

‘Problem families’ and the post-war welfare state in the North West of England, 1943-74

Volume One

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*For Andrew B. Semple, Jean Packman and Bob Holman;
because they lived it.*

*And Michael B. Katz, John V. Pickstone and Sam Davies;
unwitting mentors known through words alone, but sorely missed.*

Acknowledgements

The length of the acknowledgements is intended as a recognition of the number of people and organisations who have helped me from the beginning to completion of the project.

I would like to thank the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (award ES/J500094/1) for providing financial support, without which this thesis would never have been undertaken. The studentship was part of a Collaborative Award in Science in Engineering managed by the ESRC North West Doctoral Training Centre. The award was in partnership with Community Futures, a Preston-based voluntary organisation working in the North West since 1934, and included a placement equivalent to nine months over three years. My personal partnership with the organisation will endure long after the end of the doctoral study.

Further thanks are due to Lancaster University Department of History Postgraduate Research Support Fund which allowed me to travel to Paris in order to examine the records of ATD4W, particularly of Frimhurst, which helped to complete the project. Crucial thanks are due to Hayley Meloy of the ESRC North West Doctoral Training Centre and Becky Sheppard at the Department of History in Lancaster whose skills in handling all manner of requests has been second to none, and without whom my return to academia would have been impossible.

Particular thanks are due to those who permitted access to closed documents which were essential to the project. I would like to acknowledge David Holmes (Family Action) for permission to view the archives of Pacifist/Family Service Units (P/FSU) and the Family Welfare Association; Lesley Dixon and Melanie Bloor (Person Shaped Support) for permission to consult the records of their forerunner, the Liverpool Personal Service Society along with the Mother's Rest Association and the Child Welfare Association; Birmingham City Council Adoption Service for permission to view the records of Middlemore Emigration Homes Trust in relation to Crowley House and Lee Crescent; Lyn Burns (Cumbria Children's Services) for patiently reviewing my request to consult files relating to Brentwood and 'problem families' in Cumberland; Ruth Macdonald (Salvation Army) for permission to access the records of the Mayflower Home; Oliver Pickering (Quaker Archives) for permission to view the records of Spofforth Hall and West Bank as part of the Elizabeth Fry Memorial Trust; and Jason French Tom Croft (ATD4W) for their enormous help in providing detailed copies of records held relating to Frimhurst, and permitting access to consult them; and to Véronique and Philippe

Davienne and Bruno Tardieu (ATD4W) for giving me freedom to consult a host of material whilst at the Centre International Joseph Wresinski and above all, being such welcoming and stimulating hosts during my time in France.

Thanks are also due to those archivists and assistants who facilitated and enabled access to closed records. I would like to thank Gill Paxton (Bury Archives) for facilitating access to the records of Bury County Borough and Lancashire County Council 'problem families' files; Andrew George (Staffordshire Record Office) for permission to consult 'problem family' committee minutes for Burton County Borough Council; Helena Smart (Liverpool Record Office) for permission to view a series of welfare, children's and 'problem families' records for Liverpool City Council; Daniel Sudron (West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale) for enabling me to view closed files of the 'problem families' committee for Halifax County Borough Council; Robin Wiltshire (Sheffield Archives) for allowing access to closed records from the Problem Family Unit and Child Care Committee for Sheffield City Council; Meera Prashar (London Metropolitan Archive) for providing access to the material concerning the 'problem family' committees of Middlesex and London County Councils as well as material relating to Paddington and Kensington FSU; James Peters (Manchester University Special Collections) for granting access to the papers of the North Western Branch of the Society of Medical Officers of Health; Adrienne Mayers (Liverpool Medical Institution) for enabling me to consult the papers of Clare Oswald Stallybrass; Colin Smith (Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives) for arranging access to the papers of Margaret Simey and David Caradog Jones; Fiona Keates (NSPCC) for providing me with comprehensive catalogues of their holdings, and doing her utmost to help my repeated enquiries, and arranging access; Karen Backhouse (Liverpool Hope University Special Collections) for her patience and enthusiasm in allowing me to peruse anything and everything of relevance; and Alex Gouldie (National Archives Freedom of Information Centre) for responding to my numerous requests to view closed or restricted documents.

Further thanks are due to archivists and assistants who were able to provide or copy materials. Elias Mazzucco (British Library) has been singularly helpful in ensuring every trip to the capital is never wasted; Joanne Smith (Southampton Archives) for providing details of records relating to 'problem families' and meticulously informing me on utility and access issues; Hans Luhrs (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam) for providing copies of several documents related to Zuidplein and 'problem families' in the Netherlands; Martin Allan (Dundee City Archives) for providing me with copies of annual reports from the St

Mary's Mothercraft Centre in Dundee; Mark Barrett (Cardiff University Arts and Social Studies Library) for providing a copy of numerous theses from the public health diploma on 'problem families'; Danielle Dewhurt and Samantha Barlow (Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education) for attempting to locate the records of the Problem Families Group of the National Association for Maternity and Child Welfare which have sadly been destroyed; and Sarah Winning (Denbighshire Archives) for pursuing my enquiries on departmental and committee records held relating to 'problem families' in Wales.

Particular thanks are due to all the staff at Lancashire Archives who have very patiently and politely collected material relating to Brentwood, Lancashire County Council and other local authorities from the stacks, and who have provided a home from home for the last three years; at Lancashire Archives special mention must be made of Neil Sayer whose dry humour and unmistakeable generosity in discussing the Brentwood collection and other deposits at Lancashire and elsewhere, in addition to reading and commenting on earlier drafts have been welcome; the librarians at Lancaster University Library who have been helpful in locating items during renovation work and in processing my inter-library loan requests; and especially to Wendy Gradwell, Nicola Walshaw, Adam Carter and Gill Paxton at Bury Archives whose unfailing help in my pursuit of sources, and whose unexpected discovery of several boxes of 'problem family' records turned many of the suspicions I held about my 'problem families' into confirmation upon which much of my thesis is based.

My thanks are also extended to the libraries, archives and record offices without which this thesis would have been impossible, and for whom threats of cuts and closure looms. I hope this thesis provides a testament for their necessity. I would like to thank the following: Barrow Archives and Local Studies Centre, Birmingham Archives, Blackpool Local and Family History Centre, Bolton Archives and Local Studies Centre, British Library, Burnley Local Studies Library, Carlisle Archive Centre, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Chetham's Library, Crosby Local History Unit, Derbyshire Record Office, Greater Manchester County Record Office, Harris Library, Hull History Centre, John Rylands Library, Kendal Archive Centre, Leeds University Brotherton Library, Leeds University Special Collections, Lichfield Record Office, Liverpool Hope University Sheppard Worlock Library, Liverpool Medical Institution, Liverpool Record Office, the University of Liverpool Sydney Jones, Harold Cohen and Donald Mason Libraries, the University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives, LSE Women's Library, the University of Manchester Library, London Metropolitan Archives, National Archives, National Archives of Scotland, Oldham Local Studies and Archives,

Rochdale Local Studies Centre, Rotherham Archives and Local Studies, Salford Local History Library, Sheffield Archives, Sheffield Local Studies Library, Sheffield Western Bank Library, St Helens Local History and Archives Library, Stockport Local Heritage Library, Tameside Local Studies and Archive Centre, Tyne and Wear Archives, Warrington Library and Archive Service, Warwick Modern Records Centre, Wellcome Library, Whitehaven Archives and Local Studies Centre, Wigan Archives and Local Studies, Museum of Wigan Life, Wirral Archives Service, and the Working Class Movement Library.

Brentwood feels to have been the focal point of my life for the past three years, and my sincerest thanks are extended to Anne Hearle, Hilary Atkinson and Martin Cruickshank of the Marple Local History Society for being so welcoming in sharing their knowledge of the Centre, Marple and Edith Doris Abraham in particular. I am incredibly grateful for their invitation to speak at their Annual General Meeting and afford the opportunity to meet people who lived, worked and knew Brentwood. Here I would also like to thank Pat Ashcroft, Trish Lee, Robin and Rose Lambert for sharing their memories and experiences of Brentwood. I only hope I am able to do justice to their recollection.

Thanks are due to a number of academics and colleagues who provided help in the development of the thesis. I wish to thank Peter Shapely (Bangor University, Wales) and Vicki Bannister (Wigan and Leigh District Homes) for providing guidance and advice regarding housing in Greater Manchester in General, and the Higher Folds Estates in Leigh in particular; Ruth Davidson (King's College London) for providing me with a copy of her paper on the Child Poverty Action Group from the Voluntary Action History Society when the timetable clashed; Gillian Sinton for discussing her work on Mayfield House in Ancoats, Manchester with me, and for providing clues of the prevalence of 'problem families' in the city archives; Christine Hallett (University of Manchester) for taking the time to discuss her experiences of Colin Fraser Brockington and allowing me to consult her oral interview transcripts; Sadie Parr (Sheffield Hallam University) for her support and enthusiasm in my exploration of 'problem families' in Sheffield; Emily Ball (University of Sheffield) for discussing her work on 'troubled families' and sharing my personal interest in the city; Fiona Cosson (Manchester Metropolitan University) for her interest in 'problem families' and for allowing me to test my views at the Manchester Centre for Regional History; Becky Taylor (University of East Anglia) for always encouraging me to consider 'problem families' in the round rather than in isolation; Ros Edwards, Val Gillies and Nicola Horsley whose shared interest in 'problem families' and invitation to a number of events has opened doors which otherwise would never have been

considered; Mike Rowe, Alan Southern and Dan Warner (University of Liverpool) and Tim Parsons (Washington University in St Louis) whose support and encouragement at a key juncture of the thesis proved invaluable; David Neary (Liverpool Hope University) for sharing his knowledge on the University of Manchester, particularly the former Department of Social Administration, and social policy more generally; and both Kenneth Newport and Alex Owen (Liverpool Hope University) for offering both me and my work a new outlet and sufficient time to complete the thesis.

I would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of my friends and colleagues at Lancaster in the Department of History, the Department of Sociology and the Institute of Social Futures. Perhaps less of a familiar face owing to my travels, I have never found a closed door or someone without five minutes to discuss an issue or problem I was facing; for this I am incredibly grateful. Special thanks must be extended to Corinna Peniston-Bird (Lancaster University) for her ruthless yet wholly instructive interrogation of the thesis at an earlier formative stage. I would like to think that the end result is substantially improved because of this, even if it was painful at the time. Equally, I would like to thank the staff past and present of Community Futures who have been welcoming from the very first day of my arrival, endured my passing presence and have always been willing to listen to my latest Brentwood stories. Also, my colleagues in the Department of Early Childhood at Liverpool Hope University have been incredibly supportive and tolerant of my response of ‘nearly’ to repeated requests asking how close I am to completing and submitting the thesis.

Personal thanks are due to my former colleagues at Standby Services in Sheffield, who readily initiated me into their unseen nocturnal world. Space does not permit me to thank everyone individually over the years, but your support has not gone unnoticed. Although these pages cannot do justice to the encouragement and support provided, and for unwillingly but unfailingly tutoring me in the University of Life, I would like to thank and acknowledge ‘Tricky’ Trevor Barnett, Mark ‘Crow’ Crawshaw, Bob Hughes, Ray May, Mick Twibell, Steve Walker and Shaun Woodhead in particular. It should be no small recognition of their influence that without our numerous, sometimes seemingly never-ending, discussions, I would never have embarked on studying what I once did for a living.

Over the last three years I have incurred a number of personal debts in undertaking research for this thesis, which I hope this acknowledgement will contribute towards repaying the kindness extended. I would like to thank my brother and his better half, Tom and Naomi

Sorrel, whose home has all too often been used as a stopping off point for excursions to London, despite often being ships in the night during visits. The open door, offer of a lift to Chester, and company of Steve Green has been irreplaceable in visits to Merseyside. Thanks are due to Nick Sharman and Jo Macleod whose unfaltering hospitality and tolerance of my erratic scheduling and timetabling has been warmly received on visits to the capital; Nick's unerring support and incisive comments have been a welcome legacy of my former life studying Spain. Thanks are also owed to Mark and Jackie Crapper, whose warm welcome into their family has helped over the turbulence of the last three years, and for Jackie's ear concerning all things health visiting. A personal debt which I can never hope to repay is owed to Stephen Crossley, whose irrepressible commitment and support has been a constant source of inspiration; and to Harriet Menter for welcoming me into their home as a stranger and leaving as a friend. Undoubted thanks are also expressed for my parents, Liz Fisher and Ken Lambert, who have never stopped ushering and encouraging me onwards, and whose tolerance in leasing part of their house as a library can never fully be compensated.

I would particularly like to thank a number of academics who have been invaluable in aiding me through the disciplinary transition from the politics of Spain to 'problem families' of North West England. Pat Starkey, John Macnicol and Sheila Blackburn have all been singularly helpful in discussions, time, comments on drafts and correspondence in allowing me to make sense of both 'problem families' and the North West.

None of the above would have been possible without the potential recognised by John Welshman, Sally Sheard and Denise Partington during my interview at Lancaster University in February 2013. Since offering me the opportunity, they have each been generous in their time, energy and above all patience. I would like to thank Denise for her tolerance of the ebbs and flows of the project and her unrelenting interest in the latest idea I am pursuing; not least as Chief Executive of Community Futures, in permitting me access to the surviving case files of the 1,702 mothers who were to Brentwood from 1943 to 1970, without which the thesis would have never been realised. I would also like to thank Sally in generously sharing her expertise, resources and above all her honest opinion which has been valued in her reception of my fluctuating enthusiasm and frustration with equal measure. Particular thanks are due to John Welshman, whose time, encouragement and advice over the last three years has been ceaseless and irreplaceable, despite the many and varied forms the project has taken over time; and whose own intellectual impact upon me is more than apparent in the thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner Kayleigh, who has lived with Brentwood these past three more than I have, and whose exasperation at yet another archive trip has been well concealed. I'm sorry that the sweeping vistas of Catalonia have been replaced by the incessant rain of North West England, but thanks for your wholehearted embrace.

Abstract

This thesis examines the discourse, policy and intervention surrounding ‘problem families’ in post-war Britain from 1943 to 1974. Its contemporary salience is provided with comparisons of the Coalition and Conservative Governments’ Troubled Families Programme launched in 2011, committed to turning around the lives of Britain’s 120,000 ‘troubled’ families.’ Current historiography has emphasised its discursive formation in constituting an ‘underclass,’ linking it to the pathologisation of the behaviour of the poor. This thesis explores the operationalisation of the label by the state, and the processes of identification and intervention pursued to produce the desired outcome of self-sustaining citizenship. The principal source for the thesis are the surviving 1,817 case histories of 1,702 mothers and their children who attended the Brentwood Recuperative Centre for rehabilitation as a ‘problem family’ from 1943 to 1970. The North West provides a regional and local focus, as statutory and voluntary organisations operating within the county and boroughs council boundaries of Lancashire and Cheshire sent 1,196 of the 1,817 cases, permitting a closer scrutiny of the meaning and application of the label. Supplementing this archival source are the case paper and committee file evidence and minutes of the statutory or voluntary agencies which referred the families. By linking records of the mothers who went and the individuals who sent them, the process by which certain families were identified and the legitimisation of their intervention, permits a deeper exploration of the conflicting roles of welfare and the state in post-war Britain. The reconstruction of this process of identification and intervention is undertaken on three interconnected levels. Firstly, the personal encounter between the family and the official, considering the role of professional, ideological and local discourses in singling out families for intervention. Secondly, the role of the local authority and council in structuring social service policies which framed the personal encounter and the workplace culture of officials: what Lipsky terms ‘street-level bureaucracy.’ Thirdly, the relationship of this pattern of personal and local practice to central government, national discourse and other ‘problem family’ policies in authorities beyond the North West. This demonstrates not only the need to return the state to analysis of the welfare state, but also that common experience and understanding of the welfare state is mediated through street-level bureaucrats and the subject of official discretion, rather than simply in legislation. Ultimately, the ‘problem family’ should be seen not as the preserve of a handful of experts, but embedded in the operational implementation of family welfare policy and practice across post-war Britain.

List of Images

Image 1: Brentwood Recuperative Centre, 1947	92
Image 2: Opening ceremony for the extension at Brentwood, 5 April 1957	101
Image 3: ‘Application for care’ by Lancashire Children’s Committee, 1961	121
Image 4: Charles Metcalfe Brown, Medical Officer of Health for Manchester (1942-67), n.d. [1960s]	162
Image 5: Andrew Best Semple, Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool (1953-74), 1973	164
Image 6: Stanley Clucas Gawne, County Medical Officer for Lancashire (1950-68), n.d. [1960s]	166

List of Tables

Table 1: Surviving case file numbers for Brentwood by Registrar-General regions, 1942-70	60
Table 2: Surviving case file numbers for Brentwood and numbers referred by five North West Public Health Departments, 1943-70	61
Table 3: Surviving card index numbers for Brentwood by Registrar-General regions, 1946-70	62
Table 4: Surviving Brentwood case files from the North West of England by local authority, 1942-70	63
Table 5: Surviving Brentwood case files from the North West of England by type of sponsor, 1942-70	64
Table 6: Surviving Brentwood case files from outside the North West of England by type of sponsor, 1942-70	74
Table 7: Designated ‘problem family’ officer in County Councils by Registrar-General regions, 1952	76
Table 8: Designated ‘problem family’ officer in County Borough Councils by Registrar-General regions, 1952	77
Table 9: Admissions to West Bank by Registrar-General regions, 1963-69	87
Table 10: Sources of referral for 88 admissions to Crowley House and Lee Crescent by local authority and Registrar-General region, 1955-65	88
Table 11: Number of cases and prosecutions for child neglect by the NSPCC, 1945-74	129
Table 12: Numbers of ‘problem families’ in North West County Boroughs, 1946-73	157
Table 13: Numbers of ‘problem families’ in Lancashire by County Health Division, and Cheshire, 1949-70	158
Table 14: Population of North West County Boroughs, 1950-70	159

Table 15: Population of Lancashire County and Health Divisions, and Cheshire, 1952-70	160
Table 16: ‘Problem family’ coordinating arrangements for England and Wales, 1959	216
Table 17: Designated officers in relation to ‘problem family’ coordinating arrangements for England and Wales, 1959	217
Table 18: Designated ‘problem family’ officers in England and Wales by Registrar-General regions, 1952	218

List of Figures

Figure 1: Surviving Brentwood case files from the North West of England by per cent of sponsor type, 1942-70	65
Figure 2: Registrar-General regions in England, 1964	66
Figure 3: Regional Hospital Boards in England, 1964	67
Figure 4: Key legislation and circulars relating to the governance of the 'problem family,' 1948-75	72
Figure 5: Surviving Brentwood case files from outside the north west of England by per cent of sponsor type, 1943-70	75
Figure 6: Daily routine timetable for Brentwood, 1964	85
Figure 7: Weekly curriculum for Brentwood, 1964	86
Figure 8: Brentwood Plans, 1942	91
Figure 9: Designated 'problem family' officers in North West local authorities, 1950-70	98
Figure 10: Brentwood Extension Plans, 1953	103
Figure 11: Brentwood Extension Model, 1953	104
Figure 12: Medical Officers of Health in North West County Boroughs, 1948-72	153
Figure 13: County and Divisional Medical Officers for Lancashire, and the County Medical Officer for Cheshire County Councils, 1948-72	154
Figure 14: County of Lancaster: Health Divisions and Delegated Authorities, n.d. [1960]	155
Figure 15: 'Concentration of defect' and the 'social problem group' in Liverpool, 1934	170
Figure 16: 'Socially defective families' and the 'problem family' in Liverpool, 1954	171

Figure 17: 'Problem families' in the districts of Manchester and Salford, 1954

172

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AMC	Association of Municipal Corporations
ACCO	Association of Child Care Officers
ArCO	Area Children's Officer
ACO	Association of Children's Officers
AHA	Area Health Authority
ARC	Area Review Committee
ATD4W	Association aide à Toute Détresse Quarte Monde
BHCSA	British Hospitals Contributory Schemes Association
CAB	Citizens' Advice Bureau
CB	County Borough
CC	County Council
CCA	County Councils Association
CCO	Child Care Officer
CCC	Cheshire County Council
CCL	Community Council of Lancashire
CEO	Chief Education Officer
CGC	Child Guidance Clinic
CMO	County Medical Officer
CO	Children's Officer
COS	Charity Organisation Society
CPAG	Child Poverty Action Group
CSS	Council of Social Service
CUKT	Carnegie United Kingdom Trust
CWA	Child Welfare Association
CWO	Chief Welfare Officer
DoE	Department of the Environment
DoEaS	Department of Education and Science

DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
DMO	Divisional Medical Officer
EFMT	Elizabeth Fry Memorial Trust
ESN	Educationally Sub Normal
EVW	European Volunteer Worker
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FCW	Family Case Worker
FIP	Family Intervention Project
FSU	Family Service Unit
FWA	Family Welfare Association
GP	General Practitioner
HO	Home Office
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationary Office
HV	Health Visitor
ICAA	Invalid Children's Aid Association
ISTD	Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency
JP	Justice of the Peace
JRMT	Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust
LanCC	Lancashire County Council
LonCC	London County Council
LCCC	Lancashire and Cheshire Community Council
LCVS	Liverpool Council for Voluntary Services
LIH	Liverpool Improved Homes
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MEHT	Middlemore Emigration Homes Trust
MGC	Marriage Guidance Council
MHC	Merseyside Hospitals' Council

MHLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
MRA	Mother's Rest Association
MWA	Moral Welfare Association
MWO	Mental Welfare Officer
NAB	National Assistance Board
NAI	Non-Accidental Injury
NALGO	National Association of Local Government Officers
NAMCW	National Association for Maternity and Child Welfare
NAPO	National Association of Probation Officers
NCSS	National Council of Social Service
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NHS	National Health Service
NISW	National Institute for Social Work
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NWACO	North West Region of the Association of Children's Officers
NWSMOH	North West Branch of the Society of Medical Officers of Health
PAC	Public Assistance Committee
PEP	Political and Economic Planning
PO	Probation Officer
POW	Prisoner of War
PPO	Principal Probation Officer
PSS	Personal Service Society
PSU	Pacifist Service Unit
PSW	Psychiatric Social Worker
RCCA	Residential Child Care Association
RDCA	Rural District Councils Association
RHB	Regional Hospital Board
RIPA	Royal Institute of Public Administration
SCO	Senior Children's Officer

SELNECAC	South East Lancashire and North East Cheshire Advisory Council
SMA	Socialist Medical Association
SMO	School Medical Officer
SSAFA	Soldiers Sailors Airmen and Families Association
SSD	Social Services Department
TC	Town Clerk
TFP	Troubled Families Programme
UDCA	Urban District Councils Association
US(A)	United States (of America)
WO	Welfare Officer
WRVS	Women's Royal Voluntary Service

Note on Local Authority Officials and Seniority

Throughout the thesis reference is made to different types of official, workers and professionals in statutory and voluntary personal social services. These are not of significance to voluntary organisations where discussion focuses on caseworkers rather than organisers, volunteers or senior staff. Where discussion concentrates on such issues, they are relatively straightforward. The same is not the case for local authority personal social services, where the differentiation between senior and junior officials becomes more important.

Throughout, the term chief officer is used to denote the head of a particular department. For Public Health Departments this is the MOH (Medical Officer of Health) or CMO (County Medical Officer); for Children's Departments this is the CO (Children's Officer); for Welfare Departments this is the CWO (Chief Welfare Officer); for Education Departments this is the CEO (Chief Education Officer); and for Social Services Departments (SSDs) this is the Director of Social Services. Probation Services were often, but not always, headed by a PPO (Principal Probation Officer). In certain authorities, discussed in the text, the MOH or CMO also functioned as the CWO, but they will be referred to by their principal title. The SMO (School Medical Officer) was the head of the SMS (School Medical Service) which was part of the Education Department, but in most authorities this position was held by the MOH.

Junior officials have several interchangeable terms including social or welfare workers, street-level bureaucrats, officials, caseworkers and personnel. These all refer to the frontline staff who encountered 'problem families' on a personal basis. Each local authority department had a principal junior official. For Public Health Departments this is the HV (Health Visitor); for Children's Departments this is the CCO (Child Care Officer); for Welfare Departments this is the WO (Welfare Officer); for Education Departments this is the EWO (Education Welfare Officer); and for the Probation Service this is the PO (Probation Officer). A number of other junior officials also existed in certain departments. Public Health Departments also included MWOs (Mental Welfare Officers), and CGCs (Child Guidance Clinics) in the SMS often had PSWs (Psychiatric Social Workers). Some junior officials were not necessarily based in one department, particularly FCWs (Family Case Workers), which were used by the Public Health, Children's and Education Departments.

Between chief officers and junior officials were a range of intermediate senior officials who had responsibility for executing 'problem family' policies and strategies discussed in the thesis. For Public Health Departments these include Assistant or Deputy MOsH, or DMOs

(Divisional Medical Officers) in County Councils; and for Children's Departments there are also Assistant or Deputy COs, SCO (Senior Children's Officers) and ArCOs (Area Children's Officers) – the departmental equivalent of DMOs – in County Councils. Education and Welfare Departments, along with the Probation Service, also used Senior, Assistant, Deputy or Area designations for seniority depending on the local hierarchy. Local hierarchies varied widely between different types of authority, by services and professions, by personnel, and even across areas or divisions of the same authority. Where relevant, these are discussed in detail in the thesis.

Note on Case Files and Anonymity

The thesis is mainly informed by using the case files of ‘problem families’ who attended the Brentwood Recuperative Centre (1943-70) along with corresponding case files held by local authorities and a number of voluntary organisations. Due to the sensitive nature of the content, all of the files are closed for either 75 or 100 years and so applications for access to information in exempt records for historical purposes under Section 33 of the 1998 Data Protection Act have been essential. The permission of every depositor for voluntary records has been sought, alongside some Directors of Children’s Services for files relating to individual children. These are noted in the acknowledgements. The doctoral research project also secured approval from the Lancaster University Faculty of Arts and Social Science Research Ethics Committee. To protect the identity of the mothers, fathers and children of those labelled a ‘problem family’, the details of individuals have been anonymised.

In terms of the Brentwood case files, ensuring the identification of individuals whilst protecting their anonymity has meant the use of mothers’ initials as given on their case file. Where there is only one initial, this has been used. To ensure traceability and transparency in the historical process, each of the case file locations has been given. Where possible, the case number or file record has been given. As case numbers were discontinued in 1964, the year in which the mother attended Brentwood has been given for all cases, along with her initials, and the document where the information was obtained. For example:

L[ancashire] A[rchives]: DDX2302/box 4/case number 1855, Mrs RB (1952) M. Whale to E. D. Abraham, 16 Dec 1952.

If a mother has multiple visits to Brentwood, the case number or date of the relevant visit is given. There is no instance of a case being included where the mother has the same initials, so there are no substitute or replacement initials. Because many of those who attended Brentwood are potentially still alive, the specific locations and addresses of families have not been included and are referred to by either the general area or district where they lived. To ensure the privacy of the individuals, any potentially identifying personal details have been omitted if it was felt these would threaten their anonymity.

In terms of other case files or records of ‘problem families’, identification is given in a similar manner to Brentwood. Mothers’ initials are given, and where possible the case or file

number. To ensure consistency, the date of the file is included, along with the document where information has been obtained.

Chief officers, individual workers, Brentwood staff or others about whom the case is not concerned included in the case file documents, have been identified. As the thesis argues that the use of the ‘problem family’ label as an operational signifier across professions, services and departments is paramount, tracing officials is a key part of this historical reconstruction.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ii
<i>Abstract</i>	ix
<i>List of Images</i>	x
<i>List of Tables</i>	xi
<i>List of Figures</i>	xiii
<i>Acronyms and Abbreviations</i>	xv
<i>Note on local authority officials and seniority</i>	xix
<i>Note on case files and anonymity</i>	xxi
Introduction	1
PART ONE	
Chapter One: The problem of the ‘problem family’ as a historical subject	10
Introduction	10
The ‘problem family’ and the ‘underclass’	11
The ‘problem family’ and historiography	13
National paradigms: the post-war welfare settlement and the state	18
Local government: politics, people and power	26
Personal encounters: social work, sociological knowledge and the working class	33
Conclusion	40

Chapter Two: Recovering and reconstructing the ‘problem family’	42
Introduction	42
Theoretical approaches	43
Methodology	48
Sources	53
Personal: case files and the Brentwood Recuperative Centre, 1943-70	53
Local: individuals, committees and organisations	57
National: central governance and nationalising the ‘problem family’	70
Conclusion	79
Chapter Three: Brentwood Recuperative Centre, 1943-70	81
Introduction	81
The ‘residential option’ revisited	82
Brentwood, the ‘problem family’ and the welfare state	89
Discovery of the ‘problem family’, 1943-50	90
Intensification, competition and consolidation, 1950-57	95
Expansion and zenith, 1957-63	100
Transition, eclipse and decline, 1963-70	106
The ‘problem family’ after Brentwood, 1970-74	109
Conclusion	112
PART TWO	
Chapter Four: ‘Problem families’: personal and professional encounters	115
Introduction	115
Statutory local authority personal social services	117
Statutory agencies in the local welfare state	127
Voluntary organisations	135
Conclusion	144

Chapter Five: ‘Problem families’: local and community encounters	148
Introduction	148
Chief officers, services and strategies	150
Knowing the ‘problem family’ in the North West of England	168
The ‘problem family’ in the working-class community	184
Conclusion	194
Chapter Six: ‘Problem families’: standardisation, nationalisation and Professionalisation	197
Introduction	197
Almost not a policy: central government standardisation of the ‘problem family’	199
From the capital to the provinces: nationalising the ‘problem family’	211
Professionals, politics and the poor: discourses of the ‘problem family’	227
Conclusion	235
Conclusion	238
Bibliography	244

Word count excluding bibliography: 88,103

Introduction

Speaking at the launch of the Coalition Government's Troubled Families Programme (TFP) on 15 December 2011 at Sandwell Christian Centre, Oldbury, following that summer's 'riots of the underclass',¹ Prime Minister David Cameron outlined what he perceived was their cause:

I want to talk about troubled families. Let me be clear what I mean by this phrase. Officialdom might call them "families with multiple disadvantages". Some in the press might call them "neighbours from hell". *Whatever you call them, we've known for years that a relatively small number of families are the source of a large proportion of the problems in society* [emphasis added].²

Despite the uncertain links between implementing parenting policies and the riots,³ the newly appointed Director General of the TFP – Louise Casey – was adamant that:

The new programme of work... is an opportunity to *not repeat the failed attempts of the past, but to get underneath the skin of the families, and of the services* that are now going to be working with them to find some lasting ways to make changes [emphasis added].⁴

The 'new programme of work' identified 'troubled families' as the cause of social ills and the target for the TFP; but also lambasted existing services for failing to address the 'trouble' and rolled out a standardised national policy of intensive intervention based on 'hands on' practical efforts for each family under the direction of a keyworker.⁵ Such methods, pioneered through Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) under New Labour, were deemed a 'proven', cost-effective and evidence-based solution, and touted in policy documentation.⁶ The TFP constituted an attempt to refashion the solutions of the state, as much as the lives of the 'troubled families'.

¹ I. Tyler, 'The riots of the underclass?', *Sociological Research Online*, 18:4 (2013).

² Cabinet Office et al., 'Troubled families speech', *Gov.uk*, transcript of the speech, posted 15 Dec 2011, accessed 16 Jan 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/troubled-families-speech>.

³ R. Arthur, 'Troubling times for young people and families with troubles', *Social Legal Studies*, 24:3 (2015), pp. 443-64; S. Kirkwood, 'The presence of the absent parent', in V. Cree, et al., *Revisiting moral panics* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), pp. 169-78.

⁴ L. Casey, *Listening to troubled families* (London: DCLG, 2012), p. 3.

⁵ DCLG, *Working with troubled families* (London: DCLG, 2012), pp. 20-1.

⁶ DCLG, *The cost of troubled families* (London: DCLG, 2013); id., *The fiscal case for working with troubled families* (London: DCLG, 2013).

Claims that such an idea was ‘new’ and sought ‘not [to] repeat the failed attempts of the past’ were readily debunked by historians. Even the claim to have ‘come up with the actual figures’ of 120,000 ‘troubled families’ in England and Wales overlooked that in the post-war period, experts suggested there were 80,000 ‘problem families’.⁷ Pat Starkey drew parallels with these post-war efforts to ‘rehabilitate’ ‘problem families’, and how they overlooked wider problems of poverty and inequality, with their limited success hinging on uncertain financial support from the state.⁸ John Welshman linked the TFP with attempts to understand ‘problem families’ by officialdom, arguing that ‘how these families have been defined over time, and the different attempts made to tackle them, tell us more about the people defining the “problem”, and less about the families themselves’.⁹ Welshman’s comparison of ‘troubled’ and ‘problem’ families operates within his wider argument that both represent iterations of attempts to define an ‘underclass’ in Britain for over a century.¹⁰ Welshman acknowledged the influence of John Macnicol in ‘pursuing’ the ‘underclass’, and Macnicol’s six-fold typology serves as a useful framework to inform continuities: definitions rely on contacts by state institutions; conflation of inter-generational transmission with continuity of poverty and structural disadvantage; identification of certain traits as anti-social and their attribution to one cause; political anxiety over resource allocation; advocacy by those seeking to limit the redistributive power of the state; and an enduring call for further research.¹¹ Evidently, the similarities which both Starkey and Welshman identified between ‘troubled’ and ‘problem’ families are situated within wider commonalities concerning the ‘underclass’.

However, rooting the semantic parallels of ‘troubled’ and ‘problem’ families within an ‘underclass’ discourse which pathologises the poor overlooks their significance as the basis for particular policies. Historical iterations of the ‘underclass’ have reflected the same anxieties, but by focusing attention on *the family* as the site of intervention, both ‘troubled’ and ‘problem’ forms step from discursive anxiety into transformative action. Both Macnicol and Welshman situate the ‘problem family’ discourse as circulating amongst elites, professionals and decision-

⁷ R. Levitas, ‘There may be “trouble” ahead’, *Poverty and Social Exclusion*, posted 21 Apr 2012, accessed 15 Mar 2014, <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/system/files/WP%20Policy%20Response%20No.3-%20%20%27Trouble%27%20ahead%20%28Levitas%20Final%2021April2012%29.pdf>; C. F. Brockington, *Problem families* (Shrewsbury: British Social Hygiene Council, 1948), p. 5.

⁸ P. Starkey, ‘Problem families past and present’, *Voluntary Action History Society Blog*, posted 13 Feb 2012, accessed 16 Jan 2015 <http://www.vaahs.org.uk/2012/02/problem-families-starkey/>.

⁹ J. Welshman, “‘Troubled families’”, *History and Policy Research*, posted 1 Oct 2012, accessed 16 Jan 2015 <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-136.html>.

¹⁰ J. Welshman, *Underclass* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

¹¹ J. Macnicol, ‘In pursuit of the underclass’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 16:3 (1987), pp. 315-6.

makers on how to reconcile the persistence of poverty despite the welfare state.¹² Certainly, the emerging welfare state provided the context for debates over the ‘underclass’ in post-war reconstruction, but they overlook the experiences for families who were identified as ‘problem families’ and subjected to differential treatment. To understand the administration of ‘problem families’ in the post-war period, historical investigation must delve beneath the veneer of the welfare state and its claims to universal provision, and realise the processes of exclusion they entailed in their negotiation and implementation, as Virginia Noble has explored.¹³ The role of the local authority as the mediator of central government intentions serves as a useful means to explore the relationship between welfare and the state, and how measures were developed and implemented. Moreover, differences which emerge between authorities, places, workers, services and professions further exposes that knowing ‘problem families’ in post-war Britain is not just how experts *imagined* them, but how officials *operationalised* them.

Current debate over the TFP signifies the tensions entailed in the relationship between imagining and realising policies surrounding the family. Much of the debate has focused on the policy as symptomatic of wider neoliberal intentions in vilifying welfare claimants, rolling back the frontiers of the state, legitimising austerity and enabling marketization of welfare.¹⁴ In addition, similarity to New Labour’s ‘social exclusion’ as a condition rather than a process and preference for FIPs as a solution reflects continuity across the political divide and the consensus of the state.¹⁵ However, studies have identified that the practical solutions adopted by local authorities have often appropriated the financial incentives of the TFP and continue to run services along broadly unchanged lines.¹⁶ The fallout following the eventual release of the ‘suppressed’ official evaluation in late 2016, and the accompanying criticism of payment-by-

¹² J. Macnicol, ‘From “problem family” to “underclass”’, in H. Fawcett and R. Lowe, eds., *Welfare policy in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 69-93; J. Welshman, ‘In search of the “problem family”’, *Social History of Medicine*, 9:3 (1996), pp. 447-65.

¹³ V. A. Noble, *Inside the welfare state* (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁴ T. Jensen and I. Tyler, ‘Benefit broods’, *Critical Social Policy*, 35:4 (2015), pp. 470-91; S. Crossley, “‘Realising the (troubled) family”, “crafting the neoliberal state””, *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 5:2 (2016), pp. 263-79; R. MacDonald, T. Shildrick and A. Furlong, ‘Not single spies but in battalions’, *Sociological Review*, 64:4 (2016), pp. 821-36; D. McKendrick and J. Finch, “‘Under heavy manners?’”, *British Journal of Social Work*, forthcoming; see the contributors in the special edition of *Social Policy and Society*, 17:1 (2017).

¹⁵ On ‘social exclusion’ see R. Levitas, *The inclusive society?* (London: Macmillan, 1998); N. Fairclough, *New Labour, new language?* (London: Routledge, 2000); R. Lister, ‘From equality to social inclusion’, *Critical Social Policy*, 18:55 (1998), pp. 215-25; on FIPs see: H. Churchill and K. Clarke, ‘Investing in parent education’, *Social Policy and Society*, 9:1 (2009), pp. 39-53.

¹⁶ I. Butler, ‘New families, new governance and old habits’, *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 36:4 (2014), pp. 415-25; C. Hayden and C. Jenkins, “‘Troubled Families” Programme in England’, *Policy Studies*, 35:6 (2014), pp. 631-49; E. Ball et al., ‘Intensive family intervention and the problem figuration of “Troubled Families”’, *Social Policy and Society*, 15:2 (2016), pp. 263-74.

results provides clear evidence of the significance of policy.¹⁷ Further evidence of complexity is found in the often positive relationships between the keyworker and the ‘troubled family’ despite the punitive orientation and context of social service reform.¹⁸ These reports have been not been without criticism.¹⁹ In addition, channels of influence to local and national policy-makers, the forms of research and evidence enumerating ‘troubles’ and reports of policy success, and the process of governance must be considered.²⁰ Studying ‘problem families’ in an equally contextual and complex manner as recent enquiries into ‘troubled families’ allows for an understanding of its significance in the post-war welfare state, and its use as administrative proceduralism readily understood by officials and experienced by families.

It is through my own familiarity with administrative proceduralism that I applied for doctoral study into ‘problem families’. Returning to university after serving as a ‘street-level bureaucrat’ – in Michael Lipsky’s encompassing label – on behalf of the local authority in Sheffield for four years, I readily recognised my own experiences in his contention that:

[T]he decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively *become* the public policies... [P]olicy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators, because in important ways it is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers [emphasis in original].²¹

I successfully interviewed for a project tentatively titled ‘Troubled families: discourse, policy and intervention in the North West since 1939’ as part of an ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) CASE (Collaborative Award in Science and Engineering) in partnership

¹⁷ See DCLG, *National evaluation of the troubled families programme* (London: DCLG, 2016); C. Cook, ‘Troubled families report “suppressed”’, *BBC News*, 8 Aug 2016, accessed 8 Aug 2016 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-37010486>; id., ‘Some big lessons from Troubled Families’, *BBC News*, 18 Oct 2016, accessed 18 Oct 2016 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-37691390>; C. Bonnell et al., ‘Troubled families, troubled policy making’, *British Medical Journal*, 355:5879 (2016); P. Butler, ‘More than £1bn for troubled families “has had little impact”’, *Guardian*, 17 Oct 2016, accessed 17 Oct 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/oct/17/governments-448m-troubled-families-scheme-has-had-little-impact-thinktank>; M. Lambert, ‘The Troubled Families fiasco should be a warning to children’s services’, *Community Care*, 21 Oct 2016, accessed 21 Oct 2016 <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2016/10/21/failure-troubled-families-programme-warning-childrens-services/>.

¹⁸ E. Batty and J. Flint, ‘Conceptualising the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes of family intervention projects’, *Social Policy and Society*, 11:3 (2012), pp. 345-58; S. Parr, ‘Family intervention projects’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 39:7 (2008), pp. 1256-73; id., ‘Conceptualising “the relationship” in intensive key worker support as a therapeutic medium’, *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 30:1 (2016), pp. 25-42; J. Wills et al., ‘Troubled, troubling or in trouble’, *British Journal of Social Work*, forthcoming.

¹⁹ See the debate initiated by P. M. Garrett in *Critical Social Policy*, 27:2 and 4 (2007).

²⁰ R. Edwards et al., ‘Early intervention and evidence-based policy and practice’, *Social Policy and Society*, 15:1 (2016), pp. 1-10; D. Wastell and S. White, ‘Blinded by neuroscience’, *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 1:3 (2012), pp. 397-414; on infighting over the TFP see D. Laws, *Coalition* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016).

²¹ M. Lipsky, *Street-level bureaucracy* (New York: Russell Sage, 1980), p. xii.

with Preston-based voluntary organisation Community Futures. The project sought to utilise the archival records of the Brentwood Recuperative Centre (1935-70), previously identified in published work by Welshman,²² as a source to study the impact for officials and families of the links between ‘problem’ and ‘troubled’ families at the local level. The scale of the archival material, alongside knowledge of two other doctoral projects considering ‘troubled families’ – one in relation to officials, and the other families²³ – led to the adoption of a more explicitly historical emphasis on ‘problem families’ and their position in the post-war welfare state.

The availability of sources of evidence concerning ‘problem families’ have profoundly shaped the historiography. Macnicol has relied largely on surveys undertaken by the Eugenics Society and elite interest groups;²⁴ whilst Welshman has broadened this to include a range of periodicals representing competing professional positions,²⁵ but both locate the issue in terms of an ‘underclass’. Starkey’s research into the P/FSU (Pacifist/Family Service Units) explores tensions between statutory and voluntary services and utilises a range of oral, archival and documentary sources, but her interest in the ‘problem family’ is in relation to how it shapes the history of the organisation.²⁶ Both Starkey and Welshman have explored the local setting but whose analysis is primarily in relation to the service: Bristol and FSU, and Leicester and the Public Health Department.²⁷ Welshman, expanding on the pioneering work of Macnicol once more,²⁸ has also documented the emergence of the ‘problem family’ label during evacuation, and with John Stewart has considered the divergent trajectory of developments in Scotland, but each of their emphases remains firmly at the national level.²⁹ Within the research for their

²² J. Welshman, ‘Recuperation, rehabilitation and the residential option’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 19:4 (2008), pp. 502-529; see also his ‘Wardens, letter writing and the welfare state, 1944-1974’, in A. Borsay and P. Dale, eds., *Mental health nursing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 190-212.

²³ For the two doctoral projects and their staff profiles see: Stephen Crossley (Durham University), accessed 28 July 2016 <https://www.dur.ac.uk/research/directory/staff/?mode=staff&id=9446> and Emily Ball (University of Sheffield), accessed 28 July 2016 <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/usp/researchschool/students/emilyball>.

²⁴ J. Macnicol, “‘Problem family’”; for his previous interest in the Eugenics Society see ‘Eugenics and the campaign for voluntary sterilization in Britain between the wars’, *Social History of Medicine*, 2:2 (1989), pp. 147-70; id., ‘The voluntary sterilization campaign in Britain, 1918-39’, *Journal for the History of Sexuality*, 2:3 (1992), pp. 422-38.

²⁵ J. Welshman, ‘In search’; id., ‘The social history of social work’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 29:3 (1999), pp. 457-476; id., *Underclass*, chap. 4.

²⁶ P. Starkey, ‘The feckless mother’, *Women’s History Review*, 9:3 (2000), pp. 539-557; id., *Families and social workers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

²⁷ P. Starkey, ‘The Medical Officer of Health, the social worker, and the problem family, 1943-1968’, *Social History of Medicine*, 11:3 (1998), pp. 421-441; J. Welshman, *Municipal medicine* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 241-7.

²⁸ J. Macnicol, ‘The effect of the evacuation of schoolchildren on official attitudes to state intervention’ in H. Smith, ed., *War and social change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 3-31.

²⁹ J. Welshman, ‘Evacuation and social policy during the Second World War’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 9:1 (1998), pp. 28-53; id., ‘Evacuation, hygiene, and social policy’, *Historical Journal*, 42:3 (1999), pp.

Moving histories of class and community, Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly used the minutes of Norwich Health Committee Unsatisfactory Households Subcommittee (1942-63) to consider how ‘problem families’ were identified, and although adding a significant material and spatial dimension, struggle to account for local forces outside the purview of the Health Committee.³⁰ Selina Todd has, however, explored the street-level bureaucratic dimension using individual case records of P/FSU and Liverpool PSS (Personal Service Society) to argue for a disjunction between official rhetoric surrounding ‘problem families’ and workers’ sympathies for families in poverty.³¹ Although Todd’s aim is laudable, it insufficiently accounts for the bureaucratic contexts where the statements were produced, and the dispositions they represent. In short, it fails to fully consider social work *as work*. Ultimately, lacking detailed records from a variety of statutory and voluntary services concerning ‘problem families’, each approach provides crucial insights into a larger process.

The purpose of this thesis is to recover the larger process and disentangle its complexity by exploring the case records from Brentwood to understand the welfare state systems which identified, intervened and imagined the ‘problem family’ in post-war Britain. It seeks to delve beneath the rhetoric of the ‘problem family’ as a discursive device and *what* this conveys about attitudes, and appreciate that this translated into *how* street-level bureaucrats operationalised the term. A 1975 DHSS (Department of Health and Social Security) report on the death of two children at the hands of their father summarised this proposition, commenting ruefully that:

[T]here had to be support over a number of years from many persons and agencies – to such an extent that *the family can almost be seen as a demonstration of how the welfare state operates* [emphasis added].³²

The family in question was considered a ‘problem family’,³³ the mother being referred to Brentwood for one month in June 1968 with the Probation Officer reporting that:

781-807; J. Stewart and J. Welshman, ‘The evacuation of children in wartime Scotland’, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 26:1-2 (2006), pp. 100-20.

³⁰ B. Taylor and B. Rogaly, *Moving histories of class and community* (London: Routledge, 2009); id., “‘Mrs Fairly is a dirty, lazy type’”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 18:4 (2007), pp. 429-52.

³¹ S. Todd, ‘Family welfare and social work in post-war England, c. 1948-1970’, *English Historical Review*, 129:537 (2014), pp. 362-87.

³² DHSS, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the provision and coordination of services to the family of John George Auckland* (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-1, 69.

The Judge of the Assizes commented that it was obvious [her] lack of competence had greatly contributed to the circumstances in the home which had some bearing on causing the death of the child. In order to avert any further difficulty the Judge stated he felt [she] should receive training to make her a more competent manager.³⁴

The mother in question was one of around 3,400 who went through the doors of Brentwood from 1940 to 1970. The thesis addresses why these mothers were singled out as ‘problem families’, how the policies which demarcated them from ‘normal’ families were created and operationalised, and how they reflected a larger national pattern of welfare intervention.

The surviving case records of Brentwood reveal fragments of the Centre’s existence. The remaining case files concern 1,702 of the roughly 3,400 mothers who attended from 1942-70, totalling 1,817 visits from around 3,600 in total. The discrepancy arises because it was not uncommon for authorities to send mothers for ‘refresher’ visits, or for ‘old girls’ to return of their own accord. In addition, there exist 54 case files for cancelled applications from 1956-63. Moreover, from the surviving 1,817 individual visits, 1,196 originated from the North West of England – those living within the jurisdictions of the County Councils of Lancashire and Cheshire and the County Boroughs therein – which provides a geographical focus to understand the specificity of the region in comparison to the larger national picture. It is these testimonies of reporting, processing and administering ‘problem families’ from statutory and voluntary services across England and Wales, but specifically the North West of England, which provide an understanding of the practice of the post-war welfare state. This understanding applies on three levels. First, the individual encounter between street-level bureaucrats and the family, and how their personal and professional viewpoint informed an applied knowledge of what a ‘problem family’ was, and how to handle them is explored. Second, the local administrative context in which the street-level bureaucrats operated, and how their knowledge was shaped by departmental priorities, resources and the policies of senior officials is discussed. Third, how these local policies informed a national pattern of action, and reflect a symbiotic process between central and local government of competing professional viewpoints on the appropriate response to the ‘problem’ is reconstructed. Ultimately, although lacking a single unified policy document, management of the ‘problem family’ was as much a part of the post-war welfare state as the NHS (National Health Service). Furthermore, I contend that this is due to our view of the welfare state revelling too much in *welfare*, and not enough in the *state*.

³⁴ CF: Box 57/[no case number], Mrs BA (1968), PO report, 18 Dec 1968.

The structure of the thesis is linked directly to the foregoing frame of understanding of the personal, local and national encounter between the ‘problem family’ and the welfare state. In essence, it reflects the manner in which I approached the project from the first day: working outwards from the Brentwood case files. The thesis is split into two parts, each comprising three chapters. Part One situates the ‘problem family’ and the Brentwood archive within the historiography and articulates an interconnected methodology and chronology to understand them as part of the welfare state apparatus. Part Two uses the Brentwood case files to locate the ‘problem family’ at the different levels of the state in post-war Britain: the personal, in the encounter between the family and street-level bureaucracy; the local, within the context of statutory and voluntary welfare services and government; and the the national, in debate over the definition of the ‘problem family’ and the responses from central government.

Part One provides a historical, methodological and chronological account of the place of the ‘problem family’ in welfare state discourse and practice in post-war Britain. Chapter One critically evaluates the historiography on the ‘underclass’ alongside that concerning the welfare state, local government and social work which are used to approach the problem of the ‘problem family’. Chapter Two elaborates methodological obstacles and approaches adopted in reconstructing the processes used to identify, intervene in, and imagine the ‘problem family’ in the post-war welfare state. It then examines the sources used in the reconstruction, focusing on the composition, content and consistency of the Brentwood case files, alongside their relationship to evidence from sponsoring organisations and in turn, unearthing traces of the ‘problem family’ in central government and the state. Chapter Three reconstructs the history of Brentwood as a thematic chronology examining life and change at the Centre in the post-war period. This includes comparisons with other residential rehabilitation centres in terms of everyday routines, their relationship to national legislation and administrative procedures and wider post-war social changes which informed their use. This allows for a reflection on the conceptualisation and application of the ‘problem family’ label, and how this developed over time. In addition, it permits an understanding of how the term declined in use, intimately related to the closure of Brentwood and the demise of the classic ‘golden age’ welfare state,³⁵ and explores how this is wedded to the destruction of apparatus created to manage ‘problem families’ in successive reforms of social work, local and national government.

³⁵ On the ‘golden age’ in welfare state historiography, see D. Wincott, ‘The (golden) age of the welfare state’, *Public Administration*, 91:4 (2013), pp. 806-22.

Part Two uses the reports, correspondence, memoranda, letters and personal records in the Brentwood case files to inform each stage of analysis in the thesis: the personal, local and national. Chapter Four uses referral and follow-up reports to examine the role of street-level bureaucrats in identifying ‘problem families’ in the post-war welfare state. Particularly, it studies how decisions were made amidst competing influences of professional training, the conflicting functions of each statutory and voluntary service, and their relationship to means and methods of intervention. Chapter Five locates the decision-making process of street-level bureaucrats in its local government context through the correspondence of chief and senior officials found in case records, showing how agency and departmental priorities, constraints and resources shaped their choices. It focuses on the role of chief officers of local authority departments in crafting strategies, the relationship of professionals to committees and their relationship to local politics, and how each of these influenced the contours of the ‘problem family’ in North West England. Chapter Six situates the patterns identified in the North West in relation to other areas of England through similar documents and correspondence found in the Brentwood archives, reflecting on their common relationship to central government and the formation of a national framework of managing ‘problem families’. This is seen not as an imposition by the state, but as a symbiotic process including local authorities, professionals and voluntary agencies with politicians and civil servants in central government, informing a reciprocal dynamic through advice, circulars and legislation. Crucially, it shows that although the discursive iterations of ‘problem families’ identified by Welshman and Macnicol across the post-war period reflect competing tensions in this dynamic, they ultimately signify attempts by different groups to theorise what was essentially an *operational* concept at the very heart of the welfare state.

Chapter One:

The problem of the ‘problem family’ as a historical subject

Introduction

The problem of the ‘problem family’ as a subject of inquiry is that it awkwardly straddles the sociological and historical imaginations. Sociologists see the ‘problem’ as a subjectification of the individual: gendering and pathologising poverty through the behaviour of the poor. For historians, it is the rise and fall of such processes over time and their relationship to discourse and policy which are of concern. This chapter opens a dialogue between the two approaches by considering the ‘problem family’ as a historically discrete subject in post-war Britain which was embedded in the operational assumptions and practices of the welfare state. As such, it reviews the literature across a variety of disciplines and approaches. First, the ‘problem family’ is examined in relation to its evolution from sociological explorations of the ‘underclass’ and its relationship to the dissolution of the post-war settlement in the 1980s. Second, the existing historiography on the ‘problem family’ is situated in terms of the approach outlined in the introduction concerning Part Two: national, local and personal encounters between the family and the state. Third, the welfare state is reconsidered in terms of its place in producing a discursive and governmental framework concerned with the ‘problem family’ through the post-war settlement. Fourth, the role of local government, and its links to place and space are explored in the particularity of post-war north-west England, focusing on how these shaped the discovery of ‘problem families’ by officials. Fifth, the importance of the decision-making powers and processes used by officials, and their location in working-class neighbourhoods and communities, will be approached through an appraisal of social work literature and historical studies reconstructing working-class lives. This interwoven approach throughout the historiography – the national and the welfare state, the local and the role of people and place, and the personal of officials and family – is then used to inform the analysis in Part Two of the thesis.

The ‘problem family’ and the ‘underclass’

In the same way as the TFP (Troubled Families Programme) from 2011 renewed interest in the history of the ‘problem family’, including the present study, alarm over the ‘underclass’ in the 1980s generated similar consideration. Neoconservative commentators from the US (United States), notably Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead, argued that naïve welfare policies created incentives for the poor to develop welfare dependency, encouraged family breakdown through child benefits and eroded personal responsibility; creating an ‘underclass’ apart from society.¹ Such views found a fertile reception in the Reagan administration which used them to justify welfare reforms and punitive criminal justice against what was increasingly seen as a racialised Black ‘underclass’² Across the Atlantic in Britain, the Thatcher Government shared similar proclivities in pursuing welfare reform, and the behavioural analysis of the ‘underclass’ thesis also found a receptive audience.³ It was in this context of welfare reform and behavioural explanations of poverty that historian John Macnicol first went ‘in pursuit’ of the ‘underclass’, locating the ‘problem family’ as one among many periodic rediscoveries of views which explained social problems in terms of personal inadequacy and irresponsibility.⁴ Macnicol’s ground-breaking study exposed the ‘underclass’ as a historical device to advance behavioural explanations for poverty at the expense of those which emphasised social and structural factors.

The arrival of the ‘underclass’ debate in Britain in the 1980s exposed tensions between existing structural and behavioural explanations of poverty. In 1989, at the invitation of the *Sunday Times*, Charles Murray visited Britain and imported the ‘underclass’ narrative through several publications circulated by centre-right think tanks.⁵ Here, Labour MP and previously the Director CPAG (Child Poverty Action Group) Frank Field, and the former Director of the LSE (London School of Economics) Ralf Dahrendorf, both formerly structural proponents of understanding poverty, lent legitimacy, if not support, to the views of Murray.⁶ The response

¹ C. Murray, *Losing ground* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); L. Mead, *Beyond entitlement* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

² See the response to conservatives by W. J. Wilson, *The truly disadvantaged* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1987); A. O’Connor, *Poverty knowledge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), chap. 10; J. Macnicol, ‘Is there an underclass?’ in M. White, ed., *Unemployment and public policy in a changing labour market* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1994), pp. 29-39.

³ K. Andrews and J. Jacobs, *Punishing the poor* (London: Macmillan, 1990); K. Hickson, ‘Thatcherism, poverty and social justice’, *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 18:2 (2010), pp. 135-45; R. M. Page, *Clear blue water* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), chap. 5.

⁴ J. Macnicol, ‘In pursuit of the underclass’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 16:3 (1987), pp. 293-318.

⁵ C. Murray, ed., *The emerging British underclass* (London: Institute for Economic Affairs, 1990); id., ed., *Underclass* (London: Institute for Economic Affairs, 1994); id., ed., *Underclass +10* (Trowbridge: Citivas, 2001).

⁶ F. Field, *Losing out* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); R. Dahrendorf, ‘The erosion of citizenship and its consequences for us all’, *New Statesman*, 12 June 1987, pp. 12-15.

from social scientists, academics and commentators was vociferous, resulting in a proliferation of research into the composition and character of the ‘underclass’.⁷ At root was the complexity of pinning down the concept, as Chris Crowther identifies, the ‘underclass’ refers to:

[E]ducational failure; under- or unemployment and job insecurity; social and spatial isolation; dependency on state-provided welfare; teenage mothers; racialised discrimination; participation in the informal economy; and a propensity to engage in criminal and disorderly behaviour.⁸

Commentators almost universally saw these as social problems, but were unable to disentangle cause from effect: whether such problems were a symptom or result or poverty in the structural imagination, or as the behavioural approach contended, that they reflected the chaotic lifestyles of an ‘underclass’ which threatened the community. It is this tension between behaviour or structure in approaching the problem of poverty which resides at the very heart of debate over the ‘underclass’ and has informed sociological knowledge.

However, the complexity revealed in conflicting interpretations of the ‘underclass’ as a ‘class apart’ during the 1980s and 1990s were not new. Historian John Welshman noted: ‘the difficulties of defining the underclass and the ambiguities of the term have been *both an obstacle for researchers and part of its attraction for users* [emphasis added]’.⁹ Welshman was not just referring to contemporary debates arising from the views of Murray, but recurrent historical attempts to articulate a ‘particular interpretation of the causes of poverty’ which he suggested formed an ‘underclass’ discourse.¹⁰ Synthesising a *long durée* approach similar to Alice O’Connor’s study of *Poverty Knowledge* in the USA with Macnicol’s trenchant critique of behavioural understanding of poverty, Welshman’s 2006 work *Underclass* saw the ‘problem family’ as one of nine similar labels which emerged and declined in modern Britain, defining a section of the poor as undeserving and blaming them for their poverty.¹¹ Welshman argued

⁷ H. Dean, ‘In search of the underclass’, in P. Brown and R. Scase, eds., *Poor work* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991), pp. 23-39; K. Mann, *The making of an English ‘Underclass’?* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992); L. Morris, *Dangerous classes* (London: Routledge, 1994); J. J. Rodger, ‘The welfare state and social closure’, *Critical Social Policy*, 12:35 (1992), pp. 45-63; P. Bagguley and K. Mann, ‘Idle thieving bastards?’, *Work, Employment and Society*, 6:1 (1992), pp. 113-26; K. Mann and S. Roseneil, “‘Some mothers do ‘ave ‘em’”, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 3:3 (1994), pp. 317-31; F. Robinson and N. Gregson, ‘The “underclass”’, *Critical Social Policy*, 12:34 (1992), pp. 38-51; D. J. Smith, ed., *Understanding the underclass* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1992); R. MacDonald, ed., *Youth, the ‘Underclass’ and social exclusion* (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁸ C. Crowther, ‘Thinking about the “underclass”’, *Theoretical Criminology*, 4:2 (2000), p. 151.

⁹ J. Welshman, *Underclass* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

¹¹ O’Connor, *Poverty*; Macnicol, ‘In pursuit’; J. Welshman, *Underclass* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006).

that the significance of the ‘underclass’ resided not as a vision of reality, but as a *concept* which embodied behavioural interpretations of poverty. He attributed the concept’s resilience to the unresolved relationship between behavioural and structural factors in examining poverty; the limited evidence on poverty dynamics; the impact of technological development and economic uncertainty in creating real and imagined groups cut off from the mainstream; and the value of the ‘underclass’ as an ambiguous concept and metaphor for the fears and anxieties of society.¹² In short, Welshman’s perceptive analysis of the ‘underclass’ has had a profound impact on historical attitudes to the ‘problem family’.

The ‘problem family’ and historiography

The strength and weakness of Welshman’s ‘underclass’ thesis lies in its elucidation as a history of ideas.¹³ Whilst not overlooking the significance of the continuities Welshman identifies, the primacy of examining the ‘problem family’ as a historical subject in relation to contemporary interest in the TFP lies in its construction as a *policy* concerned with regulating the *family*. Moreover, Welshman’s emphasis on historical continuities overlooks particularities; although he has written extensively on each iteration of the ‘underclass’, particularly the ‘unemployable’ of the 1910s,¹⁴ the ‘cycle of deprivation’ of the 1970s¹⁵ and the ‘problem family’, considered below. The thesis situates this history of ideas within its operational and administrative context of the post-war welfare state, and sees the ‘problem family’ as a historical subject embedded in the policies, procedures and processes of governance on an everyday basis. In addition, it appreciates that whilst the ‘problem family’ was imagined as a class apart in the minds of the experts identified by Welshman, it was discerned on a personal level by street-level bureaucrats in working-class communities; governed by local authorities under an umbrella of strategies; and subject to national action through the participation of professionals, politicians and civil servants. This national, local and personal consideration of the ‘problem family’ is reflected in the existing historiography, which will be explored to situate the particularity of the term in the post-war welfare state and inform the direction and purpose of the thesis.

¹² Welshman, *Underclass* (2013), p. 234.

¹³ See reviews for the first and second editions: J. Macnicol in *Urban History*, 34:1 (2007), p. 164; J. Gulland in *Social Policy and Administration*, 49:5 (2015), p. 672; S. Crossley in *Housing Studies*, 31:1 (2016), p. 128.

¹⁴ J. Welshman, ‘The concept of the unemployable’, *Economic History Review*, 59:3 (2006), pp. 578-606.

¹⁵ J. Welshman, ‘Ideology, social science, and public policy’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 16:3 (2005), pp. 306-341; id., ‘Where lesser angels might have feared to tread’, *Contemporary British History*, 23:2 (2009), pp. 199-219; id., *From transmitted deprivation to social exclusion* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012).

Both Macnicol and Welshman have explored the emergence and propagation of the ‘problem family’ concept at a national level. Their studies have exposed several professional groups who articulated the concept as a behavioural explanation for the continuation of poverty amidst prosperity. Both consider the moral panic over evacuation during the Second World War as instrumental in creating the term and mobilising public opinion.¹⁶ Despite the wartime etymology, both see the ‘social problem group’ articulated by the Eugenics Society during the inter-war period as a precursor to the ‘problem family’, through links with key proponents and their exposition.¹⁷ Moreover, both view the rise of the P/FSU (Pacifist, Family from 1948, Service Units) in generating specialist knowledge of ‘problem families’ during the war as crucial in propelling anxieties into the post-war period.¹⁸ Perceptively, Welshman considers the ‘problem family’ as constituting a battleground between the ascendant P/FSU and post-war Children’s Departments, aligned against defensive Public Health Departments, stripped of powers in the wake of welfare state reforms.¹⁹ Both recognise how competing definitions and knowledge of the ‘problem family’ reflect certain professional positions. However, Macnicol’s position that ‘[i]t would be wrong to see the “problem family” concept as wholly dominant in the world of 1950s social work’ lacks any analysis of the views of workers beyond professional periodicals.²⁰ Similarly, Welshman notes that ‘[t]he *issue* of the “problem family” provides’ insights into post-war social work, seeing the term as a ‘conceptual stepping stone’ towards the ‘cycle of deprivation’, but provides limited consideration of the relationship between the label and its use by workers [emphasis added].²¹ National framings of the debate over the ‘problem family’ are instructive, but offer few insights into how the term was operationalised in the post-war welfare state, and existed in practice rather than solely as a socially constructed label.

Subsequent historians have translated the national parameters of the ‘problem family’ established by Macnicol and Welshman onto local settings, tracing how individuals, agencies

¹⁶ J. Macnicol, ‘The effect of the evacuation of schoolchildren on official attitudes to state intervention’ in H. Smith, ed., *War and social change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 3-31; J. Welshman, ‘Evacuation and social policy during the Second World War’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 9:1 (1998), pp. 28-53; id., ‘Evacuation, hygiene, and social policy’, *Historical Journal*, 42:3 (1999), pp. 781-807.

¹⁷ Macnicol, ‘In pursuit’, pp. 297-8; id., ‘Eugenics and the campaign for voluntary sterilization in Britain between the wars’, *Social History of Medicine*, 2:2 (1989), pp. 147-70; id., ‘From “problem family” to “underclass”’, in H. Fawcett and R. Lowe, eds., *Welfare policy in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 72-3; J. Welshman, ‘In search of the “problem family”’, *Social History of Medicine*, 9:3 (1996), pp. 449-50.

¹⁸ Macnicol, ““Problem family””, pp. 76-7; id., ‘Reconstructing the underclass’, *Social Policy and Society*, 16:1 (2017), pp. 99-108; J. Welshman, ‘The social history of social work’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 29:3 (1999), pp. 462-64; id., ‘Troubles and the family’, *Social Policy and Society*, 16:1 (2017), pp. 109-17.

¹⁹ Welshman, *Underclass*, chap. 4; id., ‘Social history’, pp. 464-72.

²⁰ Macnicol, ““Problem family””, p. 88.

²¹ Welshman, ‘Social history’, p. 472; id., *Underclass*, p. 81.

and local interactions shaped developments. Indeed, much of Welshman's later work on the 'underclass' is based on his study of Leicester Public Health Department and its management of 'problem families'.²² Equally, Pat Starkey's study of FSU in Bristol, and their relationship with the city's MOH (Medical Officer of Health) and advocate of the 'problem family', Robert C. Wofinden, offers an insight into the disjunction between national trends and local realities when considering the 'problem family'.²³ Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly examined 'who might find themselves designated a "problem family" and why' in their study of Norwich, using evidence from the city's Unsatisfactory Households Subcommittee, under the direction of V. F. Soothill, Norwich's MOH and another principal proponent of the 'problem family'.²⁴ Their work, as part of their project on *Moving histories of class and community*, is revealing on the common experience of poverty, conflicts between officials and families and the role of place and community in shaping identification of 'problem families'.²⁵ This relationship of discourse to place is present in John Stewart and Welshman's work on evacuation in wartime Scotland, which exposes the failure of a 'problem family' discourse to appear, with structural rather than behavioural explanations for poverty being developed.²⁶ Whilst all these studies add local flesh to the national bones provided by Macnicol and Welshman, their orientation around Public Health Department materials and limited comparability obscures the role of other individuals and organisations in creating or contesting local understanding of the 'problem family'. Seeing how behavioural understandings of poverty were constituted and applied by the 'phalanx of officials' deployed to counter 'problem families' at the personal level sheds light on how such processes were mediated in everyday places and spaces.²⁷

Histories of the personal encounter between the official and the 'problem family' have largely been navigated through the history of social work. Pat Starkey's work on P/FSU, whose history intertwines inextricably with the 'problem family', has been particularly instructive.²⁸ Her focus on the gendered interaction typically between a feminised 'caring' social worker and the 'feckless mother', and on the medical, social and psychological diagnoses of the individual as the 'problem', has shown how notions of poverty were mediated through the behaviour of

²² J. Welshman, *Municipal medicine* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 241-7; id. 'In search', pp. 455-60.

²³ P. Starkey, 'The Medical Officer of Health, the social worker, and the problem family, 1943-1968', *Social History of Medicine*, 11:3 (1998), pp. 421-41, esp. pp. 430-9.

²⁴ B. Taylor and B. Rogaly, "'Mrs Fairly is a dirty, lazy type'", *Twentieth Century British History*, 18: 4 (2007), p. 430.

²⁵ Id., *Moving histories of class and community* (London: Routledge, 2009).

²⁶ J. Stewart and J. Welshman, 'The evacuation of children in wartime Scotland', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 26:1-2 (2006), pp. 100-20.

²⁷ Taylor and Rogaly, "'Mrs Fairly'", p. 438.

