a person-to-person activity. Thus interpersonal ties are critical to the success of interorganizational relationships' (p.10). Adler quotes comments at a meeting of the Centre for Collaboration for Children which draw attention to the paradox between the need for interpersonal ties and resistance to change. This was the importance of the 'B team'. These are people in organisations who tell reformers: 'I've been here before you came and I'll be here after you go!' (p.10).

3.2.4 Developing interprofessional competencies

Knapp et al. (1994) note that most definitions of the trained professional 'do not reflect the competencies we know to be associated with interprofessional collaborative practice' (p.138). Their account of the University of Washington's Training for Interprofessional Collaboration (TIC) project showed that standards defining what beginning social workers should know were fairly specific about collaborative skills. Teachers, however, with the exception of those training for special education, made no reference to these skills. They note that:

Unlike both these professional roles, service agency administrators and policy analysts are allowed to practice without a credential. Thus, depending on the professional speciality, the requirements of the professional and governmental bodies that control entry into each profession place differing apparent values on interprofessional collaboration. (p.138)

A fundamental task for the TIC project was to develop some consensus 'around the common professional domain which is the focus of interprofessional work' (p.143). Definitions, they found were required for the key terms, 'competence', 'collaboration' and 'practitioner'. They quote Fenichel and Eggbeer's definition (1990) of 'competence' as 'the ability to do the right thing at the right time, for the right reasons'(p.143).

Knapp et al. expand this by proposing that competence:

involves the capacity to analyze a situation, consider alternative approaches, select and skilfully apply the best observation or intervention techniques, evaluate the outcome, and articulate the rationale for each step of the process. Competence generally requires a combination of knowledge, skills, and experience. Competence for work with children and families cannot be inferred from the completion of academic coursework alone; it must be demonstrated. (p.143)

Interprofessional collaboration in human service delivery they defined as:

an interactive process through which individuals and organizations with diverse expertise, experience and resources join forces to plan, generate, and execute solutions to mutually identified problems related to the welfare of families and children. (p.140)

The TIC project organized competencies into five domains: intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational and sociocultural. It found however, that 'what collaborating practitioners needed to know and know how to do could not be disaggregated neatly, but rather combined knowledge, skills and attitudes within the five domains' (p.144). Furthermore, if, as its assessment suggested, collaborative competence was in part a matter of personal flexibility and openness to ideas, could this, the project leaders asked, be taught?

While learning activities could be arranged that would highlight the importance of being flexible, encourage students to approach a problem flexibly, and even model flexible behaviour, there was no guarantee that the message would get through to individuals with certain types of personality. (p.144)

Kadel and Routh (1994) note that the challenge for practitioners in the implementation of collaboration is a dual one affecting organizations and participants. 'Participants in reform must also consider the total set of goals involved in an innovation and need to realize that collaboration is just one of many ongoing changes in an organization' (p.129). According to Fullan (1992) leaders capable of building collaborative work cultures should be enablers rather than finders of solutions. They should help build a vision among participants, employ conflict resolution strategies, encourage collegiality and respect for individuals and provide ongoing professional development of practitioners. Since leadership skills are almost certain to be required in the implementation process these should also be included in core competencies for collaboration.

Returning to the ideas of Huxham et al (1992; 1996) on 'collaborative ability', it seems that the competencies required for interprofessional collaboration crystallize around the notion of 'the ability to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons'. This appears to be the key ability needed to develop meta-strategy and, when analysed, amounts to meta-cognitive abilities of some complexity. Pervin (1993), suggests that cognitive style, particularly the dimension of

cognitive complexity-simplicity, may have important implications for leadership and international relations. High complexity was associated with the more flexible and integrated view necessary in the exercise of leadership in large corporations in order to develop flexible plans, to include various kinds of information in their decisions and to make connections between decisions.

Taken together, these ideas suggest that the competencies required of interagency collaborators are encapsulated in Gardner's definition of interpersonal intelligence:

the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations and intentions... Interpersonal knowledge permits a skilled adult to read the intentions and desires - even when these have been hidden - of many other individuals and, potentially, to act upon this knowledge - for example, by influencing a group of disparate individuals to behave along desired lines. (1983, p.240)

Goleman discusses the components of interpersonal intelligence, defined by Hatch (1990) as

- *Organizing groups* - leadership skills involving initiating and co-ordinating the efforts of a network of people.
- *Negotiating solutions* - the talent of the mediator and arbitrator, skills of conflict prevention and resolution
- *Personal connection* - talent for empathy and team building
- *Social analysis* - being able to detect and have insights about people's feelings, motives and concerns. (in Goleman, 1996, p.118)

In Goleman's view these abilities build on other emotional intelligences but need to be 'balanced by an astute sense of one's own needs and feelings and how to fulfil them' - in other words intrapersonal intelligence (p.119).

According to Mitchell and Scott (1994) 'Only if staff professionalism is characterised by focused engagement as well as skilful intervention will real needs be addressed... Professional workers differ from skilled craft work by the fact that engaged concentration is required for success' (p.77). Today, professionalism goes beyond specialised expertise, with knowledge of the process of collaboration entering the core knowledge new professionals acquire (Knapp, et al. 1993). The literature suggests that interest in inter-organisational collaboration, whether in the world of commerce or human services is a growing field of academic and practical interest. This can be accounted for partly by increasing global interdependence and ease of communication, but also by the importance now attached to interpersonal skills in daily life. These, in turn, are a natural consequence of developments in psychological theory since the fifties, coupled with a relaxation of traditional class and other social barriers. In terms of communication at least, a more egalitarian life style and the accountability of all services to the consumer play a part. Clients expect professionals to talk to each other and this has been a

challenge that those with well developed interpersonal skills have been willing to accept. Thus the language of exhortation used by report writers and legislators to promote collaboration, is pushing at an open door. The question is how to channel this intelligence in a manner which will effectively benefit the most marginalised and vulnerable of children.

3.3 Children and Young People

3.3.0 Introduction

This study is principally, though not exclusively, concerned with adolescents. It considers how agency and public perceptions of this group are changing, how young people are reacting to changes in status, rights and responsibilities and how agencies and practitioners develop their advocacy role to create human services operating, not for their own benefit, but in the interests of the client. As clients, children and young people are complex, since they have needs not only as members of families, but on their own account as rights bearing individuals (Boyden and Hudson, 1985; Wringe, 1981).

3.3.1 Conceptions of childhood

Recent studies, for example, Kumar (1993), Kempson (1996) detail the changes in living conditions of, and attitudes to, women and children in recent years. The effect has been to add 'juvenilisation' to the already well documented feminisation of poverty. Children fare disproportionately badly because their general environment is poor through exposure to, for example, health risks, pollution, danger on roads. Many cannot, through poverty, access the advantages better off children are gaining (Holtermann, 1996).

A number of factors contribute to this: lack of child care, the speed at which children grow up and mature and the increased risks they are exposed to. In general, many of today's children have more freedom and more opportunities than formerly, but some have much less.

Researchers note concerns about illegal child labour (Childright, 1998), young homelessness (McCluskey, 1994; Booth, 1989), youth crime (Graham and Bowling, 1995) and exclusion from school (Hyams-Parish, 1996). Concern about the illegal living conditions and family life have changed for children, so has their status. Many children reaching adolescence in the nineties have to shoulder the risks and responsibilities of adults both at work and at home. In addition, those most exposed to adult risks are often accorded least status with least knowledge of their rights (Lloyd, 1994).

The New Right project of the late eighties and early nineties contributed to this state of affairs, by putting the clock back on an earlier philosophy emphasising the importance of the family,

preventative work, nurture and universal provision. Young people then were seen as in need of care not control, and treatment not punishment. They were regarded as deprived not depraved and concepts of childhood were defined in those terms. Child Guidance and the comprehensive school movement of the sixties and seventies reinforced the idea that there was a continuum of need, while courts at the time could offer, through Intermediate Treatment, a range of therapeutic approaches to solving problems of juvenile crime. During the seventies this was given added weight by the passing of anti-discrimination legislation in terms of ethnic minorities, women and handicapped children. Inclusion and the notion of children's rights became articulated, supported by the raising of the school leaving age, the lowering of the age of majority, the campaign to end corporal punishment in school (NUT, 1984) and the Gillick judgement (Lee, 1986). By the time of Cleveland (Butler-Sloss, 1987), the rhetoric of children's rights was well developed, paving the way for the introduction of the 1989 Children Act with its emphasis on the wishes and feelings of children and young people and on partnership with parents. Shifts in attitude among adults and young people themselves have had an important effect on the way in which young people's needs are defined by them, their families and the agencies involved.

3.3.2 Adolescence

The nature and concept of childhood and of adolescence have been variously understood throughout history and across all cultures (Aries, 1962). Expectations of, and attitudes towards, children and young people in this country continue to be confused (Archard, 1993). This can be observed in media debates over substance abuse, the use of sanctions, forms of punishment, ages of consent for marriage, employment, sex education, access to services, and in many other areas affecting the daily lives of young people, including the advice they are given (Children's Legal Centre, 1996).

These ambiguities centre round the confusion in society as to when and in what circumstances it is children or their rights which need protection (Freeman, 1988). Workers in the primary care agencies consider that 'society has not decided whether teenagers are adults or children and there is a wide conflict of opinion as to 'best practice' (Roaf, 1991, p. 10). Confusion among adults about adolescent needs, status and rights is likewise reflected in for example, the definitions used in legislation such as the 1981 Education Act, the 1989 Children Act and the 1991 Criminal Justice Act. These contradictions are perpetuated in legislation affecting single agencies such as the 1988 and 1993 Education Acts, and live on in key documents. A common definition would have been an obvious starting point and prerequisite for effective inter-agency practice.

Traditional theories of adolescence have been either psychoanalytic or sociological. As Coleman (1993) points out, a theory of normality is needed, rather than the theory of abnormality posed by traditional approaches. He suggests nonetheless that, 'increased awareness of normal adolescent development has gone hand in hand with a heightened level of concern about problem behaviour' (p.141). The effect is to make it harder for those working with adolescents, or on their behalf to decide appropriate courses of action. The evidence of case studies, for example, Lloyd (1994) and from personal experience and works of literature serve as a caution against making any assumptions as to what can or cannot be done by, and to, adolescents and of what they can achieve without any of the support networks normally considered essential. Agencies tend to have clearly defined objectives and legal responsibilities in relation to young people. However necessary, these may prevent them from responding quickly and flexibly, not only to social trends but also to the challenge inherent in working with the psychological and sociological volatility that characterises adolescence.

Nonetheless, although improvements in some aspects of child welfare have been offset by disimprovements in others, children have benefited from, and contributed to, the more holistic agency approaches to their care and education developed during the last decade. Pressure group and research activity has produced a climate in which the voice of the child can be heard (Clough and Barton, 1995; Davie, Upton and Varma, 1996). However, children and young people present particular challenges to professionals and lay special onus on agencies to co-operate. Firstly, children challenge agency purpose and values because of their vulnerability, subordination and dependence, not only as members of oppressed minority groups, which many of them are, but because they are themselves minors. Secondly they challenge the interpersonal skills of practitioners since they require practitioners to communicate with them in language appropriate to their age and understanding. Thirdly, they challenge agency and practitioner commitment of time, energy and flexibility in the provision of resources since their needs are personal and idiosyncratic. Lastly, children challenge agencies and practitioners to co-operate, since a significant number require the services of more than one agency.

3.3.3 The development of 'inter-agency agencies' for children and families

The case for a single multi-faceted agency for children has been argued for a long time. Before the reorganisation of the Personal Social Services in 1970 in the United Kingdom, children's officers played a significant role in their communities even though the framework within which

they worked and accessed resources was fragmented (Seebohm Report, 1968). Bronfenbrenner (1970), in discussing the framework involved in the socialisation of children argues that:

The contribution of the total community, especially for the disadvantaged child, lies in the fact that many of the problems he faces, and the possibilities for their solution, are rooted in the community as a whole ... We have in mind such problems as housing, welfare services, medical care, community recreation programs, sanitation, police services and television programming... Given this state of affairs, it is a sobering fact that, neither in our communities nor in the nation as a whole, is there a single agency that is charged with the responsibility of assessing or improving the situation of the child in his total environment. As it stands, the needs of children are parcelled out among a hopeless confusion of agencies... no one... is concerned with the total pattern of life for children in the community. (p. 163)

Bronfenbrenner recommended the setting up of a Children's Commission and was himself one of the founder members of the Head Start programme in the United States in the sixties. Similarly, in Norway, there have been attempts in the past to use the school as an integrating agency in the care of children, a system now giving way as teacher work loads increase (Hagen and Tibbitts, 1994).

Mitchell and Scott (1994), describe the tension between schools and social services agencies as 'a legacy of social and educational imperatives' (p.75). In their view inefficiency and ineffectiveness are the culprits, 'arising from a long period in which schools and other service agencies have been building their own unique institutional cultures and professional norms for defining and controlling staff work efforts' (p.75). They consider that these problems are systemic in origin and account for a loss of morale and thence of efficiency and effectiveness. They blame 'the insensitivity of the systems themselves to the complexities of clients' actual life experiences and the holistic nature of client need' (p.75).

Although their study focuses specifically on programmes for collaboration between school and social services agencies in California, they draw some conclusions which are of general significance. They consider that the 'single most potent threat to successful interagency collaboration lies in the historical division of client needs into distinctive 'problems'... Once service agencies have been assigned unique responsibility for dealing with particular sets of client problems, the stage is set for systemic failure... As a result, client needs come to be defined in terms of an agency's capacity to respond' (p.89). From this follows the importance of redefining service responsibilities in terms of geographic area rather than client problems.

They next focus on the tension between case structured and programme structured work, the classic tension between individualised therapeutic interventions and 'whole school' or community preventative measures, between 'upstream' and 'downstream' work. They cite the problems these tensions cause in schools, particularly in cases where schools attempt to case manage large numbers of children rather than develop suitable whole school programmes aimed at restructuring the school to meet the overall needs of the community's children. For them, the ability to transcend traditional casework approaches in favour of holistic programmes of family support is the key.

In sum, interagency collaboration is supported when institutional norms allow geographic service regions to replace social problem-defining agency roles. This support is strengthened when these geographic centres establish an effective integration of program- and case-structured service planning, and when information systems provide documentation of service impact as well as guidance for service planning. (p.90)

The potential for interagency collaboration, in their view, is that it can supplement but not replace individual level professionalism. As educators reach beyond traditionally programme-structured services and re-orientate towards case-structured attention to children and families they will need to redefine the mission of schooling towards family empowerment and integration.

Other models of inter-agency collaboration involve the development of local networks. Knapp et al (1994) quote examples in the States such as the 30 agency network developed in Seattle, geographically located in a school district and supported by the city government and the Cities in School program, the Philadelphia Children's Network, and the Networking Committee of 30 agencies in Decatur, Georgia, formed as a community collaborative council. In the United Kingdom, Lloyd (1994) discusses the impact on local inter-agency collaboration of the 70 strong Oxford Adolescent Network.

Although some writers caution against establishing a new layer of bureaucracy through the development of inter-agency agencies (Guthrie and Guthrie, 1991), others question the grounds of professional disquiet about this in terms of vested interests and the other barriers to collaboration already discussed. Other programmes and structures tell a different story. For example, the Scottish Children's Hearing system can be interpreted as an inter-agency agency, within clear geographical and administrative boundaries, operating a case-structured approach integrated with programme-structured strategies in the community.

Meanwhile, *Children First*, a 1990 report of Ontario's Advisory Committee on Children's Services, argued for a Ministry of the Child, leading to the creation of the post of Minister Responsible for Children's Issues. Between top down (Ministers for Children) and bottom up (local networks) strategies, lies a range of inter-agency collaborative activity currently on a continuum from fully fledged agency to small project. What they share is a commitment to young people and a commitment to listen and to offer a holistic service. What they lack is what Mahwinney (1994) calls a model of a political community which recognises 'the unique problems which occur when self-interest and public interest are combined, such as occurs when the interest of various agencies in self-preservation and expansion entail social costs in duplication of services and in failure to meet the needs of their 'at risk' clientele' (p.44).

Mawhinney quotes Stone's (1989) comment that influence, co-operation and loyalty are potent forces in this. 'Influence promotes collective behaviour through band wagon effects, and even through coercion. Co-operation...recognizes that conflicts usually unite some people, just as they divide others' (Mawhinney, 1994, p.44). Loyalty to the young people makes it possible in individual cases to develop creative responses to each one. Examples quoted from Gardner (1989) are mechanisms such as 'hooks' linking student participation in one program, with participation in another, or 'glue' money which allows children to be assigned to a 'case manager' able to link with other services, or joint ventures where 'several agencies create partnerships to raise funds for jointly operated programs' (Mawhinney, 1994, p.45).

It seems that government nationally and locally is paralysed by the immensity of the task of supporting children and families. Not only is it complex in itself on account of the number of agencies and professionals involved: twenty seven to support one case quoted by Lacey and Lomas (1993), but there are conceptual arguments over children's needs and rights, structural arguments about agency organisation, and socio-political-economic arguments about the relative merits of prevention or cure.

3.4 Children and young people 'at risk'

The temptation in professional conversations about groups and individuals perceived to be 'at risk', or to have 'difficulties', or 'needs', is to focus attention on the individual or group in need of services, rather than on the agencies charged with providing them. Although the temptation is natural, it is one to be resisted if agencies are to provide for clients who do not fit their expectations. The focus in this study is on those groups and individuals, identifiable not by their difficulties, though these may exist, or their need for care and provision, which may also

exist, but solely on the grounds of agency failure to co-operate in order to provide suitable care. In order to become more inclusive, agencies need to analyse the situations they find challenging and the effect of that in the communities they serve. In this, the process of definition serves a useful purpose.

3.4.1 Definitions

Metaphors such as 'through the net', 'falling between stools, or cracks', 'falling between frameworks of care', or 'hot potatoes', are commonly used by agencies to describe those whose needs challenge them. They seem to have developed in association with metaphors such as 'seamless web' (Welton, 1989) and 'welfare network' (Johnson et al., 1980) and to have entered common parlance in the late sixties and seventies. These metaphors are framed with agencies construed as 'containers' and clients as fugitives, or possessions: volatile, elusive, to be held or caught, sometimes as in a game, more generally with the risk of being dropped and lost. Definitions of this client group are hard to find.

A study in the mid eighties of 'difficult to place' (DTP) adults records only one other report concerned with DTP people and this looked at them as patients (Vagg, 1987). Brighton Health Authority defined the typical DTP patient as

...a mentally abnormal individual, who exhibits behavioural, social and/or personality defects, who is likely to be known to multiple agencies including the police and the courts, and who has a history of repeated rejections from various types of statutory and voluntary accommodation. (Vagg, 1987, p.5)

Vagg's study refers to two definitions. These are:

those people who are seen to be misplaced by those at present attempting to contain them because of their bizarre and/or disruptive behaviour and who need accommodation providing a high level of tolerance and specialized assistance.

those for whom the statutory services find some difficulty in accepting responsibility because they have a need for a wide variety of support or provision which cannot be met by one service alone. (p.1)

He comments that the definitions can be criticised since

...first, they identify by reference to potential solutions as well as problems, and secondly, they describe a group who may have little in common other than the fact that staff in various institutions find them difficult to cope with and difficult to do anything for. (p.1)

He concedes however, that the term DTP has some usefulness in that it marks agencies' concern about those they seem unable to help and that even though it centres on the bizarre and disruptive it is clear that other groups are also DTP. Vagg stresses that:

...the label DTP applies to practitioner's assessments of the problems and needs of individuals in relation to the facilities they can offer; it is a description of a relationship, not an individual. Moreover, since that relationship is in large part defined by the objectives of the facilities dealing with them, there is no a priori guarantee that DTP people have any characteristics in common or that, in any strict sense, they constitute a 'group'. (p.17)

This adds another distinction to the one already noted between solution and problem based definitions. If agencies are to be persuaded to take the issues of 'through the netness' seriously they must be convinced that a significant number of people are affected. However, as Vagg found in his study, acquiring this information relies upon the assessments of the agencies as to who is or is not 'through the net' (TTN). Agencies have different interpretations of who is DTP/TTN and there are no objective guidelines. Vagg saw this as a strength enabling the researcher to investigate and assess the conditions which agencies find difficult. He also noted instances in which agency opinion about the same client varied. In some, for example, only one agency found the client 'difficult'.

3.4.2 Risk factors and prevalence of 'at risk' children and young people

Research in this area (Roaf and Lloyd, 1995; OECD/CERI, 1994) indicates that agencies are able to identify those at risk of falling 'through the net' and may be able to estimate numbers. However, the individuals concerned are a disparate group. They require solutions which recognise the diversity of the whole group and withstand the temptation to compartmentalise problems into, for example, homelessness, young offenders or sexually abused. That does not mean that inter-agency projects for young homeless people or looked after children are wasting their time, rather that these projects cannot be fully effective without the support of an inter-agency group to sustain clients when they cease to qualify for a particular project's attention.

Thus the group of people defined as 'through the net' tend to move in and out of 'through the net-ness' over time and according to the problems they experience. Risk factors, as Rutter pointed out (1980) have a multiplying effect, confirmed over a decade later by the 1994 OECD/CERI survey discussed in the last chapter. This study considered the question of definition carefully since it had to hold across a range of countries and cultures and found substantial agreement about the general nature of who is at risk as an 'active expression of a preventive idea' (p.17).

In this study 'children and youth at risk' (CYAR):

are those who are failing at school and who are unsuccessful in making the transition to work and adult life and as a consequence are unlikely to make a full contribution to the active society. (para 45)

...those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who fail to reach the necessary standards in school, often drop out and as a consequence fail to become integrated into a normally accepted pattern of social responsibility, particularly with regard to work and adult life. There are many manifestations of a failure to integrate successfully which include; health problems, substance and drug abuse, crime, early pregnancy and unemployment. (para 157)

According to this study, the strength of the term lay in its emphasis on the future and prevention. Recognising the importance of a developmental perspective, the study quotes Natriello et al, (1990), 'that at risk students have certain characteristics that make it possible to identify them, but that these characteristics become problematic only in conjunction with events and conditions that have yet to unfold' (p.13). The study only applied the concept of 'at risk' to children and young people whose problems originate in factors in the social environment which, over time, may cumulatively develop into 'within child' variables. In its view, the concept of 'at risk' was:

an optimistic one if it moves the debate forward by recognising the transactional nature of much learning. In the educational context this means that the right educational experiences over time can help to compensate for disadvantage and optimise the chances of success for all pupils. A major advantage of the term is that it emphasises prevention in contrast to remedial approaches to the problem. (para 159)

On the basis of these definitions, the survey showed, with considerable variation between Member countries, figures of between 15% and 30% for children and young people 'at risk'. This tallies with Canadian estimates of 30-40% of 'at risk' young people in urban school populations and 15-20% of rural school students (Mawhinney, 1994). According to Mawhinney, there is growing agreement that the factors putting children at risk tend to be interactive and cumulative, culminating most seriously in the transition between adolescence and adulthood. Failure to co-ordinate agency responses to this is seen as a further factor contributing to the risk.

Thus the literature suggests that the search for definitions and an accurate language with which to discuss the needs of vulnerable and neglected children and young people is complex. In this study it is important to the extent that it enables agencies to distinguish between young people 'at risk', a large population, and those among them, a smaller number, that are at risk of falling

'through the net'. Among the latter, while some succeed, for a small proportion, life is never other than hard and distressing. In principle their claims on resources should be recognised as a priority.

3.4.3 Critique of definitions of 'in need' and 'at risk'

The question of why or how or to categorise children and young people and for what purpose has been sharply debated in the last thirty years. The best known debates have centred on definitions of ethnic minority status, disability, special educational needs, and social class. In the context of this study the matter is important since not all agency services provide universal services for children. Even those that do are obliged to target services and must make difficult choices in an attempt to maintain a balance between services benefiting the whole community and services for the individual with specific needs or in crisis.

The development of Children's Services' Plans highlights issues concerning the concepts used in relation to children and young people. Moss and Petrie (1997) challenge the 'dominant discourse' concerning children, parents and society. In this discourse, children are the private responsibility of their parents, the passive dependents of parents, and recipients of services. Meanwhile parents are consumers of services for children. Relationships thus exist between the child and his/her parents and the parents and the market. According to this argument, no active place is left for children in services or society.

Moss and Petrie see this reflected in the 1989 Children Act in which 'parental responsibility is a legally recognized context ... but *societal* responsibility is less clearly defined' (p.4). They see societal interventions as increasingly piecemeal and targeted, as the role of the state diminishes, placing increased responsibility on individuals to provide for themselves.

Therefore, 'children are increasingly exposed to the full forces of the market, with its attendant, inherent and increasing inequalities and insecurities' (p.5). In this scenario, children are dependent and privatised unless their needs are considered to be 'at risk' or 'in need' or requiring 'protection', in which case they become the responsibility of the public. They will then be even more easily construed as weak, poor and helpless.

Moss and Petrie advocate a discourse based on a relationship between children, parents and society in which concepts of the child and of childhood are radically reconstructed. This sees the child as a complex human being and a citizen, full of potential and power and of equal value to an adult. The child has rights and, as an active member of a community and society,

takes increasing responsibility as an individual and as a family member. Children are valued for who they are and what they will become. Childhood is regarded as an important stage of life in its own right, and children as a social group whose rights need protection and promotion. Parenthood is seen as socially important and parents recognise the public and private function of the role. Civic society values social cohesion, inclusion, reciprocity and democratic participation.

Sleeter, argues similarly, in a North American context, for a deconstruction of the 'at risk' label. This is seen as the means whereby the 'dominant discourse' frames 'such children and their families as lacking the cultural and moral resources for success in a presumed fair and open society and as in need of compensatory help from the dominant society' (Swadener and Lubeck, 1995, Foreword). Sleeter finds that discussion of risk factors and poverty tend not to include 'an interrogation of privilege and the possibility that a more equitable distribution of materials, resources, education, power and self sufficiency may put the stark discrepancies of privilege at risk' (p. 2). Thus the 'at risk' metaphor is problematic, to be replaced with the 'vision of children and families "at promise" ' (p.11).

These concepts require a new approach to services for children, one in which, it can be argued, to target any group independently of others is to undermine the whole framework. Thus terms such as 'at risk', 'in difficulty' or 'in need' reinforce and further entrench the 'dominant discourse'. Hodgkin and Newell (1996), reviewing effective government structures for children world-wide, recognise that in ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, the United Kingdom government 'recognised the need for co-ordination in the planning of local children's services and has made the process mandatory (although as yet only required for targeted groups of children rather than for all children...)' (p.5). These researchers appear to accept the new discourse as an aim and the need for profound changes in the way in which children's services are structured in this country. They recommend that government strategy for UK children should be founded on the UN convention and propose the creation of special structures for children to develop a children's perspective rather than simply improving existing structures. They seek to increase the visibility of children in government, give them political priority and increase the active participation of children in society. In this context, the challenge which children and young people who 'escape from' or 'fall through the net' of agency 'containers' present to policy makers, managers and practitioners may well become valued for what it is, a unique opportunity to re-examine values, attitudes and practice in relation to children and concepts of community.

3.5 Summary

An increased range of professions and more rights conscious consumers, less impressed than formerly by professional status, expect specialist expertise to be accompanied by effective communication skills. This has increased the demands on agencies who now employ more administrators, managers, planners and ancillary para professionals than formerly. This trend has weakened the role of the professional expert and sharpened the tension between those who see agencies as protectors of agency and professional interests, and those who see them as protectors of their clients and communities. With respect to the alternative discourse developing for a children's perspective, agency momentum is not necessarily for change. This chapter has identified the following factors contributing to successful collaboration.

Agencies

- regular and systematic re-examination of agency purpose
- the development of meta-strategy and a willingness to engage with other agencies in the definition of terms and the formulation of policies leading to its implementation
- development of intra- and inter-agency training initiatives, managerial and practitioner
- development of inter- and intra-co-ordinating structures to facilitate the flow of information, formal and informal, about agency purpose, priorities and practice
- identifying geographic and administrative areas over which service planning is organised.

Professionals

Professional views about meta-strategy and the extent to which they possess meta-cognitive abilities is likely to affect the collaborative ability of the agencies they work with. Factors contributing to successful collaboration among professionals are:

- clear sense of agency purpose and of role in a holistic pattern of human services provision
- confidence in professional skills and expertise and ability to delegate appropriate parts of the traditional role to others
- competence in the interpersonal skills needed to work within and across agency/professional boundaries
- opportunities to work and train collaboratively with others
- opportunities to make personal links with the local community served by local agencies

A comparison between these findings and those relating to government and independent reports suggests some broad generalisations which will serve as a base for the more detailed review of the research questions which follows. Where legislation and government reports emphasise leadership and structure, independent reports stress process. With agencies as with government,

the emphasis is on structure and management style, where professionals emphasise professional expertise and interpersonal skills. Meanwhile the perspective of young people suggests the need for integrated services, ecological approaches, access to professional expertise and advocacy.

CHAPTER FOUR

Literature Review: Summary and Review of Research Questions

4.0 Introduction

The literature review examined firstly, legislation and reports over the last thirty years relating to the development of inter-agency practice with children and young people. Secondly, the review explored the literature on agencies, professionals and professionalism for comment on agency approaches and professionals' attitudes and practice in relation to the development of inter-agency work. This has been set in the context of changing conceptions of childhood, adolescence and family life in response to developments in their social, political and economic circumstances and to the development of the children's rights movement since the publication of the Children Act in 1989. Thirdly, the review looked at the derivation of definitions of children and young people regarded as 'through the net'. Table 1 (p.105) summarises the findings of the literature review and suggests some areas in which to look for factors contributing to inter-agency co-operation.

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 Legislation and reports

The examination of the literature on policy finds that a legislative framework exists as a result of the efforts of committed individuals, groups and organisations, many of them in the voluntary sector. These efforts emphasise equal opportunities and put the young people and their families first. Nonetheless, although legislation exhorts agencies to promote inter-agency co-operation, only rarely are formal structures set up to carry this through in practice.

Meanwhile, reports suggest the promotion of inter-professional and inter-agency team work, training, case meetings and assessment. Conceptual problems of definition of children in need have not been resolved, exemplified in contrasting definitions of need in the 1993 Education Act and the 1989 Children Act. A range of terms have also been used freely over the period, such as inter/multi- professional/ disciplinary/ agency, with inter/multi agency increasingly used since the mid-eighties.

The literature review suggests first, that legislation to promote inter-agency co-operation has limitations, particularly with regard to the generic group of young people at risk of falling 'through the net' of agency provision. Client groups have been compartmentalised with young offenders being the group most frequently studied and legislated for over the longest period. More recently truants, excluded, abused, young carers and homeless have received attention,

Table 1

		Towards Inter-Agency Co-operation		
Factors	Before 1970	1971 - 1988	1989 - 1994	After 1994
Politics	Con / Lab / Con	Con / Lab / Con	Conservative	Con / Labour
Legislation	CYP Act 1963; 1969; Circular 10/64; Education (Handicapped Children) Act 1970; Local Authority Social Services Act 1970	Health Service Re-organisation Act 1973; RRA 1976; SDA 1975; Education Acts 1981; 1988	1989 Children Act; 1993 Education Act; 1994 SEN / C.o.P.	1997 Green Papers (Education); 1998 Action Programme (SEN)
Values / Principles	Assimilation; equal but different; social welfare	Social justice / social welfare; positive action	From needs to rights and the free market	Market plus social justice / positive action; "The Third Way"
Leadership / Commitment	Beveridge; Butler; Kilbrandon; Seebohm; Plowden; Barnardo's	Court; Warnock; Fish; Swann; NCB; NSPCC	Butler-Sloss; Elton; Utting; Audit Commission; NCB; JRF; Centre-point; Life Chance; Save the Children	Audit Commission; NCB; JRF; Gulbenkian; Children's Rights Development Unit; Young Minds; Children's Legal Centre; Social Exclusion Unit
Concepts and definitions	Segregation; child as object; categories / deficit models	Special Educational Needs; Learning Difficulties; 'Statemented' children	Children in need / at risk; compartmentalism	Through the net; at promise; child as citizen; children's rights
Client Group	Young offenders; handicapped	SEN; in care; EBD; excluded; truants	As before plus abused; categories of learning and behavioural difficulty; homeless; carers	As before with emphasis on young offenders; truants; excluded; looked after
Inter-Agency Structures	Children's Hearing (Scotland)	Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs); Multi-Professional Assessment	Working Together (abuse); School Liaison Groups (Scotland)	
Inter-Agency Strategies	Intermediate Treatment (IT); Child Guidance	IT and CG fade out	Youth Strategy (Scotland)	Children's Services Plans
Terminology used to promote co-operation	Multi / Inter- professional; collaborative / joint working	Collaboration	Inter / Multi-agency co-operation	Inter-agency / organisational co-ordination / collaboration / metastrategy; collaborative advantage; networking; partnership and network broking
Agency strategies to promote inter / intra-agency co-operation	Teams; training in social work for doctors / health visitors	Multi-disciplinary teams	Inter / Multi-agency teams and projects	Inter-agency projects; inter-agency training curriculum
Resources	Available to service the Children's Panel (Scotland)	For statements of SEN	SEN (EDB / truants frequently NOT included on SEN register)	SEN; EBD via projects
Quantitative data		Isle of Wight Study (Health)	Young Offenders / looked after	Young offenders / truancy / exclusion / OECD / CERJ study 'at risk' children & youth

each tending to be marginalised and socially excluded. There has been little recognition that the same young people are frequently to be found in more than one of these categories. Young people with multiple problems are the least well served by society, constantly either on the move between different agencies claiming their concern and resources, or lost in the process and as a consequence, either denied access to existing provision, or no suitable additional provision is made for them. Many appear only to receive the attention of legislators and report writers because of their potential risk and/or burden to society, or because, as in the case of victims of abuse, claims for their need of support are made on the grounds of social conscience.

Policy making on behalf of these vulnerable young people seems to have been motivated as much for the benefit of society as a whole as for the individual young people (Kilbrandon, 1964; Elton, 1989). Egalitarian concepts of social justice and welfare thus run alongside more utilitarian concepts of community safety, the preservation of law and order and the upholding of traditional values. The reports leading to legislation acknowledge the potentially contentious nature of these issues but rarely set up inter-agency strategies to ensure that co-operation takes place in practice. Meanwhile evidence from practitioner accounts suggests that these issues present difficulties at all levels in the agencies, affecting outcomes for the young people in contact with them (Gill and Pickles, 1989; Lloyd, 1994). Society's battles, it seems, are being fought out in the lives of young people, making them even more vulnerable than they are already.

4.1.2 Conceptual difficulties

Given the contentious nature of the work, conceptual difficulties about what is meant by inter-agency co-operation in theory and in practice are to be expected. This feeds into uncertainty about which group of young people is the prime object of concern at any one time and which agencies are expected to take the lead in relation to them. Young offenders, for example, are regarded as being the responsibility of police, probation and social services. Thus legislation and recommendations concerning them can sideline other agencies such as schools, even though schools have a key role to play. The most recent literature on children's rights suggests that re-framing existing theories and re-interpretation of existing legislation in terms of the new discourse could benefit children and young people currently disadvantaged.

4.1.3 Quantitative data

Quantative data is an important factor underpinning successful inter-agency work. The quantitative data which would concentrate agency minds on the extent and range of need has

only been available relatively recently and still does not cover those who fall through the net. In this instance, qualitative data on its own is insufficient, or too anecdotal or extreme, to support the claims of those who favour inter-agency co-operation as a strategy for improving young people's life chances. If, agencies seem to be saying, inter-agency work is to be promoted, in spite of all the difficulties, then the case for it must be made out. Practitioners are not going to leave the safety of their agencies, nor risk current services for the majority, for the sake of a tiny minority. Thus justification for inter-agency work depends on the justification for it numerically (Kilbrandon, 1964; Warnock, 1978; Audit Commission, 1994; 1996; OECD/CERI 1994; Mawhinney, 1994). Those crossing agency boundaries, or entering the area between agencies therefore have to prepare thoroughly beforehand, undertake a risk assessment and build in appropriate safety measures. However, while increasing energy is being put into promoting inter-agency working and some support is being given to practical collaborative endeavour, there is little evidence in the literature that the desired improvements in quality of life for disadvantaged young people are actually taking place. Further research is required to establish this quantitatively.

4.1.4 Resources

Resources exist, and are sometimes, as in special educational needs provision, 'indicated' but are as easily lost or misdirected as the young people themselves, since agencies find it hard to make the rapid readjustments and re-prioritisation that children at risk of falling through the net require. Consequently, monitoring organisations such as the Audit Commission report evidence of misuse of resources, delays and lack of accountability (1992a;1994).

4.1.5 Summary

The literature covering legislation and reports, shows that:

- there are few examples of structures or procedures to facilitate the co-operation of agencies. Where these exist, they have been set up in response to needs or crises of pressing concern at the time
- no study is specifically concerned with 'through the netness', though the concept was implied in some
- inter-agency collaboration has been perceived to be part of the solution for an increasing range of problems over the last thirty years, but is only recently becoming an object of study in its own right

- there are a number of conceptual difficulties over the use of terms such as children ‘in need’, ‘at risk’, or ‘in difficulty’
- claims that agency failure to co-operate in the care of young people results in wasted resources have increased
- there is little quantitative data to support the belief that inter-agency co-operation would make a difference.

4.2 Agencies, professionals and young people

The literature concerning the involvement of agencies and professionals in inter-agency work showed that:

- specialisation has increased and specialist expertise continues to be required and valued
- differentiation of personnel within agencies has increased and employees now work in three main areas: service delivery, supervisory work, and policy making. Within service delivery are growing bands of influential and experienced para professionals
- the vocabulary used in connection with inter-agency work is growing fast but there is no agreement about definitions and terminology
- the development of the concept of meta-strategy suggests that the concept of inter-agency agencies may now be appropriate. An agency for children would be an example
- agencies have yet to find ways of coping with casualties at the margins, even though the lessons learnt from these would help them improve services for everyone
- in spite of thirty years knowledge of the problems caused by the failure of agencies to co-operate, attempts to overcome this continue to be piecemeal, with the relationships between ‘programme’ and ‘case work’ focused strategies poorly developed
- interprofessional skills and competencies have yet to be formulated. These appear to rely on highly developed interpersonal intelligence
- the juvenilisation of poverty combined with reduced quality of the environment for the majority of children has significantly increased the numbers ‘at risk’ in the population
- the legal and economic status of adolescents is increasingly confused and abused. Those on the margins have the least opportunity to assert their rights
- children and young people are themselves increasingly confused about their rights while being more aware, through school and the media, of their opportunities
- theory to inform the development of collaborative ability is growing in some sectors of management, but has been slow to develop in the human services.

4.3 Strengths and weaknesses in the literature

The choice of reading matter presented some difficulties, particularly the dilemma of whether to read widely or more narrowly. The advantages of the former have been to achieve an overview from a standpoint outside any one agency, and to see law shaped by and shaping society, reflecting international as well as national concerns. The reports, even though generally written in advance of legislation, act as a commentary on the law and state of agency and professional development. They reveal high expectations and set a measure against which to judge practice. This overview can be regarded as a strength of the literature. In it can be heard the voices of the policy makers, planners, practitioners and even, occasionally, the young people themselves.

