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8

Safeguarding Children's Well-being within Educational Settings: A Critical Review of Inclusion Strategies

Jo Warin

Introduction

Education is central to the safeguarding children agenda. In protecting children and maximizing their potential *Every Child Matters* (Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 2003) argued that the plans it outlined would reduce the educational failure of children. There are several ways in which education is held to be important in safeguarding children; it is central to the 'enjoying and achieving' outcome of *Every Child Matters* and to the longer-term concerns with the economic well-being of children. In addition, education has not been immune from the idea that we see in several chapters in this volume that in order to safeguard children then parenting needs to be improved. We shall see in this chapter that these concerns about education in the safeguarding agenda are, in fact, closely related.

In their consideration of the 'dividing line between family autonomy and legitimate state intervention', the Commission on Families and the Wellbeing of Children (2005, p. ix) emphasize that children's educational sites provide ideal venues for parenting interventions. This is reflected in the role of education in the pre-school and compulsory school years in the transmission of parenting advice and information, a trend that has been particularly visible since the introduction of *Every Child Matters*. This might be welcomed as education is one of a diminishing number of universal services in the UK, and hence, theoretically at least, all parents – rather than just the poorest – with dependent children could be open to pressures aimed at 'encouraging' them to conform to New Labour's version of the responsible parent. The theory somewhat diminishes, however, when one takes account of the fact that those parents wealthy enough to opt

out of everyday parenting by sending their children to fee-paying boarding schools are not subjected to such pressures, and that it is those children from economically deprived and/or black and minority ethnic (BME) families who – and their parents – are labelled as being problematic in education policy and practice (Crozier, 2005; Lupton, 2005). The class and 'race' dimensions of the problematizing of parenting, however, are lost in a discourse about marginalized parents who are alleged to be 'hard to reach' (for instance, Social Exclusion Taskforce, 2007a, 2007b), a discourse that, as we shall see, risks pathologizing poorer parents, rather than taking account of the various pressures and barriers they face to participating in the formal education of their children.

This chapter challenges the idea that parents are 'hard to reach'. It does this by examining national and local policy strategies that have been directed at two specific categories of parents identified as such; BME parents and fathers. I problematize the concept of 'reach' arguing that many parents in these categories do not believe that their own parental knowledge and expertise is recognized, sought out or valued by education professionals. I then go on to discuss the idea of 'mutual reach' between parents and educational institutions as a means of valuing the knowledge of parents before examining the concept of knowledge exchange.

The chapter discusses these issues in policy and practice, not just within compulsory schooling, but also within related educational institutions such as Children's Centres and extended schools. The central argument of this chapter – that education policy needs to take account of parents 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2005) – has been developed through my involvement in three empirical studies. The first was an evaluation of a five-year development project known as Raising Achievement in Inner City Schools (RAICS). Under the RAICS project 70 schools received funding through the Single Regeneration Budget to raise school achievement by devising strategies for increasing the quality and quantity of the involvement of parents in the education of their children (Edwards and Warin, 1999). The research was based in one local education authority in the mid 1990s. The second was a large-scale qualitative study of family life in Rochdale, Lancashire, focusing on aspects of parental care and control in families with teenagers. It provided insight into the 'funds of knowledge' that parents possess and the many informal ways that children are educated in the home and local community. This research revealed tensions between the valuing in schools of efforts expended on academic achievement and efforts expended in different, but equally valuable and educational activities, such as caring for younger siblings, and sporting activities outside of school (Langford *et al.*, 2001; Solomon *et al.*, 2002; Warin *et al.*, 1999). The third study that this chapter is based upon is an evaluation of Early Excellence Centres in Cumbria in the North of England (Warin, 2000). Early Excellence Centres were the pre-cursors to Sure Start Children's Centres and were seen as spearheading the way for inclusive practices with families and the integration of the different professional services. The Cumbrian centres had a particular brief for reaching isolated rural families and for working with fathers.