²⁸ P. Starkey, *Families and social workers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), esp. chap. 2.

the poor.²⁹ Selina Todd has criticised this tacit link between ideas and actions by examining the reports of workers in the case files of two voluntary agencies in Liverpool: PSS (Personal Service Society) and P/FSU. She argues that ‘few welfare workers... adopted either eugenicist or psychological explanations of poverty’, and contends that workers’ own contact with the poor was more significant in shaping sympathetic interactions. Todd considers there to be a disjunction between the views of worker and official, aligning social workers with ‘the people’ in her narrative of modern Britain.³⁰ James Osborne has explored fictional representations of encounters between officials and ‘problem families’ to expose tensions in the practice of the post-war welfare state.³¹ However, his discussion removes workers from their administrative context, which directly informs their behavioural approach. Contemporary commentator Joel Handler considered social workers to be ‘coercive’, controlling resources to induce compliance and making plans on behalf of families.³² Equally, on reflection, Hilary Corrick, a Somerset, later London, CCO (Child Care Officer), recalled in David Burnham’s oral history of social work: ‘we were very judgmental, talking about people’s inadequacies and problem families’.³³ Although fictional representations offer opportunities to explore relations between officials and families, the omission of key popular texts written by social workers at the time, notably *The shorn lamb* by John Stroud, limits the analysis.³⁴ Inevitably, it was officials and social workers who identified ‘problem families’ on behalf of senior officials even if they were not ardent eugenicists or psychologists. Understanding the process, pressures and prejudices by which they decided who was, or was not, a ‘problem family’, is crucial to grasping the historical and operational meaning of the term.

Glimpses of this intimate process whereby a family was labelled as a ‘problem’ and subject to intervention – which underpin the analysis of the thesis – can be seen in Welshman’s

²⁹ P. Starkey, ‘The feckless mother’, *Women’s History Review*, 9:3 (2000), pp. 539-557; id., ‘Mental incapacity, ill health and poverty’, in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey, eds., *Child welfare and social action in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), pp. 256-76; id., ‘Retelling the stories of clients of voluntary social work agencies in Britain after 1945’, in A. Borsay and P. Shapley, eds., *Medicine, charity and mutual aid* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 245-61.

³⁰ S. Todd, ‘Family welfare and social work in post-war England, c. 1948-1970’, *English Historical Review*, 129:537 (2014), pp. 362-87, p. 369; id., *The people* (London: John Murray, 2014)

³¹ J. B. Osborne, ‘Problem families and the welfare state in post-war British literature (1945-75)’, unpublished PhD thesis, Southampton University, 2014.

³² J. F. Handler, *The coercive social worker* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973), chaps. 3 and 4.

³³ D. Burnham, *The social worker speaks* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 134.

³⁴ The main antagonist of the plot is the Crump family, identified as a ‘problem family’. J. Stroud, *The shorn lamb* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p. 13. On the novel’s impact see R. Hardy, ‘Doing good and winning love’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 35:2 (2005), pp. 207-20. For other fictionalised social work autobiographies featuring ‘problem families’ see J. Steel, *Miss Hall’s girls* (York: YPD Books, 2016); E. R. Braithwaite, *To Sir, with love* (London: Bodley Head, 1959); B. Rees, *No fixed abode* (London: Stanmore Press, 1965).

study of the Brentwood Recuperative Centre for mothers and their children.³⁵ The Centre was situated at Marple, near Stockport, and its history mirrors that of the ‘problem family’ from 1943-70, functioning as a residential rehabilitation centre for families so-called and sponsored by statutory and voluntary agencies. Brentwood was the residential counterpart to the domiciliary P/FSU, and a key part of ‘problem family’ practice. As Welshman summarises:

Brentwood... was an important experiment in recuperation and rehabilitation, with its rise and fall mirroring broader attitudes to the segregation and social integration of families.³⁶

Welshman used Brentwood to explore continuities with FIPs (Family Intervention Projects), touted as a ‘success’ in rehabilitating ‘problem families’ by New Labour. His study followed controversy sparked by Paul Michael Garrett in *Critical Social Policy*, who argued FIPs were a ‘sinbin’ solution.³⁷ Welshman used letters from former mothers written to the Warden to question Garrett’s view, showing how institutions were not always ‘punitive and unpleasant’.³⁸ He has written elsewhere on this complex relationship.³⁹ Similar difficulties have been noted in studies of other ‘semi-penal’ institutions for women.⁴⁰ Welshman has only scratched the surface of the Brentwood archive. His focus on letters overlooks the case histories from where they originate, of 1,702 mothers who made 1,817 visits from 1942-70 surviving from a total of around 3,600. Brentwood forms the point of contact between the state and the ‘problem family’ which informs the analysis of the thesis and its encounters: personal, local and national. The sources of evidence explored in the archive will be discussed in Chapter Two, and its history in Chapter Three. The mirrored history of Brentwood across ‘problem family’ discourse and practice allows the stories of mothers who attended to be captured, and situated in their broader context of the welfare state in action.

The ‘problem family’ then, exists within three levels of analysis offered in the thesis. It is a historically specific label relating to elite discourse at a national level; intimately connected to the purposes and outlooks of individuals and organisations in post-war local government;

³⁵ J. Welshman, ‘Recuperation, rehabilitation and the residential option’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 19:4 (2008), pp. 502-529.

³⁶ Welshman, ‘Brentwood’, p. 505.

³⁷ P. M. Garrett, ‘“Sinbin” solutions’, *Critical Social Policy*, 27:2 (2007), pp. 203-30 and replies in *Critical Social Policy*, 27:4 (2007).

³⁸ Welshman, ‘Brentwood’, p. 505.

³⁹ J. Welshman, ‘Wardens, letter writing and the welfare state, 1944-1974’, in A. Borsary and P. Dale, eds., *Mental health nursing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 190-212.

⁴⁰ A. Barton, ‘“Wayward girls and wicked women”’, *Liverpool Law Review*, 22:2-3 (2000), pp. 157-71; id., ‘A woman’s place?’, *Family and Community History*, 14:2 (2011), pp. 89-104.

and experienced and enforced in everyday encounters between social and welfare workers and ‘problem families’. The analysis also enlarges three under-explored avenues in the ‘problem family’ historiography. First, child neglect and welfare are reconsidered. Macnicol’s statement that ‘child neglecting families were generally not seen as the same as problem families’, has been scrutinised by historians of childhood.⁴¹ Second, ‘race’, which Welshman sees as ‘not much linked with a more general underclass discourse’ is revisited. Pam Cox identifies ‘race’ as emergent in ‘the spectre of a racially defined underclass’ in post-war discourse, signifying implicit boundaries of ‘whiteness’, also studied by Wendy Webster.⁴² Third, the chronology of the concept, which both Welshman and Macnicol see in decline following the publication of *The problem of ‘the problem family’* in 1957, is recast. Welshman has noted its resilience ‘in medical circles’, whilst Starkey sees the label enduring and capturing new forms of poverty, particularly those of immigrant and homeless families.⁴³ Todd links these changes to the rise of improved structural awareness of poverty after the 1965 publication of *The poor and the poorest*, leading to the formation of CPAG.⁴⁴ By analysing the complex relationship between national discourse and local practice, I argue that the concept endured until 1974, following the implementation of the 1972 Local Government Act, which unravelled of the complex web of local operational practice already loosened by the 1970 Local Authority Social Services Act. The eclipse of the operational and discursive application of the ‘problem family’ appellation is inextricably linked to the decline of the classic ‘golden age’ welfare state, not countervailing discourses and the embrace of structural explanations of poverty.

National paradigms: the post-war welfare settlement and the state

The growth and demise of the ‘problem family’ concept and its operationalisation are wedded to the assumptions and practices of officials engaged in the construction and enforcement of the post-war welfare state. The historiography of the welfare state has enjoyed a Whig tradition

⁴¹ Macnicol, “‘Problem family’”, p. 80; A. Levene, ‘Family breakdown and the “Welfare Child” in 19th and 20th century Britain’, *History of the Family*, 11:2 (2006), pp. 67-79; A. Bingham et al, ‘Historical child sexual abuse in England and Wales’, *History of Education*, 45:4 (2016), pp. 411-29.

⁴² J. Welshman, ‘From the cycle of deprivation to troubled families’, in C. Cox and H. Marland, eds., *Migration, health and ethnicity in the modern world* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 190; P. Cox, ‘Race, delinquency and difference in twentieth century Britain’, in H. Shore and P. Cox, eds., *Becoming delinquent* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 171; W. Webster, “‘Race’”, ethnicity and national identity’, in I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ed., *Women in twentieth-century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 292-306.

⁴³ Macnicol, “‘Problem family’”, p. 90; Welshman, ‘In search’, pp. 462, 464; Starkey, ‘Problem family’, pp. 440-1.

⁴⁴ Todd, ‘Family welfare’, pp. 384-5.

which considers 1945 as the point of departure, looking backwards to locate precursors, and forwards seeing its erosion, typically after 1979.⁴⁵ Specifically, notions of universal provision and participatory citizenship progressively secured by the working class are solidified through collective wartime struggle.⁴⁶ Although its boundaries are contested, working-class access to citizenship as expressed through rights and responsibilities in contributing to, and benefiting from, universal provision are key to the post-war landscape.⁴⁷ Although present in this wartime narrative, ‘problem families’ are not constituted by the policy documents and proclamations of the welfare state. As Welshman notes, the ‘problem family’ is an anxiety. It is understood through policy and practice inherited before the 1945 welfare state, and marked continuity in attitudes towards less eligibility and exclusion.⁴⁸ The welfare settlement then, originating in the Beveridge Report published in 1942, comprised a commitment to this vision of citizenship, but was administered through structures, officials and attitudes retained from the old apparatus of services inherited from the abolition of the Poor Law.

The political counterpart to the idea of the welfare settlement is consensus, embedded in affluence generated through social reconstruction at the heart of the post-war project. These notions of modernity underpin many histories of post-war Britain.⁴⁹ Consensus in the ‘golden age’ welfare state remains contested,⁵⁰ and Charles Webster has shown that routes to consensus were arrived upon more by accident than by design.⁵¹ The challenge of affluence to the Labour Party’s working-class politics, and their relationship to the providing state as a means to enable

⁴⁵ A. Digby, *British welfare policy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989); P. Thane, *The foundations of the welfare state* (London: Longman, 1996); B. Harris, *The origins of the British welfare state* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); R. Lowe, *The welfare state in Britain since 1945* (London: Macmillan, 2005); D. Fraser, *The evolution of the British welfare state* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁴⁶ K. O. Morgan, *The people’s peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); P. Addison, *The road to 1945* (London: Vintage, 1994); A. Calder, *The people’s war* (London: Pimlico, 1992); D. Morgan and M. Evans, *The battle for Britain* (London: Routledge, 2003); G. G. Field, *Blood, sweat and toil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁷ K. Paul, ‘The politics of citizenship in post-war Britain’, *Contemporary Record*, 6:4 (1992), pp. 452-73; José Harris, “‘Contract’ and ‘citizenship’”, in D. Marquand and A. Seldon, eds., *The ideas that shaped post-war Britain* (London: Fontana, 1996), pp. 122-37; R. Weight and A. Beach, eds., *The right to belong* (London: IB Tauris, 1998); M. Freedman, ‘Civil society and the good citizen’, in José Harris, ed., *Civil society in British history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 275-92.

⁴⁸ H. Glennerster, *British social policy since 1945* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995); K. Laybourn, *The evolution of British social policy and the welfare state, c. 1800-1993* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995); L. Fox-Harding, *Family, state and social policy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); K. Jones, *The making of social policy in Britain* (London: Athlone Press, 2000).

⁴⁹ See the multi-volume post-war histories by David Kynaston, Peter Hennesy and Dominic Sandbrook.

⁵⁰ For a summary of the historiography see B. Harrison, ‘The rise, fall and rise of political consensus in Britain since 1940’, *History*, 84 (1999), pp. 301-24.

⁵¹ C. Webster, ‘Government policy on school meals and welfare foods, 1939-70’, in D. F. Smith, ed., *Nutrition in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 190-213.

equality through social policy, has been a recurrent issue in the historiography.⁵² Conversely, traditional attitudes of self-help, personal and family responsibility, and freedom from state interference imagined in Conservative Party ideology have also provided an uneasy tension.⁵³ Although undoubtedly important in shaping post-war state and society, the effect of political and ideological decision-making in the historiography of the ‘problem family’ has been notable by its absence. This is not without reason. ‘Problem families’ were not the basis of declarations from either party, in power or opposition, although they were mentioned in local and national publicity. This should not mask enduring anxiety with the ‘problem family’ in political discourse. Both the Conservatives and Labour supported strategies which managed ‘problem families’; not explicitly, but ingrained in the structures of governance which permeated the post-war welfare settlement.

The role of the state in bureaucratically administering the post-war welfare settlement is key to linking the discourses and practices surrounding the ‘problem family’. As Patrick Joyce has noted, the history of the British state has been ‘rather less benign than is sometimes thought’.⁵⁴ Becky Taylor’s study of travellers illuminates this process. She highlights how both central and local government across the political spectrum saw travellers as an unwanted minority and utilised the state to ‘normalise’ their behaviour, although this was far from unified and harmonious.⁵⁵ Concerns to act over certain subjects reflects their status in the eyes of the state: for families this has been gendered, with women cast as mothers through maternity and child welfare policies. Feminist historians have viewed these policies as far from benign, and reflective of imperial and pronatalist anxieties over the racial fitness of its citizens.⁵⁶ Similarly, historians of ‘race’ in post-war Britain have noted that despite rhetorical commitments to racial

⁵² N. Tiratsoo, ‘Popular politics, affluence and the Labour Party in the 1950s’, in A. Gorst et al., *Contemporary British history, 1931-1961* (London: Pinter, 1991), pp. 44-61; N. Ellison, ‘Consensus here, consensus there... but not consensus everywhere’, in Harriet Jones and M. Kandiah, eds., *The myth of consensus* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 17-39; S. Fielding, ‘Activists against “affluence”’, *Journal of British Studies*, 40:2 (2001), pp. 241-67; R. Toye and N. Lawton, ‘The challenge of coexistence’, in P. Corthorn and J. Davis, eds., *The British Labour Party and the wider world* (London: IB Tauris, 2008), pp. 145-66; S. Middleton, ‘“Affluence and the Left in Britain, c. 1958-1974”’, *English Historical Review*, 129:537 (2014), pp. 107-38.

⁵³ M. F. Francis, ‘“Set the people free”?’’, in M. F. Francis and I. Zweiniger-Bargielowksa, eds., *The Conservatives and British society, 1880-1990* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1996), pp. 240-54; M. Jarvis, *Conservative governments, morality and social change in affluent Britain, 1957-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); R. M. Page, ‘Conservative governments and the welfare state since 1945’, in Bochel, *Social policy*, pp. 110-33; H. M. Bochel, ‘One Nation Conservatism and social policy, 1951-64’, *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 18:2 (2010), pp. 123-34.

⁵⁴ P. Joyce, *The state of freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 5

⁵⁵ B. Taylor, *A minority and the state* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), pp. 10-15; chap. 6.

⁵⁶ A. Davin, ‘Imperialism and motherhood’, *History Workshop Journal*, 5 (1978), pp. 9-66; J. Lewis, *The politics of motherhood* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); D. Dwork, *War is good for babies and other young children* (London: Tavistock, 1987); S. Koven and S. Michel, eds., *Mothers of a new world* (London: Routledge, 1993).

equality, both Labour and the Conservatives were wedded to policies of marginalisation for those outside the ‘white’ image of the nation.⁵⁷ Social policy academics have also shown that partisan differences were relatively insignificant in the administration of local welfare, both before and after the 1945 ‘moment’.⁵⁸ The ‘problem family’ was produced in both imagination and practice by similar processes of exclusion generated by the administration of welfare by the state.⁵⁹ As much as the war created a national narrative of participation which legitimised exclusion,⁶⁰ it also mobilised a new wave of officials scrutinising the subject and discerning their fitness to access benefits or participate in the state.⁶¹ This site of encounter as constitutive of welfare policy has been highlighted by Virginia Noble, who contends that the experience of the welfare state is found not in legislation, but ‘in decisions made by bureaucrats and in the interactions between those claiming benefit and those dispensing them’.⁶² Accordingly, the ‘problem family’ constitutes one of Richard Toye’s ‘pertinent silences’ of post-war consensus. Its operationalisation was ‘unarticulated’ and ‘unquestioned’, but also unchallenged in welfare state administration.⁶³ How officials conceived ‘problems’, and the knowledge they applied, is crucial in seeing how the state operationalised and understood the ‘problem family’.

Intimately connected to the state as an entity are places of producing knowledge on its subjects and expertise judging normality, and qualifying and quantifying ‘problems’. Although the war catalysed the ‘problem family’ in evacuation and its exposure to a ‘phalanx of officials’, frames of understanding were rooted in inter-war language, notably the ‘social problem group’ touted by the Eugenics Society.⁶⁴ Knowledge of the family was concentrated in psychological, psychiatric and medical expertise across a spectrum of services, who understood the ‘problem’

⁵⁷ P. Gilroy, *“There ain’t no black in the Union Jack”* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); K. Paul, *Whitewashing Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); R. Hansen, *Citizenship and immigration in post-war Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); J. Hampshire, *Citizenship and belonging* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); W. Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁸ J. Macnicol, *The movement for family allowances, 1918-45* (London: Heinemann, 1980); I. Loveland, *Housing homeless persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), chap. 2.; D. King, *In the name of liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁵⁹ G. Lewis, *“Race”, gender, social welfare* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); J. Bailkin, *Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 2012).

⁶⁰ Morgan and Evans, *Battle for Britain*; S. O. Rose, *Which people’s war?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); D. S. Thomas, *An underworld at war* (London: John Murray, 2003).

⁶¹ R. M. Titmuss, *Problems of social policy* (London: HMSO, 1950), chaps. 19-20; M. Hinton, *Women, social leadership and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), chaps. 2-3; M. Andrews, “Nationalising hundreds and thousands of women”, *Women’s History Review*, 24:1 (2015), pp. 112-30.

⁶² V. A. Noble, *Inside the welfare state* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.

⁶³ R. Toye, ‘From “consensus” to “common ground”’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48:1 (2013), p. 23.

⁶⁴ G. Jones, *Social hygiene in twentieth century Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Macnicol, ‘In pursuit’, pp. 300-13; P. M. H. Mazumdar, *Eugenics, human genetics and human failings* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 243-50; Welshman, *Underclass*, chap. 3.

as one of deficiency, maladjustment or abnormality.⁶⁵ Historians have further commented on their inter-war antecedents.⁶⁶ Such behavioural understandings were embraced at the expense of structural approaches,⁶⁷ and were limited even within leading Labour circles.⁶⁸ Many of these psychological ways of knowing permeated into wider social and cultural assumptions in British society.⁶⁹ Nikolas Rose, drawing upon Foucauldian paradigms, contends that these disciplines constitute a complex which sought to govern the self.⁷⁰ However, this is to ascribe to experts a degree of power and control which they never wholly possessed, and belies the process of contestation, negotiation and abnegation that these forms and means of knowing underwent in the process of becoming considered legitimate. This is not to understate the extent to which knowledge, power and expertise are intertwined, but to see the development of the subject in the form of the ‘problem family’ as part of a wider and complex process of debate as to who, or what, constituted the ‘problem’ within the family form.

Anxiety about the family form itself comprised a potential ‘problem’ throughout the post-war period. The disruption caused by evacuation, the absence of male household members in the armed forces through conscription and their substitution in labour roles by women, led to profound concern with the family in the post-war reconstruction centred on returning to ‘normality’.⁷¹ These concerns about the family caused by wartime disruption converged with

⁶⁵ E. Zaretsky, “‘One large secure, solid background’”, *Psychoanalysis and History*, 1:2 (1999), pp. 136-51; G. Swanson, ‘Serenity, self-regard and the genetic sequence’, *New Formations*, 60:1 (2006), pp. 50-65; A. Haggett, *Desperate housewives, neuroses and the domestic environment, 1945-70* (London: Routledge, 2012); M. Pickersgill, ‘The endurance of uncertainty’, *Science in Context*, 27:1 (2014), pp. 143-75; J. Stewart, *Child guidance in Britain, 1918-1955* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁶⁶ M. Thomson, ‘Social policy and the management of the problem of mental deficiency in inter-war London’, *London Journal*, 18:2 (1993), pp. 129-42; J. Stewart, ‘Child guidance in Britain, 1927-1951’, in C. Rochester et al., *Understanding the roots of voluntary action* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), pp. 32-47; J. Toms, *Mental hygiene and psychiatry in modern Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

⁶⁷ D. Porter, ‘From social structure to social behaviour in Britain after the Second World War’, in V. Berridge and S. Blume, eds., *Poor health* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 58-80; R. Bivins, *Contagious communities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), chap. 1.

⁶⁸ On elite debates over health and poverty see J. Stewart, “*The battle for health*” (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 209-17 and J. Nuttall, *Psychological socialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); on the ‘philosophy of welfare’ see José Harris, ‘Political ideas and the debate on state welfare, 1940-45’, in Smith, *War*, pp. 233-63.

⁶⁹ See M. Thomson, *Psychological subjects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); I. Dowbiggin, *The quest for mental health* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷⁰ N. Rose, *The psychological complex* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985); id., *Governing the soul* (London: Routledge, 1990).

⁷¹ C. Harris, ‘The family in post-war Britain’, in J. Obelkevich and P. Catterall, eds., *Understanding post-war British society* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 45-57; J. Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), chap. 4; H. Hendrick, *Child welfare* (London: Routledge, 1994), chap. 8; M. Peplar, *Family matters* (London: Longman, 2002); J. Fink, ‘Private lives, public issues’, *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, 9:2 (2002), pp. 135-48; P. Thane, ‘Family life and “normality” in postwar British culture’, in R. Bessel and D. Schumann, eds., *Life after death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 193-210.

new forms of expertise and their use by officials when assessing families.⁷² Primarily, assessments as to whether a family was ‘normal’ or could pose a ‘problem’ were understood through concern for the welfare of the child – both physical and emotional – which in turn, could only be realised through satisfactory gendered norms of motherhood and nurturing as the lynchpin of the ‘family’.⁷³ Child-focused concerns by experts shaped the social obligation of motherhood as normality. Consequently, wartime increases in illegitimacy, widowhood and family breakdown which fuelled anxieties, also exposed concern with lone motherhood.⁷⁴ Intimately connected to this was the ‘problem’ of the working mother, who placed the material needs of the household above those of her child, and also contributed to gendered conceptions of the family by experts.⁷⁵ Equally, fear over juvenile delinquency stoked notions of families as a ‘problem’, with mothers not raising their children as the cause of these behaviours; although these discourses were also inflected by the role of the father in disciplining the child.⁷⁶ The ‘family’ then, was subject to scrutiny in the post-war period by experts and the state, its qualification as ‘normal’ or a ‘problem’ hinging on performances of motherhood, observed and assessed through the welfare of the child.

Despite extensive emphasis on the state, welfare provision was the basis of national concern in post-war reconstruction exemplified through conquering Beveridge’s five giants of disease, want, ignorance, idleness and squalor. Popular aspirations of welfare were shaped by experiences of inter-war unemployment and poverty, as much as war, although it lacked the

⁷² D. Riley, *War in the nursery* (London: Virago, 1983); M. Shapira, *The war inside* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); H. Hendrick, *Narcissistic parenting in an insecure world* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2016), parts 1-2; K. Tisdall, ‘Education, parenting and concepts of childhood in England, c. 1945 to c. 1979’, *Contemporary British History*, 31:1 (2017), pp. 24-46

⁷³ H. Hendrick, *Children, childhood and English society, 1880-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); A. Levene, ‘Family breakdown’, pp. 67-79; M. Thomson, *Lost freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); L. King, ‘Future citizens’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 27:3 (2016), pp. 389-411.

⁷⁴ K. Kiernan et al, *Lone motherhood in twentieth century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); J. Fink, ‘Natural mothers, putative fathers and innocent children’, *Journal of Family History*, 25:2 (2000), pp. 178-95; J. K. Dixon, ‘Singularly single’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2011; A. Gallwey, ‘Lone motherhood in England, 1945-1990’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2011; P. Thane and T. Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁷⁵ E. Wilson, *Only half-way to paradise* (London: Tavistock, 1980); D. Smith Wilson, ‘A new look at the affluent worker’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 17:2 (2006), pp. 206-229; Thomson, *Lost freedom*, pp. 93-102.

⁷⁶ J. Muncie, ‘*The trouble with kids today*’ (London: Hutchinson, 1984); D. F. Smith, ‘Official responses to juvenile delinquency in Scotland during the Second World War’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 18:1 (2007), pp. 78-105; id., ‘Delinquency and welfare in London, 1939-1949’, *London Journal*, 30:1 (2013), pp. 67-87; H. Shore, ‘Inventing and reinventing the juvenile delinquent in British history’, *Memoria y Civilizacion*, 14:1 (2011), pp. 105-32; P. Cox, *Bad girls in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), chap. 1; L. A. Jackson and A. Bartie, *Policing youth* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); K. Bradley, ‘Becoming delinquent in the post-war welfare state’, in H. Ellis, ed., *Juvenile delinquency and the limits of Western influence, 1850-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 227-47.

coherence later ascribed in historical memory.⁷⁷ Full employment and affluence were central, with the eradication of poverty celebrated, until it was ‘rediscovered’ in 1965 by Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend.⁷⁸ The extent to which poverty ‘eradicated’ and the experience of universal affluence have been contested by historians who highlight familial, occupational and regional concentrations of deprivation.⁷⁹ Others point to methodological problems in social surveys heralding the ‘eradication’ of poverty, particularly Seebohm Rowntree’s third and final study of York in 1951: *Poverty and the Welfare State*.⁸⁰ Intimately connected to notions of affluence was the role of full employment in lifting families out of poverty and providing social security, rooted in inter-war anxieties of unemployment and of the means test which was widely perceived to have stigmatised claimants and their families.⁸¹ Political sensitivities in the post-war period were acutely aware of keeping unemployment low.⁸² Both full employment and affluence as discourses were premised on universal welfare and participation. However, their manifestations as *the unemployed* and *the poor* encountered at the local level by officialdom brought new forms of expertise of the ‘problem’ to the individual subject. Contrary to Alan Deacon’s view that ‘there were so few long-term unemployed meant that there was little talk of unemployables’, David Vincent convincingly argues that ‘the lower unemployment became, the greater the suspicion that fell upon those who seemed incapable of finding work’.⁸³ Far from being universal, post-war welfare was founded on a contractual notion of work through

⁷⁷ S. Fielding et al., “*England arise!*” (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); José Harris, ‘Political thought and the state’, in S. J. D. Green and R. C. Whiting, eds., *The boundaries of the state in modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 15-28.

⁷⁸ M. McCarthy, *Campaigning for the poor* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); R. Lowe, ‘The rediscovery of poverty and the creation of the Child Poverty Action Group, 1962-1968’, *Contemporary Record*, 9:3 (1995), pp. 602-11; S. Sheard, *The passionate economist* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2013), pp. 200-4, 255-8; P. Thane and Ruth Davidson, *The Child Poverty Action Group, 1965 to 2015* (London: CPAG, 2016).

⁷⁹ R. G. Wilkinson, ‘Class mortality differentials, income distribution and trends in poverty, 1921-81’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 18:3 (1988), pp. 307-36; D. Vincent, *Poor citizens* (London: Longman, 1991); J. H. Veit-Wilson, ‘Condemned to deprivation?’, in J. Hills et al., *Beveridge and social security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 97-117; id. ‘The National Assistance Board and the “rediscovery” of poverty’, in Fawcett, *Welfare*, pp. 116-157; I. N. Gregory et al., ‘A century of poverty in England and Wales, 1898-1998’, in J. Bradshaw and R. Sainsbury, eds., *Researching Poverty* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 130-59.

⁸⁰ A. B. Atkinson et al., ‘Poverty in York’, *Bulletin of Economic Research*, 33:2 (1981), pp. 59-71; T. J. Hatton and R. E. Bailey, ‘Seebohm Rowntree and the postwar poverty puzzle’, *Economic History Review*, 53:2 (2000), pp. 517-43; I. Gazeley, *Poverty in Britain, 1900-1965* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); M. Freeman, ‘Seebohm Rowntree and secondary poverty, 1899-1954’, *Economic History Review*, 64:4 (2011), pp. 1175-94.

⁸¹ A. Deacon, *In search of the scrounger* (London: Bell, 1976); S. Constantine, *Unemployment in Britain between the wars* (London: Routledge, 1980); W. R. Garside, *British unemployment 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); M. Perry, *Bread and work* (London: Pluto Press, 2000); S. Ward, *Unemployment and the state in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁸² A. Deacon, ‘Unemployment and politics in Britain since 1945’, in B. Showler and A. Sinfield, eds., *The workless state* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981), pp. 59-87; D. King, *Actively seeking work?* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1995); I. Gazeley and A. Newell, ‘Unemployment in Britain’, in N. F. R. Crafts et al., *Work and pay in 20th century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 225-64.

⁸³ Deacon, ‘Unemployment’, p. 69; Vincent, *Poor citizens*, p. 142.

insurance to ensure eligibility as a citizen, and the accompanying exclusionary mechanisms of the state were operationalised by a host of welfare officials and functionaries.

Key to this conflict over the accessibility of welfare and the state's role as gatekeeper in the post-war period was housing. Wartime damage, unfinished inter-war slum clearance and a commitment to modernity through reconstruction all highlight the centrality of rehousing.⁸⁴ Similarly, the issue was one of political significance throughout. Its negotiation represented a tension between legacies of municipal socialism by Labour local authorities and contradictory commitments to providing housing by supporting owner-occupation and the 'property-owning democracy'.⁸⁵ Such a contradiction in terms of the competing roles of welfare and the state is not unsurprising. Commentators have recognised the uncertain status of housing in welfare, with Peter Malpass seeing it as the 'wobbly pillar' of the welfare state whilst Ian Loveland likened it to placing 'square pegs [in] round holes' in its role as a social service.⁸⁶ In terms of the 'problem family', housing was a key concern. Due to its shortage, officials rationed access by scrutinising families' ability to pay rent, domestic standards and their respectability.⁸⁷ Poor housekeeping and the inability to manage a home, often gendered as reified by officials, was evidence of the family presenting a 'problem' and their ineligibility to access the new service. Crucially, the advance of post-war slum clearance heightened the issue of managing 'problem families' to the authorities – much as evacuation has done during the War – and generated debate over the status of 'problem' citizens and their role in recreating slums and 'problem estates'.⁸⁸ Housing in the post-war period intersected the twin concerns of welfare provision and eligibility with the restriction of resources and access through the state.

Approaching the 'problem family' through national concerns serves to frame the type and number of 'problems' used in its construction. These are framed in terms of conditionality

⁸⁴ P. Dunleavy, *The politics of mass housing in Britain, 1945-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); A. Ravetz, *Council housing and culture* (London: Routledge, 2001); N. Bullock, *Rebuilding the post-war world* (London: Routledge, 2002); P. Malpass, *Housing and the welfare state* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁸⁵ A. Ravetz, 'Housing the people', in J. Fryth, ed., *Labour's promised land?* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), pp. 146-62; K. Morgan, 'The problem of the epoch?', *Twentieth Century British History*, 16:3 (2005), pp. 227-55; Harriet Jones, "'This is magnificent!'", *Contemporary British History*, 14:1 (2000), pp. 99-121; P. Weiler, 'The rise and fall of the Conservatives' grand design for housing, 1951-64', *Contemporary British History*, 14:1 (2000), pp. 122-50.

⁸⁶ P. Malpass, 'The wobbly pillar?', *Journal of Social Policy*, 32:4 (2003), pp. 589-606; I. Loveland, 'Square pegs, round holes', *Journal of Law and Society*, 19:2 (1992), pp. 339-61.

⁸⁷ S. Damer, *From Moorepark to Wine Alley* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), chap. 1; M. Brion, *Women in the housing service* (London: Routledge, 1995), chap. 7.

⁸⁸ J. A. Yelling, 'The incidence of slum clearance in England and Wales, 1955-85', *Urban History*, 27:2 (2000), pp. 234-54; P. Jones, 'Different but the same?', *City*, 12:3 (2008), pp. 356-71; B. Jones, 'Slum clearance, privatization and residualization', *Twentieth Century British History*, 21:4 (2010), pp. 510-39.

and marginalisation in accessing expanding welfare benefits through the punitive dimensions of the state. Although the paradigm of post-war cross-party welfare consensus is limited, its purpose as a contemporary discourse of inclusion, participation and universalism was essential in producing concurrent tendencies and policies which produced concern over the ‘problem family’. National and partisan politics of the ‘problem family’ are significant because of their absence: they are a ‘pertinent silence’. Instead, concern was constructed through wartime and post-war discourses focusing on gender, new forms of expertise of ‘problem’ and the family, and their relationship to failures of welfare to conquer Beveridge’s ‘five giants’. Although Welshman has ably navigated these discursive currents, they are situated here in their post-war context rather than immersed within a wider ‘underclass’ discourse. They are understood as temporally, spatially and socially situated. Therefore, to consider the ‘problem family’ in post-war Britain requires a consideration of how national discourses and policies were mediated and implemented across the ‘golden age’ of the post-war welfare state by professionals and officials in specific and local contexts.

Local government: politics, people and power

The ‘problem family’ engendered by wartime concerns and solidified in post-war discourse and welfare provision was a historically specific subject, but inevitably linked with inter-war continuities. This is evident at the local level, where political, regional and socio-economic particularities produced a variety of governmental responses before the welfare state. These themes have been explored through a critical historiography on inter-war municipal services which focuses on political complexion, the role of gender in mobilising support for maternity and child welfare provision, and the location of more progressive policies in the North West of England due to occupational heritage in textiles.⁸⁹ Subsequent historians have provided a more nuanced examination of this history by comparing types of authority, their use of permissive and financial powers, and proportional spending.⁹⁰ Much of the discussion has hinged upon the relationship of local Labour Parties in pushing a welfarist agenda, and the ideology of local

⁸⁹ J. Mark-Lawson et al., ‘Gender and local politics, struggles over welfare policies 1918-39’, in Lancaster Regionalism Group, ed., *Localities, class and gender* (London: Pion, 1985), pp. 195-215.

⁹⁰ M. Powell, ‘Did politics matter?’, *Urban History*, 22:3 (1995), pp. 360-79; A. Levene et al., ‘Patterns of municipal health expenditure in interwar England and Wales’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 78:3 (2004), pp. 635-69; B. Taylor et al., ‘Central and local government and the provision of municipal medicine, 1919-39’, *English Historical Review*, 122:496 (2007), pp. 397-426; M. Gorsky, ‘Local government health services in interwar England’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 85:3 (2011), pp. 384-412; A. Levene et al., *Cradle to grave* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011).

authorities.⁹¹ The character of welfare has also been investigated, particularly that of women as advocates and beneficiaries of measures, enabling their political involvement and supporting working-class mothers experiencing hardship.⁹² Consequently, historic differences of local provision, their relation to the political complexion, disposition and degree of Labour support, coupled to the involvement of women in positions of governance are crucial to understanding local and regional differences in attitudes, policies and histories of welfare which provided a basis for continuity into the post-war period.

The municipal autonomy key to framing inter-war understandings of local and regional difference was curtailed in the post-war period and compounded through the standardisation embedded in the welfare state. Despite a reduction in discretion, municipalities retained some autonomy through a tacit consensus with central government.⁹³ Several studies of individual authorities across the post-war period expose the limits of this independence with financial, ideological and administrative boundaries imposed by central government.⁹⁴ Local authorities were not simply homogenous political entities, and within their administration chief officers of departments – often due to historical, personal and financial reasons – were able to exercise influence over local developments, although they too were overseen by central government. This personal autonomy to develop strategies also exposes the extent to which either the local authority or the individual chief officer created local policies. MOsH are a case in point given their visibility in articulating ‘problem family’ discourses. Historians have debated the extent to which the MOH was a ‘watchdog’ – vociferous in pursuing public health concerns and actively securing change; or a ‘lapdog’ – typically inactive and using statutory over permissive

⁹¹ J. Reynolds and K. Laybourn, *Labour heartland* (Bradford: Bradford University Press, 1987); M. Savage, ‘The rise of the Labour Party in local perspective’, *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 10 (1990), pp. 1-16; G. P. Heaney, ‘The development of Labour politics in Southampton, 1890-1945’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 2000; J. Henry, ‘The politics of pauperism in Salford in the 1920s’, *North West Labour History*, 33 (2007/8), pp. 27-36.

⁹² P. Hollis, *Ladies elect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); J. Lewis, *Women and social action in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); P. M. Graves, *Labour women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Helen Jones, *Women in British public life, 1914-50* (London: Routledge, 2000), chaps. 3-4; C. Hunt, “‘Everyone’s poor relation’”, *Women’s History Review*, 16:3 (2007), pp. 417-30; S. King, *‘We might be trusted’* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2010); J. Neville, ‘Challenge, conformity and casework in interwar England’, *Women’s History Review*, 22:6 (2013), pp. 971-94.

⁹³ B. Keith-Lucas and P. G. Richards, *A history of local government in the twentieth century* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978); K. Young and N. Rao, *Local government since 1945* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997); G. T. Stoker, *The politics of local government* (London: Macmillan, 1988); J. A. Chandler, *Explaining local government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

⁹⁴ S. Goss, *Local Labour and local government* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988); N. Tiratsoo, *Reconstruction, affluence and Labour politics* (London: Routledge, 1990); N. Hayes, *Consensus and controversy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996).

powers, and beholden to the local committee; and how this changed over time.⁹⁵ Significantly, the status of the MOH in advocating maternity and child welfare is important when considering whether it is the individual or local authority who are pushing certain agendas.⁹⁶ Although this historiography has focused on the MOH, the same debates apply equally to other chief officers at the local level; notably to the CO (Children's Officer) and CWO (Chief Welfare Officer), who were competing for claims of professional competence over the 'problem family' directly with the MOH in the post-war welfare state. The concerns and disposition of local authorities must therefore be approached in relation to their political complexion and the role of chief officers. Crucially, the process of governance was plural, fluid and contested.

Spatial consideration of knowing and governing the 'problem family' does not relate to abstract political dimensions of local authorities alone, but also to their own particular pasts. The foregoing historiography of inter-war municipalities situates the processes and politics of local welfare comparatively, but the personal dimension concerning the role of individuals exposes the need for a firmer grasp in localities and regions. Although the reason for studying and demarcating the North West of England will be discussed in Chapter Two, the region forms the basis for such an approach. The intention is twofold. Firstly, to tease out the existence of shared regional parochial understandings of the 'problem family', and how strategies were created, exchanged and circulated spatially, professionally and personally in networks of governance.⁹⁷ Secondly, to consider the particularity of place and space in considering urban and rural differences and the sense of identity these imparted on local conceptualisation and negotiation of the 'problem family'.⁹⁸ Inevitably, these approaches cannot be detached from local political histories of the North West which were formed by the rise of Labour politics, industrial unrest, Victorian urban squalor, Irish migration and protracted struggles over civic

⁹⁵ J. Lewis, *What price community medicine?* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1986); C. Webster, 'Medical Officers of Health', *Radical Community Medicine*, 8 (1986), pp. 10-14; J. Welshman, 'The Medical Officer of Health in England and Wales, 1900-74', *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 19:4 (1997), pp. 443-50; L. Diack and D. F. Smith, 'Professional strategies of Medical Officers of Health in the post-war period – 1', *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 24:2 (2002), pp. 123-9; S. McLaurin and D. F. Smith, 'Professional strategies of Medical Officers of Health in the post-war period – 2', *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 24:2 (2002), pp. 130-5.

⁹⁶ Welshman, *Municipal medicine*, chap. 1; M. Niemi, *Public health and municipal policy making* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), chaps. 1-4.

⁹⁷ B. M. Doyle, 'The changing functions of urban government', in M. J. Daunton, ed., *The Cambridge urban history of Britain*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 287-313; id., 'Urban politics and space in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', in B. M. Doyle, ed., *Urban politics and space in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) pp. 1-29.

⁹⁸ J. K. Walton, 'Imagining regions in comparative perspective', in B. Lancaster et al., *An agenda for regional history* (Newcastle: Northumbria University Press, 2007), pp. 289-302; J. Belchem, 'A city apart', in Lancaster, *Regional history*, pp. 217-31; N. Kirk, ed., *Northern identities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

status and identity prior to the post-war welfare settlement.⁹⁹ The character of local authorities has been somewhat overlooked in historiography concerning the ‘problem family’, but its continuing role in contextualising local attitudes to welfare, particularly in the North West given the historic role of ‘local Labour’ and the continuing post-war hegemony of the Party in most areas, warrants further examination.¹⁰⁰ Consideration of how the ‘problem family’ was shaped in any locality cannot be divested from wider regional networks, and the interaction between and within local authorities as sites of governance is key to understanding them as part of a process of the post-war welfare state.

Place should not be considered solely in terms of personal or political formation, and relates to economic, social and cultural developments. The North West, although not providing a specific regional identity, has historically been defined by early industrialisation in textiles and imperial trade networks related to the import of raw materials and the export of finished products. The decline of these manufacturing concerns, the coal mines which fuelled them, and the ports which serviced them, has provided the region with a post-industrial and declining economic identity by 1945.¹⁰¹ It is this regional heritage which informs gender and household dynamics, with the prominent role of working women in contrast to the more strictly segregated mining towns and communities of Yorkshire and the North East.¹⁰² Within this generalised regional trend, historians of towns and cities of the North West have captured the essence of places and their links to wider change, situating national experiences outlined earlier in local

⁹⁹ A. Shallice, ‘Liverpool Labourism and Irish nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s’, *Bulletin of the North West Labour History Society*, 8 (1981/2), pp. 19-28; P. J. Waller, *Democracy and sectarianism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1981); S. Davies, *Liverpool Labour* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996); A. Flinn, ‘Oldham’, *North West Labour History*, 21 (1996/7), pp. 39-57; S. Davies and B. Morley, ‘The politics of place’, *Manchester Region History Review*, 14 (2000), pp. 63-78; K. Hunt, ‘Making politics in local communities’, in M. Worley, ed., *Labour’s grass roots* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 79-101.

¹⁰⁰ S. Catterall, ‘The Lancashire coalfield, 1945-72’, *Manchester Region History Review*, 14 (2000), pp. 103-16; S. Fielding and D. Tanner, ‘The “rise of the left” revisited’, *Labour History Review*, 71:3 (2006), pp. 211-33; P. Shapely, ‘Tenants arise!’, *Social History*, 31:1 (2006), pp. 60-78; D. Frost and P. North, *Militant Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

¹⁰¹ P. Ross, ‘A town like Nelson’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 1991; J. Singleton, *Lancashire on the scrapheap* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); H. Ratner, ‘Struggles against redundancies in the textile machinery industry in the North West, 1948-56’, *North West Labour History*, 23 (1998/9), pp. 40-8; A. Fowler, *Lancashire cotton operatives and work, 1900-1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); L. R. Parker, ‘Forgotten Lancashire?’, unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University, 2008.

¹⁰² M. Savage, *The dynamics of working class politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); J. Schwartzkopf, *Unpicking gender* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); V. Brookes, ‘Gender, class and identity’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2005; T. Griffiths, *The Lancashire working classes c.1880-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); N. Dennis et al., *Coal is our life* (London: Tavistock, 1969); R. K. Brown and P. Brennen, ‘Social relations and social perspectives amongst shipbuilding workers’, *Sociology*, 4:1 (1970), pp. 71-84 and 4:2 (1970), pp. 197-211.

context.¹⁰³ Crucially, grasping the relationship between these local and regional problems and experiences, and the broader national discourse, allows the generation and circulation of understandings of the ‘problem family’ to be explored.

This interrelationship between the local and the national can be seen in the North West through the state conditioning access to welfare benefits by ‘race’ as another ‘problem’ group. Historic constructions of race and identity in the North West hinge on signifying difference from other English migrants, but also to Welsh, Scottish and Irish migrants travelling to growth areas. In the North West, the racialisation of difference was constructed around Catholicism and constituted spatial and social divisions apart from society.¹⁰⁴ Primarily in Liverpool, but also found elsewhere, this racialisation was compounded by the separation of black and mixed race families.¹⁰⁵ These pre-war spatial and social signifiers were disrupted during the war with the arrival of American soldiers and Italian and German POWs (Prisoners of War).¹⁰⁶ Officials were anxious over the permeation of racial boundaries with new families and the children of unions constituting a ‘problem’.¹⁰⁷ In the post-war period this struggle over citizenship and status as a racial one in the national imagination was acutely experienced in the North West. The 1945 Labour Government’s reconstruction policy and export drive relied on rejuvenating declining industries, not by investment, but by providing a pool of cheap labour in the form of

¹⁰³ P. J. Aspinall et al., *Ellesmere Port* (Neston: Borough Council of Ellesmere Port, 1982); D. R. Beattie, *Blackburn* (Halifax: Ryland Publishing, 1992); J. Hill, *Nelson* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); J. K. Walton, *Blackpool* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); A. Crosby, *A history of Warrington* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2002); M. Fletcher, *The making of Wigan* (Barnsley: Wharncliffe Books, 2005); A. J., Kidd, *Manchester* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2006); P. Aughton, *Liverpool* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2008).

¹⁰⁴ F. Neal, *Sectarian violence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); S. Fielding, *Class and ethnicity* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1993); F. Boyce, ‘Irish Catholicism in Liverpool’, in J. Belchem and P. Buckland, eds., *The Irish in British labour history* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), pp. 277-97; J. Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007); C. E. Wildman, ‘Irish-Catholic women and modernity in 1930s Liverpool’, in D. A. J. MacPherson and M. J. Hickman, eds., *Women and Irish diaspora identities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 72-91.

¹⁰⁵ D. Frost, *Work and community among West African migrant workers since the nineteenth century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), chaps. 11-13; id., ‘The maligned, the despised and the ostracized’, in S. Haggerty et al., *The Empire in one city?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), pp. 143-64; A. Murphy, *From Empire to the Rialto* (Birkenhead: Liver Press, 1995); J. N. Brown, *Dropping anchor, setting sail* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); J. Jenkinson, ‘The black community of Salford and Hull, 1919-21’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 7:2 (1988), pp. 166-83; J. Belchem, *Before the Windrush* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

¹⁰⁶ S. O. Rose, ‘Girls and GIs’, *International History Review*, 19:1 (1997), pp. 146-60; N. A. Wynn, “‘Race war’”, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 24:3 (2006), pp. 324-46; B. Moore, ‘Illicit encounters’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48:4 (2013), pp. 742-60; W. Webster, ‘Enemies, allies and transnational histories’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 25:1 (2014), pp. 63-86; J. Custodis, ‘The enemy on the farm’, *Economic History Yearbook*, 55:2 (2014), pp. 99-128.

¹⁰⁷ G. Goodman, “‘Only the best British brides’”, *Contemporary European History*, 17:4 (2008), pp. 483-503; S. Lee, ‘A forgotten legacy of the Second World War’, *Contemporary European History*, 20:2 (2011), pp. 157-81.

wartime refugees. This comprised of demobilised POWs and suitable ‘white’ migrants in the guise of EVWs (European Volunteer Workers).¹⁰⁸ Moreover, as many of these racial ‘others’ departed from the region’s declining industries in the 1950s, the arrival of another wave of black and Asian migrants to replace them further reshaped boundaries of nationality, identity and race in the social and cultural landscape of the North West.¹⁰⁹ This exploration of racial difference shows that any understanding of the ‘problem family’ must be seen not as a social construct alone. The ‘problem family’ exists as a subject within the contours of established social and spatial patterns of governing other ‘problem’ populations in the imagination and administration of welfare through the state.

Nowhere can these common strategies of signifying difference and producing exclusion to ‘problem’ groups be better demonstrated than over the issue of access to housing in the post-war welfare state. The local mediation of national narratives and policies of reconstruction and modernity through slum clearance and council housing construction show how they served to socially and spatially reproduce difference. As discussed earlier, inter-war precedents shaped post-war developments; particularly concerning housing.¹¹⁰ The deployment of expertise by officials in judging places, and the character of their inhabitants is not without precedent.¹¹¹ Although the political complexion of authorities had a bearing on their view towards municipal

¹⁰⁸ D. Kay and R. Miles, *Refugees or migrant workers?* (London: Routledge, 1992); W. Webster, ‘Defining boundaries’, *Women’s History Review*, 9:2 (2000), pp. 257-76; L. McDowell, ‘The particularities of place’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 28:1 (2003), pp. 19-34 ; id., ‘Workers, migrants, aliens or citizens?’, *Political Geography*, 22:4 (2003), pp. 863-86; K. Burrell, *Moving lives* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2006); I. Weber-Newth, ‘Narratives of settlement’, in P. Panayi and K. Burrell, eds., *Histories and memories* (London: IB Tauris, 2006), pp. 75-95; S. Phillips et al., “‘They more or less blended in with society’”, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 25:1 (2007), pp. 49-72; id., “‘If we depart from these conditions...’”, *Labour History Review*, 72:2 (2007), pp. 135-54; J. Corbally, ‘The jarrish Irish’, *Radical History Review*, 104 (2009), pp. 103-25; id., ‘The othered Irish’, *Contemporary European History*, 24:1 (2015), pp. 105-25; H. G. Maslen, ‘British government and the European Voluntary Worker Programmes’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2011; F. Gasperetti, ‘Italian women migrants in post-war Britain’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2012.

¹⁰⁹ V. S. Kalra, *From textile mills to taxi ranks* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); J. Stanley, ‘Mangoes to Moss Side’, *Manchester Region History Review*, 16 (2002/3), pp. 33-43; C. Peach, ‘South Asian migration and settlement in Great Britain, 1951-2001’, *Contemporary South Asia*, 15:2 (2006), pp. 133-46; L. Brown and N. Cunningham, ‘The inner geographies of a migrant gateway’, *Social Science History*, 40:1 (2016), pp. 93-120.

¹¹⁰ C. G. Pooley and S. Irish, *The development of corporation housing in Liverpool 1869-1945* (Lancaster: Lancaster University, 1984); C. G. Pooley, ‘Slum clearance, rehousing and residential space, 1880-1940’, *Planning History Bulletin*, 7:1 (1985), pp. 33-40; Manchester Women’s History Group, ‘Ideology in bricks and mortar’, *North West Labour History*, 12:1 (1986), pp. 27-48; M. McKenna, ‘The suburbanization of the working-class population of Liverpool between the wars’, *Social History*, 16:2 (1991), pp. 173-89; N. Hayes, ‘Civic perceptions’, *Urban History*, 27:2 (2000), pp. 211-33; B. Luckin, ‘Revisiting the slums in Manchester and Salford in the 1930s’, in Doyle, *Urban politics*, pp. 134-47; M. Whitfield, ‘Lancelot Keay and Liverpool’s multi-storey housing of the 1930s’, in E. Harwood and A. Powers, eds., *Housing the twentieth-century nation* (London: Twentieth Century Society, 2008), pp. 37-50; see also the history of the Whitley estate in Reading for changing processes over time: M. Clapson, *Working-class suburb* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

¹¹¹ P. L. Garside, “‘Unhealthy areas’”, *Planning Perspectives*, 3:1 (1988), pp. 24-46; B. M. Doyle, ‘Mapping slums in an historic city’, *Planning Perspectives*, 16:1 (2001), pp. 47-65.

housing,¹¹² the administration of post-war housing hinged on managing limited resources, and policies of eligibility and allocation of council housing became a widespread method to manage racial and social ‘problem’ populations.¹¹³ The primacy of the state in regulating and restricting access can perhaps best be exemplified in the squatters’ movement as a response to the housing shortage in the immediate post-war period, where local authorities readily resorted to punitive and exclusionary marginalisation of squatters in disused military hutments.¹¹⁴ Historians have been keen to demonstrate changing awareness and attitudes to problems of poverty, notably through the rise of CPAG. Similarly, in relation to homelessness, this response is typified by the rise of Shelter and the reaction to the screening of *Cathy Come Home* in 1966.¹¹⁵ Although awareness was certainly raised, policies remained unchanged across the political divide;¹¹⁶ the punitive response of breaking apart or dispersing homeless families forms one ‘problem’ of the ‘problem family’ of enduring importance in exposing the continuity of the state in governing welfare. This interrelationship between social and racial citizenship and entitlement has been noted in post-war France by Minayo Nasiali using a case study of Marseille, and provides the potential to understand comparable networks and processes of local governance and exclusion in post-war Britain.¹¹⁷

‘Problem families’ did not just exist in the national imagination and discourse of experts and politicians. ‘Problem families’ existed in the towns and cities of post-war Britain, as they were identified and differentiated within communities by the powers and personnel of the local

¹¹² S. Parker, ‘From the slums to the suburbs’, *London Journal*, 24:2 (1999), pp. 51-69; N. Bullock, ‘West Ham and the welfare state 1945-1970’, in M. Swenarton et al., *Architecture and the welfare state* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 93-109

¹¹³ R. H. Ward, ‘Where race didn’t divide’, in R. Miles and A. Phizacklea, eds., *Racism and political action in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1979), pp. 204-22; T. Manion, ‘Access to local authority housing’, unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University, 1982; I. G. Law, ‘White racism and black settlement in Liverpool’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 1985; V. Walsh, ‘The social life of Hulme’, unpublished PhD thesis, Manchester University, 1993; P. Shapely, *The politics of housing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); A. J. Kidd, ‘From township to metropolis’, in A. J. Kidd and T. Wyke, eds., *Manchester* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 299-345.

¹¹⁴ J. Hinton, ‘Self-help and socialism and the squatters’ movement of 1946’, *History Workshop Journal*, 25 (1988), pp. 100-26; P. Burnham, ‘The squatters of 1946’, *Socialist History*, 25 (2004), pp. 20-45; K. Reeve, ‘Squatting since 1945’, in P. Somerville and N. Springings, eds., *Housing and social policy* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 197-216; id., ‘Criminalising the poor’, in F. L. O’Mahony et al., *Moral rhetoric and the criminalization of squatting* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 133-53; H. Webber, ‘A domestic rebellion’, *Ex Historia*, 4 (2012), pp. 125-46.

¹¹⁵ N. Timmins, *The five giants* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), pp. 255-8; T. Sasson, ‘The problem of homelessness in post-war Britain’, in B. Althammer et al., *Rescuing the vulnerable* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2016), pp. 212-35.

¹¹⁶ I. Loveland, ‘Legal rights and political realities’, *Law and Social Inquiry*, 16:2 (1991), pp. 249-319; N. J. Crowson, ‘Revisiting the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 24:3 (2013), pp. 424-47.

¹¹⁷ M. Nasiali, ‘Ordering the disorderly slum’, *Journal of Urban History*, 38:6 (2012), pp. 1021-35; ‘Citizens, squatters and asocials’, *American Historical Review*, 119:2 (2014), pp. 434-59.

welfare state. The ‘problems’ which defined or constituted a ‘problem family’ were far from nationally homogenous and varied by place, space and time. In addition, they were shaped by the concerns, priorities of politics of local authorities. Moreover, the autonomy of local chief officers to pursue strategies intensified local interest regardless of political hue. These patterns were not abstract, but situated in local social, cultural and economic contexts which cannot be detached from how ‘problems’ were defined, understood and known. Deindustrialisation and urban decline provided a common experience to the North West of England, and were crucial in the region becoming a site of recurrent migration. In turn, this intensified administrative concerns over welfare and resource allocation, heightening reliance on the state to safeguard eligibility and mediate access. The social and spatial impact of this process, particularly in relation to housing, had a profound effect on how ‘problems’ were governed within the region, and in turn by local authorities and officials responsible for their implementation. However, even situating the importance of regional and local understandings of ‘problems’ and their identification in the ‘problem family’ belies the everyday and individual encounter between officials and families in working-class neighbourhoods which differentiated one family from another as a ‘problem family’. Personal encounters by individual officials within the ‘phalanx’ formed in the locality, were pivotal in operationalising national discourses and local policies.

Personal encounters: social work, sociological knowledge and the working class

National debates, anxieties and political priorities over the family and reconstruction shaped the post-war landscape. Local interpretation and implementation of the welfare state blueprint was instrumental in developing policies, but it is only through the personal encounter between the official and the family which determined whether a family was, or was not, a ‘problem’. The term was an operational one, encapsulating the everyday contact between state and subject and the process of judgment this entailed. Crucial to understanding these encounters is the role of the social worker; already identified by all the historians of the ‘problem family’ as central. However, much of the social work historiography, especially post-war, is dominated by a Whig tradition articulated by former professionals constructing compartmentalised histories relating to their own modern development.¹¹⁸ This has contributed to the overrepresentation of public

¹¹⁸ D. Burnham, ‘Selective memory’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 41:1 (2011), pp. 5-21; see particularly A. F. Young and E. T. Ashton, *British social work in the nineteenth century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul,

health images of the ‘problem family’ in wider historiography at the expense of social work branches. Probation and Children’s Officers in particular, have written out or omitted much of their involvement in promoting the concept and agitating for increased professional powers.¹¹⁹ Compounding this issue are more recent histories of probation and children’s services which rely on the narratives developed by their professional forebears.¹²⁰ Equally, historians of health visiting, whose social work aspect is contested but whose role in local authority Public Health Departments as the vanguard of the MOH in encountering ‘problem families’ is evident, have also developed a canon of literature around professionalisation.¹²¹ Welshman’s awareness of the HV’s (health visitor’s) role in relation to the ‘problem family’ provides a more nuanced perspective.¹²² Generally, the history of social work in post-war Britain has been written by its advocates and practitioners, who are hesitant to dwell on their role in generating and articulating practices of exclusion clustered around the ‘problem family’.

Historiography which has re-examined the role of social work in administering welfare has emerged from several alternative sources. International histories of post-war social work have been less invested in narratives of professionalisation, and have been more critical about claims to modernity. Laura Curran’s work on psychological understandings of poverty and

1956); K. Woodroffe, *From charity to social work in England and the United States* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962)

¹¹⁹ On probation see: J. F. S. King, *The probation and after care service* (London: Butterworth, 1969); F. V. Jarvis, *Advise, assist and befriend* (London: NAPO, 1972); D. Bochel, *Probation and after-care* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976); on children see: J. S. Heywood, *Children in care* (London: Routledge, 1978); J. Packman, *The child’s generation* (London: Blackwell, 1981); K. Brill, ‘The Curtis experiment’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1991; B. Holman, *Child care revisited* (London: Institute of Child Care and Social Education, 1998); id., *Champions for children* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2001); O. Stevenson, *Neglected children and their families* (London: Blackwell, 2007); id., *Reflections on a life in social work* (Buckingham: Hinton House, 2013); R. A. Parker, *Change and continuities in children’s services* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015).

¹²⁰ On probation see: M. Payne, *The origins of social work* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); P. Whitehead and R. Statham, *The history of probation* (Crayford: Shaw, 2006); G. Mair and L. Burke, *Redemption, rehabilitation and risk management* (Cullompton: Willan, 2011); on children see: K. McLaughlin, *Social work, politics and society* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2008); S. Rogowski, *Social work* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2010); J. Pierson, *Understanding social work* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2011); T. Bamford, *A contemporary history of social work* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015).

¹²¹ R. W. J. Dingwall, ‘Collectivism, regionalism and feminism’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 6:3 (1977), pp. 291-315; P. Lloyd, ‘The management of motherhood’, in A. While, ed., *Research in preventive community nursing care* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1986), pp. 3-19; C. Davies, ‘The health visitor as mother’s friend’, *Social History of Medicine*, 1:1 (1988), pp. 39-59; C. Davies and A. Beach, *Interpreting professional self-regulation* (London: Routledge, 2000), chap. 1; A. Kelsey, ‘The evolving and uncertain role of health visiting in England and Wales in the twentieth century’, unpublished PhD thesis, LSE, 1999; J. Brooks and A. M. Rafferty, ‘Education and role conflict in the health visitor profession, 1918-39’, *Nursing Inquiry*, 17:2 (2010), pp. 142-50; S. Peckover, ‘From “public health” to “safeguarding children”’, *Children and Society*, 27:2 (2013), pp. 116-26.

¹²² J. Welshman, ‘Family visitors or social workers?’, *International Journal for the History of Nursing*, 2:4 (1997), pp. 5-22.

race in the US;¹²³ Nell Musgrove's study of the surveillance of poor families in Melbourne;¹²⁴ and Magda Fahrni's study of reconstruction in Montreal with social workers spinning a 'web of welfare' to snare 'problem' families as distinct from the 'normal';¹²⁵ have all been useful alongside similar studies, in providing a critical new perspective on social work history.¹²⁶ In addition, historians of welfare in Britain have challenged professional narratives, constructing more nuanced analysis in relation to the personal identity of the professional; and how this relates to changing roles, relationships with senior officials, and the fluidity of identity and knowledge.¹²⁷ John Harris's exploration of social work *as work* has been important in moving from professional to personal experiences of everyday processes.¹²⁸ Strengthening these more complex views of social work have been oral histories with a range of practitioners which have approached the experiences of the worker in relation to structures and cultures which govern their work. The personal basis of encounters becomes apparent within these studies, losing much of the superstructure of professional historiography.¹²⁹ Critical reflection on how social work professions, practices and personnel created, engaged with, and understood the 'problem family' requires a reappraisal of social work as a modern vocation, and needs to locate the day-to-day decision-making processes in their context of the operational encounter.

Narratives of development have been considered so far in relation to statutory services. Whilst voluntarism in Britain provided a 'mixed economy of welfare',¹³⁰ Jennifer Wolch has

¹²³ L. Curran, 'The psychology of poverty', *Social Service Review*, 76:3 (2002), pp. 365-86; id., 'The culture of race, class and poverty', *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 30:3 (2003), pp. 15-38; id., 'Social work's revised maternalism', *Journal of Women's History*, 17:1 (2005), pp. 112-36; L. S. Abrams and L. Curran, 'Between women', *Social Service Review*, 78:3 (2004), pp. 429-46; L. Curran and S. Pfeffer, "'You can't tie and untie love that fast'", *Social Service Review*, 82:1 (2008), pp. 61-91.

¹²⁴ N. Musgrove, "'Filthy' homes and 'fast' women", *Journal of Australian Studies*, 27:80 (2003), pp. 111-9; id., 'Private homes, public scrutiny', *History Australia*, 1:1 (2003), pp. 8-14.

¹²⁵ M. Fahrni, *Household politics* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2005).

¹²⁶ On Australia see S. Swain, "'I am directed to remind you of your duty to your family'", *Women's History Review*, 8:2 (1999), pp. 247-59; L. Straw, *Drunks, pests and harlots* (Kilkerran: Humming Earth, 2013); on Canada see M. H. Little, "'Manhunts and bingo blabs'", *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 19:2 (1994), pp. 233-47; M. Gleason, *Normalising the ideal* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1999); X. Chen, 'Cultivating children as you would valuable plants', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 16:4 (2003), pp. 460-86.

¹²⁷ John Harris, 'State social work', *British Journal of Social Work*, 38:4 (2008), pp. 662-79; V. Long, "'Often there is a good deal to be done, but socially rather than medically'", *Medical History*, 55:2 (2011), pp. 223-239; M. Peel, *Miss Cutler and the case of the resurrected horse* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press 2011); M. Burt, 'From ascertainment to assessment', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Chester, 2015.

¹²⁸ John Harris, *The social work business* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹²⁹ S. Rolph et al., "'A man's job'", *Oral History*, 30:1 (2002), pp. 28-41; id., "'A pair of stout shoes and an umbrella'", *British Journal of Social Work*, 33:2 (2003), pp. 339-59; P. Dale and C. Mills, 'Revealing and concealing personal and social problems', *Family and Community History*, 10:1 (2007), pp. 111-25; A. Davis, 'A revolution in maternity care?', *Social History of Medicine*, 24:4 (2011), pp. 389-406.

¹³⁰ G. Finlayson, *Citizen, state and social welfare in Britain, 1830-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 4-12; J. Lewis, 'Welfare state or mixed economy of welfare?', *History Today*, 45:2 (1995), pp. 4-6; M. Powell, ed., *Understanding the mixed economy of welfare* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2007); Rochester et al., *Voluntary action*.

discussed how in the US, it constituted a parallel ‘shadow’ state.¹³¹ Accordingly, the voluntary sector has contributed welfare provision and state punitiveness in equal measure to ‘problem families’. Studies of voluntary organisations, like social work, have been mainly written by participants, typically from a celebratory standpoint, seeking to use history as a commodity which bolsters legitimacy in longevity. Historians have provided a more nuanced perspective but much of this relates only to the distant past, with more recent developments remaining contested. In relation to the ‘problem family’, four organisations are of interest. First, P/FSU, whose identity is intertwined with the ‘problem family’. Aside from Starkey’s history,¹³² other works are celebrations of, or by, individuals and local units.¹³³ Second, the FWA (Family Welfare Association), whose name change in 1946 from COS (Charity Organisation Society) heralded the importance of the family to reconstruction, also has a post-war gloss.¹³⁴ Historians have been far more critical of the COS,¹³⁵ but only Jane Lewis’s commemorative academic study ventures beyond 1946.¹³⁶ Both P/FSU and FWA have been discussed in the ‘problem family’ historiography, with other organisations overlooked. First, the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), which Christine Sherrington sees as using the ‘problem family’ to ensure organisational survival after 1945.¹³⁷ Once again, histories of the NSPCC have celebrated its longevity,¹³⁸ or considered its eclipse in the post-war period,¹³⁹ but neither accounts for local experiences which have been studied in Sarah-Anne Buckley’s work on its Irish counterpart.¹⁴⁰ Second, the NCSS (National Council of Social Service) has also had its involvement with the ‘problem family’ downplayed in commemorative histories.¹⁴¹

¹³¹ J. R. Wolch, *The shadow state* (New York: Foundation Centre, 1990), chap. 1.

¹³² Starkey, *Families*.

¹³³ E. McKie, *Venture in faith* (Liverpool: Liverpool FSU, 1963); L. Cowan, *Reflections on forty years of service, 1947-87* (Manchester: Manchester and Salford FSU, 1987); Sheffield FSU, *How it all began* (Sheffield: Sheffield FSU, 1989); A. Cohen, *The revolution in post-war family casework* (Lancaster: Lancaster University Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 1998).

¹³⁴ M. Roof, *A hundred years of family welfare* (London: Michael Joseph, 1972); J. Gaddum, *Family Welfare Association of Manchester and Salford* (Manchester: Manchester FWA, 1974).

¹³⁵ J. Fido, ‘The COS and social casework in London, 1869-1900’, in A. P. Donajgrodski, ed., *Social control in nineteenth century Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 207-30; A. J. Kidd, ‘Charity organization and the unemployed in Manchester, c.1870-1914’, *Social History*, 9:1 (1984), pp. 45-66; A. W. Vincent, ‘The Poor Law Reports of 1909 and the social theory of the Charity Organisation Society’, *Victorian Studies*, 27:3 (1984), pp. 343-63; R. Humphreys, *Poor relief and charity, 1869-1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

¹³⁶ J. Lewis, *The voluntary sector, the state and social work in Britain* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995).

¹³⁷ C. A. Sherrington, ‘The NSPCC in transition 1884-1983’, unpublished PhD thesis, LSE, 1984, chap. 6.

¹³⁸ A. Brack, *All they need is love* (Neston: Gallery Press, 1983); NSPCC, *A history of the NSPCC* (London: NSPCC, 2000).

¹³⁹ G. Clapton, “‘Yesterday’s men’”, *British Journal of Social Work*, 39:6 (2009), pp. 1043-62.

¹⁴⁰ S-A. Buckley, ‘Child neglect, poverty and class’, *Saothar*, 33 (2008), pp. 57-70; id., *The cruelty man* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

¹⁴¹ H. R. Poole, *Liverpool Council of Social Service, 1909-59* (Liverpool: Liverpool CSS, 1960); id., *The march of the reinforcements* (Liverpool: Liverpool CSS, 1970); M. Brasnett, *Voluntary social action* (London: NCSS, 1969); E. White, *A history of the Manchester and Salford Council of Social Service, 1919-1969* (Man-

Historical work has so far only touched upon other aspects of the organisation.¹⁴² A myriad of other local and national voluntary organisations were involved in the ‘problem family’, but these four are highlighted due to their prominence. However, it is necessary to frame voluntary initiatives as a collective endeavour with the ‘problem family’, both as social work agencies and within their locality, rather than in organisational isolation.