It was difficult to find literature in this country which addressed the issues considered important in this study. Much of it is descriptive and focuses on problems rather than solutions. Where solutions are suggested and examples from practice given, they tend to be small scale context dependent responses to local conditions. During the nineties an American and Canadian literature has developed discussing inter-agency and inter-professional work with children and families (Knapp et al., 1994; White, 1994; Mitchell and Scott, 1994; Kadel and Routh, 1994). A literature on collaboration and co-ordination is also emerging from schools of business management (Huxham 1993; 1996; Kanter, 1994; Huxham and Macdonald, 1992; Vangen and Huxham, 1997). In these, attempts have been made to generalise from a range of co-ordinating and collaborative systems developing in the business world. However these contexts are very different from those in which children's services operate in this country. As yet, there have been few attempts to generalise, or to develop a unifying theory in which the diverse projects which came to the attention of this research can be linked. A literature emerging since the mid-nineties is, however, beginning to re-frame theory through its deconstruction of the dominant discourse in relation to the concept of children at risk (Swadener and Lubeck, 1995; Moss and Petrie, 1997; Hodgkin and Newell, 1996).

Thus the factors which emerge from the literature only go part of the way to an explanation of what leads to successful inter-agency work with young people. Although problems of inter-agency co-operation have been recognised for at least thirty years, and successful co-operation has been recognised as an important means of carrying out agency purposes in relation to young people in difficulty, there is more evidence of the failure of agencies to co-operate than of their success in this (Kendrick et al. 1996; Audit Commission, 1994; 1996; Parsons, 1994).

The adverse effect of the failure to co-operate on agencies and their clients is also well documented (Hallett and Birchall, 1992; Mapstone, 1983; Butler-Sloss, 1988). This leads to a number of questions. If so many people recommend co-operation, and, latterly, appear to be engaged in it, why are young people still falling through the net? The evidence in the literature suggests that successful inter-agency work is unusual and difficult to achieve, yet constantly being sought and desired. If the need for inter-agency work is so great and its virtues so universally acknowledged, what is standing in the way of its development? Finally, if it is recommended in legislation, and needed on the ground by young people, what is happening in between, among managers and practitioners?

Weaknesses in the literature are noted particularly in the area of professionalism and interprofessionalism. The voice of practitioners and young people themselves is largely second hand through the voices of practitioners researching or reporting on their behalf. This is an important omission. The review would have been enriched too, by more emphasis on developments in child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and in the statutory and voluntary youth services. These have been neglected areas in terms of government policy though recent developments since 1997, suggest that they would benefit from effective inter-agency co-operation.

4.4 Search for solutions

From the research and professional literature it is apparent that for at least a generation, researchers and practitioners have been aware that problems of communication and co-ordination have hampered the development of human service agencies, resulting in human misery and waste of resources. Difficulties for agencies seem to arise from local and national government policy failure to accept ecological perspectives in relation to human service provision. Agency approaches based on efficiency and accountability outside such a perspective then lead practitioners either to work harder to keep pace with ever increasing client needs or to lose morale and use their time less productively. Neither overcomes the problems and both compound them.

Hodgkin and Newell (1996) use the term 'wicked issues' derived from Stewart (1995) to describe policy problems which are 'intractably complex issues where the nature of the problem and the solution are not fully understood, and which involve more than one department and are not dealt with satisfactorily by any' (Hodgkin and Newell, 1996, p.32). According to Clarke and Stewart (1997) 'wicked issues', a concept long familiar in the States, include :

- *environmental issues and an aspiration to sustainable development*
- *problems of crime and an aspiration to safe communities*
- *problems of discrimination and an aspiration to an equitable society*
- *problems of poverty and an aspiration to a more meaningful life. (p. 1)*

These require harmony between government, agency and professional purpose of the kind attempted in for example, Norway or Canada, in relation to children and families in the context of the development of a good and just society (Adler, 1994). Without this, attempts to overcome 'wicked issues' can only be remedial, or at best, of local significance.

In relation to structural factors, legislation for services to children and families appears, in some cases, to disregard other, possibly conflicting, legislation. Definitions and procedures may be used which preordain agency activity in ways which are potentially wasteful of resources and energy and which disregard their impact on children. Professional services in different agencies overlap, with few mechanisms for communication, joint working or training.

Procedural problems within and between agencies also divert attention from substantive issues. In the absence of formal arrangements for joint funding it is difficult to cultivate agency and professional co-operation. In terms of process, the individual agency member's knowledge and experience, and beliefs about inter-agency working affect agency purpose and influence outcomes. Beliefs about personal and professional identity, the identity of others, the status of young people and beliefs about family life and traditions affect views about policy making, the allocation of resources and case management.

Evidence in reports, and commentaries on some inter-agency projects, for example, Arnold et al. (1993), Kadel and Routh (1994), McCluskey (1994) and Vagg (1987), help to explain the importance of factors already identified, and show how a deeper understanding of them could contribute to successful inter-agency work in practice. Project reports describe the processes at work in inter-agency practice from which it is possible to explore the meaning of the word 'difficult' in relation to inter-agency work. In the main, these difficulties appear to be caused by barriers between people, professionally and personally. This points to the need for further study of how inter-professional and interpersonal attitudes and behaviours interact with the organisational practices of agencies as a whole.

4.5 Conclusions

Virtually every writer on inter-agency co-operation and every government or independent report (Booth, 1983; Jaques, 1986; Gill and Pickles, 1989; Butler-Sloss, 1988; Seebohm, 1968; Audit Commission, 1994) on the subject speaks of both its desirability and its difficulty.

It is easy to argue the value of inter-agency liaison and collaboration: the interrelatedness of personal, social, educational and health need, issues of effectiveness and 'value for money' and so on are all reasons for working together. But working together is not easy, and exhortation is not enough... (University of Leicester Manual for Managers on Part 111 of the Children Act 1989, p.14)

There can be no inquiry or report published in the last twenty or so years on major problems affecting children's welfare that has not strongly underlined the need for multi-professional collaboration in services. (Wilson, 1993)

Even when the question is asked, as for example by Kingdon (1992), 'whether effective interprofessional collaboration is really so fundamental and whether quite simply, it is possible to any significant degree' (p.141), the examples given in support of such a position are deemed anecdotal and not founded on any developed discourse. Kingdon concludes instead, that 'the framework for interprofessional collaboration exists, but needs to be built on' (p.146).

It can be argued therefore, that inter-agency work is at a transition stage. It has for some years been characterised by isolated, usually small scale, short term and local examples of good practice but has now reached a point at which discussion has moved far beyond the anecdotal. It is now beginning to be possible to generalise. Interprofessionalism and interdisciplinarity have reached this point for some time (Becher, 1989; Bines and Watson, 1992; Jaques, 1986). Inter-agency work has not. Because inter-agency collaboration subsumes interdisciplinarity and interprofessionalism, lack of attention to it is holding up the progress of all three. An offshoot of the lack of understanding of inter-agency work at practitioner level concerns the confusion in common parlance as well as in the literature between inter-agency/professional work and intra-agency/professionalism. This confusion is all the more significant in that many of the problems of inter-agency work are replicated within single agencies and, where these are a feature, within their institutions. The Health Service and the Education Service are notable in this respect as having a highly differentiated work force which includes many different professionals as well as different kinds of institution and/or units. 'Through the net-ness' is thus a condition experienced within an agency and its institutions as easily as it is between them.

CHAPTER FIVE

Methodology

5.0 Introduction: review of research questions

The purpose of this study is to establish to what extent improvements in inter-agency co-operation would help agencies work more effectively with young people described as falling through the net of agency provision, what factors contribute to these improvements, and what characterises effective models of inter-agency practice. The literature revealed that a range of factors associated with successful inter-agency work with young people could be identified. These are presented in Chapter 4. Analysis of these factors suggested that problems standing in the way of a closer correspondence between government aims and objectives and client expressions of need were either structural or process in origin. It was less easy, however, to establish how factors influencing structure and process interact, and which factor, if any, underpinned the others. The characteristics of effective models were likewise difficult to establish from the literature alone.

These questions will be addressed through detailed analysis of a case study, in which a group of agency practitioners initiate and set up a local inter-agency project, and a comparative study of four similar projects. Further insight into the interaction between inter-agency process and structure is gained from a second literature review, examples of inter-agency case management, and a study of the use of teams and networks as co-ordinating structures within agencies.

5.1 Making process visible: outline of the research method for the study as a whole (Figure 1, p. 114)

Figure 1 sets out the movements of the researcher, over a ten year period. Involvement with the Elmore Committee working party, beginning in 1985, had triggered two ideas. First, that the methodology used by it to promote inter-agency co-operation in relation to a particular client group was replicable, and that therefore a project set up to benefit a different client group might also be replicable. Secondly, that experience of both projects would contribute to a meta-theory of inter-agency co-operation in which the lessons learnt could be applied much more widely in future studies. Thus, during the period 1985 - 1989 the researcher had observed a methodology which was then tested between 1989 - 1994 through the development of a new inter-agency project, used here as a case study. This case study provides the data for the research as a whole, the meta-narrative, supplemented by a comparison with such other similar

Research Process

Researcher's role and activities

1985

Member of Elmore Committee working party (in capacity as a Justice of the Peace) set up to examine the problem of adult mentally disturbed petty offenders deemed by agencies to be 'through the net' (TTN).

The working party carries out local enquiry via interviews with key agency witnesses and then secures JCC funding to:

- employ a part time researcher for one year to find out:
 - * the extent of the problem (numbers of TTN adults)
 - * agency views
- researcher reports to the working party and together they propose the setting up of an inter-agency Community Support Team (Elmore Committee, 1987)
- funding secured from DHSS (£186K) for a 2 year pilot.
- pilot established and continues with costs absorbed by the agencies

1989

Researcher(R) contacts agency heads of service to seek support for the setting up of an inter-agency steering group to examine the problem of children and young people TTN (in capacity as secondary SEN co-ordinator)

Researcher:

- arranges the meetings/venues/ agendas/minutes
- negotiates work and conduct of the group
- arranges key witness interviews
- edits the first report (Roaf, 1991)
- makes funding applications
- arranges interviews to appoint a full time research officer (RO)
- supervises the work of the RO
- restructures local agency support into a core steering group and 'outer' inter-agency support group
- as 'project holder' liaises with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and acts as secretary for the JRF advisory group.
- attends seminars/conferences and visits suggested by the JRF
- contributes to JRF evaluation (1993). Funding extended as a result.
- Supervises the setting up of a local conference proposing an 'Adolescent Network' (AN) for Oxford. The AN holds its first meeting in April 1993 and continues.

Additionally, in capacity as SENCO and secretary to the Oxford city secondary school TTN group (i.e. a separate education based group focusing on truancy and exclusion), negotiate the steering group's support of this group by:

- writing Oxford city application for GEST funding (preventing truancy) planning and setting up (with the support of the TTN group) a six month inter-agency pilot panel. Supervising, supporting (e.g. minuting meetings etc.) the RO as chair of this group.

Continuing to convene the project as a whole by:

- making arrangements for the inter-agency policy seminar (Oct. 1994)
- assisting the RO with writing the project report (Lloyd, 1994)
- writing the findings for the JRF (Roaf and Lloyd, 1995)

1992/3+

Enrol for 3 year part time MPhil to study factors contributing to successful inter-agency work with children and young people

Transfer to PhD

Figure 1

projects as could be found at the time and evidence from other sources, such as examples of inter-agency case management, and intra-agency co-ordinating structures.

The choice of research method was driven firstly by a desire to examine process in detail, to expose it and make it visible. Experience as a practitioner had revealed the acute problems for young people caused by the failure of agencies to co-operate. Practitioners gave the impression of being prevented at a personal level from responding creatively and flexibly to the needs of their clients. The result was conflict between problem focused and solution focused practice. The question was how to engage those who thought in terms of problems and were constrained by a variety of fears and inhibitions, in activities which would encourage more flexible behaviours and more productive outcomes.

Secondly, personal experience of a local inter-agency group (the Elmore Community Support Team) supporting 'difficult to place' adults had shown that although a solution to the problem of those who 'fall through the net' of provision was possible (Vagg, 1987), there might be systemic reasons preventing this in addition to process reasons of a more personal nature. The Elmore approach had examined systems through process, by using key witnesses and a researcher reporting to a working party. The working party analysed the evidence and used this to formulate a solution and secure independent funding. This was then presented to the agencies as an attractive 'no cost' pilot project. The working party members were all, however, creative thinkers and confident professionals drawn together by the shared frustration at the inability of agencies to co-operate and the seeming lack of agency commitment to clients they cared about. This united them in a common determination to arrive at a solution. They did not feel bound by either bureaucracy or personal inhibitions and encouraged each other to think critically, objectively and constructively about what their client group required of the agencies and how agencies could be persuaded to reinterpret their role in relation to this group. The Elmore approach relied on the success of their practical experiment to change agency and practitioner attitude and behaviour.

The rationale for the present research arose from a curiosity to find out whether the same approach could be replicated with young people and whether the same solution would work. Could a pilot project make process visible in this way and if so, how and why? If answers could be found to these questions they would contribute to the formulation of theory. Even if the research showed that there was no single systemic solution to the problem of 'through the

net-ness', it seemed that the study of process would in itself make a useful contribution to knowledge.

The research as a whole was designed therefore, to develop a meta-theory of inter-agency co-operation. It sought to examine agency system and process in such a way as to encourage practitioners and policy makers across agency boundaries to identify problems common to them all and to develop and agree solutions collectively. In other words, the object of the research exercise was to get people involved in inter-agency activity and then to observe their behaviours as they probed agency boundaries. In the case study, the Elmore methodology was adopted using a research officer and key witnesses backed by an inter-agency steering group. This research *process* had worked once. If it were successful again this would be useful evidence to encourage further comparison and experiment. However, the Elmore research process had also uncovered the outlines of an effective inter-agency *structure*, composed of a team and network. This appeared to resemble the intra-agency co-ordinating structure operating within Education to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and was familiar to the present researcher. If this was the case, it suggested that the structure as well as the process could be replicated. It would then be possible to generalise from existing inter-agency projects and to develop a unifying theory linking them.

5.2 Choice of methodology

The literature review suggested that the methodological approach should recognise the complex interconnections which exist between theory and practice, policy and process. The processes involved in inter-agency working reflect agency purpose, and the terms used to express this, in relation to children and their families. These affect judgements about whose needs to prioritise and how far commitment to clients could, or should, be taken in carrying out agency purpose. Agency purpose is also expressed in the judgements made over the allocation of resources and processes involved in the case management of individual clients particularly where this takes them to the boundaries of what they perceive as their territory.

The researcher must also try to understand social reality as different people see it and to demonstrate how their views shape their actions (Beck, 1979). For some, including many practitioners, agencies are construed as immovable, unchanging objects. Knowledge about them is therefore construed as 'hard, objective and tangible' demanding of researchers 'an observer role together with an allegiance to the methods of natural science' (Cohen and Mannion, p.6). However an alternative view, that agencies are created by people to serve

purposes useful to other people, suggests this construction is misleading. A more subjectivist, anti positivist approach, would allow the researcher to view the social reality of agencies as capable of change, and of investigation in a manner stressing the variety and complexity of agency relationships with each other and their clients. Agencies are construed differently at different times and from different perspectives. A client might well see them as immutable, possessing certain fixed characteristics while professionals use a number of metaphors to describe their construction of inter-agency activity. For some, the social reality is that entering each agency is like entering a playing field where a game is in progress with set rules and etiquette. Whatever the perspective, the literature review shows that some aspects of agency behaviour are sufficiently dysfunctional to justify research to find out why.

An anthropomorphic view which sees agencies as sharing some of the characteristics of beings with purposes and habits, suggests that ethnomethodology, concerned with the world of everyday life and how people make sense of it, would be suitable. In relation to inter-agency work, for example, it sometimes seemed to the researcher that agency behaviour resembled that of a stroke patient. A fully functional inter-agency system might therefore resemble someone in full health capable of thinking, acting and receiving feedback in a co-ordinated manner. These analogies were helpful in suggesting strategies to work on and in finding an appropriate methodology. According to this diagnosis of the problem, the research would have to find a way of actively exercising disused inter-agency muscles, as indeed, the Elmore approach had discovered. Thus it seemed that interpretive research which tries to understand how individuals understand the world around them, and grounded theory which allows theory to emerge from the data would encourage a dynamic view of reality (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Hammersley, 1990; 1992). Accordingly an approach was sought which would allow participants to explore and develop new aspects of agency and inter-agency activity and to reinterpret old ones.

According to Hammersley (1992), ethnographic methods are based in the belief that:

the nature of the social world must be discovered and that this can only be achieved by first hand observation in 'natural' settings', guided by an exploratory orientation; that research reports must capture the social processes observed and the social meanings that generate them...ethnography is therefore directed towards producing what are referred to as 'theoretical', 'analytical' or 'thick' descriptions. These descriptions must remain close to the concrete reality of particular events, but at the same time reveal general features of human social life. (p.12).

The capacity to integrate description with theory, Hammersley claims, is one of the most distinctive features of ethnography. He groups theoretical descriptions as:

insightful descriptions
 descriptions of *social microcosms*
applications of theory
developments of theory through the study of crucial cases. (p.13)

These ideas suggested that qualitative ethnographic research methods would be appropriate for this study.

5.2.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) within sociology is, according to Miller (1995), 'well suited to generating theory in complex social settings whilst retaining rigour and being open to critical inspection' (p.6). According to Glaser and Strauss, 'crucial elements of social theory are often found best with a qualitative method, that is from data on structural conditions, consequences, norms, processes, patterns and systems' (1967, p.18). Local theory would, they believed, emerge from the complexity of this data. Miller (1995) discusses the ways in which researchers have dealt with the accumulation of data, in particular the process used by Turner (1991) which moves in stages from 'order', through 'chaos' and back to 'order'. The method involves a preliminary, orderly gathering of data from, for example, field notes, interview transcripts or documents. This stage is followed by 'chaos' in which the data is broken down, examined and categorised so that it can finally be rearranged, re-combined and re-labelled. This staged process was also followed in the research design of the inter-agency project used as a case study. This, and indeed the design of its model, the Elmore Community Support Team (Vagg, 1987), echoes the pattern presented by Kadel and Routh (1994) in their study of the development process in inter-agency programmes developed in the United States in the late eighties and early nineties.

The use of grounded theory throughout this study allowed insights from practice, through the case study, to be compared with insights gained from the literature. Both these were then compared with the experience of the individual young people for whose benefit inter-agency co-operation is being promoted. The characteristic patterns observed within agencies could then be compared with those emerging between them.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) theory does not emerge by chance but is derived from the researcher's own conceptual framework, the technical literature and the words and phrases

of the informants themselves. This interaction, the 'constant comparative method' described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is central to grounded theory. It guards against the over intrusion of the researcher's prejudice or half formed theorising. More especially, the success of the 'constant comparative method' depends on 'theoretical sensitivity', the term used by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to describe the researcher's awareness of the meaning which can be found in the data. This depends on previous experience, on reading and discourse. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe this as:

...the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't. All this is done in conceptual terms rather than concrete terms. It is theoretical sensitivity that allows one to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense, and well integrated - and to do this more quickly than if the sensitivity were lacking. (p.42)

5.2.2 Insight

The general question here is to establish what part insight plays in determining the course of innovative projects and how to incorporate this legitimately into the development of theory. In this study, emergent theory was based on four propositions which were the result of insights gained from personal experience as a non participant observer in relation to the Elmore Community Support Team (ECST) (Vagg, 1987), and as a practitioner. These were that:

- the majority of the resources agencies say they need in order to run effective services and fill gaps in provision are already present in the community. However these cannot be mobilised because
- the local co-ordinating structures required to identify gaps in provision do not exist even though such gaps could be filled either
 - from existing resources, or
 - reprioritisation of the use of resources, and
 - alerting the policy makers to gaps in provision which remain unfilled.
- models effective for preventing one group of people from falling through the net of agency provision are equally effective in relation to other groups similarly affected.
- these models already exist within agencies but their role as co-ordinating structures is not fully understood. Thus the difficulty individual agencies experience in understanding the importance of *inter*-agency co-ordinating structures, can be partially explained by their failure to appreciate the role of *intra*-agency models of co-operation, even though they are already familiar with these.

Glaser and Strauss pay considerable attention to the place of insight in the development of grounded theory. They declare that 'the root sources of all significant theorizing is the sensitive insights of the observer himself' (1967, p.251). Further, these insights need not come from personal experience but can be taken from others, though they add that in this case 'the burden is on the sociologist to convert these borrowed experiences into his own insights' (ibid. p.252). Thus grounded theory, in which theory is developed from the data, can make use of such insights, 'though not at the expense of insights generated by the qualitative research, which is still closer to the data' (ibid. p.253). The researcher could regard these insights as 'a partial framework of "local" concepts, designating a few principal or gross features of the structure and processes in the situations that he will study. ...These concepts give him [the sociologist] a beginning foothold on his research' (ibid.p.45).

However, while insights may, and did in this study, contribute to the development of meta-theory, there is still the problem of when it is appropriate to disclose these. For example, in order to raise awareness and encourage agency ownership of the project, it was important that the members of the newly assembled inter-agency group for young people in difficulty developed its own identity and freedom to consider a range of possible strategies to promote inter-agency co-operation rather than coming to the situation with one ready made. On the other hand it was important for the group to be aware that inter-agency initiatives existed and could be successful. During the early stages of the inter-agency project there was, for the researcher, a constant tension between the need to preserve the integrity of the project's natural development and the desire to direct it to a foregone conclusion. Ultimately, a balance was struck between the original insights and those developed from the qualitative data and this tension turned out to be a factor leading to some successful outcomes. It also had the effect of turning the small scale research project into a more reflective and demanding piece of work through which to search for and examine the rationale for inter-agency work and to develop theories to explain its success or failure in different circumstances.

It seemed possible therefore that the double impact of grounded theory and a research design which was both cyclical and staged, would increase the chances of discovering a core variable. This, for Glaser (1978), is the mark of quality grounded theory, achieved through a process of analytic thought in constant dialogue with the data. A core variable recurs frequently in the data, links it together and explains much of the variation in the data.

5.3 Methodology used in the case study

5.3.0 Introduction

The purpose of the case study was, through a detailed examination of process, to provide data for the research as a whole which could not be provided in any other way. This data came firstly from minutes of meetings, interviews with practitioners, and observation of them at work in inter- and intra-agency settings. Secondly, the case study yielded data relating to agency structures from discussion with policy makers and documentary evidence. Thirdly, the data came from interviews with individual young people and their families.

5.3.1 Project development

Introduction: adopting the Elmore approach

The Elmore Committee's project development followed a pattern which had been successful, in the same locality, in supporting adult, homeless, 'difficult to place' (DTP), petty offenders. The expression DTP, in this context, bears the same relationship to adult, homeless, petty offenders as TTN does, in the present research, to young people in difficulty. The practitioners involved with this group, formed an inter-agency working party to consider the problems they were experiencing in relation to them (Vagg, 1987). For Elmore's working party, difficulties for agencies stemmed from obstacles, legal and otherwise, which stand in the way of inter-agency co-operation, even though the avenues for this seem to exist. The group, themselves key agency witnesses, supplemented their own experience by interviewing members of the voluntary sector and other agencies involved with DTP adults.

After two years investigation Elmore recommended the formation of a multi-disciplinary panel to 'take continuing responsibility for DTP people referred to it' supported by specialised accommodation (Vagg, 1987, p.4). On this basis, funding to employ a researcher was granted from Joint Finance, part of the local Joint Consultative Committee structure and lodged with a local charity, the Elmore Committee. This secured a base for the project independent of the agencies. However between the publication of its report and the early stages of the research, it became apparent that 'if such a [multi-disciplinary] panel could be set up easily, there would have been no need for the project' (ibid. p.5). Accordingly the nature of the research began to change. What had been planned as action research, became instead, a detailed study of inter-agency referral processes and an analysis of the obstacles standing in the way of inter-agency co-operation. The data collection begun in the preparatory stage was continued, becoming a vehicle for detailed discussion of process. Identification, assessment and referral all promoted discussion about definitions and agency priorities over resources, each of which were key

project objectives. Meanwhile, working party members kept their own agencies informed of the project's progress and promoted discussion there of its aims.

The Elmore solution

Thus what had begun as a proposal for specialist accommodation and some form of multi-disciplinary advisory panel, became a detailed study of process. In fact, towards the end of the project and continuing after the formal research had ceased, evidence was accumulating which suggested that the problem was not lack of resources or indeed of inter- or multi-agency meeting points. Agency support for the DTP was increasing, but the co-ordination required to ensure the effective use of existing resources and to support those who worked with the DTP in whatever agency context, was missing. What was needed was not a tangible resource such as a building, but the less easily explained, intangible concept of a co-ordinating team. Nonetheless, independent funding was eventually secured from the DHSS for a two year pilot, after which the agencies locally took over the financial support of the project which still continues.

The solution arrived at related therefore, to a different client group, and more information was needed before researchers could generate theory sufficiently reliable to apply to other projects. The literature, and experience in practice, suggested nonetheless, that a similar project for young people could be equally effective. Its anticipated end point was the setting up of a local co-ordinating inter-agency structure for young people in difficulty. It was recognised from the outset that this might prove difficult to achieve and therefore a review process was built into the research design to help the project to refocus as required.

Lessons from Elmore

Three insights gained from Elmore were applied to the present research.

The research process involved:

- a preliminary period of fact finding to raise awareness, involve the agencies in the research, raise the profile of the client group and to make the case numerically. During this time suggestions were made about possible outcomes
- an interim report, with recommendations, acknowledging the support offered and information gained. This provided further publicity and could accompany funding applications

- employment of a researcher to explore inter-agency territory, search out the difficulties faced by agencies and focus on process. Regular meetings with the working party provided opportunities to review progress
- a final report making recommendations based on the research justify applications for major funding for a pilot project.

'Difficult to place' people and their relationship with agencies.

The Elmore research findings about inter-agency work generally could be applied in other contexts. For example, the resources which exist for non DTP people exist also for DTP people, but are less easily accessed and require professional creativity to seek out, unleash and reassemble. Co-ordination is required to achieve this but the co-ordinating model developed to benefit DTP people is equally effective for other groups at risk of falling 'through the net'.

The relationship between process and solution

Finally, a key element in the Elmore research was that it was open and discursive. Having identified inter-agency co-operation as the likely key to the problem, it became process rather than solution focused. Solutions to the problem of 'through the net-ness' were difficult to find at that time. In 1987, for example, only one other report on DTP people could be found, though it was acknowledged that similar difficulties might have been disguised by compartmentalising problems into, for example, homelessness or drinking and drug abuse. The focus on process allowed a more appropriate solution than the one proposed earlier (the idea of additional specialist accommodation) to emerge from the research. However, the example of previous work is essential to inform future research. In approaching agency problems of co-ordination with a different client group (young people) the dilemma was whether, and at what stage, to propose the strategy effective with DTP adults, or whether to give the research process free rein and introduce the model later if it still seemed suitable. With similar reason to believe that inter-agency work with TTN young people was contentious and difficult, the decision was taken to follow the Elmore research process as closely as possible. This meant undertaking the preparatory period with open minds. If the co-ordinating structure 'held' in the new situation, it would increase its validity so that it could be used with greater confidence in other settings.

5.3.2 The Case Study

Although the case study described and analysed in this research is being used primarily to test a hypothesis, it is also exploratory (Herbert, 1990; Yin, 1994). According to Yin (1994), a case study firstly, is an empirical inquiry investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-

life context ‘especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (p.13) and secondly, as ‘a research strategy comprising an all-encompassing method...’ (p.13). Yin suggests that the case study is a comprehensive research strategy coping with ‘the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points’ (p.13). Because of this the inquiry relies on multiple sources of evidence and triangulation. It will also benefit ‘from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis’ (p.13). These considerations suggested that a case study, based on the proposition that improved inter-agency working would benefit clients, would be a suitable research method through which to examine what form these improvements might take. The project described in the case study could then be compared with other similar projects, case studies of individual clients and intra-agency teams. Although problems of inter-agency co-operation are now familiar, in 1989 when the project described in the case study began, relatively little was known about how these might be solved in practice.

Stage One: Entry

A catalyst, in the form of the Elton Report into Discipline in Schools (DES, 1989), raised awareness locally, of the problems caused by the failure of agencies to co-operate. Although this report was primarily directed at the education service, concern about inter-agency co-operation in relation to children in difficulty was general among all the agencies in the run up to the introduction of the 1989 Children Act. Other factors such as recession, and increased child poverty and family stress, heightened awareness of the extent of children’s needs and led to calls for greater agency accountability. In this climate, the heads of the relevant agencies readily agreed to the formation of a steering group of middle managers to study the issue of inter-agency co-operation.

Using the Elmore approach, a steering group, set up in 1989, embarked on a feasibility study to establish the extent of the problem locally and to assess local reactions to the development of an inter-agency solution. The steering group agreed to focus on agency practice rather than client behaviour, and accepted that this meant exploring sensitive and potentially hostile professional territory and would require the support of senior managers. Agency acceptance of the problem and commitment to solving it would depend initially on the scale of the problem numerically. This in turn would determine the nature of the research. Up to date information about the number of young people estimated to be ‘through the net’ would be required.

On the question of funding, the steering group was influenced by the Elmore Community Support Team's experience that independent funding had been a significant factor in achieving full agency ownership, co-operation and support for their project (Vagg, 1987). This was also the opinion of the Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action who offered to hold any funds the project could secure. At the time, even if the agencies accepted the importance of the problem on numerical grounds, it was thought that they would be unlikely to consider funding an inter-agency project, preferring instead to spend more money on service improvements within each individual agency. Furthermore, the Elmore experience suggested that practitioners and policy makers had difficulty understanding the scale of the benefits of inter-agency co-operation unless they experienced this for themselves in practice. This could be most easily achieved through the work of an independently funded pilot project.

Therefore, in 1989, the steering group rejected the possibility of a grant linked to the local education authority's bid for an Education Support Grant. Instead it was agreed (Minutes: 5.9.89, Appendix E) that it would be preferable to gain independent funding in order not to distort the project's aims. To further these aims, the steering group agreed to:

- act as an example of good inter-agency practice. Members made a commitment to 'think inter-agency' in their daily professional work and to act as key informants in relation to the project. This enriched discussion at project meetings and interviews, enabling it to adapt and develop through the reflective practice of its members
- promote debate within each agency on the aims and objectives of the project
- encourage agency ownership of the project so that each agency could invest in it fully and share in its recommendations and conclusions.

A report (Roaf, 1991), based on a questionnaire and interviews, was used for further awareness raising and applications for funding. During this stage much was learnt about how agencies operate, how agency members view co-operation and what obstacles were likely to emerge. The research methods used at this stage consisted of semi-structured interviews by steering group members who also acted as key witnesses for their own agencies. Some quantitative data was available relating to the numbers of young people out of school, and use was made of this. The process acted as a form of conscientisation, described by Freire (1972) as a method of 'learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality' (p.15).

Stage 2: diagnostic

Financial support enabled the project to employ a research officer whose brief was to:

- investigate the issues raised by agencies during Stage 1 and identify what agencies found difficult about inter-agency collaboration
- identify young people who had fallen through the net and carry out some case studies
- establish whether the Elmore Community Support Team model could be transferred to agencies working with adolescents and whether this would secure agency support. The ingredients of this model were:
 - an inter-agency support team to whom referrals could be made of cases which most severely taxed the agencies
 - a network for all those involved with the client group, and
 - training opportunities for those working across professional boundaries.

The group met monthly to discuss progress reports, plan future progress and provide the research officer professional advice and personal support. The present researcher supervised the work of the research officer and arranged academic supervision. The steering group was itself supported by an advisory group set up by the funders. This period introduced the agencies to the concepts of inter-agency networking and network broking. The research officer undertook some inter-agency case work and some comparative work with similar projects in other parts of the country.

Stage 3: therapeutic

External evaluation at the end of the first year posed a series of research questions which launched the project into a second year of development work. This involved active participation in the setting up of a local network for all those involved with young people in difficulty and a six month period of action research setting up, managing and evaluating a pilot inter-agency panel. The project ended with publication of its findings and recommendations at a seminar for policy makers and planners and the publication of its final report.

5.4 Issues arising from the case study**5.4.1 Validity and relevance**

The validity of the research was strengthened by support from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation connecting it to the wider research community in a way which would not otherwise have been possible. Support from the Foundation included an advisory group, ensuring a national

dimension to the research, the advice of one of the foundation's senior research officers and a formal evaluation at the end of the first year of funding (Armstrong and Moon, 1993, Appendix F).

This support structure also ensured that the research maintained its relevance. Foundation reports of the findings of relevant research were available and meetings were arranged with other researchers or project managers. Hammersley (1992) suggests that specialist research, that is, carried out by specialists rather than practitioners, is more likely to have indirect and general relevance whereas practitioner research produces results which are only of specific and direct relevance to practitioners. In this case it seemed likely that both could be achieved. The practitioner research described in the case study could have both objectivity and relevance because it was securely linked to the wider research community. The significance of an otherwise small scale piece of research was therefore likely to be increased. This also overcame problems Hammersley (*op. cit.* p.138) mentions as being a danger inherent in practitioner research, of inexperience, partial viewpoint and inadequate knowledge of theory and methodology. Locally, however, for the practitioners involved in the research, the methodology used strengthened its relevance for other local practitioners. The structure of the project with a steering group, a wider reference group and the establishment of a local network, ensured that locally, a large number of agencies and agency members knew of the work of the project and could contribute to it.

The employment of a full time research and development officer also extended the project in both scope and relevance. Previously a detached youth worker and social worker, she brought new skills and was able to model some aspects of inter-agency working which the project wanted to achieve, namely, the ability to break out of existing territorial boundaries. With this role model it was possible to interview a wider range of agencies, involve young people in the project, carry out case studies of individual young people and their families, and to investigate and connect with other relevant projects in the area and beyond. This increased the project's relevance and validity and allowed it to become more reflexive. This additional dimension ensured that the work of agencies was examined from the perspective of agency clients.

5.4.2 Triangulation

This study focuses on a problem which is contentious, conflictual and complex. The project required agencies to be self critical and its diagnoses were potentially threatening to professional sensibilities. It was therefore important to take every opportunity to ensure the

validity of the project's findings and to avoid possible distortion which might occur as a result of the sensitivity of the work (Cohen and Mannion 1994, p.241). This could be overcome to some extent by triangulation, achieved through a range of research methods such as semi-structured interviews, case studies of individual young people, group work with older adolescents, and participant and active observation. One piece of active participation and a six month period of action research were also included. The nature of the work permitted, in addition to the generally ethnographic, qualitative approach, the use of some quantitative data relating to numbers of children at risk in the community. These were derived principally, but not exclusively, from information about the number of children out of school. This was available locally through a GEST funded project to reduce truancy.

5.4.3 Participant observation

Participant observation was a key element in the project's methodology. According to Jorgenson (1989) 'through participant observation, it is possible to describe what goes on, who or what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur, and why - at least from the stand point of participants - things happen as they do in particular situations' (p.12).

Jorgenson considers the method suitable for studying processes and relationships among people and events, and for exploratory case studies. The research officer was able, through overt participant observation to blend 'into the settings and particular situations, carefully watching and listening to what transpires...' (Jorgenson, op.cit.p.74). This enabled the project to extend its range of informants and opportunities for data collection through casual conversation and unstructured interviews and meetings.

5.4.4 Practitioners as participants in the research

Over the course of the project, the practitioners involved in it adopted different roles in relation to the research. In general steering group members acted as key witnesses and non participant observers, while the research officer acted as a participant observer on their behalf, by for example, attending meetings and networking. For one of the project's initiatives, the inter-agency panel, the research officer adopted, in relation to that piece of work, the role of participatory action researcher. Participatory action research 'involves practitioners in the research process from the initial design of the project through data gathering and analysis to final conclusions and actions arising out of the research' (Whyte, 1991, p.7).

In general however, the role of the research officer can be defined as participant observation:

...useful during the preliminary stages of scientific inquiry for exploration and description. Qualitative descriptions generated by participant observation are used to formulate concepts for measurement, as well as generalisations and hypotheses that with further testing may be used to construct explanatory theories.
(Jorgensen, 1989, p.8)

Jorgensen suggests that 'people interested in learning participant observation have been encouraged to become apprentices to a master practitioner, review classic studies exemplifying it and go into the field and learn from direct experience' (p.8). The relationship described in this quotation is a reasonably close approximation to that which had been built up between the leaders of the ECST and the project described in this study.

5.4.5 Dealing with conflict

During the first phase of the project, there was full agency support for the project's aims. A number of issues required prolonged discussion, such as the choice of title, the terms to adopt when defining the client group and the composition of the steering group. At that stage everyone involved considered themselves to be 'winners' and the project's commitment to 'think and act inter-agency' was not challenged. Similarly, when the project received external funding, it gained status and recognition. However, it also had to consider change, and plan strategy, to achieve this. The closer these plans came to fruition, the more this strained relations within the steering group.

This was particularly felt by middle managers in education. They considered first, that some of their services stood to lose in the event of any transfer of funds or personnel to support an inter-agency initiative, and second, that these services were being threatened, even insulted, by the proposal for an inter-agency initiative. This put considerable pressure on steering group members who felt caught between conflicting loyalties. These conflicts were felt more keenly by middle managers than face to face practitioners. These latter, perhaps because of their close contact with young people, generally supported any initiative which would bring relief from the inter-agency problems they wrestled with daily.

In spite of the discomfort caused by the high levels of conflict both potential and real which the project had to withstand in its final stages, this was no more than the steering group had anticipated from the outset. It was these strong feelings, of threat, professional jealousy and insecurity which lay at the heart of the processes which the project had set out to explore. These were the 'difficulties' that loomed so large and were so ill-defined in the literature. The

task for the steering group was to minimise the potential damage which such conflict could cause either to the project, its members, or particularly to its 'probe', the research officer. However it also had to maintain its objectivity and help its members retain their observer role. Thus, the research had to go as close as it dared to the heart of the conflict it had generated and stay there long enough to learn from it. Attempts to resolve conflicts, other than by rational argument and shared experience of effective inter-agency practice, had to be avoided. The temptation, for example, to gain further external funding had to be resisted.

5.4.6 Conclusions

The methodology used in the case study was effective in that the project findings contributed powerfully to the meta-narrative concerning the development of inter-agency meta-theory. Furthermore, it achieved this while at the same time enabling the steering group to meet its short term objective that practitioners develop a greater understanding of the importance of inter-agency structure and process in their work with young people. The evidence derived from interviews with agency members and young people, case studies of individual young people, and the documentary evidence, contributed to inter-agency theory development which was then discussed and disseminated among the wider research community through seminars, national and local conferences and the preparation of teaching materials.

5.5 Issues arising from the methodology as a whole

5.5.1 Assumptions brought to the study: development of a researcher

We believe that qualitative study is forged in the transaction among what is done and learned and felt by the researcher. It is an intensely recursive, personal process and while this may be the hallmark of all sound research, it is crucial to every aspect of the qualitative way of looking at life. (Ely, M. et al, 1991 p.1)

For the present researcher, this recursive process took place in three stages. First, as a non participant observer in a local inter-agency project for 'difficult to place' adults, secondly, as an active participant observer leading an inter-agency project for children and young people in difficulty and thirdly, as a reflective researcher during the period of data analysis, interpretation, reflection and generation of theory. These stages mirror similar stages in professional development.