Parental involvement practices

There are many opportunities for parental involvement in the schooling of their dependent children. So, for instance, the RAICS project outlined above included opportunities (such as parents' evenings, open days, homework diaries and Parent Teacher Association meetings) that will be familiar to readers who may have engaged with them as pupils and/or parents. Other strategies (for example, bingo and cheese and wine evenings) were social events developed by the RAICS schools in order to attract parents on to school territory in order to raise the profile of parental involvement in them.

Since the time of the RAICS project (the mid 1990s) some of these practices have become more firmly entrenched within school procedures, especially under the influence of the Office for Standards in Education's (Ofsted) inspection focus on communication between school and parents (Ofsted, 1999). An updated list would now include the use of school websites for accessing information about the school and, demonstrating the authoritarian drift in school-parent/parenting relationships, the introduction of Parenting Contracts (formal agreements between school and parents introduced in 2003 to address pupil behaviour and attendance) and Parenting Orders which the 2006 Education and Inspections Act allows schools to apply for in cases of exclusion and where a pupil has 'seriously misbehaved, but has not been excluded' (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2006, p. 291).

We could also update this list through the many formal and informal opportunities for parent communication with education staff that have proliferated through the development of Children's Centres, and the creation of extended schools services. In the Cumbria Early Excellence cluster of Sure Start centres (now Children's Centres) there were specific events for enskilling, informing and educating parents, such as talks on aspects of 'Healthy Living' (for example, nutrition and first aid), drop-in counselling for parents, and courses on behaviour management, as well as certificated evening classes, for example, a NVQ3 in Early Years Care and Education. Looking ahead, there are two relevant recommendations for action in *Every Parent Matters* (DfES, 2007). First, that all schools should have information sessions organized by the school as part of the induction of new pupils when they move into primary schooling and, again, at transfer to secondary schooling (many already do this). Second, parents should have access to school-based 'Parent Support Advisers'. The intention is that this new professional role should ensure 'effective exchanges of information' between home and school, provide basic parenting classes and recommend parents to specialist services where they are deemed necessary (DfES, 2007, p. 25).

Taken together, the activities discussed above represent different opportunities, backed by various levels of compulsion, for professional educators to *transmit* knowledge, and underlying values, into the home via parents with dependent children. The discussion, however, demonstrates that the opportunities for parents to initiate meaningful communication with the school and to present

their own values, hopes, and information about their children, are often very thin on the ground. This one-way flow of information has been revealed in a number of studies of home-school contact (Bastiani, 1997; Cairney, 2000; Crozier, 1997; Edwards and Warin, 1999). While the Children's Plan (Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, p. 5) in noting that the 'government does not bring up children – parents do' seems to cede to parents' expertise as people who know what is best for their children, educational policy and practice looks much more like strategies for correcting perceived parental inadequacies than acknowledging that parents might have knowledge and expertise in raising children. So, while educational institutions and services provide a means of engaging in the private world of families and parenting, the expectation that is built into the policies and practices of home-school communication is that parents are to be influenced by the values and purposes of the educational institution rather than the other way round. The implication is that children can only be successfully safeguarded through a one-way flow of information from educationalists to parents; from 'expert' to 'novice'.

Reach and 'hard to reach'

In spite of the increasing policy focus on influencing parenting, and the proliferation of practices discussed above, the government is concerned it is constrained in accessing many parents, parents that in government discourse are constructed as 'hard to reach'. Such discourse, however, is problematic because it has various potential meanings. The way it is employed by the government is as a proxy for those groups who are perceived not to be engaged with public services. Its usage in this manner, however, says little about why people do not engage with such services and it also often involves judgements about the quality of parental engagement. In their research on relationships between policing and 'hard to reach' groups, for instance, Jones and Newburn (2001, p. 13) note that '"hard to reach" actually means "hard to engage with on a positive level"'. Moreover, it is clear that treating so-called 'hard to reach' groups as a homogeneous mass is deeply problematic and potentially stigmatizing because of the power relationships involved in defining who exactly is 'hard to reach' (Cook, 2002). Cook (2002), for instance, points to dissonance between those doing the defining and those defined as 'hard to reach'.