Rather than locate social work within their professional, individual or organisational confines, or understand the ‘problem family’ as a discursive interaction between these forces, personal encounters between the state and the ‘problem family’ must be contextualised in their performative context: the working-class community. Here, social historians have constructed a rich tapestry of the strategies of neighbourhood survival, getting by, and family leisure which were entrenched – but not the ‘traditional’ working-class of sociological imagination – before the Second World War.¹⁴³ Similarly, oral historians have reconstructed the lives of people who worked, thrived and survived in these working-class communities in their own words.¹⁴⁴ These oral testimonies are important in demystifying social work encounters by enabling the other half – the ‘problem family’ as the working-class subject – an opportunity to speak. ‘Problems’ of the family as judged by the middle class social worker and by working-class friends, family and neighbours do not necessarily coincide. Pre- and inter-war patterns of living, working and making ends meet shaped post-war experiences, and although post-war changes were seismic, 1945 did not mark a point of rupture. Historians of working-class life in post-war Britain have pointed to these enduring ways of living, frequently informed by oral testimony. Particularly, working-class attitudes to respectability and domesticity;¹⁴⁵ leisure, courtship and sexuality;¹⁴⁶

chester: Manchester and Salford CSS, 1969); K. Coles, *National Council for Voluntary Organisations from 1919 to 1993* (London: NCVO, 1993).

¹⁴² J. Burchardt, ‘Reconstructing the rural community’, *Rural History*, 10:2 (1999), pp. 193-216; id., ‘State and society in the English countryside’, *Rural History*, 23:1 (2012), pp. 81-106; J. Jenkins, ‘The organization man’, in L. Black et al., *Consensus or coercion?* (Cheltenham: New Clarion Press, 2001), pp. 151-68.

¹⁴³ M. Tebbutt, *Making ends meet* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983); id., *Women’s talk?* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995); P. Johnson, *Saving and spending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); R. McKibbin, ed., *The ideologies of class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); id., *Classes and cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); E. Ross, *Love and toil* (Oxford: OUP, 1993); M. Savage and A. Miles, *The remaking of the British working classes, 1880-1940* (London: Routledge, 1993); J. Bourke, *Working-class cultures in Britain, 1890-1960* (London: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁴⁴ J. White, *Rothschild buildings* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); id., *Campbell Bunk* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986); S. Humphries, *A secret world of sex* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1988); id., *Hooligans or rebels?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); A. M. Davies, *Leisure, gender and poverty* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992); E. Roberts, *A woman’s place* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995).

¹⁴⁵ J. Giles, “‘Playing hard to get’”, *Women’s History Review*, 1:2 (1992), pp. 239-55; id., ‘A home of one’s own’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 16:3 (1993), pp. 239-53.

¹⁴⁶ C. Langhammer, ‘Manchester women and their leisure’, *Manchester Regional History Review*, 13 (1999), pp. 32-42; id., ‘Love, selfhood and authenticity in post-war Britain’, *Cultural and Social History*, 9:2 (2012), pp. 277-97; D. W. Gutzke, *Women drinking out in Britain since the early twentieth century* (Manchester: Manchester

gendered roles, the domestic economy and household violence;¹⁴⁷ and the role of affluence in fomenting change;¹⁴⁸ have been examined. The personal encounters which differentiated the ‘normal’ from the ‘problem family’ cannot be removed from the wider working-class context and experience in which they are discerned by a range of officials. Crucially, this means not repeating the assumptions of ‘problem family’ contemporaries, and consider them as a class, or culturally different family, apart.

Understanding why some families came to the attention of officialdom as a ‘problem’ but not others requires knowledge of how difference was interpreted and signified. Here, oral history is limited. Although oral history is useful in denoting working-class perceptions of ‘rough’ and ‘respectable’, which undoubtedly intersected or overlapped with official views, it is only by understanding how the working class was differentiated, stratified and mediated in the official imagination that the process of discerning the ‘problem family’ emerges. Recently, several historians and sociologists have re-examined the social surveys and sociological studies which constituted knowledge of working-class families and community in post-war Britain, interrogating the ways in which subjectivities were developed.¹⁴⁹ As Mike Savage argues:

[S]ocial science sampling methods... mined down to reveal mundane, ordinary life, in miniature, and... such research was implicated in a broader process of building a modern, rational, post-imperial nation.¹⁵⁰

University Press, 2015); M. Williamson, “Getting off at Loftus”, *Family and Community History*, 3:1 (2000), pp. 5-17.

¹⁴⁷ E. Roberts, *Women and families* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995); M. Williamson, “I’m going to get a job at the factory”, *Women’s History Review*, 12:3 (2003), pp. 407-21; id., “The iron chancellors”, *Journal of Family History*, 28:3 (2003), pp. 391-410; id., ‘Gender, leisure and marriage in a working-class community, 1939-1960’, *Labour History Review*, 74:2 (2009), pp. 185-98; id., “Fair wear and tear”, *Cultural and Social History*, 8:2 (2011), pp. 233-54.

¹⁴⁸ S. Ramsden, ‘Working-class community in the era of affluence’, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hull, 2011; id., ‘Remaking working-class community’, *Contemporary British History*, 29:1 (2015), pp. 1-26; B. Jones, *The working class in mid twentieth-century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

¹⁴⁹ M. Savage, ‘Working-class identities in the 1960s’, *Sociology*, 39:5 (2005), pp. 929-46; id., ‘Elizabeth Bott and the formation of modern British sociology’, *Sociological Review*, 56:4 (2008), pp. 579-605; id., ‘Affluence and social change in the making of technocratic middle-class identities’, *Contemporary British History*, 22:4 (2008), pp. 457-76; C. Topalov, “Traditional working-class neighbourhoods”, *Osiris*, 18 (2003), pp. 212-33; S. Todd, ‘Affluence, class and Crown Street’, *Contemporary British History*, 22:4 (2008), pp. 501-518; R. Edwards and V. Gillies, ‘Working with archived classic family and community studies’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15:4 (2012), pp. 321-30; J. Lawrence, ‘Class, “affluence” and the politics of everyday life in Britain, c.1930-1964’, *Cultural and Social History*, 10:2 (2013), pp. 273-99; id., ‘Back to work’, *Juncture*, 20:1 (2013), pp. 80-4; id., ‘Social science encounters and the negotiation of difference in early 1960s England’, *History Workshop Journal*, 77 (2014), pp. 215-39; id., ‘Inventing the “traditional working class”’, *Historical Journal*, 59:2 (2016), pp. 567-93.

¹⁵⁰ M. Savage, *Identities and social change in Britain since 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. vii.

The ‘problem family’ was differentiated as part of this process of building the post-imperial nation and knowing the working class. The ‘problem family’ did not remain uncontested, but was retained and circulated in parlance. Many oral histories recount personal experiences of poverty, neighbourhood disputes and difficulties which *could* be construed as a ‘problems’ to officials, but it is only once they apply their expert knowledge, interpret the situation and form plans that the family becomes a ‘problem’. Although working-class and official conceptions of the ‘problem’ *may* intersect or overlap, a ‘problem family’ is only signified once identified and operationalised by officials. Working-class communities should not be considered as homogenous, unified or devoid of agency as Jennifer Davis discussed in relation to their use of the justice system in Victorian London: recourse to officials was another survival strategy for families: conveying the ‘problem’ in a form recognisable to officials to secure the desired response.¹⁵¹ The ‘problem family’ should not be seen as applied personal or class prejudice, but one professionally informed and common throughout statutory and voluntary agencies in the post-war state and constituting a legitimised signifier of difference.

Personal encounters between officials and the ‘problem family’ provide a prism to view the local structures which governed access, eligibility and availability of welfare through the state; the national discourses with which they interacted concerning prosperity and affluence; and the everyday encounters between officials and families which exposed the enduring reality of poverty in post-war Britain. Social work is central: as an individual and professional process in differentiating the ‘problem family’ from the wider working-class community. Within their department, profession or service social workers were subject to pressures which informed this decision-making, but a ‘problem family’ was so-called because of the demands it placed upon several services, and was a shared signifier of difference by officials. Whilst working-class communities may have identified certain families as a ‘problem’, it was only the state which determined whether they constituted a ‘problem family’; not on a personal whim, but mediated through shared professional and official assumptions and networks. These shared networks were wedded to national conceptions of modernity, prosperity and affluence in post-war Britain realised by the welfare state, what Noble terms a ‘fragile illusion of consensus and fulfilled need’.¹⁵² Just as families experienced the welfare state by contact with officials, so too did poor families in their struggles with a range of professionals who perceived the ‘need’ of the

¹⁵¹ J. Davis, ‘A poor man’s system of justice’, *Historical Journal*, 27:2 (1984), pp. 309-35; id., ‘Jennings’ buildings and the royal borough’, in D. Feldman and G. Stedman Jones, eds., *Metropolis London* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 11-39.

¹⁵² Noble, *Welfare state*, p. 10.

family to be expert intervention, not material assistance. Poor families' experience of welfare in post-war Britain was not universalism, participation and provision of the social workers' imagination, but the state qualifying eligibility, access and availability of limited resources. In a professional discourse which saw poverty as conquered, encounters with the poor by social work provided the means to apply new forms of knowledge and practice to discern and remedy the 'normal' from the 'potential' and 'problem family'.

Conclusion

The significance of the historiography of post-war Britain in unravelling the emergence of the 'problem family' at a time of unprecedented national prosperity is to overemphasise the welfare aspect of the welfare state. The continuing role of the state in defining eligibility, access and involvement of the citizen in post-war society, and policing the boundaries of 'problem' groups shows their inextricably intertwined relationship. Nationally, normative constructions of status and citizenship based on affluence, universalism and participation provided a discourse rooted in political culture and expertise which expressed doubts over the family, and mediated through their contact with the state. Not only was the 'problem family' one which did not accord with the narrative, but one which was responsible for other national and social problems due to its improper fulfilment of supporting and nurturing the family. Locally, the role of statutory and voluntary agencies under the auspices of the local authority, particularly the branches of the personal social services, served as interpretive intermediaries of this broader national discourse. Although the welfare state has been viewed as a monolithic entity, its realisation in localities was fluid, and subject to a multitude of ideological and pragmatic interpretations. These local processes of operationalising national narratives surrounding both 'problems' and the family had a profound bearing on the bureaucratic structures of governance which managed 'problem families'. Personally, through encounters between the state and the family, social workers and officials wielded professional responsibility for differentiating the 'normal' from the 'problem' family in working-class communities. Officials determined families' eligibility for welfare, and which were 'normal', only experiencing temporary 'problems', and the 'problem families'. Such encounters and processes were not constructed in the abstract, but in the concrete, and the landscape of North West England provides the setting to examine the specificity of the 'problem family'. As will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the case files of families referred to the Brentwood Recuperative Centre from 1943-70 capture this process in motion at

the personal, local and national levels, and will be used to tease out who was identified as a 'problem family' by the post-war welfare state.

The relationship between the foregoing historiography to the 'problem family' has been formed through three intersecting tiers of analysis from conceptualisation to operationalisation. These should not be considered as static, but fluid and interrelated, with much of the national discourse being informed by operational experiences of social workers, whilst changes at the local level were informed by national patterns, which reshaped personal encounters. In post-war Britain the 'problem family' did not refer to a fixed subject of meaning, but changed from its inception in 1943 until it faded from discourse and practice around 1974. These changes of meaning mirrored and reflected those of post-war social work professionalisation. However, the analysis of this thesis inverts this analytical hierarchy: rather than trying to frame how personal encounters were shaped in the language of the welfare state, my intention here is to re-examine our conception of the state in administering welfare by the content and context of the personal encounter between 'problem families' and officials. It is about what the exposure, existence and engagement with 'problem families' says about the post-war welfare state, rather than what the welfare state says about shortcomings with 'problem families'. It is a bottom-up approach from the personal to the local, and ultimately the national, rather than top-down; and to see the making of the 'problem family' in post-war Britain through the eyes of those who actively identified and intervened in families so-called, as much as the chief officers, experts and politicians who articulated discourses of difference based on the persistence of poverty.

Chapter Two:

Recovering and reconstructing the ‘problem family’

Introduction

The reading of historiography of post-war Britain outlined in Chapter One showed citizenship, universalism and participation formed discourses of exclusion, realised in aspects of welfare and administered by the state. It supports Virginia Noble’s view that the welfare state should not be understood through national legislation, but ‘in decisions made by bureaucrats and in the interactions between those claiming benefit and those dispensing them’.¹ The welfare state was created nationally, but implemented locally, and experienced personally. Nowhere is this more evident than the ‘problem family’; exposed as an abnormal or inadequate by the state and differentiated by a ‘phalanx of officials’.² Recovering and reconstructing the ‘problem family’ in post-war Britain returns the state to existing narratives of welfare which are dominant in historical thinking of the welfare state. This historiographical view informs the theoretical and methodological approaches of the thesis: working outwards from the ‘problem family’. This approach will be explored here in three ways. First, the adoption of theoretical approaches informed by this view of the historiography will be discussed. Second, their role in informing the methodology of the thesis is considered and how they apply at the personal, local and national levels. Third, the sources used to reconstruct this process will be critically considered. The inextricable interconnectivity of historiography with theory and methodology in the thesis must be understood in relation to the centrality of the Brentwood Recuperative Centre (1943-70), whose surviving 1,817 case numbers representing 1,702 individual mothers provide a window into the moving history of the ‘problem family’. Whilst the thesis is based on an exploration of the ‘problem family’ from the bottom-up, this cannot be divorced from my own experience of working from the Brentwood archive as my principal source, uncovering traces elsewhere, and recreating networks and processes of post-war governance.

¹ V. A. Noble, *Inside the welfare state* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.

² B. Taylor and B. Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly is a dirty, lazy type’”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 18:4 (2007), p. 438.

Theoretical Approaches

The theoretical approaches adopted here are not intended as a structured framework imposed inflexibly on the historical records, but are considered in relation to the interpretation of post-war Britain outlined in the historiographical literature review. They are used as approaches which encapsulate the issues and connect with the historical reconstruction of the ‘problem family’ undertaken outwards from the Brentwood case files. My own process of understanding the complex processes of identification, referral and assessment by this ‘phalanx of officials’ is directly related to this theoretical growth, and inseparable from efforts to discern how the concept was *operationalised*, rather than *theorised* in professional discourses. Discussion of these theoretical approaches is framed in terms of the analysis of the ‘problem family’ in the thesis: personal, local and national. At the personal level, two concerns are discussed: firstly, the idea of the subaltern as espoused by James C. Scott in locating the voice of the marginal in everyday processes of officialdom; and secondly, the role of feminism in interpreting these everyday interactions as gendered. At the local level, the notion of ‘street-level bureaucracy’ articulated by Michael Lipsky is crucial, allowing the personal decision-making of officials to be situated in their context of competing pressures and influences. At the national level two theories relating to the state and governance are outlined: firstly, the work of Michel Foucault on ‘governmentality’ and Jacques Donzelot on the role of ‘the social’ in regulation of the family in the form of post-modernism; secondly, the influence of post-colonialism and Edward Said in constructing the ‘other’ and how such processes relate to dynamics of governance in Britain through the imperial imagination. These approaches, individually and collectively, influence the process of reconstruction in the methodology.

Situating the personal encounter of the official with the ‘problem family’ requires an appreciation of the inequality embedded in the encounter between the powerful state and the weak individual, and their engendered performance: by the state through the typically female social worker and the maternal subject of the ‘problem family’. Using Gayatri Spivak’s notion of the subaltern,³ Scott’s studies of peasant politics in South East Asia have retrieved the voice of the subordinate and marginalised through everyday interactions with the state.⁴ Scott locates

³ See S. Harasym, ed., *The post-colonial critic* (London: Routledge, 1990); D. Landry and D. MacLean, eds., *The Spivak reader* (London: Routledge, 1996); G. C. Spivak, *In other worlds* (London: Routledge, 2006); R. C. Morris, ed., *Can the subaltern speak?* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010).

⁴ J. C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); id., *Seeing like a state* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1999); id., *Decoding subaltern politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

the everyday politics of these subaltern groups through traces in the archives, by interpreting their presence in records as one of deliberate evasion, refusal or calculating conformity.⁵ This applies in understanding the voice and behaviour of the ‘problem family’ through the lens of the official, and the need to contextualise experiences in the archive. Equally, voices within the case narrative require examination, as even when the subaltern can be traced, the voices are those of the mother and father, leaving the child unheard.⁶ Personal encounters are a dialogue between the ‘problem family’ and the official, and although the archive records only one side, fragments of the other can be traced. Equally, Pat Starkey’s view that ‘problem family’ meant ‘problem mother’,⁷ highlights the primacy of gender; particularly as Brentwood was concerned with the ‘tired’ or ‘problem’ mother.⁸ Feminist historians, especially Joan W. Scott, articulate how historical subjects and processes are engendered.⁹ Post-war welfare bounded women’s role as a mother within the context of state citizenship,¹⁰ and critical feminist work has shown the ways in which these patriarchal practices governed women.¹¹ Whilst anxiety around the family is undeniably gendered, recent work by Sadie Parr has exposed the ambiguities in their negotiation by women as officials in relation to current ‘troubled’ families.¹² Brentwood was almost exclusively female in terms of daily practice – although like other institutions, not in terms of management¹³ – and despite clear matriarchal authority, the willing return of mothers for repeat visits, along with sustained correspondence with the Warden and other staff, points to tensions and contradictions. Locating and interpreting the personal encounter requires

⁵ J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), chap. 8.

⁶ H. Hendrick, ‘The child as social actor in historical sources’, in P. Christensen and A. James, eds., *Research with children* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 36-61.

⁷ P. Starkey, ‘The feckless mother’, *Women’s History Review*, 9:3 (2000), pp. 539-557.

⁸ J. Welshman, ‘“Recuperation, rehabilitation and the residential option”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 19:4 (2008), p. 507.

⁹ J. W. Scott, *Gender and the politics of history* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999); see also D. Riley, *Am I that name?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); N. Fraser, *Unruly practices* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

¹⁰ E. Wilson, *Women and the welfare state* (London: Tavistock, 1977); id., *Only half-way to paradise* (London: Tavistock, 1980); J. Lewis, ‘Dealing with dependency’, in J. Lewis, ed., *Women’s welfare/women’s rights* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 17-37; J. Dale and P. Foster, *Feminists and state welfare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986) G. Pascall, *Social policy* (London: Tavistock, 1986); K. Canning and S. O. Rose, ‘Gender, citizenship and subjectivity’, *Gender and History*, 8:4 (2001), pp. 427-43; for a more critical consideration see S. Blackburn, ‘How useful are feminist theories of the welfare state?’, *Women’s History Review*, 4:3 (1995), pp. 369-94; id., ‘Women and the British welfare state since 1945’, in A. Knotter et al., *Labour, social policy and the welfare state* (Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 1997), pp. 183-95.

¹¹ See C. Smart, ed., *Regulating womanhood* (London: Routledge, 1992); E. B. Silva, ed., *Good enough mothering?* (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹² S. Parr, ‘Family intervention projects’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 39:7 (2008), pp. 1256-73; id., ‘Intensive family casework with “problem families”’, *Family Science*, 2:4 (2011), pp. 240-9; id., ‘Integrating critical realist and feminist methodologies’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 18:2 (2015), pp. 193-207; id., ‘Explaining and understanding state intervention into the lives of ‘troubled’ families’, *Social Policy and Society*, forthcoming

¹³ A. Barton, *Fragile moralities and dangerous sexualities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

recognition of the uneven record reflected in the archive, but exposes its potential recovery, and the need to situate the encounter as structured by the gendered role of women and the profoundly uneven negotiation of power between the individual and the state.

The decision-making surrounding the ‘problem family’ at the local level, identified by Noble as signifying most peoples’ experience of the welfare state, is a study of bureaucracy. Michael Lipsky captures these ‘dilemmas of the individual in public services’ in the encounter through his notion of ‘street-level bureaucracy’.¹⁴ He defines ‘typical street-level bureaucrats’ as ‘public employees who grant access to government programs and provide services within them’.¹⁵ This echoes the professional dilemmas of the welfare state noted in Chapter One and, according to Lipsky:

At best, street-level bureaucrats invent benign modes of mass processing that more or less permit them to deal with the public fairly, appropriately, and successfully. At worst, they give in to favouritism, stereotyping, and routinizing – all of which serve private or agency purposes.¹⁶

Similar tendencies were identified by Joel F. Handler studying a London Borough Council’s Children’s Department in the 1960s.¹⁷ Commentators have also employed Lipsky’s framework to understand professional practice in Britain.¹⁸ Bureaucratic dilemmas also present problems for the history of officialdom in the archive.¹⁹ Equally, the spectre of Švejkism ‘as an emblem of individualism in opposition to the totalising holism of organisation’ can be found in disengagement by officials, much as Scott found them for the subaltern.²⁰ Conversely, in the social work historiography recounted in Chapter One, discretion is viewed as a *positive* feature of professionalism, which contemporaries, including Richard Titmuss, were keen to support in order to retain a human component to welfare.²¹ Yet Lipsky’s street-level bureaucrats show

¹⁴ M. Lipsky, *Street-level bureaucracy* (New York: Russell Sage, 1980).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

¹⁷ J. F. Handler, ‘The coercive children’s officer’, *New Society*, 12:314 (1968), pp. 485-7; id., *The coercive social worker* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973).

¹⁸ M. J. Hill, ‘Street level bureaucracy in social work and social services departments’, in J. Lishman, ed., *Social work departments as organizations* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Department of Social Work, 1982), pp. 69-81; B. Williams, ‘Social work with prisoners in England and Wales’, in J. Schwieso and P. Pettit, eds., *Aspects of the history of British social work* (Reading: Reading University Faculty of Education and Community Studies, 1995), pp. 21-65.

¹⁹ C. Adams et al., ‘Bureaucracy, corruption and accountability in historical perspective’, *International Journal of Public Administration*, 34:11 (2011), pp. 697-700.

²⁰ D. Wastell et al., ‘Children’s services in the iron cage of performance management’, *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 19:3 (2010), p. 311.

²¹ R. M. Titmuss, *Commitment to welfare* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968), pp. 113-23; id., ‘Welfare rights, law and discretion’, *Political Quarterly*, 113 (1971), pp. 113-32.

how professional discretion can have *negative* consequences, and cannot be detached from local and operational contexts as a state agency.²² Other critics of bureaucracy and the state also highlight the significance of proceduralism in dehumanising the subject, and the use of ‘folk sociology’ by officials in signifying the moral difference of the poor subject as a burden on the service, community and society.²³ Framing the local processes of competing professional, personal and political interests which govern personal encounters between officials and the ‘problem family’ requires an awareness of the position of the state in administering welfare, and its mediation through street-level bureaucracy.

Considering the role of the state at the national level both discursively and in practice draws upon the idea of governance through two closely related theories: post-modernism and post-colonialism. The work of Michel Foucault is singularly important in studying governance through the everyday ‘microphysics of power’, discourse, its role in producing knowledge, and their realisation in what he terms ‘governmentality’.²⁴ Furthermore, in studying this process upon the family, the work of Foucault’s student Jacques Donzelot on ‘the social’ as a form of regulation and policing to secure the future reproduction of the nation is equally significant.²⁵ However, the competing and contradictory tensions within the state through different officials and purposes exposes the limits of ‘governmentality’ as an overarching theory, discussed in relation to British history in Chapter One in the work of Nikolas Rose.²⁶ Commentators have expressed scepticism over the ‘cryptic and incomplete’ forms of power alluded to by Foucault in his emphasis on discourse, and his lack of historical foundation,²⁷ with historian Jennifer Davis arguing forcefully that ‘Foucault has credited the Victorian state with a hegemony over working-class behaviour that it almost surely did not possess’.²⁸ Whilst ‘governmentality’

²² M. Rowe, ‘Going back to the street’, *Teaching Public Administration*, 30:1 (2012), pp. 10-18.

²³ D. Graeber, *The utopia of rules* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2015), chap. 1; Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), chap. 4; A. Sayer, *The moral significance of class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chap. 8.

²⁴ M. Foucault, *Discipline and punish* (London: Penguin, 1991); id., *The birth of the clinic* (London: Tavistock, 1976); on the terms’ origins see: C. Gordon, ‘Government rationality’, in G. Burchell, et al., *The Foucault effect* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), pp. 1-51.

²⁵ J. Donzelot, *The policing of families* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); on the development of the ‘social’ see: J. L. Moreno Pestaña, ‘Jacques Donzelot’s *The policing of families* (1977) in context’, in R. Duschinsky and L. Antonio Rocha, eds., *Foucault, the family and politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 121-41.

²⁶ N. Rose, *The psychological complex* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985); id., *Governing the soul* (London: Routledge, 1990).

²⁷ A. Sayer, ‘Power, causality and normativity’, *Journal of Political Power*, 5:2 (2012), pp. 179-94; G. B. Risse, ‘Before the clinic was “born”’, in N. Finzsch and R. Jütte, eds., *Institutions of confinement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 75-96.

²⁸ J. Davis, ‘The London garroting panic of 1862’, in V. Gatrell et al, *Crime and the law* (London: Europa, 1980), p. 213.

captures many facets of state operation, the seemingly hegemonic nature of post-modernism, along with its oversight of materiality, provides clear limits to its application. Linked to post-modern constructions of the subject is post-colonialism. Edward Said has reflected upon how discourses of imperialism produced the ‘other’ as a cultural and social subject of knowledge.²⁹ Said’s post-colonial approach is useful in two ways. First, it permits an identification of similar methods of ‘othering’ developed in Britain, particularly those of officialdom in understanding working-class behaviour.³⁰ Second, post-colonialism reframes definitions of citizenship and access to welfare within Britain through a racial lens of conditional exclusion.³¹ As much as ‘problem families’ were a problem to the state, their identification and intervention required the discretionary disbursement of welfare, and seeing citizenship defined by race, as much as class and poverty, allows reconsideration of ethnicity in the ‘underclass’.³² Both post-modern and post-colonial theories highlight the role of the state in creating and knowing the subject, and their contribution to national discourses of welfare, state and citizenship which governed their inclusion and exclusion.

The theoretical ideas outlined above have been situated in relation to my reading of the historiography of post-war Britain in understanding the ‘problem family’ as produced by and through narratives and practices of the welfare state. The theories are used to approach analysis of the ‘problem family’ at the intersecting personal, local and national levels, rather than inform an overarching position. The personal encounter draws upon subaltern and feminist theories to understand it as an uneven and imbalanced meeting between officials and the family, and one gendered through the female social worker and the mother. Local decision-making, which informs the personal encounter, uses Michael Lipsky’s ‘street-level bureaucracy’ to appreciate the pressures and influences exerted upon officials and services in performing their duties. At the national level the interrelated theories of post-modernism and post-colonialism have been utilised to show the role of discourse, the state and ‘governmentality’ in producing knowledge which ‘others’ groups, and defines the conditional status of citizens. Moreover, the deployment

²⁹ E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003).

³⁰ See particularly T. H. Parsons, *The Second British Empire* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014); id., ‘Administration, city planning, and policing in Imperial and Metropolitan perspective’, paper presented to the Liverpool University Management School Research Workshop, 4 July 2016; on the use of this idea in Canada see: C. Richardson, ‘Orientalism at home’, *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, 27:1 (2014), pp. 75-95.

³¹ J. Bailkin, *Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 2012); R. Bivins, ‘Immigration, ethnicity and “public” health policy in postcolonial Britain’, in C. Cox and H. Marland, eds., *Migration, health and ethnicity in the modern world* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 126-50; M. D. Moore, ‘Harnessing the power of difference’, *Social History of Medicine*, 29:2 (2016), pp. 384-404

³² J. Welshman, ‘From the cycle of deprivation to troubled families’, in Cox and Marland, *Migration*, pp. 174-94.

of these theoretical ideas in understanding the ‘problem family’ is connected the process of their historical recovery and reconstruction, and in turn informs the methodological approaches used in the thesis.

Methodology

Although the methodologies used are connected to the theories outlined above and the reading of the historiography discussed in Chapter One, their development cannot be detached from the origins of the thesis: the case files of Brentwood. Historical recovery has been outwards from the families, officials and ‘problems’ contained within the files, and these link to the personal, local and national basis for reconstructing the ‘problem family’. Connecting these files to the historical processes which produced them has imposed methodological potential and constraints on the thesis. At the level of the personal encounter, the use of oral history, biography and narratives have been explored as means of broadening the case histories. At the local level, the use of microhistory, spatial analysis and case studies have offered avenues for situating the personal encounters in the wider historical context. In terms of the national level, complexity theory, textual and discourse analysis, (anti-)social history, and quantitative and comparative histories have been used to examine the meaning contained in the reconstruction of the ‘problem family’ as an operational process. At each stage, my intention has been to contextualise the individual lives and stories contained within the files as part of a larger strategy of identification and intervention of ‘problem families’ in post-war Britain.

The personal level relates primarily to recapturing the individual – the mother, official, and chief officer – within each stage of the process. In Britain, oral history has been used both ideologically and methodologically to recover the voices of those marginalised by the historical record.³³ Using this method, historians have recaptured experiences of welfare and the state in modern Britain.³⁴ However, elites and officials are often secondary in oral history.³⁵ In terms of mediating the ‘problem family’, oral history has limits in handling these experiences. For families, oral testimony can overemphasise solidarity and reify ‘problem families’ as ‘rough’

³³ R. Samuel, ‘Local history and oral history’, *History Workshop Journal*, 1 (1976), pp. 191-208; P. Thompson, *Voice of the past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³⁴ J. Bornat et al., *Oral history, health and welfare* (London: Routledge, 2000); R. Perks and A. Thompson, eds., *The oral history reader* (London: Routledge, 2006).

³⁵ A. Seldon and J. Pappworth, *By word of mouth* (London: Methuen, 1983); R. Perks, ‘The roots of oral history’, *Oral History Review*, 37:2 (2010), pp. 215-24

‘others’ against their ‘respectability’.³⁶ Sociologists have shown how those within the same community often use the language of the ‘underclass’ to signify their own ‘respectability’ and the ‘roughness’ of others, whilst outsiders consider the entire area as ‘rough’.³⁷ For officials, unwillingness to discuss unpleasant aspects conveys a partial image,³⁸ whilst in social work, the use of anecdotes to illustrate cases compounds the view of the official over the family.³⁹ Biography and autobiography provide other avenues to recover the individual,⁴⁰ and have been used to trace people over time.⁴¹ Like oral history, biographies allow voices of the marginalised to be recovered from the posterity of the historical record. However, care needs to be exercised in relation to reflexivity and self-representation, and for biographical narratives the incomplete image produced through partial access or representation of evidence.⁴² Biographical recovery of individuals is further problematised in case histories. Whilst case files in social work history convey changing professional knowledge,⁴³ they provide a window into the decision-making process of the official as an individual in constructing biographies of state subjects.⁴⁴ Existing studies of case files by historians have traced this process by studying a single ‘problem’ or organisation,⁴⁵ whilst the ‘problem family’ exists only in its multiplicity of contacts with the state, and produces competing and conflicting narratives of families. Consequently, personal

³⁶ S. Ramsden, “‘The community spirit was a wonderful thing’”, *Oral History*, 44:1 (2016), pp. 89-97.

³⁷ H. Dean and P. Taylor-Gooby, *Dependency culture* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992); R. Macdonald and T. Shildrick, ‘Poverty talk’, *Sociological Review*, 61:2 (2013), pp. 285-303; R. Patrick, ‘Irresponsible citizens?’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2015.

³⁸ C. Elkins, *Britain’s gulag* (Bodley Head, 2014), chap. 10; id., ‘Looking beyond Mau Mau’, *American Historical Review*, 120:3 (2015), pp. 852-68.

³⁹ A. Cohen, *The revolution in post-war family casework* (Lancaster: Lancaster University Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 1998); D. Burnham, *The social worker speaks* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); for a critique see P. Starkey, ‘Review’, *Contemporary British History*, 27:3 (2013), pp. 380-2.

⁴⁰ K. Wells, *Narrative inquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴¹ G. Rubilar, ‘Social work research techniques, testimonies and analysis’, *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, 14:2 (2013), pp. 199-234; R. Humphrey, ‘Life stories and social careers’, *Sociology*, 27:1 (1993), pp. 166-78

⁴² W. Webster, ‘Our life’, in F. Bonner, et al., *Imagining women* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 116-27; P. Cox, ‘Home girls’, in K. Reynolds, ed., *Childhood remembered* (London: Roehampton Institute, 1998), pp. 64-76; B. Jones, ‘The uses of nostalgia’, *Cultural and Social History*, 7:3 (2010), pp. 355-74.

⁴³ C. Skehill, ‘Researching the history of social work’, *European Journal of Social Work*, 10:4 (2007), pp. 449-63; id., ‘History of child welfare and protection and social work in Northern Ireland’, *Child Care in Practice*, 16:4 (2010), pp. 309-25.

⁴⁴ M. Peel, *Miss Cutler and the case of the resurrected horse* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2011); F. Iacovetta and W. Mitchinson, eds., *On the case* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1998); K. Tice, *Tales of wayward girls and immoral women* (Urbana, IL: Illinois University Press, 1998); P. Starkey, ‘Retelling the stories of clients of voluntary social work agencies in Britain after 1945’, in A. Borsay and P. Shapely, eds., *Medicine, charity and mutual aid* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 245-61.

⁴⁵ L. Gordon, *Heroes of their own lives* (London: Virago, 1989); id., *Pitied but not entitled* (New York: Free Press, 1994); L. A. Jackson, *Child sexual abuse in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 2000); G. K. Behlmer, *Child abuse and moral reform in England, 1870-1908* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1982); id., *Friends of the family* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1998).

encounters remain informed by the case files of Brentwood, with attention paid to production of narrative by both individuals and officials.

Methodology at the local level situates the interrelationship between people and place. Microhistory provides a means to intensively study the social and cultural processes of a period through a close reading of texts.⁴⁶ Early-modern historians, often due to limited sources, have been keen to use microhistory to recover the lives of groups hidden from history, particularly in relation to family, community and welfare.⁴⁷ Whilst intimately conveying a certain moment, microhistory can be problematic by inferring rationality, motivation and intentionality which is not always evident, and by seeing the particular as universal.⁴⁸ Microhistory is significant, however, in linking the personal to place. The ‘spatial turn’ in history has considered the links of discourse and place,⁴⁹ and the work of sociologist Loïc Wacquant in viewing marginality as spatially as well as socially constructed has significance when considering the role of poverty and governance.⁵⁰ As seen in Chapter One, encounters between the state and the ‘problem family’ were structured in and around the working class community, and restoring the spatial dimension to operationalisation of the concept is key to disentangling post-war understanding of poverty.⁵¹ This experience relates to urban history, and the case study of the North West for the thesis.⁵² Place should not be viewed as a static object upon which people exist, but an integral part of social and community relations. Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly’s study of three working-class estates in Norwich, including a study of ‘problem families’,⁵³ conveyed how space and community were imagined and realised from within and without, and linked to class, race and gender.⁵⁴ Linking the narratives of the personal encounter constructed through the Brentwood case files to these micro-level and case studies of community and exclusion are

⁴⁶ C. Ginzburg, *The cheese and the worms* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

⁴⁷ S. Hindle, *On the parish?* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); J. Healey, *The first century of welfare* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014).

⁴⁸ A. Blaikie, ‘Problems with “strategy” in micro-social history’, *Family and Community History*, 4:2 (2001), pp. 85-98.

⁴⁹ R. Kingston, ‘Mind over matter?’, *Cultural and Social History*, 7:1 (2010), pp. 111-21.

⁵⁰ L. Wacquant *Urban outcasts* (London: Polity Press, 2007); see also: T. Slater, ‘Your life chances affect where you live’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37:2 (2013), pp. 367-87.

⁵¹ D. Massey, *Spatial divisions of labour* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁵² S. Ewen, *What is urban history?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015); A. Crosby, ‘Urban history in Lancashire and Cheshire’, *Northern History*, 42:1 (2005), pp. 75-89.

⁵³ Taylor and Rogaly, “Mrs Fairly”.

⁵⁴ B. Taylor and B. Rogaly, *Moving histories of class and community* (London: Routledge, 2009); id., ‘Welcome to “monkey island”’, in M. Wetherell, et al., *Identity, ethnic diversity and community cohesion* (London: SAGE, 2007), pp. 61-74; id., ‘Moving representations of the “indigenous” white working class’, in K. P. Sveinsson, ed., *Who cares about the white working class?* (London: Runnymede Trust, 2009), pp. 51-9; id., “I don’t want to be classed, but we’re all classed”, in M. Wetherell, ed., *Identity in the 21st century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), pp. 41-58; id., id., ‘Finding common ground against disadvantage’, in D. Feldman and B. Gidley, eds., *Integration, disadvantage and extremism* (London: Pears Institute, 2014), pp. 21-4.

more problematic, and require the case history to be interwoven with the mechanisms which produced their identification as a ‘problem family’.

Tracing the personal and local as comprising a national process raises methodological obstacles. Complexity theory explores interrelationships in social and economic life as part of a system which can be qualified and quantified in motion, rather than as chaotic interactions.⁵⁵ Complexity theory has been applied as a management tool, but offers limited knowledge of the discrepancies between the idealised and realised practice underpinning the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’.⁵⁶ Embedded within the methodology of each level of encounter is textual and discourse analysis.⁵⁷ In relation to social work, health and welfare which bind the ‘problem family’, there must be scrutiny of the motivations and creation of textual sources.⁵⁸ Due to the nature of Brentwood as the main source there is a reliance on textual practices, but other methods are used to prevent privileging forms of knowledge. My intention to write ‘from below’ recognises the aims of social history,⁵⁹ but exists in tension as the ‘problem family’ is defined by the state and lacks a constituency. Social history reflects recent trends towards the felt and lived experience of class as a social and cultural process of distinction.⁶⁰ Selina Todd’s study of ‘the people’ in Britain captures this as a shared and common national experience.⁶¹ Whilst social histories of class and culture are central, the ‘problem family’ represents an *anti*-social history of the individual within family, community and class.⁶² Understanding national processes requires a move from qualitative to quantitative methods. The roots of quantitative approaches in impersonal histories means they can be antipathetic to marginalised groups and reproduce essentialised subjects and knowledge,⁶³ but they are essential to appreciating larger

⁵⁵ P. Cilliers, *Complexity and postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1998); D. S. Byrne and G. Callaghan, *Complexity theory and the social sciences* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

⁵⁶ A. Chettiparamb, ‘Complexity theory and planning’, *Planning Theory*, 13:1 (2014), pp. 5-25; J. Paley and G. Eva, ‘Complexity theory as an approach to explanation in healthcare’, *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 48:2 (2011), pp. 269-79; A. C. Gatrell, ‘Complexity theory and geographies of health’, *Social Science and Medicine*, 60:12 (2005), pp. 2661-71; S. Fish and M. Hardy, ‘Complex issues, complex solutions’, *Nordic Social Work Research*, 5:s.1 (2015), pp. 98-114; I. Stevens and P. Cox, ‘Complexity theory’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 38:7 (2008), pp. 1320-36.

⁵⁷ N. Fairclough, *Analysing discourse* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁵⁸ B. Ziemann and M. Dobson, eds., *Reading primary sources* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); P. Starkey, ‘Historical research’, in A. McIntosh-Scott et al., *Key concepts in nursing and healthcare research* (London: SAGE, 2013), pp. 101-6; id., ‘Archival resources for social work history’, in L. Hardwick et al., *Innovations in social work research* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2016), pp. 77-91.

⁵⁹ E. P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London: Penguin, 1991).

⁶⁰ C. Tilly, *As sociology meets history* (New York: Academic Press, 1981); P. Abrams, *Historical sociology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982); P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); B. Skeggs, *Formations of class and gender* (London: SAGE, 1997); T. Bennett et al., *Culture, class, distinction* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁶¹ S. Todd, *The people* (London: John Murray, 2014).

⁶² M. Seidman, ‘Social history and antisocial history’, *Common Knowledge*, 13:1 (2007), pp. 40-9.

⁶³ R. Floud, ‘Quantitative history and people’s history’, *Social Science History*, 8:2 (1984), pp. 151-68.

patterns.⁶⁴ Situating the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ as a national trend exposes this tension, and the study of one regional case study containing local differences serves as a model for contrasts between individuals, agencies and authorities. However, an indication of their commonality can only be gauged by comparing the North West with the case files of those from elsewhere. Reconstructing the national level requires an awareness of scale in moving beyond local and personal contexts to elicit the wider relevance of ‘problem families’.

The methodologies explored above are directly informed by the theoretical approaches adopted, which in turn are related to the reading of post-war historiography offered in Chapter One. The use of the 1,817 surviving case files of Brentwood provides some limits in the use of methods. By linking and contextualising the case files with other sources, and exploring their interconnection, the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ at the personal, local and national level can be recovered and reconstructed. The personal encounter will explore the narratives constructed in the case files by several agencies and individuals, supported with testimonies of those involved through oral history and autobiography, aware of the reflexive nature of recollections. At the local level, micro-historical approaches situate the intimate but mundane encounter in the context of the working-class communities in which they occurred, understanding the impact that governance has upon the locality, but shared and circulated across regional networks. The national discourses of the ‘problem family’ will be informed by local and personal operationalisation, and the case study of the North West will be contrasted with other areas to provide a degree of scale and commonality across post-war Britain. Related to this understanding of historiography, theory and methodology is the study of the episode to inform arguments about the national situation. Here, *Policing the crisis* by the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies serves as an example, whereby crises of capitalism and the state were explored through responses to one incident of ‘mugging’ in Handsworth in 1973.⁶⁵ This thesis seeks to undertake a similar process of scale from the personal to the national using the case files of Brentwood to reconstruct the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’, and key to realising this is consideration of the source material at each stage of the process.

⁶⁴ A. Digby, ‘Qualitative and quantitative perspectives on the asylum’, in R. Porter and A. Wear, eds., *Problems and methods in the history of medicine* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 153-74; P. Hudson, *History by numbers* (London: Arnold, 2000).

⁶⁵ S. Hall et al., *Policing the crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

Sources

The types and use of sources are framed around the above discussion on methodology, theory and historiography which rest on examining the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ by the post-war welfare state bureaucracies through the case files of Brentwood. They reconstruct and recover the processes of discernment by officials to differentiate ‘problem families’ from the ‘normal’ family, and the actions taken to rehabilitate them as citizens. The following is a consideration of the types of sources found within the case files, and their relationship to complementary forms of evidence at the personal, local and national levels. The personal encounter is based on the Brentwood case files, and considers how each case is constructed in relation to experiences before, during and after visiting the Centre. The local level considers the role of people and professions in referring families to Brentwood, the impact of committees and agencies, and their interaction within place and space. The national level considers how central government dictates and mediates policies for ‘problem families’, and how the North West can be compared with other regions; arguing that discourse should be reconsidered as a process of theorising and discussing operational practices pursued within local authorities by chief officers and agencies staking a claim to specialist knowledge and services. Consideration of the source material then allows a rounded understanding of their function in reconstructing the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ through the narrative of Brentwood.

Personal: case files and the Brentwood Recuperative Centre, 1943-70

The history of Brentwood will be recounted in Chapter Three, and provides a narrative and chronological framework to analysis of the ‘problem family’ explored in Part Two of the thesis. Discussion here considers the Brentwood archive as a source, particularly the case files of the mothers who went, in examining the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’. Brentwood’s relationship to ‘problem family’ discourse has been considered by John Welshman, alongside the potential for recovering the voice of the ‘problem family’ through correspondence between the Warden and mothers.⁶⁶ However, no detailed analysis of the case files has been undertaken. In relation Welshman’s work, three issues need to be outlined. First, although Brentwood was a voluntary residential institution, most referrals originated from statutory agencies. Second, the ‘residential option’ should be seen as complementing, not opposing, the domiciliary option.

⁶⁶ Welshman, ‘Recuperation’; id., ‘Wardens, letter writing and the welfare state, 1944-1974’, in A. Borsay and P. Dale, eds., *Mental health nursing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 190-212.

Third, the history of the ‘residential option’ exemplified by Brentwood must be framed in relation to other ‘problem family’ centres; but the emphasis on Brentwood and the North West are dictated by the survival of the case files, which do not exist in quality or quantity elsewhere. The circumstances of survival for Brentwood are twofold. An unfulfilled request for the parent organisation, CCL (Community Council of Lancashire) to destroy confidential material when Brentwood closed fortuitously preserved the files.⁶⁷ The physical decay of the files in the cellar of Community Futures’ headquarters at Victoria Place, Preston led to around half of the total 3,600 being destroyed. 1,817 case files survive, of which 1,450 were deposited at Lancashire Archives in 2006, and the other 367 surviving files remaining at Victoria Place until also deposited by the author on behalf of Community Futures in 2015. In terms of the composition and content of the files, this relates to the three stages of admission: before, during and after. Each of these stages will be examined in turn to show their viability in considering their role in reconstructing the personal encounter between the official and the family.

Case details prior to admission hinge upon the collation by the sponsoring authority. In the 1940s most sponsors gathered details from reports from all interested agencies and social workers and combined these into a single narrative, whilst from the 1950s, referrals contained duplicate reports from officials, making authorship easier to identify over time. The content, length and type of documents are uneven, and this relates to how sponsors perceived and used Brentwood, with a pattern of greater length, volume and detail of information in later files, from handwritten to typewritten texts. Moreover, as noted above, many mothers returned to Brentwood and these cases offer more details. Similarly, greater knowledge on some officials can be found by their repeated referral of families, traced across changes in their professional, organisational and geographical settings. These personal networks accentuate referral patterns. The proportion of ‘convalescent’ cases from hospitals declined over time, despite Brentwood still being included in the *Directory of convalescent homes* as late as 1966.⁶⁸ The admission of ‘problem families’ was also unclear, with one Warden distinguishing between ‘problem’ and ‘rest’ cases, but conceded there existed a ‘good deal of overlapping’.⁶⁹ This ambiguity was evident with sponsors, with different agencies, professions and individuals having conflicting views on whether a family was a ‘problem’ or not, which also changed over time. This issue

⁶⁷ CF: Box 57, Instructions from A. Hatton to J. S. Jackson, n.d. [Nov 1970].

⁶⁸ British Hospitals Contributory Schemes Association, *Directory of convalescent homes serving the provinces (England and Wales)* (Liverpool: BHCSA, 1966), p. 32; on the changing role of convalescence see S. Sheard, ‘Getting better, faster’, in S. Sheard and L. Abreu, eds., *Hospital life* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 299-330.

⁶⁹ E. D. Abraham, ‘Family rehabilitation’ *Mother and Child*, 21:1 (1950), p. 12.

of balancing ‘problem families’ with others remained a persistent issue, with local authorities gradually referring mothers who either showed prospects of rehabilitation, or where all other options had been exhausted.⁷⁰ The referral form itself also masks processes of construction. London and Liverpool councils paid voluntary societies to manage referrals until 1951 and 1958 respectively, and in Cheshire the Public Health Department bore financial responsibility for cases identified by the Children’s Department.⁷¹ Negotiations over admission, financial responsibility within authorities, or the conditions which mothers agreed to attend Brentwood are present, but concealed in correspondence. Consequently, it has only been by consulting all the surviving 1,817 case files and analysing them as a corpus that common tendencies have emerged, and provide insights into the professional, organisational and individual processes of referrals to Brentwood.

Documents within cases which detail a mother’s time at Brentwood shape those relating to admission and after-care. Primarily, this is what constitutes a ‘case’, with each visit issued a unique handwritten number by the first Warden, Miss E. Doris Abraham until 1964, as her successor dispensed with the system. Mothers who attended multiple times have a case number for each visit, whilst some cancelled applications have been issued with a number without ever attending. This administrative amateurism, which changed with each Warden and subject to adjustment by Deputy Wardens, was worsened by having two sites of management: Brentwood and the headquarters of the CCL in Manchester. Regular sponsors directly contacted Wardens, causing accounting and administrative confusion.⁷² The case files themselves were collated haphazardly, with earlier files consisting of documents paper-clipped together, and later ones kept in labelled foolscap folders. Because sponsors discussed multiple cases in correspondence or have common names, many documents have been filed in different cases.⁷³ The bureaucratic creation of cases was far from uniform, and informs their content. Many files contain detailed correspondence on hospital visits or debt collection, whilst others allude to similar processes in reports or accompanying documents. Reports on mothers for sponsors from Brentwood also present issues of authorship. In the 1940s most reports were handwritten by the Warden on file cards, but progressed to a single sheet of paper typed by a secretary. By the 1950s the

⁷⁰ LA: DDX2302/30 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 11 Oct 1950; *ibid.*/46 R. Chamberlain to J.S. Jackson, 6 May 1957.

⁷¹ On Liverpool see LA DDX2302/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 8 Jan 1959; on London see *ibid.*/box 4/case number 1855, Mrs RB (1952) M. Whale to E. D. Abraham, 16 Dec 1952; for Cheshire see *ibid.*/box 4/case number 1745, Mrs EDA (1951) M. Brooke Willis to A. Brown, n.d. [Oct 1951].

⁷² LA: DDX2302/box 10/case number 669, Mrs JH (1946); CF: Box 57/case number 669, Mrs JH (1946), between Brentwood, CCL, Liverpool Public Health Department, PSS and the MRA over payment of the account.

⁷³ This is an administrative not archival issue as it was also found in unopened batches of bound case files.

Deputy Warden became involved in writing reports, despite the final report being signed by the Warden. Authorship can be identified, but the use of certain stock phrases and narratives of progress make this problematic. Differences between Wardens are easier to trace, with Miss Abraham's successor, Mary E. Oag, coming from psychiatric casework, placing emphasis on relationships with current problems deriving from early childhood, and extended the admission period from four weeks to three months. These issues are also reflected in the changes of the Brentwood regime discussed in Chapter Three, but the changing processes of record-keeping and case-recording used at Brentwood have a role in shaping files individually and collectively.

Tracing cases on departure from Brentwood presents similar problems of creation and survival. Many mothers remained in contact after departure. Welshman has used a sample of loose letters from mothers to Miss Abraham to illustrate their experiences,⁷⁴ although hundreds of cases contain similar letters with friends made at the Centre and other members of staff.⁷⁵ Mothers were also encouraged to write.⁷⁶ Many mothers returned for additional visits, but 'old girls', chiefly from nearby areas, made their own visits for the Wednesday social, weekends, and particularly Christmas. These provided continued points of contact, although many are not recorded in the case files. The main means of tracing mothers, in relation to the opinions of officials, are through after-care and follow-up reports. Regular sponsors to Brentwood reported these formally, but also informally in brief remarks about mothers in unrelated correspondence. Individual social workers also sent regular reports, or updated the Warden. Brentwood actively sought information, often to substantiate claims of success for publicity.⁷⁷ Staff and supporters of Brentwood sent Christmas cards to mothers hoping for details, whilst in the administrative lull between Christmas and New Year, they requested follow-up reports on mothers. This has the twofold effect of eliciting a response from authorities and social workers on families which is written in relation to the effects – positive or negative – of Brentwood; and a concentration of follow-up and after-care reports in January. As with admissions, these reports changed over time. In the 1940s, special visits were made by chief officers; by the 1950s senior officers would reproduce snippets of reports for the Warden; and by the 1960s reports were copied and sent wholesale. The length of after-care details varies, from an absence of any information to

⁷⁴ Welshman, 'Wardens'.

⁷⁵ LA: DDX2302/box 19/[no case number], Mrs AB (1966) Mrs A. B. to Mrs A. Davies, n.d. [reply sent 29 Jan 1967] mentions letters to other members of staff and mothers from her stay at Brentwood.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*/box 11/case number 2062, Mrs IE (1954) Mrs I. E. to E. Doris Abraham, n.d. [June 1955].

⁷⁷ 'Teaching mothercraft', *Lancet*, 1:6719 (1952), p. 1154; A. M. Watson, 'Vision and enterprise', *Almoner*, 8:1 (1955), pp. 3-6.

those remaining in contact for twenty years.⁷⁸ Selectivity and survival play a key part, but the types, variety and number of documents and reports both on and from families indicates a complex process of subjection, and of its mediation by officials and families themselves.

The case files then, in terms of their creation and survival in quality and quantity reflects the involvement of individuals, professionals and organisations at all stages and levels of the process of referral, admission and departure of mothers to Brentwood for their rehabilitation as a 'problem family'. The personal encounter is reconstructed through this process of referral, admission and after-care contained in the case files. However, sponsoring organisations used and understood the rehabilitation offered at Brentwood differently, as did individuals, leading to a lack of a clear conception of the 'problem family' as a subject. It is precisely this ambiguity and uncertainty, yet a commitment to Brentwood as a form of action for the 'problem family', which is unravelled through an examination of the case files as a corpus. Neither the 'problem family' nor Brentwood were static during the 'golden age' of the welfare state and changes are reflected in the quality and quantity of information recorded in files. These changes are linked to different conceptions of the family and the 'problem' by successive Wardens, which in turn had an impact on the process of record-keeping and knowledge production. Connected to this are the number of files available, as the move from four weeks to three months by Wardens led to a dramatic decline in the overall number of admissions, limiting the range and representation of families. What the case files permit, despite these problems as sources in their production, retention and shaping of knowledge and narrative, is an image of the 'problem family' as a personal encounter between officials and the welfare state. Moreover, this encounter can be situated within the qualitative experience of the individual family and official, but translated quantitatively as a common approach across and within authorities at the local level.

Local: individuals, committees and organisations

Both the personal encounter, and the production of its sources in Brentwood must be situated in the locality as a process entailing individuals, organisations and professionals. The location of the encounter and its evidence are intertwined and its reconstruction can be traced in three ways. First, through the role of individuals as professionals in localities in identifying and referring families to Brentwood. Second, by exploring how evidence produced from structures

⁷⁸ LA: DDX/2302/box 8/case number 1613, Mrs ME (1951); *ibid.*/box 20/[no case number], Mrs ME (1970). The mother first attended in 1951, and returned to Brentwood at the expense of the former Warden in 1970.

of governance reveal *and* conceal detail. Third, in considering statutory and voluntary agencies as services, and tracing their involvement in the ‘problem family’ within the Brentwood case files. These issues provide consideration of the construction and bounding of the North West as a regional case study, alongside individual strategies and patterns within local authorities. The files also provide a window onto this dynamic through correspondence between individual officials, workers and chief officers, and the Warden at Brentwood, indicating the potential for exploring documents beyond individual cases. However, to understand this type of evidence, it is necessary to contextualise the role of the local authority departments, chief officers, and voluntary organisations, and the types of sources they produced about the ‘problem family’. This process of recovery and reconstruction enables an appreciation of the gaps or absences in the record, and the issue of accounting for the disjunction between public rhetoric and private action in terms of operationalising the ‘problem family’.

The use of the Brentwood case files as the primary source material informs the local context as much as the personal encounter, and the concentration of referrals from authorities in the North West informs a regional approach. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of surviving case files coming from each region, according to Registrar General classification (Figure 2), by the year they arrived at Brentwood. This shows the concentration of case files from the North West and from before 1951. However, the question of survival raises issues of absence and omission. The base of Table 1 records the total admissions in the CCL reports, although discrepancies are complicated by their omission of short and repeat visits. This can be balanced by two other sources. Table 2 records the number of referrals from five Public Health Departments in the North West in relation to figures given by the annual reports of the MOH (Medical Officer of Health). Table 3 is compiled from the card index kept by Miss Abraham, noting discrepancies between cases which survive in the files and the card index alone. These both suggest that the regional trend of the North West, if anything, is understated. However, despite providing a regional case study, different local authorities used Brentwood by degrees, as shown in Table 4. In addition, the origin of referral changed over time – although qualitative problems of sponsorship are discussed above – and this is indicated in Table 5 and Figure 1. Here, the North West should be seen as an administrative one informed by ‘problem family’ operationalisations rather than a cultural or historical one. Professional associations, particularly the NWSMOH (North West Branch of the Society of Medical Officer of Health), NWACO (North West Region of the Association of Children’s Officers), and the North Western and North Wales District Council of NALGO (National Association of Local

Government Officers) served as a regional forum for senior and junior officials. The boundaries of RHBs (Regional Hospital Boards) and central government regional branches also serve as administrative units delimiting the North West (Figure 3). Although these each encompassed different jurisdictions, the common inclusion of the County Councils of Lancashire and Cheshire, and the County Borough Councils therein, serve to provide the regional boundaries. It is this quantitative presence of the qualitative personal encounter in the local authorities and communities of the North West which provide the operational context.

The local context which frames personal encounters between officials and the ‘problem family’ is structured in the operation of local government in two ways: the relationship between committees and chief officers; and local ‘problem family’ committees. Source material relating to local authorities must be understood in terms of the committee (the supervisory organ of the council), and the department (the staff responsible for implementing services). Committee evidence is often superficial with minutes or proceedings containing few traces of the decision-making processes or dissent, with historians using oral testimony finding disagreement.⁷⁹ The place of politics is hard to signify outside party affiliation, but cannot be disregarded. John Morwood, Burnley’s CO (Children’s Officer) from 1964-71 described the Chairman of the Children’s Committee as a ‘strong socialist’ and interested in managing ‘problem families’.⁸⁰ This is absent from the archival record.⁸¹ Children’s, health, and welfare committees are central to the ‘problem family’, although variations and amalgamations blur boundaries. These committees should be seen as influential in social services, but marginal to local government, although this allowed established councillors, especially women, the ability to carve a niche.⁸² Mothers can be traced through committee records, although they are often anonymised and offer little insight into practice.⁸³ Divisional or area committees in Lancashire and Cheshire also proliferate decision-making, including referrals to Brentwood.⁸⁴ Departmental sources are

⁷⁹ J. Welshman, *Municipal medicine* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), chap. 6; S. Goss, *Local Labour and local government* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988); N. Hayes, *Consensus and controversy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996).

⁸⁰ B. Holman, *Child care revisited* (London: Institute for Child Care and Social Education, 1998), pp. 65-6.

⁸¹ LA: CBBU/17/1-3 Burnley Children’s Committee Minutes, 1948-68.

⁸² On variation of jurisdictions and composition of membership see B. Davies, *Social needs and resources in local services* (London: Michael Joseph, 1968).

⁸³ LA: DDX2302/box 12/case number 3074, Mrs ML (1962); *ibid.*/box 12/case number 1768, Mrs JM (1951); *ibid.*/box 8/case number 3015, Mrs IF (1961), and their identification in Manchester, Liverpool and Tynemouth: GMCRO GB127.CM/WSC/22 Manchester Welfare Committee Minutes, 15 Feb 1960; LRO 352 MIN/HEA II/1 Liverpool Liaison Subcommittee Minutes, 30 Nov 1951; TWA CB.TY/A/1/64 Tynemouth Children’s Committee Minutes, 5 Dec 1961.

⁸⁴ On county divisionalisation see: E. W. Cohen, *Autonomy and delegation in county government* (London: RIPA, 1952).

Region	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	Total
Scotland									1																				1	
Wales									1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1					15	
North				3	2	4	5	6	4	3	4	4	3	1	3	3	2	4	4	3	2		1	2		1	1	1	66	
Yorkshire			5	13	22				18	12	11	7	4	6	5	3	5	5	9	5	6	3	3	2	1	1	3		149	
North West	4	38	35	91	97	83	115	71	71	66	31	37	34	35	41	36	29	35	35	37	39	32	26	6	15	24	15	8	10	1196
West Midlands			2	2	8				7	2	1	3	1	2	2	1	1	7	3	4	3	11	5	2	1	1	2	1	70	
East Midlands			1	2	1				1	2	3	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	5	2		3	4	3	5	2		48	
East										1	2	3	5	3	5	4	3	3	1	3	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	34	
South East			1	15	10	25	18	15	12	12	5	7	3	4	4	4	2	1					1	1	3	5	1	1	168	
South						1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	4	4	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	28	
South West								2	1	1	1	3	1	3	2	3	9	1	4	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	1		42	
Total	4	39	50	104	124	114	153	130	117	100	58	62	54	55	69	57	55	60	61	58	57	52	45	17	25	36	31	16	14	1817
Brentwood									113	112	94	80	82	74	82	74	89	81	69	63	77	61	35	33	35	35	35		2012	

Table 1: Surviving case file numbers for Brentwood by Registrar-General regions, 1942-70.

Region	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
Bolton (MOH)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	20	22	6	3	5	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	3	x	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Bolton (Cases: Health)	0	0	0	6	7	23	10	16	8	3	2	3	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cheshire (MOH) ^c	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	6	10	7	12	18	34	*	*	27	*	*	*
Cheshire (Cases: Health)	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	1	5	4	2	5	4	7	0	5	5	0	1	1
Lancashire (MOH)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	6	13	9	8	13	10	8	5	10	6	6	12	7	5	8	3	5	12	8	3	5
Lancashire (Cases: Health)	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	4	12	10	6	10	9	8	5	8	6	5	11	7	4	9	3	4	10	10	3	6
Manchester (MOH)	*	x	9	17	10	10	12	5	9	5	16	4	7	11	12	10	11	9	6	14	13	2	*	*	*	*	*	*
Manchester (Cases: Health)	0	0	10	17	9	11	12	5	9	3	15	2	5	9	11	6	9	8	7	13	13	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salford (MOH)	*	*	*	x	*	*	*	6	9	8	5	x	5	3	1	0	*	*	0	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Salford (Cases: Health)	1	2	0	6	4	7	9	5	6	6	3	7	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2: Surviving case file numbers for Brentwood and numbers referred by five North West Public Health Departments, 1943-70.

Source: Annual reports of the MOH for each County Borough, 1943-70

Note: * indicates no mention of Brentwood; x indicates mention of Brentwood but no number of referrals.

^c Cheshire figure includes both mothers and children

Region	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	Total	Case Total	Card Only
Scotland									1																				1	1	0	
Wales									1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1							14	14	0	
North									4	3	4	4	2	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	2					1			57	54	3	
Yorkshire									21	11	10	9	4	6	7	4	5	6	9	4	6	2				3			146	139	7	
North West									65	68	43	42	42	39	40	31	38	38	36	34	42	29	3			6			840	786	54	
West Midlands									7	3	1	6	3	1	1	1	2	6	4	4	3	8	1			2			65	59	6	
East Midlands									2	2	4	2	3	2	2	1	2	3	1	5	2								33	30	3	
East									1	1	2	2	3	4	4	4	3	3	1	3	2					1			29	28	1	
South East									13	12	7	7	3	4	5	4	3	2											105	99	6	
South									2	1	2	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	2					1			22	19	3	
South West									2	1	1	3	2	2	2	3	9	1	3	1									31	29	2	
Total									116	102	73	70	67	61	70	52	67	65	61	54	57	44	4						1343	1258	85	
Brentwood									113	112	94	80	82	74	82	104	89	81	69	63	77	61	35						2012			

Table 3: Surviving card index numbers for Brentwood by Registrar-General regions, 1946-70.

Region	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	Total
Barrow-in-Furness CB																														0
Birkenhead CB					1	1			1																					5
Blackburn CB		3																												3
Blackpool CB						1			1				1																	4
Bolton CB					6	7	23	10	16	8	3	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3		1							88
Bootle CB				1	1			1														1								4
Burnley CB					2	3	5	6	3	4	1	1			1												1			27
Bury CB						2															1		1							4
Cheshire CC					3	6	3		5	2	2	3	4	2	2	2	2	5	4	2	5	4	8	5	6	1	2			79
Chester CB						1		1	1																1					3
Lancashire CC		3	3	7		1	1	6	4	12	10	6	10	9	5	8	6	6	11	7	4		9	3	5	11	10	3		174
Liverpool CB	4	12	17	43	40	28	39	15	26	18	4	3	7	13	12	12	13	11	14	12	6	8	3	2	2	5	2	1	1	373
Manchester CB		11	10	23	38	28	25	16	7	9	3	16	2	5	11	11	6	9	9	10	15	14	2	2	2	2	2	1		285
Oldham CB					2	1	2	1	1	1			1						1											10
Preston CB							1		1	1	1																			4
Rochdale CB					1	3		3	2				1	1					1											12
Salford CB		1	2	11	9	9	9	9	5	6	6	3	7	2	3	1			1		1					1	1			86
Southport CB					1			1	1	1		1							1		1		1							6
St Helens CB							1																							1
Stockport CB					4		2		1		1	1		1				1		1			1							12
Wallasey CB		3	1												1				1		1						1			7
Warrington CB									1						1								1			1				4
Wigan CB									1	1					1			1												5
Total	4	38	35	91	97	83	115	71	71	66	31	37	34	35	41	36	29	35	35	37	39	32	26	6	15	24	15	8	10	1196

Table 4: Surviving Brentwood case files from the North West of England by local authority, 1942-70.

Region	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	Total
Local Authority (Health)	2	5	24	30	21	51	44	44	41	45.5	26	32	26	21	27	23	15	34	33	32	36.5	30	22	5	10.5	15.5	11	5	7	675
Local Authority (Children's)							1		0.5							1				0.5		3	3	1	1.5	6.5	1	1	17	
Local Authority (Welfare)	1					1																				1		1	4	
Probation							1		1	1			1		1									3	1	2	1	2	13	
Hospital	9	7	12	17	26	17	6	6	6	1	1	1	1	1	2	2			1	2	2	1							113	
Voluntary (Casework)	4	15	13	40	36	29	40	15.5	23	16	4	3	7	11	10	9	13	1	1	3	1						1		294.5	
Voluntary (Military)	2	1	5	4	3	1			2							1													19	
Voluntary (Other)	7	4	7	7	1	3	2.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1				1							39.5	
Private	2	5	3	3	2	3	1							1												1			21	
Total	4	38	35	91	97	83	115	71	71	66	31	37	34	35	41	36	29	35	35	37	39	32	26	6	15	24	15	8	10	1196

Table 5: Surviving Brentwood case files from the North West of England by type of sponsor, 1942-70.

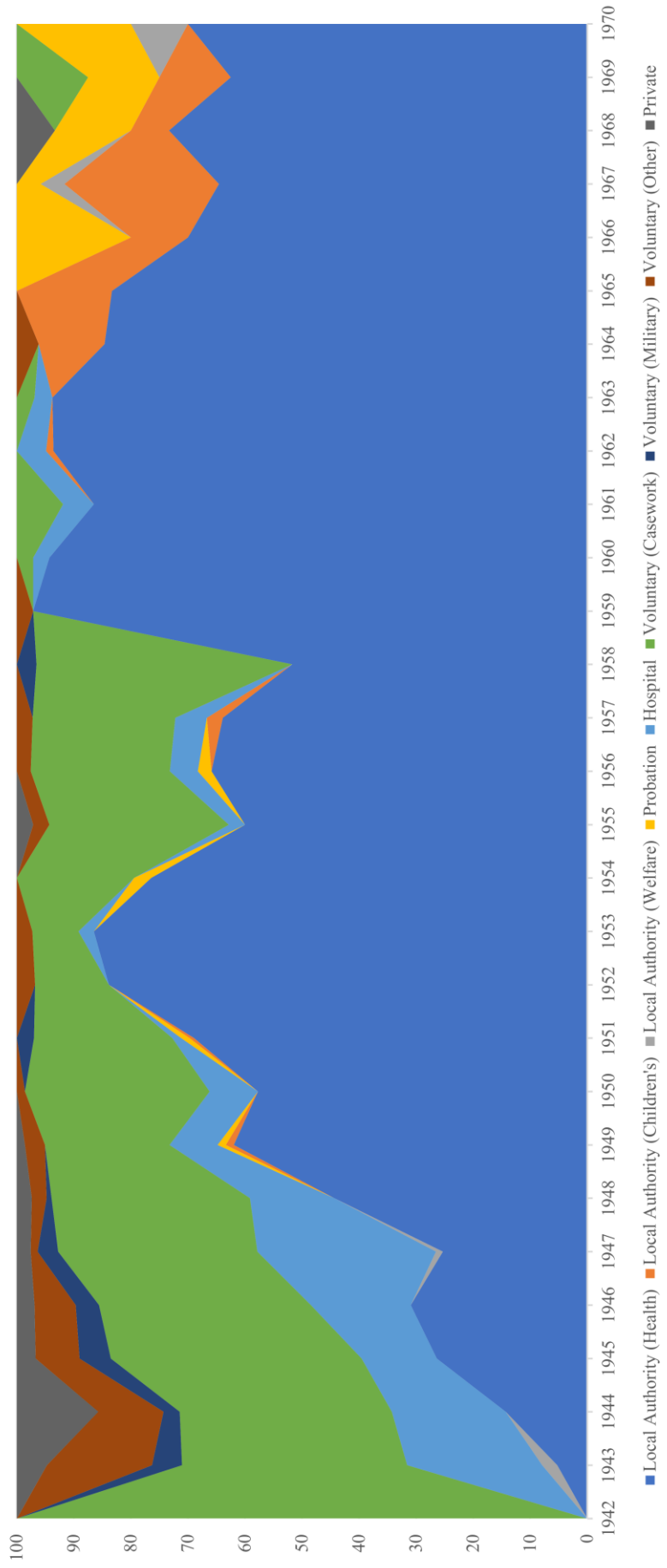


Figure 1: Surviving Brentwood case files from the North West of England by per cent of sponsor type, 1942-70.