The researcher's introduction, as an 'apprentice' (Jorgensen, 1989), to problems of co-ordination between agencies came originally through work as a magistrate. During the

seventies and eighties magistrates felt increasing frustration at the lack of provision for petty offenders coming before them with mental health and social problems. These 'difficult to place' offenders cause 'considerable problems to sentencers and may receive what appears to be an inappropriate custodial sentence' (Vagg, 1987, Summary p.vi). Magistrates are trained to act according to guidelines that require them to consider all possible alternatives before passing a custodial sentence (HMSO, 1990). The lack of suitable alternatives became a powerful motivating force encouraging probation, health and the magistracy to co-operate in joint action to prevent the misuse of custody.

During this period the present researcher also began, professionally, as a special needs co-ordinator in a comprehensive secondary school, to recognise the parallels between:

- the *difficulties* experienced by the adult 'difficult to place' people and young people variously described as 'through the net', 'at risk' or 'in difficulty'
- the *roles* of the inter-agency project co-ordinator and the comprehensive school special needs co-ordinator
- the need of both groups for an inter-agency *structure* to co-ordinate resources and case management
- the need of both groups for access to creative, flexible *provision*.

At this time, interest in disaffection and truancy was developing as a result of Local Education Authority initiatives following the government's Low Attaining Pupil project in the mid-eighties (Leeson, 1989). The combined effect was to raise the researcher's awareness of the plight of young people at risk of falling 'through the net'. The parallels mentioned above appeared even more applicable than previously and the case for action even more cogent. Finally, the move towards reflective researcher was achieved when the project secured financial support. This then required a report and evaluation. In addition, the project developed a number of facets leading to different project outcomes which widened the research focus and increased the implications of its findings.

5.5.2 Constraints

It is probable that most researchers experience a range of constraints during the course of their research activities. Some of these are special to the research, some to the researcher. In this case constraints special to the research were:

- the difficulty of explaining, to people who had not yet experienced them, the benefits they could expect from improved inter-agency co-operation
- problems of communication within and between agencies
- lack of communication between the heads of services, exacerbated by differences between them as to their leadership role in promoting inter-agency co-operation
- different priorities relating to fundamental agency purpose. For example, health and social services prioritise those with life threatening conditions. By contrast, education affects life chances, yet the agency as a whole tends to exclude those whose life chances are threatened.

Constraints special to the researcher were concerned with:

- the dual role of practitioner and researcher and the possible effects on bias and agency stance
- perception of the researcher's position. The different roles, as teacher, inter-agency worker, observer, project leader and researcher, were not always easy to separate. They may have become confused on occasion, further complicated by confusion about status and authority. For example, in an interview between a practitioner and a head of service, the power relations differ depending on whether or not it is the practitioner's own head of service.

5.6 Strengths and weaknesses of methodology

The strengths and weakness of the methodology used in the overall study as a whole are recorded here. Those relating to the case study itself appear in the next chapter as part of its evaluation. Strengths were that the methodology allowed evidence to be taken at all levels, among professionals within agencies, from children and young people and their families and from academics and other researchers. The fact that the methodology emanated from an inter-agency steering group helped the researcher to establish and maintain an inter-agency stance over time. The five year time span of the research allowed the interplay between reflection and action to develop fully. This encouraged insights to develop, and to be discussed, evaluated and incorporated into the research as it grew. This was important since, as we have seen in the literature review in chapters two and three, the research period coincided with a transition period in the study of inter-agency work. What had been a marginal area of study in the late eighties, became progressively more relevant during the nineties, attracting the attention of researchers in this country and encouraging them to share in an already well established international research in this area spanning public and private sectors and human services and business.

A weakness in the methodology resulted from the difficulty over studying enough other projects in detail. In part this was because in the early nineties, inter-agency collaboration for young people in difficulty was either concentrated in a few geographically far flung projects, or to be found in the informal networks and more formal liaison groups of professionals. Whole agency meta-strategy was unusual outside Scotland, where its development resulted from legislation dating back to the early seventies. A further weakness was that although the research design aimed to retain flexibility, this could not match the speed of change. The project was not able, for example, to carry out the process as planned in the last six months of its life, nor did it have time to evaluate the significance of this.

5.7 Conclusion

The research, as a whole, set out to establish, through an extended literature review, the case study, comparative studies of similar projects, examples of inter-agency case management and a study of intra-agency teams and networks, what factors contribute to effective inter-agency working with children and young people. Methodologically, the use of a case study contributed greatly to the researcher's understanding of the difficulties and potential inherent in inter-agency practice. At the same time, the project which was the subject of the case study, remained within the capacity, and time constraints, of the participants and met many of their objectives.

Study of the literature had produced a range of factors, and suggested the parameters of what a theory of inter-agency working might look like. However, it would not on its own have done more than reinforce the need for structural approaches to problems of inter-agency working. It could not have been used to move legislators on from the exhortation to co-operate characteristic of, for example, the 1989 Children Act, to the framing of legislation to ensure that this happens in practice. The case study allowed the researcher to probe inter-agency and inter-professional boundaries, and to return from this exploration with evidence of what happens at these boundaries, how, and for what reason. It was a suitable approach to use in a situation which required practitioners and policy makers to confront their beliefs about the purpose of their work. Factors emerging from the literature could thus be tested in the challenging circumstances of a local community of stressed, financially constrained and sceptical professionals. Finally, the findings, derived from the data in the case study, took the meta-narrative forward by enabling the researcher to propose the existence of an inter-agency structure as the single factor underpinning the others.

CHAPTER SIX

Case Study: Young People in Difficulty

6.0 Introduction

The function of the case study in the research as a whole is to analyse the problems faced by agencies in their work with young people and consider what form of inter-agency co-operation might overcome some of these difficulties. The project described in this case study was guided by two propositions:

- human and other resources to support young people in difficulty exist but cannot easily be identified or mobilised without a local co-ordinating structure set up for the purpose
- a co-ordinating structure set up locally in relation to 'difficult to place' adults, had proved that it could, in principle, be transferred to young people in difficulty.

These propositions are examined in the light of the findings from the literature review. During the life of the project significant numbers of children were falling 'through the net'. In 1989, for example, Oxfordshire's principal education social worker reported to the project's steering group (Minutes: 5.9.89, Appendix E) that a recent survey of non-attending pupils in the county showed that there were 2-3,000 pupils absent from school for 20% of the time or more. Over the country as a whole, the Oxford experience was not thought to be exceptional. Thus the issues underlying this state of affairs began to assume national significance in terms of policy and practice as well as in terms of theory development.

6.1 Stage One: entry

6.1.1 Developing an inter-agency approach

The steering group's first task was to produce a report for the heads of service describing the current state of inter-agency activity and attitudes locally. The Elmore approach was adopted:

- a) to use the working party as an example of good inter-agency practice with each member making a commitment to think 'inter-agency' in their daily professional work*
- b) to promote debate within each agency on the aims and objectives of the project*
- c) to encourage agency ownership of the project so that each agency, particularly the key areas of Health, Education and Social Services, can invest fully in the project and its development, know what they can expect of it and how best to make the most of what it is able to offer both now and in the future. (Roaf, 1991, p.6, Appendix B)*

This collaborative and participatory approach enabled steering group members to act both as role models for co-operation and key informants for the research. As the project progressed and co-operation became more challenging this role became more difficult to sustain but in the early stages the tone for the project was discursive and open. This approach also enabled the research officer, when appointed in 1992 to blend into the inter-agency domain, slipping easily between, for example, a participant and non-participant observer role.

6.1.2 Defining the problem

The project's first report records that the problem appeared to centre on:

- a) the difficulties individual agencies experience in helping young people and their families whom they may feel are on the margins of their responsibility*
- b) the lack of support, in terms of time and resources, for inter-agency co-operation to take place in all cases which call for it. (Roaf, 1991, p.2)*

The report continues:

It seemed therefore that there was a need to investigate the problem in the following way

- *to carry out a survey to find out the extent of the problem outlined above, in terms of numbers and types of children who would benefit by inter-agency co-operation*
- *to investigate the problem in terms of management of their difficulties, and of inter-agency referral processes*
- *to investigate the obstacles legal or otherwise, which stand in the way of inter-agency co-operation, even though the avenues for it seem to exist*
- *to explore the possibility of establishing an inter-agency support team and/or advisory panel. (ibid.p.2)*

The first meetings of the steering group were used to clarify what each member understood by 'children in difficulty', to plan the enquiry stage of the project and to design an interview schedule (Roaf, 1991, p.37). This was used to:

- *Assess the commitment of each agency to working collaboratively and investigate whatever obstacles stand in the way of inter-agency co-operation.*
- *Identify in detail, the needs of those identified as falling between the agency nets in order to expose gaps in existing services*
- *Suggest other resources or initiatives not at present provided or not part of current practice*
- *Assess the extent of the demand likely to be made on resources over a specified period of time (e.g. 5 years). ' (ibid.p.4)*

6.1.3 Involving others: local views on inter-agency co-operation

Project meetings provided opportunities for information gathering and discussion with representatives of agencies such as youth work, social services, education social work, health service and leaders of other local inter-agency initiatives. 'This period saw therefore, a great

deal of liaison ... with other groups sharing a concern for children and young people in difficulties' (Roaf, 1991, p.8). Nonetheless, the steering group was aware that these interviews represented only a small proportion of the actual number of agencies, groups and workers involved with young people in the area. Wider discussion was required to avoid the danger that the steering group might have developed a vested interest in discovering or exaggerating problems where none existed, or hearing what they wanted to hear. The detailed responses included much that was familiar as well as new insights, gradually building a picture from practitioner experience of the then state of inter-agency co-operation (Roaf, 1991, pp.8 -16).

The responses revealed a complex web of formal and informal inter- and intra-agency meetings. Between Education, Health and Social Services, eight regular meetings attended by more than two agencies were recorded, with further 'pairings', between, for example, social workers and education social workers. Each agency was also connected with a further inter-agency meeting reaching a different arena, not necessarily connected with the other two. For example, social workers attended the young homelessness forum and detached youth workers attended the network for 'difficult to place' adults, each extensive networks in themselves. Meetings took place at policy and practitioner level and each agency had its own internal web of meetings and team meetings. Sometimes these developed specific purposes, for example, at team meetings inservice training was an important activity. The main foci for inter-agency activity seemed to be school liaison and child protection with specialist networks for 'difficult to place' adults and young homelessness.

Those interviewed considered that inter-agency networking was accepted, but acknowledged that although needed and wanted, it was difficult and time consuming. Large meetings were considered unwieldy. Obstacles to inter-agency co-operation centred on professionalism, time, confidentiality and ambiguities in relation to the definition of 'children'. These interviews took place during the run up to the implementation of the 1989 Children Act in 1991. This had engendered a flurry of inter-agency training and the discovery that 'legislation meant that each agency is tackling the Children Act differently' (Roaf, 1991, p,11). Confusion over professional and agency boundaries was raised in most detail. Parochialism, lack of confidence and confusion about roles and responsibilities were the main criticisms. Interviewees complained of the difficulty different professions have of defining what they do.

People do not want to be rigid, but cannot do everything and need to accept their and other's limitations. Having accepted a clear set of principles about this there is then the need for anxiety management and to avoid blaming oneself and others.
(*ibid.p.10*)

Each agency, they reported, tends to perceive different problems with the same child, resulting in referrals to different agencies. In some cases there were difficulties 'over what each agency expects from each other and about what should be done about the disparities and overlaps. This can produce real inequities of care' (ibid.p.12). Being prepared to work together while at the same time keeping 'clear what their real professional boundaries are', was regarded as important. Problems were also caused in situations where one agency initiates and another has to carry out practice, for example in relation to school refusal or emotional and behavioural difficulties.

When asked how co-operation might be improved, the suggestions were similar to those mentioned before: improved systems for managing interprofessional boundaries, time and confidentiality. A forum where issues such as differences of philosophy between agencies could be discussed and practical ways forward could be considered was proposed to increase understanding of what constitutes good inter-agency action.

... good inter-agency work was more likely to be found where different agencies felt able to nail their colours to the mast and be clear about what their function was. There was also a role for managers in setting formal inter-agency groups which could frame and discuss general problems leaving the sorting out of individual cases to the informal 'worker to worker' level. It is at this informal level that detailed, often highly confidential work can take place and at which plans can be put forward which can then inform discussion as to what future action might be taken at a more formal level. (ibid. p.15)

Finally, in relation to teenagers, the view was that more hostels and workers were needed 'to provide an extremely creative and flexible resource'(ibid.p.16). Young people themselves needed confidence building and assertiveness training to help them make better use of the information and resources available.

Insights gained were sometimes unexpected, emphasising the need for deeper probing along agency boundaries than could be achieved by an interview. At this stage, it was difficult to absorb the full significance of some of the observations made in interview and conversation. In some instances these foreshadowed later developments in agencies such as social services. For example, the research officer for the Blackbird Leys Young Women's Research Project commented that the young women involved in the project appeared better able to contact the researchers than the agencies. Several years on, different purchaser/provider arrangements and more reliance on the voluntary sector for service provision have increased the likelihood of this happening.

Sometimes a finding at first neglected, emerged later in a different context. For example, a 'Joint Practice Group' consisting of representatives (of whom one was a steering group member) from Education, Health and Social Services was exploring inter-agency working through a study of the 20 most difficult young people in the county as perceived by each agency. This group found that an unsatisfactory outcome for a young person is frequently arrived at when agencies meet together and reach a decision which is a compromise. The compromise was more likely to meet the *agencies'* need for a decision than the *child's* needs. This drew attention to the distinction between a *case meeting* convened so that all the agencies involved can be present, for discussion, and a referral to a *case manager* who will, on behalf of the agencies as a result of discussion, search out the best course of action for the child. The steering group's view was that the case manager should act as advocate, negotiating the package of support required to guide the young person back into the network of provision. However, at the time, there was no structural means of doing this. This void in the organisation of services confirmed the Elmore Committee's concept of a Support Team as an essential element in an enabling co-ordinating structure.

In another context, the significance of the steering group's generic approach to young people in difficulty was provided by the Joint Care Planning Team - Care Group for children with special needs. This group was one of five inter-agency care groups set up by the Joint Consultative Committee which also involved the voluntary sector. The steering group was invited to nominate one of its members to stand for election. This was successful on the grounds, significantly, that there was no other voluntary group in the county concerned with the full range of needs as defined by the 1989 Children Act, and more particularly with the needs of children other than physical or psychiatric. Representation on the Care group consisted of Social Services, Education, Health, Community Health and the voluntary sector. Unfortunately, within two years of this invitation to join the Care Group, its terms of reference changed. The group transmogrified into a joint commissioning reference group, the voluntary sector members were no longer involved, and the focus narrowed to children with disabilities. Once again children at risk or in difficulty were marginalised.

6.1.4 Preparatory work: findings and recommendations

At the end of the preparatory period, the steering group recorded that:

- *in spite of a plethora of inter-agency groups dealing with children and young people in difficulty, there is no one agency, service or team responsible for the care of these very vulnerable young people, who could support those who slip through existing provision and guide them back into it*

- *most inter-agency work that is happening is less effective than it might be due to lack of structured co-ordination, to the extent that workers can be said to be suffering from 'meeting fatigue'*
- *in spite of attempts made to establish a data base which would record how many children were at risk of falling through the net in Oxford city, this had not happened, was hampered by lack of structured co-ordination and in any case regarded as highly contentious. (Roaf, 1991, Summary)*

Four recommendations were put forward for further investigation. These were for:

- *the setting up of a multi-disciplinary network for the age group 12 - 18 years, on the lines of the network already in existence for those over the age of 17*
- *the setting up of a community support team to whom referral could be made of the cases who most severely tax the agencies endeavouring to help them, and whose staff would guarantee to act as case managers on behalf of these young people, undertaking the case work required to meet their needs and generate a network of support*
- *the establishment of a database registering the children and young people in Oxford city identified as having needs which require inter-agency co-operation*
- *the further development of training opportunities for those working across professional boundaries. (ibid. Summary)*

These recommendations were complex, interconnected and demanding to put into operation. By encouraging the heads of service to act on them through continued support of the project, the steering group entered upon an extremely risky venture. Principally, there was the danger that senior managers, or others not connected, or not in sympathy, with the project would focus on the elements which were easiest, or least expensive, to implement. Seeing the importance of the package as a whole was difficult, thus independent sources of support and advice would be especially needed to sustain motivation.

6.2 Stage Two: diagnosis

6.2.1 Setting the tasks

In 1991 the steering group secured funding, for one year in the first instance, to employ a research officer. The Research Planning Report marks the beginning of the real venture to the boundaries dividing agency from agency. The research officer's tasks were translated into four related aims:

- *Setting up an inter-agency network. This entails identifying inter-agency meetings that already exist to locate key workers and key organisations. Assessing the commitment of each agency to working collaboratively and investigating obstacles that stand in the way of inter-agency co-operation. Identifying the tasks of the inter-agency network and investigating the support structure/resources structure necessary to enable the network to meet those tasks*
- *Identify gaps in services and identify young people who fall through the net of provision. Using in depth case studies of young people who are identified as experiencing difficulty*

- *Suggest other resources and initiatives not yet provided or not part of current practice. Provide a survey of current services, assessing the extent of demand over a specified period e.g. five years, make recommendations and seek support for these through the network in order to secure assurances for future development from agencies wherever possible*
- *To provide a report and summary of findings and other material that may prove necessary e.g. good practice training material etc. (Lloyd, 1992, p.10, Appendix G)*

The research officer was to:

- ask the agencies to map inter-agency activities and consider the context and frequency of contact and the informal and formal nature of inter-agency co-operation
- examine inter-agency collaboration using in depth case studies referred by each agency. Interviews would begin with the family, who, in the majority of cases, are the first point of referral
- through group work with older young people who had themselves fallen through the net, encourage them to share experiences and suggest the kind of resources that would help.

During this stage the steering group hoped to spread information about the project and its research more widely, and to find out what facilities already existed in Oxford for the age group. Initially, five statutory services had been contacted (Education, including youth service, Health, Social Services, Probation and the courts, Police) and two voluntary sector organisations. In all, the research officer had contacted, in the first three months, 36 different agency groups or individuals, and had attended 16 different inter-agency fora.

By this stage one task had already been partly fulfilled. Information on school attendance and the transfer of pupils between schools, derived from a study carried out on behalf of the City secondary headteachers, made it possible to estimate the numbers of children and young people thought to be 'through the net'. Data collection of this kind had, in any event, receded as an issue in advance of the 1993 Education Act which required schools to publish statistics on attendance and exclusion. In correspondence (26/5/94;16.6.94;24/6/94, Appendix H), which at that time had to remain confidential, responding to a request for information from the Oxfordshire Health Authority's Department of Public Health Medicine about possible numbers of children falling through the net in Oxford, the present researcher estimated that were a Youth Support Team to be set up in the city, it would have about 50 cases of young people of compulsory school age on its books at any one time. This number was a minimum since the problems for young people post 16 were known to be severe and increasing.

6.2.2 Widening the net: networks and network broking

Other inter-agency initiatives taking place at the time, with implications for the project were:

'Through the Net'

This Education based initiative, also involving Social Services, was set up by Oxford city's secondary headteachers to address the problems caused by the transfer of students with difficulties from school to school, and non attendance. The purpose was to monitor attendance and school transfers, to investigate gaps in provision and to work together to limit them. The project went some way towards removing the cloak of invisibility surrounding data on school exclusion and truancy. Government moves following the 1988 Education Act and prior to the 1993 Education Act meant that schools could no longer conceal these figures. One of the project's achievements had been, in advance of the 1993 Education Act, to encourage headteachers to share this information with each other and the relevant agencies, privately, even if not in public.

Safer Communities

This partnership of organisations worked together to develop and implement a community safety strategy within the three counties of the Thames Valley. Locally, relevant statutory and voluntary agencies and local businesses came together to develop a co-ordinated approach to tackling problems associated with crime. The need for effective strategies had been identified in five key areas, one of which concerned children and young people.

Young Homelessness Forum

This forum enabled all organisations both statutory and nonstatutory to exchange and share information. It was primarily concerned with:

those homeless young people who are not a priority homeless group. Therefore workers that attend the meeting are primarily concerned with 16+ homelessness as there is a statutory responsibility to house under 16's. However it is an area that needs further exploration. . (Lloyd, 1992, p.14)

The Young Homelessness forum considered that the inter-agency project's steering group would be an appropriate place for these concerns to be heard and taken forward.

Network and Support Team

The next two initiatives are discussed in more detail because taken together, they formed part of the model of structured co-ordination the steering group had in mind.

The Network'

In relation to 'difficult to place' (DTP) adults, the Network had been described as existing for:

...agencies who recognise that they cannot on their own hope to make significant progress with their most difficult clients e.g. offenders who are homeless, street drinkers, young people adrift from home, and that formal networking is required to meet their needs. The network is a loose structure including a very wide range of agencies working with single people in Oxford. It includes not only housing agencies but day facilities and specialist support and advice services. The 'network' meet through a monthly meeting which is essentially different from an inter-agency meeting in that the network has no power in and of itself, but it can have enormous influence. Many agencies in the 'network' are involved with other parts of the system, but the 'network' itself has no formal links with any other body. (Roaf, 1991, p.2)

As part of the Elmore Committee's initiative for 'difficult to place' adults, the Network functioned as the influential 'issue raising' wing of the initiative, closely connected with its 'practice', or 'case management' wing, in the shape of the Elmore Community Support Team.

Discussion with the convenor of The Network (Minutes, 5.2.91, Appendix J) on the concepts of 'the network' (noun) as distinct from 'networking' (verb) highlighted the lack of contact between agency workers within even one small city. This seemed paradoxical given the amount of inter-agency activity practitioners had, according to their own description, been involved in. Thus one of the frustrations for the steering group, was the existence in the same city of a similar, successful, project for the next age group (DTP adults aged 17 years and over) about which those working with young people below the age of 17 knew nothing. The aims and mode of operation of the Network and Elmore Community Support Team, which one might have expected to have been familiar, were quite unknown to practitioners involved with young people, even though one agency, social services, was common to both groups.

Network broking

The Elmore Community Support Team (ECST), described in Vagg (1987), and closely connected to the Network, provided the centre piece of what the steering group was coming to regard as a classic example of an effective co-ordinating structure for inter-agency co-operation. One of its functions was network broking. The following account summarises a steering group discussion with its co-ordinator focussing on:

- team and agency relationships
- responsibility and accountability
- the concept of 'network broking'

It was explained that the team:

- try to provide a package of care without alienating the agencies
- only ask agencies to take on what is within their mandate
- try to take away the 'whole problem person' i.e. those in which the problems are beyond the mandate of a number of agencies.

There seemed, in the view of the ECST's co-ordinator, to be important differences between children and young people 'in difficulty', and 'difficult to place' adults. For example, agency boundaries were fairly clear in the case of the adults and disputes were about gaps, whereas with children, these boundaries were less distinct. There were fewer gaps but the overlap in responsibility was an issue because children, unlike adults, were never out of someone's responsibility, though much depended on the agency mandate. Also, however challenging and difficult agencies might find children, their response was likely to be more optimistic. In the case of 'difficult to place' adults, agencies may be happier to let go since their clients were not always perceived as attractive. Children, on the other hand, attract loyalty from those who work with them and individual agencies can be correspondingly keen to hang on to them even if they cannot, on their own, provide a full package of care.

When agencies were in danger of shuffling off responsibility, the ECST fell back on the model in which the DTP are seen as having a problem within them which it is a full time job to sort out. Agencies needed the reassurance of knowing that they would only have to do what they had a mandate to do. Whatever was beyond this, the support team would pick up. Much time was spent by the team on self examination and self scrutiny because of the seriousness of the issues raised by the team's work in, for example the field of civil liberties. When was it right to intervene in the life of a severely disturbed adult? This issue would also arise with older teenagers.

The question was asked 'if a community support team for adolescents were to be set up tomorrow, would the agencies refer?' It seemed that this would depend on how 'difficult' the cases were, and how strongly the agencies felt bound to them by loyalty. Clients are likely to be those for whom agencies, at a case meeting, say they can do nothing. The ECST never shuts a case (open violence apart). Keeping the case open keeps the relationship going, however little is achieved. On the question of the role of ECST members, the co-ordinator explained that although deroled from whatever agency they came from, they are not de-skilled. This gave the

team independence and added greatly to their credibility as an inter-agency team. In discussion, the concept of network broking was expanded. The team does not 'own' anything but acts as a broker in that team members find out what is going on among the agencies, what is on offer in the way of provision, what can be shared and they pursue this vigorously on behalf of the client group.

Imagery and metaphor have been, as discussed in Chapter 3, a useful tool for practitioners when explaining the intricacies of inter-agency work to others. The ECST's co-ordinator used the following image for this purpose:

On the map of the world, the continents are the big agencies and the clients are in the sea. There are various small islands and isthmuses but the ECST acts as a speedboat carrying the client from agency to agency looking for bridges and narrow points in the sea but at the same time being careful not to build any bridges which can become so solidly built that they simply extend the continent in ways which do little for the client. It is important to keep the agencies guessing since if they have too clear an idea of where the speed boats with the most challenging clients are going they will:

*a) shuffle off responsibility more readily (the Botany Bay solution) and
b) fail to treat each client as an individual for whom they could with a little help from the ECST develop an individual package of care. These packages extend agency practitioners' idea of what they can reasonably expect to be able, with a little help from the Team, to achieve another time. Thus perhaps it is a question of helping agencies occupy more sea with more varied landforms.
(Minutes, 4.6.91, Appendix K)*

6.2.3 Research Year One: Conclusions

Within a relatively short period, the research officer had uncovered an extensive range of inter-agency activity on behalf of young people in difficulty in Oxford. The steering group's increased understanding of this and of the ECST model of co-ordination added strength to the project's original propositions. Of the four recommendations put forward originally, two were carried forward. These were:

- to set up a multi-disciplinary network for the age group 12 - 18
- to set up a community support team to whom referral could be made of the cases who most severely tax the agencies endeavouring to help them

To achieve this, funding for a further year was sought and granted thus enabling the project to:

- work with the agencies to set up the Adolescent Network
- carry out case studies of individual young people referred by the agencies
- undertake group work with young people over 16.

6.3 Work with young people

6.3.1 Estimating numbers of young people 'through the net'

The Research Findings for Year One reported (Lloyd, 1993, Appendix C) that although no single measure could be used to estimate the number of young people in difficulty in the area at any one time, estimates could be derived from, for example, school data on attendance and exclusion, and from local projects such as 'Girls in Difficulty', an inter-agency group addressing the problems of girls out of school. However, although data collection ceased to be a problem for young people of compulsory school age, relatively little was known about those over the age of 16. For those under 16, Education was the most powerful agency in terms of resources, though these had recently been devolved to individual schools. From the schools' point of view the number of young people 'in difficulty', although significant in total, was small enough for each school individually to feel that improvements could be achieved by their own efforts and existing inter-agency activity. However, in comparison to housing, health and social services, education has few statutory duties in relation to young people post 16. Thus education was less likely to support the unknown number of post 16 young people which would have to be added to the 50 school age young people already estimated as TTN. Data collection, derived from a range of sources to prove the extent of need, would need to cover the whole age group, and responsibility for the whole age group seen as a matter for all the agencies. However it is only with hindsight that these arguments became clear. At the time the issues were clouded by agency preoccupation with boundary disputes, financial constraints and lack of hard data. School worries about the effect on public image if such data was to be published did not help.

6.3.2 Work with young people under 16

In order to explore young people's perspective on agency co-operation, suitable subjects were referred by Social Services, Education and Health. Twenty-eight young people and their parent/guardians were contacted by letter of whom 8 could not be interviewed for various reasons. Of the 20 interviewed, 5 could not be followed up because of the risk of undermining agency work currently taking place. For the remaining 15 permission was sought from the family and young person. Tape recorded interview took place at home, lasting about one and a half hours. In some cases the young person and parents were interviewed separately. Permission was then sought from them for the research officer to contact the agencies involved with their case.

The research officer reported:

I examined the initial contact with a family and the perception by that family at the point of intervention. I detailed a historical account of the contact by different agencies, or in the case of no contact, what had happened, and examined the different agency involvement and multi-agency intervention... Having studied these cases from the family perspective, I then contacted the agencies to discuss the case and trace the referral, look at the nature of intervention, and the assessment and consequent action taken and any follow up procedures of monitoring the outcomes of the case. (Lloyd, 1993, pp.39-40)

The strengths of this approach were considered to be that:

- *the perceived need of the family can be recorded*
- *the family and young person has an opportunity to reflect on what has happened*
- *the family and young person has an opportunity to record events as they see them.*
- *the case studies highlight particular areas of concern and gaps in provision*
- *the strength of emotion is evident and can be recorded.*

Weaknesses of the method were thought to be:

- *They are too small a number to make an assessment of overall provision, or use as a statistical analysis*
- *They should not, and are not intended to, be seen as directing blame or pin pointing weakness in any one agency or with any one service. Where a service has been singled out, it is to show the particular problems that can arise for all of us working in a multi-agency setting with young people who have multiple needs*
- *In some instances I was unable to contact all those involved with the case e.g. a young lad was in Feltham and a psychiatrist had moved*
- *I have used quotes as much as possible to illustrate that these findings are opinions and feelings, as such they cannot always be seen as fact. This is a difficulty when dealing with people, but in our work this is inevitable and these feelings are as real as the facts that surround them. (ibid.p.39-40)*

The case studies contributed greatly to the validity and significance of the study as a whole and the metaphors used by participants illustrated their experiences vividly:

He was offending while truanting from school. A mixture of the two. In the end we felt like tennis balls because Education said it was a social problem and Social Services said it was an education problem, and we were just going backwards and forwards from one to another. (ibid. p.55)

Thus the case studies added first, the client perspective. The data highlighted 'issues of concern that re-occurred during the interviews, and that arose at meetings and contacts with other agencies' (ibid. p.40). Secondly, the case studies convinced senior managers and heads of service that the failure of agencies to co-operate presented real problems and affected real people. These problems were summarised as follows:

- *Young people with multiple needs require the services of more than one agency*

- *Young people are defined by individual agency boundaries rather than by an analysis of their need and therefore tend to be seen as on the margin, or outside of, any one particular service provision*
- *Young people and their families are not aware of their rights and responsibilities*
- *There are sometimes lengthy delays in assessing the needs of a young person*
- *Young people get 'lost' in the system*
- *The needs of ethnic minority young people are not prioritised by any one agency. In instances where they need specialist support they find themselves outside mainstream agency provision*
- *Young people suffering from mental health problems are particularly vulnerable*
- *Young people experience delays in assessment or provision through the assessment process leading to a Statement under the 1981 Education Act.*

(Lloyd, 1994, pp.35-37)

In the research officer's view these issues were not new, 'they have all been previously identified by workers in the field and by the families and young people involved' (ibid. p.40).

6.3.3 Working with young people over 16

An opportunity to collaborate with the YWCA on a study of vulnerable young people for whom the normal support from family, their community and statutory agencies had failed, was welcomed for three reasons. First, little was known numerically about the number of young people 'through the net' in this age group, even though a number of projects were involved with them. However, evidence from the ECST and the Network for DTP adults estimated that there were 150 adults in this situation in Oxford (Vagg, 1987). Secondly, the steering group was interested in the earlier experiences of older teenagers, particularly their experience of statutory services. Thirdly, it was hoped that work with this age group would shed light on a group the project had originally identified as being of concern. These were young people caught sight of by agencies only fleetingly, or who got lost in the system. The research officer notes:

Initially, I felt that much of my research with young people over 16 would be among those who were known to at least one of the main agencies e.g. SSD or the ESW service, and therefore could not be seen to have truly 'fallen through the net' of provision in a literal sense. In fact these studies revealed that many young people are left with no appropriate support except basic provision. (Lloyd, 1993, p.66)

The study involved about 30 young people over a six month period. The techniques used were participatory, to build up trust through group work and to encourage frank and honest discussion. The study introduced the steering group to a further range of agencies and networks involved with young people including the police, probation, housing and voluntary sector provision such as the Night Shelter. It also became the steering group's point of entry into border country between the 'Network' for adults and the one proposed for adolescents. It established that:

for many young people, at a crucial age of development, especially as far as education and housing is concerned, delays in intervention, lack of resources and lack of co-ordination, means that for a significant time these young people...in effect fall through the net. (ibid. p.75)

The young people were clear that they wanted educational opportunities, especially the skills needed to cope with a college environment, help in combining child care with education and/or work, and a range of facilities such as counselling, drop in facilities, housing and welfare benefits, independent housing, family planning and parenting skills. Most had no direct access to any provision and had no key worker to help them with support, information and advice. Although facilities were being developed in the area, it seemed that this age group was even more in need of inter-agency support than those of school age, and that an adolescent network and youth support team which would bridge the pre- and post-16 gap could be a key ingredient in any preventative inter-agency strategy.

6.4 Working with the agencies

6.4.1 Agency problems

Although the agencies and organisations contacted accepted the concept of inter-agency work and most worked at various levels to develop this, several issues stood in the way:

Several agencies agree that it is difficult to clarify or agree a definitive description of the client group they cater for. Therefore referrals can be a frustrating exercise.

*a) for the other agencies, who are unclear of the specific role of each agency and
b) for the referral agency who receives an inappropriate referral.*

(Lloyd, 1992, p.12)

The agencies were confused about theoretical and practical responsibility, individual work methods, day to day pressures of work and overlapping geographical boundaries. Even within a single geographical boundary, intra- and inter-agency groups appeared to be uncoordinated and to work independently of each other leading to calls for open information sharing and better communication. Lack of understanding of different agency priorities, inability to share information freely, lack of understanding of professional status and role of different agencies were specific issues mentioned. For this reason,

Action research methods were used in contacting the agencies to develop an understanding of the level of inter-agency work currently taking place, and to ascertain the commitment to this method of working. ...The case studies were conducted to gain an understanding of the experiences of individuals who would be on the receiving end of agency intervention and to assess the needs of these clients. (Lloyd, 1993, p.32)

From the agencies contacted during this period a number of practitioners were interviewed. These included teachers responsible for special needs and pastoral care in 10 of the 16 city secondary schools, educational social workers, social workers, advisory teachers for multi-cultural education, staff at the adolescent psychiatric unit, educational psychologists, members of the youth court team and school nurses, specialist youth workers and workers in voluntary projects. These interviews made sense of the problems revealed in the case studies and provided:

insights into how schools and agencies perceive each other in relation to children in difficulties, helping us to understand where some of the work around multi-agency developments needs to take place. (Lloyd, 1993, p.37)

To overcome problems of communication between agencies and schools it was proposed that:

It is essential that these issues are addressed from a multi-agency perspective so that the whole person is the focus. If either education, health or the social problems are addressed in isolation without informing others then there is evidence to suggest that these are not successful because other workers are not working towards the same outcome. (ibid. p.37)

Building on this evidence, a list of the problems faced by the agencies was drawn up. These corresponded with the list of problems faced by the young people. For the agencies, however, the main subject of this study, the research project exposed the problems caused by uncoordinated approaches to co-operation.

This lack of structured co-ordination creates problems of working collaboratively which is often put down to problems with individuals or a particular agency. A whole agency can be scapegoat for the failure of an inter-agency project to be effective. The hostility and suspicion which then develops further hinders the development of successful inter-agency co-operation and the workers retreat to their own 'patches' where they feel safer and more able. (Lloyd, 1994, p.30)

It was hoped that an objective analysis of the problems they faced would help practitioners retain their personal objectivity in a crisis and help them develop strategies to improve practice.

The following problems were identified:

- *Practitioners are unsure which specialist agency to refer to*
- *Individual disciplines within an agency have problems defining what they offer in relation to each other*
- *Responsibility for service delivery is vertically managed, causing difficulty for collaboration across agencies*
- *Agencies are not always clear about the limits of their responsibility and therefore tend to spend too much time working on their own with young people with multiple needs, and too little time in co-operation with other agencies to make a effective joint plans in the cases which call for this*
- *Each agency has statutory responsibilities. This can create difficulties in co-ordinating provision and developing a holistic care plan for a young person*

- *Each agency has its own culture, language, aims and objectives and priorities*
- *Each individual worker has different pressures and incentives placed on them*
- *Agencies find it difficult to accept responsibility for seeing a 'case' through the 'system'*
- *Different agencies use different screening methods to control their intake of clients. This gatekeeping of provision gives some agencies access to provision and others none*
- *There is a lack of co-ordination between school transfers and a lack of continuity of approach with reference to school exclusions*
- *Agencies often find it difficult to agree 'ownership' of the 'case'*
- *There is no one agency, team or service responsible for the care of these vulnerable young people, which can support those who slip through existing provision and guide them back into it*
- *Different agencies share different responsibilities for young people at 16*
- *There is limited understanding of what inter-agency work means in terms of skills and practice and of its potential to alleviate problems of the agencies as distinct from those of the young people*
- *There is a lack of strategic planning across agencies*
- *Agencies do not hold the same information and have difficulty passing information to one another*
- *Conflicting legislation and financial constraints have created additional barriers to multi-agency co-operation*
- *Each agency holds its own budget and few mechanisms exist for joint financing*
- *Agencies are still uncertain about their roles, particularly in the context of purchasing and providing. (Lloyd, 1994, pp.30-35)*

This formidable array of problems can be grouped into four equally formidable sets of generic issues all of which affect all the parties to inter-agency co-operation. These issues concern:

- legislation
- strategic and operational matters
- professional practice
- financial arrangements

Each one of these areas would have to be taken into account, in a context in which socio-economic and political change was a constant. Agency problems could be further reduced to issues of structure and process. It seemed even more important to establish a co-ordinating framework to help agencies bring these different aspects of their work into a functional relationship.

6.4.2 Agency solutions: The Adolescent Network (Appendix L)

On the strength of this evidence supporting the need for improved co-operation, a conference to discuss the value and function of a network for those working with adolescents was arranged, attended by 100 representatives from Health, Education, Social Services and the voluntary sector with the support of their heads of service. The conference agreed to support a local

Adolescent Network which held its first meeting in April 1993 and still functions effectively as a meeting point, providing opportunities for discussion of current issues and circulating its newsletter to over 70 agencies, projects and individuals involved with young people in difficulty. Because membership is open to all whatever their status, the Network promotes effective communication and feedback within and between agencies. This feature is particularly valued by voluntary sector workers on short term contracts, an expanding group in the political and organisational world of the nineties. Such practitioners need to be reassured that their work will be followed through by others, preferably within the statutory sector. 'Purchaser' members of the Adolescent Network were frequently able to arrange this. As the project stated in its Findings:

When agencies agree to collaborate over individuals with complex difficulties, they bring their collective experience and determination to bear. The creative solutions which arise, generate improvements for everyone. (Roaf and Lloyd, 1995)

By providing regular opportunities to discuss issues as they arose, the Network enabled its members to address them in a practical way. If, as research seemed to suggest (Welton, 1985), workers who meet regularly have more knowledge of each other's role, more understanding of priorities within different organisations and are more trusting of colleagues, then the Network provided these opportunities. Collectively then, the Adolescent Network, like its 'parent' network for DTP adults, formalised informal networks, identified gaps in provision and responded to these through partnership and information sharing. At a practical level it produced a Directory of Resources as well as its regular Newsletter.