Reflecting some of these issues, typologies of those people deemed 'hard to reach' have been developed. Doherty *et al.* (2004), for instance, suggest three categories of not mutually exclusive 'hard to reach' families: minority groups ('traditionally under-represented groups, the marginalized, disadvantaged or socially excluded' – Doherty *et al.*, 2004, p. 4); those who 'slip through the net' (those who for various reasons are 'invisible' to service providers), and those who are deemed service resistant (those who are 'unwilling to engage with service providers, the suspicious, the over targeted or disaffected' – Doherty *et al.*, 2004,

p. 4). As we shall see, the latter group is particularly pertinent to discussions about engagement with educational institutions.

Despite these difficulties with the conceptualizing of 'hard to reach' it has become a taken-for-granted concept in government discourse. The recent Social Exclusion Taskforce (2007b, p. 4) paper, *Reaching Out: Think Family*, for example, aims to tackle a minority (2 per cent) of families with 'complex and multiple problems' who are held to be disproportionately responsible for 'antisocial' acts. It suggests that such families are 'hard to reach' because, first, they make up such a small proportion of the population and, second, because of a disjuncture between the views of 'the system' of such families and the view of such families of 'the system'. The 'net effect' of this is 'that families and services fail to engage effectively' (Social Exclusion Taskforce, 2007b, para. 2.7). The implication, as was highlighted by Jones and Newburn (2001) in relation to policing, is not the difficulty of accessing 'hard to reach' families, but perceptions of *their* engagement with the services on offer.

While the *Reaching Out: Think Family* paper recognizes that the perceptions and experiences of the so-called 'hard to reach' help structure their non-engagement (or their lower than the expected/demanded level of engagement) with public services, the paper is also structured by the tensions in the government's desire to 'support' families. The reader of *Reaching Out: Think Family*, for instance, is left in little doubt of the tools of the state (Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, eviction and Parenting Orders) that 'can, as a last resort, be used to enforce engagement with services' (Social Exclusion Taskforce, 2007b, para. 2.2). In this context, it is difficult to conclude anything but that reaching the so-called 'hard to reach' implies a one-way transmission of influence from government via public services to parents and families.

With the caveats about the concept of 'hard to reach' in mind, however, it is also the case that researchers and evaluators of family-based services, nursery education and childcare, at local and national levels, have noted that certain categories of parents, most notably BME and fathers, remain excluded from such services.

BME parents

Lloyd and Rafferty (2006) undertook a synthesis of local evaluations of Sure Start programmes and found a scarcity of work involving BME families. They suggest that while service providers recognize the under-representation of BME families in service usage, they do not provide specific plans for addressing the issue. They also point out that more effort is expended on reaching South Asian communities compared to African and African Caribbean communities. However, exceptions to these more general trends do exist. The Sure Start Centre at Higham Hill, Waltham Forest, for instance, has a particular focus on, and understanding of, problems of engagement with parents in specific BME groups

(NESS, 2004). These are portrayed as language problems, family responsibilities, insecurities about immigration status and a concern about providing personal information. Some of the families are portrayed as being tied to the domestic sphere by their cultural traditions. Others feel they lack the confidence to approach strangers when they do manage to attend some of the Sure Start services. A further example comes from Wilson and Refson (2007) in their evaluation of the organization, Place2Be, a therapeutic service operating inside some schools. They claim that its work with families from BME groups is a hallmark of its success: 'The proportion of non white children accessing individual or group interventions in the Place2Be was 35% (on average, across all hubs). This compares with 7.5% in the general population as indicated in the National Statistics Census, 2001' (Wilson and Refson, 2007, p. 132). Wilson and Refson (2007, p. 136) attribute this success to the fact that while the Place2Be is an 'external service' it is embedded within the inner workings of a primary school: 'it retains its own authority and standards and yet fits into the fabric of the school, working alongside teachers and others close to the children' (Wilson and Refson, 2007, p. 136). The familiarity and proximity of the Place2Be programme within the school means that access to children's counselling has been improved.