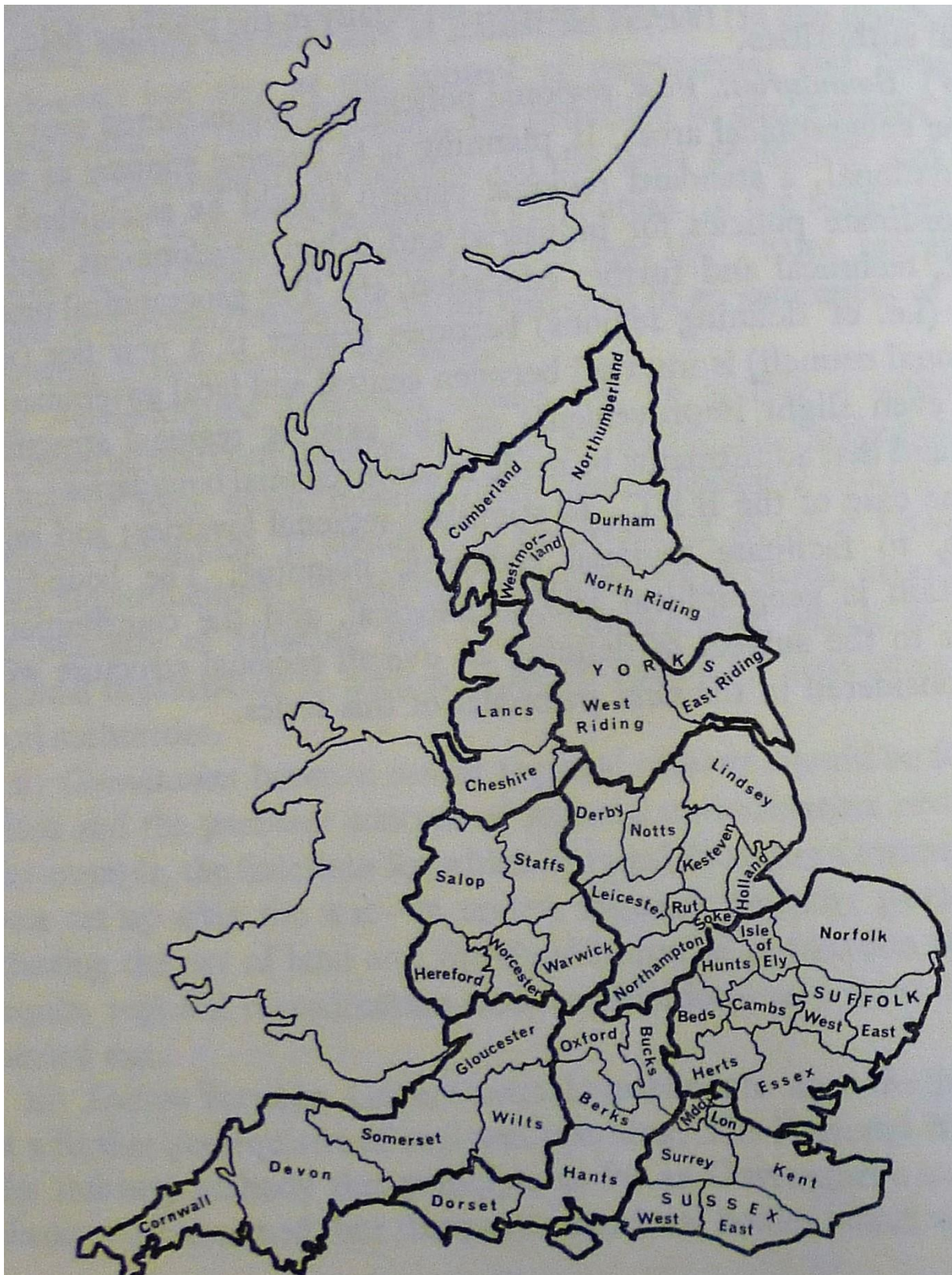


Figure 2: Registrar-General regions in England, 1964.

Source: B. C. Smith, *Regionalism in England* (London: Action Society Trust, 1964), p. 92.



Figure 3: Regional Hospital Boards in England, 1964.

Source: B. C. Smith, *Regionalism in England* (London: Action Society Trust, 1964), p. 94.

more relevant to the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’, but are scarce. Connected with these are ‘problem family’ committees, discussed in Chapter Three. In different authorities, committees were variously voluntary, standing, advisory, divisional, departmental, and inter-departmental. The Brentwood case files offer a unique means to explore the configurations of local ‘problem families’ committees through correspondence, as noted above. Records of committees are fragmentary, and emphasis on authorities relates to the survival of documents: notably Bury and its neighbouring LanCC (Lancashire County Council) Health Division 12. Surviving records of ‘problem family’ committees vary from registers of meetings and lists of cases, to reports from officials, correspondence and notes on selecting mothers for Brentwood. Consequently, the Brentwood case files cannot be divorced from the process of identification by officials in local government, but tracing records beyond case files provides methodological issues of selectivity in understanding local and regional patterns.

The identification of ‘problem families’ and consequent intervention by officials within these local frameworks requires exploration of the role of both voluntary and statutory agencies beyond the purview of the children’s, health and welfare departments. This applies particularly to organisations involved in sponsoring or referring families to Brentwood, but can be traced to other officials and organisations through copies of reports submitted in applications or after-care documents. In Liverpool, the MRA (Mother’s Rest Association) – a joint enterprise of two parochial organisations, CWA (Child Welfare Association) and PSS (Personal Service Society), whose boundaries were blurred – administered referrals on behalf of the MOH.⁸⁵ Neither Manchester, Salford nor Bolton used voluntary organisations in a comparable way, whilst the mill towns of the North West used existing agencies such as COS/FWA (Charity Organisation Society/Family Welfare Association) or the local CSS (Council of Social Service) for ‘problem family’ casework and referrals. Mainly in the 1940s, military welfare societies including the British Legion and SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families’ Association) sponsored families or funded admissions. Hospitals also referred families in the 1940s, but by the 1950s these were largely either children’s or psychiatric referrals. These trends can be seen in Table 5. Although these organisations are the most visible by their involvement in referrals, documents in case files link the residential practice of the Centre with the domiciliary action which preceded and followed; particularly the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of

⁸⁵ On the origins and permeability of the organisations see: I. A. Ireland, *Margaret Beavan of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Henry Young, 1938), pp. 103-12; Liverpool Child Welfare Association, *Loving hands* (Liverpool: Liverpool CWA, 1957); R. Currie, ‘Innovation that changes lives’, in R. Morris and H. Russell, eds., *Rooted in the city* (Liverpool: LCVS, 2010), pp. 14-23.

Cruelty to Children), MWA (Moral Welfare Association) and P/FSU (Pacifist/Family Service Units). The role of P/FSU in defining 'problem families' has been well documented, whilst the MWA and NSPCC are less visible, and the Brentwood case files offer a means to examine their role through local practice. The problems of evidence discussed above exist in a similar form to all the agencies and services mentioned above: between the committee in a supervisory capacity with more documentary evidence, and the agency as the operational arm, whose traces are limited. The documents found in the Brentwood case files provide an uneven, complex yet otherwise intangible means of locating the 'problem family' in a 'mixed economy of welfare' represented in each locality and across the North West.

Contextualising the personal encounter between the 'problem family' and the official in the locality is essential for understanding the 'problem' as one of operational practice rather than discourse. Recovering and reconstructing how officials, organisations and professions not only viewed the 'problem', but also identified and intervened in families so-called, and used Brentwood is at the heart of this process. Encounters were personal, but they were not unique. Moving outwards from Brentwood, from the personal to the local encounter, involves tracing referrals, families and officials back to sponsoring organisations. Both statutory and voluntary records present issues of survival, selectivity and the tension between supervisory committees and operational agencies. The diffuse and multiple sources of involvement by local authority departments, voluntary agencies and others, and between their agencies and committees, makes recovering and reconstructing the system of governance they comprise a difficult but necessary process. The abundant reports, correspondence and other documents in the Brentwood case files provide a window onto these systems and allows its operational changes and developments to be traced, but they are also shaped by the production of case files at the Centre. Seeing the Brentwood case files collectively, rather than individually, imposes geographical limits. The North West, as an administratively defined area, is the only one to regularly and consistently refer mothers to the Centre from 1943-70. An understanding of how the term was interpreted regionally, as well as locally, becomes apparent. However, whilst Brentwood was a regional institution, it was of national significance with referrals, discourse and strategies to rehabilitate the 'problem family' from across the country. At the personal and local level, the evidence contained in the Brentwood case files permits an examination of the operationalisation of the 'problem family' which are ultimately part of a common, widespread and national process at the heart of the 'golden age' welfare state.

National: central governance and nationalising the 'problem family'

Unlike the TFP (Troubled Families Programme) since 2011, 'problem family' policies must be traced through operational structures and interactions between local and central government as there is no one policy document delineating the term. This recovery through operationalisation in the 'golden age' welfare state also frames the periodisation. The 1943 publication of *Our towns* by WGPW (Women's Group on Public Welfare) which coined the term 'problem family' coincided with the arrival of Miss Abraham as the Warden at Brentwood, whose personal role was to define the Centre. In addition, the publication of the Beveridge Report in December 1942 laid the foundations of the welfare state structures which were essential in legitimating the concept in its 'golden age'. This 'golden age' faded by 1974 with the collapse of affluence and the economic settlement following the 1973 oil crisis. The local structures which embraced the 'problem family' also dissipated: through the unification of children's and welfare services in SSDs (Social Services Departments) with the 1970 Local Authority Social Services Act; the 1973 National Health Service Reorganisation Act providing the death knell to the MOH; and the 1972 Local Government Act ending County Borough and County Council authorities. In addition, the eclipse of the 'problem family' label through the rise of the 'cycle of deprivation' touted by Sir Keith Joseph, and the furore surrounding the death of Maria Colwell in 1973 led to a rupture between the national 'underclass' discourse and the local operational structures which located them in the family. Brentwood's closure in 1970 was part of this, epitomising the relationship between the local and national. This 'nationalisation' of the 'problem family' from 1943-74 can be traced beyond Brentwood in three ways. First, in the dynamic between central and local government in developing operational practices; particularly the extent of either central dictation or council consultation. Second, by the relationship of the North West to other local authorities and the degree to which it can be indicative or representative. Third, in the relationship of operational practices to discourse and their links to experts' efforts to theorise the 'problem family'. Reconstructing the 'nationalisation' of the 'problem family' also needs due consideration of the sources and processes involved.

The local structures which shaped the contours of the personal encounter were not built autonomously and were created by national developments, notably through central government department oversight of local authority branches. Crucially, as 'problem family' policy was not constructed in Downing Street, this afforded Whitehall considerable scope, and the traces of this, along with changes over time, are located in the central department files in the National

Archives.⁸⁶ The files reflect the everyday governance of welfare, and vary according to the ethos of different central government departments.⁸⁷ Substantive governance can be evidenced through the issuing of circulars from central government, either individually or jointly across departments, which offered guidance or outlined best practice on how to manage the ‘problem family’. The impact of circulars can be found in the corresponding records of local authorities. Crucially, the idea of a ‘problem family’ committee was ‘nationalised’ through a joint circular in 1950, and the impact of subsequent circulars can be traced through changes in their practice as listed in Figure 4. However, circulars were not the product of civil servants’ whims, and details of consultation with local authority and professional associations, repeated drafting, and evidence from voluntary agencies can be found within the Whitehall files. These offer insights into the operational limits of the ‘problem family’ and discrepancies between discourse and practice. However, although circulars offer flashpoints of changing practice, correspondence between local authority officials and central government departments over, contested cases, the extent of permissive powers and financial responsibility provide a window into the day-to-day governance of the ‘problem family’. Moreover, like the Brentwood case files, Whitehall and local authority material allows key officials and individuals to be traced across services and places at different times, allowing the examination of networks related to the ‘problem family’. As with local sources, issues of selectivity by officials, survival and partial access to incomplete files presents problems. Despite this, synthesising the personal, local and national evidence, and following its conceptualisation, interpretation and operationalisation provides continuities in understanding how the ‘problem family’ was nationalised.

Narrating the ‘nationalisation’ of the ‘problem family’ requires considering whether the North West case, which provides the core of the thesis, is representative of national trends, or indicative of governance structures. ‘National’ here denotes England and Wales, as Northern Ireland and Scotland had comparable but distinct structures of local government and personal social services. The Brentwood case files and the National Archive material provide two ways of considering the North West in relation to the wider nation. Although 1,196 of the surviving 1,817 files originate from the North West, the other 621 came from across England and Wales, but present a more fragmentary picture of local practices and changes over time. Similar types of documentation are contained within the case files, and repeat sponsors – principally those

⁸⁶ A. Land et al., *Development of the welfare state, 1939-1951* (London: HMSO, 1992); P. Brigden and R. Lowe, *Welfare policy under the Conservatives, 1951-1964* (London: HMSO, 1998).

⁸⁷ J. A. G. Griffith, *Central departments and local authorities* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966).

Document	Year	Ministry/Department Issuing				Outcome
		HO	MoH (DHSS from 1968)	MoE (DoEaS from 1964)	MHLG (DoE from 1970)	
Children Act	1948					Creation of Children's Departments
Children neglected or ill-treated in their own homes	1950	157	78	225		Formation of 'problem family' coordination committees under designated chief officer
Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act	1952					Requires all allegations of neglect or cruelty to be investigated by the Children's Department
Health of children: prevention of break-up of families	1954		27			Identifies health visitor as official best suited to identify and intervene in 'problem families'
<i>Unsatisfactory tenants</i>	1955				X	Advocates 'intermediate accommodation' and other strategies for housing 'problem families'
Coordination of the statutory and voluntary services dealing with the family	1956	118	16	311		Identifies role of voluntary organisations in detection and rehabilitation of 'problem families'
Homeless families	1959		4		17	Identifies role of Welfare Department in rehabilitating 'problem families' in their own home
Children and Young Persons Act	1963					Provides Children's Department with power to spend or disburse funds to prevent care admission
Section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, extension of powers of local authorities to promote welfare of children	1963	204				Advises authorities not to disrupt existing 'problem family' policies due to legislative change
Family planning	1966		5			Advocates involvement of Family Planning Association with local social services
Homeless families - temporary accommodation	1966	178	20		58	Advises authorities on alternatives housing options instead of temporary accommodation
Homeless families - temporary accommodation	1967	177	19		62	Circulates best practice on current alternatives to temporary accommodation
The battered baby	1970		2			Identifies issue of 'battered baby' and need for local cooperation for prevention and detection
Camps and adventure courses, training for neglectful mothers on probation	1971	9				Identifies potential of 'residential option' for cases other than child neglect and on probation
Battered babies	1972		26			Circulates best practice on current models of prevention and detection in authorities
Non-accidental injury to children	1974		13			Formation of area review committees under oversight of supervising chair
Children Act	1975					Provides statutory framework for removal of children from parents and admission to care

Figure 4: Key legislation and circulars relating to the governance of the 'problem family', 1948-75.

associated with the ‘problem family’ discourse – permit an exploration of whether common identification and intervention of ‘problem families’ exist nationally. An indication of this is given in Table 6 and Figure 5 on the sources of sponsors from authorities outside the North West. Equally, the use of the limited surviving records of the other ‘problem family’ centres broadens evidence beyond Brentwood and allows regional patterns elsewhere to be explored. The other centres are: Mayflower, Plymouth (1948-62), Spofforth Hall, Harrogate (1952-57) and West Bank, York (1958-72), St Mary’s, Dundee (1952-74), Crowley House and Lee Crescent, Birmingham (1955-73) and Frimhurst, Surrey (1957-). As mentioned earlier, these case files are limited quantitatively and qualitatively in comparison to Brentwood; but they offer an appreciation of the similarities by regions, professions and institutions. The National Archive also offers evidence on local authority and regional patterns. The 1950 joint circular which nationalised the ‘problem family’ recommended that each authority appoint a designated officer, and Tables 7 and 8 highlights local and regional patterns in terms of appointments. Although these suggest quantitative trends, the qualitative cannot be disregarded, and evidence on the operation of these committees submitted to the Working Party on Social Workers (1956-59) found mixed views on their use and practice.⁸⁸ The documents in the Brentwood files, and those of other centres, in conjunction with a qualitative and quantitative reading of the material contained in the National Archives enables the local and regional study of the North West to be conveyed both as particular and part of this wider nationalisation of the ‘problem family’.

Connected with the central government nationalisation of the ‘problem family’ through operational processes across local authorities are the professional and expert discourses which defined the ‘problem family’ and theorised its causation and solution. The work of Welshman has capably reconstructed these from periodicals, publication and texts.⁸⁹ The significance of these texts is compounded in their frequent inclusion in local and national sources documenting the ‘problem family’. However, most of the publications consulted are affiliated with certain professions, and reflect efforts at theorising the ‘problem family’ from existing operational processes. Even the critical 1957 study *The problem of ‘the problem family’* did not deny the existence of ‘problem families’, but opposed domination of the subject by MOsH rather than caseworkers.⁹⁰ These differences of opinion were intimately connected to operational practice. In addition, the ‘problem family’ is included in other public administration and contemporary

⁸⁸ Ministry of Health, *Report of the working party on social workers in the local authority health and welfare service* (London: HMSO, 1959), chap. 12 and appendix F.

⁸⁹ J. Welshman, *Underclass* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), chap. 4.

⁹⁰ J. Welshman, ‘Troubles and the family’, *Social Policy and Society*, 16:1 (2017), pp. 109-17.

Region	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	Total
Local Authority (Health)			1	1	1	2	11	11	17.5	14	13	11	16	16	19	19	25	18	23	17	15	16	9.5	4.5	3	1.5	1	1	1	275
Local Authority (Children's)							1.5	2	0.5	1		2		2.5				2	1	4	2	1	3	3.5	3	7	9.5	3	1	47.5
Local Authority (Welfare)							0.5							1.5			1	2	1	1	1	1	1		0.5				8.5	
Probation								3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1					1	3.5	3	4	2	5.5	4	1	48	
Hospital				4	6	15	21		12	7	3	4		2	2	2					1	1	1				1		79	
Voluntary (Casework)			13	7	20	14	19		10	8	8	4	1	3	1	1	1	1	1				1							132
Voluntary (Military)				4	2	4	2	1	1																					14
Voluntary (Other)									2	1				1	1	1														9
Private			1	1	1	1					1		1	1												1		1	8	
Total	0	1	15	13	27	31	38	59	46	34	27	25	20	20	28	21	26	25	26	21	18	20	19	11	10	12	16	8	4	621

Table 6: Surviving Brentwood case files from outside the north west of England by type of sponsor, 1942-70.

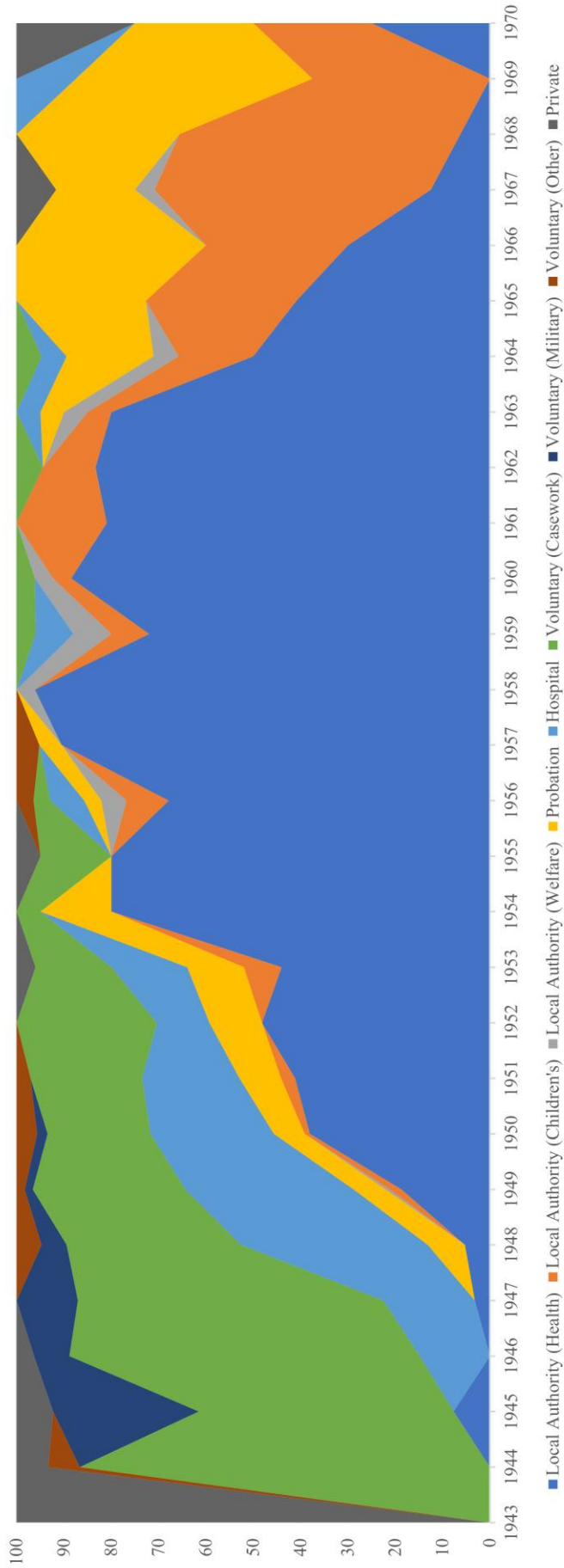


Figure 5: Surviving Brentwood case files from outside the north west of England by per cent of sponsor type, 1943-70.

Region	Children's Officer	Medical Officer of Health	Chief Education Officer	Town Clerk	Councillor	Existing Arrangements	Undecided
Wales	8			3			2
North	3	1		1			
Yorkshire	1			1			
North West	1	1					
West Midlands		3		1		1	
East Midlands	3	1	1	1		1	
East	3			2	1	2	1
South East	3		1			1	1
South		1		5			
South West	1	1	1	1		1	
Total	23	8	3	15	1	6	4

Table 7: Designated 'problem family' officer in County Councils by Registrar-General regions, 1952.

Source: NA MH 134/181 Local authority officers designated under the Home Office Circular 157/50 and Ministry of Health Circular 78/50, Aug 1952

Region	Children's Officer	Medical Officer of Health	Chief Education Officer	Town Clerk	Councillor	Existing Arrangements	Undecided
Wales	2	1		1			
North	5	2				2	
Yorkshire	3	6	1	1		1	
North West	5	11		1		3	1
West Midlands	4	2		1		3	
East Midlands	5	1				2	
East	3	1		1		1	
South East	2	3					
South	2	1		2			
South West	3	2					
Total	34	30	1	7	0	12	1

Table 8: Designated 'problem family' officer in County Borough Councils by Registrar-General regions, 1952.

Source: NA MH 134/181 Local authority officers designated under the Home Office Circular 157/50 and Ministry of Health Circular 78/50, Aug 1952

publications without detailed exploration of its significance, and deployed as a given concept. For instance, a 1961 PEP (Political and Economic Planning) report entitled *Family needs and the social services* explicitly stated in the introduction that the survey was *not* about ‘problem families’, as was assumed when debating family welfare.⁹¹ Although it is impossible to locate every mention of ‘problem families’, it is important to trace their inclusion in key documents such as textbooks, social surveys and studies; not necessarily as the subject of discussion, but included alongside other known social groups and ‘problem’ populations. It is also possible to trace the boundaries of the ‘problem family’ discourse by considering research which remained unpublished, or studies which were peripheral to debates but point to sustaining the discourse. Finally, and crucially, the relevance of these national debates to local and personal encounters between the ‘problem family’ and the state can be traced in the contents of reports, documents and files in local authority records and Brentwood case files. This allows some comment to be made about the resilience of the term, and the degree of engagement by officials, and question the degree of disjunction proposed by Selina Todd.⁹² The final layer of analysis contributes to examining the encounter between the official and the family in terms of a shared, nationwide experience of the welfare state.

The sources which recover and reconstruct the operationalisation and understanding of the ‘problem family’ at the national level inform the periodisation of the thesis, and provide the final layer of analysis in linking national discourses identified by historians to the everyday encounters between officials and the ‘problem family’ in the post-war welfare state. This nationalisation of the ‘problem family’ is a process not of imposition by central government upon local authorities, but of consultation and appropriation of practices discussed in journals, and used to inform operational structures in the post-war welfare state. It is about framing the interaction and interconnectivity of individuals, professionals and organisations in theorising and operationalising the term locally and articulating these methods nationally, as much as central government forming a common ‘problem family’ policy. Understanding this national processes of permeation to and from Whitehall can be recovered through central government records, the Brentwood archives and key professional and social work periodicals. This allows the processes and policies which both conceptualised and operationalised the ‘problem family’ to be understood as at the very heart of the experience of the post-war welfare state.

⁹¹ PEP, *Family needs and the social services* (London: PEP, 1961), pp. 14-15.

⁹² S. Todd, ‘Family welfare and social work in post-war England, c. 1948-1970’, *English Historical Review*, 129:537 (2014), pp. 362-87.

Conclusion

Approaching the ‘problem family’ from the surviving case files of Brentwood, recovering and reconstructing the processes whereby families were identified for residential rehabilitation, and connecting this with individuals, professions and organisations which supported and used the Centre, has shaped the development of the thesis. This approach has also informed the reading of the historiography of post-war Britain in Chapter One which underpin the theoretical and methodological positions developed in Chapter Two. The incorporation of key theories relates to three issues. First, through the personal encounter and the recovery of the ‘problem family’ as gendered within texts not of their making. Second, with street-level bureaucracy which informs the local operational context. Third, in the use of post-modern and post-colonial ideas to understand governance as a national model, although cautious of the hegemony of the state and the prominence of discourse. This view informed methodological considerations in relation to reconstructing the ‘problem family’ at the personal, local and national levels. The personal level showed the limits of oral history in understanding state concepts, the use of biography to recover fragmented narratives, and the central but problematic use of case records in knowing subjects. The local level outlined the benefits of micro-history, the need to locate the ‘problem family’ spatially, culturally and socially, and appreciate the fluid communities they inhabit. The national level considered the limits of complexity theory as a managerial model, the status of discourse and textual analysis, the benefits of social history in approaching the ‘problem family’ from below, the need to situate the case study of the North West in wider context, and the role of quantitative approaches in recovering degrees of scale. Consequently, the historiography, theory and methodology used in the thesis are inextricably connected with recovering the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ in the ‘golden age’ of the welfare state through the files of Brentwood (1943-70).

Approaching the thesis by examining the Brentwood case files and working outwards has informed the layers of analysing the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ from the personal to the local and national. The personal level is informed by a close examination of the discretionary and professional judgments contained in the case files relating to the referral, admission and after-care of ‘problem families’ identified as needing the rehabilitation offered by Brentwood. The local level removes this process to its context, using the files to inform a case study of processes in the local authorities comprising the North West; through statutory and voluntary agencies which sponsored and referred families, and the problems of sources relating to their supervisory committee and executive branches. The national level places the

case study of the North West, charting the rise and fall of the ‘problem family’ chronologically from 1943-74 through evidence from central government, other local authorities and regions, and their interrelationship to discourse in theorising about operational practice. Although other forms of evidence are drawn upon at each stage of the analysis, the documents which constitute the surviving 1,817 case files of 1,702 mothers who attended Brentwood from 1942 to 1970 are used to navigate the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ at each stage of the analysis: the personal, local and national. Consequently, the history of the Centre and its connection with the rise and fall of the ‘problem family’ in the ‘golden age’ welfare state, will be used to provide a chronology which will inform the analysis of the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ considered in Part Two of the thesis.

Chapter Three:

Brentwood Recuperative Centre, 1943-70

Introduction

The 1,817 surviving case files accounting for 1,702 mothers from around 3,600 in total who attended the Brentwood Recuperative Centre (1943-70) rests at the heart of the reconstruction of the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ which informs the thesis. This corpus has informed the historiographical reading of the post-war welfare state outlined in Chapter One, and the theoretical and methodological approaches considered in Chapter Two. This chapter provides a history of Brentwood narrating the rise and fall of the Centre and the ‘problem family’, both nationally and in the North West of England in post-war Britain. The narrative relates changes of personnel and practice within Brentwood to the discursive and legislative changes of the ‘problem family’, connecting them to other residential rehabilitation centres to identify the specificity of Brentwood. However, the ‘problem family’ extends beyond the 1970 closure of Brentwood, and the narrative situates the decline of other centres in the context of changing patterns of governance linked to the ‘cycle of deprivation’ and child protection social work which emerged by 1974. The end of Brentwood in 1970 thus formed part of a larger wave of change linked with the decline of state structures which operationalised the ‘problem family’. This chapter begins by revisiting the ‘residential option’ identified by John Welshman and discussing Brentwood and the five other rehabilitation centres in four key areas: purpose; institutional practice and governance; referral processes and patterns; and financial resources.¹ After situating Brentwood as one of several ‘problem family’ residential rehabilitation centres, the narrative examines its specific history from 1943-70, along with the demise of the ‘problem family’ around 1974. Having established a narrative of Brentwood and the ‘problem family’, this is then used to ground the analysis developed in Part Two of the thesis: the personal, local and national encounters between the state and the ‘problem family’ in the ‘golden age’ of the welfare state.

¹ J. Welshman, ‘Recuperation, rehabilitation and the residential option’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 19:4 (2008), pp. 502-529.

The ‘residential option’ revisited

Brentwood was the largest and most famous of the handful of residential centres which grew in post-war Britain to rehabilitate ‘problem families’, and served as a model for the others that followed. In his study of Brentwood, Welshman acknowledged the work of two other centres, but focused on Brentwood as the ‘residential option’ of institutionalisation enduring against emerging community care and the ‘domiciliary option’ of rehabilitating the family at home.² Understanding the relationship of Brentwood to the changing operationalisation the ‘problem family’ is key to this narrative. Revisiting the ‘residential option’ by comparing Brentwood to other centres allows their perceived purpose by individuals, professionals and organisations referring ‘problem families’ to be reconsidered. There were five similar ventures, with most modelled on the purported success of Brentwood. The archives for each centre apart from St Mary’s have been located and consulted. The first was the Mayflower Training Home for Mothers (1948-62), Plymouth, run by the Salvation Army, who later opened another, also called Mayflower, in Belfast (1957-82).³ The second was Spofforth Hall (1952-57), Harrogate, managed by the EFMT (Elizabeth Fry Memorial Trust), later relocating to West Bank (1958-72), York.⁴ The third was the St Mary’s Mothercraft Centre (1952-74), Dundee, started by Mrs Phyllis Graham, wife of the Bishop of Brechin.⁵ The fourth was Crowley House (1955-73), Birmingham, run by MEHT (Middlemore Emigration Homes Trust) which also later ran family rehabilitation flats at Lee Crescent (1957-64) and Speedwell Road (1964-72).⁶ Frimhurst (1957-), Surrey, was the fifth and was opened by two former ‘problem family’ caseworkers for LonCC (London County Council), and from 1974 working under the umbrella of ATD4W (Association aide à Toute Détresse Quarte Monde), remaining open to this day.⁷ Each of the four issues identified in the introduction – purpose; everyday life, regimes and governance; sources and referrals; and financial resources – will be examined in relation to their relevance for the history of Brentwood and the ‘problem family’.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 517-8, 524-5; see also J. Welshman, ‘Organisations and structures in community care 1948-1971’, in J. Welshman and J. Walmsley, eds., *Community care in perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 59-76.

³ Records for Mayflower (Plymouth): SAIHC: MAY; for Mayflower (Belfast) *ibid.*, MAYB and THO/5.

⁴ Records for Elizabeth Fry Memorial Trust (Spofforth Hall and West Bank) held as part of Yorkshire Quaker Archives, Clifford Street Collection LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/York/1/59.

⁵ Records for St Mary’s, Dundee have not been located by the author; details derived from annual reports: DCA: CO/X534; CF: Box 57; BAIC: MS517/A/13/5/3; and Scottish Education Department Inspectorate reports NAS: ED28/154/1.

⁶ Records for Crowley House held as part of Sir John Middlemore Charitable Trust Collection: BAHS: MS517/A/3/2; Lee Crescent: *ibid.* /A/3/3; Speedwell Road has no separate records.

⁷ Records for Frimhurst (1957-75): CIJW: XH39-50/VII.2 GB, XH113/VII.2 GB.

Each of the centres saw their role as the rehabilitation of ‘problem families’, but each had a differing conception of the ‘need’ they saw themselves as fulfilling. Brentwood provided an influential model, developing residential work with ‘problem families’ alongside P/FSU (Pacifist/Family Service Units) and domiciliary visiting, both being supported by the WGPW (Women’s Group on Public Welfare) in their 1948 report *The neglected child and his family*.⁸ The publicised success of Brentwood influenced both EFMT and MEHT.⁹ The Mayflower arose separately as a partnership between the HO (Home Office) and the Salvation Army as an alternative to prison for mothers convicted of child neglect.¹⁰ EFMT and MEHT, along with St Mary’s, considered themselves fulfilling an unmet ‘need’ by reforming neglectful mothers for the HO,¹¹ with Crowley House developing from a similar scheme at Winson Green Prison.¹² Eligibility to admit neglectful mothers required certification, which Brentwood lacked until 1964, preventing them from admitting cases financed by the HO.¹³ Any distinction between centres for neglect or ‘problem families’ is misleading, and relates *only* to financial distinctions. Mary D. Sheridan, Medical Inspector for the HO, saw both voluntary and probationary cases as ‘problem families’ in her 1955 study.¹⁴ No distinction could be discerned by a comparative report of recuperative centres in 1961.¹⁵ Both EFMT and MEHT carefully named their centres, avoiding the word ‘neglectful’, to ensure referrals from agencies besides the HO.¹⁶ Mayflower readily admitted mothers sentenced for offences other than child neglect, along with voluntary cases.¹⁷ Throughout, Brentwood admitted convicted mothers, with cases financed by Probation Committees, not the HO.¹⁸ Frimhurst’s permissive ethos spurned HO cases, although mothers

⁸ WGPW, *The neglected child and his family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 89-92, 94-100, 105-7.

⁹ LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/York/1/59/5 L. Waddilove to W. Wallace, 21 Dec 1951; BAHS: MS517/A/3/2/1 Crowley House Minutes, 5 Dec 1955; MEHT, *One hundred years of child care* (Birmingham: Middlemore Emigration Homes Trust, 1972), pp. 30-1.

¹⁰ SAIHC: MAY *A new “Mayflower” at Plymouth* (St Albans: Cambfield Press, 1949), p. 2; J. Allan, ‘A training home for neglectful mothers’, *Deliverer*, June-July (1948), pp. 145-7; *Times*, 8 Mar 1952; A. Price, ‘School for mothers’, *Child Care*, 8:2 (1954), pp. 57-59.

¹¹ LULSC MS/DEP/1981/2/York/1/59/5: L. Waddilove, ‘Home for mothers and young children’, 17 Dec 1951; BAHS: MS517/A/3/2/1 Crowley House Minutes, 20 Mar 1956; *ibid.*/A/13/5/3 Annual report for St Mary’s Mothercraft Centre, 1953, p. 2.

¹² *Birmingham Post*, 18 Feb 1956; *News Chronicle*, 18 Feb 1956; *Birmingham Gazette*, 26 Feb 1956.

¹³ LA: DDX2302/box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 8 Apr 1965.

¹⁴ M. D. Sheridan, ‘The training of neglectful and unsatisfactory mothers’, *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 75:7 (1955), pp. 466-74.

¹⁵ CF: Box 57, A. H. McMichael and R. A. Parker, *Recuperative Centres Study*, 27 Oct 1961.

¹⁶ LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/York/1/5/3 EFMT Management Minutes, 10 Nov and 20 Dec 1951; BAHS: MS 517/A/3/2/1 Crowley House Minutes, 26 June 1956.

¹⁷ SAIHC: WSW/11/2/4 Discharge returns for Mayflower, 1949-51.

¹⁸ For example: LA: DDX2302/box 16/case number 1210, Mrs LS (1949); see also the number of probation cases prior to 1964 in Tables 5 and 6 in Chapter Two.

on probation were accepted.¹⁹ For every centre, financial imperatives outweighed commitment to any purpose: MOsH (Medical Officer of Health) possessed money and permissive powers, sponsoring mothers under the nebulous Section 28 of the 1946 National Health Act,²⁰ whilst the HO and PPOs (Principal Probation Officers) were frugal and demanding. Sponsors saw little difference, applying to another centre if one was full, or its waiting list lengthy.²¹ Despite different routes, powers and the ability to pay, the ‘residential option’ was conceptualised by centres and sponsors to provide rehabilitation for ‘problem families’.

The similarity of the ‘residential option’ in rehabilitating ‘problem families’ can be seen in their regimes of domesticity and gendered habits. Brentwood again provided a model, with committee members or Wardens of other centres, aside the Mayflower, visiting to study the routine of Miss E. Doris Abraham. Her daily and weekly regime at Brentwood (1943-64) is shown in Figures 6 and 7. Despite widespread emphasis on domesticity and gendered habits, each centre developed different ideas of rehabilitation. The Mayflower, run by Major Gladys Newcombe with emphasis on neglect, saw practical instruction in cookery, cleaning and other forms of housekeeping as paramount.²² St Mary’s mirrored Mayflower in requiring a strong domestic element with a similar religious aspect.²³ EFMT placed stress on relationships and social work, maintaining close links with the casework organiser of the local FSU.²⁴ Crowley House saw rehabilitation of the whole family – including the father – as important, and initially only admitted cases from Birmingham, although this was later widened to the West Midlands and beyond owing to unfilled vacancies.²⁵ Frimhurst grew apart from other centres, although still catering for ‘problem families’, as its regime moved from material concerns to offering therapy, and promoting stable relationships.²⁶ Regimes were not fixed and changed over time, often due to the style of the Warden. The onerous physical regime demanded by Miss Abraham

¹⁹ CIJW: XH41/VII.2 GB/2 G. Goodman to A. A. de vos Steenwick, 22 Oct 1963; CF: Box 57 *A new lease of life for families* (London: Broadway, 1967), p. 2.

²⁰ TNA HLG 57/345 Memo from J. T. Woodcock to N. C. Rowland, 8 Jan 1952.

²¹ LA DDX2302/box 20/case number 3254, Mrs DP (1964) applied to Brentwood as Frimhurst waiting list too long; *ibid.*/box 14/[no case number], Mrs EQ (1957) application for Brentwood submitted on form for Crowley; *ibid.*/box 16/case number 1719, Mrs EMS (1951) asked for a home closer to Rochdale than Mayflower after sentencing; BHAS: MS517/A/9/2/case number 58, Mrs DER (1960) applied to Crowley House as the Mayflower was too far for husband to visit.

²² *Picture Post*, 8 May 1954; G. Newcombe, ‘Ten years at “Mayflower”’, *Deliverer*, Aug-Sept (1958), pp. 68-9, 78.

²³ BAHS: MS517/A/13/5/3 Annual report for St Mary’s Mothercraft Centre, 1954, p. 2.

²⁴ LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/York/1/5/3 EFMT Management Minutes, 9 Apr 1954, 18 Dec 1959; LUSCA: D495(YO)M1 Annual report for York FSU, 1955, p. 3.

²⁵ BAHS: MS517/A/3/2/1 Crowley House Minutes, 7 Feb 1956; *ibid.*/A/3/3 Lee Crescent Minutes, 14 Nov 1956; *Birmingham Mail*, 9 July 1956.

²⁶ CIJW: XH40/VII.2 GB/2 Annual report for Frimhurst, 1964, p. 3; *ibid.*/XH44/VII.2 GB/1 Leslie’s report, 26 Aug 1969.

Time	Action
7.15	Families called
8.00	Breakfast for children in nursery, for mothers in dining room and rooms inspected by staff
8.45	Housework
10.00	Babies changed and given drinks
10.45	Break for tea
12.00	Dinner for babies and children
1.00	Dinner for mothers and staff
2.00	Babies changed and given drinks
2.30	Activity
4.00	Break for babies' tea
4.30	Tea for children and mothers in nursery followed by games and singing, television for older children
5.45	Bathing begins
7.45/8.00	Activity
9.15	Supper for mothers, babies changed and given drinks

Figure 6: Daily routine timetable for Brentwood, 1964.

Source: LA: DDX/2302/box 27 'Daily programme' notes for Brentwood Subcommittee, n.d. [Apr 1964].

was commented upon by sponsors, centres and mothers alike.²⁷ Her replacement Mary E. Oag introduced longer stays, admitted fathers, employed professional social workers, undertook pre-admission visits and made referrals for psychiatric issues.²⁸ Similarly, EFMT and MEHT followed Brentwood, admitting fathers, increasing staff ratios and employing professionals.²⁹ These common changes were enabled by regular meetings held by Wardens and committee members, particularly after 1963, which sought to standardise practices, charges and exchange

²⁷ Mrs CM attended Spofforth Hall in 1954, and a 1955 after-care report stated that 'she felt rather overworked at Brentwood and that she felt more benefit from her stay at Spofforth Hall'. LA DDX2302/box 12/ case number 1594, Mrs CM (1951) HV report, Jan 55; *ibid.*/box 22/[no case number], Mrs KJP (1970) R. T. Needham to A. Hatton, 1 Oct 1970.

²⁸ *Ibid.*/box 25 Brentwood Subcommittee Minutes, 9 June and 13 Aug 1964; *ibid.*/box 23/case number 3246, Mrs APW (1964); CF: Box 57 Brentwood: draft report of a meeting, 30 Nov 1964; *Manchester Evening News*, 1 Dec 1964.

²⁹ LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/York/1/5/3 EFMT Management Minutes, 24 July 1964; BAHS: MS517/A/3/2/7 Crowley House Minutes, 19 July 1964; LA: DDX/2302/box 25 Brentwood Subcommittee Minutes, 23 Feb 1965.

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Sunday	Housework	Parents take children for walk	Church attendance encouraged
Monday	Housework	Discussion of child care/cooking	Discussion of budgeting/cooking
Tuesday	Housework	Sewing with voluntary helpers	Sewing with voluntary helpers
Wednesday	Housework	Keep fit class	Social
Thursday	Housework	Free/cooking	Sewing with voluntary helpers
Friday	Housework	Free/cooking	Mending
Saturday	Housework	Parents take children for walk	Cinema attendance encouraged

Figure 7: Weekly curriculum for Brentwood, 1964.

Source: LA: DDX/2302/box 27 ‘Activities’ notes for Brentwood Subcommittee, n.d. [Apr 1964].

referrals.³⁰ Throughout the ‘golden age’ of the welfare state, the ‘residential option’ offered rehabilitation regimes of gendered domesticity and household management. They were fluid, later using self-contained flats, often with fathers, emphasising longer admissions and social work expertise. The ‘residential option’, although malleable, rested rehabilitating the ‘problem family’ on domesticating mothers.

Referrals from individuals, organisations and professions signified a willingness to use the ‘residential option’ for the rehabilitation of ‘problem families’ evident across all branches of the welfare state. The regional and professional basis for referrals to Brentwood was noted in Chapter Two. However, due to fewer comparable admission records, reconstructions cannot be undertaken for the other centres, and details are gleaned from other sources. What becomes apparent is that, like Brentwood, families were admitted from across the country, but centres had a distinct regional and professional orientation. According to the surviving admissions records, Mayflower admitted more than half of its cases from the South West of England, with the remainder comprising of mothers on probation or convicted or child neglect.³¹ Admissions for West Bank in Table 9 show large numbers from Yorkshire and the North, often discussed

³⁰ LA: DDX2302/box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 23 July 1964; TNA: BN29/2580 E. J. Clifford, Note of a meeting held on 29 Apr 1970; LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/YORK/1/59/4 J. I. Flute and E. Mary Kay, Report on conference at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 23-25 Sept 1968.

³¹ SAIHC: SS/2/2/2 Country Statement Books 41-54, Mayflower, 1949-62; *ibid.* WSW/11/2/4-6 Mayflower Discharge Statistics, 1948-62; admission entries exist for approximately one in four of the 279 mothers.

Region	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	Total
Wales		1						1
North	3	5		6		4	4	22
Yorkshire	9	7		3		9	8	36
North West	5	4		2		3	3	17
West Midlands				1		1	2	4
East Midlands	1	2				2	3	8
East	1			2		1		4
South East	1	2		2		1	1	7
South	1	1				2	1	5
South West		1						1
Total	21	23	21	16	18	23	22	144

Table 9: Admissions to West Bank by Registrar-General regions, 1963-69.

Source: LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/YORK/1/59/5 Annual reports of EFMT, 1963-69.

in the annual reports.³² For Crowley House, their aim to only admit families from Birmingham compounds regional referrals from the West Midlands, shown in Table 10. Frimhurst, Surrey, was dominated by referrals from London and the Home Counties.³³ This is not unsurprising, as a letter to Miss Abraham from a FWA (Family Welfare Association) caseworker in 1953 noted: ‘my only grumble is that you are not nearer London’.³⁴ LonCC welcomed the opening of Frimhurst as part of its use of residential centres.³⁵ St Mary’s only admitted cases from Scotland, but regional and professional trends are evident.³⁶ Equally, Mayflower in Belfast received cases only from Northern Ireland.³⁷ The exception is a mother from Dundee who read about Brentwood in the *News of the World* and went without referral.³⁸ Patterns of use can be traced across centres by particular authorities or professions. The regular referral of families from the North West to West Bank shown in Table 9, mainly sponsored by LanCC (Lancashire County Council), shows their commitment to the ‘residential option’, not just Brentwood. The decline of cases from the North, West Midlands and the South East for Brentwood in Table 6 is mirrored by growing admissions for Crowley House, West Bank and Frimhurst. In addition, after Mayflower closed in 1962 and Brentwood in 1970, committed regional sponsors applied

³² LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/YORK/1/59/5 Annual report for EFMT, 1954, p. 4 and 1964, p. 3.

³³ CIJW: XH40/VII.2 GB/2 Annual report for Frimhurst, 1965, 1966; *ibid.* XH44/VII.2 GB/2 Annual report for Frimhurst, 1969; see also *ibid.* XH39/VII.2 GB and XH43/VII.2 GB for surviving referrals, 1958-73.

³⁴ LA: DDX2302/box 4/case number 1855, Mrs RB (1952) H. K. M. Darton to E. D. Abraham, 6 Jan 1953. Miss H. K. M. Darton later became senior ‘problem family’ caseworker for Surrey County Council.

³⁵ LMA: LCC/PH/1/142 Joint report of TC, MOH, Director of Housing, CEO, CWO and CO, 3 Nov 1959.

³⁶ NAS: ED28/154/1 Reports of Chief Inspector, 1962-67.

³⁷ ‘Meet the Peeples family’, *War Cry*, 17 Feb 1962, p. 10.

³⁸ LA: DDX2302/box 18/[no case number], Mrs PW (1953).

Registrar-General Region	Region	Health	Children's	Welfare	Probation	Total	Total
Wales						0	0
North	Newcastle CB	1				1	9
	North Yorkshire CC			1		1	
	Northumberland CC	1.5	5		0.5	7	
Yorkshire						0	0
North West	Blackpool CB	0.5			0.5	1	1
West Midlands	Birmingham CB	12.5	0.5		5	18	65
	Coventry CB	1				1	
	Dudley CB				1	1	
	Herefordshire CC	0.5			0.5	1	
	Smethwick CB	0.5	0.5			1	
	Staffordshire CC	20			2	22	
	Warwickshire CC	1.5		0.5	1	3	
	Wolverhampton CB				1	1	
	Worcester CB	1				1	
	Worcestershire CC	6.5			9.5	16	
East Midlands	Leicestershire CC	2				2	8
	Nottingham CB	1				1	
	Nottinghamshire CC	3	1		1	5	
East	Essex CC	1.5			1.5	3	4
	West Suffolk CC		1			1	
South East	Surrey CC	1				1	1
South						0	0
South West						0	0
	Total	55	8	1.5	23.5	88	

Table 10: Sources of referral for 88 admissions to Crowley House and Lee Crescent by local authority and Registrar-General region, 1955-65.

Source: BAHS: MS517/A/9/1/4 Schedule of information relating to families formerly resident at Crowley House, c. 1965.

elsewhere.³⁹ Crucially, evidence from other centres points to their common use by all branches of the welfare state, not just MOsH. Many different individuals, organisations and professions preferred one centre to another, but this was due to proximity and personal networks, not any service on offer. COs, PPOs, MOsH and others across the country identified ‘problem families’ and willingly used the services provided by the ‘residential option’ for their rehabilitation.

³⁹ LA: DDX2302/box 7/case number 3068, Mrs JD (1962) K. Brill to E. D. Abraham, 13 Jan 1962; LUSCA: D495(LI)C2/2 Report on M. family by FSU for LanCC, L. Mix, Sept 1974.

The overriding concern of all the centres throughout the ‘golden age’ welfare state was financial viability, and this had a substantial impact on their sense of purpose and willingness to accept admissions. Brentwood was the costliest venture of the CCL (Community Council of Lancashire), and struggled despite its pioneering reputation. Much of the discussion about the reputation of the Centre served as advertisement.⁴⁰ As with the regime, the personal role of the Warden was crucial. The efforts of Miss Abraham in securing numerous BBC appeals, grants from statutory and voluntary agencies, and CUKT (Carnegie United Kingdom Trust) funding for an extension, were significant.⁴¹ The CCL tried to depress staff wages and reduce expenditure to cut costs, but relented due to its counterproductive and demoralising impact.⁴² Similar, though less successful, fundraising was needed by St Mary’s and Frimhurst, as they lacked a sponsor or parent organisation and led a precarious existence.⁴³ Both MEHT and EFMT possessed the backing of confectionary philanthropists through the Cadbury and Rowntree families, although this did not provide them with stability.⁴⁴ Crucial to all centres were fees: in no instance did they ever cover costs. Fluctuating occupancy rates due to summer highs and winter lows, bouts of illness requiring closure and a period of quarantine, and amateur accountancy all contributed to keep income down.⁴⁵ Moreover, the centres could only charge as much as sponsors were willing to pay: the HO set low rates in line with its other institutions, whilst COs and PPOs lacked extensive or permissive funds until the 1960s in contrast to MOsH. This influenced the length of stay as MOsH preferred short convalescent breaks and were opposed to the longer and expensive rehabilitation sought by COs and PPOs. Centres were pulled in two directions in search of financial security and operational integrity. Tellingly, high vacancy rates produced by mothers leaving early, and low HO fees caused Mayflower to close in 1962.⁴⁶ Conversely, the flexibility of Brentwood in accepting cases

⁴⁰ ‘A deserving appeal’, *Medical Officer*, 78 (1947), p. 25; *Weekly News*, 12 July 1947 ‘Teaching mothercraft’, *Lancet*, 1:6719 (1952), p. 1154; P. Haddington, ‘Where tragedy ends in happiness’, *Cheshire Life*, 25:3 (1959), pp. 71-3; E. D. Abraham, ‘Brentwood Recuperative Centre’, *Medical World*, 90:3 (1959), pp. 251-4; Brentwood featured on BBC Woman’s Hour on 26 Jan 1951 and 22 Nov 1957; appeals were made 13 July 1947 by William Beveridge, 18 Mar 1951, 31 May 1959, 17 Mar 1963, 26 June 1966 and 10 Aug 1969. Later appeals were general and not specifically for Brentwood.

⁴¹ CF: Box 57 Annual report for CCL, 1947, pp. 9-10; LA: DDX2302/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 2 Oct 1952.

⁴² LA: DDX2302/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 14 Jan 1954 and ‘Appendix A: report of the Brentwood wages Subcommittee’.

⁴³ CF: Box 57 Annual report for St Mary’s Mothercraft Centre, 1962, p. 2; *ibid. Families in need* (Fleet: North Hants Printing, 1966), p. 5

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Annual report for MEHT, 1961, pp. 6-7; *Birmingham Mail*, 18 Sept 1962; LULSC MS/DEP/1981/York/1/59/5 *The Elizabeth Fry Home* (York: Ebor Press, 1968) incl. ‘Additional notes on the Elizabeth Fry Memorial Trust’.

⁴⁵ LA: DDX2302/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 17 Jan 1952; LULSC: EFMT Executive Minutes, 9 Mar 1954; BAHS: MS517/A/3/2/1 Crowley House Minutes, 18 Sept 1956.

⁴⁶ SAIHC: WSW/7/7 Salvation Army Women’s Social Work, ‘“The Mayflower”, Plymouth’, Apr 1958.

from numerous individuals, professions and organisations was key to its success under Miss Abraham. Financial demands underpinned many of the changes in purpose, regime and referral patterns of the ‘residential option’, and cannot be detached from the intentions of sponsors.

The purpose, regimes, admissions and financial imperatives of the ‘residential option’ were common to all ‘problem family’ rehabilitation centres. Despite different origins, strands of funding and referral dealing with ‘neglectful’ versus ‘tired’ mothers, the purposes were the same: domesticate ‘problem family’ mothers. Regimes reflected routines structured around gendered tasks of housework, child care and domesticity. Admissions were accepted from a range of individuals, organisations and professions concerned with the ‘problem family’, with geographical proximity and financial imperatives more prominent than any sense of purpose. At the root of these trends were monetary concerns, and the precarious position of the voluntary ‘residential option’ was common, and underpinned flexibility for survival. These issues need to be understood in relation to all the residential centres to grasp the specificity of Brentwood. Common regimes of domesticating the ‘problem family’ belie subtle processes. Brentwood’s emphasis on recuperation rather than neglect, its physical and material regime which endured into the 1960s, its operational horizon in the North West of England with referrals dominated by MOsH, and its financial predicament intimately linked with the personal fundraising of its first Warden, Miss Abraham, were vital. Archival evidence from the other centres shows the greater comparable quality and quantity of Brentwood, allowing for firmer understanding of the ‘problem family’ at the personal, local and national level. Consequently, the thesis draws upon the evidence from other centres to substantiate the commonality of the ‘residential option’ and its relationship to rehabilitating the ‘problem family’. Brentwood as the focus of the case study imposes specificity concerning its purpose, regime, source and type of referrals, which were all shaped by financial considerations. Brentwood therefore constitutes a specific part of the ‘residential option’ for conceptualising and operationalising the ‘problem family’, and cannot be extricated from its rise and fall in the post-war welfare state.

Brentwood, the ‘problem family’ and the welfare state

Discovery of the ‘problem family’, 1943-50

Brentwood’s involvement in conceiving and operationalising the ‘problem family’ in wartime, signified by the arrival of Miss Abraham and the publication of *Our towns*, was preceded by

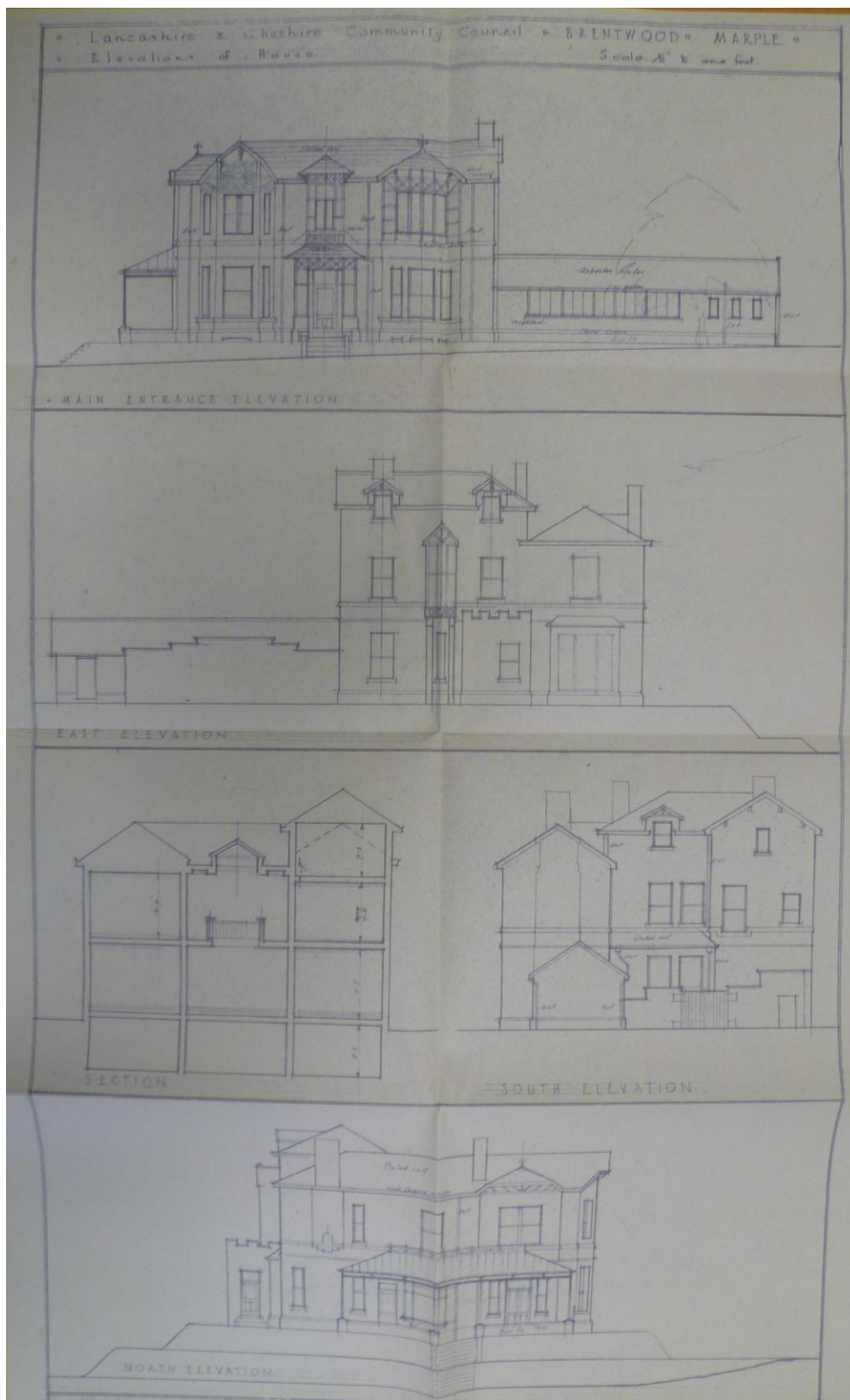


Figure 8: Brentwood Plans, 1942.

Source: LA: DDX2302/box 28 J. Price Nunn 'Brentwood, Marple', 10 Oct 1942.



Image 1: Brentwood Recuperative Centre, 1947.

Source: Manchester Guardian, 11 July 1947.

the Centre's origins and growth during the late 1930s. Brentwood was established in 1935 as a holiday home for the wives of unemployed workers by the forerunner of CCL, SELNECAC (South East Lancashire and North East Cheshire Advisory Council) 'to help women face the other fifty-one worrying weeks'⁴⁷ After spending two summers at temporary locations in Edale and Hayfield in Derbyshire, in 1937 Brentwood – a large residential villa in Marple, Cheshire (Figure 9) – was donated to SELNECAC, and opened each summer to admit mothers and their children for one week's holiday. Uncertainty in 1939 and 1940 with the outbreak of war did not alter its use, despite the admission of Czech refugees for a period out of season, and it was only in 1941 with raids on London, Manchester and Liverpool that its use transformed into

⁴⁷ LA: DDX2302/1 SELNECAC Executive Committee Minutes, 10 Oct 1937.

rehabilitation for unbilletable ‘blitzed families’.⁴⁸ Such was its success that the Warden Hilda M. Smith, the Women’s Secretary for LCCC (Lancashire and Cheshire Community Council) – the successor to SELNECAC – was seconded by the Ministry of Health to establish similar centres in the South East of England, although the abatement of bombing by the end of the year curtailed the scheme.⁴⁹ Moreover, the departure of several Wardens due to physical and mental breakdowns caused uncertainty.⁵⁰ It was only reluctantly that Miss Abraham, as part of her Friends’ Relief Service work, became the Warden in March 1943. Her influence, along with the arrival of other long-term staff at a similar time, proved crucial in aligning the centre with rehabilitating the ‘problem family’. Crucial in this regard were links with P/FSU in Liverpool and Manchester, her approaches to MOsH and Billeting Officers for referrals and support, and contacts with WGPW.⁵¹ Brentwood existed prior to 1943 but its connection with the ‘problem family’ was made in war with links to other organisations, notably PSU and WGPW, and crucially the influence of Miss Abraham as Warden.

Brentwood was not alone in establishing an operational structure and discourse around the ‘problem family’, and was wedded to PSU and the genesis of the term by the WGPW. The publication of *Our towns* in 1943 mobilised public consciousness over the ‘problem family’:

Always on the edge of pauperism and crime, riddled with mental and physical defects, in and out of the Courts for child neglect, a menace to the community, of which the gravity is out of all proportion to their numbers.⁵²

It is difficult to overstate the impact of the report on popularising and illuminating the ‘problem family’ as a subject of concern.⁵³ Whilst Brentwood provided the ‘residential option’ for the rehabilitation of the ‘problem family’, PSU provided a domiciliary counterpart. Small units of conscientious objectors living in slum districts of blitzed cities pioneered intensive social work, termed ‘friendship with a purpose’, where relationships with ‘problem families’ were formed, and used to encourage them towards domestic standards.⁵⁴ Despite engendering the ‘problem

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*/5 LCCC Executive Committee Minutes, 19 Sept and 17 Oct 1940; *ibid.*/6 LCCC Executive Committee Minutes, 16 June 1941.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*/6 H. M. Smith, Report on Recuperation Centres Work, Apr 1942.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* LCCC Executive Committee Minutes, 17 July and 20 Nov 1941.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* LCCC Executive Committee Minutes, 18 Dec 1941; *ibid.*/30 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 12 May and 4 Aug 1943; CF Box 57/case number 286, Mrs LOK (1943), M. Lee to E. D. Abraham, 18 Aug 1943.

⁵² WGPW, *Our towns* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. xiii.

⁵³ J. Welshman, ‘Evacuation, hygiene, and social policy’, *Historical Journal*, 42:3 (1999), pp. 781-807.

⁵⁴ LUSCA: D495(MA)M8/5 Annual report for PSU, 1945, pp. 3-4; E. McKie, *Venture in faith* (Liverpool: Liverpool FSU, 1963), p. 24; see also P. Starkey, “*I will not fight*” (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992); id., ‘Friendship with a purpose’, in R. Morris and H. Russell, eds., *Rooted in the city* (Liverpool: LCVS, 2010), pp. 27-33.

family', Brentwood and PSU required recognition of their work, finding a receptive audience in MOsH. Continuities with the 'social problem group' of the inter-war eugenicists abounded, with many MOsH retaining a 'fashionable' interest.⁵⁵ The interchangeability of the term, and continuities in proponents of the concept, led to several studies into the 'problem family' by MOsH and the Eugenics Society, which touted both PSU and Brentwood.⁵⁶ In addition, many MOsH tried to reaffirm their vulnerable position in the wake of the 1946 National Health Act, the 1948 National Assistance Act and the 1948 Children Act which removed many of their duties. MOsH were key patrons of P/FSU and Brentwood in their formative years in the 1940s, notably those most closely associated with articulating the 'problem family'.⁵⁷ For both P/FSU and Brentwood, this meant meeting a demand greater than they could manage: P/FSU rejected many requests for Units by MOsH; whilst Brentwood struggled with high referral rates and a waiting list stretching months.⁵⁸ Accordingly, both P/FSU and Brentwood were instituted and publicised as successful methods of rehabilitating 'problem families', in demand from MOsH, and possessing an effective monopoly on domiciliary and residential services.

The institutionalisation of Brentwood as a component of the national 'problem families' paradigm was crucial in mobilising other ventures, but it was also a period of transition for the regime at Brentwood. Wartime connections with blitzed cities persisted, but the primacy of the North West grew with representation on the Brentwood Committee by Bolton, Lancashire and Salford, in addition to Liverpool and Manchester.⁵⁹ Brentwood moved from haphazard admissions, lengthy stays and crowded living arrangements tolerated in war, to standardised practice. The daily and weekly routines, shown in Figures 6 and 7, provided recuperation by balancing instruction and leisure for mothers, nurturing a determination that the 'mother returns

⁵⁵ J. Welshman, 'The Medical Officer of Health in England and Wales, 1900-74', *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 19:4 (1997), p. 444; id., 'Eugenics and public health in Britain, 1900-40', *Urban History*, 24:1 (1997), pp. 56-75.

⁵⁶ C. P. Blacker, 'Social problem families in the limelight' *Eugenics Review*, 38:3 (1946), pp. 117-27; S. W. Savage, 'Rehabilitation of problem families', *Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute*, 66:4 (1946), p. 339; C. G. Tomlinson, *Families in trouble* (Luton: Bamforth, 1946), pp. 33-36; C. F. Brockington, 'Problem families', *Journal of the Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene*, 12 (1949), pp. 9-18; R. C. Wofinden, *Problems Families in Bristol* (London: Eugenics Society, 1950), pp. 37-40; C. P. Blacker, ed., *Problem families* (London: Eugenics Society, 1952).

⁵⁷ LUSCA: D495(LI)M11/4 Annual report for Liverpool FSU, 1950; *ibid.* D495(MA)M8/8 Annual report for Manchester FSU, 1950; WL: SA/EUG/D/168 C. P. Blacker to D. Jones, 31 Jan 1947; CF: Box 57 Annual report for CCL, 1949, pp. 4-5; Problem Families Committee, *Problem families* (London: Eugenics Society, 1948); the six areas of the Eugenics Society pilot survey and their respective MOsH were all among the first regular sponsors outside the North West to Brentwood: Bristol, Warwickshire, Luton, Rotherham, the West Riding and Kensington.

⁵⁸ GMCRO: GB127.M184 Manchester and Salford CSS, Problems Families Group Minutes, 21 Sept and 23 Nov 1949 both list many authorities in the North West requesting but failing to obtain P/FSU: Burnley, Rochdale, Preston, Wigan, Oldham and Stockport; LA: DDX2302/30 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 20 July 1949.

⁵⁹ LA: DDX2302/30 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 18 May 1951.

home *prepared to make the struggle* [emphasis added].⁶⁰ A comparable regime for mothers to renew ‘the struggle’ prevailed in post-war West Germany, although mobilising women for work, rather than rehabilitating ‘problem families’, was the purpose.⁶¹ In Brentwood, Miss Abraham managed both staff and mothers as a philanthropic Edwardian matriarch: kindly but stern.⁶² Mothers were sponsored by organisations, who typically charged them a portion of the fee, were admitted for four weeks, extended to six if deemed necessary and supported by the sponsor. Only children under seven were allowed, and families lived two per room, with staff in quarters. This standardisation was partial: many mothers stayed longer, in some instances years; children over seven were routinely accepted as ‘exceptions’; and mothers admitted as ‘problem families’ occasionally became employees. This flexibility was part of its success, if unintended and unpublicised.⁶³ This ethos of amateurism was also prevalent in P/FSU, and contributed to the novelty of the ‘problem family’ in social work.⁶⁴ Both the ‘problem’ and ‘solution’ were new: Brentwood offered a ‘residential option’, P/FSU a ‘domiciliary’ one. In their 1948 follow-up to *Our towns – The neglected child and his family* – WGPW put the issue simply: ‘In looking at these problem families there emerges one dominating feature – the capacity of the mother’.⁶⁵ Both Brentwood and P/FSU shared assumptions which saw a willing embrace of ‘the struggle’ by ‘problem family’ mothers as key to their rehabilitation. The 1948 report was again influential, and solidified the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ in the structure of the ‘golden age’ welfare state.

Intensification, competition and consolidation, 1950-57

The report by WGPW influenced the operationalisation and conceptualisation of the ‘problem family’ after 1948. Questions raised in Parliament by Labour MP Barbara Ayrton-Gould in 1949 led to the formation of a working party on children neglected in their own homes by the HO, Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Education (MoE).⁶⁶ The working party reports drew upon the studies by MOsH and the work of FSU and Brentwood, but the ensuing circular

⁶⁰ Abraham, ‘Problem mothers’, p. 253.