6.5 Taking stock: evaluation of progress

The project had two main sources of evaluation. The first came from the advisory group set up by the funding body. The second was external evaluation at the end of the first year (Armstrong and Moon, 1993). Thus the project's relevance and validity was extended by its connection with the broader research community. The discipline of working with an advisory group and subjecting the project's work to independent evaluation seemed a small price to pay for the financial and moral support required. Furthermore the project found itself buying into an organisation for whom there was no such thing as failure, only different interpretations of success. For risky ventures this had the advantage that while a good outcome could be a model of good practice, a pilot for other areas to use, undesirable things which had *not* happened as a result of its work would also yield desirable outcomes.

6.5.1 The Advisory Group

The function of an advisory group set up by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation is to ensure the practical application of the research and to surround the project with people who can introduce it to a wider audience. Advisory groups play an important evaluative role in the life of their projects, discussing progress, the form evaluation should take, and the form of the final report. They also encourage the evaluator and project leaders to acknowledge where things might not work (Advisory group minutes, 27.7.92, Appendix M) and towards the end of the project, to examine what is left undone, what can still be achieved and what can be replicated elsewhere. Advisory group meetings provided a 'safe' place to ask, and respond to, challenging questions, to discuss progress, difficulties and dilemmas. For example, when money became an issue for the project causing practitioners to retreat behind agency boundaries at the prospect of what project proposals might cost them, the advisory group were ready with suggestions of strategies used by other projects to overcome this.

6.5.2 Evaluation Report (1993)

Armstrong and Moon (1993) record the project's 'significant influence in raising awareness of the importance of inter-agency co-operation' (Summary) and that it was 'very positively evaluated in terms of the role and work of the action researcher' (Summary). The project was seen to be dealing with vexed issues, functioning as an important legitimator of activity with the Research Findings (Lloyd, 1993) and case studies illuminating current problems. 'Without exception, all the agencies saw benefits accruing from their involvement with the project' which had 'directly and indirectly resulted in changed policy/practices to promote co-operation' (Armstrong and Moon, 1993, p.5). Comments from practitioners noted, for example, that the project 'hasn't got the power to enforce but it has the power to influence by persuasion...The project has done something desperately needed and out of it something positive will come'. [It has] identified gaps in the existing system and brought people together in one forum'(p.5). One agency identified the project as: 'a highly significant factor in promoting the development of a real youth strategy in the area'(p.6).

The report suggested the following areas for development:

- to differentiate the role of the research officer from the agency 'owned' structures that could be set up to facilitate co-operation

- to focus more analytically on the critical interfaces between agencies which inhibit/enhance co-operation (leadership roles, communication systems, statutory responsibilities are three examples)
- to focus research officer time and resource on the key player agencies
- to restrict project activity given resource limitations
- to provide some judgements on the human resources implications of the strategies being devised.

Two concerns were uncovered. Firstly, the extent to which the project had become an agency in its own right. The project was considered to have 'held the line' overall in maintaining its independence. However, there was confusion over the other inter-agency groups linked with it, particularly the education based Through the Net (TTN) project which existed for school students below 16. The Youth Support Team (YST) proposal had polarised opinion between Education, Health and Social Services. While some agency representatives held the view that the concept of a youth support team was an important future development, others felt that a system already existed through ESWs, social workers and youth service. Therefore a YST could create another, unnecessary, agency. Important in the second phase would be:

- *differentiating the type of inter-agency executive action that may be in existence (TTN) or planned (YST) from the functions of the action researcher*
- *clarifying the role of the action research in relation to whatever structure or systems are established. (p.8)*

The evaluators concluded that:

the action research role of the project would be circumscribed if it came to be seen as a protagonist in the debate about inter-agency co-operation, or indeed the 'focus' of a particular form of inter-agency mechanism...the project seeks to facilitate agencies to work in an inter-agency way...it is not the aim...to set up an agency (although the outcome of Rowntree sponsored activity is that agencies may so do). Any new structure should, we believe, be seen as owned by the agencies and not by 'Rowntree'. In our view this distinction is not clear to all who touch on the work of the project and needs conceptual and structural clarification in future work. (p.8)

The second concern was the relative involvement of different agencies and the support given by agency leaders. The evaluators commented that a tighter focus on the involvement of the main player statutory agencies might have led to some clearer frameworks within which co-operation might develop. This had become more problematic as the debate around the Youth Support Team gathered momentum. The evaluators recommended that the second phase of the project address more analytically the different statutory responsibilities of agencies, how these might relate to legislation and the implications for new working practices as they might evolve. There

were differences noted in the leadership style of different agencies, some had been consistently supportive, others saw leaders as playing a less 'hands on' role.

a number expressed the view that having given the 'go ahead' there was very little feeling of contact with central decision making. In one instance a change of policy leading to a more devolved way of working had been taken without reference to the implications it had for Rowntree and similar activities. One interviewee, talking in a general way about the project said 'I don't understand what it is that makes those in key positions take an interest in us. If we fit into some other agenda then our role may be seen as important. But a lot of the time we're left to withstand the vicissitudes of medium and low level politics within the different agencies. (p.10)

One interviewee pointed out that 'the process of inviting key officers at Senior Management level is different in different agencies according to the complexity of the management structure and the communication channels between senior and middle management and practitioners '

(p.10). The evaluators thus exposed an:

element of unpredictability in agency leadership... Measures to overcome this could be built into the framework for future work. We would see this issue as an important example of a strategic agency interface and one that requires further exploration as the project develops. (ibid. p.10)

The evaluators' conclusions, in relation to the original tasks set for the research, suggested:

1. Setting up an inter-agency network
 - focusing on where new ways of working and additional resources might best be channelled
 - focusing on key agencies to find out more about each agency's approach to co-operative working and the obstacles to it
2. Identifying gaps in the service, including young people who fell through the net of provision
 - exploring the extent to which gaps are created by resource restrictions or the lack of co-operation. Were resource constraints used to divert consideration of more substantive issues?
3. Suggest other resources/initiatives not yet provided
 - ensuring that whatever way the existing agencies choose to adopt should form the focus of the second phase activities
4. To provide a report as a guide to good practice
 - that this form the basis for inter-agency inservice activity, also providing the focus for discussion for future policy and planning
 - that this should focus on the structures facilitating/inhibiting co-operation and the measures taken by agencies in response to it.

6.5.3 Steering Group proposals

The key issue was the question of the third task, that the research as a whole should suggest other resources/ initiatives not yet provided. The evaluation noted that 'these [the youth support team model] have drawn some hostility from agencies who feel threatened (one view) or who

feel the proposal is unnecessary (another view)' (Armstrong and Moon, 1993, p.12). The majority view from within the steering group itself and among its advisers was that the model of linked team and network was sound and would provide the co-ordinating structure required. The risk that the YST might become another agency in its own right was possibly premature. Equally, it could turn out to be irrelevant and was worth risking anyway.

A more cogent dilemma was the question of how far the majority should push forward its proposal against strong opposition from a minority. Intra-agency teams in all the primary care agencies had good reason to feel threatened by the proposal, since inter-agency activity was an important element in much of their ordinary work. For some, evidence of the number of young people through the net was regarded as proof that an inter-agency *co-ordinating structure* was needed, while for others it was seen as proof of the need to improve inter-agency *co-operation* as part of improved intra-agency practice. These distinctions were difficult for steering group members to absorb and even more difficult to explain to others. Even if understood, the ideas were difficult to bring into operation.

What those in favour of inter-agency co-ordinating structures found most difficult to explain to those opposed to this was that no-one *inside* any agency, with the possible exception of the detached youth workers, could easily leave their agency duties to follow a young person into the rough ground between agencies. Even if they did venture out, as some did, they could not stay there with the young person for the length of time required to develop the flexible packages of support needed to bring them back into the agency network. Anyone who tried this, would be regarded as acting in breach of their statutory agency duties, or at the very least acting beyond the call of duty. Yet unless someone did this, young people slipped through the net and stayed there.

The majority of agency practitioners venturing into inter-agency territory also found themselves unfamiliar with the legislation, culture, language and resources of the other agencies they then had to do business with. This created its own problems. The knowledge and skills required for network broking among the agencies had to be learnt. It seemed increasingly probable therefore, that what the research was exposing was not so much a plethora of inter-agency *meetings* as a plethora of specialist agencies, and the absence of a specialist '*inter-agency*' agency.

The Elmore model had successfully provided this and after experience of it, agency fears had been allayed. The steering group had already begun to replicate this model and members of the Adolescent Network were in favour of its completion, having seen what could be achieved in practice. It was, in principle, possible for agencies to agree to give formal permission for this. Representatives from existing intra-agency teams working with young people at risk of falling 'through the net' could re-group to form a specialist inter-agency team. Examples would be members of school special needs teams, educational social workers and youth work teams in education, youth justice and adolescent teams in social services. It was logic of this kind, albeit at that stage less clearly articulated, that led to the steering group's proposal that each of the agencies be asked to share the cost of a small specialist inter-agency resource.

The tensions developing over the steering group's proposals were exacerbated by other threats however. Local government review threatened to change administrative and geographical boundaries and financial constraints were pressing so heavily on agencies that existing teams, especially in education and social services, were hard pressed to maintain a minimum of staffing. In this situation decisions about agency purpose were acute. Should some staff and/or resources be transferred to an inter-agency team set up in the interest of the least well off minority, or should resources remain within the agencies in the interest of the majority? Was it better to retain resources within agencies for preventative work and crisis management there or could some of this be more effectively managed through an inter-agency co-ordination? How could proponents of inter-agency co-ordinating structures satisfy the seemingly conflicting needs of agencies and clients for both prevention and cure?

Significantly, social services, the agency suffering most severely from cuts in public spending, supported the proposal most enthusiastically. The effect of the spending squeeze, coupled with the requirements of the 1989 Children Act had focused attention on those most in need. Social Services were thus better able than others to focus on young people 'through the net'. For them, any strategy designed to improve inter-agency co-operation would help.

Meanwhile, the police and health authorities, both conscious of the huge cost to their services of, for example, a persistent young offender or a teenage pregnancy, were strongly in favour of the proposal. However this support may have stemmed from a perception of the problem in financial terms as a drain on resources. By contrast, their colleagues in education and social services saw the problem in more personal terms, and young people in need as having claims

on their daily care and attention. Consequently Health Services and Police felt less involved personally or professionally and less easily threatened.

The evaluators' advice that action in the second phase should be guided by what the agencies chose was sound, since choice could lead to commitment. However, in the circumstances, the choice was not so simple. As the research had demonstrated, the problems faced by the agencies and young people covered a range of issues, organisational, financial, professional and philosophical. Agency choice was thus governed by a range of opinion reflecting these concerns. Nonetheless, agency opinion led to the steering group's decision to allow the research to explore the proposal for a youth support team in the modified form of an inter-agency panel. This was a risky decision, taken with some misgivings, with the steering group aware that behind 'choice' lay 'confusion'.

Stage Three: Intervention

6.6 Border movements: from inter-agency panel to youth strategy

6.6.1 Decision-making

The dilemmas emerging as the project moved into its second year of funding were discussed at meetings of the steering group, with senior managers in the individual agencies and with the advisory group. Inevitably, tensions developed within the steering group, straining relationships there and testing the commitment 'to work in an inter-agency manner' to the limit. Under the heading 'Planning for 1993/94', minutes of an Advisory Group meeting note that:

The discussion in this part of the meeting [re Adolescent Network and inter-agency panel] was extremely helpful and supportive. It included some matters of advice echoing that received in Lothian³ e.g.

Hold onto the arguments - boldly if necessary and keep raising the profile

Hold onto the muddle

Secure clarity re data and get access to this

Re funding - recommended that approaches be made to the Home Office, Joint Planning and Mental Health Provision.

(Advisory Group Minutes, 5/3/1993, Appendix N)

With the confidence gained from independent advisers, and support from the majority of the agencies (though this, as the evaluation had pointed out was confused, with different levels in agency hierarchies giving the project varying degrees of support) the steering group decided to 'hold onto the muddle' by using the opportunity provided by the formation of the panel, to take the project further into the little known area between agencies.

³ the present researcher and research officer had recently been to Edinburgh to learn about the development of Lothian's Youth Strategy

6.6.2 Inter-agency panel (Appendix P)

At the time in Oxford, several inter-agency initiatives were underway, such as the Diversion Panel, where police take the lead role. The fact that the steering group became closely linked to one of these initiatives, the city secondary schools' inter-agency project, Through the Net (TTN) was not surprising. First, the role of education in young people's lives meant that education was better represented on the steering group than other agencies. Second, other possible foci for the research, through housing, or the courts for example, would have led to the compartmentalisation of the client group which the concept of 'through the netness' tries to avoid. The Through the Net project had carried out some data collection and was looking for ways forward to support young people known to be 'lost in the system'. The idea of an inter-agency pilot panel for case management and network broking along the lines of the ECST was thus attractive to both the steering group and TTN.

At this point there was a common agenda between them. For TTN, the research brought valuable skills and resources. For the steering group, the pilot panel provided an opportunity to introduce inter-agency approaches and promote the idea of inter-agency co-ordinating structures among the city headteachers, an increasingly powerful group since the introduction of local financial management in 1991. They were now the main budget holders, not the LEA. If money was to come from education to fund a youth support team or panel, some would have to come from the city schools. Thus, mindful of the benefits to be gained by positive responses to agency needs, the project agreed to commit time and energy to helping practitioners collaborate to set up, manage and evaluate TTN's pilot inter-agency panel. The first planning meeting was held in November 1992, the six month pilot began in January 1993 and the project was evaluated in July.

Panel purpose

The Panel was described as:

a multi-agency initiative which seeks to support those young people for whom there is a break down in education, such as to give school little hope of reintegration, and for whom there are no resources at present or where potential breakdown would cause similar problems. (Lloyd, 1993, p.82-3)

The salient points of its rationale, composition, process, costs and benefits were:

- membership was multi-agency
- referrals were made through the schools to a monthly meeting of the panel

- independent assessors were appointed to gather information about individual cases. These were presented to the panel who then recommended multi-agency packages of support.
- progress reports on the young people were received by the panel at subsequent meetings and further action planned.

From an inter-agency position, the panel, as a Through the Net initiative, remained, even though multi-agency in its membership, firmly within the territory of Education. Therefore, although it succeeded in giving its members experience of inter-agency processes, it did not, and perhaps could not, take its members into inter-agency territory. In this respect, the experiment was, firstly, not genuinely inter-agency. Secondly, some of its members may have been, however unintentionally, left with the impression that it was. At the time, discussion of this type would have seemed incomprehensibly esoteric to busy practitioners. Steering group members were obliged to accept this, and to pursue their own debate on this subject with agency senior managers and heads of service. Thirdly, while the research covered young people 12-18, the panel was principally concerned with young people of compulsory school age.

However there were benefits. Although it appeared expensive and unproductive, with many people involved and only 16 cases referred over the five months of the panel's operation, it was recognised that:

- *pilot work is expensive*
 - *it produces questions to be answered and further work to be done*
 - *there has been a history of everyone doing their own thing in separate patches - this brought people together and a number of people were able to talk to each other who had not had that opportunity before.*
- (TTN minutes, 4/11/1993, Appendix Q)*

The panel's evaluation proposed that given the expense, a decision should be made as to whether to revert to the previous situation, or 'acknowledge that there had been improvements. Young people were being pulled back into the system.' Existing structures, with the addition of an inter-agency worker, created the climate in which schools deal with the majority, educational social workers deal with those beginning to slip away and:

...we pick up those TTN using panel working methods...this enables us to throw the rule book away and get on with it. The sort of inter-agency work the panel was engaged with produced exciting packages and got together people who could say "this might work", "this key worker might do it". The young people were being pulled back. (TTN Minutes, 4/11/1993, Appendix Q)

The panel noted that its policy had been to look at whatever cases the schools sent, to look at everything known about the young person and at whatever could be done before making a decision. Dangers to be aware of were first, that schools might relinquish responsibility for the young people referred to the panel, and secondly that the schools might themselves feel marginalised. Other difficulties noted were the need to involve the health service and the need to affirm the role of the ESW service deciding who was 'through the net'.

In its self evaluation the panel outlined a number of issues. These concerned the definition of TTN which did not, in the panel's experience, fully describe the students referred. In several cases the panel had:

*kick started services into action but in the majority of cases there was a network of agencies involved already, but these had not been able to offer the appropriate response. In these cases the Panel had a role in establishing a needs assessment and an action plan through the Independent Assessors report.
(Through The Net evaluation: Macro issues, Point No. 1 Appendix R).*

Other issues concerned improvements to existing intra-agency methods for early intervention, preventative work, and inter-agency problems over confidentiality. The panel's role in relation to young people post 16 raised further questions. Were they to be considered beyond the reach of help (one view), or as an indication of the need for early, pre school preventative strategies (another view)? A third view recognised that some young people post 16 were already parents so that the problem was, in effect, indivisible. If post 16 was panel responsibility, then establishing who the appropriate key worker would be was a difficulty. If not, there was a transfer issue. The panel was reminded of the existence of the Adolescent Network as a new inter-agency resource to help progress matters such as this.

Process issues

The steering group's decision to become involved with the panel was based on the opportunity this would provide to explore inter-agency processes. The panel did indeed achieve this objective, exposing interprofessional and inter-personal points of contact as well as misunderstandings and incompatibilities. Many of these centred on values and professional ethics expressed through a range of positive and negative behaviours. However difficult and potentially damaging some of the reactions were at the time, the object of the research was to expose and work with these issues rather than mask them. Those which triggered the sharpest reactions tended to be focused round inter-agency case work and management, confidentiality, and the interface between agencies explored by the independent assessors.

Independent Assessors and Keyworkers

The role of the Independent Assessor required trial and error in order to tease out its key elements and to ensure that these did not conflict either with agency responsibilities or with inter-agency panel aims to achieve practical action for the young people (Appendix S). The panel appointed Independent Assessors, allocated cases to them and received their reports. On the basis of the reports the panel then identified key workers. The minutes record that 'by having an independent assessor the panel would be able to tap resources hitherto unobtainable e.g. [we] would not previously have thought of using a voluntary youth worker [as a key worker]'. (Through The Net Minutes, 1/10/1993, Appendix T). The independent assessor was 'about enabling' and could make economies of scale: 'by pulling things together ... enable the keyworker to draw on other agencies for support and assistance... the key workers knew the contacts and got access to things that weren't usually on the agenda. We went out of our way to use unusual keyworkers who were more sensitive and were at a better starting point' (ibid. Appendix T). The use of 'unusual' key workers was an important element in the panel's successes with young people. The panel's job was to identify, from the assessor's report and their own experience, who, if anyone, had a positive relationship with the young person 'through the net'. In some cases this person had no statutory responsibilities but could be supported by someone who did. In many instances this was often the most effective means initially, of helping a young person back into the support network. The panel's success therefore depended on the permission agency practitioners gave each other to act creatively.

Benefits

The panel's view was that as its work developed so did the benefits, for example, a 'clearer understanding of the systems which already existed in different agencies was developed and, in part, usefully co-ordinated for particular referrals...Extensive ad hoc discussion took place during the life of the panel...By accessing the work of other agencies the range of programmes was improved and better articulated' (Draft evaluation of the Through the Net Panel, Appendix U). Panel members characterised the initiative as providing 'spin offs/creative thinking.. it developed its own momentum/dynamic so after a while the panel was thinking more creatively' (Appendix T).

Phrases such as 'got more information', 'got more creative', 'widened terms of referral', were used to describe successes during the course of the pilot. Less successful aspects related to the time scale of the project. Thus it was not always clear if successful intervention would result in long term change for the young person, nor, significantly, had there been 'any general system

improvement' (Appendix U). Other issues mentioned were that referrals were geared to education and not to difficulties outside school. This could lead to a gap in provision. Some schools had not referred, considering they were able to contain students in school even though help was needed for the home situation. Transfer arrangements between schools still needed attention as did confidentiality between agencies. This problem had been circumvented for the panel by all members, if not already local authority members, being formally attached to a relevant agency. Improved practice was noted in the area of special educational needs and more reliable access to the curriculum for late entrants, poor attenders and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

6.7 Planning the exit: introducing a model structure for inter-agency co-ordination

The six month pilot had functioned, as anticipated, as an embryonic youth support team. Demands on time, and the skills required for assessment, and for the support of key workers had been greater than expected however. The intention had been for a number of independent assessors to be involved. In fact, because these proved difficult to find, the research officer did most of the assessment. At the end of the panel's life, with further cuts expected to agency and school budgets, funding to continue the pilot was uncertain and the research project itself was about to end.

However, panel participants had gained confidence in inter-agency work and were keen to incorporate their new skills into their own work within agencies. Much depended on the emotional and financial climate within agencies. Those who recognised that they could not do everything on their own, tended not to feel professionally threatened by the existence of young people TTN and were keen to move forward to a YST despite the need to contribute personnel or cash to it. These agencies also recognised that the YST could attract funding from agencies who would not normally have contributed to these young people's welfare. This included an offer from Oxfam for example. Opposition to the YST tended to come from those the steering group had failed to persuade or reassure. These agencies were more likely to retreat behind their agencies boundaries. Without additional money, they would not support the transfer of agency resources to an inter-agency group.

This proved to be the biggest problem for Education. Much of this reluctance can be attributed to the introduction of local financial management to schools. Before 1991, schools were centrally financed by LEAs which could use budget surpluses to support a number of initiatives such as action research or a focus on 'unpopular' groups. Indeed Oxfordshire had a

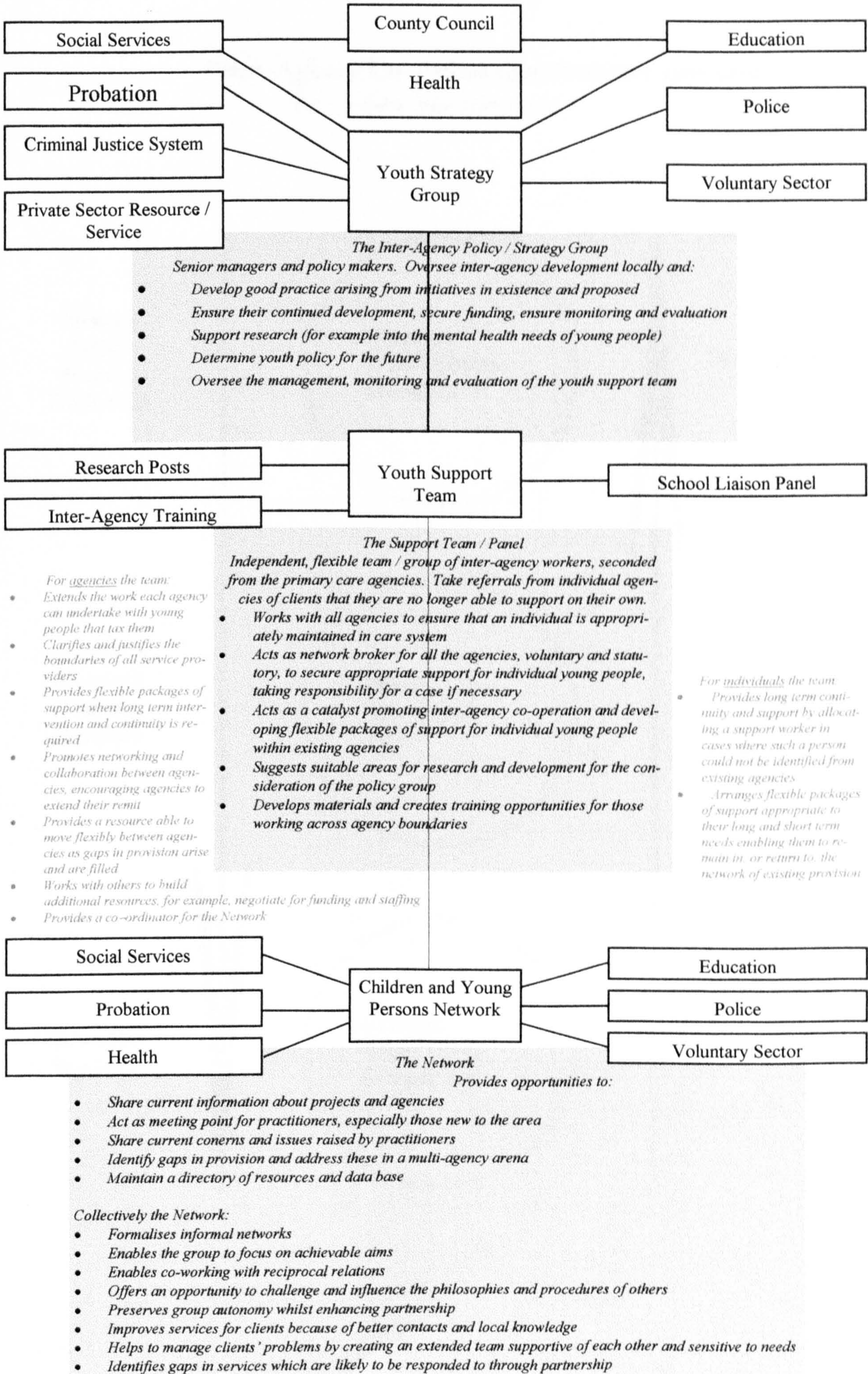
history of successful projects of this kind (Leeson, 1989). After devolution to individual school budgets this became more difficult as schools became relatively more powerful. Young people TTN were not, as the research had demonstrated, a high priority for schools. Education's existing inter-agency workers were starved of cash for the same reason. Faced by a series of budget cuts in the mid 1990's, schools became increasingly ready to exclude young people with difficulties. Thus the TTN group's acceptance of the steering group's help in carrying out the pilot was only partly altruistic. It was also attractive financially.

Securing the commitment of Education to young people in difficulty became a key objective. A presentation to the city headteachers was unable, however, to achieve more than agreement that the research should continue to work with TTN for the time being and pursue alternative funding from charitable sources as well as from Health, Social Services and Joint Planning. Education made no offer and thus it seemed that the research might have little opportunity to put the lessons learnt from the pilot process into practice.

6.7.1 Policy Seminar

The research project and the inter-agency panel facilitated by it, had, nonetheless, raised the profile of children and young people in difficulty. Practitioners had been given some experience of inter-agency processes and improved intra-agency practice. Lack of support from Education was compensated to some extent by strong support from Health and Social Services. A positive outcome for the project was therefore, the invitation by the Director of Social Services to lead a policy seminar to present the project's findings and recommendation for a Youth Support Team to be set up in the area.

During its second year, the project had developed a theoretical model as a basis for discussion at inter-agency seminars and conferences to demonstrate the links between inter-agency policy, case management and networking (Figs.2 a and b pp. 164-165). As a theoretical model it proved a useful training tool and practitioners could apply it in many circumstances. The objective was to explain how the operation of the model would benefit agencies and to demonstrate this through successful examples of its use elsewhere. The seminar consisted of 45 senior policy makers across all the agencies involved with young people in difficulty. Nine elected members also attended, representing the county council. The presentation outlined the project's rationale, provided details of the costs to society of the consequences (for example, secure accommodation, health costs) of the failure to address the need of young people in



Inter-Agency Co-ordinating Structure (simplified)

For – problem / issue / client group

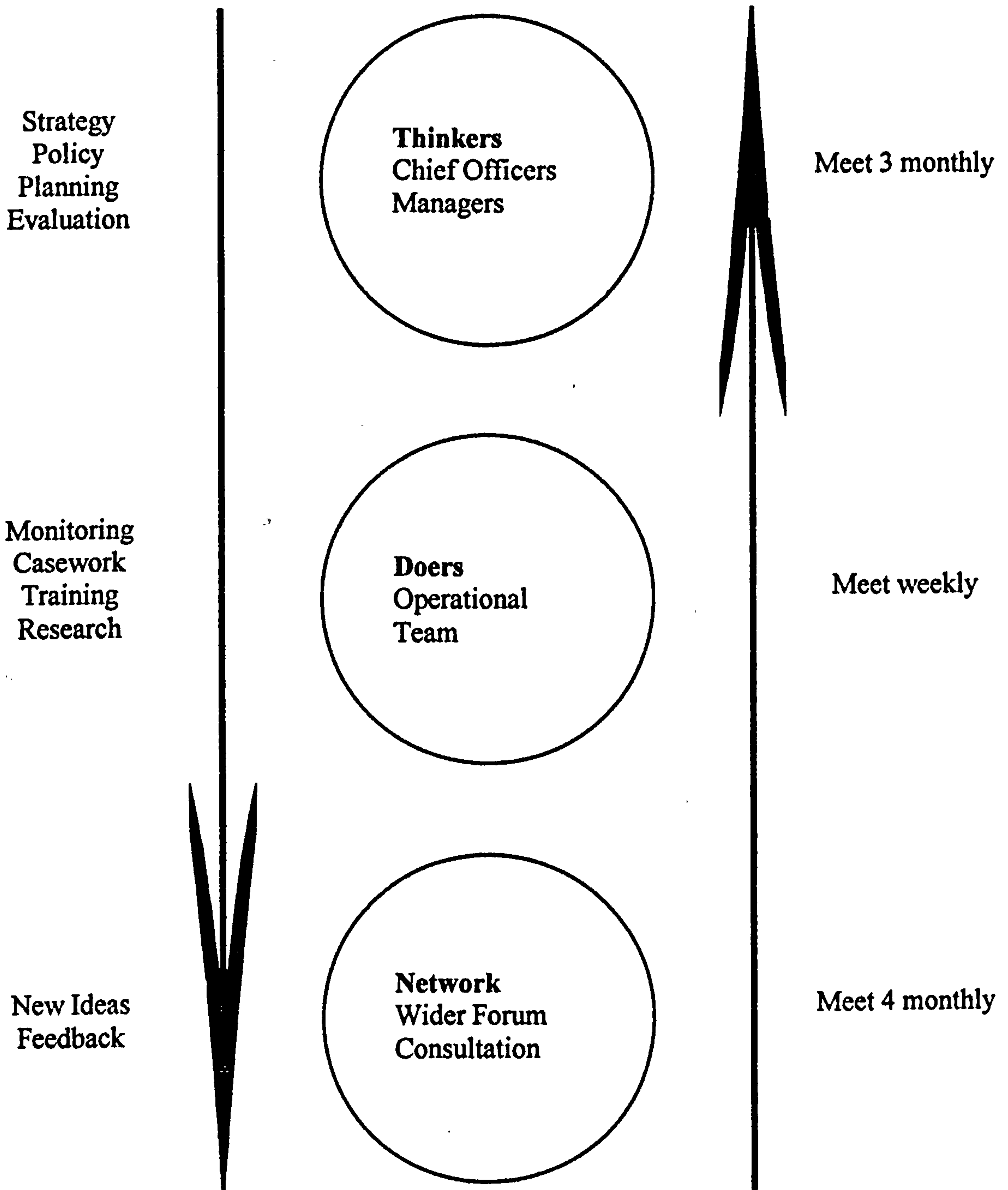


Figure 2b

difficulty, and outlined the project's findings. The Youth Support Team proposal was introduced with details of its cost and the offers already made towards this.

This was the first time the Findings (Roaf and Lloyd, 1995) had been discussed before such a wide ranging gathering of policy makers. As the seminar proceeded, it became apparent that the real problem standing in the way of improved co-operation was the tension, exposed by the debate, between agencies at senior management level. The evaluation had commented on this in its report but its full extent had been disguised. Senior managers could each, it transpired, support the project on behalf of all, or parts of, their own agency, but could not achieve this jointly. The seminar thus threatened to become an opportunity for the rehearsal of old grievances.

At this point however, the elected members, shocked by the evidence of the case studies and the inability of local authority managers to agree as to how to address the issues raised by them, intervened. The seminar ended with the proposal that a short life joint officer/member working party be set up to review provision for children and young people in difficulty. This met for six months and contributed to the development of Oxfordshire's Children's Services plans.

Although the project had arrived at a different destination from the one intended, it had raised the stakes, achieved considerable influence and credibility, and was able to disband knowing that fresh life could be given to its objectives through dissemination and training.

6.8 Project findings and conclusions

The project's principal finding was that 'There are many inter-agency groups dealing with children and young people in difficulty and with special needs. However a lack of structured co-ordination is limiting their effectiveness' (Roaf and Lloyd, 1995). Furthermore, 'a formal structure promoting inter-agency collaboration would encourage agencies to innovate and to provide a fully co-ordinated service for young people needing more support than can be provided by any one of them' (ibid.). However, 'although the potential of inter-agency action to maximise resources and improve services is great, the perceived threat it poses to individual agencies inhibits its development. In order to gain experience of it away from these pressures, independent funding is needed to ensure that the work is not aligned to any one agency' (ibid.).

The steering group's experience continued to support this view, at least for the initial stages of an inter-agency project. Finally, experience gained from the inter-agency panel led the project to conclude that:

- *Although the nature of the problems identified are complex and involve large agencies in charge, effective and innovative solutions can emanate from small scale inexpensive inter-agency projects*
- *When agencies agree to collaborate over individuals with complex need difficulties, they bring their collective experience and determination to bear. The creative solutions which arise generate improvements for everyone (ibid.)*

6.9 The case study: factors contributing to successful inter-agency practice

Analysis of the problems experienced by the young people (see pp. 146-147) and the agencies involved with them (see pp. 149-150), showed that these fell into four main groups within which it was possible to identify factors contributing to inter-agency success.

Legislation

Although legislation itself featured in only three of the problems identified by agencies and comment on it was limited, its effects were regarded as devastating. Legislators had reinforced agency boundaries and offered few solutions other than exhortation to overcome these. The young people mentioned legislation tangentially in terms of their *ignorance of their rights* under the terms of existing legislation. This was particularly noted in relation to ethnic minority groups, to girls and to those suffering from mental health problems.

In spite of many recommendations promoting inter-agency co-operation, legislation had not achieved this because only rarely had structures been built in to ensure that co-operation took place. Without this safeguard, local attempts to provide *co-ordinating structures* were easily frustrated. For example, no one agency, team or service has been set up to take responsibility for the care of vulnerable young people, to support those who slip through existing provision and guide them back to it. Legislation is also conflicting in its implications for children and *child impact statements* are not included. Thus different agencies share different responsibilities for young people and this becomes more complex after the age of 16. These factors in combination make it difficult to co-ordinate provision or to develop a holistic care plan for a young person.

Strategic and organisational matters

About one third of the problems identified in relation to agencies, and one half of those identified in relation to the young people could be directly linked to the way in which agencies were organised and practitioners carried out their roles. Young people needed the services of more than one agency but were *categorised by agency boundary rather than an analysis of*

their needs. They were thus readily compartmentalised and might, for example, receive help if they were seen as eligible for a truancy programme fronted by Education, but if they became homeless or left school, then they fell 'through the net' again. Collaboration across agencies was difficult since there was little *strategic planning across agencies* and *responsibility for service delivery is frequently managed vertically within agencies*.

Since there was no organised means of communication, still less collaboration with another agency, practitioners did not know which agency to look to for support if their own agency could no longer help. If they were committed to helping their clients, they did what they could on their own or referred only to agencies or professionals with whom they were familiar. As a consequence, *practitioners became confused about the limits of their professional responsibility*. In general the effect was for practitioners to spend too much time working on their own with young people in difficulties and too little time in co-operation with others to make effective joint plans where these are needed. Furthermore, as young people, particularly older teenagers, frequently did fall through the net and it was no-one's responsibility to bring them back, *agencies had difficulty seeing 'cases' through the 'system'*. For example, there was little co-ordinated help available when a young person transfers from one school to another, or is permanently excluded from school, or is moving in or out of care, or from pre to post 16 provision. Nor were the consequences of this brought home until, as sometimes occurred, there was a crisis, possibly resulting in media attention and adverse publicity for whichever agency was seen to be at fault at the time.

Professional practice

Nearly half of the agency problems appeared to arise from matters concerning professional relationships or working methods. Included in this was *lack of understanding of what inter-agency work means in terms of skills and practice*. Different *methods of assessment and gate keeping devices* controlling access to resources and different attitudes towards *confidentiality* and the sharing of information were frequently mentioned as stumbling blocks.

Finance

Financial arrangements, like legislation, although less frequently mentioned specifically as an agency problem, are nonetheless implied in the list of problems faced by agencies. Although frequently invoked, informally, as a reason for not embarking on inter-agency activity, sometimes, as in the case study, this seemed to be an avoidance strategy. The central problem focuses on arrangements which might have been made were it not for *lack of effective joint*

funding mechanisms. Problems were compounded because local and national government and agencies face competing claims for, usually, *decreasing funds*. Furthermore, it has not always been clear whether *funding priorities* have been for family services as distinct from children's services.

Process and purpose

While many of these factors overlap or interconnect, threading through them, in a different dimension, are factors governing *inter-agency process and interpersonal behaviour*. These, the case study revealed, are as important as factors governing systems in promoting or inhibiting effective inter-agency co-operation. Unless these are fully understood and worked with, co-ordinating structures may be difficult to set up. Unless there is harmony between agencies at senior management level, independent funding or 'starter grants' are essential. Thus the case study confirmed the findings in the literature review concerning the *development of inter-professional skills* and the contrast between the successful professional or practitioner who 'does a great job with the kids' and the interprofessional who 'does the right thing in the right way at the right time' in the inter-agency arena.

The *terms used by inter-agency workers* was an important aspect of agency process. These are developing rapidly but there is little agreement as to the meaning, use and implications of the terms used in legislation and in professional practice. Thus there is confusion between for example, inter-agency co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration, or between case meetings and case management. This has consequences for inter-agency understanding and practice of which the most significant is to limit understanding firstly, of what inter-agency work means in terms of skills and practice and secondly, of its potential to alleviate problems of agencies as distinct from those of the young people. Finally, inter-agency work focusing on young people who fall 'through the net' exposes weaknesses in *agency purpose in relation to those who most need their services* and for whom they provide very little or nothing. These young people challenge normal perceptions of agency purpose and priorities. Because agency purpose in relation to clients is unclear, agencies are unable to reprioritise resources quickly. Therefore a co-ordinating structure is required fundamentally, as a mechanism to redistribute resources towards those in greatest need.

A corollary is that the hallmark of an effective inter-agency co-ordinating structure is its success in redistributing resources to benefit those most in need of them. This cannot be left to unilateral decision making by any one agency. Local authorities require inter-agency strategies

which are mandatory but these will be ineffective without an accompanying inter-agency co-ordinating mechanisms which should also, therefore, be mandatory. Chapter Seven compares the evidence provided by the literature and the case study. Key elements in the co-ordinating structure proposed by the project are discussed and implications for professional practice are considered.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Literature and Case Study: Analysis and Discussion

7.0 Introduction

The two groups of literature reviewed in this study required different strategies for examination. The first scanned an established canon of government documents and government and independent reports to find out when and why inter-agency working has been recommended, on whose behalf and with what effect. The second, on agencies, professionals and young people, selected texts with a bearing on inter-agency practice.