While the above examples are testament to positive efforts to engage some 'hard to reach' families, the strategies described are based on the assumption that reach is both necessary and desirable. However, I will suggest below that what is required is a much more democratic basis for engagement with families based on a concept of mutual reach. A fundamental part of this re-conceptualization of parents as reciprocal partners with services is a need for research on the parenting values, beliefs and practices of BME families. In the consultation phase for preparation of the Children's Plan, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2007, p. 155) formed focus groups and consultation events including a 15 per cent representation from BME groups. While this is a step in the right direction there is currently too little research on which policy might be based. As Arrighi (2007, p. 109) points out, 'ethnic differences in parenting styles . . . are neither well documented nor understood'. If BME families are to be fully included in pre-school and compulsory school age services and their children able to engage with the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters* they need to be.

Fathers

A focus on engaging with fathers has been a key concern in the development of Sure Start Children's Centres. Of the original group of Early Excellence Centres (set up in 1997) which pioneered the practices that became enshrined within Sure Start and then in Children's Centres, a small number had a particular focus on working with fathers. Including fathers, for instance, was a specific part of the work at the Pen Green Centre, a flagship Early Excellence/Children's Centre

in Corby, Northamptonshire, and the Sheffield Children's Centre (Broadhead and Meleady, 2008; Chandler, 1997; Whalley, 1997) and it was also a key focus in one of the Cumbrian centres I worked with as local evaluator. This centre, based in an area of high male unemployment, developed a specific set of practices to increase the involvement of fathers and male carers, discussed more fully in Warin (2007). Various strategies were attempted to involve such men. So, for example, a local musician was engaged to set up a fathers' band, recording nursery rhymes and songs, drawing in men who would not otherwise have been involved, attracted by the 'carrot' of professional music recording. The success of the 'Dads work' at this centre was largely due to the drive of a nursery teacher, himself a father of young children and a longstanding member of the immediate local community. However, such practices were not widespread or lasting within the national picture of Sure Start. In their exploratory study of engaging fathers in Sure Start, Lloyd *et al.* (2003) revealed a strong mother focus in service management and delivery, and found that only 12 per cent of programmes were categorized as 'highly involving fathers'. Lloyd *et al.* (2003) make a number of recommendations, prioritizing the need for male workers and recognizing that services should be tailored to the differing needs of fathers in diverse circumstances. Ferguson and Hogan (2004), in their analysis of father-inclusive practices, recommend that professionals should address the anxieties that can lead to fathers excluding themselves. They identify fears of professionals' assumptions about dangerous and feckless masculinities, fears about being discovered defrauding social security or any other illegal activities, and fears about their personal relationships with children. They suggest that father-inclusive policies must overcome classism and prejudice against men working with children. They recommend that agencies who work with children and families develop explicit father-inclusive policies and practices, a recommendation that *Every Child Matters* also makes.

Enduring barriers for accessing parents

There is an increasing identification of specific groups of 'hard to reach' families and a growing understanding, arising from the research and evaluations of service usage, about some of the barriers to engaging with services for those families. Anning *et al.* (2007) in the National Evaluation of Sure Start final report, reveal that potential service users who do not engage are articulate about what the barriers to them accessing services are, but that providers find it very difficult to surmount them. In this section I consider why some of the identified barriers seem so immoveable.

One of the reasons lies in the gap between the cultural worlds of professionals and the families they are attempting to engage. This is implied in the argument of Ferguson and Hogan (2004) that the development of father inclusive practices will have to include tackling classism and prejudices. A number of commentators

ask challenging questions about the nature of the relationship between families who are deemed 'hard to reach' and the professionals involved in trying to reach them (Anning *et al.*, 2007; Pomerantz *et al.*, 2007; Wilson and Refson, 2007). They suggest that professionals may find it difficult to move beyond their comfort zones and their traditional ways of working: 'They may be so institutionalised in their practice that, from an organisational point of view, they are not set up or prepared to extend beyond their traditional procedures' (Wilson and Refson, 2007, p. 132). With specific reference to the reach of schools, Crozier and Davies (2007, p. 295) point out that schools frequently inhibit accessibility for certain parents and we should perhaps pay attention to the concept of 'hard to reach schools' rather than 'hard to reach parents'.