⁶¹ K. M. N. Carpenter, “‘For mothers only’”, *Journal of Social History*, 34:4 (2001), pp. 863-93.

⁶² Interview with Trish Lee, Robin and Rosie Lambert by Michael Lambert, 18 May 2016.

⁶³ CF: Box 57/case number 408, Mrs VL (1944); *ibid.*/case number 588, Mrs ML (1946); LA: DDX/2302/box 10/case number 737, Mrs MEH (1946); *ibid.*/box 16/case number 1425, Mrs BJS (1949); *ibid.*/30 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 6 Feb and 1 May 1946; *ibid.*/46 1 Apr 1954 and ‘Appendix A’.

⁶⁴ P. Starkey, *Companions in caring* (Ilfracombe: Arthur H. Stockwell, 1989), chap. 6.

⁶⁵ WGPW, *Neglected child*, p. 22.

⁶⁶ Hansard (House of Commons), ‘Child welfare’, 22 July 1949, cols. 1740-82; TNA: HLG 101/297 J. Ross to E. Halliday, 9 Dec 1949.

reiterated the content of recent legislation, advocating the appointment of a committee under a designated officer responsible for ‘problem families’.⁶⁷ The permissive powers of the circular were readily seized and the different welfare branches highlighted the benefits of the circular for their own operations. The MoH annual report for 1951 linked the powers for MOsH to use P/FSU and Brentwood.⁶⁸ The HO, in their 1951 report, made similar connections for COs.⁶⁹ A joint memo issued by the local authority associations – CCA (County Councils Association), AMC (Association of Municipal Corporations), UDCA (Urban District Councils Association) and RDCA (Rural District Councils Association) – drew attention to welfare authorities and evicted families ‘[w]hen the character of these families presents social problems’.⁷⁰ The effect of the 1950 circular for ‘problem families’ was twofold: it nationalised and operationalised the ‘problem family’; and Brentwood referrals moved from a myriad of voluntary organisations to statutory services selecting cases from ‘problem family’ committees. These committees were not a shared venture in cooperation, and led to conflicts over which service was best placed to shoulder the responsibility. The MoH produced several reports on the use by MOsH of the National Health Act 1946 to extend duties for ‘problem families’: Section 22 to sponsor cases at Brentwood; and Section 28 for grants to support FSU branches.⁷¹ The 1954 MoH circular based on these reports backed maximising permissive powers, along with greater use of HVs (Health Visitors).⁷² The fallout of the 1948 WGPW report, unlike *Our towns*, was not felt in the public domain, but in government. It cemented concern with the ‘problem family’, the use of the ‘residential’ and ‘domiciliary’ options, and its legitimacy in the welfare state.

The entrenchment of the ‘residential option’ in rehabilitating the ‘problem family’ had several impacts for Brentwood: competition from other centres; creeping professionalisation; and conflict over modernisation. The 1951 MoH report imploring MOsH to use Brentwood for ‘problem families’ complained that: ‘demand far exceeds the available provision’.⁷³ This did not last. The Mayflower opened in 1948, although dominated by the HO referring mothers convicted of neglect; Spofforth Hall in 1952; Crowley House in 1955; and Frimhurst in 1957.

⁶⁷ TNA: HLG 101/297 Draft reports, 27 Jan and 21 Mar 1950, final report, 26 Apr 1950; *ibid.*, HO, MoH and MoE, ‘Children neglected or ill-treated in their own homes’, Joint Circular 157/50, 78/50 and 225/50, 31 July 1950.

⁶⁸ Annual report for the MoH, 1951, p. 110.

⁶⁹ Sixth report on the work of the Children’s Department, 1951, pp. 40-43.

⁷⁰ TNA: HLG 101/297 CCA, AMC, UDCA and RDCA, ‘Accommodation for homeless families’, 25 July 1950.

⁷¹ TNA: MH 134/181 H. Campbell, ‘Problem families’, 26 Oct 1951; Dr Fenton, ‘Problem families report’, 12 Nov 1951.

⁷² *Ibid.* MoH, ‘Health of children: prevention of break-up of families’, Circular 27/54, 30 Nov 1954, p. 1.

⁷³ Annual report for the MoH, 1951, p. 110.

The end of Brentwood's monopoly compounded referrals from the North West. In turn, the greater appointment of MOsH in these authorities as designated 'problem family' officers, as shown in Figure 8, meant that the Centre was firmly, not wholly, aligned with MOsH. Their preference for shorter duration but greater volume of stays ensured buoyancy. Changes were not just felt outside Brentwood, but inside. Serving as the sole residential centre during the formative post-war years led to staff exhaustion, especially for Miss Abraham whose relentless schedule caused prolonged periods of illness and absence.⁷⁴ The appointment of additional staff, particularly a Deputy Warden, was intended to offset the strain of continually working and living with families, but apart from Ilse Buetow (Head of Nursery) and Violet Lambert (Cook) who arrived at a similar time to Miss Abraham, staff turnover remained a problem.⁷⁵ The extension, funded by CUKT and opened in 1957, eased overcrowding, as did the decanting of staff from quarters to alternative accommodation. This eased but did not overcome many strains. Newly appointed staff, more recently and highly qualified, brought psychological and sociological ideas into the purview of the Centre – such as John Bowlby, and Donald and Clare Winnicott⁷⁶ – although these did not alter its emphasis on domesticity.⁷⁷ Modernisation was not without obstacles. The Secretary of the CCL, Andrew M. Watson, attempted to retain the amateurism, and concomitant low wages and long hours, in asserting his authority over the autonomy of the Warden and attach himself to the prestige of Brentwood. Only with his departure and untimely death in 1955 were staffing changes undertaken.⁷⁸ The changes brought by the expansion of the 'residential option' at Brentwood compounded its regional and professional alignment, and bound them to the personal role of the Warden.

The nationalisation and consolidation of the 'problem family' and its mechanisms of rehabilitation did little to clarify what a 'problem family' was, but this uncertainty did not stop

⁷⁴ LA: DDX2302/30 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 6 Nov 1946; *ibid.*/46 4 Oct 1951, 15 Jan 1953, 6 Jan and 18 Oct 1955, 2 Apr 1959, 5 Jan 1961, 20 Apr 1964.

⁷⁵ LA: DDX2302/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 1 Oct 1953 created a Staffing Subcommittee to manage the problem.

⁷⁶ On their influence see D. Riley, *War in the nursery* (London: Virago, 1983); J. Kanter, 'The untold story of Clare and Donald Winnicott', *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 28:2 (2000), pp. 245-61; B. Mayhew, 'Between love and aggression', *History of the Human Sciences*, 19:1 (2006), pp. 19-35; S. Alexander, 'Primary maternal preoccupations', in S. Alexander and B. Taylor, eds., *History and psyche* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 149-72; R. Duschinsky, 'The politics of attachment', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 32:7-8 (2015), pp. 173-95; M. Shapira, *The war inside* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁷⁷ LA: DDX2302/30 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 1 Aug 1945 and 4 Nov 1948; *ibid.*/46 1 Oct 1953. Miss Knockton (Assistant Warden) as being a State Registered Nurse whilst Miss Woodcock (Deputy Warden) was a Social Science graduate from the University of Manchester who later returned to undertake an MA, with her thesis on Brentwood and the 'problem family'.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 5 Jan 1956; CF: Box 57 Annual report for CCL, 1956, pp. 3-4.

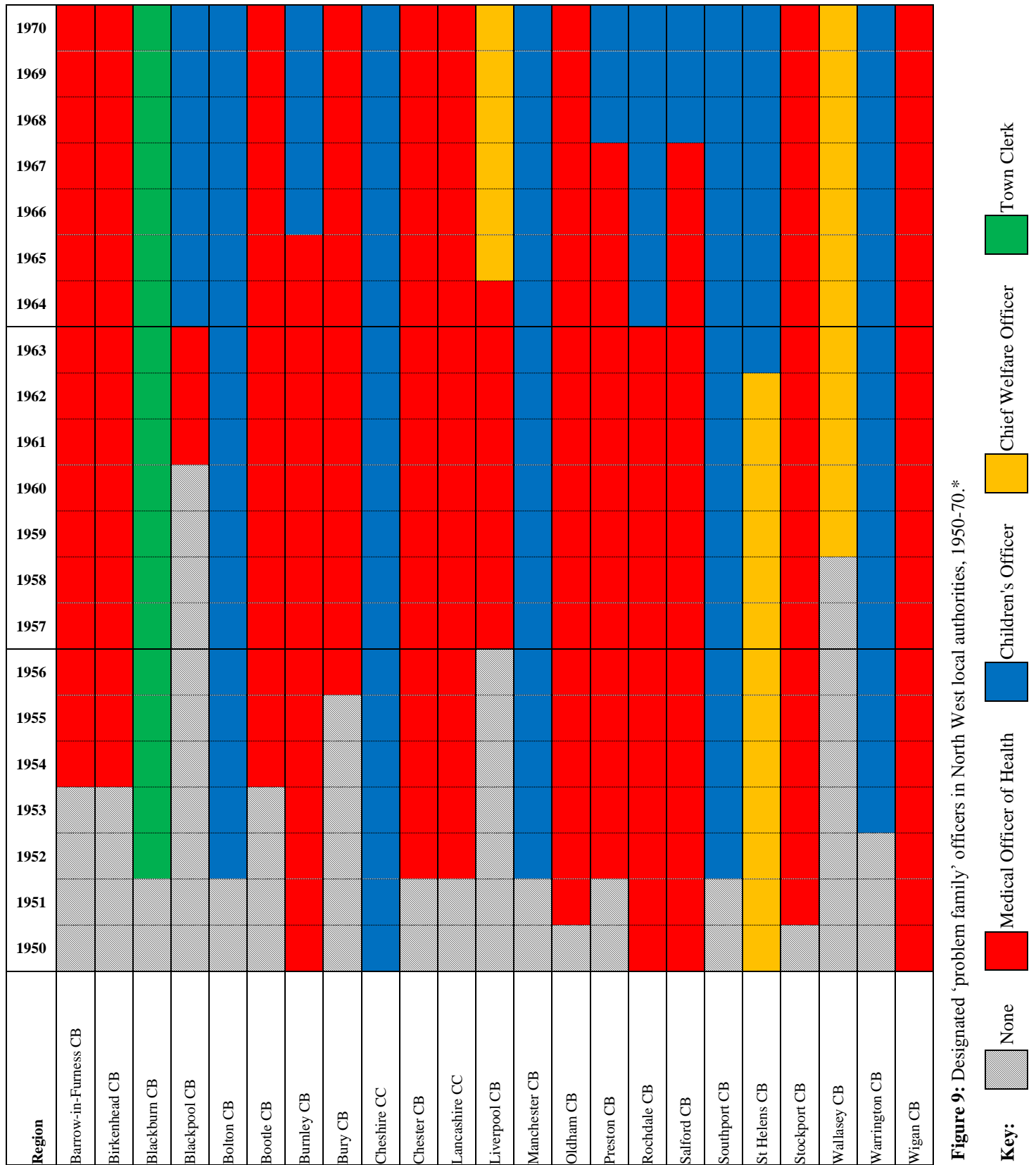


Figure 9: Designated 'problem family' officers in North West local authorities, 1950-70.*



the continuation of the residential and domiciliary options. The publication of *The problem of 'the problem family'* in 1957 by Fred Philp and Noel Timms, one active and one former FSU worker, encapsulates this confusion. They denigrated the definitions and studies by MOsH of the 'problem family', but celebrated the success of FSU and Brentwood in aiding the 'problem family mother'.⁷⁹ The ambiguity extended into Brentwood over the types of cases admitted. A visitor from the MoH noted this during discussions with the Warden:

Miss Abraham agreed that there were certain mothers who she found, on arrival, were unlikely to gain any benefit from their stay. It may well be that a more careful selection of the cases... would be of value.⁸⁰

Conversely, LonCC considered the cost of residential training excluded the 'hard core' case:

Mothers selected for the training should be those who can be expected to maintain on their return home the better standard they will have been taught in the rehabilitation centre... Residential training is appropriate in only a few selected cases.⁸¹

A similar tension existed for FSU on the suitability of families referred by the local authority.⁸² At the root of this uncertainty over the 'problem family' for both domiciliary and residential options was their purpose: rehabilitation or prevention. Prevention meant identifying 'problem families' quickly and acting swiftly, whilst rehabilitation limited efforts with the 'hard core'.⁸³ However, lacking a clear definition of a 'problem family', prevention and rehabilitation merged across a spectrum determined by officials. As one contemporary commentator noted: 'Problem families are easy to recognise and describe, but surprisingly hard to define'.⁸⁴ Tellingly, the use of examples to illustrate certain 'problem families' where definitions failed, was common in publications.⁸⁵ Brentwood, along with FSU, was conceived by officials as both the first *and*

* Source for Figure 8: NA MH 134/181 Local authority officers designated under the Home Office Circular 157/50 and Ministry of Health Circular 78/50, Aug 1952; Annual reports of the MOH and CO for each local authority, 1950-70.

⁷⁹ A. F. Philp and N. Timms, *The problem of 'the problem family'* (London: FSU, 1957), pp. 42-46, 52-57.

⁸⁰ LA: DDX2302/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 17 July 1957 Appendix A, R. Chamberlin to J. S. Jackson, 6 May 1957.

⁸¹ LMA: LCC/PH/1/142 Joint report of TC, MOH, Director of Housing, CEO, CWO and CO, 3 Nov 1959.

⁸² P. Starkey, *Families and social workers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 179-92.

⁸³ F. H. Myers, 'Towards the eradication of the problem family', *Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute*, 73:2 (1953), pp. 97-9; J. A. Scott, 'Problem families in London', *Medical Officer*, 100 (1958), pp. 83-6; B. Kahan, 'Prevention and rehabilitation', *Approved Schools Gazette*, 55:12 (1961), pp. 374-87.

⁸⁴ E. E. Irvine, 'Research into problem families', *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, 2:9 (1954), p. 24.

⁸⁵ T. Stephens, ed., *Problem families* (London: Gollancz and PSU, 1946); N. Timms, 'Problem families in England', *Almoner*, 6:4 (1953), pp. 180-5; C. H. Wright, 'Problem families', *Medical Officer*, 94 (1955), pp. 381-4; H. C. Maurice Williams, 'Problem families in Southampton', *Eugenics Review*, 47:4 (1956), pp. 217-23; A. F. Philp, 'The problem family and the social services', in ISTD, *The problem family* (London: ISTD, 1958), pp. 30-40.

last resort for ‘problem families’. Expansion and consolidation of the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ in the post-war welfare state thrived on the ambiguity embedded in concepts of prevention and rehabilitation which were determined by the professional, and fuelled the use of residential and domiciliary ‘options’.

Expansion and zenith, 1957-63

The official ceremony for the unveiling of the extension at Brentwood on 3 April 1957 by Lord Sefton ushered in the ‘golden age’ of the Centre and its involvement with the ‘problem family’ (Image 2). Speaking at the ceremony, C. Fraser Brockington – a ‘problem family’ proponent, a regular source of referrals to Brentwood when CMO (County Medical Officer) for the West Riding of Yorkshire, latterly Professor of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University of Manchester⁸⁶ – described the visit of mothers as ‘a pilgrimage to a shrine of their own particular thoughts’, calling the Centre a ‘Mecca’ for social medicine, family casework and voluntarism.⁸⁷ The 1958 annual report of the MoH celebrated the ‘success’ of Brentwood, acting as a ‘blueprint’ for other centres.⁸⁸ In Brentwood, the extension allowed each mother their own room, reducing crowding and the spread of illness, ensuring higher rates of occupancy (Figures 10 and 11). Amenities which had changed little since the war were modernised.⁸⁹ Although the extension eased strains of everyday living, it produced a divide between staff and mothers, in contrast to cheek-by-jowl amateurism which had endured since the war. Shared meals between families and staff, and the joint use of living space became a thing of the past; whilst former mothers were no longer hired as staff. Above all, larger premises, more staff and higher wages caused spiralling running costs, which created a tension between increasing fees for sponsors, and finding other sources of funding.⁹⁰ Fees were calculated to cover costs at full occupancy for an average number of children, and were often contested by sponsors who considered the financial cost of large families to be exorbitant, and became reluctant to spend larger sums on ‘problem families’.⁹¹ Despite Brentwood – much like Britons in Harold Macmillan’s famous

⁸⁶ C. F. Brockington, *Problem families* (Shrewsbury: British Social Hygiene Council, 1948); on his role at Manchester see C. Hallett, ‘Colin Fraser Brockington (1903-2004) and the revolution in nurse-education’, *Journal of Medical Biography*, 16:1 (2008), pp. 89-95.

⁸⁷ *The Reporter*, 5 Apr 1957; *Stockport Advertiser*, 11 Apr 1957.

⁸⁸ Annual report for the MoH, 1958, pp. 151-54.

⁸⁹ LA: DDX2302/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 10 Apr 1958.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 Oct 1958; CF: Box 57 Annual report for CCL, 1960, pp. 3-4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*/box 18/case number 2654, Mrs JW (1958) is indicative, with an argument about the account and a poor experience by the mother leading to the Middlesbrough MOH, E. C. Downer, sending Mrs JW as the first and last case to Brentwood, although he continued to use EFMT.



Image 2: Opening ceremony for the extension at Brentwood, 5 Apr 1957.

Source: LA: DDX2302/box 25

Left to right (front row): Mrs C. James (WRVS, Brentwood Committee), Mrs G. B. Harrop ('Chantrey', Marple, Brentwood Committee Chair), Mr A. Crompton (Acting Chair and Honorary Treasurer, CCL), Mrs W Elliot (Convenor of Community Services Subcommittee, CUKT), Miss E. D. Abraham (Warden, Brentwood).

Left to right (middle row): Sir George Dyson (Chair, CUKT), Canon Eric Saxon (Deputy Chair, Brentwood Committee)

Left to right (back row): Professor C. Fraser Brockington (Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Manchester), Lord Sefton, J. Pirie Glen (Treasurer, CUKT), J. S. Jackson (General Secretary, CCL).

Details of the three children are unknown.

phrase – in 1957 having 'never had it so good'⁹² the success of the 'residential option' brought attendant problems. Undoubtedly the six years from 1957 to 1963 represented the zenith of Brentwood and its role in rehabilitating the 'problem family', but the conditions which gave it buoyancy were also those which heralded impending changes.

⁹² *The Times*, 21 July 1957.

Relationships between the worker and the family were central to the ‘problem family’ in the domiciliary and residential options. FSU had ‘friendship with a purpose’ and Brentwood relied on ‘giving hope’ by companionship.⁹³ Publicising ‘success’ hinged on appropriating and projecting the voices of the mothers. Starkey has considered the clients’ ‘voice’ in publications by FSU as problematic, whilst Welshman argues that the correspondence between mothers and Miss Abraham shows that many experienced Brentwood positively.⁹⁴ The self-styled image at Brentwood was a family: exemplified in the return of ‘old girls’ for short breaks; multiple visits of mothers, either from a sponsor or funded themselves; and the frequency of mentions in letters and in oral testimony.⁹⁵ Miss Abraham always tried to visit families when travelling, and other staff at the centre corresponded with mothers and made visits, particularly to those in the North West.⁹⁶ Undeniably, many mothers enjoyed their stays, and the Warden tried to prolong them, either by using one of the funds at her disposal, or by suggesting an extension to the sponsor.⁹⁷ This did not stop at formal appeals; in one case she colluded to lengthen a stay over Christmas, feigning the illness of a mother’s child to secure financial support from the MOH. A note on the case record from Miss Abraham to her secretary reads: ‘Hilda. Write that [Mrs IC’s son] has now developed mumps so [Mrs IC]’s return will be even further delayed! [Mrs IC’s son] is very well. EDA’.⁹⁸ Brentwood’s ‘success’ lay in discrepancies between views of sponsors and mothers. Sponsors perceived Brentwood as providing domestic education, child care and housekeeping skills for neglectful mothers. Mothers experienced Brentwood as offering friendship with staff and other mothers, encouraging leisure, or participating in activities other than domestic duties, fostered in a supportive atmosphere with women similarly placed. Although the use of such purposive friendship to label the centre a ‘paradise for mothers’ is

⁹³ Abraham, ‘Problem mothers’; D. A. Topham, ‘The story of “Brentwood”’, *Social Welfare Notes and News*, 5:4 (1962), pp. 37-9.

⁹⁴ P. Starkey, ‘Retelling the stories of clients of voluntary social work agencies in Britain after 1945’, in A. Borsay and P. Shapely, eds., *Medicine, charity and mutual aid* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 245-61; J. Welshman, ‘Wardens, letter writing and the welfare state, 1944-1974’, in A. Borsay and P. Dale, eds., *Mental health nursing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 190-212.

⁹⁵ LA: DDX2302/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 1 Apr 1954; *ibid.*/box 26 Mrs AP to E. D. Abraham, 24 Feb 1948; *ibid.*/box 11/case numbers 725, [no case number], 1199, 1450 and 1695, Mrs IJ (1946-51); CF: Box 57/case number 925, Mrs IJ (1947); Mrs IJ – known as ‘squatter’ due to her repeated admissions – also returned on numerous weekend visits and was mentioned in publicity: *Sunday Express*, 26 Oct 1952; Haddington, ‘Tragedy’, pp. 71-3; Interview with Trish Lee, Robin and Rosie Lambert by Michael Lambert, 18 May 2016.

⁹⁶ LA: DDX2302/box 26 Mrs AR to E. D. Abraham, 3 Apr [n.d. 1948]; *ibid.*/box 7/case number 1456, Mrs MLD (1949-52); CF: Box 57/case number 1087, Mrs MLD (1948).

⁹⁷ Rest Breaks, Sale of Work and Cinderella funds were used to extend mothers’ stays from two to four weeks where the sponsor proved unwilling, obstinate, or had already provided an extension and a further extension was sought by the mother.

⁹⁸ LA: DDX2302/box 6/case number 1562, Mrs IC (1950).

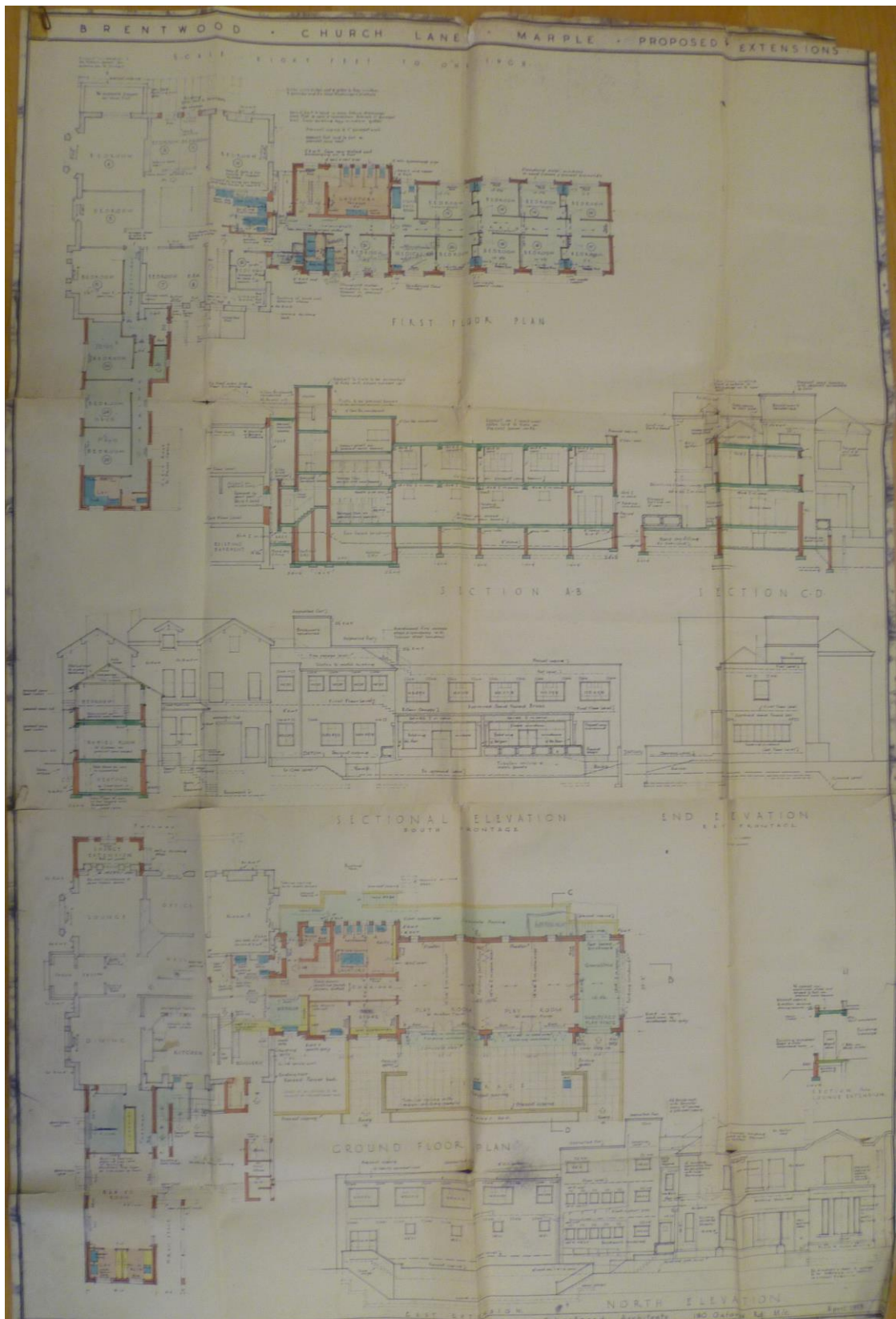


Figure 10: Brentwood Extension Plans, 1953.

Source: LA: DDX2302/box 25 J. Price Nunn 'Brentwood, Church Lane, Marple, proposed extension', April 1953



Figure 11: Brentwood Extension Model, 1953.

Source: LA: DDX2302/box 25 J. Price Nunn 'Brentwood', 1953.

questionable – considering that it was often engaging in activities other than domestic duties which *caused* referrals – many of those

who went to Brentwood undoubtedly saw their time as beneficial.⁹⁹ Although later Wardens kept correspondence with mothers which reflected positively, their experiences changed with professionalisation and separation entailed by the extension.

The shifting patterns of admission to Brentwood during the period reflect the changing operationalisation of the 'problem family'. Following the joint circular of 1950, referrals were mainly from MOsH due to their permissive powers and financial freedoms. The erosion of their autonomy challenged Brentwood as *the* 'residential' and FSU as *the* 'domiciliary' option. A joint circular issued by the HO, MoH and MoE in 1956 implored local 'problem family' committees to use voluntary organisations, and many CSSs (Councils of Social Service), branches of the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) and the WRVS (Women's Royal Voluntary Service) offered domiciliary casework services.¹⁰⁰ In

⁹⁹ 'Paradise for mothers' was used in: *Daily Worker*, 4 Oct 1945; *Illustrated*, 16 Feb 1946; and *Salford City Reporter*, 26 Oct 1951; see the posts on the Marple Community Forum and Noticeboard from former mothers and children at Brentwood: <http://www.marple-uk.com/smf/index.php?topic=70.0>, accessed 1 Sept 2016.

¹⁰⁰ W. P. Smith and H. A. Bate, *Family casework and the country dweller* (London: FWA, 1953); TWA: CH.CSS1/1/14 Annual report of the Northumberland and Tyneside CSS, 1955, pp. 3-4; NSPCC: 1/8 Annual report of the NSPCC, 1952, pp. 2-8; CAC: C/C/3/2/72/GP350 (AH) J. W. Freeman to M. Silva-Jones, 17 Aug 1954; *ibid.* WC/W/A1568/box 42/18 P. Thurman to C. E. Shipley, 13 July 1956; CUKT Juvenile Subcommittee Minutes, 4 Oct and 5 Dec 1951, <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/search-archive/>, accessed 25 May 2015.

addition, *Unsatisfactory tenants*, a 1955 report by the MHLG (Ministry of Housing and Local Government) along with a circular issued jointly with the MoH in 1959 increased the role of Welfare Committees in managing ‘problem families’. *Unsatisfactory tenants* advocated using intermediate or substandard accommodation to house ‘problem families’ and develop specialist rehabilitation services, citing a residential scheme in Liverpool run by PSS (Personal Service Society), FSU and LIH (Liverpool Improved Homes).¹⁰¹ The 1959 circular outlined how the cooperation of services could prevent children in homeless families being admitted to care.¹⁰² The most significant development was the creation of the Ingleby Committee in 1956, which threatened to subsume all ‘problem family’ activities under Children’s Departments:

[W]hether local authorities responsible for child care... should, *taking into account action by voluntary organisations and the responsibilities of existing statutory services*, be given new powers and duties to prevent or forestall the suffering of children through neglect in their own homes [emphasis added].¹⁰³

The Ingleby Report was not published until 1960, and its recommendations excited the interest of COs and their exponents in the Fabian Society for a ‘family welfare service’,¹⁰⁴ which in effect meant *problem* ‘family welfare service’. The rising number of referrals from Welfare and Children’s Departments to Brentwood, seen in Figures 1 and 4, provides an indication of change. The monopoly of the ‘residential’ and ‘domiciliary’ options of Brentwood and FSU were simultaneously strengthened by buoyant demand and threatened because of their inability to meet this demand meaning alternatives were sought. This resulted in their ‘options’ being appropriated and imitated by both statutory and voluntary professionals and organisations who operationalised the ‘problem family’ as the ‘golden age’ welfare state expanded.

¹⁰¹ TNA: HLG 37/39 ‘Unsatisfactory tenants’ draft report A; MHLG, *Unsatisfactory tenants* (London: HMSO, 1955); Liverpool PSS, *Rehabilitation of homeless families* (Liverpool: PSS, 1961); LRO: 364 PSS/6/1/1-6 PSS Family Rehabilitation Committee Minutes, 1953-76.

¹⁰² LMA: MCC/CL/HS/4/348 MHLG and MoH, ‘Homeless families’, Joint Circular 17/59 and 4/59, 18 Mar 1959; *ibid.*, Report of Middlesex TC to conference of Finance, Health, Welfare and Children’s Committees on ‘Rehabilitation of homeless families’, 11 Jan 1960.

¹⁰³ *Report of the committee on children and young persons* (London: HMSO, 1960), p. ii.

¹⁰⁴ E. Younghusband, ‘The case for a local authority family welfare service’, *Social Service Quarterly*, 26:3 (1952/53), pp. 106-9; S. Yudkin and [P.] M. C. Jay, ‘An all-in family service’, *Lancet*, 1:7031 (1958), p. 1179; D. V. Donnison and M. E. H. Stewart, *The child and the social services* (London: Fabian Society, 1958); D. V. Donnison et al., *The Ingleby Report* (London: Fabian Society, 1962); S. Hastings and [P.] M. C. Jay, *The family and the social services* (London: Fabian Society, 1965); on the synergy between professional services, ‘problem’ groups and the Fabian Society see: J. Clarke, ‘Social Democratic delinquents and Fabian families’, in NDC, ed., *Permissiveness and control* (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 72-95; more generally see: J. Callaghan, ‘The Fabian Society since 1945’, *Contemporary British History*, 10:2 (1996), pp. 35-50.

Transition, eclipse and decline, 1963-70

The passage of the Ingleby Report onto the statute books did not result in the ‘family welfare service’ envisaged by Fabians when some of its recommendations were incorporated into the Children and Young Persons Act, 1963. However, the Act transformed the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ and both residential and domiciliary options. Section 1 stated:

It shall be the *duty of every local authority* to make available such advice, guidance and assistance as may promote the welfare of children by diminishing the need to receive children into care... or to bring them before a juvenile court [emphasis added].¹⁰⁵

Crucially, it gave Children’s Departments permissive powers and budgets in a similar manner to MOsH, although these varied across local authorities.¹⁰⁶ An accompanying circular issued by the HO sought to assuage the fears of chief officers concerned with the ‘problem family’:

Section one of the Act will not disturb existing arrangements which are working satisfactorily nor will it confer a monopoly of preventive work upon children’s committees or their staffs.¹⁰⁷

The circular conferred such a monopoly in all but name, and its impact on the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ was twofold. For the domiciliary option, COs began recruiting trained and qualified CCOs (Child Care Officers) alongside junior FCWs (Family Case Workers) in increasing numbers, often displacing the need for FSUs or other voluntary agencies.¹⁰⁸ The impact upon the residential option by the 1963 Act was doubly felt. First, COs used their new powers to refer families to residential centres independently of MOsH.¹⁰⁹ Like POs with cases of neglect, COs were more selective in making referrals, and reasons moved from recuperation to treatment. Second, COs began using the powers to establish residential centres themselves. A report by London CSS in 1967 listed centres run by Somerset, Wiltshire and Oxfordshire COs along with one in Essex by Barnardo’s,¹¹⁰ but similar ventures grew elsewhere, including

¹⁰⁵ *Children and Young Persons Act, 1963*, chap. 37, part 1, section 1, para 1.

¹⁰⁶ M. J. Hill and P. Laing, *Money payments, social work and supplementary benefits* (Bristol: Bristol University School for Advanced Urban Studies, 1978).

¹⁰⁷ TNA: BN 29/1627 HO, ‘Section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, extension of powers of local authorities to promote welfare of children’; Circular 204/63, 17 Sept 1963.

¹⁰⁸ Starkey, *Families*, pp. 187-91.

¹⁰⁹ LA: DDX2302/box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 23 July 1964; LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/York/1/59/3 EFMT Management Minutes 8 Jan 1965; BAHS: MS 517/A/3/2/7 Crowley House Minutes 15 Jan 1965.

¹¹⁰ London CSS, *Residential centres for family rehabilitation* (London: NCSS, 1967), pp. 5-10, 19-20; E. G. Collins, ‘Family rehabilitation at Barkingside’, in D. Lambert, ed., *Annual review of the RCCA* (Harpenden: RCCA, 1965), pp. 83-91.

Warrington.¹¹¹ In both new and existing residential centres, the onus was placed on admitting and rehabilitating the whole family, including husbands and older children, for longer periods with supervision from social workers.¹¹² In many areas COs replaced MOsH or other chief officers as the ‘designated officer’ under the 1950 joint circular. In short, the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ moved firmly into the orbit of Children’s Departments from 1963, with statutory, not permissive, powers.

Although not directly connected to national developments, 1963 ushered in change at Brentwood with the departure of Miss Abraham as the long-serving Warden and the arrival of her replacement, Mrs Oag, from 1964. Miss Abraham had intended to retire in 1963, but stayed longer so the CCL could find a replacement, although she spent much of the time in hospital.¹¹³ Described as a ‘mother to mothers’ in *The Guardian*,¹¹⁴ Miss Abraham used her retirement to visit families who had stayed at Brentwood when she was Warden.¹¹⁵ Her departure, and those of long-serving staff including Mrs Lambert in 1957 and Miss Buetow in early 1963 ended the stability which had given Brentwood its peculiar character in contrast to other centres. Mrs Oag, like Miss Abraham before, was reluctant to take over, but profoundly changed the Centre and aligned its regime with wider national developments once appointed. This had three crucial components. First, the duration of admission increased. Under Miss Abraham this had grown until six to eight weeks was considered normal but Mrs Oag aligned Brentwood with the other centres who preferred mothers to be admitted for at least three months, preferably over six.¹¹⁶ This produced hesitancy from sponsors less willing or able to spend such sums, and expected comparable returns on their investment.¹¹⁷ Secondly, and linked to duration, were changes in the regime. Mrs Oag supported admitting husbands and older children to ensure the whole family was rehabilitated. The regime changed, and families graduated after a number of weeks to independent flats, with emphasis given to assessing family relationships over domesticity.¹¹⁸ These changes alienated traditional MOsH who measured success by hygiene not relationships, particularly Charles Metcalfe Brown, MOH for Manchester and the second largest sponsor of

¹¹¹ WLAS: WPS6 Annual report for Warrington CO, 1966, pp. 16-20.

¹¹² Flute and Kay, ‘Report’; TNA BN 29/1921 A. Brown to HO, 8 Jan 1969; *ibid.*, BN 62/2566 A. K. Pick, Bawdrip House, Bawdrip, Somerset. Family training centre’, 1 May 1967; MRC: MSS.378/ACCO/C/12/8/2 L. Faithfull, ‘Measures to prevent homelessness and to provide accommodation for homeless families’, Apr 1967.

¹¹³ LA: DDX2302/ 4 July and 3 Oct 1963, 9 Jan 1964.

¹¹⁴ *The Guardian*, 30 Dec 1963.

¹¹⁵ *Evening News and Chronicle*, 13 June 1964.

¹¹⁶ LULSC MS/DEP/1981/York/1/59/5 Annual report for EFMT, 1965 p.3; CF: Box 57 Annual report for MEHT, 1966, p. 3; ‘Frimhurst’, *Igloos le 4^e Monde.*, 77-9 (1973), pp. 45-63.

¹¹⁷ CF: Box 57 Brentwood: draft report of a meeting, 30 Nov 1964

¹¹⁸ LA: DDX2302/box 16/case number 3235, Mrs PAS (1964) M. E. Oag to L. J. Horton, 6 May 1964; this was a standard letter sent to all cases admitted under Miss E. D. Abraham; *Stockport County Express*, 3 June 1965.

Brentwood, who ended use of the Centre in 1964.¹¹⁹ Thirdly, and connected to duration and the whole family approach, was the use of psychiatric and professional social work. In addition to securing HO approval for mothers on probation, Mrs Oag wanted ‘tougher cases’, screening them with pre-admission visits and attending case conferences hosted by sponsors. On arrival, many families’ behaviour upset the delicate balance with the residents of Marple in accepting Brentwood.¹²⁰ Mrs Oag modernised the Brentwood regime in line with developments, but at the cost of alienating traditional supporters without gaining the new.

The closure of Brentwood in October 1970 was the culmination of problems which grew during the 1960s related to national developments and those within the Centre. Changes brought in by Mrs Oag (1964-66) ensured Brentwood kept pace with other residential centres and those run by local authorities under the 1963 Act, and were not ‘locked into ideologies and practices of the 1940s’ as Welshman contends.¹²¹ A succession of Wardens and a high turnover of staff ended the personal connections and flexibility which had been a hallmark of its success. Mr and Mrs Davies (1966-69) succeeded Mrs Oag, who in turn were replaced by Mr and Mrs Hatton (1969-70) with an Acting Warden in the interim.¹²² Regional and individual contacts ensured the survival of Brentwood into the late 1960s; and applies to staff as well as referrals. Prior to their joint appointment, Mr Davies was a FCW for Burnley, whilst Mrs Davies was the Deputy CO for Rochdale.¹²³ The continued arrival of mothers from Liverpool, Lancashire and Cheshire proved essential, although both duration and regime were a compromised form of conventional and new forms of rehabilitation. Local authorities in the North West emphasised the need for Brentwood, but their use of the Centre declined, as did the powers of the MOH, its historic supporter.¹²⁴ Approaches to COs, often appointed in place of MOsH as ‘designated officers’, noted in Figure 8, resulted in replies which emphasised the use of powers under the 1963 Act.¹²⁵ Personal connections, notably Frank Rumball, CO for Tynemouth, formerly a

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*/box 18/case number 3202, Mrs FW (1964) M. E. Oag to C. Metcalfe Brown, 19 Oct 1964; *ibid.*/box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 12 Jan 1967; Metcalfe Brown also omitted Brentwood from his annual reports, which he had included from 1944-64.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*/box 25 Brentwood Subcommittee Minutes, 9 June 1964; *ibid.*/box 21/case number 3241, Mrs SMM (1964) had the husband sent home due to a physical altercation with the Warden; *ibid.*/box 21/case number 3290, Mrs ML (1965) had both mother and father cause problems in local pubs.

¹²¹ Welshman, ‘Brentwood’, p. 528.

¹²² LA: DDX2302/box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 19 Apr 1966, 9 Jan and 1 May 1969, 16 Oct 1970.

¹²³ *Ibid.*/box 22/[no case number], Mrs JS (1966) A. Davies to M. E. Young, 8 July 1966.

¹²⁴ CF: Box 57 Brentwood Recuperative Centre Meeting, 13 July 1967; Meeting with LanCC, 18 Feb 1970.

¹²⁵ LA: DDX2302/box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 3 Oct 1969; CAS: WC/W/A/A1568/box 14/6 Notes of Mr and Mrs Webster’s visit to Brentwood, 15 Nov 1966, and correspondence from CCL, 1967-70.

member of Liverpool FSU, ensured a trickle of referrals despite new Wardens.¹²⁶ Competition with other residential centres and those run by local authorities meant there were too few cases, although the problems of Brentwood were not unique. Even appeals to the HO to circulate the availability of Brentwood to COs and PPOs yielded little response.¹²⁷ The inability to ensure admissions led to mounting financial problems towards the end of the 1960s, coupled with a decline in alternative sources of funding, resulting in the closure of Brentwood on 28 November 1970.¹²⁸ Brentwood was the largest and most expensive ‘residential option’ in terms of both running costs and size, and was the reason for it closing first. The ‘problem family’ and its operationalisation endured, however, beyond Brentwood and into the 1970s.

The ‘problem family’ after Brentwood, 1970-74

Brentwood’s closure was symptomatic of the ‘residential option’ and others soon followed. Mayflower had already closed in 1962, largely due to its emphasis on neglect and the departure of the Warden, Major Gladys Newcombe, whose personal influence was comparable to Miss Abraham, both being recognised in the Queens Honours List in 1955 and 1958 respectively.¹²⁹ West Bank, York closed in 1972, followed by Crowley House in 1973 and St Mary’s in 1974. Frimhurst continued due to its proximity to the capital and patronage from local authorities in the Home Counties, and remains open to the present day, although in a different form. Like Brentwood, the closures were due to rising costs and declining admissions, reflecting changing sources of sponsorship from MOsH to COs, and the expansion of residential centres run by local authorities. A 1966 joint circular concerning homeless families advocated their creation as a more humane form of temporary accommodation, in contrast to the use of former Poor Law Institutions since the war.¹³⁰ Local authority residential centres remained open until the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, which provided a statutory basis for people to access council housing and curtailed the exercise of discretion which operationalised the ‘problem

¹²⁶ LA: DDX2302/box 14/case number 1464, Mrs AEP (1950) Report on Mrs AEP, [n.d., Feb 1950] and *ibid.*/box 21/case number 3292, Mrs PL (1965) F. Rumball to M. E. Oag, 11 Aug 1965.

¹²⁷ TNA: BN 29/2580 J. S. Jackson to J. F. Francis, 24 Apr 1970.

¹²⁸ LA: DDX2302/box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 16 Oct 1970; CF: Box 57 Report on responses to Brentwood, 16 Aug 1970; Christmas letter from E. D. Abraham to mothers, Dec 1970; Letter of termination of employment from CCL to Warden, 30 Sept 1970.

¹²⁹ D. Muirhead, ‘History and hope’, *Deliverer*, Feb-Mar (1963), p. 118; LA: DDX2302/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 3 July 1958; see also: T. Harper, ‘Voluntary service and state honours in twentieth-century Britain’, *Historical Journal*, 58:2 (2015), pp. 641-61.

¹³⁰ TNA HLG 118/353 MoH, HO and MHLG, ‘Homeless families – temporary accommodation’, Joint Circular 20/66, 178/66 and 58/66, 31 Oct 1966; R. Bailey and J. Ruddock, *The grief report* (London: Shelter, 1972).

family'.¹³¹ Political demand for the 'residential option' remained. Keith Joseph, Conservative Secretary of State for Social Services, lamented the closure of West Bank in 1972, in his efforts to break the 'cycle of deprivation'.¹³² His Labour successor, Barbara Castle, opened an inquiry into the circumstances of a father who killed his children; the recommendations of the report included increasing access to funds to sponsor mothers to residential centres, despite Frimhurst being the only one when the report was published.¹³³ Similarly, COs and CCOs, particularly from the North West, commented on the continued need for the 'residential option' in addition to their new powers.¹³⁴ Accordingly, Welshman's contention that Brentwood closed due to an emphasis on community care, desires to keep families together, and scepticism of the 'problem family' contains some substance, but overlooks the extent to which the changes were a move from voluntary to statutory services.¹³⁵ Starkey has suggested that FSU, as the 'domiciliary option', were a victim of their own success in precipitating their decline, with statutory services appropriating their approaches;¹³⁶ the same is also evident with the 'residential option'.

The statutory appropriation of the 'residential' and 'domiciliary' options for managing the 'problem family' entailed the fissuring of discourse and its operationalisation. Developing concern around so-called 'battered babies' led to new professional forces shaping the discourse. Particularly, the resurgent NSPCC along with paediatrics and the police led to calls for other agencies to intervene in families.¹³⁷ This formed part of a reconceptualisation of the 'problem' with the family, with emphasis on 'danger' or 'risk' to the child, with detectable signs in the family for the official to discern. The parallel development of new forms of expertise eclipsed the existing operationalisation of the 'problem family'.¹³⁸ The 'problem family' label became unpopular and stigmatised in public, although kept in use by street-level bureaucrats, with the 'rediscovery of poverty' in the late 1960s.¹³⁹ Joseph's declaration that there was a 'cycle of

¹³¹ I. Loveland, 'Square pegs, round holes', *Journal of Law and Society*, 19:2 (1992), pp. 339-61; N. J. Crowson, 'Revisiting the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act', *Twentieth Century British History*, 24:3 (2013), pp. 424-47.

¹³² J. Welshman, *From transmitted deprivation to social exclusion* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012), p. 63

¹³³ DHSS, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the provision and coordination of services to the family of John George Auckland* (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 92.

¹³⁴ LA: DDX2302/box 22/[no case number], Mrs KJP (1970) R. T. Needham to A. Hatton, 1 Oct 1970.

¹³⁵ Welshman, 'Brentwood', p. 528.

¹³⁶ Starkey, *Families*, pp. 187-89.

¹³⁷ N. Parton, *The politics of child abuse* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985); J. Crane, "'The bones tell a story the child is too young or frightened to tell'", *Social History of Medicine*, 28:4 (2015), pp. 767-88.

¹³⁸ A. W. Franklin, ed., *Concerning child abuse* (London: Churchill Livingstone, 1975); E. Baher et al., *At risk* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976); P. Dale et al., *Dangerous families* (London: Tavistock, 1986).

¹³⁹ S. Todd, 'Family welfare and social work in post-war England, c. 1948-1970', *English Historical Review*, 129:537 (2014), pp. 385-87; R. Lowe, 'The rediscovery of poverty and the creation of the Child Poverty Action Group, 1962-1968', *Contemporary Record*, 9:3 (1995), pp. 602-11.

deprivation’, where behavioural problems were transmitted across the generations, provided political legitimacy to the ‘problem family’ and he drew upon its definition when launching research into the ‘cycle’.¹⁴⁰ The convergence of professional interest in the ‘battered baby’ and the ‘cycle of deprivation’ coincided with the death of Maria Colwell. The resulting inquiry used the idea of the ‘battered baby’, alongside criticisms of services responsible for the family in returning Maria to parents who exhibited ‘risk’.¹⁴¹ A series of circulars concerning the ‘battered baby’ issued by the DHSS (Department of Health and Social Security) in 1970 and 1972 suggested local cooperation, but the fallout from Maria Colwell led to another circular in 1974 and the 1975 Children Act.¹⁴² The foundation of the new structure designed to protect children ‘at risk’ was the establishment of ARCs (Area Review Committee) in local authorities, chaired by an appropriate professional.¹⁴³ In all but name ARCs were reconstituted ‘problem family’ committees formed under the 1950 circular.¹⁴⁴ By 1974, the governance structures which operationalised the ‘problem family’ had been supplanted with new interest in children ‘at risk’, whilst the ‘cycle of deprivation’ removed the discourse to one of political and national concern. The end of the ‘problem family’ then, emerged due to the fissuring of professional concern for the family, and renewed discursive interest in the ‘cycle of deprivation’.

The separation of the operationalisation and discourse concerning the ‘problem family’ was compounded with the dismantling of the administrative structures which governed them. Key to this was the publication of the Seebohm Report in 1968 which recommended unifying all personal social services – children’s, health and welfare – under the leadership of a director. The 1970 Local Authority Social Services Act fell short of the unified ‘family welfare service’ envisaged by COs and the Fabian Society and its compromised form led to dissatisfaction at the loss of specialisms.¹⁴⁵ In addition, the Maud Report of 1967 advocated the reduction of the overall number of local authority committees, and their centralisation under a Chief Executive,

¹⁴⁰ Welshman, *Transmitted deprivation*, chap. 2; see B. Jordan, *Poor parents* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974); M. Rutter and N. Madge, *Cycles of disadvantage* (London: Heinemann, 1976), chap. 1.

¹⁴¹ DHSS, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the care and supervision provided in relation to Maria Colwell* (London: HMSO, 1974); see also: I. Butler and M. Drakeford, *Social work on trial* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012); id., ‘Familial homicide and social work’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 40:5 (2010), pp. 1419-33.

¹⁴² DHSS, *The battered baby* (London: HMSO, 1970); id., *Battered babies* (London: HMSO, 1972); id., ‘Non-accidental injury to children’, Circular LASSL(74)13, CMO(74)8, 22 Apr 1974.

¹⁴³ DHSS, *Non-accidental injury to children* (London: HMSO, 1976).

¹⁴⁴ J. W. Freeman, ‘Area Review Committees’, in DHSS, *Non-accidental injury to children* (London: HMSO, 1975), pp. 27-33; DHSS, *John George Auckland*, pp. 30-31; see also C. Hallett and O. Stevenson, *Child abuse* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1980), chap. 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Report of the committee on local authority and allied personal social services* (London: HMSO, 1968); see the contributions in P. Townsend, ed., *The fifth social service* (London: Fabian Society, 1970) and id., ed., *Social services for all?* (London: Fabian Society, 1970).

with a reduction in the independence of committees and their chief officers. This undermined the local government structure which operationalised the ‘problem family’ through collective discretion.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the 1969 Redcliffe-Maud Report curtailed the independence of local authorities and recommended the creation of unitary authorities, metropolitan areas and the redrawing of boundaries. Their realisation in the 1972 Local Government Act destroyed the personal structures developed in areas which operationalised the ‘problem family’.¹⁴⁷ Perhaps crucially, given their role in articulating concerns about the ‘problem family’ and supporting the ‘residential’ and ‘domiciliary’ options, was the dissolution of the post of MOH. Following the 1973 National Health Service Reorganisations Act MOsH were replaced by Community Practitioners, with most of their former responsibilities divided between AHA (Area Health Authorities) and SSDs (Social Service Departments), leaving a hollow role lacking the status of its predecessor.¹⁴⁸ Together, these changes fundamentally restructured the forms and networks of governance which had previously operationalised the ‘problem family’ at the personal, local and national levels. Compounding these governance changes was the financial retrenchment associated with the 1973 oil shocks which ruptured the post-war settlement and ended the ‘golden age’ welfare state.¹⁴⁹ The dismantling of the settlement, the structures of governance which enforced them, new concerns with families ‘at risk’, and the eclipse of the ‘problem family’ label by the ‘cycle of deprivation’, all signified the end of the discourse and operationalisation concerned with the ‘problem family’ by 1974.

Conclusion

The history of Brentwood is inextricably intertwined with the rise and decline of the ‘problem family’ discourse in post-war Britain. However, it is also embedded in the changing structures of governance which attempted to prevent and rehabilitate the ‘problem’, and composed the operational administration of the ‘problem family’ in the welfare state. Key to this is the regime of rehabilitation offered by Brentwood, and later centres, which sought to rehabilitate ‘problem family’ mothers through a gendered routine of domesticity and instruction in housekeeping and

¹⁴⁶ *Report of the committee on management of local government, vol. five* (London: HMSO, 1967), chaps. 3, 7-8 and 12.

¹⁴⁷ DHSS, *John George Auckland*, pp. 57, 64-5 on consequences for Barnsley and the West Riding.

¹⁴⁸ J. Lewis, *What price community medicine?* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1986), chap. 3.

¹⁴⁹ M. J. Hill, *The welfare state in Britain* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1993); N. Timmins, N., *The five giants* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), pp. 281-318; R. Lowe, *The welfare state in Britain since 1945* (London: Macmillan, 2004), chap. 11.

child care duties. A similar dynamic is found in the intensive intervention services pioneered by FSU. However, to see Brentwood as ‘locked into ideologies and practices of the 1940s’, as Welshman contends, is somewhat misleading. The development of domiciliary services and community care did not mean the end of the ‘residential option’, but rather the success of the idea of Brentwood in the eyes of sponsors led to the adoption of its methods in a smaller scale by local authorities. The closure of Brentwood, and other residential centres, relates largely to COs, CWO (Chief Welfare Officers) and other chief officers developing comparable schemes themselves, as described above and in Chapter Five. Consequently, it is Brentwood, and the ‘residential option’ as a voluntary venture which is of significance, and the relationship of the Centre to the shifting conception of the purpose and responsibility of statutory services.

Within the narrative of the national discourse of the ‘problem family’ and its change over time, are the changes within Brentwood and its specificity in understanding and capturing this process. Undoubtedly, the personal role Miss Abraham played in establishing, solidifying and disseminating Brentwood as emblematic of the ‘residential option’ is key. The association of the Centre with her, and the level of personal correspondence and contacts she sustained with officials is a testament to her centrality to Brentwood, and to the ‘problem family’. Linked to this is the experience which mothers had whilst resident at the Centre. The personal benefits they took can be traced through correspondence with the Warden and other staff, and shed light on the experiences many had, and the fostering of a welcoming atmosphere amongst mothers and staff alike at Brentwood, although clearly not without gendered and class condescension. Moreover, the importance of sharing experiences with women in similar positions can be seen through its loss in the 1960s with the admissions of husbands and the displacement of a female space by a family one. This points to a tension between how officials considered, viewed and used Brentwood to rehabilitate their ‘problem families’, and how mothers experienced and accommodated to life at the Centre. Recognition of this tension can be seen in the recuperation centres study undertaken in the late 1950s written by Miss A. H. McMichael and Roy Parker, and sponsored by JRMT (Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust).¹⁵⁰ Although clearly another form of ‘friendship with a purpose’, surviving sources on life at Brentwood point to the complexity of mothers’ subjective experiences and agency. They suggest the need to consider encounters beyond untrammelled state power, as noted by Sadie Parr in relation to ‘troubled’ families.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ McMichael and Parker, *Recuperative Centres Study*.

¹⁵¹ S. Parr, ‘Explaining and understanding state intervention into the lives of ‘troubled’ families’, *Social Policy and Society*, forthcoming.

Brentwood, as the residential counterpart to the domiciliary casework of FSU, is closely wedded to the discourse and operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ in the post-war welfare state. The narrative of one is inseparable from the other. The evidence of rehabilitation of ‘problem families’ at Brentwood constitutes only one part of the history of the Centre. How families were identified and referred for treatment, and managed or provided with after-care are also crucial components in the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’. Understanding the place Brentwood has in this process, and the sources of evidence which can be used to reconstruct and reconsider them, allows Brentwood to be considered as a point of transition between the personal, local and national encounter with the ‘problem family’.

Chapter Four:

‘Problem families’: personal and professional encounters

Introduction

Part One identified the historiography, methodology and chronology for situating the encounter between the ‘problem family’ and the state. The historiography on the ‘problem family’ has concentrated on official interpretations of working-class behaviour, and locating the ‘problem’ in the family. John Macnicol sees definitions denoting ‘a poverty of lifestyle rather than a poverty of income’;¹ whilst John Welshman has explored the publications of professionals advancing their own viewpoint.² Starkey has seen class and gender norms in P/FSU (Pacifist/Family Service Units) workers as widespread in blaming the poor for their poverty.³ However, the reliance of these analyses on professional discourses overlooks the extent to which ideas permeated practice. Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly, have shown how families were labelled by officials by using minutes from Norwich’s Unsatisfactory Households Committee (1942-63), although distinguishing workers’ voices from committee members is problematic.⁴ Selina Todd sees a disjunction between workers and chief officers: ‘The casefiles of individual social workers demonstrate that... eugenicist and psychological explanations of poverty were not particularly significant’.⁵ This chapter reconsiders Todd’s contention by reconstructing how the ‘problem family’ was operationalised from the surviving case files of the Brentwood Recuperative Centre (1943-70). It follows Virginia Noble’s position that the welfare state must be understood ‘in decisions made by bureaucrats and in the interactions between those claiming benefit and those dispensing them’ rather than discourse alone.⁶ Experiences of the welfare state for both officials and families, must be viewed as a series of professional and personal encounters influenced by judgment, discretion and the pressures of working and living.

¹ J. Macnicol, ‘From “problem family” to “underclass”’, in H. Fawcett and R. Lowe, eds., *Welfare policy in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 90.

² J. Welshman, ‘In search of the “problem family”’, *Social History of Medicine*, 9:3 (1996), pp. 447-65; id., ‘The social history of social work’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 29:3 (1999), pp. 457-476.

³ P. Starkey, ‘The feckless mother’, *Women’s History Review*, 9:3 (2000), pp. 539-557.

⁴ B. Taylor and B. Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly is a dirty, lazy type’”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 18:4 (2007), pp. 429-52.

⁵ S. Todd, ‘Family welfare and social work in post-war England, c. 1948-1970’, *English Historical Review*, 129:537 (2014), p. 387.

⁶ V. A. Noble, *Inside the welfare state* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.

The personal encounter between the official and the ‘problem family’ is examined in relation to the views of competing professions. The encounter is recreated using surviving case files of families referred to Brentwood as a ‘problem family’ from the North West of England. Emphasis is placed on professional views, personal judgment and service pressures, and how these shaped attitudes towards ‘problem families’. Michael Lipsky’s ‘street-level bureaucracy’ is used to contextualise these dilemmas: in the use of discretion to administer resources; and how collectively, individual decisions formed agency culture.⁷ The basis of decision-making is inextricably linked to the purpose of each organisation within the welfare state. These are explored in three strands. First, in local authority personal social services as the main contact between officials and the ‘problem family’, particularly, public health, children’s, welfare and education departments which comprised the personal core of post-war welfare. Second, other statutory services in the local state are examined: probation, police, housing, hospitals and other health services, and branches of central government agencies. Third, voluntary organisations forming the ‘shadow state’, providing a ‘mixed economy of welfare’ are discussed. Prominent agencies, including P/FSU, the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), FWA (Family Welfare Association), PSS (Personal Service Society), MWA (Moral Welfare Association), local CSSs (Councils of Social Service) and forces groups including the British Legion and SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association), and their involvement in operationalising the ‘problem family’ are considered. The chapter closes by discussing the movement of individuals and ideas across agencies and professions, and how these formed shared service-driven ideas of ‘problem families’; what Andrew Sayer terms a ‘folk sociology’.⁸ ‘Problem families’ were, for officials, understood through experiences. This everyday essence was captured by critic Barbara Wootton,⁹ who argued that:

[A] problem family might well be defined as one whose consumption of social workers’ time greatly exceeds the average of the local community.¹⁰

After all, according to PSW (Psychiatric Social Worker) and later Reader in Social Work at the University of York Elizabeth Irvine, ‘problem families’ were ‘*easy to recognise and describe* [emphasis added]’.¹¹

⁷ M. Lipsky, *Street-level bureaucracy* (New York: Russell Sage, 1980), part 1.

⁸ A. Sayer, *The moral significance of class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chap. 8.

⁹ On Wootton see E. Jacobs, “‘An organizing female with a briefcase’”, *Women’s History Review*, 16:3 (2007), pp. 431-46; A. Oakley, *A critical woman* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); P. Thane, ‘Barbara Wootton (1897-1988)’, *Women’s History Review*, 23:5 (2014), pp. 793-98.

¹⁰ B. Wootton, *Social science and social pathology* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959), p. 55.

¹¹ E. E. Irvine, ‘Research into problem families’, *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, 2:9 (1954), p. 24.

Statutory local authority personal social services

Local authority personal social services were the principal means by which most working-class families experienced the welfare state in post-war Britain. Each of the branches – public health, children’s, welfare and education – had a statutory footing, although their quality and quantity varied between authorities.¹² The local welfare state had certain legislative requirements, but much of their power was permissive and subject to the discretion of local authorities and chief officers heading services. Moreover, each of the branches competed with one another in terms of resources, objectives and responsibility for child welfare which legitimated intervention in the ‘problem family’ as noted in Chapter Three. These conflicting professional and service requirements each produced distinct concerns with the child and the family which influenced their view of the ‘problem family’. Thus far, historiography of the ‘problem family’ has been dominated by analyses emphasising public health, particularly HVs (Health Visitors) as the ‘shock troops’ of MOsH (Medical Officer of Health). Although they were significant, they were one of several services concerned with the ‘problem family’. As shown in Tables 7 and 8, many local authorities appointed a chief officer other than the MOH as the designated ‘problem families’ officer: COs (Children’s Officers); CWOs (Chief Welfare Officers) and CEOs (Chief Education Officers) all had responsibility, along with other officials including the TC (Town Clerk). Equally, officials under the authority of these chief officers were involved with the ‘problem family: CCOs (Child Care Officers) under COs; WOs (Welfare Officers) under CWOs; and EWOs (Education Welfare Officers) under CEOs. Both definitions and operational understanding of the ‘problem family’ must be understood as part of a larger whole within the local welfare state, and as an interaction of conflicting branches within authorities. Crucially, appraising the ‘problems’ of families and their behaviour by street-level bureaucrats must be situated in terms of service purposes. Each of these are studied: HVs and public health; CCOs and child care; WOs and welfare; and EWOs and education.

HVs as the vanguard of the Public Health Department were concerned with the welfare of young children under five within the family. Health visiting sprang from ‘lady visitors’ in late Victorian philanthropy, securing professional status following the 1918 Maternity and Child Welfare Act.¹³ After 1945, post-graduate qualifications entrenched class and gender

¹² See B. Davies, *Social needs and resources in local services* (London: Michael Joseph, 1968).

¹³ J. Lewis, *The politics of motherhood* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); C. Davies, ‘The health visitor as mother’s friend’, *Social History of Medicine*, 1:1 (1988), pp. 39-59; J. Brooks and A. M. Rafferty, ‘Education and role conflict in the health visitor profession, 1918-39’, *Nursing Inquiry*, 17:2 (2010), pp. 142-50; V. Heggie, ‘Health visiting and district nursing in Victorian Manchester’, *Women’s History Review*, 20:3 (2011), pp. 403-22.

norms into workers and their role.¹⁴ In post-war Britain, HVs sat uneasily between traditional surveillance of working-class homes, and newer social work ideas, reflected in their separate consideration in government inquiries.¹⁵ The onus of the HV remained on physical and material understandings of the family, with its ‘problem’ located in the inability of a mother to perform her duties. Mrs TD from Longridge, Lancashire, was referred to Brentwood in 1958 as, after being rehoused to a council property, she was ‘unable to keep it clean and tidy without constant supervision’ which the HV saw as *causing* her husband’s desire to frequent the pub, and ill-treat his family.¹⁶ Reporting on Mrs KT from Ellesmere Port, Cheshire in 1966, the HV felt that ‘she seems quite fond of the children, but has little idea of their needs’. Specifically:

[Mrs KT] will not get up in the mornings to send her husband to work or the children to school. Neither can she manage the family budget nor keep the house and children clean. She appears to have no idea how to organise her housework, washing or shopping.¹⁷

Diet was also important. Mrs ME from Bradford, Manchester, was referred in 1961 as meals consisted of ‘a daily visit to the chip shop’, meaning ‘one dreary day follows another’ for the family. Although the GP (General Practitioner) did not diagnose malnourishment, cooked meals were deemed necessary to fulfil motherhood.¹⁸ In such cases, the domestic instruction of Brentwood discussed in Chapter Three was seen by HVs as raising mothers to a suitable standard to maintain her family. Success at Brentwood, for HVs, lay in the mother’s acceptance of an orderly domestic regime, and its proper and *willing* implementation.

Emphasis on the physical care of the household is common to public health discourse and provision. Some discrepancies arose between senior and junior staff – MOsH and HVs – around hereditarian notions of the ‘problem family’. The extent to which HV reports were manipulated by MOsH to substantiate their position is unclear, but many HVs held ill-formed ‘folk sociological’ eugenic theories. For instance, in 1957 a Burnley HV noted that Mrs JH’s

¹⁴ A. Kelsey, ‘The making of health visitors’, *International Journal for the History of Nursing*, 5:3 (2000), pp. 44-50 and 6:2 (2001), pp. 66-70; Brooks and Rafferty, ‘Education’, *Nursing Inquiry*, 17:2 (2010), pp. 142-50.

¹⁵ J. Welshman, ‘Family visitors or social workers?’, *International Journal for the History of Nursing*, 2:4 (1997), pp. 5-22; on the reports see MoH, *An inquiry into health visiting* (London: HMSO, 1956); id., *Report of the working party on social workers in the local authority health and welfare service* (London: HMSO, 1959).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*/box 7/case number 2731, Mrs TD (1958) DMO report including HV excerpts, 27 Nov 1958.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*/box 23/[no case number], Mrs KT (1966) DMO report including HV excerpts, 26 Apr 1966.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*/box 8/case number 2989, Mrs ME (1961) HV report, 24 Feb 1961; on the moral judgment of working class diet by experts, see: J. Burnett, *Plenty and want* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968); J. K. Walton, *Fish and chips and the British working class, 1870-1940* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), chap. 7; A. Levene, ‘The meanings of margarine in England’, *Contemporary British History*, 28:2 (2014), pp. 145-65.

protestations that her son was ‘untrained and untrainable’ and requiring assistance, was due to her own low intelligence, found in her family background.¹⁹ In 1964, a Southport HV referred Mrs NB to Brentwood as she ‘comes from rather an unstable family background and is herself mentally unstable’, but Mrs NB could be redeemed, as she lacked the ‘subnormal intelligence’ of other family members, ‘having gained a place in a grammar school’.²⁰ Mrs KM was referred from Morecambe, Lancashire by her HV in 1962 due to the mother’s inherited incapability:

The mother, thought to be one of a problem family herself and of poor intelligence, has no idea of housekeeping or how to manage finances. Spends money foolishly to the extent that the family suffer from “secondary poverty”, [sic] e.g. buying clothes to go to a wedding, leaving insufficient money for food and milk for the baby.

That the issue was behavioural and not material, was further commented upon:

[I have] assisted the mother with cleaning, bathing and feeding the baby, but this gives no lasting improvement. She has several times been found in bed at 11am. Has been given clothing for the children and bedding yet there is never anything clean to put on them. Dirty clothes and dishes are pushed to one side until not a clean one remains. Turns nasty and abusive when these matters are pointed out to her.²¹

HVs did not just reflect a physical image of ‘needs’. Although Mrs EM from Oswaldthistle, Lancashire, had ‘no idea whatever of baby care or home care’ according to her HV in 1959, her cooperation made her redeemable.²² In Liverpool in 1960, the HV reporting on Mrs JF noted she ‘does not keep her home clean and tidy, but she is very fond of both her children and tries to do her best for them’ but was discouraged by her husband, and a delay in admission saw a ‘great improvement’, rendering the application unnecessary.²³ Central to referrals was a view that ‘problem families’ could be prevented or rehabilitated by domestic instruction. HVs were wedded to a model of diagnosis and treatment which saw the problem and solution of the ‘problem family’ in gendered domestic incapability.

Unlike HVs, CCOs were created alongside the welfare state in 1948. Accompanying anxieties over evacuation following *Our towns*, the Monckton Report on the death of Dennis

¹⁹ LA: DDX2302/box 10/case number 2266, Mrs JH (1957) HV report, 27 Feb 1957.

²⁰ *Ibid.*/box 15/case number 3216, Mrs NB (1964) HV report, 17 Jan 1964.

²¹ *Ibid.*/box 13/case number 3126, Mrs KM (1962) HV report, 27 Nov 1962.

²² *Ibid.*/box 12/case number 2782, Mrs EM (1959), HV report, 30 Apr 1959.

²³ *Ibid.*/box 25/case number 2945, Mrs JF (1960), HV report, 18 July 1960, A. B. Semple to E. D. Abraham, 15 May 1961 containing extracts from HV report.