The inter-agency activity described in the case study took place over five years, and this research began when it was in its final stage. Thus the literature review predates and post dates the case study, enveloping it. The case study in its turn provides a commentary on the literature. In the late eighties, for example, the language with which to discuss inter-agency working, already well developed in academic circles (Hallett and Birchall, 1992) was becoming more widely used and debated among practitioners. However, the texts demonstrating the beginnings of inter-agency theory did not appear until after the project described in the case study was over. In common with other inter-agency projects for young people running at the time, those involved had to develop their own ways of expressing what they thought and felt about inter-agency work. In some respects this is an advantage, in that they could less easily use jargon as a mask. On the other hand, lack of a common language made communication with others working in the same field difficult. Furthermore, these projects were widely separated geographically and in different professions and organisations.

This chapter draws some conclusions about the progress of inter-agency work with young people based firstly on a comparison of the evidence of the literature review and the case study. Secondly some additional literature with a bearing on aspects of professional practice not yet considered is reviewed. Conclusions reached in this chapter will be applied in different contexts in the final three chapters to establish:

- to what extent improvements in inter-agency co-operation would help agencies work more effectively with young people variously described as falling through the net, or on the margins of an agency's responsibility
- what factors appear, from the evidence in the literature and current examples of inter-agency work, to contribute to these improvements
- what characteristics of effective models of inter-agency practice can be identified to inform future research, practice and policy making.

7.1 Evidence from the literature review

7.1.1 Legislation and reports

The work of strategists, policy makers and decision makers is concerned with systems and structures, quantitative data and the distribution of resources. Leaders create and are influenced by the concepts in legislation and this in turn both generates and influences agency commitment to young people in need locally and nationally. Three sets of factors appeared to promote effective inter-agency working:

1. Commitment from government to act on an issue affecting children's welfare or rights, usually preceded by:
 - Recognition through quantitative evidence that a problem exists
 - The commitment of influential individuals and charitable and professional groups to policy making which asserts equal opportunities and children's rights
2. Protocols which encourage active co-operative working methods:
 - Inter-agency co-ordinating structures, supported by legislation, for example, the Scottish children's hearing, the multi-professional assessment of children with special educational needs, the child protection panel and Joint Consultative Committees
 - Co-ordinating structures within agencies to re-prioritise agency attention and resources towards vulnerable groups who would otherwise be denied their entitlement to services
 - Co-terminous geographical and administrative boundaries of participating agencies.
3. Attention to process when entering any form of inter-agency activity. For example:
 - Understanding that a young person 'falling through the net' of agency provision can be variously described as a young offender, abused, homeless, or looked after, and that compartmentalising young people into these separate groups can be counterproductive, meeting the needs of agencies rather than children
 - Attention to the definition of the terms used by agencies engaging in inter-agency work
 - Opportunities for joint training.

7.1.2 Agencies, professionals and young people

Factors emerging in relation to the active partners in inter-agency work include much of the foregoing but add to or modify them. For example, the commitment of practitioners is just as important as that of senior managers. In some cases recent literature on inter-agency working

has increased the significance of a factor originally noted many years ago, such as the mobilisation of community resources associated with Intermediate Treatment in the 1970's.

The following factors appear significant:

- clarity over the terminology and concepts to be used in a complex agency structure now spanning an increased range of agencies in both private and public sectors
- community based provision for children and young people 'at risk', including that provided in the comprehensive school, offering flexible packages of support
- common practices in relation to legislation, budgets, referrals, procedures, agreed definitions and vocabulary
- opportunities for joint training between the practitioners in different agencies.
- the development of meta-strategy to form inter-agency agencies and develop inter-professional practice so that agencies respond appropriately to the complexity of inter-agency relationships
- training to develop interprofessional competencies as an integral part of initial and continuing professional development
- increased numbers of paraprofessionals, accompanied by fears that this trend could undermine the power and influence of the traditional professions
- the juvenilisation of poverty, promoting ecological perspectives on the conditions in which children and young people live. This has exposed flaws in current policies which compartmentalise young people into different groups
- ecological perspectives on the provision of human services. These draw attention to children 'at risk' among whom those most at risk are those most marginalised. Without inter-agency strategies to integrate case work and programme focused work, individual agencies will continue to be overwhelmed by the crises which develop among those on the margins
- distinguishing between the services provided for families and those provided for children and young people. Until the confusion between these is resolved, the needs and rights of children are unlikely to be addressed effectively. Current confusion about the legal and economic status of adolescents will thus be perpetuated and the rhetoric of equal opportunities threading through political debate of the last thirty years will be severely compromised.

In contrast to the policy focus in government reports and legislation, the literature on agencies and professionals, focuses on action and process. There seems, on the face of it, to be little to

connect those who do, and those who think and plan, and still less to those who are 'done to', the young people themselves. In addition, both professionals and legislators appear to be working historically over time, and within their own professional and personal lives, on a continuum from welfare perspectives emphasising needs, to the perspective of the market, emphasising rights. Meanwhile, fresh challenges are coming from their young clients, severely affected by the reduced quality of life in their communities. Nonetheless, connections are apparent in the overlapping nature of the factors leading policy makers and practitioners to an increased interest in inter-agency working. Inter-agency projects, in which doers and planners combine their efforts, produce useful insights and a further gloss on the factors identified so far.

7.2 Evidence from the case study

7.2.0 Introduction

In the five years of its life, the inter-agency project described in the case study exposed the interplay of structure and process in all aspects of the work of agencies and practitioners. The project was complex and the evidence from it is equally so. Some aspects are discussed in this chapter and others are discussed in the contexts provided by the next three chapters.

7.2.1 Expectations of the project

There were four main players involved with the project, each with different expectations of it. Firstly was the funding body for whom process issues were fundamental. Any outcome which would expose these and increase understanding of the factors leading to improvements in inter-agency co-operation would be valued. Secondly, was the majority of the project's steering group for whom success locally would be seen in terms of a co-ordinating group up and running within the time scale of the project. Thirdly, were the agencies involved with the project. Among these opinion ranged from those who knew little of the project's objectives, those who saw its potential for improved co-operation and practice, and those who shared its objectives for the setting up of a co-ordinating structure. There were also those who simply made use of the additional, temporary resource without much regard for its provenance.

There was a minority, who, while sharing the project's lesser objective of improving inter-agency co-operation through increased understanding of inter-agency processes, disapproved of the idea of an inter-agency co-ordinating structure. These were reasoned objections. They concerned professional matters such as confidentiality and financial concerns about, for example, possible job losses should agency resources be diverted to fund an inter-agency

initiative. There were also concerns about the wisdom of setting up another agency on the grounds that this would increase problems of communication and thereby increase, rather than reduce, the risk of young people falling through the net.

A further group were the elected members of the county council, concerned with value for money from their employees and their accountability to the electorate for the welfare of children and young people. For them, the costs to the community incurred by, for example, young offenders, or young people in secure accommodation, or looked after, were important. Any initiative which would avoid the costs incurred by failure to co-operate would be regarded as good value.

7.2.2 Success criteria and outcomes

Success criteria for the project were therefore set at two levels. Success at the first level would be found in evidence of improved understanding among the agencies locally, and through the project's findings. This first, lesser, objective was largely achieved. In addition the project was able to:

- present an analysis of the problems faced by the agencies as well as the problems faced by the young people and their families (Chapter 6)
- identify the main characteristics shared by effective inter-agency projects (Chapter 8).

The project's main conclusion confirmed the view originally held by the majority of its steering group. This was that formal structures promoting inter-agency collaboration would encourage agencies to innovate and to provide a fully co-ordinated service for young people needing more support than can be provided by any one of them. Success at the second level was, therefore, to gain agency approval for, and to set up, an inter-agency co-ordinating structure. Although this was not achieved, there were some unexpected positive outcomes in terms of insights gained. Failure in the short term was attributed to:

- The decision not to apply to charities for independent core funding. The project had operated without funding for two years and had been supported by a charitable body for a further two years. It was agreed that responsibility for implementation of the project's findings should rest with the agencies who had set it up in the first place
- Severe financial constraints placed on all the agencies involved as a result of government policy. This meant that:
 - a) the agencies found it difficult to fund the co-ordinating structure

b) those who did not support the recommendations could (as was suggested in the project's evaluation) use 'resource constraints to divert consideration of more substantive issues' (Armstrong and Moon, 1993)

- Lack of support from education, among whom were two groups of practitioners and middle managers (education social workers and youth workers) who could, with some justification, feel threatened by the prospect of a team of inter-agency workers, involved in very similar work to their own.

These reasons shed light on three areas of potential difficulty affecting inter-agency relationships. These are agency responsibility and priorities, professional interests, and the presence or absence of joint funding mechanisms. Coping with these highlights, in turn, the risk element inherent in much inter-agency endeavour. Inter-agency work is still in its infancy, lacking a unifying theory through which to build greater understanding of its potential and variety. To engage with it is to engage with an enterprise which is risky because it is new. On this account it is hard to evaluate. It is also inherently risky, since it involves work with the most complex issues and difficult individual cases (Bines, 1995).

The availability of funding can, though need not, cut across these issues in a frustrating way. When times are good, the tension between crisis management of the most complex cases and provision of a basic service is low. The incentive to initiate inter-agency work is correspondingly low. When times are hard agencies tend to become constrained to the point that they can barely maintain a basic service. Tension then rises to breaking point. In this situation, agencies are less willing to engage in new enterprises even where this might reduce the tension. Thus either way, the potential of inter-agency work to maximise existing resources and improve services whatever the financial circumstances, is not explored. To overcome this dilemma, inter-agency projects have a choice. They have either to continue their dependence on independent funding and run the risk of further marginalising clients already marginalised by agency failure to co-operate, or explore other ways of achieving the learning experience they provide.

The final outcome was first, that at the request of elected members of the county council, an officer/ member working party was set up to devise a youth strategy for the county which later contributed to its Children's Services' Plan. Secondly, the co-ordinating structure devised by the project was adapted as a training tool.

7.2.3 Developing a co-ordinating structure

The co-ordinating structure developed in the case study (Figs. 2a and b, pp.164-165) could, in principle, be applied in any situation requiring the integration of preventative (upstream) work and (downstream) case work. In this study it is argued that successful integration of upstream and downstream work depends on the existence of collaborative activity at three different levels in and between agencies. These levels are concerned with:

- strategy and policy making (senior management)
- implementation and case work (middle managers and face to face practitioners)
- networking (everyone with an interest in the client group)

As a training tool the model helps individuals or groups to identify the current structures within which they operate and to locate themselves in that structure. They may next identify which elements of the model exist already in a locality and which need to be developed. The model is useful when:

- an individual, group, agency or agencies begin to plan activity to improve practice in relation to an identified target group
- explaining the importance of a structured approach to inter-agency co-operation
- demonstrating the significance of every person involved with the target group.

The model benefits front-line workers by giving them an opportunity to voice their opinions, to see that their experience is valued and that they can influence policy making and its successful implementation. They can also appreciate the significance of their role and their potential influence on other parts of the system. For clients, their immediate, often rapidly changing needs are met as well as their long term needs. For policy makers, the model improves their ability to identify and prioritise training needs, areas requiring further research and development, gaps in provision and areas currently over resourced. The model also creates the communication channels through which they receive feedback.

Thus the three tier structure provides a coherent whole through which information sharing, case management, programme development, research, training and policy making can all be co-ordinated in a manner which guarantees that client needs can be addressed independently of those of the professionals and agencies. Agency and client difficulties are given parity of concern and professionals in difficulties are not compromised. The model, is, however, not fully effective if any element is missing or weak, or if the local community lacks commitment to

the client group. A model working successfully would expect to see the support team reduce over time to be replaced by an inter-agency co-ordinating panel.

7.3 The case study: evaluated in the light of the literature review

The case study attempted, by making process visible, to find out what was meant by 'difficult' in an endeavour generally regarded as desirable. Evidence from this source supports and enlarges upon the factors which emerged from the literature, showing how they operate in real life over a period of time. In the case study the interchanges taking place at the boundary between agencies, and in the equally important space between them, are exposed. The literature reviewed in this chapter supplements this by suggesting theories to explain the behaviour and attitudes of professionals as they move across and between boundaries. The findings from the case study also reflect the broad division, noted in the literature, between structure and process and the way in which these interact with the generic issues also identified in the literature concerning strategy, legislation, professional practice and financial arrangements.

Issues arising from the work with young people centred on their need for a holistic service, to be aware of their rights, to experience the assertion of these rights in the communities in which they lived, to be consulted and to have their wishes and feelings taken into account. Young people looked, in short, for commitment, advocacy and respect from the professionals and agencies with whom they had contact. The simplicity of their needs thus contrasts starkly with the complexity of the concerns of the professionals.

The four groups of agency problems derived from interviews with practitioners during the course of the inter-agency research project will be used as starting points for discussion. These correspond closely with similar sets of problems noted by other researchers, for example, Mapstone (1983), and Lacey and Lomas (1993).

7.3.1 Conflicting legislation

The evidence of the literature and the case study revealed the significance of the missed opportunity provided by the 1989 Children Act to agree on common definitions of need with the relevant agencies. Thus agencies defined 'need' in different ways and had different statutory responsibilities towards children. This caused particular difficulties for young people, still minors, once they reached the age of 16. The requirement stated in the 1989 Children Act (Section 1), that 'the child's welfare should be the court's paramount consideration' and that a court 'shall have regard in particular to the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child' was disregarded in education legislation, for example, the 1993 Education Act. Even in the 1994

Code of Practice on Special Educational Needs this requirement comes a poor second to the regard the Code expresses for the wishes of parents. Child impact statements, proposed in the late eighties, attached to legislation seemed to have been less than effective (Freeman, 1987) and these still have to be called for rather than legislated for (Cohen and Long, 1998). As recently as 1994, Parsons et al. in their report on excluded primary school children conclude that, 'The law as it stands at present is inadequate to protect the educational rights of behaviourally difficult children who come to be excluded from school' (1994, p.50).

This is all the more frustrating in that some aspects of past legislation, such as the 1969 Children and Young Person's Act, the 1973 National Health Service Re-organisation Act and the 1981 Education Act, had been enabling. Legislation has always been regarded as a key factor in either hindering or supporting inter-agency co-operation. The stumbling block however was the failure to legislate across government department boundaries to provide the framework to support the joint financial arrangements necessary to resource inter-agency collaboration. Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs) could, indeed, have provided this service more widely had they been encouraged to be more consistently effective. The political pressure needed to promote them was, however, lacking through the Tory years and must be regarded as a key factor in the struggle to provide inter-agency support in local communities. The prevailing philosophy of the late eighties and early nineties that there is 'no such thing as society, only individuals', while arousing fierce opposition, was not a climate conducive to collaboration among financially hard pressed agencies. Lack of legislation, combined with lack of interest from legislators in inter-agency collaboration left a political vacuum which became rapidly filled with inter-agency activity and action research supported by the voluntary sector.

7.3.2 Strategic and operational arrangements

The three tier co-ordinating structure seemed, to the inter-agency project, to be appropriate as a means of overcoming some of the problems faced by agencies and their clients. In the Elmore version of the model, the middle tier, that is, the support team, was regarded as the key element. Practitioners with appropriate professional skills were either seconded, or employed in their own right to combine their expertise in the team and to assess and case manage those with complex and multiple needs. This usually involved some 'network broking' around the agencies, either to return the client to the appropriate agency, or to identify elements in a flexible package of support which combined the resources of a number of agencies. This was a task for a small team of practitioners led by a co-ordinator supervised by, in the Elmore model, a local, voluntary sector management group.

In the mid to late eighties, the upper tier, the policy or strategy making element in the Elmore model, was shadowy. For the inter-agency project for young people in difficulty however, it came to assume a significance, particularly in the hierarchical system in which the agencies operated, not fully appreciated until the project was in its final stages. At this point the lack of unity among senior managers was a key factor in the decision not to fund its continuation. It became apparent to the project's steering group that it had been overconfident of senior managers' willingness to collaborate. If the youth support team was to depend on agency funding it was essential that agencies support it. If, on the other hand, it continued to be funded independently, agency purpose in relation to the most vulnerable young people would be compromised.

Perhaps it is not entirely coincidence that, unknown to the project, at about the time when proposals to fund a youth support team in Oxfordshire were being made, the significance of a policy making element in inter-agency co-operation was being recognised by researchers. To use Huxham and Macdonald's (1992) terminology, the policy making element at senior management level was needed because at no other level could 'meta-strategy' be devised to ensure the 'collaborative advantage' which the inter-agency youth support team sought to achieve.

At the time of the policy seminar (1993) however, no such rationale for the project's three tier model existed locally among policy makers and practitioners. Enormous problems were caused by the failure of all participants to understand this. Furthermore these problems did not emerge in the open until the question of financial support for the project was raised. Then it became obvious that innovative projects are unlikely to be tolerated unless they have financial independence. Only if they succeed in changing organisational structures and practitioner attitudes will toleration extend to financial support.

7.3.3 Professional practice

The evidence of the literature review suggests that the thirty year period it covers was also a period of increasing interest in the application of psychological theory and general systems theory to organisations of all kinds and to human relationships in the work place. Thomas (1992) points out that 'much of traditional research into groups and teams was framed at a time when people fitted into institutions, rather than institutions adapting to their personnel' (p.62). This, he suggests, implies a greater willingness on the part of the institution as a whole to changes which reflect 'negotiations among participants in complex networks and has to be

reflected in appropriate methods of enquiry, methods which explore the very richness and complexity which [previous] experimental-analytic method would, on its own, attempt to simplify' (ibid., p. 63).

The purpose of the inter-agency project, with the research officer acting as a probe, or scout, was to explore, and fully participate in these negotiations at the interface between agencies. It transpired that what was required there, apart from credibility as a fellow professional, were interpersonal skills, and, what would now be more readily recognised, and with less hostility, as inter-professional skills. What are these? Can they be broken down into recognisable abilities which can then be specifically written down in for example, a job description? The literature suggests a strong association between effective inter-professional/ inter-agency skills and interpersonal skills.

Developments in social psychology and systemic work with organisations help to explain some of the difficulties experienced by practitioners in their relationships with colleagues in their own and other agencies. Attribution theory for example, suggests a division of the agency problems identified in this study between situation and dispositional attributions. Trying to understand how practitioners construed the problems they identified was important to the success of the project as a whole, and made it easier to distinguish between successful and less successful outcomes. Similarly discursive psychology offers useful techniques for analysing motives, beliefs and decision making processes (Carbaugh, 1995).

The difficulty, for a group of middle management practitioners anxious to change outcomes for their clients, was in making judgements about which parts of the organisations to work on and where negotiation could most effectively take place. Theoretical frameworks are required in order to make sense of the data being assembled and, as the case study showed, a number of perspectives and ways of construing have been uncovered among practitioners and researchers in this field. According to Campbell, Coldicott and Kinsella (1994):

1. *when people think systemically, they are able to understand better the effects of connectedness in organizations, and account more effectively for the dilemmas and tensions that arise during change;*
2. *when people understand and accept how they collectively create and maintain a mental picture of the organization and its problems they are able to alter and renegotiate these understandings and find new ways of solving their problems. (p.2)*

To 'think systemically', let alone facilitate this ability in others, implies a high level of interpersonal skills: flexibility and sensitivity of mind and willingness to change and adapt, even under pressure and when stressed. It takes some skill for example, to help a team or individual reframe problems in ways which admit of change and solution. Campbell, Draper and Huffington imply as much:

We believe that organizations change when people's perception of beliefs and behaviour changes. Our understanding of the organization allows us to have conversations which lead people to make that change... As we share our observations we come to an understanding of the meaning these beliefs and relationships have for the larger organization. Through this process, beliefs and relationships are seen in different way and alternative actions can be devised. (1989, p.2)

Thus change, unless brought about by natural disaster, legislation or some other factor beyond normal human control requires motivation and interpersonal skills either to adapt to the inevitable or to initiate change.

The literature on inter-agency working in human services provision relating to children and young people, corroborated by work on inter-organisational collaboration in the world of business management, suggests that inter- and intra-personal skills do, in fact, form the core of interprofessional competencies. This is reflected in the case study finding that when conflicts arise between agencies, these are then attributed to personalities rather than to the lack of structures to support and validate collaboration (Roaf and Lloyd, 1995). In addition, the combination of evidence from the case study and literature suggests that if personalities and emotions are such that they need structures to contain them, then they must indeed be matters for serious concern, resulting in dysfunctional professional and agency behaviour. In other words, structure and process are inextricably linked and the 'connecting tissue', so to speak, is to be found in the inter-personal skills of professionals. This seems to be the case, in the current state of understanding of how the conflict between the professionals' and the clients' need of 'agency' can be resolved. Can any organisational framework pull these warring factions together? What, to introduce another metaphor into an already metaphor laden thesis, will de-personalise this and play the part structurally, of the pedals between the two wheels of the inter-agency bicycle? Let us go back a step to consider this.

In the early nineties, practitioners could not easily deal openly with the frustration caused by interpersonal difficulties. Although there was a developing literature on interpersonal behaviour and the emotions, this would not have been easily accessible to practitioners unless they were undertaking post experience training. Thomas (1992), for example, sees the introduction into

classrooms in the late eighties, of adults other than teachers, as a response to the introduction of increasing numbers of children with special needs, previously marginalised in special schools, into mainstream classrooms. The classroom co-operation then required to meet their needs had not previously been evaluated. Thus his book devotes considerable attention to the importance of interpersonal relationships in the microcosm of the classroom, between teachers and their aides such as support teachers, parents and support assistants. Thomas suggests that there are 'mismatches or tensions which impede the effectiveness of teams', and that these may be 'managerial, interpersonal, ideological, definitional, practical or personal' (p. 53). He draws on construct theory and attribution theory in his analysis of what helps these new classroom collaborative arrangements succeed.

Training for interagency or interdisciplinary work of any kind, however, still only rarely features in initial professional qualification courses (Hornby, 1994; Lloyd, 1998).

Interprofessional skills have not therefore, been an easy area to discuss, and ground rules based on coherent theory have yet to develop. In the case study, steering group members had to make up their own guidelines for what would be regarded as good inter-agency behaviour and this was not easy to adhere to. Literature coming out in the mid-nineties, discussed in Chapter 3, is only recently considering the question of interprofessional competencies, acknowledging that interpersonal skills are a core skill and can be taught.

A recent guide for the development of partnership in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, considers that 'Interpersonal skills are the secret weapon of a successful partnership management process' (Wilson and Charlton, 1997, p.49) and

One cannot ignore the importance of interpersonal skills in any management process. These are skills which can be taught and can be acquired... But skills cannot be bolted on where there is no willingness to be open about one's own position or to the different views of others. (ibid. p.50)

Some light is shed on the nature of these skills by Huffington and Brunning (1994) in their edition of essays by 'internal consultants' in the public sector. Internal consultancy is described as being increasingly used as a means of bringing about change, partly because it is cheaper, but chiefly because the internal consultant 'is more knowledgeable about the system, more aware of local particularities' (Foreword). Furthermore, internal consultants:

are part of the system they observe, which also experiences them... Those who truly understand their system dynamics use not their own power but the force-fields in the system itself. The idea is to use minimalist interventions to achieve optimal results. It is this that vindicates the skill of the system dynamicist. (ibid. Foreword)

In playing this role, 'a consultant enters into a relationship with a client - whether an individual, group or an organization - about a work related issue broader than the management of an individual case' (p. 2).

Thus behind Fenichel and Eggbeer's (1990) aphoristic description of the skills required for inter-professional and inter-agency working as 'the ability to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons', lies many years' work in widely separated disciplines which have still to connect at practitioner level. Knapp's work (1994), for example, lacks the insights to be gained from social psychology and systems theory and the more detailed analysis from the latter is required of the interpersonal skills practitioners need in a range of specific contexts. Thus concepts such as 'interpersonal' or 'interprofessional' skills require continued attention from social and organisational psychologists before they can become fully integrated into the accepted behaviour and language of local organisations and communities.

Campbell, Coldicott and Kinsella (1994) however, counsel against an over simplistic approach to 'core competencies'. In connection with management skills they find the components of such skills to be more generally focused on 'doing', for example, negotiating, appraising, with little attention given to 'the contextual or relational aspects of these skills' (p.49). In their view 'competencies describe *behaviour in relationships*, not behaviour in isolation. So competencies are mental constructs, things that arise through a process of negotiation and agreement between people' (p.49). They expand this further by seeing:

competencies as constructs linked to theories that attempt to explain reality...constantly subject to revision, as experience is used to search for more useful ways of thinking about, describing, and working with systems...competencies can be seen as reflecting an ideology about management behaviour, invented by a dominant group at a moment in time for practical reasons. So even the constructs of competencies are not something fixed but are products of a process, an evolving attempt to find better theories to guide actions. (ibid. p.50)

Finally, the part played by the client group itself on practitioner attitude to inter-agency work might have escaped attention had two inter-agency groups, sharing similar aims but different client groups, not been operating in the same city. Thus in the case study it was noticeable that a different configuration of agencies were, in spite of some agencies in common, scarcely aware of each other's existence. A number of reasons could explain this. Firstly, informal inter-agency networking tends to develop naturally through shared case work. Secondly, when both groups eventually met, it seemed to them that children attracted more agency loyalty than adult mentally disturbed homeless offenders. Agencies concerned with the latter were more likely to agree to inter-agency work as a means of off-loading 'problems' where children's services

would prefer to hold onto them. These were issues the project had no time to pursue and would be an area for future study in a context which gave priority to the views of the clients.

7.3.4 Financial arrangements

Even where effective local strategies exist, such as Joint Commissioning, these can get easily bogged down in debates about which group of children to prioritise and are not helped by different agency perceptions and definitions of 'need'. Kendrick, Simpson and Mapstone (1996) found that 'even within the same local authority, defensiveness about departmental budgets has created major tensions, particularly in relation to education and social work...joint commissioning and multi-funding of services will be essential...' (p. 30). Other initiatives such as local financial management of schools, had effectively dispersed LEA budgets. LEAs had, as a consequence, lost the ability to vire money from one spending head to another and were also denied access to sometimes large sums held in school balances (Audit Commission, 1993)

Huffington and Brunning (1994) point out that these issues have increased stress levels in the public sector, already high as a result of reduced budgets. They comment that a more tightly managed public sector and the adoption of the purchaser/provider model :

brings with it notions of increased responsiveness to the consumers' needs and service quality. Both concepts concern the creation of feed back loops between consumers and providers of services so as to create the most effective services to meet needs. Local knowledge is highly valued in this culture... Team work and inter-agency co-operation are, however, being stressed to ensure that the services are bought and cost effectiveness is maximised. (p. 10)

Parsons et al. found that 'costing public services, and more particularly child care services, is a relatively recent development' (1994, p.41). His study draws attention to the habit of 'cost shunting' between agencies. Improved liaison and less cost shunting was resting, the study found, on the unsure foundation of good personal relations rather than formalised procedures.

Access to data about costs was not easy to find in the early nineties. Local financial management of schools, combined with the legal duty to publish numbers of pupils excluded and truanting, enabled practitioners to enter a field previously ring fenced either by financial experts in county halls or by service managers, such as head teachers, unwilling to share such information for fear of adverse publicity, and even more unwilling to discuss shared funding. It seemed that this lack of trust could only be overcome through legislation. Among the many negative effects of this type of information being freely available has been the positive one enabling practitioners interested in inter-agency work to use financial arguments in support of

collaboration. Since 1994 these arguments have developed further and are being used to good effect by many researchers and advocates of improved services for children, among which the benefits of inter-agency collaboration features strongly (Holtermann, 1996).

7.4 The co-ordinating structure: evaluated in the light of the literature review

7.4.1 A vehicle for collaboration 'fit for the purpose'

The literature and the case study suggest that factors contributing to successful inter-agency working concern legislative, strategic and operational, professional and financial matters. In every agency these largely structural matters were then found to be subject to agency and practitioner process. Among these factors, what, to paraphrase Glaser (1978) will prove to be the core variable? What factor recurs frequently in the data, links it together and explains much of its variation? Such a factor must also, for the purpose of this study, achieve positive short and long term outcomes for children and young people at risk of falling 'through the net'. Although all the factors make a contribution, only one, the co-ordinating structure, it is proposed here, produces these outcomes and links the other factors. Favourable legislation on its own, for example, is helpful, but has to be implemented in practice, where it tends to be exposed to the vagaries of agency interpretation and process.

The co-ordinating structure outlined in this study therefore requires further scrutiny. For some, it will seem unduly prescriptive. Hambleton et al. (1995) in their study of the collaborative council, suggest in relation to 'getting the right model' that:

There is a whole range of collaborative activities: some of which have been clearly thought out at the beginning and others which have grown in an organic way. It is important that the vehicle of collaboration is fit for the purpose intended. This will require budgets, objectives, roles, structures and process to be clearly defined; occasionally it will require joint arrangements to be time limited. All of this will require clear definition and clarity of purpose.' (p.75)

Hambleton et al. highlight some of the factors which this study suggests contribute to the success of inter-agency practice. A model 'fit for the present purpose' must meet the needs of any client group at risk of falling 'through the net'. Additional proof of 'fitness for purpose' should be that the model can be replicated and transferred to different localities thus demonstrating the universality required to develop an alternative life as a theoretical training tool.

Evidence from the case study suggests that this structure satisfies these criteria. It also shares with other models the characteristic that:

it is not meant to be prescriptive... [it] describes a composite picture drawn from experience... the purpose of the model is to provide a framework for examining the critical success factors that impinge upon the partnership management process. (Wilson and Charlton, 1997, pp.16-17).

This caveat is necessary to counter claims of over prescription in general but also because flexibility and sensitivity to local needs is important in a model designed to meet the needs of a range of clients, practitioners and agencies. Further proof of 'fitness for purpose' is still required however. The literature suggests that this model, geared to definitions of 'through the net' which do not compartmentalise children, may be more successful than others. This is because most co-ordinating models for children at risk are designed for certain subgroups of the wider category of children at risk which, from the evidence of the literature and from practical experience, cannot be compartmentalised. The circumstances of children at risk change too rapidly, their needs are too various and too many agencies are required to provide for them. Although neglecting their needs altogether is an option, on the grounds that these are 'exceptionally exceptional', this is not a strategy that is easily, or publicly sustainable. Even though this appears to be the situation in reality, most agencies and governments would regard this as unethical, happening by default rather than intent. Two elements of the model designed to promote short and long term positive outcomes will be examined next.

'Down stream' case management: the inter-agency panel

Further proof of fitness for purpose is to be found in the evidence of the action research undertaken by the inter-agency project in its final year. This was intended to give participants first hand experience, on a small scale, of what a youth support team could achieve. The panel's job was to co-ordinate the case management of young people identified by agencies or individual schools as having fallen through the net. This was a departure from the more familiar multi-professional assessment undertaken for children with special educational needs in that the only qualification required was evidence that the young person had fallen, or was at risk of, falling through the net. Independent assessors gathered information, in person and used this as the basis for a high quality, detailed and relevant report. Taking the assessor in person to the informants rather than the more usual practice of gathering the information by post was more expensive but produced a more useful report, a practice reminiscent of the Child Guidance movement.

For its members, the inter-agency panel demonstrated the difference between a case meeting and case management. In the former, practitioners from different agencies meet, share information and agree to do a variety of things on their own which they then achieve with varying degrees of success. They may or may not meet to evaluate this. In the latter, the meeting, having discussed the assessor's report, appoints a case manager who is given permission to make whatever arrangements meet the child's needs. Case managers undertake this role with permission to be creative, and knowing who to turn to for support and advice and when to report back to the panel.

Several objectives are met in this model. The child's needs are put first. A management plan and appropriate resources are put together by the person most likely to make and retain personal contact with the young person and to consider his/her wishes and feelings. The key worker is likely to be someone already known to the young person, possibly a youth worker, teacher, or someone from the voluntary sector known to the young person. A case which had seemed impossible to succeed with becomes more manageable and practitioners are encouraged and become more willing to work with difficult cases in the future. This would, according to Huxham's definition, exemplify 'collaborative advantage', since agencies have achieved together 'something unusually creative...that no organization could have produced on its own' (1996, p.241).

There were other benefits. Practitioners from different agencies were brought together with a job they had all agreed, and had given up time, to do. This required mutual tolerance and trust. Panel members could express their opinions freely and learn about other's viewpoints, prejudices and fears. Panel meetings provided a relatively safe place to where ideas could be discussed and challenged. The literature review provides many examples of situations where provision of opportunities to challenge others philosophies, concepts and language have contributed to good practice.

A significant element in the panel's appeal to practitioners was that it allowed them a degree of independence from mainstream agency attitudes and behaviours without compromising their professional standards. Here was an opportunity to meet on neutral territory, with permission to work with young people in ways they considered were professionally appropriate, but would have seemed subversive within the confines of normal agency business. The pressure to conform was removed. They were not asked to make judgements about whether time spent on one young person might have been better spent on preventative work elsewhere. No agency

colleagues reproached them or ridiculed their efforts. This appeared to renew professional confidence and motivation. Agencies and practitioners were as likely, it seemed, to become victims of 'learned helplessness' as their clients. Paradoxically, involvement with an inter-agency initiative appeared to increase, rather than reduce the value of the specialist expertise of professionals. They felt fully capable, in short, of 'doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons'. This was welcomed at a time when morale was low and the sense of agency and professional purpose blunted. For many practitioners in primary care agencies during the early and mid nineties political interference and lack of funding had distorted agency purpose (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995).

Because of the panel's focus on the extremity of young people's needs, panel members gained a clearer picture of the pressures on young people in the locality than they would otherwise have had. This was especially true for teachers and headteachers and generated ideas for training and for future research and preventative work based on a realistic understanding of community needs. In this situation, it was easier to engage with an ecological perspective in a manner which was practicable locally.

Cost highlighted more than any other factor the need for meta-strategy and legislation. The evidence from the literature review is unequivocal on this point, whether from the costs of Care in the Community or from business management. Huxham's experience (1996) for example, suggested that successful collaboration was expensive but that cost should be seen in the context of what advantage could be gained from the collaboration. For legislators there is also the evidence in the literature on school exclusion, that making agencies pay for the 'true' costs of failure to take responsibility for clients who fall 'through the net' can be an effective strategy to improve services. Charging schools for young people they fail to educate at best encourages schools to review their provision to include these children. At worst it enables LEAs to insist that funding follows the pupil. The inter-agency panel operated at a time when these issues were becoming better understood. The implementation of the 1989 Children Act and initial steps towards the development of 'Local Authority Children's Services' Plan followed closely on the introduction to schools of LMS. Momentarily, at any rate, until distorted by loss of funding, agency purpose could be reaffirmed to include those at the margins. There was still however, the tendency to argue too simplistically, in support of inter-agency work, that it would cost less. In the circumstances altruism was not enough. Agencies were not then bearing the cost, financially, of young people through the net, and could not see how working with them

would do other than increase their costs. The cost to professional morale and waste of young people's opportunities seemed less important set against a deficit bank balance.

The panel had therefore, some measure of success and was positively evaluated in terms of improved inter-professional relationships and changed attitudes. Practitioners and clients had both benefited and although the young people selected for assessment and case management had been among the most difficult known to the agencies, pupils had been 'pulled back into the system'. Key workers had been able to put together 'exciting packages', reminiscent of Intermediate Treatment working methods in the seventies. At the end of the six month 'pilot', the panel disbanded because the inter-agency project's funding ended and the agencies had failed to co-operate to find the necessary funds to continue. Nonetheless, the project had acted as a catalyst at a difficult time for agencies financially, even though without it, momentum slackened and agency focus narrowed. Useful practices were, however, carried forward and integrated into normal agency practice thus achieving an important project outcome. These were particularly noted where experience of the panel had encouraged agencies to extend their experience, and hence the remit of their agency.

'Upstream' preventative work: The Network

'The Network' (noun plus definite article) is not given much attention in the literature perhaps because the verb is deceptively simple and used in an ever extending number of contexts. In the case study, however, it emerged as a key element in the inter-agency model explored. It was a 'local' product in that it featured prominently in the development of the Elmore model for 'difficult to place' adults. In some respects, it was the most innovative, and enduring, aspect of the inter-agency project's work, attracting considerable attention among face to face practitioners at conferences, for example at the Rainer Foundation in 1995, or the National Children's Bureau in 1994.

The reasons for this can be inferred from its activities and approach. Its unusual combination of informal formality, and powerful, yet powerless, influence made it a non threatening meeting place for practitioners from any part of any agency hierarchy. At a time when the primary care agencies and children at risk were becoming increasingly dependent on the voluntary sector for services and case management this was especially important. Many voluntary sector workers were employed on short term, part time contracts. Some were new to the area and newly qualified. The Network provided support, encouragement and the opportunity to meet with others working in the same field. Agendas were arranged as issues arose that participants

wanted to discuss and minutes were sent to all participants whether or not they attended. In this way information was shared widely and everyone was included.

Although the agencies in the network are involved with other parts of the system, the network itself has no formal links with any other bodies. The network has no power, it cannot authorise anyone to act, but it does exercise influence. As a whole it has the ability to provide a wide range of information and evidence to support change. The network is self managing but requires authority from senior managers to enable those who want to attend, to do so.

Viewed systemically, however, the idea of an inter-agency network focusing agency attention on a particular client group assumes much greater significance. According to Campbell, Draper and Huffington (1989):

The single most important intervention to enable organizations to manage change productively is to increase awareness of the way feedback is passed through the organization. Feedback is the life blood of any system. In order to work together, people at both the top and bottom of a hierarchical organization must have feedback about their behaviour from other levels of the hierarchy. and in order for a system to remain viable within its environment, feedback must be passed back and forth between the internal organization and the external environment. (p. 12)

Campbell, Coldicott and Kinsella (1994) developing this theme, consider that, 'Complex human systems exist for a purpose, and the purpose creates a context that in turn gives meaning to all of the activity that takes place in that context' (p.15). Thus feedback 'can only be received, or observed, by someone who is looking for feedback' (p.15). This depends on the context in which the observer is placed. The same action for example, can be interpreted to mean different things to different people. In the context of this study, the co-ordinating structure would appear to supply the channels through which feedback on this scale can pass. Without it, those who value feedback are deprived of it and opportunities for others to become involved in it are minimal. Feedback is reduced to the informal, passing between those who share the same beliefs and outlook and get on with each other at a personal level.

Furthermore, the context of an inter-agency network for children and young people 'at risk', is frequently that of agency case management. Individual cases are never, for reasons of confidentiality, discussed at network meetings, but the issues arising from case work are. Since individual agency practitioners do not, by definition, manage cases that have fallen 'through the net', they are unable to provide feedback about these young people's situation to their policy making senior managers. Nor are they able to share experience of the successful inter-agency

case management of such children. Thus the only feedback circulating is negative, a story of professional and agency incapacity and failure. In the co-ordinating model suggested, the support team provides the opportunity for positive feedback and the opportunity to change beliefs and behaviour. These positive changes in attitude arising out of successful practice can then be discussed in the Network. However, this virtuous circle is incomplete, as the case study demonstrates, without the existence of a meta-strategy designed by policy makers, taking into account the feedback received from other parts of the system.