Researchers into communication between secondary school staff and parents find that parents often feel powerless and infantilized in their contact with school staff. So, for example, Crozier (2002) quotes a parent who noted: 'Sometimes when I go into school and they're talking to you, I feel intimidated because ... you feel as if you're the kid'. Walker and MacLure (2001, p. 12), in their study of parents' evenings, note that even those parents who are themselves teachers, often feel powerless: 'When such parents attend parents' evenings they experience them emphatically as parents – i.e. the relatively powerless actors in the encounter'. A further aspect of cultural communication barriers between professionals and parents lies in the specifics of professional cultural discourses. For example, professional educational language often mystifies and intimidates parents. During the local evaluation of the Cumbrian Early Excellence centres, a parent told me about her lack of confidence to stand up to the centre staff when they had misunderstood the 'bad behaviour' of her 4-year-old son during a school bus trip. Following her involvement in a parenting programme at the centre, she felt, not a 'better' parent as perhaps had been the intention, but better able to communicate with staff on their own terms, for example, to use the term 'cognitive development' to discuss her son's needs. While recognizing the value of her new-found confidence, the story was depressing in that it illustrated that she had to speak an unfamiliar professional language before she felt 'part of the club' and, thus, able to communicate with staff. Parents who slip through the net of services may do so for the simple reason that they do not recognize themselves in the language used to engage them. This point is made by Sheriff (2007) who discusses why young fathers do not access services. He points to the gendered language used in publicizing services and suggests that the simple strategy of harnessing the gender neutral term 'parent' to replace the ubiquitous 'mother' would have a considerable benefit.

Where professionals are themselves embedded in the cultures and communities of potential service users it is possible to build up a greater mutual trust and overcome parental insecurities. We have already seen examples of this in the Cumbrian male nursery worker who created a crucial 'bridge' between fathers and the centre. His 'Dads work' was based on a democratic model in which he and the other fathers shared their parental expertise and knowledge

of their children (Warin, 2007). The work of the Sheffield Children's Centre is exemplary in this respect. Broadhead and Meleady (2008, p. 61) describe how the centre appoints and supports staff who are representative of 'hard to reach' groups, staff who knowingly place 'their collective heads above the parapet through their work'. They present a frank account of the challenges faced by their staff. So, for example, some staff were leafleted with race hate flyers, a disabled worker experienced considerable harassment, and male staff had to struggle to overcome the prejudices of some people in the local community.

Recognizing the important bridging function that certain service employees may fulfil, and paying attention to the inclusive and exclusive features of language, are certainly strategies that may go some way towards engaging the categories of families who 'slip through the net'. However, these approaches do not help to engage families who may be characterized as 'service resistant' in Doherty *et al.*'s (2004) typologies of 'hard to reach'. Relevant here are findings from studies with BME families that reveal that a lack of so-called help-seeking behaviour may be explained by a resistance to the perceived values of UK liberalism (Beishon *et al.*, 1998; Hylton, 1997). Beishon *et al.* (1998, p. 77), for instance, report a resistance to 'an excessive individualism and materialism, in which personal gratification and fulfilment undermine more family-orientated values'. In the Moyenda project (Hylton, 1997, p. 3), an African-Caribbean woman makes the following comment on service provision: 'the values they passed down to your children are worse than what you would give'. These studies suggest that parents in these families are likely to feel they have little to learn about parenting from the UK's educational establishments, a finding echoed in Dosanjh and Ghuman (1996, p. 155), who reported that 'Punjabi fathers are more involved than their white counterparts in the education of their children'. Reay and Mirza (2002) and Crozier (2002) discuss how black parents may often feel driven by the wish to *compensate* for schooling rather than to cooperate with schooling. In an account of their small-scale study of four black (African-Caribbean) supplementary schools Reay and Mirza (2002) show how the practices within them demonstrate an effective and collectivized agency that represents a response to a mainstream educational system which is perceived to be failing black pupils. They show that: 'The black women through their involvement, as both educators and parents, in supplementary schooling were producing resources to compensate for perceived deficits in state educational provision' (Reay and Mirza, 2002, p. 9).