O'Neil published in 1945, alongside the Curtis and Clyde Committees in 1946, led to the formation of new Children's Departments for 'children deprived of a normal home life'.²⁴ CCOs were the new, trained staff of the departments, and their idealism was resolute. John Stroud, a pioneering CCO, in his semi-autobiographical novel *The shorn lamb*, felt with the first tranche of child care graduates from the LSE (London School of Economics),²⁵ that '[t]here was a tremendous crusading atmosphere about the new service'.²⁶ Kenneth Brill, CO for Devon, later wrote in his doctoral thesis that the departments were 'hailed as the panacea for childhood deprivation'.²⁷ From the start, CCOs were wedded to the 'problem family'. Despite having different ideas of children's needs, centring on maternal bonds and emotional security influenced by John Bowlby, and Donald and Clare Winnicott,²⁸ material conceptions remained. Olive Stevenson, originally a Somerset CCO who became a professor in social work reflected that CCOs 'were anything but mini-psychoanalysts, they were very practical women running about in cars with potties in cots'.²⁹ In 1968 Mrs DT from Horwich, Lancashire was referred by her FCW (Family Case Worker)³⁰ due to debts, the husband's irregular, low paid work, and the mother's 'problem' was managing on less, with no mention of her children.³¹ Similarly, Mrs EDA in Altrincham, Cheshire, was found to 'have had no training at all in the best way to feed and look after her children, and her difficulties are of the type best dealt with by assistance from a Family Service Unit' according to the CCO in 1951.³² Despite material emphasis of the 'problem', psychological theories were prominent. In 1969, the CCO referring

²⁴ B. Holman, 'Fifty years ago', *Children and Society*, 10:3 (1996), pp. 197-209.; J. Stewart, "'The most precious possession of a nation is its children'", *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 21:1 (2001), pp. 43-66; *Report of the committee on homeless children* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1946); S. M. Cretney, 'The state as a parent', *Law Quarterly Review*, 114:3 (1998), pp. 419-5; R. A. Parker, 'Getting started with the 1948 Children Act', *Adoption and Fostering*, 35:3 (2011), pp. 17-29; *Report of the care of children committee* (London: HMSO, 1946).

²⁵ E. Youngusband, *Social work in Britain, vol. two* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), chaps 1-4; N. Parry and C. Parry, 'Social work, professionalism and the state', in N. Parry et al., *Social work, welfare and the state* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), pp. 21-47; R. Dahrendorf, *LSE* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 376-89.

²⁶ J. Stroud, *The shorn lamb* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p. 8.

²⁷ K. Brill, 'The Curtis experiment', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1991, p. 10.

²⁸ J. Bowlby, *Child care and the growth of love* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972); D. W. Winnicott, *The child, the family and the outside world* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965); J. Kanter, ed., *Face to face with children* (London: Karnac, 2004); D. Riley, *War in the nursery* (London: Virago, 1983) and M. Shapira, *The war inside* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Youngusband, *Social work, vol. one*, chaps 2 and 5; and *ibid.*, *vol. two*, chaps 1-5.

²⁹ Interview between J. Welshman and O. Stevenson, 20 July 2006 cited in J. Welshman, *From transmitted deprivation to social exclusion* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012), p. 144, n. 16; on Olive Stevenson, see the foreword by Harry Ferguson in her unfinished autobiography: O. Stevenson, *Reflections on a life in social work* (Buckingham: Hinton House, 2013), pp. xi-xxix.

³⁰ Family Case Workers worked with 'problem families' across health, children's and welfare departments, requiring few qualifications and lower status, they were employed in greater numbers after the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act. See J. Packman, *The child's generation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), chap. 4.

³¹ LA: DDX2302/box 23/[no case number], Mrs DT (1968) FCW report, 6 Feb 1968.

³² *Ibid.*/box 4/case number 1745, Mrs EDA (1951) M. Brooke Willis to A. Brown, [n. d. Sept 1951].



Image 3: ‘Application for care’ by Lancashire Children’s Committee, 1961.

Source: Lancashire County Council Children’s Committee, *Our growing family* (Preston: Lancashire County Council, 1961), p. 4.

Mrs NO from Hattersley, Cheshire, felt that ‘the state of the home can be directly related to [Mrs NO’s] state of mind’.³³ In 1964 the Warrington CCO referring Mrs BY noted the HV ‘was concerned about the cleanliness of the house and children and the state of the furnishings’ whilst she reported on the family’s ‘strong bonds of affection’, perceiving the ‘problem’ as the parents, ‘handicapped by inadequate personalities’.³⁴ Contrary to Harry Hendrick’s view, mind did not replace body as the concern of experts: they coexisted even within professions.³⁵

The CCO’s conception of the ‘problem family’ was broader than that of the HV, notably the interrelationship of physical and mental welfare, and links to other members and aspects of the family. In 1970, the fifth of Mrs AL’s eight boys from Bacup, Lancashire was ‘beyond control’ and ‘deceitful and... involved in petty theft’. Yet, ‘on close investigation it was clear that the main source of worry was [Mrs AL] herself who had become increasingly anxious and intolerant of [his] behaviour’, and this was seen by the CCO as symptomatic of Mrs AL’s loss

³³ *Ibid.*/box 22/[no case number], Mrs NO (1969) CCO report, [n. d. Mar 1969].

³⁴ *Ibid.*/box 18/case number 3238, Mrs BY (1964) CCO report, 12 June 1964.

³⁵ H. Hendrick, *Child welfare* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 211-37.

of status as ‘king-pin of the home’.³⁶ Discipline was also a problem. Mrs EEW was ‘known’ to the Chorley CCO for ten years in 1969, who stated:

[T]he parents do love their children and very much want them. Unfortunately this is not nearly enough. Over the years the family have become isolated from the community and built up an anti authority attitude which is transmitted to the children.³⁷

Equally, poverty was *not* seen as the ‘problem’ by most CCOs, although often the reason for their referral. In 1966 Mrs DH was condemned for working late as a barmaid in Huyton, Merseyside by her CCO. Not only was ‘little or no benefit derived from her earnings’ but ‘her obsession with her own emotional needs leaves an absence of loving and maternal feelings’. Her disinterest in her responsibilities was the ‘problem’.³⁸ In 1962 Kenneth Harding, ArCO (Area Children’s Officer) for Wigan and Chorley in Lancashire reported:

*It is not material assistance which is needed but a casework service which can help the family to a better understanding of relationships within it [emphasis added].*³⁹

Peter Boss, Harding’s counterpart in West Cheshire, summarised the issue in 1959:

[W]hereas we seem to have solved the problems of poverty we have not yet solved the problems of mental health and matrimonial incompatibility: perhaps we never shall and shall have to resign ourselves to having to deal with ‘problem families’ for evermore.⁴⁰

CCOs then, although often overlooked in their role in the ‘problem family’, are emphatically party to it. Although less emphasis was placed on domestic arrangements, CCOs saw the cause and solution of the ‘problem family’ in maternal incapability, whether mentally or physically, and how it affected her children.

Compared with HVs and CCOs where concern over ‘problem families’ was embedded in professional practice, WOs were less powerful, but no less significant. Welfare Departments revolved around a residue of services mainly relating to the elderly and disabled after the 1948 National Assistance Act dismantled the Poor Law.⁴¹ Their interest in ‘problem families’

³⁶ LA: DDX2302/box 21/[no case number], Mrs AL (1970) CCO report, [n. d. June 1970].

³⁷ *Ibid.*/box 23/[no case number], Mrs EEW (1969) CCO report 22 Sept 1969.

³⁸ *Ibid.*/box 20/[no case number], Mrs DH (1966) K. R. Hague to H. R. Irving, 6 May 1966.

³⁹ LA: CC/CWF/acc. 7954 Annual report for Wigan and Chorley ACO, 1962, p. 3.

⁴⁰ CALS: CCC2/5/7 Annual report for Cheshire CO, 1959, p. 6.

⁴¹ See S. K. Ruck, *London government and the welfare services* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963); M. Jefferys, *An anatomy of social welfare services* (London: Michael Joseph, 1965), chap. 5; M. Brown, *An introduction to social administration in Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), pp. 115-6.

stemmed from responsibilities under Section 21(1)b of the Act to offer temporary accommodation for homeless families ‘in circumstances which could not reasonably have been foreseen’.⁴² So-called Part III accommodation comprised ‘revamped workhouse wards’ and only admitted mothers and young children, serving as a deterrent for undeserving cases.⁴³ Only by the 1950s, with substandard and intermediate properties could whole families live together under the guidance of WOs. Amidst housing shortages due to wartime damage, unfinished inter-war slum clearance, and restricted access to limited council housing,⁴⁴ judging whether the circumstances of a homeless family could have been ‘foreseen’ or intentional was a ‘problem’ for WOs. As with HVs and CCOs, WOs saw the ‘problem’ – homelessness – in terms of family, mainly maternal, failure. In 1956 Mrs IR was referred from Belmont Cubicles, Liverpool’s Part III accommodation, to Brentwood having been evicted from her old house for arrears. Mrs IR was initially ‘very apathetic about the whole situation’, but at Belmont, ‘the feeling of shame seems to have changed to an acute sensitiveness lest anyone should think she is incapable of good housekeeping’, not least the WO, warning Miss Abraham that she ‘is very sensitive about her incapacities’.⁴⁵ In 1961 Mrs MEP was referred from Hollins Cottages, Farnworth near Bolton – LanCC’s (Lancashire County Council’s) Part III accommodation – also for arrears. The family occupied intermediate accommodation in Rawtenstall, equipped with household furnishings by the WRVS (Women’s Royal Voluntary Service) and WO, but had fallen into arrears and were evicted despite both parents, and a lodging sister, working. The WO felt that ‘the mother is shiftless and prepared to let anyone do things for her’ and needed domestic instructions.⁴⁶ For WOs, homelessness was the presenting ‘problem’, but it reflected a deeper maternal failure to properly maintain a home for her children.

Beyond the ‘problem’ of family homelessness, WOs reinforced ideas of deservingness about eligibility for council housing, differences between ‘problem families’ and families with ‘problems’, and the patriarchal legitimacy of the household. Deservingness hinged on moving from Part III or substandard to normal council property. In 1967, Mrs VP was referred from intermediate accommodation in Great Harwood, Blackburn as ‘her standards of housekeeping and budgeting leave much to be desired’, the WO believing her admission to Brentwood would

⁴² *National Assistance Act 1948*, chap. 29, sect. 21, para. 1, clause b.

⁴³ A. Ravetz, *Council housing and culture* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 199.

⁴⁴ I. Loveland, *Housing homeless persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), chap. 2; P. Shapely, *The politics of housing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), chap. 3; B. Jones, ‘Slum clearance, privatization and residualization’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 21:4 (2010), pp. 510-39.

⁴⁵ LA: DDX2302/box 15/case number 2184, Mrs IR (1956) WO report, 22 Feb 1956; F. E. Peck to E. D Abraham, 2 Mar 1956.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*/box 14/case number 3039, Mrs MEP (1961) WO report, 19 Oct 1961.

satisfy the Housing Department that Mrs VP deserved a tenancy.⁴⁷ Differentiating a ‘problem family’ from one experiencing ‘problems’ also fell to WOs. In 1959 Mrs LW was referred from Belmont Cubicles as she ‘has always sought advice and listened to instructions but appears incapable of carrying out advice given’ due to ill-health and a large family.⁴⁸ Mrs SS was ‘a typical problem family’ according to her 1959 report, being referred to Brentwood from a family rehabilitation unit in Trafford Park, Manchester run by LanCC, to satisfy Lancaster Housing Department who refused her housing application.⁴⁹ Changing conceptions of the male role and ‘companionate marriage’ in the family were in circulation,⁵⁰ but ‘problem families’ were often not judged by prevailing standards. Mrs EI was referred from Belmont Cubicles in 1954 as ‘[t]he root of the trouble seems to be her inability to look after her children adequately and keep a comfortable home’, *causing* her husband to abandon his family and lose their Speke tenancy.⁵¹ The growth of unsupported mothers in Part III was perceived as a threat to the stability of the family and WOs deterred unsupported or unmarried mothers benefitting at the expense of other, deserving, groups.⁵² Mrs HP was referred from Stretford, Lancashire in 1962, as the condition of her substandard property prevented the return of one of her children from care. The WO commented that her husband ‘knocks his wife about when he is drunk’ and ‘will take no share in the responsibilities of the home or children saying he earns the money and his wife must do the rest’, yet rehabilitation centred on the mother.⁵³ Much like HVs and CCOs, WOs saw the ‘problem’ of the ‘problem family’ as maternal incapability, and policed access and routes to housing through gendered notions of deservingness.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*/box 22/[no case number], Mrs VP (1967) CCO report, 5 Mar 1967, HV report, [n. d. Mar 1967], WO report 5 June 1967.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*/box 18/case number 2728, Mrs LW (1959) HV report, 15 May 1959. Liverpool operated a joint Health and Welfare Service until 1964 and homeless duties were often carried out by specialist HVs.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 2797, Mrs SS (1959) WO report, 3 July 1959.

⁵⁰ J. Finch and P. Summerfield, ‘Social reconstruction and the emergence of companionate marriage, 1945-1959’, in D. Clark, ed., *Marriage, domestic life and social change* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 7-32; P. Summerfield, ‘Women in Britain since 1945’, in J. Obelkevich and P. Catterall, eds., *Understanding post-war British society* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 58-72; M. Williamson, ‘Gender, leisure and marriage in a working-class community, 1939-1960’, *Labour History Review*, 74:2 (2009), pp. 185-98; S. Szreter and K. Fisher, ‘Love and authority in mid-twentieth century marriages’, in L. Delap, et al., *The politics of domestic authority in Britain since 1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 132-54.

⁵¹ LA: DDX2302/box 11/case number 2062, Mrs EI (1955) F. E. Peck to E. D. Abraham, 19 Nov 1954.

⁵² TNA: MH 57/572 ‘Draft report on unmarried and unsupported mothers in Part III accommodation’, 8 June 1954; J. Greve et al., *Homelessness in London* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1971), pp. 207-14; B. Glastonbury, *Homeless near a thousand homes* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), pp. 69-72; Liverpool University Department of Sociology, *Women in shelter* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Department of Sociology, 1975).

⁵³ LA: DDX2302/box 14/case number 3089, Mrs HP (1962) HV report, 21 May 1962. Although Stretford was part of LanCC, the Borough Council, under the terms of the 1958 Local Government Act, provided its own Health and Welfare services, which it did as a combined department from 1959.

Whilst CCOs and HVs dominated operationalisation around the ‘problem family’, and WOs were peripheral but influential, EWOs were less articulate in professional discourse, but evident in practice. The reduced visibility of EWOs is, like WOs, due to lower professional status, originating in enforcement, not welfare services.⁵⁴ Unlike CCOs, HVs and WOs, EWOs did not refer families to Brentwood. The Centre’s policy of only admitting children under seven underplays EWOs as they were responsible for school-aged children. However, traces of their involvement in the records of ‘problem family’ committees, discussed in Chapter Five, attest to their significance. Referral reports from other professionals allude, or include, EWOs in seeing truancy or improperly disciplined children as symptomatic of a ‘problem family’. In 1965 the truancy of Mrs RM’s eldest child from Liverpool, along with her fifth child of eight giving her ‘cause for concern’ resulting in a referral to the CGC (Child Guidance Clinic), was proof that ‘she is not coping with her large family’ and needed domestic instruction.⁵⁵ Mrs MC had been ‘under constant supervision ever since [her eldest child] entered school’ and was ‘well known’ to agencies in Liverpool when referred in 1960, her application being supported by Labour MP Bessie Braddock who was the magistrate when Mrs MC was prosecuted for her children’s non-attendance.⁵⁶ In 1964 Mrs EF came before Bury’s ‘problem family’ committee as ‘she refuses to take responsibility for [eldest daughter’s] actions [emphasis in original]’, and those of her son, in sending them to school. He was referred to the psychiatrist with ‘school phobia’,⁵⁷ whose report read:

I think it likely that he is a boy who has not been trained to normal standards of behaviour, that he is weak willed and runs away from normal obstacles [...] The only recommendation that one can make here is to advise some form of legal sanctions to compel the boy to attend and to hold the mother responsible.⁵⁸

Although under-represented in Brentwood referrals and professional status, EWOs, like other local authority agencies, understood their ‘problem’ – truancy – as a symptom of inadequate

⁵⁴ D. Beer and F. Coombes, F., *The long walk from the dark* (Birmingham: National Association of Social Workers in Education, 1984); F. M. S. Paterson, *Out of place* (London: Falmer, 1989); N. Sheldon, ‘School attendance, 1880-1939’, unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2007.

⁵⁵ LA: DDX2302/box 21/case number 3295, Mrs RM (1965) PO report, 16 July 1965.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*/box 6/case number 2917, Mrs MC (1960) School Nurse report, 6 Apr 1960; F. E. Peck to E. D. Abraham, 29 Mar and 15 June 1960.

⁵⁷ On middle class ‘school phobia’ and working class ‘truancy’ see Paterson, *Out of place*, chap. 2; on its psychiatric ‘discovery’ in the family dynamic see J. Stewart, “‘The dangerous age of childhood’”, *Paedagogica Historica*, 47:6 (2011), pp. 785-803; see also M. J. Tyerman, *Truancy* (London: University of London Press, 1968); C. Waddington, ‘Is it worth “trying” truancy?’, unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University, 2003.

⁵⁸ BA: unlisted, Bury coordinating committee, case number 44: HV report, 7 Apr 1964; Psychiatrists’ report, 1 Sept 1966.

maternal care and a poor home conducive to the 'problem family'. It was their judgment which differentiated between patterns and instances of such behaviour.

Within the welfare functions of local authority Education Department, EWOs served as gatekeepers to other services, notably the SMS (School Medical Service) and special education. Absence from school, investigated by the EWO, incorporated the expertise of other services in identifying its cause. Complicating the matter was the dual responsibilities of the MOH as the SMO (School Medical Officer), straddling the Public Health and Education Departments.⁵⁹ At the junior level this led to overlap with HVs working as School Nurses, incorporating material views of the 'problem family'. In 1967 Mrs PA from Nantwich, Cheshire, came to the attention of the School Nurse when the latter inspected her ten- and six-year old sons and found head lice, leading to a home visit which exposed the behaviour of Mrs PA as conducive to a 'problem family'.⁶⁰ As with others, notions of intergenerational continuity were shaped by professional horizons; in education this meant ESN (Educationally Sub Normal) children.⁶¹ Mrs KF from Farnworth was referred by the School Nurse in 1969, being 'in danger of becoming a problem family because of the wife's very limited intellect and ability'. This was manifested in Mrs KF's eldest child at school, who was labelled ESN, and they hoped Brentwood would avert a similar future for her three younger children.⁶² The connectivity of services can be seen in the case of Mrs KB from Platt Bridge, near Wigan, in 1959. The referring HV's report stated that:

The headmistress... states that they are frequently absent without good cause, that the elder child often gets their breakfast, and that often a neighbour has washed and brought the children to school when she has seen that Mrs [KB] is making no attempt to do so. When [she] does take the children, the headteacher has often seen her still gossiping in the play-ground after ten o'clock, consequently by the time she gets home it is almost time to set out to fetch them for their dinner. This could be one of the reasons why little housework is done as the house is undoubtedly neglected.⁶³

⁵⁹ B. Harris, *Health of the schoolchild* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995); J. Welshman, 'Physical education and the School Medical Service in England and Wales, 1907-1939', *Social History of Medicine*, 9:1 (1996), pp. 31-48; P. A. Gardner, 'A brief history of the rise and fall of the School Medical Service in England', *Public Health*, 122:3 (2008), pp. 261-67.

⁶⁰ LA: DDX2302/box 19/[no case number], Mrs PA (1967) HV report, 22 Feb 1967.

⁶¹ See the articles on families and ESN children in the North West by Z. Stein and M. Susser in *British Journal of Preventive and Social Medicine* and *British Journal of Psychiatry*; on their links with 'problem families' see J. L. Burn, 'The home background', in NAMCW, *The child and the family background* (London: Frederick W. Kahn, 1962), pp. 10-13.

⁶² LA: DDX2302/box 20/[no case number], Mrs KF (1969) HV report, 26 Sept 1969.

⁶³ *Ibid.*/box 4/case number 2806, Mrs KB (1959) HV report, 4 July 1959.

The case of Mrs KB exemplifies how welfare services in the Education Department were a key component in the identification and intervention of the ‘problem family’, refracted through the behaviour of the children at school, and indicative of maternal incapability as the root cause.

Street-level bureaucrats in local authority personal social services typically formed the first point of contact between the state and the ‘problem family’. They were encountered and understood differently by each branch: HVs in Public Health Departments; CCOs in Children’s Departments; WOs in Welfare Departments; and EWOs in Education Departments. These differences were shaped by the circumstances in which each assessed the ‘problem family’ as reflective of maternal incapability to meet what they perceived individually, professionally and departmentally to be the needs of the child. Although material circumstances and poverty were the principal reason for the involvement of services, their professional framework meant they diagnosed problems and prescribed solutions which sought to motivate the ‘problem family’ mother to take an interest in what *they* considered to be the best interests for the welfare of the child. However, the four main local authority welfare branches, although subject to a degree of overlap, were departmentally and professionally in conflict with what they considered to be the best interests of the child. Despite this, they all agreed that the problem and solution were maternal irresponsibility and incapability.

Statutory agencies in the local welfare state

Although the four main branches of the local authority personal social services – public health, child care, welfare and education – were the main means of contact between the state and the ‘problem family’, other statutory services had interest or involvement. The purpose of agencies beyond personal social service or welfare functions buttressed the collective conception of the ‘problem family’ as operationally understood through contact, experience and interpretation of behaviour. Other facets of the local state are different to the personal social services in that, apart from POs (Probation Officers), they were not referring families to Brentwood, and must be traced through fragments found in referral documentation. Whilst this makes the voice of the other agencies and professionals harder to identify, it reflects the corporate construction of ‘problem families’ as an operational process of information-gathering, creation and sharing. This contributes to the ‘folk sociology’ across services which made ‘problem families’ so ‘easy to recognise’. Substantiating the engagement of others in knowing the ‘problem family’ also reflects their professional and departmental function, with competition over both purpose and

resources relating to chief officers' aspirations of 'empire building' in authorities. Families recognised as a 'problem' more easily and therefore earlier by services could be prevented from *becoming* 'problem families', and represented a sound investment by the local authority or central government in *their* service in comparison with their rivals, leaving a 'hard core' of 'problem families' needing rehabilitation. Particularly, the probation service, police, housing officers, national and other public health services, among others, were keen to state their claims to knowledge about the 'problem family'. Each will be examined in turn.

Outside local authority personal social services, POs were the most important statutory agency which operationalised the 'problem family'. Their origin as police court missionaries supervising offenders meant most POs were men, although women were involved in 'women's issues' as the service expanded and professionalised after 1945.⁶⁴ Their training blended many disciplines and influenced sentencing through 'social enquiry' reports which considered the character and circumstances of the offender.⁶⁵ Their purview was effectively a social worker for the courts: both juvenile and magistrates.⁶⁶ POs, like other professions, found the 'problem' in the behaviour of the family, seeing criminality and delinquency as a result of poor mothering. POs became involved in the 'problem family' in a similar manner to other services: in the best interests of the child. Typically, this meant parents convicted of child neglect or cruelty – seen as a last resort, with the number of cases declining throughout the post-war period (Table 11) – for other offences, or any member of the family convicted of an offence. In 1963 Mrs PG was convicted of child neglect, with her PO commenting that although 'no-one could possibly care for babies under such conditions', her unsettled matrimonial relationship and background meant she required domestic instruction.⁶⁷ Mrs EC was placed on probation for larceny from the gas meter at her home in Halewood, Liverpool in 1966 which the PO felt was 'symptomatic of her inability to cope' which was rooted in her 'poor housekeeping', 'limited intelligence... and her poor health' despite her husband only giving her £6 per week from his £11 wages.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ J. Rimmer, 'How social workers and probation officers in England conceived their roles and responsibilities in the 1930s and 1940s', in J. Schwieso and P. Pettit, eds., *Aspects of the history of British social work* (Reading: Reading University Faculty of Education and Community Studies, 1995), pp. 173-89; A. Worrall, 'Gender and probation in the Second World War', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 8:3 (2008), pp. 317-33; G. Mair and L. Burke, *Redemption, rehabilitation and risk management* (Cullompton: Willan, 2011), chaps. 4-6.

⁶⁵ J. Lunan, 'Probation officers, social enquiry reports and importuning in the 1960s', *Historical Journal*, 36:3 (2013), pp. 781-92.

⁶⁶ V. Bailey, *Delinquency and citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), chaps. 4- 6; S. M. Cretney, *Family law in the twentieth century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), esp. chaps 15-20; A. Logan, *Feminism and criminal justice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), chap. 2; K. Bradley, *Poverty, philanthropy and the state* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), chap. 5.

⁶⁷ LA: DDX2302/box 9/case number 3150, Mrs PG (1963) PO report, 21 Mar 1963.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*/box 19/[no case number], Mrs EC (1966) PO report, 20 July 1966.

Year	Number of Cases	Number of Cases Prosecuted
1945	41,050	1,273
1946	41,270	929
1947	37,343	643
1948	41,008	690
1949	40,246	626
1950	40,198	602
1951	39,070	647
1952	39,750	700
1953	38,460	617
1954	38,184	537
1955	37,058	438
1956	36,697	495
1957	36,033	340
1958	38,081	404
1959	38,090	362
1960	38,326	382
1961	39,873	354
1962	41,375	418
1963	41,716	408
1964	41,415	297
1965	39,223	261
1966	36,929	274
1967	32,198	161
1968	30,693	161
1969	28,391	111
1970	26,326	59
1971	24,395	43
1972	21,143	36
1973	20,273	35
1974	14,989	13

Table 11: Number of cases and prosecutions for child neglect by the NSPCC, 1945-74.

Source: NSPCC: 1/7 Annual reports for the NSPCC, 1945-74; HO, Report on the work of the Children’s Department, 1951-63.

Note: The 1969 Children and Young Persons Act effectively transferred powers of prosecution to local authorities. Local authority prosecutions occurred, but prior to 1969 statistics are unreliable and uneven.

When the middle child of Mrs JS’s family of five was placed on probation for theft in 1958, this became the precipitating moment for the ‘well known’ ‘problem family’ from Flixton, near Warrington, being referred to Brentwood. Despite finding ‘good grounds for proceedings by the NSPCC’, the PO felt ‘one last effort ought to be made to keep this family together’ by the

‘problem family’ mother improving her housekeeping skills.⁶⁹ Across several contexts, POs found the culpability for offences in the poor mothering of ‘problem families’. The difficult material circumstances of families was evident in most social enquiry reports. However, the diagnosis and treatment of the ‘problem’ as a penal-welfare solution outside prison,⁷⁰ placed emphasis on the expert knowledge and supervision of the PO to rehabilitate the mother and the family to prevent further offending.

The professional understanding of the ‘problem family’ by POs extended beyond the supervision of offenders, to upholding the family. Principally, the ‘matrimonial work’ of POs served as gatekeeping to separation orders for women wanting to legally leave their husbands.⁷¹ Throughout the post-war period, such orders served as a working-class alternative to divorce.⁷² The role of POs in relation to the ‘problem family’ was matrimonial reconciliation as much as rehabilitation of the delinquent and neglectful; and in both instances their attention focused on mothers. Mrs RM, from Salford, was ‘persuaded to return to husband’ in 1954 by her PO, and Brentwood was used both to provide her with a holiday, and inculcate domestic habits to satisfy her husband.⁷³ Similarly, Mrs JB was referred from Moss Side, Manchester in 1961 after her husband ‘threatened to obtain separation order and look after children himself’ as his wife ‘has little idea of how a mother should care for home and family’. The PO was left in no doubt that ‘[t]he problems within this family... lie namely with the mother’.⁷⁴ Although these situations typify the limited options for women wanting separation orders, pragmatism prevailed in their use. In 1945 Mrs CB was referred by her Salford PO after being ‘deserted by her husband’ with the maintenance order ‘rarely paid in full’, meaning she placed her children in the nursery at the behest of the Public Health Department in order to find work; Brentwood served as an incentive to secure cooperation.⁷⁵ In 1964 Mrs APW was referred from Litherland, Merseyside by her PO, after being approached for a separation order. The POs report stated:

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 2719, Mrs JS (1958) PO report, 6 Oct 1958; HV report, [n. d. Oct 1958].

⁷⁰ NAPO, *Cruelty to and neglect of children* (London: NAPO, 1955); on penal-welfarism see D. Garland, *The culture of control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and A. Logan, ‘Women and the provision of criminal justice advice’, *British Journal of Criminology*, 50:6 (2010), pp. 1077-93.

⁷¹ B. E. Pollard, *Social casework for the state* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962); M. Wynn, *Fatherless families* (London: Michael Joseph, 1964); O. R. McGregor, L. Blom-Cooper and C. Gibson, *Separated spouses* (London: Duckworth, 1970).

⁷² Cretney, *Family law*, chaps. 7-9 and 11.

⁷³ LA: DDX2302/box 13/case number 1995, Mrs RM (1954) HV report, 6 Apr 1954.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*/box 4/case number 3010, Mrs JB (1961) HV report, 30 Mar 1961.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*/box 5/case number 513, Mrs CB (1945) HV report, 3 July 1945.

The couple got married some 13½ years ago and almost from the start there were matrimonial difficulties which were mainly due to [Mrs APW's] inability to cope with her domestic responsibilities, and sexual disharmony. [Mrs APW] is an inadequate and apathetic woman of subnormal intelligence.⁷⁶

However, the PO pressed Mrs APW to take a summons against her husband for cruelty, to help her case for custody against his efforts to have the children taken into care.⁷⁷ POs had a wide involvement with 'problem families' through a range of responsibilities, and were involved with many members of the family. However, behavioural understandings remained dominant, with operational practice centring around action on, or with, the mother.

Although offenders were typically brought to the courts by the police, they had an ambivalent relationship to the 'problem family'. Constabularies did not directly refer cases to Brentwood, but frequent mention of 'trouble with the police' in the reports of social and welfare agencies was used to signify the poor character of families.⁷⁸ Most offences were minor and related to drunkenness, public order or petty theft; often subject to the discretionary policing common to working-class communities.⁷⁹ However, as the number of mothers referred due to child cruelty or neglect grew, and the 'battered baby' loomed in official consciousness, police involvement was noted more frequently.⁸⁰ The voice of the police is therefore largely absent in the reports of sponsors, as narratives were formed around the long-term welfare of the child in the family, rather than short-term incidents of the police; although the latter were often used to substantiate the former. The two exceptions are branches associated with the welfare of the family and the child: JLOs (Juvenile Liaison Officers) and women police. Links were made between anxieties over rising juvenile delinquency and the 'problem family', with its resolution in domestic education offered at Brentwood.⁸¹ JLOs were pioneered in Liverpool in 1951, and established later in Lancashire, and worked with parents using cautions rather than prosecutions

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*/box 23/case number 3246, Mrs APW (1964) PO report, 14 Aug 1964.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* PO report, 19 Jan 1965.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*/box 4/case number 2159, Mrs MAB (1955) HV report, 18 June 1963; *ibid.*/box 19/[no case number], Mrs AB (1966) MWO to A. Davies, 1 Sept 1966.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*/box 7/case number 2702, Mrs OD (1958); *ibid.*/box 20/[no case number], Mrs MH (1967); *ibid.*/box 23/[no case number], Mrs PCW (1970); on policing and the working-class community see S. Humphries, 'Steal to survive', *Oral History*, 9:1 (1981), pp. 24-33 and J. Davis, 'From "rookeries" to "communities"', *History Workshop Journal*, 27 (1989), pp. 66-85; for contemporary studies see D. Robins and P. Cohen, *Knuckle sandwich* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp. 107-14; J. McLure, *Spike island* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

⁸⁰ LA: DDX2302/box 22/[no case number], Mrs AES (1970); *ibid.*/box 22/[no case number], Mrs KJP (1970).

⁸¹ See J. A. Mack, *Family and community* (Edinburgh: CUKT, 1953), chap. 5; on juvenile liaison officers see L. A. Jackson and A. Bartie, *Policing youth* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), chap. 2.

to prevent delinquency and criminality.⁸² Indeed, it was the JLO's involvement with Mrs AL from Bacup in 1970, mentioned above, which precipitated contact with other agencies and led to the Brentwood referral. Equally, women police officers, mainly assigned 'women's work' – moral and child welfare – often traced concerns to the behaviour of the mother, and readily identified the 'problem family'.⁸³ The reason for Mrs W being added to Haslingden 'problem family' committee's cases in 1959 was the allegation by Mrs W's eldest daughter, diagnosed as ESN, against Mrs W's cohabitee that he 'interfered with her'. The women police found 'there was no evidence to support her statement' and 'in view of this and other circumstances involving lying and petty thieving' she was sent to a residential school.⁸⁴ The police remained at the fringes of the 'problem family', but its welfare branches – JLOs and the women police – provided an operational model which traced the presenting criminal or delinquent behaviour back to the behaviour of the mother.

Like the police, housing officials did not refer families to Brentwood, but were often instrumental in inducing the compliance of mothers, and lurked in the operational framework of the 'problem family'. Housing inspectors lacked the status of other agencies, and centred on assessing prospective tenants, collecting rent and ensuring properties were maintained.⁸⁵ Contributing to low professionalism was the place of housing within the local authority: as the responsibility of the Borough or District, not County Council. This led to large and impersonal bureaucratic structures in the County Boroughs in contrast to the involvement of councillors in smaller authorities.⁸⁶ Common to both was an assessment of the character of families, judging eligibility for housing, and the allocation of properties; assessed through the payment of rent and household cleanliness.⁸⁷ Officials framed suitability through maternal domesticity. In

⁸² On Liverpool see J. B. Mays, *Growing up in the city* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964); for Blackburn and Accrington see G. Rose and R. A. Hamilton, 'Effects of a juvenile liaison scheme', *British Journal of Criminology*, 10:1 (1970), pp. 2-20 and *Juvenile liaison 1*, dir. N. Broomfield, UK, Channel 4, 1975 [DVD, 2006].

⁸³ See L. A. Jackson, *Women police* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), chap. 5; id., 'Care or control?', *Historical Journal*, 46:3 (2003), pp. 623-48.

⁸⁴ BA: unlisted, LanCC Health Division 12, 'Problem families', Record of case conference at Haslingden, 2 Nov 1959.

⁸⁵ M. Brion, *Women in the housing service* (London: Routledge, 1995), chaps. 4-7; see contributors in R. J. Rowles, ed., *Housing management* (London: Isaac Pitman, 1959); on the moral origins of housing management see Ravetz, *Council housing*, pp. 29-30 and J. Lewis, 'Social facts, social theory and social change', in D. Englander and R. O'Day, eds., *Retrieved riches* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 49-66.

⁸⁶ D. G. Bull, 'Housing departments and clearance areas', *Social Policy and Administration*, 2:4 (1968), pp. 250-70; City University London Housing Research Group, *A study of roles in the Housing Department of the City of Manchester* (London: Housing Research Group, 1976); A. McCartney, 'Housing', *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 74:2 (1954), pp. 124-30.

⁸⁷ S. Damer and R. Madigan, 'The housing investigator', *New Society*, 29:616 (1974), pp. 226-7; S. Damer, 'Wine Alley', *Sociological Review*, 22:2 (1974), pp. 221-48.

1969 Chorley Housing Department supported the application of Mrs EEW – mentioned above – to attend Brentwood ‘[b]ecause of the condition of the house, rent arrears and the fact they are generally considered to be unsatisfactory tenants’. Chorley UDC (Urban District Council) pressed for their eviction, and rehabilitation was considered central to retaining the tenancy.⁸⁸ Similarly, in 1962, Mrs PB and her family were considered ‘dirty and unsatisfactory tenants’ by the Wallasey WO who made the referral.⁸⁹ On her return from Brentwood in 1953, Mrs FL was visited at her Widnes home by the HV, who lamented the unchanged attitude of Mrs FL:

As this is a Corporation house, I think the Housing Department should issue a stern warning to the tenant for the place to be cleaned up. Present conditions do not indicate that [Mrs FL] made much use of her training.⁹⁰

In 1967, Mrs AP was referred to Brentwood as ‘[l]ong-known to local authority departments’ with ‘perpetual arrears’ for a house in ‘in poor condition, varying degrees of uncleanliness and periodically brought to the notice of the Public Health Inspector’. Notwithstanding the efforts of the Padiham Housing Officer to move the family elsewhere, they were reluctantly rehoused in substandard property, until unfavourable press coverage and the intervention of the UDC saw them removed to a new council house.⁹¹ The judgment of housing officials demonstrates the behavioural and conditional access to the benefits of the welfare state by families, and how keeping a house as a home focused attention onto maternal competence.

Elsewhere in the operational framework of the ‘problem family’ were a range of health professions and experts. They were involved in referring families to Brentwood and generating ‘folk sociological’ knowledge on ‘problem families’, but were less directly involved than HVs. Within the local authority these included MWOs (Mental Welfare Officers)⁹² and home helps,⁹³ while elsewhere in the NHS (National Health Service) and hospital structures were almoners,⁹⁴

⁸⁸ LA: DDX2302/box 23/[no case number], Mrs EEW (1969) CCO report, 22 Sept 1969.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*/box 5/[no case numbers], Mrs PB (1962) WO report, 2 Mar 1962.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*/box 11/case number 1830, Mrs FL (1952) HV report, 6 Nov 1953.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*/box 22/[no case number], Mrs AP (1967) HV reports, 16 June and 29 Sept 1967, C. Ford to A. Davies, 21 Sept 1967, undated and untitled news clipping, ‘Council house not fit for family to live in’.

⁹² S. Rolph et al., “‘A man’s job?’”, *Oral History*, 30:1 (2002), pp. 28-41; id., “‘A pair of stout shoes and an umbrella’”, *British Journal of Social Work*, 33:2 (2003), pp. 339-59.

⁹³ J. Welshman, “‘The missing relative’”, *International Journal for the History of Nursing*, 5:1 (1999), pp. 4-11 and 5:2 (2000), pp. 48-58.

⁹⁴ Helen Jones, *Health and society in twentieth-century Britain* (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 20-8; G. C. Gosling, *Payment and philanthropy in British healthcare, 1918-1948* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

PSWs⁹⁵ and psychiatrists.⁹⁶ In 1964 the MWO referring Mrs EO from Wilmslow, Cheshire in 1964, it was her wavering as the lynchpin of the family which prompted her referral:

[Mrs EO] in a very tearful and distressed condition. She was both physically and mentally worn out. She told of three unsuccessful suicide attempts, saying that she was very depressed and fed up with the whole situation and she felt that she needed a complete break.⁹⁷

The voice of the home help from the Brentwood case files is muted, as discussed in Chapter Two, lacking the professional status of HVs and others. They were crucial in domesticating ‘problem families’. According to the HV in 1959, Mrs MES, from Askam-in-Furness:

[H]as been under observation for some considerable time and *an attempt has been made to improve their living conditions* by the supply of a special home help to assist [Mrs MES] in her housekeeping [emphasis added].⁹⁸

Almoners, effectively social workers in hospitals, also saw maternal incapability as the cause for many of the ‘problems’ they encountered. Mrs EY was referred from Liverpool in 1948:

[The] underlying trouble seems to be domestic and marital unhappiness – our visitor thinks this is due to patient’s inability to cope. She has married into good working class family who are disgusted by her apparent shiftlessness.⁹⁹

In 1961, the PSW at Crumpsall Hospital, Manchester felt that Mrs IM never recovered from a miscarriage and ‘*was unable to face her many duties*, lost a great deal of weight and became quite apathetic [emphasis added]’.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Mrs AM was referred to Prestwich Hospital, Manchester in 1949 for ‘nervous debility’, and after being given electro-convulsive therapy by her psychiatrist, was referred to Brentwood as ‘she does not feel capable of performing her domestic duties’.¹⁰¹ Across a range of health settings, a number of experts and officials were

⁹⁵ J. Stewart, “‘I thought you would want to come and see his home’”, in M. Jackson, ed., *Health and the modern home* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 111-27; V. Long, “‘Often there is a good deal to be done, but socially rather than medically’”, *Medical History*, 55:2 (2011), pp. 223-39.

⁹⁶ R. Jennings, “‘The most uninhibited party they’d ever been to’”, *Journal of British Studies*, 47:4 (2008), pp. 883-904; M. Pickersgill, ‘The endurance of uncertainty’, *Science in Context*, 27:1 (2014), pp. 143-75.

⁹⁷ LA: DDX2302/box 13/case number 3240, Mrs EO (1964) MWO report, 19 June 1964.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 2804, Mrs MES (1959) HV report, 3 July 1959.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*/box 18/case number 1196, Mrs EY (1948) Almoner report, 30 Nov 1948.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*/box 12/case number 3009, Mrs IM (1961) PSW report, 15 May 1961.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*/box 13/case number 1346, Mrs AM (1949) HV report, 16 July 1949.

positioned to recognise the ‘problem family’ and its cause in maternal incapability: whether assessed and understood through a physical, mental or psychiatric professional lens.

Outside the personal social services were a myriad of agencies across local authorities engaged with ‘problem families’, confronting them with what Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly term a ‘phalanx of officials’.¹⁰² POs, JLOs and women police, housing officials and an array of NHS professionals were all involved in identifying and intervening in ‘problem families’. The list is not exhaustive, with many agencies involved in a handful of cases. For instance, the NAB (National Assistance Board) were routinely concerned with workshy ‘problem families’, and many cases include husbands attending re-establishment centres for ‘unemployables’.¹⁰³ What is apparent, is that throughout street-level bureaucracy, ‘problem families’ were ‘easy to recognise’ due to a shared ‘folk sociology’ across common types of encounter despite different professional expertise. Accordingly, however the ‘problem’ was conceived, ‘problems’ could be traced to a poor home environment which was considered the responsibility of the mother. Poverty or deprivation were instrumental in precipitating contact between the ‘problem family’ and the state, but actions were determined by interpretations of behaviour rooted in professional understandings. Although the voices of some agencies and professions are hard to hear through the Brentwood case files, noted in Chapter Two, their traces reflect the corporate construction of the ‘problem family’ as an operational process.

Voluntary organisations

In tandem with the ‘phalanx’ of local authority and allied personal social services were those provided by voluntary organisations, comprising the ‘shadow state’. The organisations, their volunteers and caseworkers should *not* be seen as an undifferentiated arm of the state, as each organisation existed independently with their own agenda, purpose and practice. However, financial dependence on local authorities, particularly upon the permissive powers of chief officers, alongside coexisting with statutory services, limited organisational freedom.¹⁰⁴ Many families were unsure of the affiliation of the waves of social workers who traipsed through

¹⁰² Taylor and Rogaly, “Mrs Fairly”, p. 438.

¹⁰³ LA: DDX2302/box 6/case number 2994, Mrs CC (1961); *ibid.*/box 10/case number 3245, Mrs DH (1964); *ibid.*/box 23/[no case number], Mrs PS (1968); on re-establishment centres see Noble, *Welfare state*, chap 3.

¹⁰⁴ See especially P. Starkey, ‘Can the piper call the tune?’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 32:5 (2002), pp. 573-587.

their homes.¹⁰⁵ The keen sense of identity possessed by voluntary organisations became less discernible at the personal level for many families, and workers were often another ‘lady from the welfare’.¹⁰⁶ Agencies used a range of workers, and volunteer visitors, often without a clear professional identity. Training and expertise varied between individuals and organisations. Although many areas had a similar number of local branches of national voluntary societies, others, notably Liverpool and Manchester, possessed a wide range of parochial and specialist agencies. Both the quality and quantity of voluntary organisations were spatially specific, and also changed over time. However, there were several agencies key to both the ‘problem family’ and the North West. Each of the organisations brought their own disposition, resources and notion of the ‘problem’, exemplified through their street-level bureaucratic agents, in framing encounters between the ‘problem family’ and the ‘shadow state’. Each will be explored in turn: FSUs as the domiciliary complement to the ‘residential option’; the NSPCC whose significance has been underplayed in the historiography; the regionally important PSS in Liverpool and the FWA in Manchester; the MWA and its efforts to safeguard the sanctity of the family; and local CsSS as an umbrella group to other voluntary agencies, including SSAFA and the British Legion.

FSU was the most specialised and significant voluntary agency to work with ‘problem families’ in post-war Britain; other organisations even used ‘FSU family’ as a synonym for ‘problem family’.¹⁰⁷ The origins of P/FSU in alarm about the family coming from evacuation meant after the war they became a ‘high-profile, professional agency almost by accident’.¹⁰⁸ Initially ‘amateur social workers’, their burgeoning reputation fed into professionalisation, and attracted both conservative and progressive recruits.¹⁰⁹ P/FSU had a presence in the North West, especially in the Blitzed cities of Manchester and Liverpool.¹¹⁰ After the war there was an emphatic demand for FSUs from nearby towns; with Oldham and Rochdale gaining Units

¹⁰⁵ This is conveyed most clearly in the letters from mothers to the Warden. See: LA: DDX2302/box 22/[no case number], Mrs ER (1967) Mrs ER to A. Davies [n. d. June 1968]; *ibid.*/box 12/case number 1142, Mrs FM (1948), Mrs FM to E. D. Abraham, 26 Jan 1949; *ibid.*/box 15/case number 1968, Mrs VR (1953) Mrs VR to J. J. Clarke, 14 Jan 1956; see also M. Lassell, (pseud. J. Longford), *Wellington Road* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), pp. 128-30, 146.

¹⁰⁶ A. Thompson, *Are you the lady from the welfare?* (Brighton: Penn Press, 2009), pp. ii-iii, 177-78.

¹⁰⁷ CF: Box 57/case 1009, Mrs ML (1948) MRA report, 13 Mar 1948; *ibid.*/case number 1070, Mrs EN (1948), MRA report [n. d. Aug 1948]; LA: DDX2302/box 13/case number 2201, Mrs LM (1956) HV report, 21 Apr 1956.

¹⁰⁸ P. Starkey, ‘Friendship with a purpose’, in R. Morris and H. Russell, eds., *Rooted in the city* (Liverpool: LCVS, 2010), p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ P. Starkey *Families and social workers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 5; P. Goldring, *Friend of the family* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1973), pp. 36-9.

¹¹⁰ P. Starkey, *“I will not fight”* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992); A. Cohen, *The revolution in post-war family casework* (Lancaster: Lancaster University Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 1998).

in 1958 and 1971, whilst the ‘problem estates’ of Kirkby and Speke, along with Stockport, each had workers operating from Units in Liverpool and Manchester.¹¹¹ Although they had links with Brentwood, FSU were not a major source of referrals. However, their role as the ‘domiciliary option’, complementing and not competing with the ‘residential’, ensured their involvement in many referrals. As with their statutory counterparts, FSU framed the ‘problem’ around the behaviour of the mother, often in material terms. The PSU report on Mrs LT from Manchester in 1946 noted her ‘domestic cleanliness’ was poor: ‘house, children, mother, clothing – all dirty, much excrement; no laundering’ and despite the Unit having ‘given much manual work, propaganda; no result’ was forthcoming.¹¹² The PSU report on Mrs MW from Manchester in 1946 was equally pessimistic, with the worker feeling that ‘[t]here seems so little one can do’. His report offered hopes of rehabilitation:

In spite of poor health [Mrs MW] is clean in the home and industrious. She washes all clothes regularly. Takes care of clothes given and is appreciative of everything done for her. She cooks and bakes. *Her* main concern is how to make the best use of her persistently low income [emphasis added].

The worker went on to note that her ‘budget seems always to be just a few shillings more than her income’ and with no prospect of a regular wage, needed to manage on less.¹¹³ As pioneers with ‘problem families’, P/FSU held firm beliefs that their ‘friendship with a purpose’ adjusted mothers to their predicament, provided them with domestic skills to manage, and ameliorated their behaviour. This ‘success’ was the basis of their influence on post-war social work.

Despite the ‘success’ of FSU, their ‘friendship with a purpose’ was far from systematic, varied across Units and workers, incorporating a broad range of sociological and psychological currents. In 1956 Mrs EK was referred from Liverpool by her FSU worker for material reasons:

We are afraid that conditions within the home and the standard of child care will deteriorate so far as to make prosecution necessary, unless some help is given in the very near future.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ LUSCA: D495(LD)M11/1 Annual report for Liverpool FSU, 1957, p. 2; *ibid*: D495(MA)M8/16 Annual report for Manchester and Salford FSU, 1958, p. 6; L. Cowan, *Reflections on forty years of service, 1947-87* (Manchester: Manchester and Salford FSU, 1987), pp. 7-8.

¹¹² CF: Box 57/case number 625, Mrs LT (1946) PSU report, 26 Feb 1946.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*/[no case number], Mrs MW (1946) PSU report, 6 Mar 1946.

¹¹⁴ LA: DDX2302/box 11/case number 2202, Mrs EK (1956) P. Brown to E. D. Abraham, 20 Apr 1956.

Although poverty was common to most families encountered by FSU, diagnoses remained behavioural. The 1955 FSU report on Mrs EW from Oldham agreed with the HV that she was a ‘problem family’, noting intergenerational continuity as ‘[Mrs EW] is the eldest daughter of a problem family’. However, it was affluence, not poverty, which prompted her referral. Mrs EW’s husband felt ‘he was “spoilt” by big wages during the war and would not accept an average wage again’ and the family’s problems were due to Mrs EW’s acquisition of consumer goods on credit.¹¹⁵ The FSU worker visiting Mrs C on Liverpool’s Kirkby Estate in 1967 saw the family’s problems stemming ‘from their inability to increase the family, in an area where large families seem to be the accepted cultural norm’. Equally, they felt it was Mr C’s ‘unstable personality’ and his ‘desire to be popular’ which led to his involvement in industrial action.¹¹⁶ Agreement across professional boundaries was not guaranteed. The FSU worker supervising Mrs VL from Oldham in 1961 queried her Brentwood referral after the HV reported her as a ‘Typical Problem Family [sic]’. The FSU worker saw family relationships as more important:

I would not have recommended her, because frankly she is one of my best families. She knows how to cook and care for her children but I feel that her mother was and still is such a dominating personality in [Mrs VL’s] life that she, poor woman just hasn’t got the confidence in herself.¹¹⁷

Despite a common ‘friendship with a purpose’, FSU workers embraced a spectrum of political, professional and personal views on ‘problem families’. Like their statutory counterparts, FSU hinged on seeing the problems of, or with, the family as the responsibility of the mother.

Beyond the specialist FSU were other voluntary organisations concerned with ‘problem families’, notably the NSPCC. They were considered an anachronism in the post-war climate promoting the family, with a ‘punitive and authoritarian attitudes towards inadequate parents’ by threats or recourse to prosecution.¹¹⁸ The NSPCC tried to sculpt a more modern image, but historical practices endured.¹¹⁹ Their involvement with ‘problem families’ has been absent from the historiography, including John Macnicol’s claim that ‘child-neglecting families were generally not seen as the same as problem families’.¹²⁰ The ‘problem family’ and concerns

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*/box 17/case number 2076, Mrs EW (1955) FSU report, 6 Apr 1955.

¹¹⁶ D495(LI)C1/5 FSU report on C family, 27 Oct 1967.

¹¹⁷ LA: DDX2302/box 12/case number 3016, Mrs VL (1961) B. Trembatt to E. D. Abraham, 13 Sept 1961.

¹¹⁸ C. A. Sherrington, ‘The NSPCC in transition 1884-1983’, unpublished PhD thesis, LSE, 1984, p. 371.

¹¹⁹ See E. Chesser, *Cruelty to children* (London: Gollancz, 1951); L. G. Housden, *The prevention of cruelty to children* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955); A. Allen and A. Morton, *This is your child* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961).

¹²⁰ Macnicol, “‘Problem family’”, p. 80.

over child neglect were inextricable. Although the NSPCC referred few families, their frequent involvement can be traced in referral reports. Their approach was bifurcated: Inspectors were male and pursued allegations of neglect; Women Visitors were female, and were established specifically to supervise ‘problem families’, aping FSU. Indeed, in Bolton and Cumberland, Women Visitors were used *because* local authorities failed to secure FSUs,¹²¹ whereas they coexisted in Manchester and Liverpool.¹²² These gender and status differences shaped the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ by Inspectors and Women Visitors. Mrs KW from Helmshore, Lancashire, was referred to Brentwood at the behest of the NSPCC Inspector in 1958. Finding intolerable living conditions for the children: ‘[t]he mother was severely warned and in excuse stated that she had never been trained in the arts of housewifery’. After the birth of her fifth child in 1959 Mrs KW, subsequently refused to attend.¹²³ Mrs RZ from the Langley Estate in Middleton was referred to Brentwood in 1956 after ‘[a]ttempts [were] made by the [HV], and the Inspector for the NSPCC to induce [Mrs RZ] to take more interest in herself and her home, but the response is very short lived’.¹²⁴ According to the NSPCC Inspector who referred Mrs JS from Macclesfield for a second visit in 1962: ‘[she] is a totally inadequate person, and has very little idea how to budget, or care for the baby. *It is in the child’s interest that the mother should receive some supervision or training* [emphasis added]’.¹²⁵ Overall, NSPCC Inspectors possessed an inflexible, dated and a material conception of neglect into the 1960s, with change only accompanying professionalisation.¹²⁶ To male NSPCC Inspectors, the ‘problem family’ provided the locus of continuing neglect, and reflected gendered failures.

Alongside the anachronistic attitudes of the male NSPCC Inspectors were the Women Visitors. Their gendered status *as women* was considered essential in supervising ‘problem families’ through friendly instruction rather than prosecution.¹²⁷ In 1964 Mrs AR was referred by her Liverpool HV, anxious about escalating domestic violence in the home; particularly Mrs AR’s husband who considered his wife as ‘merely something to look after his home and

¹²¹ CA: C/C/3/2/72 G. N. C. Swift to HO, J. W. Freeman to M. Silva Jones, 16 Feb 1954; NSPCC: 360/30/55 Annual report for Bolton and District NSPCC, 1954, p. 2; *ibid.*/360/53/57 Annual report for Carlisle, Penrith and North Cumberland NSPCC, 1952, p. 5; BALS: B/362.7 BOL Annual report of the CO for Bolton, 1954, p. 15.

¹²² NSPCC: 360/180/2 Annual report for Liverpool and District NSPCC, 1953, p. 2; *ibid.*/360/189/51 Annual report for Manchester and Salford NSPCC, 1948, p.4; LUSCA: D495(LI)R2/3 Notes on CT family, 15 June 1955.

¹²³ LA: DDX2302/box 25/case number 2734, Mrs KW (1958) NSPCC report, 10 Nov 1958.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*/box 18/case number 2176, Mrs RZ (1956) HV report, 30 Jan 1956.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 3102, Mrs JS (1962) NSPCC report, 17 July 1962.

¹²⁶ NSPCC: 29/2/12 NSPCC Inspector’s Directory, 1971; *ibid.*/1/10 Annual report of the NSPCC, 1969, pp. 12-3; CIJW: XH41/VII.2 GB/2 NSPCC Revised Syllabus, Course 7, 1 Jan 1968; Sherrington, ‘NSPCC’, pp. 464-76.

¹²⁷ NSPCC: 1/8 Annual report of the NSPCC, 1949, pp. 9-10; *ibid.* Annual report of the NSPCC, 1951, p. 10.

children and provide his “nights” ... If she does not come up to standard he loses his temper’. Prior to Mrs AR’s referral, the Women Visitor who supervised her reported:

During the time I have been visiting I have tried to teach [Mrs AR] to run her home and work a budget, this has not proved enough, and the disputes are becoming more frequent. I feel that if we are to hold this family together, something must be done immediately to give this mother some more constructive training.¹²⁸

In nearby Bootle in 1964, Mrs ET was referred by her HV who saw Brentwood as the solution:

The NSPCC Woman Visitor has had the family under supervision for the past few months and although there has been some improvement during the course of supervision, the mother is still far from capable of discharging the duties of a mother and a housewife.¹²⁹

In neighbouring Crosby, Mrs PAW was referred in 1967 as the Woman Visitor supervising her felt that she ‘does not improve much in household management’ and needed intensive training to keep her children.¹³⁰ Similar reasons were voiced about Mrs MB from Manchester in 1962, where the limits of the Women Visitor to remedy the ‘poor home’ were reached, and she needed Brentwood.¹³¹ If the NSPCC felt a case did not warrant prosecution, but required supervision, they referred them elsewhere. This process was how Mrs IT and Mrs LM, both from Toxteth in Liverpool, were referred to FSU and the Children’s Department in 1959 and 1968.¹³² Unlike male Inspectors, Women Visitors could not pursue prosecutions, and if their supervision of ‘problem families’ failed, they were referred to their male counterparts: as happened to Mrs ES from Liverpool in 1958.¹³³ Concern over the ‘problem family’, and its explanation as maternal failure, directly informed the operational strategies of the NSPCC in the post-war through their use of Women Visitors alongside male Inspectors.

Alongside FSU and the NSPCC, voluntary family casework organisations embraced the ‘problem family’ as a continuation and expansion of pre-war practice. Although unpaid visiting of ‘lady bountiful’ continued, the post-war period ushered in the professionalisation of

¹²⁸ LA: DDX2302/box 15/case number 3222, Mrs AR (1964) NSPCC report, 21 Jan 1964.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*/box 17/case number 3252, Mrs ET (1964) CCO report, 30 July 1964.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*/box 23/[no case number], Mrs PAW (1967) NSPCC report, 6 Sept 1967.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*/box 5/case number 3112, Mrs MB (1962) HV report [n. d. Sept 1962].

¹³² *Ibid.*/box 17/case number 2784, Mrs IT (1959) HV report, 6 Feb 1959; *ibid.*/box 21/[no case number], Mrs LM (1968) CCO report, 19 Sept 1968.

¹³³ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 2647, Mrs ES (1958) HV report, 23 Jan 1958; NSPCC: 29/3/1 NSPCC Woman Visitor’s Directory, 1948, pp. 25, 29-30.

caseworkers employed by agencies, who increasingly possessed social work qualifications.¹³⁴ In the North West textile towns, local branches of the FWA (Family Welfare Association) were prominent in Manchester, Salford and elsewhere, whilst PSS (Personal Service Society) were dominant in Liverpool. PSS and local FWAs referred mothers to Brentwood, being involved in ‘problem family’ casework. Although they claimed expertise about ‘problem families’ due to acquired knowledge over time,¹³⁵ their diagnosis and solution rested on rectifying maternal incapability. In 1944 Mrs EB was referred by PSS from Liverpool as she was ‘finding life very difficult at present’. Elaborating on Mrs’s EB’s ‘difficulties’, the PSS worker noted that ‘these people are usually grasping’ and that ‘their constant grip with poverty makes them untruthful’, concluding: ‘[i]t is a very low class home, but I felt sorry for the children’.¹³⁶ In 1943 Mrs LB was referred by Blackburn COS (Charity Organisation Society), being billeted following the destruction of her Liverpool home in the 1941 Blitz, as her ‘unruly’ children were considered troublesome to fellow billeted families.¹³⁷ In Manchester the FWA employed a caseworker solely to deal with families at risk of eviction on the Wythenshawe Estate, and used Brentwood to rehabilitate suitable families.¹³⁸ In 1964 Mrs FAS was referred, struggling to pay the rent on her Wythenshawe home after separating from her husband, and was referred to improve her financial self-discipline, as well as her ‘uncontrolled’ children.¹³⁹ Using the FWA as a source of knowledge about ‘problem families’ which could be drawn upon by other services was also common. Before deciding on the fate of the M family in 1956, the officials convening Bury’s ‘problem family’ committee – discussed in Chapters Two and Five –sought their advice due to their whole view of the family, rather than the array of other agencies interested in them.¹⁴⁰ The prominence of the family in the post-war imagination ensured that voluntary casework agencies flourished despite an uncertain status, along with their behavioural understandings of maternalism at the heart of the ‘problem family’.

¹³⁴ Youngusband, *Social work, vol. one*, pp. 260-1, 272-9; on ‘lady bountiful’ see J. Lewis, *The voluntary sector, the state and social work in Britain* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995), chap. 2 and E. Ross, ‘Good and bad mothers’, in K. D. McCarthy, ed., *Lady bountiful revisited* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 174-98.

¹³⁵ BA: GCS/2/3 Annual report of Bury FWA, 1951, p. 3; GMCRO: GB.127.M294/1/7/3/32 Annual report of Manchester and Salford FWA, 1948, p. 5; LA: DDX1772/4 Annual report of Blackburn FWA, 1949, p. 2; LRO: 364 PSS/3/1/23 Annual report of PSS, 1947, pp. 3-8.

¹³⁶ LA: DDX2302/box 5/case number 310, Mrs EB (1944) PSS report, 28 Mar 1944.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*/box 5/[no case number], Mrs LB (1943) COS report, 12 Aug 1943.

¹³⁸ GMCRO: GB.127.M184 M. Brown, ‘Problems of homelessness, 1954-1963’, pp. 8-9; Manchester and Salford CSS, *Setting up house* (London: NCSS, 1960), pp. 40-4; *Manchester Evening News*, 1 Oct 1965.

¹³⁹ LA: DDX2302/box 23/case number 3228, Mrs FAS (1964) HV report, 20 Mar 1964; F. Maude to M. E. Oag, 26 May 1964.

¹⁴⁰ BA: unlisted, Bury coordinating committee, case number 11: HV report, 9 Oct 1956.

Workers of the MWA (Moral Welfare Association) and other denominational societies also policed the boundaries of family acceptability, particularly through the ‘problem family’. Jane Lewis and John Welshman have noted that ‘[t]here is some evidence of an elision between the “problem family” and the unmarried mother’, concerning intergenerational illegitimacy and maternal incapability.¹⁴¹ This elision was evident to contemporaries. Burnley and Oldham MWAs noted their continuing work with ‘problem families’ in reports, whilst Penelope Hall found in her inquiry into MWA caseworkers that ‘although numbers were small’, ‘problem families’ were common to caseloads.¹⁴² This can be seen through Brentwood referrals, with workers sending few mothers, but often supporting applications. Lax moral behaviour by either mother or children was seen as symptomatic of maternal incompetence found in the ‘problem family’. In 1950 Mrs DB was referred by Southport MWA and Liverpool Catholic Protection Society, as ‘the poor little woman needs a great deal of “pulling up”’ to prevent her separating from her husband, who, according to the worker, ‘is not as bad as painted by [Mrs DB], and I think he has a lot to put up with!’¹⁴³ Mrs MM was referred from Moss Side, Manchester by her HV in 1961, noting: ‘Home conditions are rapidly deteriorating. Mother has ? been taking drugs ? leading an immoral life and is on probation [sic]’. The Salford Catholic Protection Society worker supervising Mrs MM was concerned about the consequences for family life:

During the recent deterioration the children were not exactly neglected but their life was becoming progressively disordered. During the mother’s long absence in the early night hours the children have often been out of bed and not getting their sleep and only a casual eye has been kept on them by another lodger.¹⁴⁴

For Mrs DS, originally from Bury but referred from a Mother and Baby Home in Wilpshire, Blackburn in 1958, the MWA worker opened her report by stating ‘[t]here is a long-standing history of social “failure” here’. The worker drew on Mrs DS’s background as proof of her unfitness as a mother, and was worried over the future of her children, who had been repeatedly admitted to care.¹⁴⁵ Whilst not specifically concerned with ‘problem families’, MWA workers

¹⁴¹ J. Lewis and J. Welshman, ‘The issue of never-married motherhood in Britain, 1920-70’, *Social History of Medicine*, 10:3 (1997), p. 410.

¹⁴² LA: DDX1101/26/1 Burnley and District Family Social Work Association Minutes, 12 Jan and 7 Mar 1967; OLSA: M4/5 Annual report of Oldham MWA, 1963, p. 5; M. P. Hall and I. V. Howes, *The Church in social work* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 187.

¹⁴³ LA: DDX2302/box 5/case number 1451, Mrs DB (1950) MWA report, 9 Feb 1950.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*/box 13/case number 3028, Mrs MM (1961) HV report, 23 Aug 1961; MWA report, 26 Aug 1961.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 2726, Mrs DS (1958) MWA report, 24 No 1958.

readily drew upon, and fed into, behavioural understandings of the ‘problem’ through concerns over illegitimacy as reflecting maternal incapability.

Part of the definition of the ‘problem family’ was the sheer number of problems they presented to many agencies, and this meant that local CSSs were influential in centralising and coordinating work with ‘problem families’. Although marginalised from the narrative of the NCSS (National Council of Social Service), local CSSs were keen to celebrate their pioneering work with ‘problem families’.¹⁴⁶ CSSs were not casework agencies, and served as an umbrella organisation to voluntary organisations, notably in the post-war context, SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families’ Association) and the British Legion. Local CSSs were at the forefront of ‘problem family’ committees across the North West, pursuing social work schemes including employing intensive caseworkers modelled on FSU, managing local rehabilitation units, and referring mothers to Brentwood.¹⁴⁷ The spectrum of voluntary visitors, caseworkers and officials employed by CSS varied widely, but they held a shared behavioural conception of ‘problems’ which informed the response of the worker and the agency. In 1947 Mrs AW was referred from a disused military camp near Northwich, Cheshire, as ‘the victim of very distressing domestic circumstances’ due to the desertion of her husband after demobilisation. The worker from Northwich and District CSS saw the domestic situation as temporary, feeling confident that ‘a period at [Brentwood] will not only restore her health but will give her a new outlook on life and an incentive to find suitable employment which she obviously needs’.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, in 1945 Mrs MH from Ashton-under-Lyne, and in 1943 Mrs HH from Stockport were both ‘very deserving’ according to their referrals from local CSSs on behalf of SSAFA, showing resilience in the face of material adversity.¹⁴⁹ Conversely, Mrs MD was referred after her eldest son’s appearance before the juvenile court in 1950, when ‘[i]t was realised by the Magistrates that the Mother needed help and guidance’, which Stockport CSS coordinated.¹⁵⁰ Mrs EMH from Burnley was referred by her local CSS worker in 1949 as she ‘got into a very

¹⁴⁶ M. Brasnett, *Voluntary social action* (London: NCSS, 1969); H. R. Poole, *Liverpool Council of Social Service, 1909-59* (Liverpool: Liverpool CSS, 1960), pp. 86-7; E. E. White, *A history of the Manchester and Salford Council of Social Service, 1919-1969* (Manchester: Manchester and Salford CSS, 1969), pp. 30-4, 46-7; St Helens Council of Social Service, *42 years of social service in St Helens, 1932-74* (St Helens: St Helens CSS, 1974), p. 5.

¹⁴⁷ BLSL: LQ6/BUR Annual report for Burnley CSS, 1954, p. 9; OLSA: D/COSS/2/2/6 Annual report for Oldham CSS, 1951, pp. 9-10; StoLHL: S/S/32 Annual report for Stockport CSS, 1954, pp. 10-11; SalLHS: Annual report for Manchester and Salford CSS, 1949, p. 10; LRO: H361/COU Annual report for Liverpool CSS, 1946, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴⁸ CF: Box 57/case number 866, Mrs AW (1947) CSS report, 7 July 1947.

¹⁴⁹ LA: DDX2302/box 10/case number 466, Mrs MH (1945) SSAFA report, 26 Mar 1945; *ibid.*/box 10/case number 305, Mrs HH (1943) CSS report, 28 Aug 1943.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*/box 7/case number 1465, Mrs MD (1950) CSS report, 9 Mar 1950.

depressed state of health (mental and physical) owing to the strain of child bearing and rearing' and required both rest *and* instruction to prevent a relapse in the future.¹⁵¹ Although all cases showed material poverty, narratives of deservingness and undeservingness alike were framed around notions of family performance centred on maternal capability.

Alongside local authority personal social services and a host of other professionals and agencies, voluntary agencies propped up the 'shadow state' which operationalised the 'problem family'. FSU's intensive casework is the most familiar and clearly aligned with the 'problem family', but like statutory services, voluntary organisations also competed over knowledge and work with 'problem families'. Competition across voluntary services was fierce due to the emerging welfare state, and the accompanying uncertainty for established voluntary societies. Most notably the NSPCC established Women Visitors directly to supervise 'problem families' as part of a range of modernising practices; but other agencies including FWA and PSS, MWA and local CSSs – often responsible for administering duties on behalf of SSAFA and the British Legion – all claimed expertise and experience in identifying and rehabilitating the 'problem family'. The wide standard of training and approaches adopted by agencies ensured a varied engagement with casework methods, and sociological and psychological theories, although these also developed throughout the post-war period, as discussed above. Ultimately, each of the organisations' claims hinged on a behavioural diagnosis which saw improper or incapable mothering as the cause of other 'problems', and argued that their professional or organisational position was the best placed to act.