7.5 Conclusions

Current literature supports ecological perspectives on the socio-economic, political and environmental problems, which have increased the numbers of children and young people estimated to be 'at risk', and new approaches to children's services aimed at reducing poverty and economic inequalities among children. The literature and case study provide evidence that this new approach should be coupled with positive action in terms of individual case management. Furthermore case management requires flexible, long term provision from a number of providers. Gaps in provision have to be made good, if necessary by reprioritising existing resources. Key workers of exceptional skill and dedication are required and need personal support, training and skilled management, from professionals trained to work across agency boundaries and with up to date knowledge of legislation, concepts, terminology and techniques. New difficulties and needs experienced by young people are continually being identified and research is required into these. The development of the three tier model was motivated by the view that unless agency difficulties could be resolved, children's needs would continue to be met in a manner which was unreliable, wasteful of energy and damaging to everyone. The test of a successful model was that it should work for those who challenged the agencies most, namely those who currently fall through the net. The tripartite pattern of the model separates the qualitatively different though interlocked activities of policy and planning, implementation and networking. The structure protects each from the constraints and modes of operation of the others but at the same time creates communication lines between them. Inter-agency activity appropriate to each level can then be co-ordinated, communicated quickly and outcomes monitored and evaluated. The measure of the structure's success is that it helps agencies retain children within their support network and restores to it those that fall through. This suggests that the ability to integrate prevention and cure, upstream and downstream characterises effective models 'fit for the purpose'. The model presented here appears to achieve this and is put forward as the core variable, occurring frequently in the data, linking it and explaining its variation.

The insights gained from the combination of literature and case study demonstrate that an inter-agency co-ordinating structure connecting strategy makers, case managers and networkers provides the best hope of meeting the needs of children and young people at risk of falling 'through the net'. Such a structure appears to benefit both agencies and their clients. Additionally, a community co-ordinating structure of this type can adopt the ecological perspective required to prevent children falling 'through the net' and reduce the total number deemed to be 'at risk'. In the remaining chapters of this study, this thesis is further examined in three different contexts.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Inter-agency Projects for Children and Young People 'at risk'

8.0 Introduction

Throughout the life of the inter-agency project, similar models in practice elsewhere were sought as exemplars of what was being proposed locally in Oxford. In studying them, the project was keen to identify characteristics of good practice they held in common, and the key elements of their organisational structure. In the late eighties Gill and Pickles (1989) considered that 'collaborative practice with young people in trouble is much advocated yet rarely practised' (Introduction). This situation did not greatly change during the life of the project although inter-agency work was gathering momentum, encouraged by pressure group activity and the implementation of the 1989 Children Act.

Inter-agency activity tends to focus on categories such as young offenders, homelessness, looked after or truants. Currently undergoing evaluation, for example, are two hundred projects begun in the mid nineties and funded by DfEE Grants for Education Support and Training (Hallam et al, in press). These focus on school attendance, discipline and exclusion. In a recent publication listing community programmes for young and juvenile offenders, over two hundred programmes are recorded for this category alone, of which only a few are concerned with young people 'at risk' (Martin, 1997). Thus, the focus continues to be on local needs identified by the agency rather than the young person, and attention is rarely directed towards children as a whole. For the purpose of this study, projects contemporaneous with the case study and resembling it in clientele have been selected for comparison. These are presented in Table 2 (p. 195).

8.1 Inter-agency projects

8.1.1 Mobile Action Resource Service Project (MARS)

The project arose from concerns expressed by middle managers in Tayside social work and educational departments and the health board, that some children seemed to 'proceed quickly through these services only to end up being removed from their families and /or schools' (Gulaboff, 1989, p.31). The project offered:

direct work with children and families and a consultancy service to local professionals based on a comprehensive analysis of the child's situation, the perceptions held by key parties knowledge of the range of services involved. Emphasis is on clarifying short- and long-term objectives and securing the commitment of other professionals to these. (p.30.)

Table 2

Inter-agency Projects: Comparison

Project	MARS	Surrey Youth Link	Mid Glamorgan	Exeter Youth Support Team
Background	Established (Dundee) 1983 with central government funding, later local agencies and Barnado's.	Established 1986 with central government funding. Surrey County Council after 1992.	Established 1989	Established in 1979 with an Urban Aid Grant
Aim	Offer alternatives to young people in danger of being removed from their communities.	To promote greater social awareness amongst disaffected or difficult pupils through an inter-disciplinary approach which aims to avoid labelling young people. To maintain young people within school. Strengthen existing links between schools and other or to create these where they do not already exist	To address problems of crime, alcohol and substance abuse in relation to the health and life styles of young people and to gain insights into young people's views on these issues. Simple exploratory and descriptive investigation to raise questions about the development for service delivery and practice.	To divert juvenile offenders from the Criminal Justice System and the courts.
Clientele	High-risk children and their families e.g. adolescent boys out of school, adolescents rejected by residential establishments, children under ten who still had school difficulties but are 'also being poorly parented', children and young people sexually abused.	'Disaffected', 'difficult' or 'disruptive' young people.	Secondary school students	Potential and actual juvenile offenders, recognising that the majority of young people who come to the attention of the Team will, in time, become responsible members of society
Inter-Agency Organisation	Explicitly inter-agency team. Five practitioners from a range of agencies. Supported by a management group funded by local agencies and Barnardo's. Procedural and policy framework for collaboration to support practitioners and ensure improvements are implemented.	Multi-disciplinary team based in Education. Complex inter-agency management, referral and meetings structure.	Three multi-agency committees and a multi-agency Survey Steering Committee. Survey undertaken by the County Social Crime Prevention Unit Co-ordinator.	Team located in premises independent of the three parent agencies (Police, Social Services & Probation). Composed of nine practitioners with administration assistance. The liaison structure of twice weekly meetings.
Points of Comparison	<p><i>Referrals and Assessment</i></p> <p>Referrals from education (headteachers, educational social workers or educational psychologists) or social work. Assessor undertakes the information gathering task personally.</p> <p><i>Work to support other professionals</i></p> <p>Team works closely with other professionals involved with the child in order to negotiate common objectives. Goals are identified, discussed, prioritised. Roles and tasks are assigned. Face to face meetings with relevant people.</p> <p><i>Feedback and Networking</i></p> <p>Feedback essential, if time consuming, to help professionals change their responses, attitudes, keep up to date and moving in the same direction.</p>	<p><i>Referrals and Assessment</i></p> <p>Referrals made to Locality Teams from various sources including parents and self referral by the young people</p> <p><i>Work to support other professionals</i></p> <p>Enables professionals to develop their individual skills and enhance personal growth by working with other disciplines and using different tactics and strategies</p> <p><i>Feedback and Networking</i></p> <p>Through the meetings structure and project organisation. Includes young people. Positive feedback about young people's success encouraged at all points.</p>	<p><i>Referrals and Assessment</i></p> <p>Whole age group involved. No desire to prove or disprove any particular theory.</p> <p><i>Work to support other professionals</i></p> <p>The findings provide useful information for service providers and shed light on issues of current interest to them.</p> <p><i>Feedback and Networking</i></p> <p>A common base line of information was achieved via the report.</p>	<p><i>Referrals and Assessment</i></p> <p>Majority of referrals to the Community Assessment Unit are offence based. Others from those seen to be 'at risk'. Information gathering, assessment and decision making is a joint process involving all relevant agencies. Strong emphasis on minimum intervention because of the dangers of labelling youngsters.</p> <p><i>Work to support other professionals</i></p> <p>Team based school liaison officers link with specific schools. Team associated with a large number of initiatives. Involves discussions about crime prevention work and attitude change.</p> <p><i>Feedback and Networking</i></p> <p>The Youth Support Team promotes feedback to all the agencies concerning the problems and progress of young people in the community. No formal network but the team take every opportunity to take part in local debates in other fora.</p>

The project's objectives were:

1. *To provide individualised programmes ...to divert them from inappropriate residential care or removal from their community school or home.*
2. *To develop and promote working methods which*
 - a) *enable children and their families to remain together*
 - b) *facilitate children being cared for in the least institutionalised environment.*
3. *To challenge the process of labelling which tends to restrict the number of options available and identify the difficulties that arise between the agencies who do not share the same professional approaches, perspectives and recommendations.*
4. *To work alongside referring agencies in a sharing consultative role, with the purpose of jointly developing the best standards of practice.*
5. *To indicate to agencies how policy changes might promote the development of additional options, even within existing resources. (p.30)*

The rationale for a multi-agency approach arose from a fear that 'the structure of our child welfare system may in itself generate fragmentation of a child's physical, emotional and social needs' (p.35). Experience showed that different agencies serving different needs did not necessarily take account of the inter-related nature of all the child's problems. Instead, the project held that, 'Even when several agencies are involved, proper co-ordination and trust between agencies can overcome the dangers of fragmenting the services to the child and prevent any subsequent fragmentation of the child's personal life' (p.35).

MARS defined the child's problems initially in terms of each agency's objectives, and then in terms of the failure of other agencies.

This can lead to an escalation in the definition of the problem. If a particular service is available only in extreme circumstances, the child's problems may be defined as extreme by other agencies simply in order to gain access - but the extreme label sticks on the child thereafter. (p.36)

Assessment closely resembled that carried out by the independent assessor in the case study's inter-agency panel. The assessor undertook the information gathering task personally, 'to develop a clear picture of the work that has been done and of the different perspectives of the family and other agencies' (p.32). Significantly, at this stage, they began

to identify inter-agency obstacles and misunderstandings which may have inadvertently hindered previous plans. We deliberately seek out what degree of commitment still exists to help the child. We interpret in a positive way what the other agencies tried to do and what were the constraints on them. We want to understand what changes they seek in the child's attitude or behaviour, no matter how trivial this seems. (p.32)

In its work with other professionals the team could identify, discuss and prioritise goals and assign tasks. 'Face to face meetings take place with relevant people. Then the work begins' (p.33). Although an inter-agency training role other than consultancy for professionals working across agency boundaries did not seem to be part of the project's brief, support for the professionals working with young people was regarded as important. In this context, MARS experienced the familiar catalogue of obstacles to effective inter-agency work, principally lack of time to meet with colleagues in other agencies and ignorance of other's roles and responsibilities. This led 'to damaging stereotypes and the creation of a vicious circle of self fulfilling prophecies about the perceived intransigence of other agencies' (p. 36).

The team's belief was that for children to improve, the professionals 'must also variously change their responses' (p.33). Feedback, 'even seemingly insignificant information' (p.35), but especially to note successes, was essential, if time consuming, in helping to achieve this. Team workers monitored progress carefully so that they could provide regular feedback to keep all professionals up to date and moving in the same direction. 'It is essential in this way to maintain the commitment of a multi-disciplinary team, especially when they are based in their own agencies' (p.35). Plans made for the young people required 'a series of linked interventions and need careful and reliable co-ordination if they are to succeed. Separate tasks and objectives become more potent than just the sum of the parts, when linked across a network of people' (p.33). Change, they observed, in any part of the network, including the children and their families, needed to be reflected by changed responses elsewhere in the network.

8.1.2 Surrey Youth Link (Appendix W)

Surrey Youth Link, in addition to strengthening existing links between schools and other agencies and creating new ones, sought to develop school based projects for pupils outside normal school hours. Other projects to reduce vandalism in schools, to involve parents, the youth service and to promote social responsibility through curriculum development were also encouraged. In 1992, after the withdrawal of central government funding, Surrey County Council continued to support the project but expected it to extend multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working and to support the Youth Link model in more schools. Joint funding with other agencies, particularly Social Services and the Police and the establishment of a clear management support structure were also priorities.

The benefits of the model were considered to be that it 'identifies positive ways of helping disaffected pupils' to improve motivation, self esteem and self discipline, 'as opposed to

options that increase alienation' (Surrey County Council, 1992, p. 2). The model was also designed to improve relationships between the student, family and school. The extra-curricular activities were designed for everyone 'but based on the targeted young people's needs, so that the influence of their peers on the young people is more effective' (p.2). Practitioners involved with the project reported that it helped them to appreciate the different professional roles played in relation to young people. It encouraged professionals such as Education Psychologists and Education Social Workers to work in a different way in schools and to view young people targeted by the project in a more positive light.

Youth Link is managed by the youth service with the involvement of headteachers and the support of whole school staff. Its committee structure consists of:

- a county steering group (oversight of strategy and revenue)
- a Youth Link staff team 'to share good practice, discuss ideas or issues, monitor and evaluate the whole process and, when required, implement decisions made by the Steering Group' (p.3)
- Locality teams. These meet weekly to monitor the progress of targeted pupils, take referrals to the project, make decisions about the welfare of young people and liaise with school staff and other agencies as appropriate. Locality teams are described as 'the pivot of the model' and are composed of a teacher/co-ordinator, youth worker, education welfare officer and educational psychologist. It was regarded as important to identify from each discipline, 'the right person with appropriate skills' (p.6). Young people are referred, or self refer, to the team who then decide whether it can help and accesses other agencies for assistance as appropriate
- Area Support groups. These meet termly with all agencies invited to share concerns about individual young people. 'It increases mutual understanding of their respective roles and gives greater attention to the resources available' (p.3).

Although feedback and networking are not emphasised strongly in project documentation, the meetings structure and project organisation allow these activities to take place. Schools, in addition, are expected to provide meeting places for the Locality Teams as suitable for young people as for practitioners and visitors. It is also regarded as important that 'the staff are kept constantly informed of the effectiveness of Youth Link through regular briefing sessions' (p.6). As with MARS, positive feedback about the success of young people previously regarded as 'difficult' was encouraged at all points.

8.1.3 Exeter Youth Support Team (Appendix X)

The Exeter Youth Support Team's objective to divert juvenile offenders from the Criminal Justice System and the courts is achieved through the development of policies to prevent juvenile crime and to support a range of community based initiatives such as Intermediate Treatment programmes. The team's philosophy is based on the belief that no one agency has exclusive knowledge, skills or experience in dealing with juvenile delinquency. Agencies might provide a more effective and consistent response to this were they to work together with shared aims and objectives. 'By having a focal point to which matters relating to juveniles can be referred, a co-ordinated response reflecting trends should emerge. This should enhance the policies of all the agencies involved... In relation to policy development, it is important that decision making and working methods be based on research, rather than opinion or Agency prejudice' (Exeter YST, 1992, p. 2). In the team's experience juvenile crime is mainly minor and transient, court appearances tend to be followed by increases in delinquent activities, with all forms of intervention having a limited impact on offending behaviour. The team observed that this is particularly true of custodial sentences and that it was difficult to predict who will become delinquent. Thus the team were keen to maintain a broad perspective on the difficulties faced by young people and to support some services that are not exclusively reserved for offenders such as work with girls and young women, and young people 'at risk' through housing difficulties. Feedback to all the agencies concerning the problems and progress of young people in the community seems to have achieved collaborative advantage in what the Team describes as 'the development of trust, co-operation and professional respect. This generates confidence in risk taking and in developing alternatives to prosecution, it also fosters credibility for the responses developed' (p.17). As a result, issues relating to crime prevention are discussed rather than individual cases. Developments such as the Community Assessment Group 'encourage the community to take responsibility for its youngsters in trouble, directly involving schools, families and other networks' (p.17).

Drawbacks of the model are thought to arise from 'the sophistication of services and the availability of resources' (p.17). Children can get drawn into these and become labelled. In addition, 'an inter-agency team could be accused of collusion' (p.17). To counter this the Team stressed the importance of clear roles, responsibilities and duties along agency lines which provide demarcation. While working to common aims and objectives, our individual perspectives inevitably differ, allowing for discussion and inter-professional debates' (p.18).

8.1.4 Mid Glamorgan Multi-agency and Multi-disciplinary Partnership Project

This project was set up to address what would now be regarded as a 'wicked issue', that is, an intractable problem recognised as being too complex for any one agency or organisation to deal with in isolation, in this case, crime, alcohol and substance abuse. National and local surveys during the eighties showed that 'Mid Glamorgan is one of the poorest and most deprived areas in Britain' with high levels of unemployment, poor housing, high death rates and proportion of residents off sick (Mid Glamorgan Social Crime Prevention Unit, c.1992, p.7). There was particular concern, in relation to health, about the life styles of young people in the county. To tackle these problems, three multi-agency committees were formed to develop a common baseline of information. Simple pooling of existing agency data was not possible because data was either insufficient or incompatible or inappropriate. The project carried out a survey of over 13,000 young people at school in Mid Glamorgan 'to improve mutual understanding of young people and together develop policies, resources and services which are appropriate and responsive to the needs of young people in Mid Glamorgan during the 1990's' (p.2). A Multi-agency Survey Steering Committee 'provided a pool of expert information, or access to information, from every profession, discipline and agency in Mid Glamorgan' (p.9). The planning, co-ordination and action in connection with the survey was undertaken by the County Social Crime Prevention Unit Co-ordinator. Fifty-eight percent of all school attenders aged 13-18 years in 42 schools responded.

There are a number of points of comparison between the inter-agency projects noted in this study and the case study. Firstly, the objective was to gain insights into young people's views on issues of concern to the agencies and organisations involved. This was achieved by asking the young people themselves. Secondly, the organisers did not want to prove or disprove any particular theory. 'The clearly stated intention was to mount a simple exploratory and descriptive investigation which would raise questions about the development of service delivery and practice' (p.9). This approach revealed that concern about alcohol and drug use and abuse was an overreaction by social welfare and law enforcement agencies. The findings highlighted instead, the lack of social activities for young people, with crime appearing to be a 'social event' and criminal activity 'a sort of moral holiday' (p.83). The report suggested that one effective crime prevention strategy might well be to make organised youth leisure activities more appealing to the crime-prone 14-16 year old age group.

8.1.5 Characteristics of good practice

Comparison of these projects with each other and with the case study, suggests that children and young people, when asked about their problems and what would improve their lives, raise upstream preventative, environmental issues stressing their rights as citizens. Agencies, on the other hand, appear to focus on downstream problems and the legislative, organisational, financial and professional obstacles standing in the way of inter-agency co-operation. Perhaps then, effective inter-agency co-operation should be directed more firmly towards improving the quality of young people's lives in general. Although improved inter-agency co-operation is required to carry out effective downstream work with individuals, a proportion of this effort, these projects seem to suggest, should be used to identify characteristics of good practice which can be used to benefit everyone. This analysis would explain the marked unwillingness expressed by all the projects to categorise, label or otherwise compartmentalise young people regarded as 'at risk'. This also makes sense of the emphasis in these projects on networking, feedback and the inter-personal skills required to effect change: 'the right person with appropriate skills' (Surrey County Council, 1992, p.6).

In spite of the small number of comparable inter-agency projects, it was, nonetheless, possible to identify characteristics of good inter-agency practice. These were identified as:

- *Formal commitment and support from senior management and from political to practitioner level*
 - *Formal and regular inter-agency meetings to discuss ethical issues, changes in legislation and practice, gaps in provision and information-sharing at all levels to develop short- and long- term strategies*
 - *Common work practices in relation to legislation, referral/assessment, joint vocabulary, agreed definitions, procedures and outcomes*
 - *Common agreement of client group and collective ownership of the problems, leading to early intervention*
 - *Mechanisms for exchange of confidential information*
 - *Framework for collecting data and statistical information across all agencies that can inform all practice including ethnic monitoring*
 - *Monitoring and evaluation of services in relation to inter-agency work*
 - *Joint training in order to understand each other's professional role.*
- (Roaf and Lloyd, 1995)*

These can likewise be rearranged into the groups of factors identified in Chapter 7 as contributing to effective inter-agency work. Legislative, strategic, organisational and professional practice factors reinforce the interconnection between systemic and process factors noted earlier, and the interplay of the preventative and the proactive. Finally, these features can be related to the model co-ordinating structure, and applied in practice within the overarching

framework of national and local inter-agency meta-strategy being developed in response to the 1989 Children Act.

8.2 Youth Strategy and Children's Services Plans

Children's Services Plans were originally recommended in the Utting Report, 'Children in the Public Care' (DoH/SSI, 1991). However, it did not become mandatory for local authorities to draw up Children's Services Plans until March 1997. These Plans are intended to be multi-agency, with local authorities consulting a wide range of agencies and voluntary organisations. In the context of this study they can be interpreted as an example of a move towards inter-agency collaboration and the development of meta-strategy, backed with the force of law.

The critique of traditional perspectives on childhood developing over the last five years is beginning to influence children's services planning, stimulated by the Children's Rights movement represented by, for example, the Children's Rights Development Unit and the Children's Legal Centre. Moss and Petrie (1997) point out that in spite of the articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, there is little provision that is universal and 'societal interventions directed at children have been increasingly piecemeal and targeted... maybe small groups of children deemed 'at risk' or 'in need' ' (p.5). They argue against the traditional compartmentalised nature of children's services and propose instead, a 'new approach to the impact of *all public policy* affecting children', for example, 'a holistic and integrated approach to the child's day' based on a revised concept of the school and its place at the heart of services for children in which all, including those 'at risk' will benefit' (p.12).

Much depends, however, on local interpretation which varies according to local tradition, agency culture and local values and commitment to children and young people. In Scotland, regional councils, such as Lothian and Strathclyde, have been moving in this direction since the early eighties, at least ten years ahead of their English counterparts. In this section an early example of Scottish youth strategy is reviewed alongside a recent English Children's Services Plan.

8.2.1 Lothian

Lothian Youth Strategy was adopted by the then minority Conservative administration in 1983. It aimed to 'cope with some of the region's most difficult youngsters...' (Maginnis, 1989, p.7).

It was based on four principles:

1. *Problems associated with children's behaviour or circumstances should be dealt with wherever possible by keeping the child in his/her local community, using the resources of the family and other local resources in a flexible manner.*
2. *Children who are at risk of having to leave home or who are at risk of being excluded from school or who have special educational need should be jointly assessed and in some cases jointly reviewed.*
3. *Both the education and social work departments will endeavour to contribute day and group work provision as an alternative to the residential care of adolescent children where this is appropriate.*
4. *No child should be recommended for residential care unless:*
 - a) *he/she has no home (including a substitute home) in the community which can, with appropriate support, provide an adequate degree of control or care, or*
 - b) *he/she is at risk to himself/herself or others in the community, or*
 - c) *he/she has medical, psychiatric or special educational needs which can only be dealt with in a residential context, and/or it is in the child's best interest which cannot be met in any other way. (p.7)*

A fifth principle, to reinforce community-based solutions, was added in 1987, to prevent children of primary school age being sent to residential placements outside Lothian without the prior approval of the education committee.

These principles marked Lothian's first public commitment 'to the concepts of community based resources and joint co-operation between the education and social work departments to resolve the difficulties of the adolescent youngster with emotional and behavioural difficulties' (p.7). As Maginnis, herself a local councillor at the time, points out, these principles could have remained as a paper exercise only. In 1983, implementation was left in the hands of council officers working in a highly complex and hierarchical bureaucratic system of management.

That the youth strategy survived, is attributed to the quality of the concept and the belief of a number of officers in its principles who then began to recommend ways in which to implement it. In this, the children's hearing system played a key role. The various consultative groups set up by the hearing system to encourage liaison between themselves and the regional council, put pressure on the social work department. Meanwhile panel members, concerned about truancy, brought pressure to bear on the education system. The result was that in 1987, the newly appointed Labour administration, acting on the recommendation of the children's panel policy planning committee, set up a youth strategy sub-committee. This group quickly found that to

achieve the 'fundamental change necessary to make the strategy real and effective we were going to have to set about shifting attitudes, changing work practices, and encouraging innovation... It would have to be plainly demonstrated that professionals were accountable to the strategy. Uproar followed' (p.9). In overcoming local resistance, Maginnis records the support provided by Barnado's who, in support of the principles of the Youth Strategy, closed down an 'out of region' residential school for primary age children and diverted funds to the local strategy.

In implementing the strategy Lothian recognised that the task was, in terms of this study, to secure collaborative advantage. Departments would have to be persuaded to see the professional advantage to themselves and the young people, of pursuing a strategy which required co-operation and joint action. Youth strategy must, they considered, therefore, 'have a management structure which recognises and allows for the significant differences in philosophy, training and attitudes which exist among all professional participants in the strategy' (p.10). The committee concluded that the lead role in implementation should be taken by Education on the grounds that schools saw children every day: 'So it makes sense that the local authority's strategy, designed to meet the needs of every child at risk or in difficulty, should be centred on the service most likely to be encountering the child on a daily basis' (p.11). This was the approach advocated though never implemented, by Kilbrandon (HMSO, 1964) and contrasts with the lead role given to social services departments in drawing up the Children's Services Plans of the late nineties.

In practical terms, the strategy was supported by a range of initiatives including individual counselling, group work with families and specialised resources and facilities for children and young people with acute needs. From the beginning, a key element in the strategy was the intention that all secondary schools should establish school liaison groups (SLGs), for which detailed guidelines were provided (Lothian Regional Council, 1992). An SLG operates as a local inter-agency forum 'able to intervene at the earliest opportunity to support a child experiencing difficulties by drawing on the best amalgam of joint professional skills and resources' (Maginnis, 1989, p.11). Before a young person could be excluded, for example, it was recommended that he/she should be the subject of a joint assessment by the SLG. A key objective was to free professionals from concentrating all their energies on case work, without considering the broader, societal issues involved.

The second report on the work of SLGs (Lothian Regional Council, October 1991) records that about 2% of the Region's secondary school population had been referred during the year and that the Strategy 'is making a major contribution to these young people and their families through the inter-agency forum of the SLG' (p.16). The report speaks of 'a creative array of support intervention' (p.17) though the shortage of social workers and psychologists caused adverse comment from schools. Schools were reported to be making good use of the inter-agency forum provided by SLGs with school staff more aware of their purpose and finding a place for them to contribute to school policy making and inservice training.

For Maginnis, the strategy needed resources which could come initially (hence the value attached to support from Barnado's) through a redirection of existing resources from outwith to within Lothian. Ultimately, the Youth Strategy makers wanted 'to create a structure which reflects better the notion that the stressed child is too often the victim of family circumstances and social pressure and is not the guilty individual alone' (Maginnis, 1989, p.14). They hoped for 'a sense of community responsibility where every agency and professional shares the common objective of care and progress, for every child' (ibid. p.14). At the time of writing (1998), Lothian Youth Strategy remains intact in terms of basic principles and policy, but has been reshaped under the title Working Together (City of Edinburgh Council, 1997)

8.5.2 Oxford

Oxfordshire published its first Children's Service Plan in 1994. It was produced by Social Services and 'its contents generally reflected the priorities of that service' (Oxfordshire County Council, 1997). A Children's Strategy Group established in 1996 brought together officers from social services, health and education to produce and implement the Children's Services Plan. This group functions in three main areas:

- the co-ordination of inter-agency activity in children's services, ensuring 'that other partners, agencies, parents, carers and young people are properly involved in the planning and implementation of such services' (p.1)
- overseeing and co-ordinating 'the activities of other inter-agency groups (e.g. Joint Commissioning Reference Group, Area Child Protection Committee, Youth Court Inter-Agency Group) and acts as a link with the Joint Officers' Group' (p.1)
- commissioning and prioritising 'work from other inter-agency groups, seeking to ensure that it is consistent with the priorities defined in the Children's Services Plan, and reviewed annually' (p.1).

In addition, the group receives and co-ordinates 'all bids to external funding bodies in children's services which involve more than one agency to avoid potentially confusing overlap and to ensure that such bids are consistent with agreed priorities' (p.1). The group also co-ordinates officer involvement in the Member/Officer working group on children's services to ensure agendas reflect agreed strategic priorities.

The Plan's introduction acknowledges that an audit across Social Services, Health and Education, showed 'little evidence of a systematic commitment to children's rights enacted into policy'. More effective targeting of service to need, a clearer definition of need, and more detailed information about numbers of children in need were required. The main body of the plan outlines the services, in existence and planned, for eleven categories of children and young people. These follow a format which, taken together, provides information about needs and multi- and inter-agency activity:

- the legislative context
- service provision
- key data
- key pressures and needs
- timetable for proposed action
- priorities for change and development

In contrast to Lothian, Oxfordshire has produced a needs led rather than issues led strategy with little sign of co-ordinating structures at practitioner level. A similarity is the mediating role of local councillors who insisted in both cases that agencies review their priorities and change their practice.

8.3 Discussion

The projects and strategies outlined in this chapter cover a number of issues. Firstly there is an increased awareness of the problems thought to stem from professional and agency isolation. In the early nineties, inter-agency projects record a sense of innovation. These projects were short term, multi-agency team based 'pilots', funded from charitable sources directed at specific groups, frequently young offenders or young people in care. Very few could be found which focused on agency co-operation in relation to children and young people defined in a manner which stressed the social and environmental factors, which put them 'at risk' or 'in difficulty' and which could not be resolved by short term attention to individual need. Long term

strategies were required. Lothian and Mid Glamorgan are examples of local authority attempts to achieve this, while Exeter Youth Support Team, MARS and Surrey Youth Link display this philosophy in the context of their more specifically case management focused projects.

Second, it was not always easy to establish the organisational structure of a project. Those which had been taken on by local authorities tended to have developed organisational structures at senior and middle management levels linking them into the agencies they served, rather than being part of an overall inter-agency meta-strategy for children and young people, which in any event, did not appear to exist. In informal discussions held with inter-agency project leaders, it seemed that of the three elements of the inter-agency co-ordinating model (Figs. 2a and b, pp.164-165), the element most frequently absent was the practitioner based network. This was important given that the network was the least expensive element of the model, and most effective in terms of feedback. Sometimes a network existed but its significance was ignored or under valued. For example, in Oxfordshire, the Adolescent Network for practitioners, initiated in 1993, is not mentioned in its Children's Services Plan even though the feedback from this network would have benefited its operation. In most of the projects discussed, feedback and networking is implied rather than specifically catered for and few strategies were used to develop and promote its benefits. Information sharing was invariably informal, unless, as in the example from Mid Glamorgan, taking place in the wake of a major survey. Strategies such as newsletters, fact files or directories of local resources, for sharing and discussing ideas, concepts and local issues were not much in evidence. The significance and operation of networks is, indeed, only recently being fully analysed (McCabe, Lowndes and Skelcher, 1997). When examined, these analyses seem consistent with lessons learnt from, for example systemic thinking and social psychology. Perhaps the most telling example in support of local inter-agency co-ordinating structures for practitioners working across and between agency boundaries is the experience recorded in the case study. In this instance, only one member of the steering group for young people between 12-18 years knew of the existence of the thriving network for people over 17 years.

Finally, evaluative frameworks for inter-agency initiatives have yet to be devised. The history of inter-agency work suggests that these are only beginning to be considered and that much depends on the perspective of childhood and children that is adopted. Martin's (1997) compendium of community programmes for young and juvenile offenders is a data collection exercise and makes no pretence to be evaluative. A comparison with Hodgkin and Newell's review of effective government structures for children however, emphasises that perspectives on children governing such structures require elaboration and wider discussion before evaluative frameworks can be developed (Hodgkin and Newell, 1997). Key features of a possible model identified in this study are, however, summarised here as:

- Senior management **POLICY AND PLANNING GROUPS**
- Middle management **TEAMS** to secure long term planning, individual case management and preventative work. The Team's efficiency is secured through effective:
 - co-ordination, communication and information exchange
 - network broking
 - research
 - staff development and training
- Formal **NETWORKS**, operating informally, open to all

In general, models of effective co-ordination:

- are solution focused
- provide opportunities for creative thinking
- challenge professionals to overcome inter-agency boundaries/professional jealousies/ vested interests
- invite professionals to consider, and support them towards, more collaborative ways of working
- maintain progress in the face of political change or vacuum.

Each of the features characterising good practice can thus, in principle, become associated with, and be promoted by, a particular level in the model. Effective practice, from the evidence of the case study and the other projects studied suggested that this was the case. Taken together, therefore, the model and the characteristics of good practice associated with it, form a framework for the evaluation of inter-agency work for those working across agency boundaries which would take account of long and short term needs.

CHAPTER NINE

Inter-agency Case Management: Case Studies of Individuals

9.0 Introduction

At all points in the research, young people's experience of agencies was invited and welcomed for its own sake, and to secure the client's perspective. Children and young people, as members of a minority group, are susceptible to short comings in agency values and professional practice. The client perspective provided a means of cross referencing ideas and opinion, and of checking whether proposed changes in agency policy and practice would be seen by clients as improvements.

The case study details are to be found in Appendix V. Although, in these examples, the main focus is on the client and their relationship with practitioners and agencies, the latter's views of this relationship can also be inferred from them. In this chapter, information from the case studies is used, in stylised examples, to highlight some of the effects of agency failure to co-operate. An attempt is also made to illustrate how the inter-agency co-ordinating structure described in Chapter 7 might help agencies work more effectively at the margins. The examples of inter-agency projects provided in Chapter 8 and in the case study are also referred to for comparison, supplemented by the case of a 'difficult to place' adult.

9.1 Young people at risk

9.1.0 Introduction

The case studies (Lloyd, 1994) were carried out by the project's research officer, on behalf of the inter-agency project described in Chapter Six. The interviews took place between March and September 1992, soon after the implementation of the 1989 Children Act. Since then a number of grants, albeit short term, were available from, for example, Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST), or initiatives such as support for those leaving care were becoming available to help children in need. However, in spite of local amelioration, evidence from national surveys indicates a rising number of young people 'at risk' and a continued concern about the difficulties agencies experience in trying to co-operate (Kempson, 1996; Audit Commission, 1998; DoH, 1998)

9.1.1 The case studies: implications for inter-agency case management

Quotations are used freely in the case studies to demonstrate that the findings derived from them 'are opinions and feelings, and as such cannot always be seen as fact. This is a difficulty

when dealing with people, but also inevitable and these feelings are as real as the facts that surround them' (Lloyd, 1994, p.12). Clarity of expression from the client proved, furthermore, to be a useful starting point in assembling the outlines of the longitudinal progress of a 'case' as it passed through the 'system'. Establishing the sequence of events which leads an 'at risk' young person to fall through the net is not always easy. Disparate events taking place over a period of years are hard to disentangle and record.

The case study showed however, that where more than one agency was involved that there were:

a number of critical points when the management of a 'case' could cause concern.

These were:

- *Access and referral*
- *Identification and assessment*
- *Transition, particularly post 16 or when closing a case'.*

For the agency to whom the initial referral is being made the key question becomes: Can this agency meet this person's needs from its own resources or is support needed from elsewhere? This is the point at which practitioners most need an inter-agency structure. (Roaf and Lloyd, 1995)

In other words, the structure provides the communication channel on which the co-ordination of services depends. This is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 3 (p.211). From this it can be seen that in the ideal situation, the intra- and inter- agency structures are held in balance with activity on one side matching activity on the other. Imbalances lead to young people either falling through the net of agency provision, or being partially catered for by a single agency, or none at all. Maintaining the balance requires an inter-agency structure to promote preventative strategies within and between agencies and manage cases requiring inter-agency co-operation.

This is the point at which practitioners benefit most from an inter-agency structure (Roaf and Lloyd, 1995). Figs.4 a and b (pp.212, 213) illustrate diagrammatically how and when such intervention by an inter-agency worker could maintain a young person within the support network where individual agency practitioners might fail. Fig.4c (p.214) spells this out in more detail.

The traditional approach to this situation has been for the agency to whom the original referral was made to call a case conference. This initial case conference tends to lead to subsequent case conferences within each agency who each conduct their own reviews with little further contact with each other. Support continues to come from individual agencies and problems are rarely resolved. Even where agencies agree to hold joint case conferences, problems with diaries, travelling time and expense prevent them from being fully attended. Furthermore,

Referral process

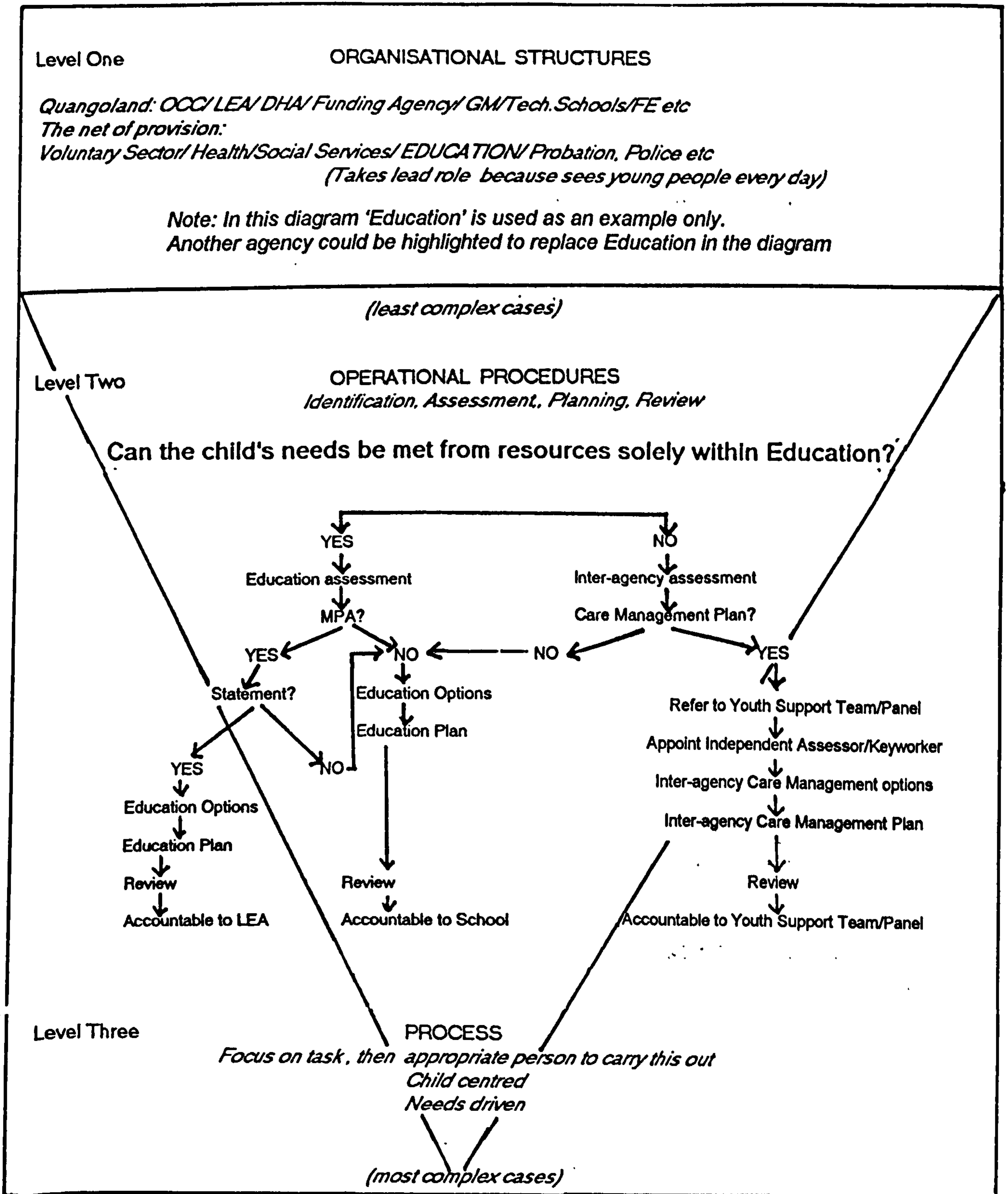


Figure 3

P**White male, aged 12****Referred to ESW Service — Family problems and non-attendance****Referred to Highfield****Referred to SSD—Education issue—Will not allocate****Referred to Youth Support Team****YST allocate worker to liase with SSD and ESW and Highfield****Does not engage with Highfield****Home tutoring is arranged, P is linked to group work with a plan to re-integrate into school****P is involved in criminal activities. YST refer to SSD for Family Support—YST joint work****YST take P to the Youth Club****ESW works with YST worker and school to re-integrate****Re-integration****YST continues to work with Youth Club and P****Family work ends.**

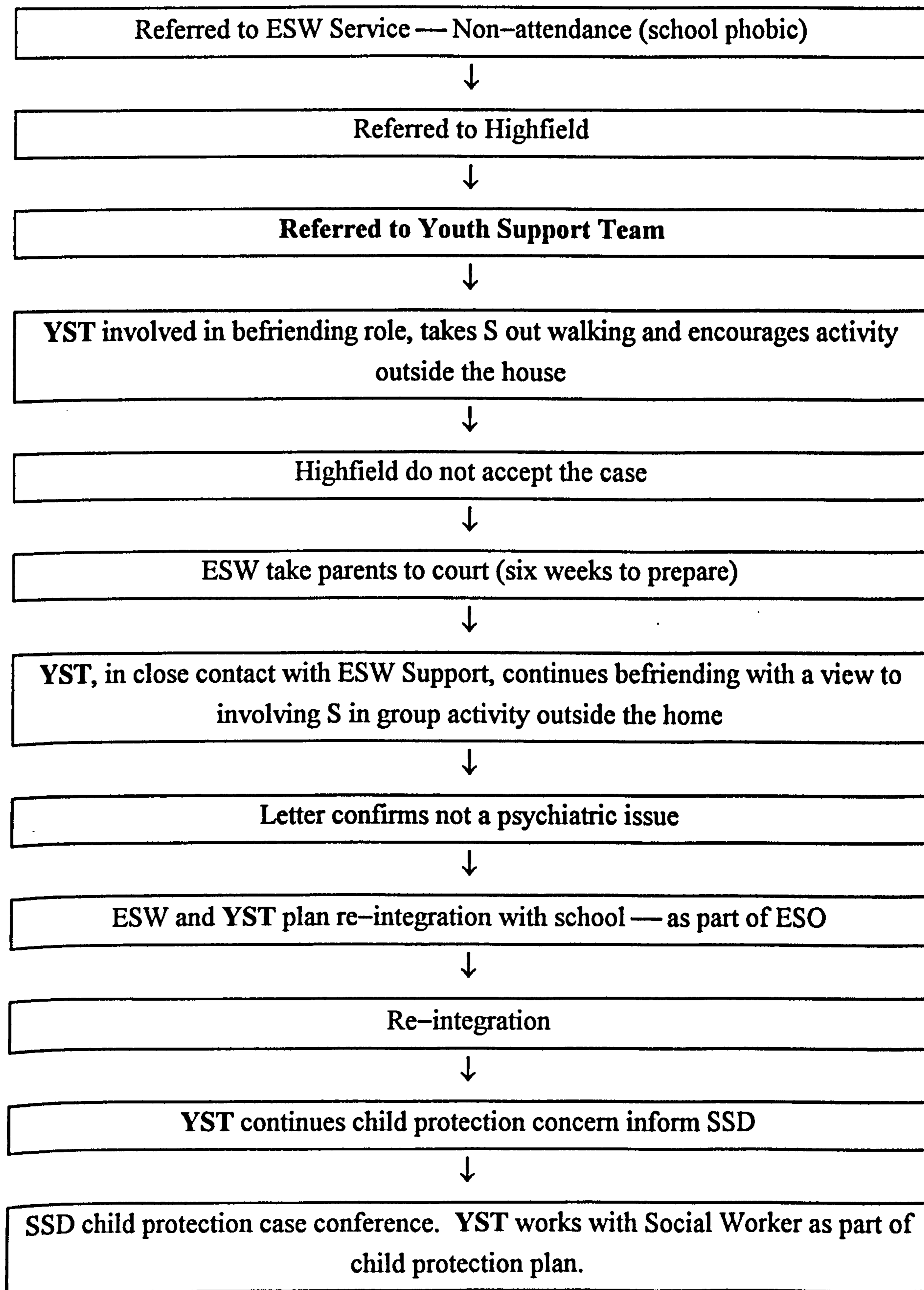
Case Study: Inter-agency Intervention**S****White female, aged 13**

Fig. 4b

Case Study: without inter-agency intervention

The following case study demonstrates how a multi-agency / holistic approach can help to prevent some of the problems escalating and how agencies could be encouraged to co-ordinate their services through the use of an independent body.