These observations are important because they demonstrate that resistance to inclusion in services is not born out of deviancy or pathological failings. The observations suggest that it is the ways in which educational institutions are embedded in a deeply socially and culturally unequal society that is the problem for the 'hard to reach', rather than the 'hard to reach' being the problem. If children are to be safeguarded, if they are to fulfil the Every Child Matters outcomes, then educational services will have to work harder to include those families labelled as 'hard to reach' in their services. This will necessarily involve

a questioning of the social, cultural and linguistic relationships between families and service provision. One aspect of this that I want to highlight is the recognition that ought to be given to the contribution that parents can make when their own values and practices are not only recognized, but welcomed, by educational institutions and where there is an expectation that educational professionals have as much, perhaps more, to learn from parents than parents have to learn from educational professionals.

Mutual reach

We need to think much more radically about 'reach'. I suggest that we need a very different concept, a counter-discourse – that of 'mutual reach' – on which to base education policy and practice. Many parents, including those identified in the examples above, do not recognize the contributions they have to make to a partnership with staff in Children's Centres and schools. While policy documents may use the rhetoric of respect for parents there are, in fact, few arenas for creating a genuine partnership or exchange of information between parents and educationalists about children. There are very few opportunities, places or spaces for a more democratic and genuine knowledge exchange to occur. There are also very low expectations of what parents can contribute. There is policy blindness to the idea that professional educators can learn from parents. It is, perhaps, little wonder that so many parents become identified as 'hard to reach'.

In order to establish models of a more democratic and cooperative exchange between parents and teachers we need to locate and build on pockets of existing practice where a concept of 'mutual reach' is operating. We need to find examples of democratic practice as advocated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2006, p. 220) in their description of early childhood services as: 'a life space where educators and families work together to promote the wellbeing, participation and learning of young children ... based on the principle of democratic participation'.

An exceptional study by Gonzalez *et al.* (2005), focusing on parents' 'funds of knowledge' enshrined this principle. It provides both a concept and a model of educational intervention which could inspire policy on home-school communication. The 'funds of knowledge' concept turns on its head the parental deficit model that underlies so much of current parent-school policy. The starting point is that education needs a counter-discourse in a period when it is dominated by a discourse of accountability through testing. Gonzalez *et al.* (2005, p. x) base the concept of 'funds of knowledge' on the premise that 'people are competent, they have knowledge, and their life-experiences have given them that knowledge'. In the Funds of Knowledge Project, carried out in Tucson, USA, the research team, including a teacher, anthropologist and educational researcher, set out to document the competences and knowledge held within the families whose children

attended participating schools, and the communities in which the schools were located. They aimed to explore the pedagogical implications that come about through gaining a deep and personal understanding of the children's families, and recognizing the resources contained within them. They conclude that this rich understanding of the lives of their pupils can provide the basis for learning and teaching in the classroom. They engaged teacher/researchers to conduct in-depth interviews with parents in order to access an understanding of the family/community lives of their pupils. An important aspect of the study was that the teacher/researchers were themselves well-recognized members of these communities and, therefore, were in a good position to build the trust necessary for knowledge exchange.