Conclusion

Across the statutory and voluntary social services throughout the post-war period, behavioural interpretations of poverty were dominant. Although there is truth in Todd's *specific* contention that 'eugenicist and psychological explanations of poverty were not particularly significant', shared professional dispositions and broad welfare functions ensured that encounters between officials and families were shaped around behaviour. This common 'folk sociology', apparent across services was neither explicit nor ideological, but formed by officials making sense of their everyday routines and decision-making processes. Efforts to theorise this 'folk sociology' into more formal discourse about the 'problem family' by local authority chief officers and

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*/box 10/case number 1207, Mrs EMH (1949) CSS report, 5 Jan 1949.

keen experts – essential to the historiography and explored further in Chapter Six – were often haphazard and used to legitimise professional positions. Here Todd is right to question the extent to which attitudes of street-level bureaucrats and chief officers were indistinguishable. However, the Brentwood case files show that despite evidence of some disjunction between street-level and chief officers across statutory and voluntary services and professional settings, individual workers embraced behavioural understandings which perceived the ‘problem’ as the family itself. Although shaped by the workplace structures of social and welfare agencies in using the term, street-level bureaucrats had few doubts or hesitations in labelling a family as a ‘problem family’ to legitimate a particular course of action. The term ‘problem family’ served as a convenient label and an all-encompassing theory which was hard to define, but was *readily* and *willingly* understood and applied by street-level bureaucrats to families in poverty in the post-war welfare state. Moreover, because ‘problem family’ largely meant ‘problem mother’, maternal behaviour formed the core of the ‘problem’ and shaped its ‘solution’.

Much like considering voluntary organisations as forming part of the ‘shadow state’, organisational and professional differences should *not* be considered as static, unchanging and undifferentiated. This chapter has explored professions and services individually in order to demonstrate widespread involvement beyond HVs and public health services which form the core of the historiography. However, throughout the post-war period, individuals moved across professional and organisational boundaries, carrying their own ‘folk sociological’ theory of the ‘problem family’ with them. Although undoubtedly holding sympathetic convictions and ideas about helping the poor – seen with social workers’ close involvement in CPAG (Child Poverty Action Group) and other campaigning and political activities¹⁵² – the behavioural diagnosis of the ‘problem’ in the family meant it was only the expert, equipped with their ‘folk sociology’ who could rectify the situation. Moreover, many obtained further qualifications or training – often held by workers familiar with ‘problems families’ themselves – which led them to harden, not challenge their views about ‘problem families’. Here, tracing the lives of individual social workers across cases exposes how such ideas were generated and circulated. In 1950, Miss Windmuller began as a specialist ‘problem family’ HV in Salford Public Health Department,

¹⁵² P. Thane and Ruth Davidson, *The Child Poverty Action Group, 1965 to 2015* (London: CPAG, 2016), pp. 6-10; M. McCarthy, *Campaigning for the poor* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), chap. 2; J. Tunstill, ‘CPAG and social work’, *Bulletin of the Social Work History Network*, 3:1 (2016), pp. 5-11; R. Bailey and M. Brake, eds., *Radical social work* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975); J. Clarke, ‘Critical sociology and radical social work’, in Parry, *Social work*, pp. 125-39; M. Simpkin, *Trapped within welfare* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979); C. Jones, *State social work and the working class* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983); J. Weinstein, ‘Case Con and radical social work in the 1970s’, in M. Lavalette, ed., *Radical social work today* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2011), pp. 11-26.

leaving in 1956 to undertake a social science course at LSE, returning to Salford to work for the Catholic Protection Society, predominantly with ‘problem families’.¹⁵³ In Liverpool, Miss Pope began as a caseworker for PSS in the 1940s, moving to MRA and, after training at the University of Liverpool, worked as a PO in neighbouring Cheshire.¹⁵⁴ Frank Rumball began as a PSU worker in Liverpool during the war, before becoming a Children’s Visitor in Dudley, pioneering local authority family casework with ‘problem families’ under Barbara Kahan (then Langridge) before serving as CO for Tynemouth County Borough.¹⁵⁵ As will be considered in the next chapter, the career routes of post-war social workers, in contrast to HVs within Public Health Departments, were significant in displacing MOsH as the chief officer most interested in, and influential in shaping, the ‘problem family’. Indeed, Mrs Mary E Oag, prior to being Warden of Brentwood in 1964, served as a caseworker for Sheffield CSS, trained as a PO, worked as a PSW and, after leaving as Warden in 1966, became Senior Family Case Worker for Glamorgan County Council.¹⁵⁶ Although using the Brentwood case files influences how individuals are traced across professional and organisational boundaries, the following chapter explores how post-war social service structures shaped solutions around child welfare and maternal capability. Across professions and roles, the behaviour of the mother remained the cause, and domesticity and rehabilitation the solution to the ‘problem family’.

The personal encounter, across a range of statutory and voluntary officials and services, shows how understanding and knowledge of the ‘problem family’ is wedded to professional and departmental viewpoints. However, despite widespread conflict and competition amongst viewpoints, they all found the ‘problem’ in the family and its behaviour. Rehabilitation of the ‘problem family’ was a solution-driven process. The very structure of the personal encounter between street-level bureaucrats and families shaped professional and organisational processes of decision-making which required action on a case by case basis. Accordingly, the ‘problem family’ was unquestionably ‘easy to recognise’ as its operationalisation rested on the judgment and discretion of individual workers. Wootton’s view that a ‘problem family’ is one ‘whose consumption of social workers’ *time* [emphasis added]’ was disproportionate plays a key role

¹⁵³ LA: DDX2302/box 4/case number 2055, Mrs IA (1954) Neglected children coordination case conference minutes, 10 Sept 1952; *ibid.*/box 13/case number 3028, Mrs MM (1961) MWA report, 26 Aug 1961; Annual report of the MOH for Salford, 1957, p. 70.

¹⁵⁴ CF: Box 57/case number 796, Mrs RM (1947) A. Pope to E. D. Abraham, 20 May 1947; LA: DDX2302/case number 2249, Mrs ID (1956) A. Pope to E. D. Abraham, 8 Dec 1956.

¹⁵⁵ CF: Box 57/[no case number], Mrs MW (1946) F. Rumball to E. D. Abraham, 6 Mar 1946; LA: DDX2302/box 14/case number 1464, Mrs AEP (1950) CV report, [n. d. Feb 1950]; *ibid.*/case number 2909, Mrs EJV (1960) F. Rumball to E. D. Abraham, 16 Feb 1960.

¹⁵⁶ SLSL Annual report for Sheffield CSS, 1951, p. 4; Stockport County Express, 3 June 1965; LA: DDX2302/box 19/case number 3266, Mrs MLB (1964) M. E. Oag to G. M. Wansborough Jones, 28 Mar 1966.

in informing the ‘folk sociology’ of street-level bureaucracy. When Lipsky contends that ‘[a]t best, street-level bureaucrats invent benign modes of mass processing’, time constraints and the lack of the desired response of the ‘problem family’ by workers compounds individualising assessments. Consequently: ‘[street-level bureaucrats] give in to favouritism, stereotyping, and routinizing – all of which serve private or agency purposes’.¹⁵⁷ The production of the ‘problem family’ at the personal level is not a process of condemning the individual by the official, but reflective of service pressures and professional judgments of street-level bureaucrats. However sympathetic they may have been to the poor families they encountered, street-level bureaucrats dealt with cases and made decisions based on assessing maternal capability. Here Todd’s claim that in the 1960s ‘an increasingly vocal minority questioned the purpose of family casework’ fails to convey that it was *only* a minority, and that this minority has had a disproportionate influence on social work historiography, discussed in Chapter One.¹⁵⁸ Comments on families should not be considered as statements of personal prejudice, but as part of a wider process of decision-making. Operationalisation was a one-to-one encounter between the state and the subject which individualised poverty and material circumstances through the lens of behaviour. Reports on families, and their emphasis on maternal failure, were created within larger forms of governance. Ultimately they were products of pressures, demands and processes created at the local level, to which we now turn.

¹⁵⁷ Lipsky, *Street-level bureaucracy*, p. xii.

¹⁵⁸ Todd, ‘Family welfare’, p. 387.

Chapter Five:

‘Problem families’: local and community encounters

Introduction

Working from the notion of the ‘problem family’ formed by the historiography, methodology and chronology considered in Part One, Chapter Four reconstructed the shared dispositions held by street-level bureaucrats in the ‘golden age’ of the post-war welfare state, 1943-74. This challenged Selina Todd’s argument that eugenic and psychological ideas were ‘not particularly significant’ for individual workers by exploring the common practices which underpinned the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’.¹ Across a ‘phalanx of officials’, behaviour was the basis of the diagnosis of the ‘problem’ and the creation of the solution.² This constituted a ‘folk sociology’ of professional practice informed by operational experiences.³ Moreover, the behaviour of the family was gendered through the mother. Whilst workers struggled to define *the ‘problem family’*, they knew one when they saw one. This process of discerning who was, or was not, a ‘problem family’, was not undertaken at the whim of the worker, but structured by the organisation they served: these varied by community, locality and authority. The studies of ‘problem families’ in Leicester by John Welshman, Bristol by Pat Starkey, Norwich by Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly, and Sheffield by the author, all expose the importance of place and senior officials in shaping definitions and decision-making.⁴ The impact of politics, chief officers, and socio-economic conditions on other policies has been noted in histories of welfare, health and social services.⁵

¹ S. Todd, ‘Family welfare and social work in post-war England, c. 1948-1970’, *English Historical Review*, 129:537 (2014), pp. 387.

² B. Taylor and B. Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly is a dirty, lazy type’”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 18:4 (2007), p. 438.

³ A. Sayer, *The moral significance of class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chap. 8.

⁴ J. Welshman, *Municipal medicine* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 241-7; id. ‘In search of the “problem family”’, *Social History of Medicine*, 9:3 (1996), pp. 447-65; P. Starkey, ‘The Medical Officer of Health, the social worker, and the problem family, 1943-1968’, *Social History of Medicine*, 11:3 (1998), pp. 421-41; Taylor and Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly’”; M. Lambert, “‘In pursuit of the welfare trait’”, *People, Policy and Place*, 10:3 (2016), pp. 225-38.

⁵ V. Harrington, ‘Voices beyond the asylum’, unpublished PhD thesis, Manchester University, 2008; A. Davis, ‘A revolution in maternity care?’, *Social History of Medicine*, 24:4 (2011), pp. 389-406; id., *Pre-school childcare in England, 1939-2010* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), chap. 3; S. J. Snow, ‘Health and Greater Manchester in historical perspective’, *Representations*, 51:4 (2015), pp. 439-52.

Whilst the MOH (Medical Officer of Health) has been subject to close scrutiny of their personalities, politics and place,⁶ other chief officers of the post-war local welfare state – the CO (Children’s Officer), CWO (Chief Welfare Officer) and CEO (Chief Education Officer) – have received limited attention. Moreover, the role of politics in local government, crucial to studies of inter-war welfare provision,⁷ has been absent in post-war historiography, particularly in terms of ‘problem families’. Connected with local services and officials are the communities where personal encounters were performed. Here, Todd’s claim that ‘[n]either working women nor working-class mothers more generally were *uniformly* pathologised by welfare workers [emphasis added]’ contains some validity.⁸ However, as Chapter Four illustrates, the behaviour of working-class mothers *was* pathologised by workers; but on a *systematic* rather than *case-by-case* basis. Pathologisation was intrinsic to street-level bureaucratic practice. This chapter addresses how individual ‘problem families’ were operationally ‘recognised’ and *differentiated* from other working-class families: this was undertaken by services and officials, constructing and sharing local knowledge, and acting within working-class communities.

The local encounter governed the decision-making processes of the personal encounter, not directly or overtly, but through workplace culture, professional dispositions, resources and their provision in working-class communities. The local encounter is reconstructed by using correspondence and documentation from the Brentwood case files, along with organisational records of the statutory and voluntary organisations involved in operationalising the ‘problem family’. The analysis is structured around the conflicting and competing pressures, alongside complementary purposes, which street-level bureaucrats experienced, in the context of working for, or on behalf of, the state. By definition, street-level bureaucrats were employed by street-level bureaucracies, and this determined the personal encounter between the state and ‘problem families’. Moreover, the purpose of organisations, and their relationship to *other* agencies and *other* client families, must be appreciated to situate the personal encounter as a professionally and service-driven one, rather than simple prejudice. Crucially, the organisation which street-level bureaucrats worked for, the area in which they worked, and the communities they visited,

⁶ J. Welshman, ‘The Medical Officer of Health in England and Wales, 1900-74’, *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 19:4 (1997), pp. 443-50; L. Diack and D. F. Smith, ‘Professional strategies of Medical Officers of Health in the post-war period – 1’, *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 24:2 (2002), pp. 123-9; S. McLaurin and D. F. Smith, ‘Professional strategies of Medical Officers of Health in the post-war period – 2’, *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 24:2 (2002), pp. 130-5.

⁷ J. Mark-Lawson et al., ‘Gender and local politics, struggles over welfare policies 1918-39’, in Lancaster Regionalism Group, ed., *Localities, class and gender* (London: Pion, 1985), pp. 195-215; M. Gorsky, ‘Local government health services in interwar England’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 85: 3 (2011), pp. 384-412; A. Levene et al., *Cradle to grave* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011).

⁸ Todd, ‘Family welfare’, p. 376.

all had an impact on their decision-making processes in deciding who was, or was not, a 'problem family'. These three themes of local authority chief officers and services, knowledge and provincial particularity, and working-class communities, form the basis of this chapter and the local encounter between the state and the 'problem family'. Chief officers, services and local authorities are examined to explore the setting of the street-level bureaucrat; knowledge and provincial particularity are discussed in terms of regionally specific 'problems', concerns about the family, and the socio-economic context; whilst consideration of the working-class community is undertaken to expose the operationalisation of the 'problem family' as a process of distinction. Consequently, the term 'problem family' was a crudely formed, but acutely understood and recognisable label which was shaped by place, space and the requirements of local welfare state services.

Chief officers, services and strategies

Local government was the backbone for the 'phalanx' of personal social services which formed the post-war welfare state; providing direction and oversight in operationalising the 'problem family'. This occurred directly, through the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies specifically dealing with 'problem families' in the local authority, and tangentially, through other local policies which indirectly affected them. Moreover, lacking a centralised policy or agenda, the discretionary and operational basis of such practices makes them hard to trace. Governance of the 'problem family' was not without structure or direction. As noted in Chapter Three, there was a clear national pattern of developments concerning the 'problem family', and in Chapter Four, professional views and service purposes were shown to be crucial in shaping views of 'problem families'. These conflicting service and professional dispositions applied doubly for chief officers. Here, I reconstruct the local framework which determined the pressures and processes of the personal encounter. First, by considering the role of politics and power in local authorities. Second, in reconstructing the appointment of 'problem family' officers in local authorities and their link with statutory functions. Third, by understanding how chief officers, either as designated officer or in their own department, developed strategies to manage 'problem families'. Fourth, the limits placed on these strategies by resources and staffing, and how they were overcome in many instances by using voluntary organisations. Fifth, the interaction of junior and senior staff in case conferences is discussed. Finally, these five strands are unified to consider their relationship to the professionalisation of decision-

making in terms of child neglect; particularly, the processes around admitting children to care, prosecution and notions of risk. The seemingly condemnatory judgments of officials discussed in Chapter Four cannot be fully appreciated without this contextualisation of their purposes.

Within local government, the council and its committees provided the highest level of decision-making, shaping the contours of the local welfare state. They were subject to statutory requirements determined by central government, and the corresponding overseeing ministry.⁹ The growth of local responsibilities created by central government in the post-war period was tempered by a reduction in the power and autonomy of local authorities. This is discussed in the historiography.¹⁰ Clearly, although the political hue of the authority mattered, there was a reduction in ideology and an emphasis on management.¹¹ Consequently, a bifurcated view of authorities whereby Labour are sympathetic to poverty and antipathetic to the ‘problem family’ in contrast to the Conservatives, has little traction. Politics matters to the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ *precisely because it had limited bearing on policies*. In their study of Children’s Departments in the 1960s, Bleddyn Davies, Andrew Barton and Ian MacMillan noted that ‘many of the most influential Labour councillors have no great sympathy with the lower working class than Conservatives’.¹² As discussed in Chapter One, the Chair of Burnley Children’s Committee was viewed by the CO as a ‘strong socialist’, yet was keenly interested in ‘problem families’.¹³ ‘Problem families’ were just another matter-of-fact issue to be dealt with by relevant services, undoubtedly one of Richard Toye’s ‘pertinent silences’ of post-war consensus.¹⁴ Accordingly, the chief officers of the Children’s, Welfare and Health departments possessed the real influence in local operationalisation of the ‘problem family’.

On a day-to-day basis, there were clear lines of responsibility: departments oversaw street-level bureaucrats and were governed by a chief officer appointed and accountable to the relevant committee: Children’s, Welfare or Health. There was ambiguity in identifying who wielded power and determined policy. Several contemporary academic studies highlighted the

⁹ J. A. G. Griffith, *Central departments and local authorities* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 17-94.

¹⁰ B. Keith-Lucas and P. G. Richards, *A history of local government in the twentieth century* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), chap. 5; G. T. Stoker, *The politics of local government* (London: Macmillan, 1988), chap. 1; K. Young and N. Rao, *Local government since 1945* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), chap. 3; J. A. Chandler, *Explaining local government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), chaps. 9 and 10.

¹¹ See particularly C. Cockburn, *The local state* (London: Pluto Press, 1977).

¹² B. Davies, A. Barton and I. McMillan, *Variations in children’s services among British urban authorities* (London: Bell, 1972), p. 111.

¹³ B. Holman, *Child care revisited* (London: Institute for Child Care and Social Education, 1998), p. 65.

¹⁴ R. Toye, ‘From “consensus” to “common ground”’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48:1 (2013), p. 23.

tension between committees and chief officers,¹⁵ the politics of appointing members to certain committees,¹⁶ the nature of party government,¹⁷ the exclusionary decision-making practices of ruling councils in terms of their own members,¹⁸ and in terms of the wider public.¹⁹ Moreover, Health, Welfare and Children's Committees had limited status within authorities, and did not excite political interest.²⁰ Consequently, in local government, the decision-making concerning the operationalisation of the 'problem family' was shaped by the professional expertise of chief officers. Councillors and committees were influential, but the 'problem family' was another subject of administration which required expert action.

Local authority Health, Welfare and Children's Departments, under the control of their respective chief officers, were the focal points for operationalising the 'problem family'. This has been readily identified in the historiography, with disproportionate emphasis on the MOH. Contemporaries also noted their influence. N. H. Thacker's 1962 report on municipal services in Bolton saw the Health and Welfare Departments bearing 'the burden of executing some of the most important schemes of the Welfare State'.²¹ Similarly, Davies' 1968 study of social services noted that Children's Departments, had 'a great deal of discretion'.²² The appointment of a particular chief officer as the designated officer under the 1950 joint circular, discussed in Chapter Three, had a profound impact on local developments. Figure 12 lists these for all the

¹⁵ J. Parker, *Local health and welfare services* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1965); N. T. Boaden, *Urban policy-making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 71-86; R. G. S. Brown, *The administrative process in Britain* (London: Methuen, 1971); M. J. Hill, *The sociology of public administration* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), esp. pp. 76-85.

¹⁶ A. H. Birch, *Small-town politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959); J. M. Lee, *Social leaders and public persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); F. Bealey, J. Blondel and W. McCann, W. P., *Constituency politics* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965); R. V. Clements, *Local notables and the city council* (London: Macmillan, 1969); J. Dearlove, *The politics of policy in local government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); K. Newton, *Second city politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

¹⁷ L. P. Green, *Provincial metropolis* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959), pp. 148-201; J. G. Bulpitt, *Party politics in English local government* (London: Longman, 1967); G. W. Jones, *Borough politics* (London: Macmillan, 1969); W. Hampton, *Democracy and community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970); R. Rose, *The problem of party government* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).

¹⁸ H. V. Wiseman, *Local government at work* (London: Routledge, 1967); J. K. Friend and W. N. Jessop, *Local government and strategic choice* (London: Tavistock, 1969); D. Berry, *The sociology of grass roots politics* (London: Macmillan, 1970); B. Hindess, *The decline of working-class politics* (London: Paladin 1971); D. G. Green, *Power and party in an English city* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981).

¹⁹ N. Dennis, *People and planning* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971); id., *Public participation and planners' blight* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972); J. Davies, *The evangelistic bureaucrat* (London: Tavistock, 1972); for a supportive view see: D. M. Hill, *Participating in local affairs* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

²⁰ B. Davies, *Social needs and resources in local services* (London: Michael Joseph, 1968), pp. 114-21; see recollections of CCOs and COs in Holman, *Child care*, pp. 26, 27-8, 33, 37, 63, 73-4, 76, 90-1.

²¹ N. H. Thacker, *A study of the administration of the municipal corporation of the County Borough of Bolton* (Bombay: All-India Institute of Local Self-Government, 1964), pp. 5-6.

²² Davies, *Social needs*, p. 247.

Authority	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
Barrow	G. G. Dicke		J. Maclachlan							I. D. M. Nelson								D. J. Roberts					A. W. Hay		
Birkenhead	A. W. Foster																							P. O. Nicholas	
Blackburn			V. T. Thierens																J. Ardley						
Blackpool			G. W. Murray																D. W. Wauchob						
Bolton	R. M. Galloway	A. M. Hutchinson		R. W. Elliott															A. I. Ross						
Bootle	A. F. Swan									T. R. Robertson											G. T. MacCulloch				
Burnley			D. C. Lamont																						
Bury										K. K. Wood															G. A. Levell
Chester	J. W. Lobban										D. F. Morgan														
Liverpool																									
Manchester																									K. Campbell
Oldham																									B. Gilbert
Preston																									C. F. W. Fairfax
Rochdale																									J. Carroll
Salford																									D. J. Roberts
Southport																									P. W. Lang
St Helens																									J. H. E. Baines
Stockport																									A. R. M. Moir
Wallasey																									H. W. Hall
Warrington																									E. H. Moore
Wigan																									J. Haworth Hilditch

Figure 12: Medical Officers of Health in North West County Boroughs, 1948-72. *

Authority	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
LCC HD1 (Barrow)	J. L. Wild																								
LCC HD2 (Lancaster)	R. W. Farquahar																								
LCC HD3 (Blackpool)	A. Dodd	G. Roberston Wilson																							
LCC HD4 (Preston)	J. Walker																								
LCC HD5 (Blackburn)	R. C. Webster																								
LCC HD6 (Burnley)	R. E. Robinson	J. V. Dyer	P. G. Holt																						
LCC HD7 (Southport)	J. G. Hailwood																								
LCC HD8 (Wigan)	G. H. Potter	R. Schofield	J. H. Robertson	P. Lee																					
LCC HD9 (St Helens)	F. W. Bunting																								
LCC HD10 (Warrington)	A. C. Crawford										R. Ellis Jones										J. N. V. Packer				
LCC HD11 (Bolton)	T. Patton Sewell										E. Taylor														
LCC HD12 (Bury)	C. H. T. Wade										T. Seymour Jones														
LCC HD13 (Rochdale)	T. P. O'Grady					G. Fyfe					A. Nelson Pickles														
LCC HD14 (Oldham)	E. Taylor					T. P. O'Grady					G. Brackenridge														
LCC HD15 (Salford)	A. V. Stocks										W. J. Ellwood														
LCC HD16 (Stretford)	E. H. Walker										W. Sharpe														
LCC HD17 (Stockport)	A. S. Simpson										E. J. J. Foster										A. B. Davies				
LCC CMO	F. Hall					S. C. Gawne										C. H. T. Wade									
CCC CMO	A. Brown										B. G. Gretton-Watson														

Figure 13: County and Divisional Medical Officers for Lancashire, and the County Medical Officer for Cheshire County Councils, 1948-72. *

Note: ■ indicates insufficient or absent information; HD denotes Health Division with its principal town in brackets.

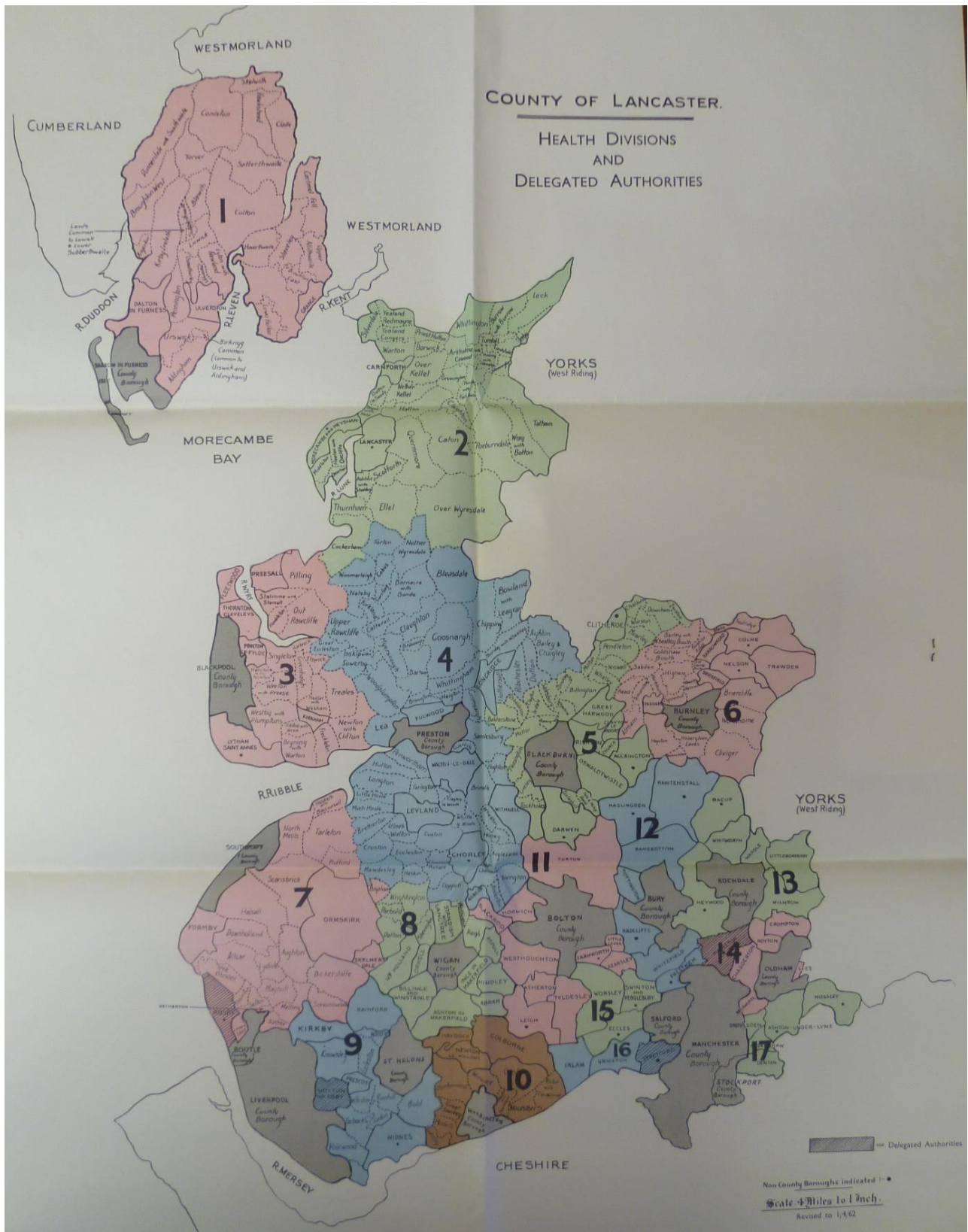


Figure 14: County of Lancaster: Health Divisions and Delegated Authorities, n.d. [1960].

Source: BALSC: BTCAHA/4/1/11.

North West authorities in the post-war period. Changes in the chief officer of a department, or designated ‘problem family’ officer, were more important than changes in the ruling party. Figures 12 and 13 show the changes in the key post of MOH for County Boroughs and County Councils in the North West in the post-war period. Figure 13 also denotes LanCC (Lancashire County Council) DMOs (Divisional Medical Officers) as the duties of the designated officer were delegated divisionally (Figure 14), and after the 1958 Local Government Act, extended to the Delegated Authorities of Crosby, Huyton, Middleton and Stretford.²³ MOsH dominated, although the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act affected many authorities. In contrast, Miss M. Brooke Willis was CO and designated officer for CCC (Cheshire County Council). The responsibilities of designated officer were not always clear. In Barrow, the MOH was designated officer, noting in the annual report for 1955: ‘The children of problem families... receive particular attention from the [HV]’.²⁴ Yet a 1959 consultancy report on the work of the Children’s Department noted: ‘[t]he field staff keep problem families under surveillance’.²⁵ Similarly, MoH (Ministry of Health) returns identified the CO as the designated officer for St Helens, but the CWO was later appointed, already responsible for preventive duties.²⁶ In Manchester the MOH, Charles Metcalfe Brown (Image 4), was the power behind the throne for the city’s ‘problem families’ despite Ian Brown being designated officer as CO.²⁷ The appointment and actions of chief officers acting as designated officers hinged not just on professional, but also local dispositions.

The extent of each designated officer’s involvement with ‘problem families’ depended on their personal and professional interest, and developing strategies. For MOsH, CWOs and COs alike, ‘problem families’ were a small proportion of their responsibilities, but received disproportionate interest. Following the 1950 joint circular, most authorities kept registers of ‘problem families’ as indicated in Tables 12 and 13. The fluctuations of families on the register

* *Sources* for Figures 12 and 13: Annual reports of the MOH or DMO for the respective local authority or Health Division concerned, 1948-72.

²³ E. W. Cohen, *Autonomy and delegation in county government* (London: RIPA, 1952), pp. 18, 34, 54-9; Annual report of the MOH for Crosby, 1960, p. 25; Annual report of the MOH for Huyton, 1960, pp. 27-8; Annual report of the MOH for Middleton, 1961, p. 24; Annual report of the MOH for Stretford, 1961, p. 63; BALSC: AHA/4/1/3/1 LCC DMO circular 67/56.

²⁴ *Ibid.* BTCAHA/12/2/3 Annual report of the MOH for Barrow, 1955, p. 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.* BA/R/15 Report to County Borough of Barrow-in-Furness on Children’s Department by S. J. Noel Brown and Co. Ltd., 1959, sheet 3; until 1958 Barrow came under the jurisdiction of LanCC Area 1; *ibid.* Barrow Children’s Committee Minutes, 21 Jan 1957.

²⁶ TNA: MH134/181 Local authority officers designated under HO circular 157/50 and MoH circular 78/50, 15 Feb 1952; V. Cleaver, *The first ten years* (St Helens: St Helens Welfare Department, 1959), pp. 9-11, 19-21.

²⁷ D. V. Donnison, *The neglected child and the social services* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954), pp. 35-9; B. Holman, *The corporate parent* (London: NISW, 1996), pp. 119-22.

Authority	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Barrow	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	12	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	a
Birkenhead	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Blackburn	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	60	75	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	100	187	185	217	204	64	69	69
Blackpool	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	x	x	x	x	x	x	11	36	42	x	x	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	a
Bolton	*	*	*	*	*	*	x	53	79	72	69	55	52	62	69	61	69	71	77	77	41	45	43	35	36	29	27	a
Bootle	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	34	50	66	69	93	73	68	61	75	76	69	68	55	51	56	51	a	a	a
Burnley	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	a
Bury	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	21	21	21	20	20	19	19	17	15	17	19	20	17	17	17	21	a	a
Chester	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	a	*	*	*	*	*	a	*	*	*	*	17	16	27	*	*	a
Liverpool	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	80	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Manchester	*	*	*	a	a	x	a	17	21	x	38	44	49	60	64	55	47	48	87	90	70	56	65	51	37	x	x	x
Oldham	*	*	*	*	*	20	23	25	23	20	20	25	25	23	28	30	33	30	32	36	33	30	31	38	53	*	*	a
Preston	*	*	*	*	*	*	x	17	20	15	15	20	28	24	24	20	19	24	39	41	35	48	33	*	*	*	*	a
Rochdale	*	*	*	*	x	53	50	37	57	66	75	64	45	47	40	31	36	34	x	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	a	a
Salford	x	60	x	x	x	120	164	154	144	135	301	265	305	255	235	246	234	229	215	247	256	214	x	x	*	*	*	*
Southport	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	a
St Helens	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	a	a	a
Stockport	*	*	*	*	*	x	x	50	49	43	43	38	34	40	36	37	36	34	30	29	17	15	11	8	10	*	*	a
Wallasey	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	x	*	*	*	*	*	*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	a	a
Warrington	*	*	*	a	a	a	a	21	23	31	36	30	17	16	11	16	11	52	x	x	a	x	a	a	a	a	a	a
Wigan	*	*	*	*	x	x	x	x	x	x	63	48	30	x	x	x	x	x	11	16	18	16	18	15	14	11	a	a

Table 12: Numbers of 'problem families' in North West County Boroughs, 1946-73. **

Note: * indicates no mention of 'problem families'; x indicates mention of 'problem families' but no number of referrals; a indicates absent report.

Authority	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
LCC HD1 (Barrow)	a	a	a	*	*	*	6	7	7	7	4	2	3	8	5	3	5	7	7	6	4	6
LCC HD2 (Lancaster)	a	a	a	*	x	x	19	26	56	45	50	46	x	45	43	39	29	33	38	39	43	49
LCC HD3 (Blackpool)	a	a	a	*	*	*	48	50	44	29	19	23	20	23	22	15	16	19	22	a	a	a
LCC HD4 (Preston)	a	a	a	*	*	3	x	14	21	22	25	30	27	26	25	29	33	43	28	45	60	74
LCC HD5 (Blackburn)	a	a	a	*	*	*	a	16	29	145	137	125	149	90	157	169	159	154	135	138	294	a
LCC HD6 (Burnley)	a	a	a	*	x	x	31	32	25	21	26	21	25	21	27	26	33	72	75	61	78	86
LCC HD7 (Southport)	a	a	a	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	122	81	89	101	104	87	83	65	128	138	151	165
LCC HD8 (Wigan)	a	a	a	*	4	2	13	14	11	9	10	7	11	15	14	15	44	56	61	52	50	56
LCC HD9 (St Helens)	a	a	a	*	89	81	67	107	134	153	140	128	82	87	88	*	*	a	x	x	x	x
LCC HD10 (Warrington)	a	a	a	*	x	23	21	29	34	33	29	55	49	58	73	a	71	64	54	52	43	28
LCC HD11 (Bolton)	a	a	a	*	*	*	x	*	*	108	89	101	128	128	175	148	148	114	124	140	124	*
LCC HD12 (Bury)	a	a	a	3	20	21	x	70	59	60	54	51	44	48	36	38	38	34	40	*	*	*
LCC HD13 (Rochdale)	a	a	a	*	*	*	10	37	38	34	27	29	33	30	30	27	38	44	38	34	43	40
LCC HD14 (Oldham)	a	a	a	*	*	*	*	x	*	x	x	a	x	x	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
LCC HD15 (Salford)	a	a	a	x	20	42	28	27	34	33	38	52	25	28	31	30	*	*	*	*	*	*
LCC HD16 (Stretford)	a	a	a	*	*	*	*	33	31	40	23	15	18	14	19	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
LCC HD17 (Stockport)	a	a	a	*	*	*	*	*	56	67	70	66	59	69	73	56	60	50	48	47	50	x
Lancashire CC	*	*	x	x	x	x	x	631	738	751	869	867	906	871	978	999	1003	1046	1128	x	x	x
Cheshire CC	x	x	x	x	x	x	70	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	352	382	428	*	*	*	*	*

Table 13: Numbers of 'problem families' in Lancashire by County and Health Division, and Cheshire, 1949-70. **

Note: * indicates no mention of 'problem families'; x indicates mention of 'problem families' but no number of referrals;

a indicates absent report.

Authority	1950	1960	1970
Barrow	67,950	64,580	63,510
Birkenhead	143,150	144,280	141,410
Blackburn	111,500	105,330	100,010
Blackpool	149,600	143,530	150,000
Bolton	168,600	159,570	152,010
Bootle	70,240	82,580	79,780
Burnley	84,920	80,560	76,610
Bury	59,190	59,290	62,710*
Chester	48,860	60,090	61,490
Liverpool	802,300	754,670	667,000
Manchester	704,500	665,590	590,000
Oldham	119,500	117,250	108,080
Preston	120,300	113,460	100,140
Rochdale	89,530	84,210	87,720
Salford	177,700	161,170	135,530
Southport	85,500	81,350	83,000
St Helens	112,500	109,610	102,770*
Stockport	142,110	141,440	139,330
Wallasey	101,100	103,450	100,470
Warrington	79,480	78,780	70,870*
Wigan	84,950	80,950	79,300

Table 14: Population of North West County Boroughs, 1950-70.

Source: Annual reports of the MOH for each County Borough, 1950, 1960 and 1970.

Note: *Bury figure is from 1965, St Helens from 1969 and Warrington from 1969.

were not, however, determined demographically, as seen in Tables 14 and 15. Services and their strategies, created and implemented by chief officers, affected the number of families kept under surveillance. The MOH for Salford, John L. Burn, had taken a firm interest in ‘problem families’, creating a register in 1946 which had more families under supervision than similarly sized Bolton or Blackpool. Equally, in LanCC Health Division 6, the number of families on the register increased dramatically with the arrival of P. G. Holt during 1967. Cooperation and coordination was a common trope among contemporaries; but ‘problem family’ policies were typically the design of one chief officer, subject to contest negotiation with other chief officers for their successful implementation. Strategies centred on maternal behaviour. MOsH utilised a variety of tools. Although their voice is muted in the Brentwood case files, the deployment of home helps was widespread.²⁸ Home Help Organiser for Salford, Bessie Chadwick, was

*** *Sources* for Tables 12 and 13: Annual reports of the MOH, CO or DMO for the respective local authority or Health Division concerned, 1946-73.

Authority	1952	1960	1970
LCC HD1 (Barrow)	39,541	39,350	40,900
LCC HD2 (Lancaster)	109,675	112,830	120,850
LCC HD3 (Blackpool)	110,342	119,820	137,830*
LCC HD4 (Preston)	163,665	177,340	220,470
LCC HD5 (Blackburn)	143,449	142,450	114,830*
LCC HD6 (Burnley)	94,922	90,420	89,970
LCC HD7 (Southport)	160,474	175,220	229,430
LCC HD8 (Wigan)	109,889	115,480	129,690
LCC HD9 (St Helens)	163,775	225,350	297,400
LCC HD10 (Warrington)	90,910	88,230	111,560
LCC HD11 (Bolton)	174,263	175,280	192,200*
LCC HD12 (Bury)	134,003	133,466	140,680
LCC HD13 (Rochdale)	75,128	73,160	81,040
LCC HD14 (Oldham)	114,279	114,170	150,720*
LCC HD15 (Salford)	127,870	122,250	129,600
LCC HD16 (Stretford)	101,660	118,220	122,270
LCC HD17 (Stockport)	128,155	128,690	132,470
Lancashire CC	2,042,000	2,175,950	2,477,560
Cheshire CC	622,345	899,580	1,078,380

Table 15: Population of Lancashire County and Health Divisions, and Cheshire, 1952-70

Source: Annual reports of the MOH for each county council and Lancashire HD, 1952, 1960 and 1970.

Note: *HD3 (Blackpool) figure is from 1967, HD5 (Blackburn) from 1963, HD11 (Bolton) from 1966 and HD 14 (Oldham) from 1961.

particularly influential, arranging Brentwood referrals and deputising for the MOH in the city's 'problem family' committee.²⁹ Training specialist HVs dealing solely with 'problem families', including Miss Windmuller in Salford, was also common.³⁰ Equally, the use of day nurseries to negate the supposedly poor parenting found in 'problem families' and provide mothers with respite was prevalent, particularly in the mill towns of Lancashire.³¹ V. T. Thierens, the MOH for Blackburn, preferred day nurseries to convalescence, which he considered were 'subsidised

²⁸ On 'problem families' and the home help see: J. Welshman, "The missing relative", *International Journal for the History of Nursing*, 5:1 (1999), pp. 7-8; and 5:2 (2000), pp. 54-6.

²⁹ B. Chadwick and H. L. Latham, 'The training of home helps', *Medical Officer*, 82 (1949), pp. 103-4; LA DDX2302/box 17/case number 1882, Mrs BT (1953) Salford coordinating committee minutes, 28 Jan 1953; Annual report of the MOH for Salford, 1955, p. 94.

³⁰ I. Windmuller, 'The health visitor in the changing field of social work', *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 76 (1956), pp. 618-25; Annual report of the MOH for Salford, 1955, pp 84-6; J. Welshman, 'Family visitors or social workers?', *International Journal for the History of Nursing*, 2:4 (1997), pp. 17-8.

³¹ CALS: LBE4175/2 Annual report of the MOH for Ellesmere Port, 1963, pp. 70, 75-6; LA: CC/HDR/6 Annual report of the DMO for HD6 (Burnley), 1953, pp. 10-11; Annual report of the MOH for Rochdale, 1950, pp. 27-9; on day nursery provision see V. Randall, *The politics of child daycare in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Davis, *Pre-school*, chap. 2.

recuperative rest', and referred few mothers to Brentwood.³² Other MOsH used convalescence and Brentwood as part of their strategies.³³ Blackpool, a financially pressed and notoriously frugal authority which opposed using permissive powers, saw the cost of sending mothers to Brentwood as prohibitive and referred few cases.³⁴ Conversley the MOH for Preston, J. S. G. Burnett, saw the number of Brentwood referrals inhibited by difficulties securing places: 'More use could be made of this special type of convalescent home if accommodation was more readily available'.³⁵ Following the 1967 National Health Service (Family Planning) Act, domiciliary family planning services designed to curb the fertility of 'problem family' mothers was also developed as a strategy, if uncommon outside metropolitan areas.³⁶ In the North West, MOsH possessed a keen interest and utilised a wide variety of strategies and policies at their disposal to identify and intervene in the lives of 'problem families'.

Although MOsH were in the vanguard of formulating strategies for 'problem families', other chief officers were involved. Many of the strategies discussed above have been covered by Welshman and Starkey.³⁷ The older industrial character of the North West affirmed the MOH in contrast to other areas, as discussed in the next chapter.³⁸ COs and CWOs also formed strategies and policies, although at a comparative disadvantage due to their later establishment. The self-professed claims of 'enthusiasm and tireless devolution' by LanCC's CO, Horace R. Irving, were proven by his pursuance of preventive work to keep children out of care, supported by the Labour group on the Children's Committee as a 'pet scheme'.³⁹ Like the specialist HV,

³² LA: HRBI/1/52 Annual report of the MOH for Blackburn, pp. 9, 63.

³³ *Ibid.*/CC/AHA/1/2/12 Annual report of the DMO for HD12 (Bury), 1954, pp. 23-4; Annual report of the MOH for Stockport, 1953, pp. 89-90.

³⁴ Annual report of the MOH for Blackpool, 1956, p. 32, 1958, p. 35; LA: DDX2302/box 13/case number 2125, Mrs GNVN (1955) E. D. Abraham to P. Harrison, 14 July 1955; for the historical roots of Blackpool's financial hesitancy, see J. K. Walton, *Blackpool* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 124-30.

³⁵ Annual report of the MOH for Preston, 1954, p. 38.

³⁶ For Liverpool see: Annual report of the MOH for Liverpool, 1970, pp. 74-6 and *Family planning in community medicine*, UK, London Film Associates, 1973 [DVD, 2009]. I am grateful for Sally Sheard for bringing this to my attention and providing me with a copy; for Manchester see: TNA: BN34/53 I. Allen, 'PEP report on domiciliary family planning service in Manchester', Oct 1975; for Runcorn see: I. Allen, *Birth control in Runcorn and Coalville* (London: PEP, 1974), pp. 8-18. On the basis of the programme in the Eugenics Society see D. Morgan, 'Family planning in problem families', *Public Health*, 82:3 (1968), pp. 125-8 and TNA: FD23/578 J. Faulkner, 'An evaluation of free oral contraception services for problem families', n.d. [1964].

³⁷ Welshman, 'In search'; Starkey, 'Problem family'.

³⁸ For Manchester see: E. L. Jones and J. V. Pickstone, *The quest for public health in Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), chap. 2; for Liverpool see: S. Sheard, 'Nineteenth century public health', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 1994, pp. 39-46, 209-19; on the urban strength of MOsH see Levene, et al, *Cradle to grave*, pp. 17-28.

³⁹ LanCC Children's Committee, *Our large family* (Preston: Lancashire County Council, 1955), p. 1; D. T. Denver and H. T. G. Hands, 'Politics, 1929-74', in J. D. Marshall and M. E. McClintock, eds., *The history of Lancashire County Council, 1889 to 1974* (London: Martin Robertson, 1977), pp. 233-4; Holman, *Child care*, pp. 66, 72-3; J. Packman, *Child care needs and numbers* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968), pp. 82-3, 233.

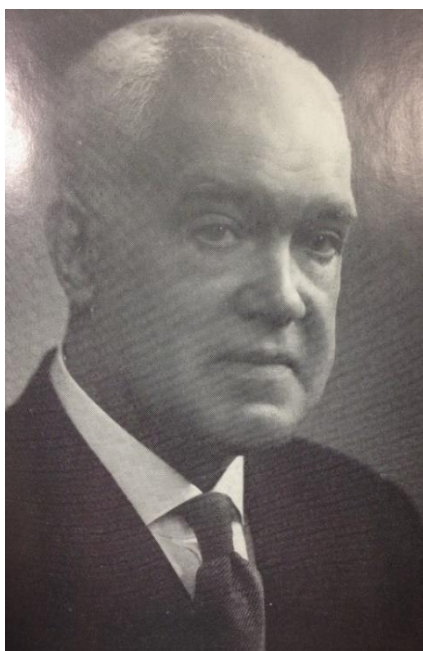


Image 4: Charles Metcalfe Brown, Medical Officer of Health for Manchester (1942-67), n.d. [1960s]

Source: Annual report of the MOH for Manchester, 1973.

FCWs (Family Case Workers) were commonly appointed and used by COs, although often in competition with MOsH, and in both Rochdale and Wigan they came under the Public Health Department.⁴⁰ COs developed a system of rent guarantees, preventing the children of ‘problem families’ coming into care due to eviction by clearing arrears and ensuring payment of rent. Although pioneered in a few authorities before the 1963 Act, they were commonplace by the end of the ‘golden age’ of the welfare state.⁴¹ The issue for authorities extended beyond the personal encounter. In nearby Halifax, West Yorkshire, the ‘problem family’ committee faced a dilemma when, in 1973: ‘[Mr DC] is said to be boasting, on the estate and in the pubs, that he does not pay any rent, and anyone who does it a fool’. This resulted in his family’s eviction, sending a warning to others.⁴² Homelessness was the main concern of CWOs in the ‘problem family’, and apart from appointing FCWs, their strategies mainly rested on providing forms of

⁴⁰ TNA: BN29/96 Annual report of the CO for Manchester, 1957, pp. 13-4; OLSA CBO/17/1/2 Oldham Children’s Committee Minutes, 21 Oct 1958; CALS; LA: CBBU: 17/2 Burnley Children’s Committee Minutes, 7 June 1966; B. N. Rodgers and J. Dixon, *Portrait of social work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 39-41, 94-5, 158-9; WALs: A1/262 Wigan Health (Accommodation) Subcommittee (Special) Minutes, 18 Apr 1954

⁴¹ LRO: 352 MIN/CHI/1/5 Liverpool Children’s Committee Minutes, 15 Apr 1964; LA: CBBU/17/2 Burnley Children’s Committee Minutes, 8 Nov 1966; BLFHC Blackpool Welfare Committee Minutes, 20 July 1967; LA: CC/HSC/1 LanCC Social Services Coordination Subcommittee Minutes, 6 Sept 1967; P. Wedge, *Preston family welfare survey* (Preston: Preston County Borough Council, 1966), pp. 18-9; A. E. Leeding, *Child care manual* (London: Butterworths, 1966), pp. 110-3; HO, *Tenth report on the work of the Children’s Department* (London: HMSO, 1967), pp. 2-4.

⁴² CA: 13645/3 Halifax Problem and Homeless Families Committee, report on DC family, 27 Feb 1973.

substandard accommodation, or supervised family units.⁴³ They did not possess a monopoly on this strategy. The inability to secure places at Brentwood led the MOsH for Preston and Wigan to create small family rehabilitation schemes, as did Warrington's CO, Miss M. I. Snell, using Section 1 powers of the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act.⁴⁴ LanCC managed a family rehabilitation unit at Trafford Park, often used alongside Brentwood, as noted in Chapter Four.⁴⁵ Chief officers pursued a variety of strategies, focused on maternal rehabilitation. More importantly, they did not operate independently, but in cooperation or conflict with other chief officers inside the local authority, resulting in the formation of local policies.

The context of each local authority was vital in shaping the strategies of chief officers around two issues: resources and staffing. Whether a service was statutory or permissive was critical in securing financial backing, although the actions of chief officers were significant.⁴⁶ The lower status of Health, Welfare and Children's Committees in comparison with prestigious committees including Housing, heightened conflict over resource allocation. Moreover, Health and Welfare Committees often merged as in Liverpool, or the Children's Committee operated within other departments, typically the TC (Town Clerk), as in Bootle.⁴⁷ Furthermore, most of the resources of the three committees were consumed by salaries. Affluent authorities such as Cheshire attracted experienced and qualified candidates, unlike the poorer North West County Boroughs, which relied on fewer and untrained staff, with a high turnover.⁴⁸ Even when MOsH remained dominant, notably Liverpool under Andrew B. Semple (Image 5), committee support still had to be secured.⁴⁹ Pragmatism and compromise had consequences for strategies. The MOH for Bury, K. K. Wood, was unable to recruit sufficient HVs, so he supplemented them with School Nurses, widening the purview of the 'problem family' committee beyond infants and young children.⁵⁰ In Cheshire, despite a more buoyant financial position, M. Brooke Willis

⁴³ Cleaver, *Ten years*, pp. 19-21; Manchester City Council Welfare Services Committee, *A decade of civic welfare, 1948-58* (Manchester: Manchester Welfare Department, 1959), pp. 16-8; WAS: W/161/1162/1 J. Yule, 'Memorandum on provision of homeless or problem families in County Boroughs in the North West', 11 Sept 1959.

⁴⁴ Annual report of the MOH for Preston, 1953, pp. 100-1; Annual report of the MOH for Wigan, 1953, p. 38; WLAS: WPS6 Annual report of the CO for Warrington, 1965, pp. 16-18.

⁴⁵ LA: CC/HYM/1 LanCC Family Unit Accommodation Subcommittee Minutes, 30 Sept 1960.

⁴⁶ Boaden, *Urban policy*, pp. 80-6.

⁴⁷ Liverpool Children's, Health and Education Committees, *Coordination of social services in the city* (Liverpool: Liverpool City Council, 1961), p. 2; CLHU: B67 Bootle Children's Committee Minutes, 14 June 1950. Bootle also shared a CO with LanCC, who served as ACO for Area 8.

⁴⁸ Lee, *Social leaders*, pp. 123-4; Rodgers and Dixon, *Portrait*, pp. 1-4; Packman, *Child care*, pp. 175-85; E. Younghusband, *Social work in Britain, vol. one* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), pp. 301-24.

⁴⁹ Interview with Professor Andrew B. Semple by Sally Sheard, 21 Sept 1994. I am grateful to Sally Sheard for permission to use her interviews.

⁵⁰ BA: ABU/4/1/1/28 Annual report of the MOH for Bury, 1951, p. 69; *ibid.* unlisted, Bury coordinating committee minutes, 12 Feb 1963.



Image 5: Andrew Best Semple, Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool (1953-74), 1974.

Source: Annual report of the MOH for Liverpool, 1973.

wrote in her 1961 annual report that: ‘As staffing stands at present, intensive casework with families... from the Children’s Department, has to be limited’. This fuelled the use of WRVS (Women’s Royal Voluntary Service) caseworkers.⁵¹ Similar developments occurred across the region. The failure to secure a FSU (Family Service Unit) in Bolton and the reluctance of the Children’s Committee to appoint staff for this purpose led the CO, J. W. Freeman, to gain an NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) Woman Visitor instead.⁵² Oldham secured a FSU, although financial contributions – and control – were shared equally by the three main Committees.⁵³ The impact of resources, staffing and voluntary agencies was most visible in Liverpool. Here the saturation of voluntary organisations interested in ‘problem families’ hampered statutory casework in all services until the 1960s. This bolstered Semple as designated officer, and the Public Health Department, in shaping the city’s policies regarding ‘problem families’.⁵⁴ Strategies of chief officers were fundamentally shaped by the availability of staff and resources, but determined by personal and professional outlooks.

⁵¹ CALS: CCC2/5/9 Annual report of the CO for Cheshire, 1961, pp. 10-12.

⁵² CAC: C/C/3/2/72/GP350 (AH) J. W. Freeman to M. Silva-Jones, 16 Feb and 5 Apr 1954; BALS: AB/32/1/1 Bolton Children’s Committee Minutes, 22 May 1953; NSPCC: 360/30/55 Annual report for Bolton and District NSPCC, 1954, p. 2.

⁵³ LUSCA: D495(OL)M2/1 Annual report of Oldham FSU, 1960, pp. 1-4; OLSA: NF/75 Annual report of the MOH for Oldham, 1951, p. 125; *ibid.* CBO/17/1/1 Oldham Children’s Committee Minutes, 21 Apr 1949.

⁵⁴ M. Lambert, ‘Rediscovering poverty or charity?’, in C. Rochester, ed., *Old problems, new solutions*, forthcoming.

Whilst the merging of chief officers' strategies in local authorities became policies for 'problem families', it was in the case conference that decisions were taken regarding families. Case conferences collapsed the frontier between personal and local encounters of the 'problem family'. Here, clarity over the functions of 'problem family' committees mattered: managing cases, policy-making, or both. In Wigan, 'problem families' had their own standing committee, formed as part of regular council business, nominally uninvolved in cases, which fell to the MOH.⁵⁵ Similarly, Semple oversaw several liaison committees which coordinated statutory and voluntary services in Liverpool, but he also chaired the PSS (Personal Service Society) case committee, blending decision-making on policies and families.⁵⁶ The compact nature of Salford, keen interest from the MOH, and participation of statutory and voluntary organisations ensured case decisions were made by workers, with chief officers rubber-stamping actions.⁵⁷ Conversely, in Bury, the size of the borough encouraged all chief officers to participate in the decision-making process for families, based on reports from HVs.⁵⁸ Interestingly, Brentwood was one strategy among many, with Bury referring few families; *none of whom were on the authority's 'problem family' register*, yet were all still labelled 'problem families'.⁵⁹ Whilst operational structures provided routes to identification and intervention, Bury shows that the personal encounter mattered as much as the local in differentiating 'problem' from supposedly normal families. Despite common frameworks and practices, local developments mattered.

It was in the County Councils where tension over committee purposes and power were most apparent. In Cheshire, ArCOs were delegated as the designated officer with responsibility for 'problem families', chairing meetings in their area. Action was reliant on the approval of the DMO (Divisional Medical Officer), who had little autonomy under the control of the CMO (County Medical Officer), Arnold Brown.⁶⁰ In Lancashire, the CMO Stanley C. Gawne (Image

⁵⁵ WALs: A1/22 Joint Meeting of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Children's, Education, Estates, Health and Welfare Services Committees, 21 Sept 1950; *ibid.* A1/369 Wigan Children's Committee, 16 Jan 1963; Annual report of the MOH for Wigan, 1958, pp. 44, 79-81.

⁵⁶ LRO: 352 MIN/HEA II/1 Liaison Subcommittee Minutes, 27 July 1951; *ibid.* 352 MIN/JOI/15/1 Joint Advisory Committee on the Coordination of Social Services Minutes, 16 Dec 1960; *ibid.* 364 PSS/3/1/30 Annual report for PSS, 1954, pp. 5-8, 13; Liverpool, *Coordination*.

⁵⁷ Annual report of the MOH for Salford, 1953, pp. 86-92; J. L. Burn, 'The problem of the child neglected in his own home', *Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute*, 72:4 (1952), p.326-36; Donnison, *Neglected child*, pp. 112-5; LA: DDX2302/box 10/case number 2102, Mrs MH (1955) Salford coordinating committee minutes, 25 Mar 1953, 13 Jan 1954 and 9 Mar 1955; Log book of Elwyn Thomas, Manchester and Salford FSU, 1950-67. I am grateful to John Welshman for providing access and permission to use the log book.

⁵⁸ BA: unlisted, Bury coordinating committee, report of the work of the committee, 1963-69.

⁵⁹ LA: DDX2302/box 18/case number 3128, Mrs BW (1962) HV report, 20 Oct 1963; *ibid.*/box 20/[no case number], Mrs DD (1966) MWO report, 11 Mar 1966.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*/box 13/case number 3212, Mrs BO (1963) Ellesmere Port coordinating committee minutes, 12 Nov 1963; *ibid.*/box 20/case number 3244, Mrs EH (1964) Congleton coordinating committee minutes, 30 Sept 1964;



Image 6: Stanley Clucas Gawne, County Medical Officer for Lancashire (1950-68), n.d. [1960s]

Source: British Medical Journal, 321:7274 (2000), p. 1474.

6), took a keen interest in ‘problem families’, delegating decision-making to DMOs. In turn, DMOs chaired several local case committees which encouraged the participation of anyone interested in each family. The DMO for Health Division 12, based in Bury, regularly convened committees in Rawtenstall, Ramsbottom, Radcliffe and Prestwich, calling further committees at Whitefield and Tottington when needed.⁶¹ Similar practices were common in Lancashire.⁶² Across the North West, ‘problem family’ mechanisms were fluid, and the boundary between committees of chief officers and street-level case conferences was porous. ‘Problem family’ committees did not represent Foucauldian governmentality, often despite their best efforts, but a haphazard, localised and fraught competition of professions, personalities and purposes.

Throughout the post-war period ‘problem family’ committees were not static, as shown in Chapter Three. Professionalisation occurred around child welfare in relation to cruelty and neglect. Contrary to John Macnicol’s claim that ‘child-neglecting families were generally not seen as the same as problem families’, concerns about child welfare were central to mobilising

CALS: LUM50 Annual report of the MOH for Middlewich, 1964, appendix A; J. M. Lee, B. Wood, B. W. Solomon and P. Walters, *The scope of local initiative* (London: Martin Robertson, 1974), pp. 135-41.

⁶¹ BA: unlisted LanCC HD12 (Bury) Case conference at Rawtenstall, 7 Apr 1964, Ramsbottom, 9 Apr 1964, Radcliffe, 18 Apr 1964 and Prestwich, 28 Aug 1964; and Whitefield, 27 Oct 1964 and Tottington, 10 Jan 1967.

⁶² For instance, Health Division 6 (Burnley) had committees in Reedley and Padiham, Nelson with Brierfield and Briercliffe, and Colne. LA: DDX2302/box 8/case number 1221, Mrs MF (1949) HV report, 27 July 1956; *ibid.*/box 4/case number 2056, Mrs RB (1954) HV report, 2 Sept 1954; *ibid.* CC/HDR6/1 Annual report of the DMO for HD6 (Burnley), 1955, p. 10.

the interest of the local state.⁶³ Child welfare also blurred service boundaries. As part of the gendering of justice, women magistrates normally presided over cases involving children, were often patrons or members of local voluntary organisations, sat on Children's Committees, and were part of the civic elite, being deeply embedded in local 'problem family' networks.⁶⁴ In Stretford, Mrs Cordelia M. James, JP (Justice of the Peace) was a magistrate, served as the child specialist for the Stretford branch of the WRVS, and attended the local 'problem family' committee.⁶⁵ Chadderton had similar arrangements.⁶⁶ Mrs ML from Speke, Liverpool in 1953 and Mrs IA from Salford in 1954 were the subjects of such a debate on the appropriate plan of action and only narrowly averted prosecution.⁶⁷ Pursuing prosecution cases for some families but not others also acted as another strategy in efforts to manage 'problem families'

Actions were not always taken unanimously, and consensus unforthcoming. In 1953 Mrs JS from Speke, Liverpool, was prosecuted for child neglect on leaving Brentwood, to the chagrin of FSU and MRA (Mother's Rest Association) who considered her a suitable candidate for rehabilitation.⁶⁸ Such local decision-making was challenged by the professionalisation and medicalisation accompanying the 'battered baby'. Expert representation proliferated whilst lay members, such as councillors, voluntary workers and magistrates were marginalised. Whilst the 1970 DHSS (Department of Health and Social Security) circular (Figure 4) led to some authorities forming a new committee, such as Rochdale, most combined them with 'problem family' committees.⁶⁹ In both Bury and Lancashire Health Division 12, this led to the increased role of the police, GPs (General Practitioners) and others previously outside the personal social services.⁷⁰ Other committees also became specifically and explicitly concerned with 'battered

⁶³ J. Macnicol, 'From "problem family" to "underclass"', in H. Fawcett and R. Lowe, eds., *Welfare policy in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 80; see A. Levene, 'Family breakdown and the "Welfare Child" in 19th and 20th century Britain', *History of the Family*, 11:2 (2006), pp. 67-79; A. Hughes and J. Meek, 'State regulation, family breakdown and lone motherhood', *Journal of Family History*, 39:4 (2014), pp. 364-87.

⁶⁴ G. M. Kammerer, *British and American child welfare services* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1962), pp. 131-4, 249-51; E. Burney, *Justice of the peace* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), pp. 36-41, 73-91; A. Logan, "'A suitable person for suitable cases'", *Twentieth Century British History*, 16:1 (2005), pp. 129-45; id., 'Policy networks and the juvenile court', *Crimes and Misdemeanours*, 3:2 (2009), pp. 18-36; C. Smart, 'Legal subjects and sexual objects', in J. Brophy and C. Smart, eds., *Women in law* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 59-60.

⁶⁵ LA: DDX2302/box 16/case number 2020, Mrs SM (1954) C. M. James to E. D. Abraham, 9 Nov 1954.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*/box 13/case number 2041, Mrs AN (1954) E. F. J. James to E. D. Abraham, 2 Feb 1955.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*/box 11/case number 1949, Mrs ML (1953) MRA report, 28 Sept 1953; *ibid.*/box 4/case number 2055, Mrs IA (1954) Salford coordinating committee minutes, 10 Sept 1952.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 1845, Mrs JS (1952) pencil note on Warden's Report, [n.d. June-July 1953].

⁶⁹ Annual report of the MOH for Rochdale, 1970, p. 31; C. Hallett and O. Stevenson, *Child abuse*: (London: Allen and Unwin, 1980), chap. 1.

⁷⁰ BA: unlisted, Bury coordinating committee, case number 64: HV report, 2 June 1971; *ibid.* LanCC Health Division 12, 'Problem families', B. Wolman to S. Chaudhuri, 19 Jan 1967; HV to DMO, 28 Apr 1967; DMO to T. Mackay, 4 Dec 1969; LA: DDX2302/box 22/[no case number], Mrs AES (1970) HV report, 22 Sept 1970, newsclipping from *Manchester Guardian*, 21 Oct 1970.

babies'.⁷¹ Discursive emphasis moved away from the 'problem family' to families 'at risk'. Operational structures remained: broadened and specialised, but in practice. Throughout, child welfare and neglect provided the core of anxieties, discourse and practices concerning decision-making on 'problem families' within the local state.

The local encounter between the state and the 'problem family' served as a confluence for local politics, chief officer competition, service strategies, staff and resources constraints, case conferences and concerns about child welfare. These factors influenced and shaped the parameters of the personal encounter discussed in Chapter Four. Politics mattered because it *did not* influence local policies and practices: these were determined by chief officers in the personal social services, who were constrained by staffing and resource shortages, increasing reliance on existing voluntary agencies and competition among each another. Decision-making on individual 'problem families' also varied by authorities, but concerns were voiced about and around the welfare of the child and maternal capacity. Local 'problem family' coordinating committees were the locus of operationalisation, but the extent to which they were genuinely cooperative or the domain of only one chief officer was also subject to personality clashes and conflicting service demands. Such clashes were certainly evident in Blackburn where repeated efforts by the MOH, J. Ardley, to regrade HVs to medico-social workers supervising 'problem families' caused an impasse with the CO, leading to repeated petitions to national professional associations to resolve the dispute.⁷² Across the North West, authorities and the overwhelming majority of chief officers, were engaged in formulating and implementing policies for 'problem families'. Historiographical emphasis on the published and visible sources of expertise has overlooked the extent to which such *practices*, and not just discourses, which targeted 'problem families' were ubiquitous to the local welfare state in post-war Britain.

Knowing the 'problem family' in the North West of England

Although chief officers and their strategies informed decision-making for 'problem families' in each authority, they did not exist in isolation. Chief officers were aware of practices in their neighbouring authorities, and drew on them to justify actions to their committees. Collectively,

⁷¹ For Salford see LA: DDX2302/box 19/[no case number], Mrs SB (1969) Salford coordinating committee minutes, 23 Mar 1970; for Winsford see *ibid.*/box 22/[no case number], Mrs KJP (1970) PO report, n. d. [Apr-May 1970].

⁷² MRC: MSS.378/C/13/1/2 K. R. Harding to Blackburn TC, 16 Jan 1962; *ibid.*/10 K. R. Harding to E. A. Steel, 1 Oct 1962; *ibid.*/4 D. Heney to M. Barnes, 1 Apr 1966; *ibid.*/5 K. McDougall to D. Heney, 18 Apr 1966.

these shared practices comprised a regional network. The networks were not just regional local authorities, but other institutions and individuals interested in ‘problem families’: notably the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester. Social scientists were linked with ways of knowing the ‘problem family’, and exploring policy impact. Networks were not ephemeral, but operated through professional associations such as NWSMOH (North West Branch of the Society of Medical Officers of Health) or NWACO (North West Region of the Association of Children’s Officers).⁷³ Moreover, ‘problem families’ were not just constructs of professional imagination, but specific subjects in rapidly changing working-class communities. High labour demand in declining low status industries including textiles and mining made the region one of the main destinations for post-war immigration. Alongside other ‘problem’ populations, Virginia Noble has argued that migrants were also subject to conditionality in accessing the welfare state.⁷⁴ Individual case files expose underlying racial considerations which permeated practices.

Here, I subsume local structures which governed the personal encounter in a provincial context in four ways. First, by exploring how universities created knowledge and trained social workers who operationalised the ‘problem family’. Second, consideration is given to the role of regional professional associations in circulating ideas of the ‘problem family’. Third, links between ‘problem families’ and another post-war ‘problem’ – race – are discussed, notably around the idea of ‘whiteness’. This is examined by contrasting attitudes and actions towards Irish and Eastern European families, especially EVWs (European Volunteer Workers), with non-white ‘Commonwealth’⁷⁵ migrants from the West Indies and Pakistan. Fourth, the socio-economic context which informed the declining basis of the region and the precarious basis of post-war affluence and consensus will be explored. Importantly, the local encounter which governs the personal encounter cannot be detached from its wider relationship to the landscape of the North West in post-war England.

Regional knowledge of the ‘problem family’ was as much a product of the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester as it was chief officers of local authority departments. Each of

⁷³ The records of the NWSMOH for 1904-74 are held in Manchester whilst those for 1894-1904 and 1974-81 are held at the Wellcome Library. The records of NWACO form part of the BASW (British Association of Social Workers) collection held at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick. MUSC: GB133 NWH; WL SA/SMO/N.7/1-4; MRC: MSS.378/ACCO/C/6/3. See also A. Engineer, ‘The Society of Medical Officers of Health’, *Medical History*, 45:1 (2001), pp. 97-114 and R. W. Stacey and T. Collis, *Catalogue and guide to the archives of the predecessor organisations, 1880-1970* (Birmingham: British Association of Social Workers, 1987), chap. 1.

⁷⁴ V. A. Noble, *Inside the welfare state* (London: Routledge, 2009), chap. 4.

⁷⁵ On the use of the term Commonwealth in racialising migration see P. Thane, ‘Population politics in postwar British culture’, in B. Conekin et al., *Moments of modernity* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1998), pp. 114-33.