T.

White male, 15 at the time of interview. His mother stated that it was difficult for her to get help at the beginning.

"When he was six he was caught nicking sweets. I called the police to give him a warning. Sweets to skateboard to bikes to burglaries. Every time I was telling the police: 'Please do something with this kid before it gets bigger,' and every time it got bigger I said the same thing." (Mother)

T. could have been referred early to the Youth Support Team by either his mother, the ESW or the school.

T. was first referred to the ESW service when he was aged 11. The ESW notes state that "mother appears not able to cope". It is suggested that she contacts the Children's Psychiatric Services. The Psychiatric Social Worker (PSW) agreed to take the case.

The PSW's ten-week input might have been more effective had it not taken place in isolation and had it been supported by a YST worker.

There is a second referral to the ESW service from the Upper School because of his "continued absence from school". The ESW tries to move him from the school, but two schools refuse him a place. He is then permanently excluded from his current school. The ESW tries to involve Social Services who state that the main problem is education and close the case.

The ESW recognised the need for Social Services involvement, e.g. to offer the family support or counselling, but it did not have the appropriate authority to ensure that Social Services make a contribution to the support plan.

T. is not at school and in trouble with the police. His mother states that the family are in crisis and need Social Services help. He continues to be in trouble with the police on a weekly basis and is in court nearly every week with additional offences to be considered. The court cases are continually adjourned to consider these. These offences have now become more serious and include burglary and stealing cars.

During the time the ESW worked with the school to find T. a place, the YST worker could have had on-going contact with T. out of school and been looking at the wider issues of motivation, family relationships and his criminal activities. The YST worker could invoke the networking process involving a wider range of relevant agencies, e.g. Youth Service, Further Education opportunities, skills training, Careers, etc.

T. is now 15 and at an education case conference it is proposed that he attend an off-site education provision. The ESW's intervention ceases. At 15 his mother contacts Social Services stating she cannot cope. T. is taken into care. He spends a year in a Children's Home during which time he is moved from the Social Services Adolescent Team to the Juvenile Justice Team and remanded into care as part of a remand placement order. He fails to conform to this order and a secure order is requested by Social Services. T. is currently in Feltham Young Offenders Institute.

In cases such as this the YST worker would provide long-term continuity and co-ordination for the young person and their family. This might have eliminated the need for T. to be received into care. As a minimum, the YST worker would have ensured that the issue of attendance at an education institute would be pursued once he was in a residential home and ensured continuity of attention for him and his family.

successful case meetings require preparation, information gathering and the marshalling and co-ordination of resources. In this scenario, the case management models used by, for example, MARS, Surrey Youth Link or the Oxford project's inter-agency panel demonstrate the difference in outcome for the young person, when a case manager or independent assessor collects, assimilates and reports on the information rather than expecting individual practitioners to arrive at the meeting with information which no-one has had time to evaluate.

As the case study demonstrates in practice, and Huxham and Macdonald (1992) supports in theory, collaborative advantage is expensive. An inter-agency structure that would support a panel or team and employ skilled inter-agency independent assessors and case managers have to be paid for. However, as the inter-agency project's report suggests, a typical case going through the 'normal' channels would entail the cost of several case conferences, individual agency assessments and review meetings which professionals are expected to attend. For complex cases this is expensive. The real cost is not however, the cost of the co-ordinating structure or individual agency effort, but to society. 'Society as a whole bears the cost of the extreme cases and agencies owe it to society to ensure that if co-operation will help keep costs to a minimum, they will find ways to do so' (Lloyd, 1994, p.44). This question is not lost on central government however, who have, in keeping with the increased emphasis on the market in human services provision, placed greater financial obligations on agencies to pick up the bill for failure to achieve their goals. Preventative work, and effective case management are a crucial part of this endeavour.

In the next section, lest it be thought that the development and improvement of inter-agency co-operation is all that is required, a case study is described and discussed in which inter-agency co-operation had been a significant feature for several years.

9.2 'Difficult To Place' adults: the Report of the Inquiry into the circumstances leading to the death of Jonathan Newby

9.2.1 Introduction

The Newby inquiry has significance for this study because John Rous, the person who killed Jonathan Newby, was a client of the Elmore Community Support Team (ECST), an innovative inter-agency project, generally regarded as an example of good inter-agency practice, and a model which had proved itself to be 'fit for the purpose.' The inquiry could therefore be expected to shed light on the place of inter-agency work in such people's lives. The following summary has been made from the report of the inquiry (Oxfordshire Health Authority, 1995).

Jonathan Newby was a twenty-two year old graduate working as a volunteer in a hostel run by the Oxford Cyrenians. In October 1993, John Rous, a resident, suffering from schizophrenia with a 'concomitant severe disorder of personality' (p.3) stabbed Jonathan Newby in the heart, killing him. John Rous pleaded guilty to manslaughter and has since been detained in Broadmoor. Under the terms of a National Health Service Executive circular (HSG (94) 27), 'In cases of homicide, it will always be necessary to hold an inquiry which is independent of the providers involved' (p.3). A year later, in November 1994, the Committee of Inquiry began its work. Its task was lengthy. 'John Rous had been in the care of practically every statutory and voluntary organisation in Oxford and elsewhere... Sixty witnesses were invited to give evidence ... Fifty-four written statements were received, forty-five people gave oral evidence' (p.5).

9.2.2 Jonathan Newby

Jonathan Newby worked with Oxford Cyrenians in a number of hostels before going to Jacqui Porter House in October 1993. He found this placement difficult and discussed this with other volunteers who were all apparently concerned for the safety of those working at this particular hostel. Another volunteer had been threatened previously with a knife, 'and additionally each individual worker had a sense of insecurity arising from the fact that the residents were severely mentally ill and therefore more difficult to understand and identify with than the residents of Simon House' (p.23).

In the days preceding his death, Jonathan Newby told his friends of turmoil in the house because a female resident was unwell and her behaviour was disturbing residents and volunteers alike. 'In a letter Jonathan wrote of how B had threatened to gouge his eyes out with a key and how B hit him in the groin with a bag of frozen peas' (p.24). On October 9th Jonathan Newby was due to undertake the 24 hour shift beginning at 5.00 p.m. on Saturday and ending at 5.00 p.m. on Sunday. Between the hours of 7.00 and 9.00 he was to be the only worker on duty and it was during this time that he was killed. In recording these events the Inquiry's view was that they had '...resulted in the death of a bright and popular young man who died when attempting to deal with a problem with which he, alone and untrained, should never have been confronted' (p.24).

9.2.3 John Rous

John Rous was 49 at the time of the inquiry. Born in Oxford, he never knew his natural father and was abandoned by his mother at the age of three and thereafter was cared for by foster parents. He left school at fifteen and when he was seventeen, joined the army. He was

discharged after three months for medical reasons and then travelled around the country from job to job. During this period he began to abuse drugs, starting with amphetamines and moving on to abuse of heroin, barbiturates, cannabis and other narcotic drugs. A diagnosis of personality disorder was first made in 1965 and he was admitted to hospital in Oxford for amphetamine abuse in 1968. In 1969 he was detained in hospital in London for offences of handling stolen drugs and possession of illegal drugs. Between 1970 and 1980 he was in and out of hospital, having been diagnosed schizophrenic in 1972. Then followed a period of placements in rehabilitation units, half way houses, and in lodgings in the community coupled with attendance as a day patient in hospital. In 1978 there was a 6 month period of imprisonment, followed by accommodation in a hostel, once more in the community. During this time there were two occasions on which John Rous physically assaulted hospital staff.

From 1980 - 1990 he continued to receive medical attention as an out patient and maintained links with his probation officer. He successfully completed a number of community service projects and resided in a succession of hostels including the Night Shelter. He was also in contact with a day centre run by Oxford MIND. In 1986 he overdosed and was again referred to hospital for assessment because of concerns that he might be becoming more acutely psychotic. By 1988 his attendance as an out-patient was becoming increasingly erratic but his psychosis was deemed to be under control. He had taken up a tenancy in an Oxford City Council unit for single people where he remained until 1991.

During this period, in 1989, his consultant referred him to the Elmore Community Support Team. After this his attendance as an outpatient improved. Unfortunately John Rous's behaviour in his place of residence deteriorated and there were concerns once more about increased levels of drinking. He left the accommodation and returned to lodgings such as the Night Shelter. He was believed to be depressed and suicidal on occasion. The Elmore Community Support Team workers continued their efforts to find suitable accommodation which eventually resulted in a placement in Jacqui Porter House.

This was not a happy period for him, he wished to leave, was irritated by the rules, and lack of money available to him and was unable to make friends there among a group of people very different from him in education and background. In 1993 he found a girl friend who became pregnant, John Rous believing himself to be the father. At this point, according to the Inquiry:

It became clear...that on the part of these people [those with whom he was in contact daily], and also the staff of Jacqui Porter House, there was limited knowledge of that aspect of John Rous's life which resulted from and was still associated with his years 'on the street'.....John Rous had a street life of some twenty years when he took up residence in Jacqui Porter House....Significantly it was evidence of a friend from these years who gave evidence of events during the day of 9 October 1993, evidence which appears to be unknown to other witnesses. (p.29)

During the summer of 1993, John Rous's alcohol consumption rose and he became short of money, but no-one noticed any deterioration in his mental state. He was distressed by the behaviour of the inmate B, previously mentioned, and was looking forward to an appointment with his consultant on October 5th. In the event this was postponed and John Rous was known to have been disappointed about this. On October 9th, he pestered workers on duty for a loan. There was a system for this which he had already exceeded and his request was refused. Later in the day, he asked Jonathan for money, adopting an intensely threatening manner. Jonathan at first refused but then later under even more duress, gave John Rous an IOU. John then went to the local pub. At the Inquiry he said that it was there that he decided to kill someone, and of three possible people, decided on Jonathan Newby. Later he returned to the hostel and did so. The Committee found during the course of the Inquiry that:

...one point was made forcibly by all witnesses who knew John Rous, be they friends, support workers, carers or doctors. It was their initial astonishment and disbelief at the news that John Rous had committed an act of such violence as to result in a death. A picture emerged of a man who could be verbally threatening but no witness... suggested that he or she had ever felt physically threatened by John Rous. His criminal convictions do not disclose a tendency to violence. Only one of the incidents of aggression recorded was regarded as being particularly serious and this occurred in 1977. On the evidence available to us we conclude that the killing of Jonathan Newby was an act of horrific violence, it was also an act wholly out of character for John Rous and of a nature unforeseen by all who knew him. (p.31)

What went wrong, and how could such a tragedy have been prevented?

9.3 Discussion: Implications for inter-agency work

For the purpose of this study there are a number of issues relating to the pressures on those who work with 'difficult to place' people which have implications for inter-agency work.

Homelessness and mental illness

John Rous presented a severe challenge to those providing care. He was homeless, he had a severe and enduring mental illness and a concomitant severe disorder of the personality. The problem which John Rous presented is not uncommon.. (p.50)

The Inquiry investigated the issue of homelessness and severe mental illness, recognising that Oxford had an unusually high number of homeless people, that among these was an increasing number of people with mental illnesses and that there were fewer than average statutory services for them. This meant that there was a greater burden on the voluntary sector and 'Oxford had an unusually sharp divide between statutory services in the group homes for people with mental illness whose behaviour was acceptable to the homes, and voluntary services in hostels and day centres for another 150 or so homeless people with mental illness' (p.52). The Inquiry considered that 'a national programme is required to tackle this problem' and that health authorities, social services departments and housing authorities should establish a specialist outreach and care team for homeless people with severe mental illness' (p.52).

Co-operation between health and social services.

Witnesses in this case described a long history of poor relationships between health and social services: 'There always seemed to be financial constraints on both authorities that appeared to shift the focus of planning more to what we could pass on to whom rather than how we can build services jointly' (p.55). The Inquiry commented that in these circumstances, it was hardly surprising that voluntary agencies took on the role of providing accommodation and care for the mentally ill. These difficulties meant that the Care Programme Approach had been slow to develop in Oxfordshire and was only fully implemented in October 1994, whereas it could have been in place from April 1991.

Issues for practitioners

Maintaining up to date personal knowledge about clients

Practitioners found it difficult to keep up with the day to day activities of their mentally ill clients. Important events in John Rous's life in the days before he killed Jonathan Newby were not known to the workers and inmates of the hostel, but one of John Rous's street friends gave a different account of events in the days preceding October 9th from that given by John Rous himself or the inmates of Jacqui Porter House. John Rous had apparently told this friend how much he disliked being at the hostel, how disturbed he was by inmate B's behaviour and that he wanted to be put in hospital in a lock up ward. He spent three hours on October 9th with this friend and three others, was very upset about a number of matters relating to his life at the hostel and was on what the witness described as a 'drink bender'. He was also smoking cannabis. He left his friends during the afternoon 'high and merry' and did not return.

Actions of practitioners in a crisis

These also raise difficult issues. In the immediate crisis, Jonathan Newby recorded in John Rous's notes that on being refused an IOU by him, John Rous had become extremely threatening. 'He called 999 and told the police he was going to kill me. He went into his room to get a knife so I locked myself into the office and he proceeded to attempt to kick the door in' (p.42). Jonathan Newby records that he gave him an IOU at this point, whereupon John Rous left saying he would go the Night Shelter. In fact, he went to the pub, with what consequences we know. Evidence concerning the 999 call to the police established that John Rous did indeed use a pay phone, warning the police, in a conversation of just on two minutes, that he intended to kill someone at the hostel, how and why. The operator took no action. Within forty minutes Jonathan Newby was dead.

Management in the voluntary sector

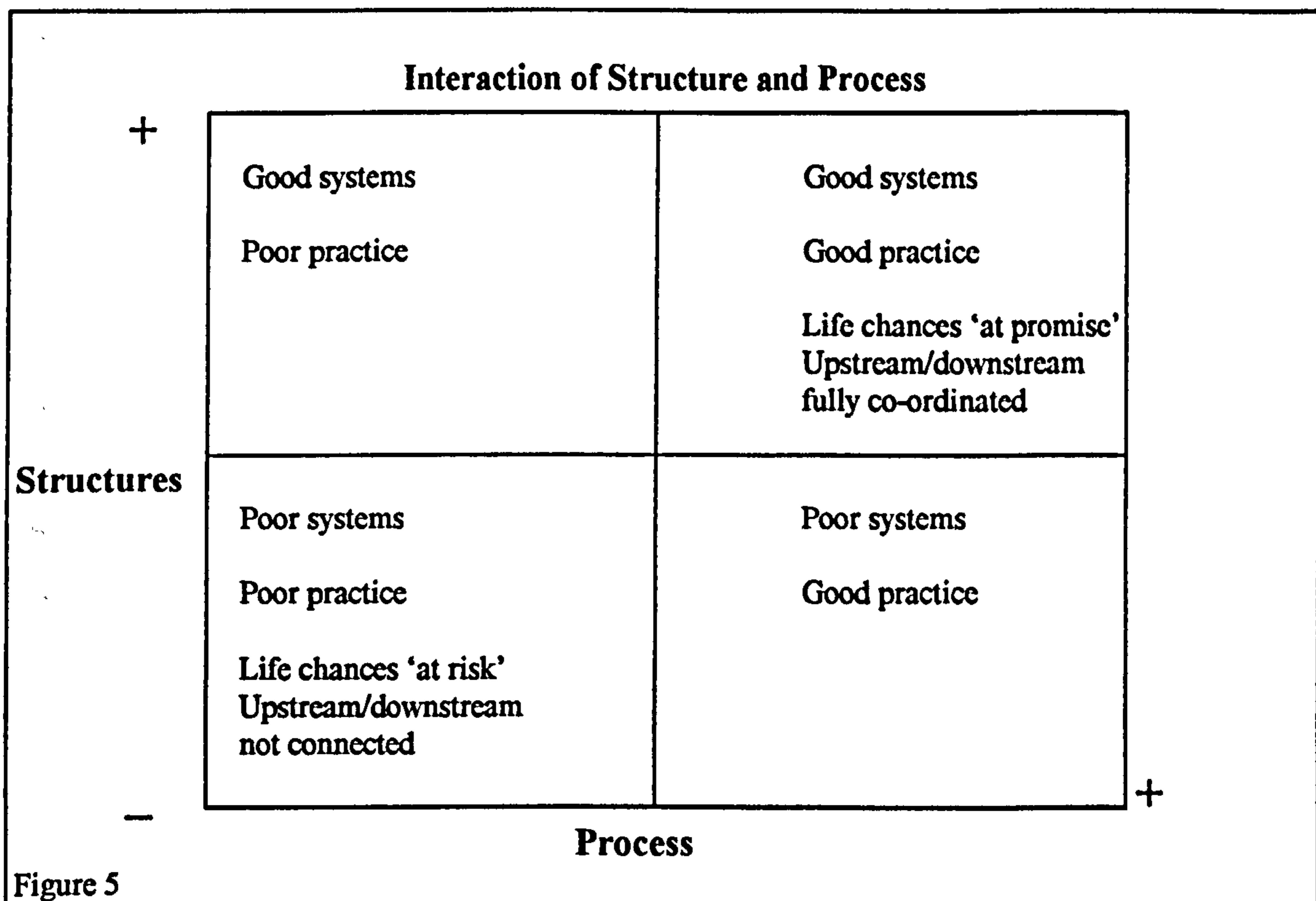
As we have seen, neglect of some of society's most vulnerable people had led to the voluntary sector filling gaps in public sector provision. The report heavily criticised poor management, monitoring and evaluation in the public sector. As one example of many supplied, Jonathan Newby was telephoned by the manager of the hostel on the evening of the tragedy, but was otherwise on his own. Resident B's behaviour had been causing concern for some time, had not been appropriately dealt with, and this adversely affected the care of the other inmates. Furthermore, 'the inadequacy of the procedures and arrangements at Jacqui Porter house meant that the elements supporting John Rous in those days prior to Jonathan Newby's death were paper thin, there was a total failure to provide a supportive environment for John Rous'(p.140).

Lessons for inter-agency co-operation

In the light of the factors identified by agencies emerging from the literature review and the case study, many of the salient points made by the Inquiry's Committee can be grouped similarly. Although only a small sample of their detailed recommendations have been discussed here, these broadly concern legislation, strategic and operational matters, professional practice and financial arrangements. All these factors were interlocked in what the Inquiry described as 'a chain of causation'. This they believed 'resulted in the creation of an accident 'black spot' ' (p.140). As with the 'critical points' noted in agency relationships with young people, the Inquiry identified the occasions upon which the chain of events leading to Jonathan Newby's death could have been broken. These likewise centred on details which can be routed back to structural or process issues and to the importance of the values and principles which underpin inter-agency meta-strategy.

Significantly, the Elmore model of inter-agency co-ordination focused on a team and a network. What was missing was the almost total lack of co-operation between senior managers and policy makers in health and social services which came in for so much criticism from the Inquiry. This, it will be recalled, is in marked contrast to the situation in Lothian, where it had been strategists from the two lead agencies for young people that had promoted the principles which eventually drove the policy for co-operation forward despite initial opposition. In Oxford, the void created by lack of commitment and support from the top for the section of the population who, by any standards, was most at risk of falling through the net, was filled by voluntary organisations many of whom were least well prepared for this. The effects of the lack of meta strategy can be detected in all sixteen of the 'critical points' in the 'chain of causation'. An example concerns training. One of the self appointed tasks of the Network, itself a product of the voluntary sector, supported by individual agency practitioners, was to organise training for those working across agency boundaries. Without meta-strategy, this could not be expected to satisfy demand or provide a structured comprehensive service. Thus Jonathan Newby, a young volunteer received 'no appropriate training in working with people with chronic and enduring mental illness' (p.141).

Jonathan Newby's case and the case studies of young people, point to a further lesson to be learnt from those most at risk. The evidence from the individuals suggests that the problem of inter-agency co-operation is two dimensional. There is typically, a 'systems' dimension and an 'interpersonal' dimension, reflecting the structure/process dichotomy identified throughout the literature. This can be expressed very simply as two intersecting axes (Figure 5, p. 222).



On a point scale of 0 - 10 on each axis, positive points indicate successful inter-agency practice, negative points indicate failure and the risk of falling through the net. In any particular case it should be possible, using the grid, to identify those aspects of policy or practice leading to either outcome. Into the left hand bottom quadrant would be recorded the failure of the Thames Valley Police Control Room officer to respond to John Rous's call. From the evidence in the literature review, we can describe this as a tragic failure 'to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons', and therefore a failure of interprofessional competency. It would in principle be possible to go through each case study and plot positive and negative points revealed in the details. As a tool for assessing risk or for highlighting areas of strength or weakness in the management of a case, or for evaluation and training, this can be useful, and a useful reminder of how structure and process interact. Even more, such a tool can suggest where further research, development and training to promote better practice in and between agencies is required.

There remains finally, the question of what happens to people 'at risk' for whom falling through the net is a reality. What becomes the unifying factor then? What might there be in common between 'difficult to place' adults and 'through the net' children? According to some,

mainly media sources, it would appear that both groups occupy the same doorways, arches and pavements, but that children and young people are almost invisible.

9.4 Conclusion

The case studies reinforced, as nothing else could, the reality behind the numerical data demonstrating the problem of agency co-operation to be addressed in relation to people considered to be 'at risk'. Among these some were totally without support at all when they needed it. Models of inter-agency co-operation have the capacity to improve practice but only when commitment from the top enables the development of an integrating and co-ordinating structure and process appropriate for the client group for which it is intended.

CHAPTER TEN

Co-ordinating Structures within Agencies: Intra-agency Teams and Networks

10.0 Introduction

Two insights drew attention to co-ordinating structures within agencies. Firstly, good practice within agencies appeared to be the first line of defence preventing 'at risk' individuals from falling through the net. Much of this good practice relied on effective intra-agency communication between practitioners. Conversely, poor communication, even on a seemingly small scale, was found to be one of the most important factors in the 'chain of causation' leading to tragedy or near tragedy. Secondly, an initial, superficial comparison between an inter-agency team for adults 'at risk', or 'difficult to place' (the Elmore Community Support team), and an intra-agency team (special educational needs team) to prevent children falling through the net of provision in a comprehensive school, suggested structural and process similarities between them. In the light of the case study, it seemed that it would be worth examining this comparison in more detail. If general similarities could be found between the communication and support systems operating between agencies, and those working within them this would have implications for the development of good agency practice in general, in relation to some of the most disadvantaged young people in society (Roaf, 1998).

The evidence of the case study suggested that the range of skills and resources required to meet the complex needs of individuals 'at risk', has led to the tendency of inter-agency practitioners to gather together, or to be organised, in teams enabling ease of co-operation and communication. However, inter-agency teams designed to prevent individuals falling through the net do not stand on their own but form one element in a co-ordinating structure with a recognisable pattern. However because the team tends to dominate the model, the other two elements are easily overlooked and usually under developed. The Child Guidance movement, Intermediate Treatment and the Scottish children's hearing are examples of inter-agency teamwork operating within a policy framework and supported, however loosely and informally, by extensive networks of interested parties from all sectors of society. This is equally true of co-ordinating structures within agencies.

Networks, however, are frequently almost invisible, in a permanent state of atrophy. Possibly this is because, within agency boundaries, informal networking is taken for granted as something that will happen anyway without having to be planned. Similarly the policy making element may be visible, but may only be loosely connected to the whole structure, or it has

developed a will of its own and has disappeared, or been hi-jacked, to fulfil some other mission. The model exists, in other words, but looks neglected, like a dismembered bicycle, still firmly locked to a community railing, but unfortunately no longer functional.

Agencies, for this purpose, can be regarded as microcosms of society, or indeed as families, each with its own ethic, language and culture. Individuals, even those with complex educational needs can be supported within the confines of education provided that it is agency policy to do so, and that policy is carried through into practice. In Education, for example, it has been agency policy since the passing of the 1981 Education Act, to encourage the inclusion of children with complex difficulties in mainstream schools. Although practice has lagged far behind policy *intra-* agency, multi-disciplinary teams have been developed in many schools and LEAs as a strategy to promote inclusion. These now play a familiar and recognisable part in the way in which education carries out its purpose in relation to young people, effective so long as they do not require the services of other agencies. For young people at risk, however, the evidence of the case study was that agency purpose required *inter-*agency teams set within a co-ordinating model fully functional in all its parts. The case studies of individuals demonstrate what happens if they are not. In some instances, however, no team has been created for this purpose and responsibility resides either with a lone practitioner, or with someone who has assumed this role voluntarily, or no-one. From the point of view of the client, the risks in this situation can be to life or to life chances. The OECD described these as the failure 'to become integrated into a normally accepted pattern of social responsibility, particularly with regard to work and adult life' (OECD/CERI, 1994, p.3). Warnock expresses the risk in similar terms as the failure 'to enter the world after formal education is over as an active participant in society and a responsible contributor to it, capable of achieving as much independence as possible' (DES, 1978, para.1.4). From the point of view of the agencies, failure to meet the needs of 'at risk' people is compounded by the risk they, the agencies, are then exposed to in terms of loss of public recognition and support, professional and agency morale, and self esteem. These risks, for client, professional and agency, are not trivial. Avoiding them however, may appear to agencies to involve them in activities which may not, in themselves, seem important enough to bother about (networks), or conversely, seem too expensive and threatening to contemplate (support teams).

Teams, whether *intra-* or *inter-*agency are the most visible point of contact and comparison between agencies. If teams do not stand alone, and it is the effective functioning of the model as a whole which matters most to people 'at risk', it seemed appropriate to examine firstly their

function in general, and in their relationship with networks and, secondly, to examine how inter-agency teams operate within agencies.

10.1 Teams and Networks

In some situations, depending on the context and working methods, it may not be easy to distinguish between teams and networks. Since membership is unlikely to be mutually exclusive, there will many opportunities for overlap between them. Kanter (1984) sees the team as one of a number of network-forming devices encouraging 'the immediate exchange of support and information and create contact to be drawn on in the future' (p.166). According to Kanter, innovative companies:

make the assignments with the most critical change implications to teams across areas rather than to individuals or segmented units...Such formal teams, not incidentally, served as models of the method that top management endorsed for carrying out major tasks and projects. (p.166)

This is not a new phenomenon she notes, nor will *any* team help innovation. In her experience of older established industries, 'integrative team mechanisms may account for successful problem solving and innovation' (p.167). Teams that achieved this however, drew members from 'a diversity of sources, a variety of areas'. Innovating companies seem deliberately to create a "market place of ideas", recognising that a multiplicity of points of view need to be brought to bear on a problem (p.167).

Kingdon (1992), discussing teams and networks in the human services stresses that it is 'important to distinguish between them as both are essential in providing a balanced package of care to most individuals' (p.142). In the complex multi-disciplinary world developing in, for example, social work and health in the eighties it was being recognised however, that:

Intensive multi-disciplinary teamwork is a way of working which needs to be used sparingly and concentrated where it can yield highest returns. For the most part we need to consider ways of achieving a fair level of effectiveness in a wide range of looser and more spasmodic interrelationships. (Webb, 1982, p.11)

Webb's view was that whatever these interrelationships were, they were necessary in order to 'galvanise particular sets of workers into closer interaction at points where a breakdown of communication and joint action would be disastrous' (p.11). Muir (1984) draws attention to Hey's distinction (1979) between teams and networks. Thus a team is described as the 'continuing interaction between a small clearly bounded group of the same people who share a common task, similar values and who hold distinctive knowledge and skills' (Muir, 1984, p.170). Muir points out that 'if there are no common objectives or pooling of skills then it is

unlikely that teamwork exists' (ibid. p.168). A network is 'composed of a range of people with different knowledge and skills who may meet infrequently with a changing constituency, yet who work on a common task when the occasion demand' (ibid. p.170).

Both types of collaboration characterised the Elmore Community Support Team (ECST) as it developed from 1988. Interestingly the 'Network' as described in the case study, had already been in existence for several years and was regarded as a good in itself, with an important role to fulfil. Any other role that it might have was not, of course apparent before 1988 since there was no team in existence to which it could relate. From the standpoint of the agency or organisation, Payne (1982) comments 'that teamwork ... is an instrument for carrying out the policy of the agency' (p.13). As such teams are subsets of a larger organisation. Therefore, he suggests, it is necessary to look at the total structure and goals of the host organisation in order to understand the functioning of a team within the larger system. Payne stresses 'the importance of setting up a clear system for collaboration in a multi-disciplinary team, the clear differentiation of tasks ... and respect for the values of other occupational groups' (p.107). This emphasis on the relationship between team and organisational purpose foreshadows the emphasis ten years later made by researchers such as Huxham and Macdonald (1992), on the importance of making aims and values explicit in order to achieve the benefits of collaboration.

The management and training of teams has likewise attracted an extensive literature, some of which is relevant to inter-agency working. Only recently however, has this extended beyond the world of professionals. In the literature of the eighties and early nineties the focus was on professionals and their training for interprofessional practice, some of which might take place in interprofessional teams (Higgins and Jaques, 1986). Others, for example Bines (1992), are concerned with the training of professionals for interprofessional practice, as an agency member, not necessarily as a member of an inter-agency team. By contrast, the inter-agency and inter-disciplinary teams that have grown up during the nineties can be described more accurately as teams of inter-agency practitioners. In Education, for example, Lacey and Lomas (1993), Thomas (1992) and Solity and Bickler (1994) recognise the range of people from different parts of disciplinary and agency hierarchies who now make up intra- and inter-agency teams.

Valuable insights concerning team leadership, management and training now come from a wider range of perspectives. Owen (1996) discussing the reasons for the prevalence of teams in modern organisations claims that 'For a long time, business gurus have been saying that staid, difficult to respond hierarchies are out and fast, flexible, flatter networks in... Yet the move from hierarchical organisations has been slow. Many use this network description, but few have yet to make it a reality for all who work in the organisation' (p.17). The hierarchical

mentality is hard to shift, in which managers see power as a limited rather than an expanding resource and therefore fear its loss through networking. For Owen, 'The clearest difference between a hierarchy and a network organisation is that a network is more flexible and can respond quicker, which is vital today' (p.18). Although networks look different from hierarchies, 'the differences are not just structural' (p.18). There may, for example, be gender differences in management. Owen quotes Helgesen's view that women managers tend to:

structure organisations as a web, or network, rather than a hierarchy... Each of the women described her place in the organisation as being in the centre reaching out, rather than at the top reaching down. A hierarchy focuses on targeting a position, climbing the ladder and knocking out competition. A web emphasizes interrelationships, building up strength and knitting loose ends into the fabric. (Helgesen, in Owen, 1996, p.20)

Pondering the changes she observed as a management consultant, Owen considers 'The old ways won't work. Confrontation has been replaced by co-operation, and teams are working across these companies' (Owen, 1996, p.17). Was it, she asks, because in industry, managers had their backs to the wall and were being forced to change, or was it that 'workers are participating in the decisions and problems in these companies and feel part of a team?' (p.17). Her interest in teams led her to study the Red Arrows to explore 'their *approach* to teamwork and *process...*' (p.24) and the notion that by doing one's best for the team, one is also doing the best for oneself.

Developing teams, Owen maintains, means developing organisations, since teams are not isolated and have to interact with others in the organisation, '... leadership and teams need to be established throughout the organisation, not just at one or two levels' (p.35). Leadership and management style emphasises listening, empowerment and praise. What matters more than specific skills is how managers lead and how they behave since this affects the amount and quality of feedback they receive. Owen notes that the success of the Red Arrows lay in their ability to agree objectives and goals. They achieved this in two ways. Firstly, they agreed objectives together, rather than assuming either agreement and commitment, or that goals were preordained and did not need discussion. In working with people 'at risk', this is important since, as the case studies of young people show, agency commitment cannot be assumed.

Secondly, the Red Arrows set performance targets and objectives together, based on what they intended to achieve, rather than simply on what things they would do (p.124). They used 'the results of monitoring by feedback to tell people what they have achieved and set new goals, or assess why goals were not achieved,' and then took action to ensure further success (p.86). In the context of people 'at risk' the emphasis on achievable goals, monitoring and evaluation, before setting fresh targets is an essential part of effective case management. Case meetings,

and many team meetings, from this perspective are not currently a favourable environment in which to discuss targets since they tend to focus on what participants will do rather than what they will achieve.

Lastly, the Red Arrows were careful to elicit individual goals from team members and incorporate, or discover, these in the team goals. In this way team synergy is multiplied and commitment and high performance from all its members guaranteed. In the case of the Red Arrows, this was important because the enterprise is inherently risky, requiring daring and consummate skill. Again, the comparison with working with 'at risk' people makes Owen's analysis particularly apt.

In contrast to teams, networks have, until recently, received little attention from researchers. According to McCabe, Lowndes and Skelcher (1997), 'Partnerships and networks have become a prominent feature of the way in which voluntary, community and public organisations operate' (p.1). They define partnerships as 'formal relationships between agencies, for example a board or company. They have fixed memberships and clear boundaries' (p.1). Networks, they define as operating 'through relationships between individuals with shared interests, values or goals. They tend to have indistinct boundaries and fluid memberships' (p.1). These writers find that partnerships and networks co-exist and that networks can help or hinder partnerships, sometimes complementing them, sometimes challenging them. McCabe et al. identify four typical attitudes to networking. There are firstly, enthusiasts, who value networking because of its ability to overcome some of the boundary hugging constraints of bureaucracy. Secondly, activists who see networks as a means whereby strategic goals are met among fragmented services. Thirdly, pragmatists regard networking as a necessary evil, and finally there were opponents, 'openly hostile', who think that networks circumvent democratic processes. In relation to power, McCabe et al consider that while networks are frequently described as 'flat' relationships between individuals and/or organisations, partnerships are associated with hierarchical structures which are less inclined to share power.

By comparison with the accounts in the case study of networking associated with 'difficult to place' adults and 'at risk' young people, McCabe's analysis seems somewhat limited. There is no attempt to explore the potential of networking, as a generator of feedback, as a venue for senior managers to meet practitioners, or for provider to meet purchaser. Nor is the network's power to influence acknowledged, or the skills required of the network broker. In relation to 'difficult to place' adults, these skills proved to be core inter-agency skills. They were highly developed and passed on to those working with 'at risk' young people. In this study networks are seen as an integral, if neglected, part of organisational structures, helping to provide the feedback which agencies need to evaluate their purpose and priorities and set team targets. This

would appear to be an under-researched area with much to discover about the positive and negative aspects of the role of the network in inter-agency working.

10.2 Co-ordination and the role of the co-ordinator in the management of change

Writers on the subject of teams devote considerable attention to team leadership. Lacey and Lomas (1993) consider that the team leader gives 'direction and moulds the individual parts into a whole' (p.144). It is also their job to make final decisions. In an inter-professional team, Higgins and Jaques raise the issue of who, in a team stressing equality and collegiality, should lead. In consequence, 'some regard the question of 'leadership' as outmoded...' (1986, p.8). These issues are all affected by the culture of change which, as in the business world, is required in the provision of human services. To be an individual 'at risk' is indeed, to be exceptionally vulnerable to negative change and exceptionally in need of positive change. Kanter (1984) identifies five key 'building blocks of change' (p.289). These are:

- Departures from tradition
- Crisis or Galvanizing effect
- Strategic decisions
- Individual 'Prime Movers'
- Action 'Vehicles'

The first two, according to Kanter will not of themselves guarantee change. Leadership is required to make strategic decisions in favor of change and create 'an orderly plan' (p.294). These plans then need prime movers and mechanisms with structures and procedures which will enable the innovation to work in practice.