The 'funds of knowledge' concept illuminates ways that teachers and child-care workers can learn from parents, since this approach seems to be attempting to operationalize a concept of 'parent as expert'. It also suggests a need for researchers to undertake a wide trawl of families, going into homes and community settings to engage with parents to understand their funds of knowledge. One such example comes from Maddock (2006, p. 153) who has conducted ethnographic case studies of children's learning outside of school, exploring contexts where learning was 'not an obligation or purpose'. She reveals the learning opportunities in a range of activities including DIY, and sports and leisure activities. The children's home learning is fuelled by social and emotional dimensions and offers opportunities for learning about the human condition. She suggests that if teachers close their eyes to learning which occurs outside school, and are required to impose school models of learning onto children's home learning, 'they miss important parts of the whole picture of learning' (Maddock, 2006, p. 155). In the Rochdale study, referred to at the outset of this chapter, the extensive family interviews we conducted on a one-to one basis with different family members enabled us to glimpse the many informal educational activities that were ongoing in the home, providing a further illustration of funds of knowledge. So, for example, one father was teaching his 14-year-old son to make a Sunday roast dinner; another enjoyed walks with his daughter in the local conservation area in which he shared his knowledge of wild life; one mother was helping her daughter with interior decorating, and another father was teaching basic woodworking skills to his daughter through the construction of a rabbit hutch.

Another significant example is the recent work of Martin Hughes and colleagues in the Home-School Knowledge Exchange project (HSKE, 2007). Mindful of previous critiques of the one-way flow of values and information from school to home this project set out to ensure an exchange of knowledge about the child from home to school and from school to home. Knowledge exchange strategies included video viewings, shoe boxes filed with artefacts from home and photographic displays of both environments (Hughes and Greenhough, 2006). Hughes and Greenhough (2006) suggest that it is necessary to raise the profile of home-school communication both inside and outside school. This is a far

cry from the practice revealed in the evaluation of the RAICS project, described above, where the over-riding concern of the teachers was 'getting the parents in' and where improvements in parental involvement were measured by counting the numbers of parents crossing the school threshold (Edwards and Warin, 1999). The all-important issue of the location, or territory, for home–school knowledge exchange that Hughes and Greenhough (2006) draw attention to has also been noted in the development of practice with parents in Children's Centres.

The evaluation of the Cumbrian Early Excellence/Children's Centres revealed the significance of home visits for developing mutual trust between parents and professionals. Here, concerns about mutual reach were compounded by the rural isolation of some of the families concerned. Home visits were seen as a crucial first step in developing rapport between staff and parents in order for staff to gain a rich insight into the child's home life, to understand their interests, activities and preferences, and their family relationships. Home visits may, of course, be fraught with parental concerns about surveillance from their child's professional educators, especially among parents who have a history of mistrust of professionals visiting their homes. However, the staff concerned were well aware of these issues and handled them sensitively. So, for instance, they were aware of managing first impressions through attention to non-intimidating dress and body language, and in order to build a rapport they engaged in play with children and parents together in a relaxed manner. A further example comes from Pen Green Children's Centre, which like the example above, illustrates that the establishment of trust is a necessary pre-cursor to knowledge exchange between parents and professionals. Whalley (2001) describes the innovative practice in parent-staff collaboration that takes place at the centre. Parents are loaned camcorders and encouraged to make videos of their children learning and playing at home while nursery staff also make recordings of the child in the centre. She explains that parents were anxious about showing staff the videoed footage because they were worried about the judgements that nursery staff might make about their interventions with their child without having access to the parents' perspectives. She also points out that members of the nursery staff were equally concerned about parents' judgements. Consequently, parents and staff were brought together to watch the videos simultaneously and to exchange their understandings about the child, building a trust that would pave the way to further cooperation.

How far could these practices filter up the school system from early years to primary schooling and to secondary schooling? These practices are undoubtedly resource intensive and they happen in contexts that are relatively free from the performance constraints of national tests and league tables. The practice described by Whalley (2001) is possible because, despite the introduction of the curriculum for 3–5s (the Foundation Stage), there is clearly much less public pressure on this age group to perform, compared to older children whose achievements are examined and measured through SATs and public exams.

Consequently, educational purposes are focused on social and emotional aspects of education as much as academic achievement. Given this much wider brief for the welfare of the child, parents are more likely to recognize their contribution in cooperating with staff. This is because, in particular, parents can contribute to a knowledge exchange with professionals in educational institutions their experience of their child's social and emotional life. We need models where there is a mutual exchange of knowledge about the interests and emotional concerns of children, as well as their more academic abilities.