In this study, the case studies suggest that to work with people who are 'at risk' requires departure from tradition. Unlike a business, agency enterprise does not necessarily fail because clients are lost. The galvanising effect of crises is then less marked. In this situation, the attitudes, beliefs and priorities of leaders and prime movers become relatively more important. For Kanter, co-ordination and the role of the co-ordinator has, as the result of changed attitudes and assumptions about how organisations change and grow, become more, rather than less significant. The assumption used to be, according to Kanter, that organisations consisted of specialisms, co-ordination was itself a specialism and co-ordinators made sure, as managers, that the parts fitted together. In the new approach, co-ordination is more complex. Even if efforts are made to reduce specialisation, organisations:

have responsibilities for the consequences of their actions beyond their own borders. They need to learn about and stay informed about what is happening elsewhere, and they need to honor their social responsibilities to act for the larger good. These tasks call for managers with general perspectives and with experience of more than one function. (p.61)

Handy (1985) considers that 'the greater the differentiation the greater the potential for conflict' (p.210) and cites co-ordination and the role of co-ordinator as one of a range of integrating devices to overcome these difficulties. He considers that 'the greater the degree of differentiation between the cultures the more devices the organisation should use' (p.210). He acknowledges that the role is a difficult one and suggests the devices, some or all of which co-ordinators need to fulfil the role. These are:

1. ... position power and the appropriate status...
2. ... expert power, and be perceived to have it by all the groups or individuals whom he is co-ordinating... experience both sides of the fence
3. ... interpersonal skills necessary to resolve conflict situations between individuals in a problem solving mode. (p.210).

Goodwin explores the connections between partnership, professionalism and co-ordination in some detail:

Being a partner means being someone who has a share or a part with another or other persons, a partaker or a sharer in any form of enjoyment or possession. The word 'partner' has been used for centuries though its medieval form derives from the original Latin 'partitio' (partition) and this divisive meaning has remained at its centre. In its many social, political and scientific uses it has since developed as an all purpose term meaning everything from splitting apart to getting together. It should be used with care and only after those using it have discussed the question and decided what they wish to make clear (or maybe conceal). (in Roaf, 1991, p.39).

The tension in the word partnership is full of meaning for those anxious either about threats to, or limitations that might be put on their professionalism. In the literature and case study, comments from professionals showed that this was a real concern for those embarking on inter-agency activity and networking.

*People want to keep their patches safe
 People do not want to be rigid, but cannot do everything and need to accept
 their and other people's limitations
 People must keep clear what their real boundaries are
 In general there needs to be some acceptance that boundaries exist
 (Roaf, 1991, passim)*

The issue is clear. How can a professional, that is, one who has 'a vocation, a calling' (C.O.D.), whose inspiration, experience and motivation come from pursuing a profession, be encouraged to work with, and understand, others not of the same calling? To what extent is it possible to promote the idea that it may be part of professionalism to be able to share it? How can professionals be encouraged to expand the boundaries of their professionalism? Dictionary definitions help to develop Handy's description of the role. A co-ordinator can be regarded as one who 'brings parts into proper relation' (C.O.D.) or (Roget) one who 'adjusts, settles, fixes,

organizes'. Evidence from the case studies suggests that at the heart of inter-agency co-ordination and networking in the human services, is appropriately resourced co-ordination.

If some day care is provided could you accommodate this person at night? If a classroom assistant accompanies this profoundly deaf child into class, would you be prepared to teach her? A co-ordinating team provides that essential little bit of ease and confidence which encourages professionals to expand their idea of what it is they can do. The onus, however, is on the co-ordinator...not only to negotiate the support package, but to hold onto the case if the professionals retreat, or are not ready to stretch. But they can, and must, challenge and argue in order to 'bring parts into proper relation' and in return for the occasional battering they may give them, they must enjoy the confidence of the professionals with whom they work that they will respect a degree of professional limitation and negotiate fairly. (Roaf, 1991, p. 40)

Team synergy thus seems to rest in the co-ordinating skills of the team leader, who in turn depends on guidance from senior managers in the organisation who must then, in Kanter's phrase 'honor their social responsibilities to act for the larger good' (p.61) by ensuring that the work of the teams they are responsible is consistent with the work of similar teams in other agencies.

10.3 Teams in primary care agencies

10.3.1 Introduction

Teams of interest to this study are those specifically designed to:

- help individuals at risk of falling through the net to remain within agency support networks
- help agencies change those elements in the environment which create difficulties for individuals.

These are complex tasks requiring a range of professional skills, including research, professional development and co-ordination. The bicycle provides a useful metaphor. Progress comes when the separate wheels of prevention/policy and positive action/case work are connected by a well oiled chain and hub. Examples would be a Health Service paediatric assessment team, Social Services adolescent services team and in Education, a school or LEA special educational needs team. In most cases referral to these teams only requires intra-agency intervention even though the initial referral may have been prompted by another agency. For example, referral to a GP might be suggested by a school as a way of accessing adolescent mental health services, or to social services via an educational social worker. The majority of referrals to primary care services are straightforward and do not require the combination of more than one service.

However, in the case of DTP adults, until a team was set up to take referrals from agencies and carry out the casework and network broking required to help the individual back into appropriate mainstream support, individuals fell through the net. The same situation holds for

children and young people. It appears from other projects referred to in this study, that similar strategies are needed for other at risk groups such as homeless people. Do people fall 'through the net' because they are difficult people, or because their environment is difficult? Experience of identification and assessment in relation to children with SEN suggests the latter (Faupel and Norgate, 1993). The severity of a child's special educational needs, as defined by the 1981 Education Act, depends upon the interaction of the child and the environment and assessment relates specifically to this interaction. Thus the ability to meet and prevent needs is a factor of school effectiveness to a greater extent than previously realised and more heavily dependent on well co-ordinated support services.

The primary care agencies impact on children in different ways however. This may affect the way in which agencies interpret their role and priorities in relation to them. Health and social services, for example, prioritise those whose lives are at risk but also engage in community preventative work. Education by contrast is concerned with life chances rather than with risks to life but tends to prioritise those that succeed at school rather than those that fail. Thus in Health the greater the risk the more likely a client or patient is to receive a service while in education the reverse is true (Parsons et al, 1994).

In this study, it was not possible in the time scale to investigate how teams operated in all three primary care agencies. In theory it would have been possible, for example, to compare structures and systems in a hospital or a children's home. However both of these would, as would the special school, or young offender institution, have been specialist, as opposed to mainstream, or community, examples of provision, dealing with crisis rather than prevention. In addition, the young people in these establishments are not 'at risk' in the same way. They may have been 'through the net' and may become so again, but whilst in an institution, they are not. Some generalisations can be made but this study restricts attention to the original point of comparison which was the operation of special educational needs team in secondary comprehensive schools. These schools are regarded for this purpose, as microcosms of society in which it is possible to see intra-agency co-ordinating structures and processes operating in a stylised way. Superficial comparison between the model and the typical structure of the SEN team showed them to be similar. More detailed study shed further light on possibilities not yet fully realised in the inter-agency model. These related to the mechanisms by which such co-ordinating teams were funded, but also concerned other areas such as research and staff development and training.

10.3.2 The role of the school in inter-agency work for children and young people: Special Educational Needs Teams.

For Education, as for Health and Social Services, inter-agency co-operation is no longer an option. Children's Services Plans are mandatory and are intended to ensure that strategies for planning and delivering services for children are inter-agency and schools have a role, limited as yet, in their development. In 1994 the joint working advocated in the Code of Practice, on identification and assessment procedures, was introduced in schools (DfEE, 1994). The Code also advocated an inter-agency approach to the framing of individual education and care management plans.

Progress towards more effective inter-agency working is, however, hindered by lack of a common language and local structures to implement legislation collaboratively. This is something schools can surmount by developing their policies and definitions of 'need' jointly with the agencies they work with. In implementing the 1981 Education Act, LEAs have developed arrangements to ensure some redistribution of resources which are then directed to individual children with special needs. In Health and Social Services money does not follow children in the same way and no mechanisms have yet been formulated to ensure the matched funding which would prevent young people falling 'through the net'. Without inter-agency funding strategies, coherent inter-agency planning which would bring about the integration of care and education is hard to arrange. As a consequence more children and young people truant, are excluded or otherwise fail to benefit from education than would otherwise be the case.

Riley (1992) highlights this tension in relation to provision for the under fives. It is no less acute for older children and teenagers. Ultimately, during childhood and adolescence, the school, even more than the family becomes the locus of inter-agency activity. Schools are then faced with a dilemma. If they accept their inter-agency role, they also accept some responsibility for care as well as education. If they do not (and are not selective in their intake) they risk poor outcomes in terms of marketable commodities such as exam results, and a rise in truancy and exclusions. In the past it was easier than it is now to ignore this. Legislation has heightened this dilemma and made it more apparent than previously that how schools co-ordinate their own resources and promote effective inter-agency co-operation is an important part of the way in which they assert the entitlement to education for those who are most likely to be denied it.

School models of co-operation

One of the ways in which schools both attract, and compensate for lack of, support from other agencies in the care of their students is to develop support structures within school. Many

schools operate intra-agency models to support young people which mirror almost exactly the models of co-operation described in the case study (Bradley and Roaf, 1994). Prominent in the model (and variously labelled) are special needs/ learning/ curriculum/pupil support teams. These tend to be based in centres which act as a 'holding bay' between the classroom and home or street, where young people can receive immediate support from skilled staff with time to listen. The intra - agency special needs support team co-ordinates resources from within the school and mobilises additional resources from other agencies or the local community. This model displays the same features of team, network and policy or senior management group that seem to be effective elsewhere in promoting co-operation across professional and agency boundaries and combining preventive work and case management. This is as important in the school as it is in the community.

There are other similarities. In secondary schools faculty and year teams have different jobs and use different methods to achieve their ends. Age groups differ as do areas of the curriculum. These teams stand, in the microcosm of the school, in relation to children, in the same way as the primary care agencies do in the community. The special needs team must, as an 'inter-agency' team, do business with all of them and must therefore understand their methods and objectives, values and attitudes. This understanding is required to support the individual child and to help the school as a whole adapt and change.

In the school model, the strategy group is represented by the senior management team and governing body and has overall responsibility for policy and development and oversight of the team's activities. Finally, the network can be identified in the school model in the meetings many schools operate to co-ordinate support for young people in difficulty. Some schools also operate inter-agency liaison groups. A large school's liaison group, as we saw in the examples in Lothian Region, could consist of twenty or thirty people. Between them they can ensure that the school becomes part of whatever inter-agency structure has been developed in the community and can begin to draw on it for support and resources.

These are some of the similarities of approach between school models and community models. Inter-agency models of this kind are now emerging in a number of local authorities. Research into these shows that intra-agency and inter-agency teams share many of the characteristics of good practice which were noted in the case study. There is the same emphasis on, for example, commitment and support from senior management, networking and regular inter-agency meetings to discuss ethical issues, changes in legislation and practice, gaps in provision and information sharing, common work practices, agreed definitions, and joint training.

In the school model as with the community model, the advantages of the inter-agency approach are the effective combination of strategy group, team and network. This enables the team to be more effective as a resource than it would have been on its own without the support of the other two elements. The team promotes effective liaison and collaboration with faculty and year teams, encouraging them to support students more fully themselves. The staff thus feel more, rather than less skilled as a result of the team's intervention. The team can move flexibly between the other school teams to fill gaps in provision as they arise. Through its investigative and research interests the team works with others to find additional resources, for example to negotiate funding and staff for new projects to meet unexpected needs and needs previously unidentified. The team is also able to advise on long term strategic planning. Finally, the team co-ordinator is able to arrange regular network meetings to promote further collaborative work, to maintain an overview on the provision available and to provide feedback.

For individuals, the model provides support enabling them to remain in school if attendance is at risk, or return to school if they have been away. Continuity of support for individual young people is also guaranteed. Because the team can tap into the community networks, it can plan, together with other agencies, packages of support extending beyond the school day for young people with complex needs. Their short and long term development can be considered as can their need to acquire greater self esteem and confidence to help them make positive relationships with adults and their peer group.

10.4 Inter-agency projects: making process visible

One response to the problem of agency failure to support those with needs requiring the services of more than agency has been to set up an independent inter-agency team to undertake the necessary case management and network broking. These projects have typically depended on the vision and commitment of an influential individual, charity or research body. The result, in some instances, has been that at the end of the pilot period, agency funding has replaced the original grant and the work becomes absorbed into agency practice. The ECST, MARS and Surrey Youth Link (see Chapter 8) are examples of projects which were able to convince policy makers, through practice, in a way which rhetoric could not have done. The result has been a redistribution of agency energy and resources to the least advantaged. Another way of expressing this would be to say that agency purpose had been refocussed. How has this been achieved?

In order to investigate the difficulties their clients were experiencing and to find appropriate resources, project workers have had to learn the rules, language and culture of a range of agencies. They have also had to move through all levels of agency hierarchy. To do this they have developed interpersonal skills as communicators and co-ordinators. Whatever their original specialism, this has been subsumed in the need to understand and respect a range of

professional expertise so that they can access it for their clients. They have had to work together, since agency power could not be confronted single handed. They have had to acquire a secure knowledge base and be in command of a range of accurate data in order to be regarded as credible advocates for their clients. Finally they have had to understand process, and promote feedback, working through existing communication channels or creating new ones.

The study of young people 'through the net' is more than usually instructive. By definition these individuals do not fit typical agency descriptors. Instead, they challenge these by their complexity and volatility. Young people 'through the net' move from category to category and cannot be compartmentalised. In the container metaphor they are butterflies or very slippery fish, rarely staying still long enough to be examined. Those who work with them have to be prepared to enter the rough ground between agency playing fields in order to observe, meet and talk with them. This is especially true of teenagers who pass rapidly out of the knowledge of the one agency, education, to see them daily. In interview, however, individuals 'through the net' can, by expressing their needs and feelings, reveal what provision is needed for everyone more accurately than anyone else. To ignore them as 'exceptions that prove the rule', or as 'too difficult to be worth helping', is to ignore an opportunity to learn how to adapt the environment in ways which, by definition, will benefit everyone, and to raise expectations of what is possible and how success can be achieved (Devlin, 1995). An example of the way in which co-ordinating models enable agencies to refocus and redistribute resources is given by current approaches to funding special educational needs in school.

A number of recent studies have proposed funding mechanisms to ensure that mainstream schools identify children's special educational needs and arrange provision for them in accordance with the principles and practice of inclusion (Audit Commission, 1992a; 1998; Coopers and Lybrand, 1996). Evidence from some Local Education Authorities (LEAs) suggests that:

- how funding is used
- how support is organised
- the LEA's concept of SEN

are more important than how much funding there is overall and how equitably it is distributed (Gray and Dessent, 1993). Greater correspondence between needs and funding is desirable but 100% accuracy is not realistic at the present time and if pursued too far as a goal distracts from the primary purpose which is to ensure that existing resources are used efficiently.

An NFER study (1997) points out that local management of schools (LMS) and the 1994 Code of Practice emphasise identification and assessment of the individual child's learning difficulties rather than consideration of wider issues such as school effectiveness and teacher effectiveness. Thus headteachers tend to request equity, efficiency and transparency based on the idea that 'x' needs should equal 'y' funds. This has turned out to be an over simplistic and flawed relationship. It is essential therefore that funding follows existing good practice, and attempts to improve practice, rather than simple identification of need. Schools tend to want, and think they need, a change of funding. What they need, but do not necessarily want, is a change in organisation and practice. A responsible LEA will not concede to the former without ensuring the latter through the development of a well organised, co-ordinated and differentiated special educational needs support service (SENSS).

Although effective SEN funding mechanisms are at an early stage of development and there is, as yet, little agreement or consistency among LEAs, and a lack of research evidence to support particular approaches, some LEAs have been successful in combining low levels of 'statementing' with maximum financial delegation. In these LEAs, as schools become more familiar with SEN, types of difficulty which might previously have triggered a demand for a statement no longer do so, for example specific learning difficulties and mild learning difficulties. The common factors in these LEAs are:

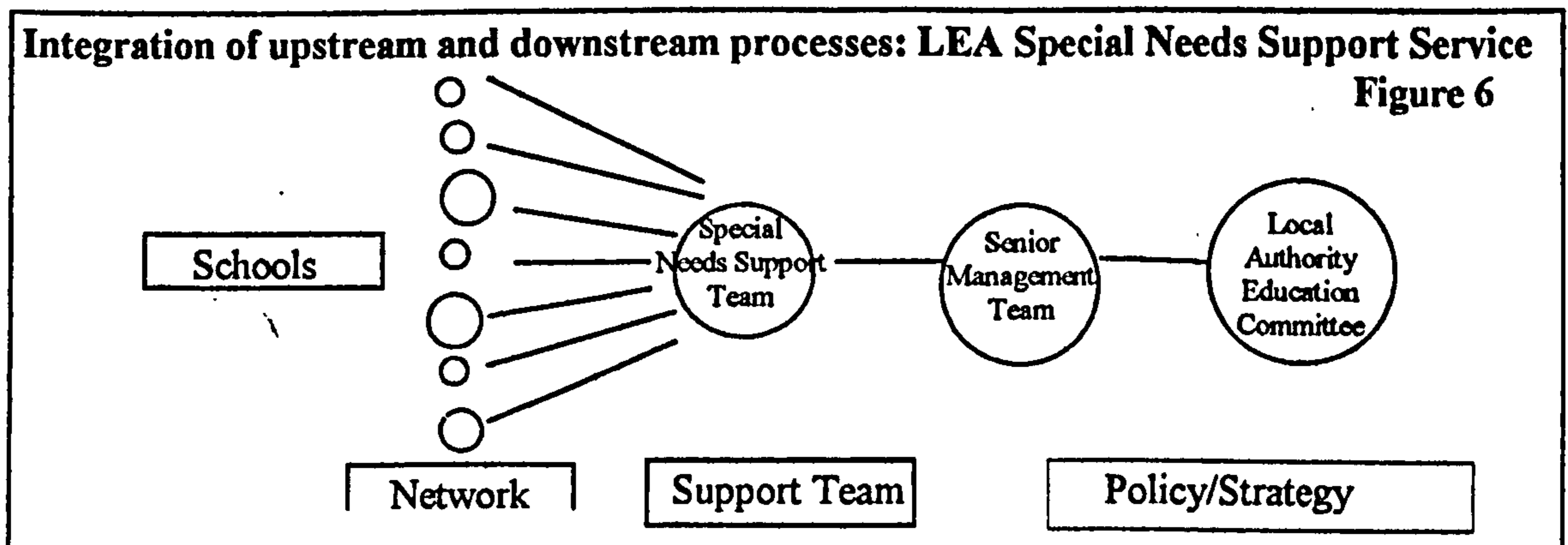
- Special attention is given to the role and co-ordination of SEN Support Services
- Communication between individuals (e.g. SENCO and Officer) and 'paper' meetings is replaced by round table conferences attended by representatives of all the relevant services. This promotes transparency by allowing issues to be discussed openly and good practice shared
- A balance is held at all levels between issues led 'upstream' research and development mode, and needs led, 'downstream' decision making mode
- A key element of the SENSS role is to remind schools regularly, in person, of their responsibilities towards their pupils with SEN and to offer practical and co-ordinated support and guidance in carrying this out.

For LEAs therefore, starting points would be:

- Clarifying the concept of inclusive education
- Clarifying the role and organisation of SENSS and its relationship to the schools and to LEA officers and advisers

- Using existing structures to best effect, for example, school partnerships as the centres for increased opportunities for research and training in inclusive education/equal opportunities (Cade and Caffyn, 1994; Lunt, Evans, Norwich, Wedell, 1994)
- Adapting their LMS scheme to reflect the dual nature of effective inclusive SEN policy and practice. That is:
 - positive action on behalf of individual pupils with difficulties ('downstream', needs led)
 - whole school preventative action promoting equal opportunities/responding to diversity ('upstream', issues led).

Effective models can be illustrated diagrammatically (Figure 6) and reveal the same elements discovered in the inter-agency model described in the case study. In these models good practice is identified and assessed rather than individuals, and interest focuses on the most complex because of the stimulus provided by the circumstances of these individuals for research to improve good practice further. These models tend to be dynamic because they accept the challenge of individuals whose needs are complex and volatile. Furthermore the support, or consultation group, can exert more influence on a school unwilling to refocus its purpose to include the least well off than any individual member of it could on their own. In this way the group can challenge the traditional power and authority of the institution.



10.5 Conclusions

Co-ordinating structures between and within each agency are required for the same reasons as in the Education model just described:

- To clarify and assert agency policy
- To use knowledge about the needs of the most complex to identify good practice and suggest improvements to meet community needs as well as individual needs
- To reprioritise energy and resources

- To combine skills and resources effectively
- To encourage feedback
- To identify areas for research and development
- To monitor and evaluate progress

Teams used for these purposes, as in schools, are linked more clearly with management than with networks which remain shadowy. For example, a social services Adolescent Services team will typically link with a large number of other local professional and community groups who can/ be regarded as its 'network' without this being formalised as such. It is possible that formalisation would reduce the total number of meetings that would otherwise be necessary to maintain communication and flow of feedback with such a range of groups. A more explicit awareness of a network could also make individual meetings more effective (interview with Social Services Unit Manager).

In the Health Service, teams are more likely to dominate other structural elements. The concept of the network, in these circumstances is unfamiliar but once grasped would be more likely to include parents. For example, some GP practices now operate patients' groups which provide both support and feedback. Looking for points of comparison between a mainstream schools special needs team and similar teams in other services thus highlights some other points of contrast between client group, agency priorities and definitions of people regarded as 'at risk'. Where inter-agency teams exist for people 'at risk', they are an indication that a co-ordinating structure also exists, even if only in an embryonic form, weak for lack of attention. Examples from inter-agency practice support the theory developed in this study that intra-agency teams supporting people 'at risk' need to be connected to inter-agency co-ordinating structures which are also fully functional.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Conclusions

11.0 Introduction

Over the thirty year period covered in this study, a cyclical pattern emerges. The post World War II welfare model of universal provision persisted into the sixties. In this climate if needs existed, it was assumed that they should be met and that post war growth and prosperity would eventually achieve this. In the face of deepening recession, universal provision as an ideal became more difficult to sustain and led to calls for greater accountability. 'Accountability' in this context leads inexorably to identification and assessment of individual need at the expense of more general prevention. Hence priorities are set so that agencies focus on ever reducing numbers of individuals in more extreme need. Ironically, the equal opportunities debate contributed to these developments during the seventies and eighties. A social justice model based on positive action alone is an approach to the problem of inequality based on rights rather than needs. In this climate, the ideal of universal provision and the need for ecological perspectives on welfare are easily neglected so that needs increase. The development of this cycle of preventative and proactive work over a generation makes it easier than formerly to see how upstream and downstream work inter-relate over time as well as in the present. What is required is a strategy enabling this inter-relationship between upstream/downstream and needs/rights to be constant rather than cyclical. In the absence of such a strategy, practitioners and their clients lurch from one mode to the other with no means of creating a balance between them.

The literature review uncovered this cycle and showed that inter-agency work, and its study, has a longer history than is currently supposed. Practitioners frequently had personal experience of inter-agency co-operation, having worked through earlier stages of the upstream/downstream cycle at some point in their working lives. Thus social workers, youth workers, probation officers or teachers, although currently dominated by downstream work, often mentioned, in discussion, their previous involvement with upstream initiatives such as Child Guidance or Intermediate Treatment. They used this experience as a point of reference when considering the benefits of inter-agency work, but had not considered how the organisational and co-ordinating structures familiar to them within agencies might be translated into structures which would function between them.

The evidence of the case study however, led to the conclusion that formal structures were as important between as within agencies in order to promote and maintain inter-agency co-

operation. Furthermore, successful models of inter-agency co-operation shared some characteristic features. The case study revealed, for example, the significance of the relationship between individuals in need and the strength of feeling these needs aroused in individual practitioners. This relationship could be most sharply observed when practitioners were faced with individuals for whom they required the help of one or more other agencies but had no means of securing this. The practitioner could then, according to their personality and/or professional circumstances, either give up, ignore this situation, or they could persist and try to find a means of crossing agency boundaries. Generally they stayed in downstream mode and looked for a short term process based solution, perhaps seeking the help of someone known to them in another agency. In the case study and other similar projects attempts were made to move into longer term upstream systemic mode while supporting existing downstream work. These projects showed that co-ordinating structures were required to maintain and develop inter-agency processes but that these must be designed in such a way as to ensure the development of inter-agency process at all levels in agency hierarchies. Furthermore, although the word 'hierarchy' is used this did not necessarily imply a hierarchical mode of operation. Rather it reflected the qualitative difference between thinking and planning, action, and networking and feedback. The same people could easily be involved in all three structurally distinct activities.

The literature and the case studies of projects and individuals showed that the factors contributing to successful co-operation were wide ranging covering legislation, organisation, professional practice and financial resources. The common factor linking them was the existence of intra-agency co-ordinating structures mirrored by similar inter-agency co-ordinating structures. The structure itself appeared to be successful because it was simple, enabling even the smallest action carried out by paraprofessionals working far from an agency base, to connect with managers and policy makers in its effects. 'Doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason' could therefore be analysed in detail and assumed a new meaning for everyone involved. This study concludes therefore, that a structure which could ensure effective communication and feedback between these three components would help agencies co-operate more effectively and give them a means of evaluating current policy and re-prioritising their work.

11.1 Findings

11.1.1 Legislation

The study found that legislators had it in their power to specify the inter-departmental co-ordinating structures and joint funding mechanisms required to promote inter-agency co-operation and to include child impact statements in all legislation affecting children and families as separate entities. Legislators also had it in their power to ensure that strategies to meet children's needs addressed them as a group with collective needs as citizens as well as with individual needs arising from particular circumstances. Legislation is required to cover children in for example, hospital, residential care or custody or homeless, but legislation should also set up effective government structures which do not compartmentalise children and ensure that preventative and proactive work is fully integrated.

11.1.2 Organisational structures: the dimensions of good practice

The factors contributing to effective inter-agency practice and the features characterising it, was found in the study to have two dimensions. Structural and process issues appeared inextricably linked in the models found to be 'fit for the purpose' and among practitioners capable of 'doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason'. When things went wrong in the life of a young person, as a consequence of the failure of agencies to co-operate, incidents in the 'chain of causation' could be plotted on a grid demonstrating where the difficulties lay and this detailed analysis could be used to point to improvements that would have to be made to prevent a similar occurrence. In demanding cases, the grid could also be used as a preventative strategy to highlight areas of risk from factors already known.

Structures within and between agencies can in principle be set up without legislation but this has been rare, usually restricted to small scale, short term, local projects. Where they exist between agencies and have come into existence through legislation, for example the Scottish Children's Hearings, MPAs, JCCs and ACPCs, they have been notably long term and effective. Their effectiveness would however be enhanced by improved co-ordination elsewhere in the system by for example, the existence of Youth Strategy groups and local inter-agency co-ordinating groups and networks. Principally, policy makers suffer from the lack of feedback. Thus the study demonstrated that even though effective models of co-operation exist within agencies, they tend to lie unnoticed with key components, particularly the network, neglected and undeveloped.

11.1.3 Professional practice

Interpersonal skills emerged as the core skills required by those engaging in inter-agency work coupled with what Handy (1985) refers to a 'position power' (status) and 'expert power', a working knowledge of the range of working practice, legislation and culture of the agencies and professionals involved with the client group. Inter-agency work thus emerges as a new professionalism with its own skills and practice relating to co-ordination, networking, network broking, research, and staff development and training. Policy makers easily alienate practitioners, many of them highly specialised professionals, clever, idiosyncratic, valued for their specialist skill rather than the ability to co-operate. Networkers and co-ordinators are required to harness the expertise, secure access for those who need it, mediate professional expertise for their clients and provide feedback to policy makers. In this respect, professional practice has been much affected by demands for increased accountability in a world of shrinking financial support for public services. Every professional now works alongside para professional practitioners as fellow team members. This has increased the range of issues to be dealt with by professionals as team leaders, concerned with policy, personnel issues, training and staff development. Inter-agency work is no exception with inter- and intra- agency para professionals beginning to appear in for example, schools or children's homes with many skills shared in common the closer they are to agency boundaries. However, until relatively recently, two issues guaranteed to cause anxiety and stress at any gathering of agency practitioners to discuss inter-agency co-operation were the need for inter-agency co-ordinating teams and the idea of inter-agency work as a new professionalism. Post 1995, however, these ideas have begun to gain credibility. A number of researchers in this country and in North America have contributed to this change, for example, Hambleton et. al. (1995), Leathard (1994), Wilson and Charlton (1997) and Vangen and Huxham (1994). The market economy of the late 1990's, among other factors, has lent itself to the proliferation of project based innovation. In this climate inter-agency programmes have flourished and with them an increase in the number of practitioners now employed primarily as inter-agency workers. Professional and theoretical connections have yet to be made between them however. It has been the fundamental purpose of this study to contribute to that development.

11.1.4 Financial resources

This study has shown that the most significant measure of the effectiveness of inter-agency projects for young people 'through the net' is the extent to which experience of successful inter-agency work persuades agencies to refocus agency purpose and redistribute agency resources. By putting resources into co-operation, agencies give themselves the opportunity to

evaluate current agency practice and provision together. Inter-agency panels or support teams which take referrals from agencies of individuals at points of crisis or change are thus, in effect, acting as peer moderators and evaluators of agency practice. Scrutiny of the individuals referred to them shifts the container metaphor implied in the phrase 'through the net' so that practitioners become enquirers and investigators rather than hunters and trappers, more interested in releasing their clients into a friendly environment than protecting them from a hostile one. In so doing it becomes clear that it is practitioners who are trapped by the failure of agencies to co-operate rather than their clients, and that it is problems, notably the 'wicked issues' referred to earlier, not people that fall 'through the net'.

While refocusing of energy in the form of staffing, perhaps through short term secondments, is relatively simple, ring fencing money for inter-agency work has proved more difficult to achieve. Funding for special educational needs in schools is, for example, 'indicated' rather than ringfenced and in most areas, funding for additional educational needs comes from savings made elsewhere rather than by removing it from mainstream provision. Young people 'at risk', it seems, are entitled to resources provided this does not put the privileged at risk. Such practice implies that current policy falls some way short of the Rawlsian view that it is only fair to privilege the already privileged if doing so benefits the least well off (Rawls, 1972).

11.2 Strengths and weaknesses of the study

Strengths and weaknesses in this study tend to complement each other. The study was motivated by observation of a problem. If mentally disordered, difficult to place adults could be prevented from falling through the net of agency provision, could other groups, such as difficult to place elderly people or young people in difficulties be similarly helped? The evidence of Elmore suggested that they could but that policy makers and practitioners would have difficulty understanding why because the methodology was new and therefore unknown and untested. A strength of the case study was that it broke new ground while its weakness was to embark on a risky project however potentially ground breaking. The risk stemmed from lack of understanding of the nature and extent of the problem among policy makers and, indeed, acceptance of it as 'normal' by many practitioners combined with a lack of commitment to the young people and their families and lack of resources.

The study began with the simple intention of finding out whether a methodological technique could effect a similar solution in a different context. The study's main strength was to demonstrate that while the methodology held, it could not be relied on to produce a successful

outcome without inter-agency commitment of policy makers and without independent funding. In Lothian, for example, a similar problem had been observed and the structures were set up first by policy makers and inter-agency practice and some additional funding followed. It is recorded that there were disputes among elected members and policymakers but the strategy went ahead (Maginnis, 1989). In Oxford there was no such commitment from policy makers in spite of support from elected members so that bottom up effort from practitioners appeared to be the only strategy. This led to a further combination of strength and weakness. The strength was that the study has stayed close to practitioners and to young people and their families. In order to secure the support of fellow practitioners the researcher had to listen, observe and persuade through example. Decisions had to be made as a group and difficulties had to be resolved in and by the group. If in Lothian there were disputes among policy makers, in Oxford there were disputes between practitioners. A weakness in the study has been the difficulty of remaining objective in these circumstances even though these difficulties highlighted the importance of process issues and the significance of interpersonal skills in the development of inter-agency work. The extent of these problems drew attention to the importance of process and the ability of inter-agency projects to expose and confront these issues at source.

If these aspects were weaknesses, in that it was difficult to make sense as a researcher of much of the evidence because of the constant engagement in practice, a strength is the literature review. As a researcher, caught between the severe problems of process revealed in the case study and its huge potential for success, the literature provided a wealth of relatively 'safe' and objective information. It acted as a welcome cross-referencing device demonstrating the persistence of inter-agency co-operation as a concept and confirming the lack of progress and the need for theory development and further research. Limitations in the literature review are the lack of attention to youth work, community care and adolescent mental health initiatives. In the study as a whole, more comparative studies of inter-agency projects and of intra-agency teams would have been desirable. However, time and space prevented this and it is doubtful whether they would have contributed more to the study as it stands.

11.3 Ideas for further research

A number of ideas for further research are suggested by this study.

1. The inter-agency co-ordinating model presented here as an evaluation and training tool now needs to be tested more widely and used in relation to other constellations of agencies, within a range of individual agencies, and in relation to different client groups. If, as is suggested in this thesis, the structure is successful in asserting the rights of particular groups and redistributing

resources towards the most vulnerable, it would be useful to compare this model of co-operation with those used by Non-Government Organisations such as Amnesty International or Oxfam. Theoretically, the ultimate success criteria for the model would be to introduce it to the women of Ariel Dorfman's play *Widows* (Dorfman, 1997) to find out whether it could help them overcome military force through co-operation and influence.

2. The problem of whether to organise services holistically to meet the needs of client groups such as children in difficulty, or to maintain them as now in separate primary care groups is not addressed in this study. It does not however, seem either feasible or desirable to plan for services entirely without boundaries in the increasingly specialised and predominantly urban environment of modern times. Even if services for children were more fully integrated, there would still be the potential difficulty of crossing the boundary between child and adult. The evidence from both the case study and the literature suggested that boundaries continue to be, for all practical purposes, a given. Thus the meta-narrative in this study has been primarily concerned to develop a theory to guide policy makers and practitioners in their design of the local and national inter-agency structures and practice which will ensure safe boundary crossings for all their clients and practitioners. Research is required however into what co-ordinating structures are needed, and what balance is to be held between the need to address upstream or downstream needs. A Ministry for Children, a Children's Rights Commissioner, child impact statements, Children's Services Plans and local inter-agency groups of the type outlined in the study would possibly be sufficient. Western minds rooted in Aristotelian thought tend to think in terms of A and not A where Eastern thought rooted in Buddhism might be more at home with merged services and more communitarian approaches (Kosko, 1993). These ideas merit more detailed comparative study internationally.

3. A major problem, mentioned but unresolved in this study, is to understand how agencies can be encouraged to co-operate effectively when their fundamental tenets are in opposition. In this study for example, the case study revealed the sharp contrast in attitude between Education and every other service. In the case study this proved to be the single most important issue leading to a negative outcome. Social Services and Health presented as protectors of life and life chances, Education did not, even though schools had been delegated the funds enabling them to do so. Education's objectives, intensified in school, tend to be based on concepts of excellence, of progress, and norms which depend on abstractions, an idea of what can be achieved by some, and of what behaviours are to count as 'normal'. The school system is designed to select out those who do not conform and whose life chances are then, by definition, most at risk. Nor

are the distinctions and links between upstream and downstream work as clearly marked as they are in health or social services. For the welfare of children and young people the potential and significance of further work in this area is vast. A starting point would be to look at how local inter-agency co-ordinating groups might encourage Education to become more inclusive in its approach, take more risks with privileged young people not themselves at risk and engage in more effective upstream work to benefit those whose life chances Education currently exposes, metaphorically speaking, to the elements.

4. There is scope for detailed work studying the psychology of inter-agency groups, of practitioner reactions to co-operative working and the way in which inter and intra-agency groups manage group behaviour and attitude. For social psychologists the 'thoughts, feelings and behaviours of each person affect or are affected by the thoughts feelings and behaviours of others' (Deaux, Kane and Wrightson, 1993). Owen (1996) stresses the importance of team members making decisions as a group about what they want to achieve together and the discovery of individual goals in group goals. In the inter-agency arena, such approaches are effective in helping to promote the use of appropriate language and to model co-operative behaviour among practitioners. This strategy also discourages unilateral action while encouraging independence, confidence and flexibility. Groups of this kind are notably effective in using their combined influence to overcome, for example, aggressive management, prejudice, or abuses of human rights.

5. Finally, this study has exposed, but not addressed, the difficulty inherent in much proactive work with individuals perceived to be in need. The tendency to focus on downstream at the expense of upstream work appears to be deeply ingrained. Possibly downstream work presents as more manageable and within the capacity of individuals working on their own. It is certainly more immediate and does not necessarily require a lot of campaigning. However, current thinking about children and their rights as citizens suggests that children urgently need inter-agency groups to campaign for the changes in attitude leading to improved quality of life and amenities such as local swimming pools, cinemas, cycle tracks and child care. The case studies of individuals and other projects suggest that this imbalance can be reliably rectified by inviting children, young people and their families to take part in the discussion and decision making and to listen to their views. Comparative studies are required to investigate the proportion of upstream and downstream work going on in and between agencies and between projects and the extent to which young people are actively involved as fellow citizens. It would, for example,

have been interesting to undertake an in-depth comparative study of the Mid Glamorgan project and the M.A.R.S. project described in Chapter 8.

11.4 Conclusions

It would seem that the model for interagency co-operation proposed in this thesis could be used as an effective tool in the evaluation of programmes attempting to solve 'wicked issues'. The substantive issue is how to reverse usual practice, by privileging the vulnerable rather than the already privileged and how to convince the privileged that redistribution of resources is no robbery. It would be naive to suppose that a model as simple as the one proposed can be an equally simple panacea for wicked issues. The model developed in the case study and applied, or discovered, in other situations has proved sufficiently simple and robust to use in relation to a range of problems caused by the failure of agencies to co-operate. However, its simplicity is deceptive, disguising the rigour of a process which requires protagonists to sit down together, perhaps in the company of a facilitator to enable individual members discover their own goals in group goals.

In general however, professionals within agencies have to experience the benefits to believe them and this cannot be achieved without independently funded pilot projects. The elements in the co-ordinating structure proposed are not always easy to identify and nor is the necessity of each part's function easily appreciated. Nor can the structure be successful without the commitment of the participants at each level. In the case study and other projects cited, it was difficult for practitioners to separate the problem from the person and to connect the preventative issues led work to improve the environment from the proactive needs led work with individual young people. The essential function of the co-ordinating structure is that it achieves a synthesis of public issue and private problem. As a tool for evaluation and staff development it promotes the play of ideas and possibilities. As a structure in real life it influences the way practitioners, managers and policy makers go about their business.

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