There are several recent policy developments in education which, taken together, appear to offer a move away from the very narrow conception of academic ability and achievement which has underlined the policies of New Labour to date. One is the emphasis on social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL), which has now been introduced into primary schooling and is currently being piloted in secondary education (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills [SEBS], 2008). The second development is the policy emphasis on 'personalized' learning, intended to be based on a 'sound knowledge and understanding of every child's needs' (Miliband, cited in James and Pollard, 2004). Sceptics suggest that personalized learning is wide open to interpretation and, therefore, while it could be about the development of learner identities, it could equally produce more frequent assessment and target setting (James and Pollard, 2004). Nevertheless, I believe that personalized learning, along with SEAL, offer a potential move towards a more holistic approach to schooling and perhaps indicate an upward extension of the pedagogic aims and purposes that characterize some of the best practice in Children's Centres. It remains to be seen how such policy turns will be realized in practice in a climate that is still strongly dominated by the performance goals and measurable outcomes reified in league tables, SAT scores and public exams results, a climate in which, according to Shuayb and O'Donnell (2008, p. 3), 'what matters is measured and what cannot be measured does not matter'. Shuayb and O'Donnell (2008) also suggest that UK education policy now seems caught between two goals: a traditional economic pressure to compare educational performance favourably with international competitors, and a return to philosophies of personalized teaching rooted in earlier child-centred values, aimed at improving a broader notion of child well-being. These, however, make uncomfortable bedfellows.

Conclusion: the way forward

This chapter has been concerned with issues that are important to the safeguarding children agenda. First, education is central to the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*. It is seen by the government as *the* means of developing the human capital of children as 'becomings'. While the 'education, education, education' mantra of New Labour is now not heard as loudly as it once was, it is

clear that education is seen by the government as being the main mechanism for tackling a range of economic and social dilemmas in the longer term. Second, the chapter has focused upon families – those deemed to be 'hard to reach' – that are central to the safeguarding agenda. The government is keen to highlight that it believes a very small minority of families are the cause of a disproportionate amount of 'anti-social' behaviour, but even these are not lost causes; they can be brought into the normative fold. Hence, the focus upon how the so-called 'hard to reach' can be 'captured' in policy terms.

The chapter has exposed the tensions that exist in the education-related aspects of safeguarding children. It suggests, for instance, tensions between the 'enjoy and achieve' outcome of *Every Child Matters* and the longer-term economic well-being outcome that is related to developing the human capital of children. Education seems to be failing children on both of these accounts. The recent UNICEF (2007) report, *Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries*, for instance, found that only 19 per cent of children aged 11, 13 and 15 in the UK said they liked school 'a lot'. Fifteen OECD nations scored higher than the UK on this measure and the UK's score was about half of the top scoring OECD nation, Norway. With so few enjoying their schooling in the UK it is perhaps not surprising that many children are not achieving. While such observations are clearly at odds with the 'enjoy and achieve' outcome of *Every Child Matters*, they also undermine the longer-term aims of increasing the human capital of children so that they can contribute when they are adults.

The point that I want to make is that parental engagement with educational institutions in a way that respects and harnesses the former's 'funds of knowledge' could help safeguard children's likelihood of being able to 'enjoy and achieve' within their schooling and in their broader lives. In order to protect children from misery, boredom and a low engagement in learning we need two-way communication between parents and education professionals with the goal of sharing holistic knowledge about children. In particular, parents can contribute knowledge about their children's interests, preferences, home activities, culture and also about their emotional lives, drives and family relationships. However, constraints to the realization of this goal lay in the current emphasis of educational policy on a narrowly defined academic performance and the educational professional as 'expert'.

Within current government policy the expertise of educational professionals is intended to enrich the life of the child within their family by improving parenting. In this chapter I have presented a critique of the assumptions behind this approach and made the case for a counter-discourse, a turn in policy that suggests that parental expertise is accessed in order to enrich children's educational experiences and outcomes. Instead of trying to correct so-called 'poor parenting', communication between parents and education professionals could be harnessed to the cooperative goal of safeguarding children's enjoyment of school and of their wider lives.

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