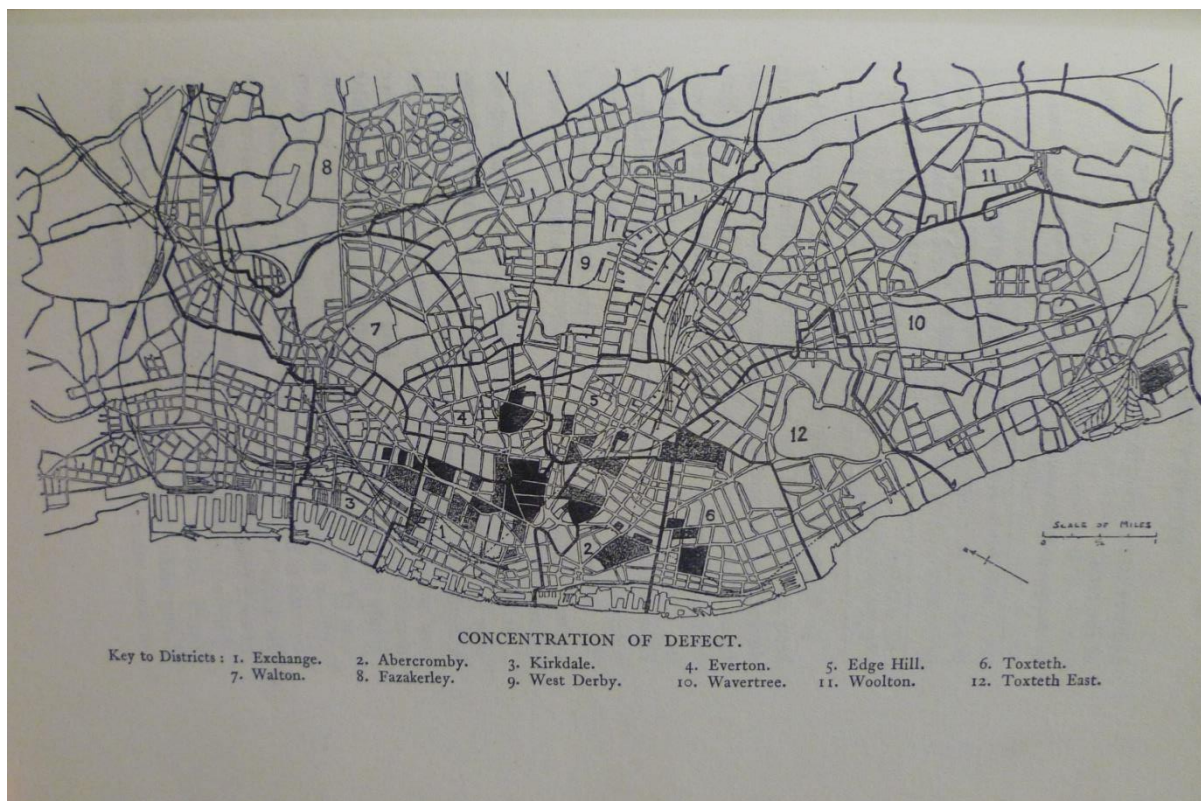


Figure 15: ‘Concentration of defect’ and the ‘social problem group’ in Liverpool, 1934.

Source: D. C. Jones, *The social survey of Merseyside, volume three* (Liverpool: LUP, 1934), p. 487

the universities performed social, spatial and civic functions in the city.⁷⁶ The Department of Social Science at Liverpool and the Department of Social Administration at Manchester, with their commitment to the study of local social problems and offering solutions, were crucial in managing the North West ‘problem family’.⁷⁷ In Liverpool, D. Caradog Jones’ 1934 *Social survey of Merseyside* was a precursor to post-war studies, with the third volume defining and

⁷⁶ W. Whyte, *Redbrick* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 7-16; T. Kelly, *For advancement of learning* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1981), chaps. 1 and 3; B. Pullan and M. Abendstern, *A history of the University of Manchester, 1951-73* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), chap. 4; id., *A history of the University of Manchester, 1973-90* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), chap. 1.

⁷⁷ D. Donnison, ‘The teaching of social administration’, *British Journal of Sociology*, 12:3 (1961), pp. 203-23; id., ‘The development of social administration’, in W. D. Birrell et al., *Social administration* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 28-41; M. Savage, *Identities and social change in Britain since 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 145-51; for Liverpool see LUSCA: D255/7/2/6/12 Notes by Norman Wilson on the history of the Social Science Department, May 1976; W. H. Scott, and J. B. Mays, ‘Department of Social Science, the University of Liverpool’, *Sociological Review*, 8:1 (1960), pp. 109-17; T. S. Simey, ‘Fifty years of social work teaching’, *Case Conference*, 1:8 (1954), pp. 5-9; id., ‘Social work, social policy and the university’, *Accord*, 8:4 (1963), pp. 17-23; M. E. Farmer, ‘University social science departments – 5’, *Social Service Quarterly*, 41:1 (1967), pp. 27-31; O. Banks, ‘Some reflections on gender, sociology and women’s history’, *Women’s History Review*, 8:3 (1999), pp. 401-10; for Manchester see J. Stevenson, ed., *The Barbara Rodgers memorial lectures* (Manchester: Manchester University Department of Social Policy and Social Work, 1997); D. Scott and P. Wilding, *Rise and fall* (Manchester: Manchester University School of Social Sciences, 2005); D. Scott, *Slightly above the weavers* (Lymm: DWS Publications, 2014).

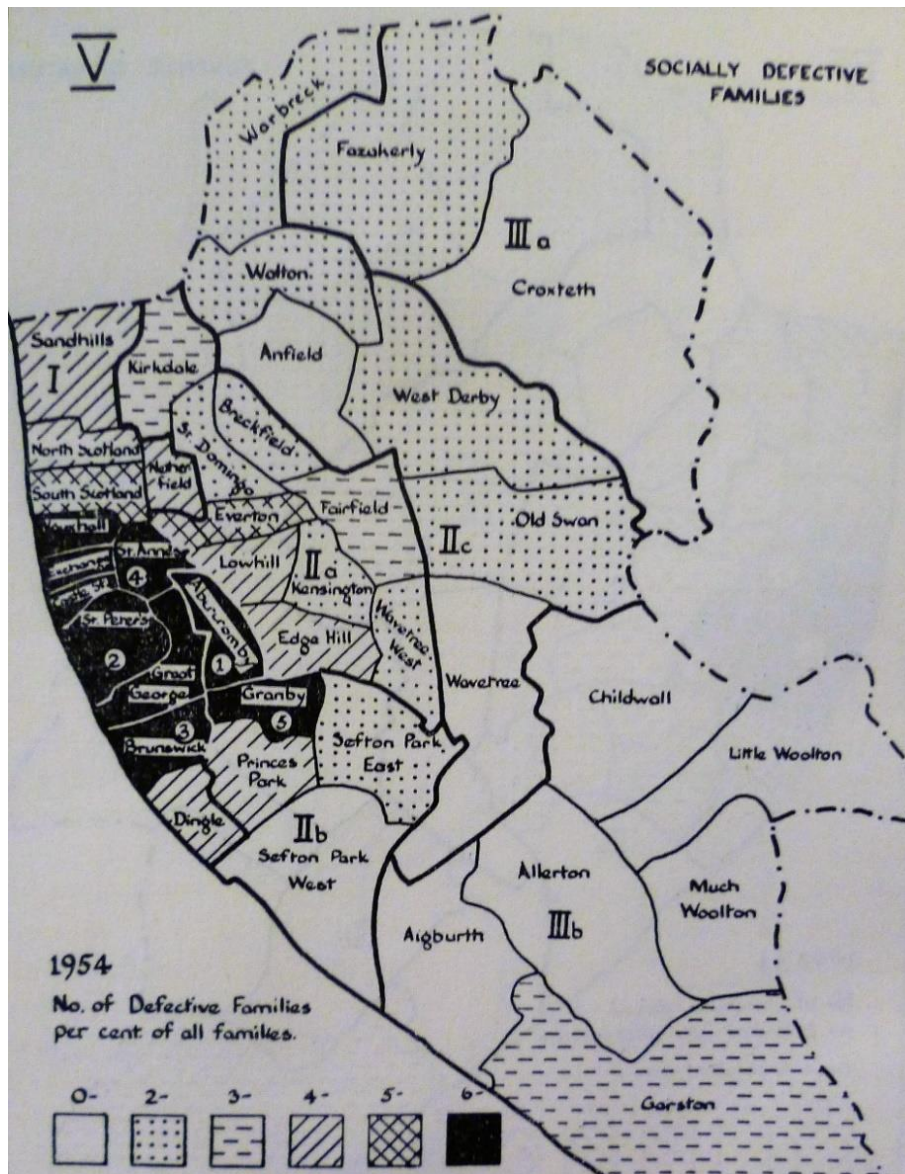


Figure 16: ‘Socially defective families’ and the ‘problem family’ in Liverpool, 1954.

Source: I. M. Castle and E. Gittus, ‘The distribution of social defects in Liverpool’, *Sociological Review*, 5:1 (1957), p. 64

quantifying the ‘social problem group’, mapping concentrations within the city (Figure 15).⁷⁸ Jones, and then Head of Department Alexander Carr-Saunders, were active members of the Eugenics Society.⁷⁹ In 1954 I. M. Castle and Elizabeth Gittus undertook a successor study which overlaid details obtained from the Public Health, Children’s and Police Juvenile Liaison

⁷⁸ D. C. Jones, *The social survey of Merseyside, vol. three* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1934), pp. 343-57; id., ‘Mental deficiency on Merseyside. Its connection with the social problem group’, *Eugenics Review*, 24:2 (1932), pp. 97-105; id., ‘The social problem group’, *Canadian Bar Review*, 23:3 (1945), pp. 183-226.

⁷⁹ See P. M. H. Mazumdar, *Eugenics, human genetics and human failings* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 243-5, 283-7; D. J. Kevles, *In the name of eugenics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 113-4; T. Osborne and N. Rose, ‘Populating sociology’, *Sociological Review*, 56:4 (2008), pp. 552-78.

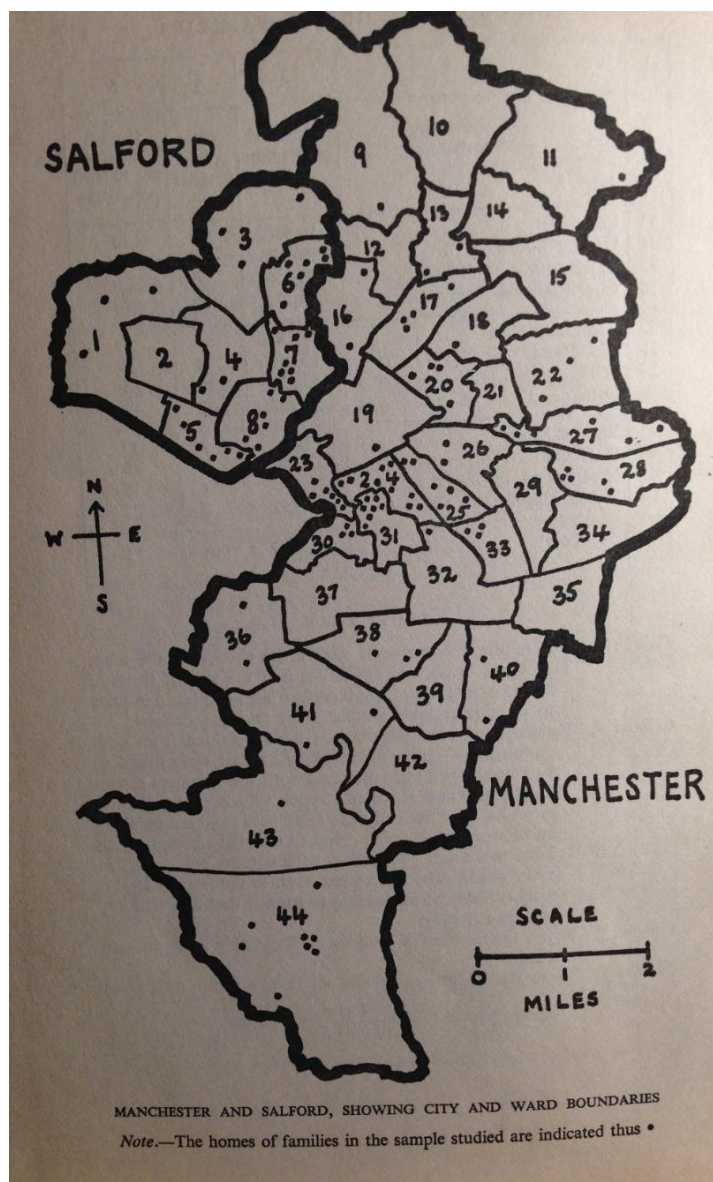


Figure 17: ‘Problem families’ in the districts of Manchester and Salford, 1954.

Source: D. V. Donnison, *The neglected child and the social services* (Manchester: MUP, 1954), p. 150.

Departments, and noted the proportion of ‘problem families’ to the normal population (Figure 16). This spurred Semple to further action after its publication in 1957.⁸⁰ Such views were not confined to the North West and were common to other provincial universities.⁸¹ Other studies

⁸⁰ I. M. Castle and E. Gittus, ‘The distribution of social defects in Liverpool’, *Sociological Review*, 5:1 (1957), pp. 43-64; Annual report of the MOH for Liverpool, 1957, pp. xiv, 27-9.

⁸¹ M. Bulmer, ‘The British tradition of social administration’, *Hastings Center Report*, 11:2 (1981), pp. 35-42; P. Wilding, ‘The evolution of social administration’, in P. Bean and S. MacPherson, eds., *Approaches to welfare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 1-15; id., ‘Social policy’, *Social Policy and Administration*, 43:7 (2009), pp. 736-49; R. Mishra, ‘Social policy and the discipline of social administration’, *Social Policy and Administration*, 20:1 (1986), pp. 28-38; id., ‘The academic tradition in social policy’, in M. Bulmer, et al., *The goals of social policy* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 64-83; R. M. Page, ‘The changing face of social administration’, *Social Policy and Administration*, 44:3 (2010), pp. 326-42.

by the Department, although not specifically on ‘problem families’, alluded to their existence or their relationship to other social problems.⁸² However, many later revised their views.⁸³ At Manchester, a more systematic study was undertaken by David V. Donnison, published in 1954 comparing ‘problem family’ committee policies in Salford and Manchester, and the districts where ‘problem families’ originated (Figure 17).⁸⁴ Traces of his involvement can be seen in several Brentwood case files.⁸⁵ His colleague in criminology, Gordon Rose, serialised a study of ‘problem family’ committees in *Case Conference* based on several County Boroughs near Manchester.⁸⁶ Following requests by many North West Children’s Departments using Section 45 of the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act – which encouraged commissioning research – two studies on ‘problem families’ were produced.⁸⁷ An unpublished study was also made of Brentwood.⁸⁸ Unlike Liverpool where more theoretical and less parochial sociological currents developed, Manchester remained wedded to post-war social administration, and the ‘problem family’, into the 1970s.⁸⁹ Both universities were central in creating regional knowledge of ‘problem families’. Moreover, their intimate relationship with statutory and voluntary agencies informed a shared commitment that prescribed and legitimated certain courses of action.

Operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ did not rest upon knowledge alone from the universities. Social studies departments in Liverpool and Manchester were sites for *training* and *mobilising* social workers. The transmission of ideas about the ‘problem family’ through

⁸² Liverpool Council of Social Service, *Youthful lawbreakers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1948), p. 40; J. B. Mays, *Growing up in the city* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1954), pp. 159-61; G. Duncan Mitchell and T. Lupton, ‘The Liverpool estate’, in Liverpool University Social Science Department, *Neighbourhood and community* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1954), pp. 58-9; T. S. Simey, *Social purpose and social science* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964), pp. 22-5; M. Kerr, *The people of Ship Street* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 1.

⁸³ J. B. Mays, ‘Urban family and social life’, *Case Conference*, 5:6 (1958), p. 134; Elizabeth Gittus became one of the first subscribers to CPAG. P. Thane and Ruth Davidson, *The Child Poverty Action Group, 1965 to 2015* (London: CPAG, 2016), p. 11.

⁸⁴ Donnison, *Neglected child*.

⁸⁵ LA: DDX2302/box 10/case number 2102, Mrs MH (1955) Salford coordinating committee minutes, 25 Mar 1953; *ibid.*/box 16/case number 1808, Mrs ALS (1952) Salford coordinating committee minutes, 2 Apr 1952; *ibid.*/box 4/case number 2055, Mrs IA (1954) Salford coordinating committee minutes, 10 Sept 1952.

⁸⁶ G. Rose, ‘Co-ordinating committees’, *Case Conference*, 4:2 (1957), pp. 41-6; 4:3 (1957), pp. 75-7; and 4:4 (1957), pp. 111-4.

⁸⁷ Wedge, *Preston*; J. S. Heywood and B. K. Allen, *Financial help in social work* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971).

⁸⁸ LA: DDX2302/box 19/[no case number], Mrs MB (1966) A. Davies to J. E. Handcock, 3 Oct 1966.

⁸⁹ Subject of discussion in interview with Paul Wilding by Michael Lambert, 31 October 2016; correspondence with Barry Hindess by Michael Lambert, 10-31 October 2016; on this tension see J. Platt, *A sociological history of the British Sociological Association* (London: Routledge, 2003), chap. 2; A. H. Halsey, *A history of sociology in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), chap. 5; on studies of the ‘problem family’ in Manchester see G. Rose, *The working class* (London: Longmans, 1968), pp. 109-10; M. Brown, *An introduction to social administration in Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), pp. 109-22; B. N. Rodgers et al., *Comparative social administration* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), pp. 268-9, 320-2.

training has been contested in the historiography. Selina Todd argues that by the late 1960s ‘only a small minority of family welfare workers received any formal training that could have exposed them to [psychological or eugenicist] ideas’.⁹⁰ However, Starkey has shown how links between FSU and provincial universities cemented expertise on ‘problem families’, especially Liverpool.⁹¹ Chris Hallett’s work on C. Fraser Brockington’s changes to HV training at the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, Manchester, also highlights the importance of regional networks.⁹² In the North West, the proportion of university qualified social workers was low, emphatically when compared to the South East.⁹³ Despite this, the training of street-level bureaucrats undertaken at the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester fed into the ‘folk sociology’ underpinning operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ narrated in Chapter Four. Local authorities across the North West regularly received students on placements from both universities.⁹⁴ Equally, many existing staff members were sent on short training or education courses to either university, one of the local colleges at Bolton or Preston, or run by professional associations.⁹⁵ Qualifications were not the sole indicator of engagement with new knowledge.

Voluntary organisations were also plugged into these regional networks operating from the universities. Starkey has discussed how FSU were considered a prestigious placement, and family casework agencies including PSS in Liverpool and FWA (Family Welfare Association) in Manchester regularly placed students.⁹⁶ Brentwood straddled these networks. The Centre received students on placement, particularly from Manchester, with members of staff including

⁹⁰ Todd, ‘Family welfare’, p. 369.

⁹¹ P. Starkey, *Families and social workers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 153-63; id., ‘Kind-hearted and good with people – or skilled professionals?’, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 155 (2006), pp. 65-84.

⁹² C. E. Hallett, ‘The “Manchester scheme”’, *Nursing Inquiry*, 12:4 (2005), p. 289; ‘Colin Fraser Brockington (1903-2004) and the revolution in nurse-education’, *Journal of Medical Biography*, 16:1 (2008), pp. 89-95.

⁹³ Packman, *Child care*, pp. 181-5; Parker, *Local health*, pp. 71-7, 165-6, 180-2; M. Jefferys, *An anatomy of social welfare services* (London: Michael Joseph, 1965), pp. 26-39; Youngusband, *Social work, vol. one*, pp. 80-97, 218-26; *ibid.*, vol. two, pp. 19-82; Holman, *Child care*, pp. 3-16; J. Cooper, *The creation of the British personal social services, 1962-1974* (London: Heinemann, 1983), pp. 26-32, 121-34.

⁹⁴ LA: CBBU/17/2 Burnley Children’s Committee Minutes, 8 Apr 1958, 10 Sept 1959, 7 June 1966; WALs: A1/389 Wigan Children’s Committee Minutes, 15 July 1965; StoLHL: S/R/15 Annual report of the MOH for Stockport, 1962, p. 12; Annual report of the MOH for Preston, 1957, p. 34; CALs: CCC2/5/6 Annual report of CO for Cheshire, 1958, pp. 23-4; Barrow Children’s Committee Minutes, 19 Sept 1960.

⁹⁵ SLHAL: S/MH/3/1/15 Annual report of the MOH for St Helens, 1954, p. 77; BALS: AB/32/2 Bolton Children’s Committee Minutes, 19 July 1955; OLSA: CBO/17/1/3 Oldham Children’s Committee Minutes, 10 Jan 1962; BLFHC Blackpool Children’s Committee Minutes, 22 Jan 1964; WLAS 180 Warrington Children’s Committee, 29 Oct 1959, 28 May 1964; Annual report of the MOH for Rochdale, 1955, p. 18; Annual report of the MOH for Southport, 1966, p. 34; LA: HRBI/2/1/59 Annual report of the MOH for Blackburn, 1958, p. 23.

⁹⁶ P. Starkey, ‘Kind-hearted and good with people – or skilled professionals?’, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 155 (2006), pp. 71-2, 82-3; LUSCA: D495(LI)M11/13 Annual report of Liverpool FSU, 1959, p. 4; LRO: 364 PSS/3/1/36 Annual report of PSS, 1960, pp. 22-4; GMCRO: GB127.M294/1/7/49 Annual report of Manchester and Salford FWA, 1965, pp. 13-14; *ibid.* GB127.M294/1/7/50 Annual report of Manchester and Salford FWA, 1966, p. 8.

the Deputy Wardens Catherine Woodcock and Sheila Barker leaving to study child care at the university.⁹⁷ The influence of Brentwood extended further into regional networks with students from Liverpool and Keele, but further nationally to the Universities of Hull and Edinburgh, with many arriving from the hub of post-war social work training: the LSE (London School of Economics).⁹⁸ Contemporary studies by Barbara Rodgers on the destinations of social work graduates, and the issue of women leaving social work on marriage, found that many continued to volunteer in local organisations.⁹⁹ Across the North West, psychological and eugenic ideas were not confined to qualified graduates, but *circulated* through educational currents around the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester.

Central to the development and circulation of regional networks around the ‘problem family’ were links between chief officers and universities. Civic universities prior to the war had strong connections with local philanthropists and voluntary social services, often through university settlements.¹⁰⁰ The revolving door between provincial university and local authority social work hardened after the war. At Manchester Jean Heywood, an influential lecturer in child care was formerly CO for Rochdale, whilst Ronald Walton, lead for the child care extra-mural course previously worked as a CCO in Oldham.¹⁰¹ These links extended to voluntary agencies. Barbara Rodgers, doyenne of the Manchester Department, previously worked for Manchester and Salford CSS (Council of Social Service), whilst Peter Wedge, who undertook

⁹⁷ LA: DDX2302/46 and box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 1 Oct 1953, 14 July 1966.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 17 Jan 1952, 3 July 1958; *ibid.*/box 20/[no case number], Mrs EH (1968) LSE Social Science to A. Hatton, 3 Apr 1970 and Keele Adult Education to A. Hatton, 10 Apr 1970; *ibid.*/box 6/case number 2917, Mrs MC (1960) M. Mulhall to E. D. Abraham, 20 June 1960; *ibid.*/box 6/case number 2183, Mrs DC (1956) K. Wells to E. D. Abraham, 17 Apr 1957; *ibid.*/box 13/case number 2050, Mrs EM (1954) J. Taylor to E. D. Abraham, 15 Jan 1955.

⁹⁹ B. N. Rodgers, ‘University social studies departments take stock’, *Case Conference*, 11:6 (1964), pp. 175-80; *id.*, *A follow-up of social administration students of Manchester University, 1940-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963), pp. 15-7; *id.*, *Careers of social science graduates* (Welwyn: Codicote Press, 1964), pp. 22-31; see also R. G. Walton and E. Barber, ‘Recruitment and follow-up of mature students on a two-year child care course’, *Case Conference*, 15:4 (1968), pp. 151-3.

¹⁰⁰ C. M. King and H. King, *“The two nations”* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1938); T. Kelly, *Outside the walls* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1950); M. D. Stocks, *Fifty years in every street* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956); M. E. Rose, *Everything went on at the Round House* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); *id.*, ‘Settlement of university men in great towns’, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 139 (1989), pp. 137-60; Scott, *Weavers*, chap. 4; on settlements more generally see H. Jennings, *University Settlement Bristol* (Bristol: Bristol University Settlement Community Association, 1971); R. Hamilton and J. Macleay, *Glasgow University Settlement* (Glasgow: Glasgow University Press, 1998); G. Smith et al., *Social enquiry, social reform and social action* (Oxford: Oxford University Department of Social Policy and Intervention), chaps. 1-8; K. Bradley, *Poverty, philanthropy and the state* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

¹⁰¹ LA: DDX2302/box 5/case number 1217, Mrs FB (1949) J. Heywood to E. D. Abraham, 8 Feb 1949; R. G. Walton and M. C. Heywood, *The forgotten children* (Manchester: Manchester University Department of Extra-Mural Studies, 1971) and biographical note in R. G. Walton, ‘In the best interests of the child’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 6:3 (1976), pp. 307-13.

research on ‘problem families’ in Preston, worked for Manchester FWA.¹⁰² A similar situation existed in Liverpool. Jean Kastell became child care lecturer in 1960, having served as a SCO (Senior Children’s Officer) in Cheshire. Peter Boss, whom we encountered in Chapter Four as an ArCO (Area Children’s Officer) in the county noting the conquest of poverty had exposed ‘problem families’, became a lecturer in child care in 1961.¹⁰³ These connections related to research. The close links with Rochdale formed the basis of Barbara Rodgers’ two studies of social services there, in 1960 with Julia Dixon, and in 1973 with June Stevenson.¹⁰⁴ Muriel Brown used her connections with Manchester and Salford CSS to report on the rehabilitation scheme for homeless and ‘problem’ families run by the organisation in 1964.¹⁰⁵ The discourse that academics constructed related directly to these regional connections.

Brentwood was also rooted in these networks. Susanne Lempert, a close colleague of Brockington at the University of Manchester Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, sat on the Brentwood committee from 1957 to 1962. She was joined by Margaret Hamilton, a lecturer in psychiatric social work who chaired the Brentwood case committee.¹⁰⁶ Lempert and Brockington had also worked on a study of services for the elderly requested by A. M. Watson, Secretary of the CCL (Community Council of Lancashire) a Stockport councillor, and Chair of the town’s Welfare Committee.¹⁰⁷ In 1965 Lempert was replaced by Nancy Lingard, tutor in child care in the Extramural Department and architect of Manchester’s family welfare centre.¹⁰⁸ These changes in outlook from public health to child care at Brentwood were also reflected in their ties to the University of Manchester. ‘Problem families’ were not separate or special, but simply another problem for post-war social administration academics to overcome in conjunction with local social services.

¹⁰² Scott and Wilding, *Rise and fall*, pp. 5-10; GMCRO: GB127.M294/1/7/49 Annual report of Manchester and Salford FWA, 1965, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰³ CALS: CCC2/5/9 Annual report of CO for Cheshire, 1961, pp. 30-1; *ibid.*/10 Annual report of CO for Cheshire, 1962, p. 25; P. Boss, *Social policy and the young delinquent* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 62-6; *id.*, *Exploration into child care* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 26-31; see foreword by Cheshire CO, M. Brooke Willis, in J. M. Kastell, *Casework in child care* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. x.

¹⁰⁴ Rodgers and Dixon, *Portrait*; B. N. Rodgers and J. Stevenson, *A new portrait of social work* (London: Heinemann, 1973).

¹⁰⁵ M. Brown, *Problems of homelessness* (Manchester: Manchester and Salford CSS, 1964); *id.*, ‘Coping with homelessness’, *New Society*, 3:92 (1964), pp. 16-7.

¹⁰⁶ LA: DDX2302/46 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 17 July 1957, 1 Oct 1959, 4 Oct 1962; *ibid.*/box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 7 May and 26 July 1965.

¹⁰⁷ C. F. Brockington and S. M. Lempert, *The social needs of the over-80s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966); MUSC: GB133 MMC/2/LempertS/1 Manchester Medical Society biographical form, 1965.

¹⁰⁸ LA: DDX2302/box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 11 Jan 1965 and 9 Jan 1969; N. E. Lingard et al., *Family Welfare Centre* (Manchester: Manchester Family Welfare Centre, 1960); Annual report of the MOH for Manchester, 1960, pp. 160-1.

Local and regional networks did not exist solely in relation to the university, but across professions and similar types of authorities. The CCA (County Councils Association) and the AMC (Association of Municipal Corporations) exercised influence in the creation of common policies across authorities;¹⁰⁹ particularly around ‘problem families’.¹¹⁰ Mrs M. M. C. Kemball exemplifies this interconnectivity, serving as a county councillor, later alderman for LanCC. She sat on the Children’s Committee, and the Welfare Services, Family Unit Accommodation and Social Services Coordination Subcommittees, along with the Brentwood Committee.¹¹¹ Based on her expertise, she became the CCA delegate on the Central Training Council in Child Care and for the Ingleby Report.¹¹² Professional associations were also important forums for debating the ‘problem family’. Meetings of the NWSMOH (North West Branch of the Society of Medical Officers of Health) provided an opportunity to air views, and shows the breadth of discourse beyond published sources. J. B. Davies, Deputy MOH and later Director of Social Services for Liverpool, J. W. Lobban, MOH for Birkenhead, J. Haworth Hilditch, MOH for Wigan, A. C. Crawford, DMO for Health Division 10 and J. G. Hailwood, DMO for Health Division 7 – among others –regularly discussed defining and tackling ‘problem families’.¹¹³ Furthermore, many had a common background at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Manchester during the inter-war years.¹¹⁴ Personal, professional and social networks were as a result enmeshed and intertwined.

The NWACO served a similar function for the less prolific COs.¹¹⁵ They pursued a common agenda with their junior colleagues, unlike MOsH, where career differences between typically male medically qualified men and subordinate street-level women as HVs prevented

¹⁰⁹ E. J. O. Gardner, *The Association of Municipal Corporations, 1873-1973* (London: AMC, 1972); K. Isaac-Henry, ‘The Association of Municipal Corporations and the County Councils Association’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1980; J. D. Marshall, ‘The years of transformation, 1929-74’, in Marshall, and McClintock, *Lancashire*, pp. 120-55; Lee et al, *Local initiative*, pp. 130-5.

¹¹⁰ LA: CC/HWM/1 CCA, AMC, UDCA and RDCA, ‘Accommodation for homeless families’, 25 July 1950 in LanCC Welfare Subcommittee Minutes, 20 Sept 1950; *ibid.* CBBU/59/1 Burnley Welfare Committee Minutes, 18 Apr 1961; *ibid.* CBBU/17/2 Burnley Children’s Committee, 7 Sept 1965; CALS: CCC2/5/3 Annual report of the CO for Cheshire, 1955, pp. 14-5; ‘Preventing the break-up of families’, *County Councils Association Gazette*, 48:3 (1955), p. 47-9; WL SP/FPA/A17/74 ‘Team work to aid problem families’, *Municipal Journal*, 4 Mar 1955.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* CC/CWA/2 LanCC Children’s Committee Working Papers, 30 Apr 1968; *ibid.* CC/HWM/1 LanCC Welfare Subcommittee Minutes, 28 Aug 1949; *ibid.* CC/HYM/1 LanCC Family Unit Accommodation Subcommittee Minutes, 7 Nov 1962; *ibid.* CC/HSC/1 LanCC Social Services Coordination Subcommittee Minutes, 20 Mar 1967; *ibid.* DDX2302/box 25 Brentwood Committee Minutes, 13 Jan 1966, 11 Jan 1968.

¹¹² HO, *Eighth report on the work of the Children’s Department* (London: HMSO, 1961), p. 87; *Report of the committee on children and young persons* (London: HMSO, 1960), p. ii.

¹¹³ MUSC GB133 NWH/1/6 folder 5 NWSMOH Minutes, 13 Mar 1953; *ibid.*/6 folder 6 10 Dec 1954; *ibid.*/7 folder 1 13 Jan 1956; *ibid.*/7 folder 2 8 Nov 1957 and 10 Oct 1958.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* GB133 MMC/2 see the biographical files for J. L. Burn, J. Haworth Hilditch, T. P. O’Grady, C. H. T. Wade and K. K. Wood.

¹¹⁵ MRC: MSS.378/ACCO/C6/3/3 NWACO Minutes, 27 Aug 1955; *ibid.*/5 10 Feb 1956; *ibid.*/11 7 Dec 1967.

any comparable convergence of professional interests. The career trajectories identified at the end of Chapter Four were stymied in public health, whereas they grew in other areas of social work. This was key to their ascendancy in relation to ‘problem families’. In 1964, along with the North West branch of ACCO (Association of Child Care Officers), NWACO sponsored Derek Jehu, child care tutor at the University of Liverpool, to study preventive services in the region, including the “‘problem family’ mother badly needing a recuperative holiday’ and their use of Brentwood.¹¹⁶ It was these shared professional links which fuelled the study of ‘problem family’ policies by the University of Manchester noted above. Local ties also transcended professional isolation. In Oldham, Jeanette Woods became the first woman police officer for the authority, later appointed as Assistant Principal PO (Probation Officer) for South East Lancashire, and serving as a member of the committee for the local FSU and CSS.¹¹⁷ These professional, local and associational ties, along with looser bonds with universities, produced an understanding of the ‘problem family’ which had many commonalities to national discourse, but was also unique to the North West.

The regional specificity of the North West becomes clearer when the ‘problem family’ is considered in relation to race and citizenship. Historically, waves of migration to the region had marked the Irish out as an unfavourable and distinct group, associated with criminality and poverty.¹¹⁸ Irish here must be understood as a ‘derogatory label applied to the “contagion” of Catholic migrants’, in the view of John Belchem.¹¹⁹ This label of separation and denigration continued into the twentieth century, although there were distinctions between generations and Irishness.¹²⁰ Evidence of these continuities in the North West can be seen in the Brentwood case files. The HV who referred Mrs ER from New Ferry, Cheshire in 1964 noted that ‘This

¹¹⁶ D. Jehu, *Casework* (Chorley: NWACO, 1964), p. 2.

¹¹⁷ OLSA: M190 Oldham Chronicle, 29 Jan 1944 and 14 July 1973; *ibid.* D/COSS/2/2/13 Annual report of Oldham CSS, 1958, p. 4; LUSCA: D495(OL)M2/1 Annual report of Oldham FSU, 1974, p. 4; D. Taylor, *999 and all that* (Oldham: Oldham Corporation, 1968), p. 107.

¹¹⁸ C. Pooley, ‘Irish settlement in North West England in the mid-nineteenth century’, *North West Labour History*, 16 (1990/1), pp. 26-35; *id.*, ‘The Irish in Liverpool, circa 1850-1940’, in M. A. Engman, ed., *Ethnic identity in urban Europe* (New York, NY: Dartmouth Publishing, 1992), pp. 71-97; F. Neal, *Sectarian violence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); W. J. Lowe, *The Irish in mid-Victorian Lancashire* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1989); S. Fielding, *Class and ethnicity* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1993); R. Swift, *Behaving badly* (Chester: Chester Academic Press, 2006); D. Beckingham, ‘The Irish question and the question of drunkenness’, *Irish Geography*, 42:2 (2009), pp. 125-44.

¹¹⁹ J. Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 10.

¹²⁰ A. Strachan, ‘Post-war Irish migration and settlement in England and Wales, 1951-81’, in R. King, ed., *Contemporary Irish migration* (Dublin: Geographical Society of Ireland, 1991), pp. 21-31; M. J. Hickman, ‘Reconstructing and deconstructing “race”’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21:2 (1998), pp. 288-307; R. M. Douglas, ‘Anglo-Saxons and Attacotti’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25:1 (2002), pp. 40-63; J. Corbally, ‘The jarrish Irish’, *Radical History Review*, 104 (2009), pp. 103-25; *id.*, ‘The othered Irish’, *Contemporary European History*, 24:1 (2015), pp. 105-25; H. Ewart, ‘“Coventry Irish”’, *Midland History*, 36:2 (2011), pp. 225-44.

household has always been a problem to us. The mother has also got a large family and takes in quite discriminately any Irish who arrive on this side'.¹²¹ In 1953 Mrs BT was one of many young Irish women who fled Ireland when pregnant, fearful of the consequences for unmarried Catholic women, and upon arriving in Salford began cohabiting with an unemployed hard-drinking married man, with the HV supporting her referral noting that 'they appeared to have contributed to each others [sic] ruin'.¹²² Conversely, the Warden's report of Mrs ED who left Brentwood to return to Manchester in 1953 noted that very quickly after her arrival, she 'soon showed herself to be a typical Irish peasant woman cheerfully ignorant and slow of intellect but with a certain amount of shrewdness'.¹²³ Although the growth of Catholic welfare and civic agencies curtailed outright prejudice, the Irish continued to feature as a racialised 'other' to post-war social services.

The Irish were not the only community to be socially differentiated. The arrival of EVWs (European Volunteer Workers) from Central and Eastern Europe in the immediate post-war period created further 'problem' populations which existed ambiguously in conceptions of entitlement and provision of the welfare state.¹²⁴ The disproportionate concentration of EVWs in the North West was due to their placement in unpopular, poorly paid and declining industries such as textiles, mining and agriculture. Conflict with local populations in similarly precarious and low status positions was reflected in tensions across communities in the North West.¹²⁵ It also provided another 'problem' to identify 'problem families'. In 1964 Mrs BO was referred to Brentwood from Ellesmere Port, after her Polish husband had a serious accident as a steel erector, plunging the household into poverty.¹²⁶ In 1955 Mrs JW was referred from Swinton, near Salford, as she never 'had a properly cooked meal as a child and does not know how to keep house, cook or bring up the children', although her Polish husband taking days off as a

¹²¹ LA: DDX2302/box 15/case number 3239, Mrs ER (1964) HV report, 12 June 1964.

¹²² *Ibid.*/box 17/case number 1882, Mrs BT (1953) Salford coordinating committee minutes, 28 Jan 1953; on unmarried Irish motherhood in post-war Britain see P. M. Garrett, 'The hidden history of PFIs', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 19:3 (2000), pp. 25-44; id., 'The abnormal flight', *Social History*, 25:3 (2000), pp. 330-43; on Lancashire see S. Lambert, *Irish women in Lancashire, 1922-1960* (Lancaster: Lancaster University Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 2001).

¹²³ LA: DDX2302/box 7/case number 1908, Mrs ED (1953) Warden's report, n. d. [Nov 1953].

¹²⁴ D. Kay and R. Miles, *Refugees or migrant workers?* (London: Routledge, 1992); W. Webster, 'Defining boundaries', *Women's History Review*, 9:2 (2000), pp. 257-76; L. McDowell, 'Workers, migrants, aliens or citizens?', *Political Geography*, 22:4 (2003), pp. 863-86; I. Weber-Newth, 'Narratives of settlement', in P. Panayi and K. Burrell, eds., *Histories and memories* (London: IB Tauris, 2006), pp. 75-95; B. Taylor and M. Sliwa, 'Polish migration', *History Workshop Journal*, 71 (2011), pp. 128-46.

¹²⁵ S. Catterall and K. Gildart, 'Outsiders', in S. Berger, et al, *Towards a comparative history of coalfield societies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 164-76; S. Phillips et al., "'They more or less blended in with society'", *Immigrants and Minorities*, 25:1 (2007), pp. 49-72.

¹²⁶ LA: DDX2302/box 13/case number 3212, Mrs BO (1964) HV report, 24 Dec 1964.

miner ‘for no apparent reason’ also featured prominently.¹²⁷ Mrs RZ was referred after being abandoned by her husband, a German miner, and moving to the Langley Estate, Middleton in 1956. The HV felt the problem was obvious: ‘the husband’s departure, and indeed... the whole problem, is the complete incompetence of [Mrs RZ] as housekeeper’.¹²⁸ Importantly, Mrs JW and Mrs RZ were sisters, and their foreign husbands served as an intensifier for surveillance by street-level bureaucrats. Like the Irish, EVWs – both as mothers and husbands – were disproportionately represented in case files as ‘problem families’ referred to Brentwood from the North West. Similarly, relationships between former Axis POWs (Prisoners-of-War) and British women enhanced the visibility of families to officials.¹²⁹ Although not necessarily seen as a ‘problem’ in isolation, racialised differences became a further signifier of a family as a ‘problem’ in conjunction with other ‘problems’ associated with maternal failure.

Racialised difference became problematic with increasing black and Asian migration under the label of ‘Commonwealth’ citizens in the post-war period. Although many cities had black or Asian communities before 1945, they were spatially, socially and culturally segregated and dealt with as a distinct ‘problem’.¹³⁰ Like the Irish, these were tinged with anxieties about criminality, poverty and sexuality, stoking fears of miscegenation by eugenicists.¹³¹ Although the Irish and amalgamation of nationalities under the EVW label were socially, culturally and often spatially differentiated, their ‘whiteness’ meant that they were not considered a distinct ‘problem’. Despite derogatory labelling and increasing their visibility as a ‘problem family’, the ‘whiteness’ of the Irish and EVWs meant that they *could* be rehabilitated. Black and Asian

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*/box 17/case number 2127, Mrs JW (1955) HV reports, 22 June 1955, 30 June 1956.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*/box 18/case number 2176, Mrs RZ (1956) HV report, 30 Jan 1956.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 2239, Mrs ES (1956) HV report, 4 Oct 1956; see also B. Hatley-Broad, ‘Coping in Britain and France’, in B. Moore and B. Hatley-Broad, eds., *Prisoners of war, prisoners of peace* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 141-50; B. Moore, ‘Illicit encounters’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48:4 (2013), pp. 742-60.

¹³⁰ W. Webster, *Imagining home* (London: University College London Press, 1998); on Liverpool see A. Murphy, *From Empire to the Rialto* (Birkenhead: Liver Press, 1995); J. N. Brown, *Dropping anchor, setting sail* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) and J. Belchem, *Before the Windrush* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014); on Salford see J. Jenkinson, ‘The black community of Salford and Hull, 1919-21’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 7:2 (1988), pp. 166-83; see also N. Evans, ‘Regulating the reserve army’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 4:2 (1985), pp. 68-115; L. Tabili, ‘The construction of racial difference in twentieth-century Britain’, *Journal of British Studies*, 33:1 (1994), pp. 54-98; B. Taylor, ‘Immigration, statecraft and public health’, *Social History of Medicine*, 29:3 (2016), pp. 512-33.

¹³¹ L. Tabili, *We ask for British justice*: (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); L. Bland, ‘White women and men of colour’, *Gender and History*, 17:1 (2005), pp. 29-61; on Liverpool see D. Frost, ‘The maligned, the despised and the ostracized’, in S. Haggerty et al., *The Empire in one city?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), pp. 143-64; C. Webb, ‘Special relationship’, *Women’s History Review*, 26:1 (2017), pp. 110-29; see also: M. E. Fletcher, *Report of an investigation into the colour problem in Liverpool and other ports* (Liverpool: Liverpool Association for the Welfare of Half-caste Children, 1930); Liverpool University Social Science Department, *The economic status of coloured families in the port of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1940); A. H. Richmond, *Colour prejudice in Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954).

families were a separate ‘problem’ and *could not* be rehabilitated by conventional practices. For instance, J. Ardley, MOH for Blackburn, dedicated the introduction of each of his annual reports to a ‘problem situation’. In 1966 this was the ‘problem family’; in 1967 it was Asian immigrants.¹³² Contemporary studies of Blackburn and Rochdale teased out this racialisation of problems.¹³³ In Liverpool, the black community in Granby preceded post-war migration, but white mothers of children with black fathers continued to be subject to close and targeted supervision by NSPCC Women Visitors.¹³⁴ Local strategies developed for ‘problem families’ by officials and agencies readily differentiated families through the lens of ‘whiteness’.

Traces of the process of determining ‘whiteness’ can be found in the Brentwood case files. In 1958 Mrs LG was referred to Brentwood for a second time, her referral report noting that ‘Officers supervising the case have done all they can to keep the family out of the coloured part of Liverpool and this prevented [Mrs LG] being tempted to adopt an easier way of life’.¹³⁵ Moreover, her association with black US servicemen in the ‘coloured clubs’ of Toxteth which caused her first referral, did nothing to assuage fears that an ‘easier way of life’ was tantamount to prostitution.¹³⁶ The Brentwood case files here indicate the issue of race by the presence of an absence. White mothers could be ‘rehabilitated’, even if they had mixed race children, so long as the non-white male was absent; although MWA (Moral Welfare Association) workers often did all they could to prevent such unions.¹³⁷ Black mothers could not be rehabilitated, and were notable by their absence in regional referrals to Brentwood. The issue of race was, however, complex. Mrs JC was referred from Liverpool in 1956 as she was allegedly not adequately performing her duties for her Chinese husband, described as an ‘intelligent man and quite capable’ by PSS’s case secretary.¹³⁸ Within the racialised hierarchies of (post-)colonial

¹³² LA: HRB1/2/1/67-8 Annual reports of the MOH for Blackburn, 1966, pp. 10-8 and 1967, pp. 10-4.

¹³³ J. Seabrook, *City close-up* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971); V. Robinson, *Transients, settlers and refugees* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986); A. H. Lord, ‘Housing of Asians in Wardleworth’, unpublished MSc thesis, University of Salford, 1975.

¹³⁴ NSPCC: 360/180/13 Annual report for Liverpool NSPCC, 1964, pp. 4-6; LA: DDX2302/box 16/case number 3203, Mrs ES (1963) A. B. Semple to E. D. Abraham, 26 Nov 1963; *ibid.*/box 16/case number 3227, Mrs GS (1964) A. B. Semple to E. D. Abraham, 20 Mar 1964; see also D. Frost, ‘Ambiguous identities’, in N. Kirk, ed., *Northern identities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 195-217.

¹³⁵ LA: DDX2302/box 9/[no case number], Mrs LG (1958), MRA report, 30 Jan 1958.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*/box 9/case number 2207, Mrs LG (1956) MRA report, 14 June 1956; see also: N. A. Wynn, “‘Race war’”, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 24:3 (2006), pp. 324-46; G. Goodman, “‘Only the best British brides’”, *Contemporary European History*, 17:4 (2008), pp. 483-503; S. Lee, ‘A forgotten legacy of the Second World War’, *Contemporary European History*, 20:2 (2011), pp. 157-81.

¹³⁷ LA: DDX1101/26/1 Burnley and District Family Social Work Association Committee Minutes, 7 Mar 1967, 13 Feb 1968; *ibid.* DDX1513/5/7 P. Swancott, ‘A subjective study of the Brookhouse community for the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Social Responsibility’, 1976.

¹³⁸ LA: DDX2302/box 6/case number 2191, Mrs JC (1956), B. Pearson to E. D. Abraham, 1 June 1956.

Britain, white mothers of Chinese husbands were not beyond the pale;¹³⁹ but mothers who were not white were ineligible for action. Accordingly, the Brentwood case files support Noble's argument about the racial boundaries of citizenship in the welfare state.¹⁴⁰ Whilst Welshman's view that 'ethnicity has generally been underplayed in [the underclass] discourse' is broadly accurate, race did permeate the assumptions of practice.¹⁴¹ The 'problem family' was therefore judged by street-level bureaucrats in *practice* as *white* maternal failure.

Underpinning the increase in migration in the post-war years and concerns over the 'problem family' was the socio-economic context of the North West. Poverty remained despite the welfare state. In the North West, several elements counterpoised affluence and prosperity: deindustrialisation and decline, occupational precariousness, workplace injury and disability, and the hardships of agricultural workers. For each element, the case files of Brentwood shine a light on how poverty brought families to the attention of the welfare state. Deindustrialisation was not new, and decaying Victorian premises and practices, along with global competition, contributed to high levels of unemployment in the inter-war period; particularly in textiles and mining.¹⁴² Peter Townsend's 1952 study of the unemployment of textile workers in Lancashire suggests that Seebohm Rowntree's claim that poverty had been virtually eliminated in his 1951 survey of York were inflated.¹⁴³ In 1952 Mrs BG was referred to Brentwood by her Atherton HV as she 'finds systematic homecraft overwhelming, resulting in fits of depression', yet the same report noted that her husband was an unemployed 'cotton operative' working as a house-to-house fruit vendor, with his 'negligible sales' causing Mrs BG to approach local charities.¹⁴⁴ Elsewhere, the decasualisation of the docks was heralded as a success, but household instability

¹³⁹ See Jones, *Social survey of Merseyside, vol. one*, pp. 66-85; M. Broady, 'The social adjustment of Chinese immigrants in Liverpool', *Sociological Review*, 3:1 (1955), pp. 65-75; on these hierarchies in Liverpool see T. Lane, *Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), pp. 82-95.

¹⁴⁰ Noble, *Welfare state*, chap. 4.

¹⁴¹ J. Welshman, 'From the cycle of deprivation to troubled families', in C. Cox and H. Marland, eds., *Migration, health and ethnicity in the modern world* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 177.

¹⁴² J. Singleton, 'Lancashire's last stand', *Economic History Review*, 39:1 (1986), pp. 92-107; H. Ratner, 'Struggles against redundancies in the textile machinery industry in the North West, 1948-56', *North West Labour History*, 23 (1998/9), pp. 40-8; S. Catterall, 'The Lancashire coalfield, 1945-1972', unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2001; A. Fowler, *Lancashire cotton operatives and work, 1900-1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), chap. 7.

¹⁴³ PEP, 'Poverty', *Planning*, 19:344 (1952), pp. 21-40; id., 'Social security and unemployment in Lancashire', *Planning*, 19:349 (1952), pp. 113-36; B. S. Rowntree and G. R. Lavers, *Poverty and the welfare state* (London: Longmans, 1951); on the survey see A. B. Atkinson, et al, 'Poverty in York', *Bulletin of Economic Research*, 33:2 (1981), pp. 59-71; T. J. Hatton and R. E. Bailey, 'Seebohm Rowntree and the postwar poverty puzzle', *Economic History Review*, 53:2 (2000), pp. 517-43; I. Gazeley, *Poverty in Britain, 1900-1965* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 173-7.

¹⁴⁴ LA: DDX2302/box 9/case number 1852, Mrs BG (1952) HV report, 17 Nov 1952.

and workplace precariousness for dockers remained in Liverpool, Manchester and Salford.¹⁴⁵ Neither Mrs AD and Mrs FM from Liverpool and Bootle, were able to provide for their families despite decasualisation, with both encountered by the welfare state for the first time due to poverty in the late 1940s.¹⁴⁶ Prosperity and stability for families were relative experiences.

Similarly, incapacity, illness and disability continued to cause hardship, plunging many families into poverty, with injured servicemen vulnerable throughout the post-war period.¹⁴⁷ All of these groups featured disproportionately as ‘problem families’. Typical was Mrs EJH, referred from Burnley in 1947 as her husband ‘is a neurotic, in receipt of 100% War Pension on that account, and is really in a bad state, which makes life very hard for [Mrs EJH]; she is under constant strain’.¹⁴⁸ Mrs MF was referred from nearby Padiham in 1949 as her husband was ‘a semi-cripple after pit accident few years ago’ and was unable to work, leaving his family of 11 to survive on inadequate NAB (National Assistance Board) payments.¹⁴⁹ Low wages, rugged conditions, poor housing and the isolation of farmworkers ensured disproportionate experiences of poverty and marginalisation.¹⁵⁰ The HV referring Mrs LVP to Brentwood in 1954 understated her situation, commenting: ‘I feel her circumstances are getting her down’.¹⁵¹ Mrs LVP was pregnant, lived with her husband and three children in a derelict agricultural labourers’ cottage in Wrightington, near Wigan, with few amenities and reluctance on the part of Wigan RDC (Rural District Council) to rehouse them. When they eventually moved to Shevington in 1956, the distance to Mr LVP’s former work rendered him unemployed until the CCO secured a place at a linoleum factory in 1958. Even then the family could only manage

¹⁴⁵ E. Tapin, *Liverpool dockers and seamen, 1870-1890* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1974); R. Bean, ‘Custom, job regulation and dock labour in Liverpool, 1911-39’, *International Review of Social History*, 27:3 (1982), pp. 271-89; F. Kenny, ‘“Good men”’, *North West Labour History*, 29 (2003/4), pp. 12-8; Liverpool University Social Science Department, *The dock worker* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1954); T. S. Simey, *The problem of social change* (Keele: North Staffordshire University College, 1956); C. M. Cunningham, ‘Labour mobility on the Liverpool Docks’, in R. Lawton and C. M. Cunningham, eds., *Merseyside* (London: Longman, 1970), pp. 294-323.

¹⁴⁶ LA: DDX2302/box 7/case number 830, Mrs AD (1947) MRA report, 13 Apr 1947; *ibid.*/box 12/case number 1142, Mrs FM (1948) MRA report, 19 Aug 1948.

¹⁴⁷ J. Bourke, ‘“Going home”’, in R. Bessel and D. Schumann, ed., *Life after death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 149-60; P. Thane, ‘The “welfare state” and the labour market’, in N. F. R. Crafts, et al., *Work and pay in 20th century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 190-6; Noble, *Welfare state*, pp. 75-81; J. Anderson, *War, disability and rehabilitation in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), chap 1; J. Hampton, *Disability and the welfare state* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2016), chap. 2.

¹⁴⁸ CF: Box 57/case number 823, Mrs EJH (1947) Burnley CSS report, 29 Apr 1947.

¹⁴⁹ LA: DDX2302/box 8/case number 1221, Mrs MF (1949) PO report, 17 Jan 1949, HV report, 9 Oct 1953.

¹⁵⁰ A. Armstrong, *Farmworkers in England and Wales* (Ames, IO: Iowa State University Press, 1988); S. Todd, ‘Young women, work and family in interwar rural England’, *Agricultural History Review*, 52:1 (2004), pp. 83-98; A. Davis, ‘Uncovering the lives of women in post-war Oxfordshire’, *Rural History*, 19:1 (2008), pp. 105-21.

¹⁵¹ LA: DDX2302/box 14/case number 1997, Mrs LVP (1954) HV report, n. d. [Apr 1954]

on regular overtime.¹⁵² Across the North West deindustrialisation, precariousness, disability and illness, along with the continuing poor conditions of agricultural work, were keenly felt. Each element underpinned the poverty which brought families into contact with the state.

Knowing the ‘problem family’ was inextricably linked to place. In the North West, the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester shaped knowledge of ‘problem families’ and trained social workers and others how to apply this expertise. Connections between universities and localities were reinforced by the circulation of personnel in statutory and voluntary agencies, and their involvement with professional associations. Knowledge and expertise were not just elite constructs. At the local level race and notions of ‘whiteness’ were central in identifying and intervening in ‘problem families’; delineating family eligibility for rehabilitation. Black and Asian families under the rubric of ‘Commonwealth’ migration were beyond the pale, exposing the ‘problem family’ as a problem of whiteness. Undoubtedly, poverty determined which families were exposed as ‘problems’. In the North West, the cumulative effects of deindustrialisation, precarious and insecure employment, poor health despite the welfare state, and the unseen hardship of farmworkers sustained regional deprivation which demarcated the ‘problem family’. The importance of regional specificities of the ‘problem family’ and their links with strategies and discourse will be discussed in Chapter Six through wider comparisons. However, focus on national discourses of the ‘problem family’, central to the historiography, belies the importance of place and region in the process of determining which families were, or were not, a ‘problem’.

The ‘problem family’ in the working-class community

When Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan proclaimed in 1957 that ‘most of our people have never had it so good’, he had a clear notion of who constituted ‘our people’.¹⁵³ Whilst the *place* of the North West shaped knowledge of the ‘problem family’ and the strategies and policies developed by chief officers, it was in the *space* of the working-class community where ‘problem families’ were differentiated from ‘our people’ by street-level bureaucrats. Views by contemporaries that ‘problem families’ were ‘easy to recognise and describe’ masks the subtleties involved. How families came to the attention of different services, were assessed as a ‘problem’, or one temporarily experiencing problems, and subject to intervention, were all

¹⁵² *Ibid.* HV reports, 23 Mar and 19 Dec 1955, 8 Nov 1956, 20 Sept 1958 and 3 Jan 1963.

¹⁵³ *The Times*, 21 July 1957.

actions undertaken at the local level by street-level bureaucrats. Here, Todd's argument that 'many welfare workers were sympathetic to the needs of working-class mothers in ways that were informed by both psychoanalytic methods and theories' has some truth.¹⁵⁴ However, she overlooks the extent to which negative, stereotyping and punitive sentiments were commonly and regularly employed by workers on a case-to-case basis because of the very structure of the personal encounter. 'Problem families' did not exist as a visibly, socially and culturally distinct deviant group except in the imagination of the contemporary expert. 'Problem families' were identified, designated a 'problem' and subject to action by street-level bureaucrats operating in working-class communities.

The 'problem family' is examined within the working-class communities of the North West in three ways. First, the role of poverty or other difficulties experienced by families in initiating contact with the state is explored. Second, the strands of contact and communication between the community and the state, as mediated by street-level bureaucracy, are discussed. Particularly, the denunciation of families as a 'problem' by friends, neighbours and relatives is considered, alongside how such families were established as, or refuted to be, a 'problem' by agencies of the state. Official procedures surrounding the referral of families to other agencies will be considered, and how this links to definitions of experts which relied on the number of contacts as the justification for labelling a family a 'problem'. Here, Barbara Wootton's remark that 'a problem family might well be defined as one whose consumption of social workers' time greatly exceeds the average of the local community' becomes more apparent.¹⁵⁵ Third, the changing character of working-class communities which enabled an unprecedented degree of intervention in everyday life is examined in relation to slum clearance and rehousing. The changing spatial and social contexts of post-war North West England were emphatic in creating and exposing the 'problem family', and providing legitimacy to street-level bureaucrats' claims that the 'problem' was found in the family, not society.¹⁵⁶

'Problem families' were poor families; and it was this which brought them into contact with a 'phalanx of officials' who differentiated them from the wider working-class community. Todd's view that '[f]amily welfare workers' interactions with their clients proved important in shaping and modifying their understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty' fails to frame poverty as the reason for the encounter between the worker and the family.¹⁵⁷ Indeed,

¹⁵⁴ Todd, 'Family welfare', p. 376.

¹⁵⁵ B. Wootton, *Social science and social pathology* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959), p. 55.

¹⁵⁶ See D. Massey, *Spatial divisions of labour* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ Todd, 'Family welfare', p. 363.

as David Vincent argues: ‘There was little sense of reciprocity in relations between bureaucrats and claimants’.¹⁵⁸ From the point-of-view of the street-level bureaucrat, ‘those threatened with destitution were to be passive recipients of the goodwill of the state’.¹⁵⁹ Requesting aid due to poverty determined power in the encounter, and handed street-level bureaucrats the authority to decide which was a ‘problem family’, and which was not. The case files of families referred to Brentwood offer an insight into this process of discernment. Mrs IG was referred from Leigh in 1951, being ‘unable to cope with home conditions’, ‘badly in need of rest and change, and has not had a holiday for the past twelve years’. Another HV reported in 1955 that ‘[Mrs IG] and family have moved into a larger house and the home conditions have much improved. The house is clean and comfortable’ meaning ‘[n]o further follow-up visits [are] necessary’.¹⁶⁰ Mrs IG was clearly part of a family with ‘problems’, not a ‘problem family’. Conversely, Mrs FM was referred from Liverpool by her MRA caseworker in 1949, finding her ‘rather a difficult m[other] to deal with – tended to be moody and discontented if not continually receiving material assistance. A stay at Brentwood would help her to achieve a happier outlook’.¹⁶¹ Workers did not always ‘shape’ or ‘modify’ views of poverty, as Todd argues. On returning from Brentwood, the HV visiting Mrs MR in 1952 felt this distracted her from caring for her family, particularly whilst working as potato picker and millworker, finding her ‘a nervous, excitable type of woman, living in a state of tension... and continually worrying about the family and how “they were going to manage”’.¹⁶² Street-level bureaucrats determined which approaches for assistance were legitimate and would overcome difficulties, and which reflected deeper or underlying ‘problems’. Far from contesting dominant notions of poverty, workers were required by their service role to reinforce notions of (un)deservingness.

The state did not systematically subject all working-class families to surveillance, but relied upon approaches by families for material or social assistance to initiate the processes of subjection. The paradigms of Foucault and Donzelot construct a hegemonic and monolithic state which never existed. Families were only differentiated by the state as a ‘problem’ after approaching services for assistance. Mrs EF was referred from Dingle, Liverpool in 1946 by PSS after she contacted them about ‘matrimonial difficulties’ stemming from the return of her husband, who suffered ‘shell shock’ following his experiences serving in the Far East during

¹⁵⁸ D. Vincent, *Poor citizens* (London: Longman, 1991), p. 206.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁶⁰ LA: DDX2302/box 9/case number 1580, Mrs IG (1951) HV reports, [n.d. Jan and Dec 1955].

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*/box 13/case number 1294, Mrs FM (1949) MRA report, 17 May 1949.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*/box 15/case number 1433, Mrs MR (1950) HV report, 5 Sept 1952.

the war. On investigation, the PSS caseworker reflected the ‘problem’ was Mrs EF as she was ‘known’ to them since 1937 and ‘has been “a difficult child” all her life’.¹⁶³ Mrs MD was referred from her tenement flat in Toxteth, Liverpool, 22 years later for a similar reason:

The family came to the notice of the Children’s Department firstly as a ‘rent case’ about two years ago. Collection was arranged and [Mrs MD] had paid regularly. It became apparent that there was a mental problem and eventually [her husband] deserted. He probably is not a very stable character and is rather frightened of anyone in authority or official position.¹⁶⁴

As the example of Mrs MD shows, eugenic and psychological explanations clearly permeated attitudes to poverty at the street level. Equally, not all workers sympathised with families. Mrs CS was referred by the MRA from Vauxhall, Liverpool in 1956 due to her inability to cope with her family’s dire poverty, and her poor choice of second husband:

At the present time he is receiving National Assistance for his family with help from the Prisoners Aid Society and clothing for [his eldest step-son] from the Education Department. Father has not accepted jobs when offered to him and spends a great deal of his money backing horses and drinking. [Mrs CS] is of rather low mental standard and is a poor housewife who has no idea of how to cook or budget her income, and the home and children are not well-kept.¹⁶⁵

Street-level bureaucrats across a spectrum of social services used their professional judgment to differentiate ‘problem families’ from working-class families in difficulties. Certainly, many were sympathetic, but the disparities in power which framed the encounter meant that poverty was understood in terms of the individual poor family, not structural inequality.

Families were not pushed into the encounters with the state by poverty alone, and there was some congruency between families considered a ‘problem’ by authorities and working-class neighbours. E. P. Thompson’s notion of a ‘moral economy’ was undoubtedly prevalent, particularly in poorer areas, and was policed within working-class communities.¹⁶⁶ The role of gossip in gendering this transmission of knowledge and its relationship to space has been

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*/box 8/case number 705, Mrs EF (1946) PSS report, 19 July 1946.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*/box 20/[no case number], Mrs MD (1968) CCO report, n. d. [Apr 1968].

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 2170, Mrs CS (1956) MRA report, 11 Jan 1956.

¹⁶⁶ E. P. Thompson, ‘The moral economy reviewed’, in E. P. Thompson, ed., *Customs in common* (London: Penguin: 1993), pp. 259-351; on Liverpool see P. Ayers, ‘Work, culture and gender’, *Labour History Review*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (2004), pp. 157-9; J. Murden, ““City of change and challenge””, in J. Belchem, ed., *Liverpool 800* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp. 410-1.

discussed by Melanie Tebbutt.¹⁶⁷ The denunciation of families failing to meet the standards of the community was widespread, and frequently a reason for coming to the attention of the authorities.¹⁶⁸ Neighbourhood disputes over children's behaviour were particularly common. The NSPCC encouraged such denunciations, but warned Inspectors to distinguish 'groundless' accusations.¹⁶⁹ However, street-level bureaucrats were the ones responsible for differentiating between 'idle gossip', 'malicious accusations' and 'genuine' concerns. The starkest example is the case of Maria Colwell in Brighton in 1973, discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, where the social worker was reprimanded for failing to account for the neighbours' complaints, despite the DHSS report finding their evidence 'unreliable, inaccurate and... exaggerated'.¹⁷⁰ There are frequent examples of denunciations in the Brentwood case files. The referral report for Mrs CAM from Billinge, near St Helens, in 1968 noted not only that '[n]eighbours have been complaining about the noise, and the parents' inability to cope with the children etc.', but '[t]hey have had very little help from neighbours and even some of the relatives, with the exception of the mother in law, who first approached me for help at the Child Welfare Centre.'¹⁷¹ The HV who referred Mrs TB from Manchester in 1963 also found herself making judgments amidst a family dispute:

[Mrs TB] has left her husband on two occasions and gone to her mother's home. On one occasion the paternal grandmother came to the Child Welfare Centre and asked the [HV] to see the state of the home, which was left in a filthy condition.¹⁷²

Similarly, the referral report on Mrs SC from Salford by her HV in 1957 commented: 'It has been reported by a neighbour that [Mr SC] sometimes knocks his wife about but she has never complained of this and is very loyal to him'.¹⁷³ Deciding which denunciations were accurate, and which were gossip, was instrumental in determining which families were a 'problem'.

¹⁶⁷ M. Tebbutt, 'Women's talk?', in A. M. Davies and S. Fielding, eds., *Workers' worlds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 49-73; id., "'You couldn't help but not know'", *Manchester Region History Review*, 6 (1992), pp. 72-9; id., *Women's talk?* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995).

¹⁶⁸ R. Gellately and S. Fitzpatrick, 'Introduction to the practices of denunciation in modern European history', in R. Gellately and S. Fitzpatrick, eds., *Accusatory practices* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), pp. 1-21; J. Klein, *Invisible men* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), chap. 9.

¹⁶⁹ NSPCC: 29/2/8 NSPCC Inspector Directory, 1948-58, part III.

¹⁷⁰ DHSS, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the care and supervision provided in relation to Maria Colwell* (London: HMSO, 1974), p. 34; I. Butler and M. Drakeford, *Social work on trial* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012), pp. 119-26.

¹⁷¹ LA: DDX2302/box 21/[no case number], Mrs CAM (1968) HV report, 17 May 1968.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*/box 5/case number 3164, Mrs TB (1963) HV report, n. d. [Apr 1963].

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*/box 6/case number 2305, Mrs SC (1957) HV report, 19 June 1957.

Related to the differentiation of families from the working-class community by poverty or denunciations was the sharing and circulation of details about families. This notion is crucial to the definition of the ‘problem family’ which relied on families being ‘known’ to multiple agencies. However, the practices of such agencies actively contributed to the construction of this self-fulfilling definition. Once again, the Brentwood case files provide a window into these practices at the street-level. The opening sentence of the report on Mrs AB from Ellesmere Report in 1966 read: ‘This family is well known to various agencies including the Children’s Dept., the NSPCC, Mental Welfare, probation...’.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, a letter from the Senior PO for South Lancashire to the DMO (Divisional Medical Officer) requesting financial aid for Mrs JS from Flixton, near Warrington, to attend Brentwood reported: ‘The above family is well known to you as it has been the subject of much discussion at the Coordination Committee over the last few months’.¹⁷⁵ In a referral report supporting the application of Mrs EW from Oldham to attend Brentwood in 1955, the FSU worker noted that she was ‘referred to us as being in need of help, particularly with regard to budgeting’ but this then exposed further ‘problems’ within the family.¹⁷⁶ In 1957 Mrs AE from Liverpool came to be classified as a ‘problem family’ after being referred to the Public Health Department by the MRA and CWA, which subsequently led to the HV referring the case to the NSPCC, who in turn requested that Mrs AE take the children to the GP and Child Welfare Clinic.¹⁷⁷ Information was also shared across authorities. The DMO for LanCC Health Division 12 often contacted neighbouring authorities if ‘known’ ‘problem families’ were removing into their areas.¹⁷⁸ These arrangements were reciprocal. If families arrived or moved from afar, enquiries were made; authorities that were more interested in ‘problem families’, such as Sheffield, actively exchanged details.¹⁷⁹ Crucially, families only became a ‘problem’ because local services *collectively* agreed. Disagreement and competition were rife, as discussed in Chapter Four, but concern that families were exploiting assistance, or playing agencies off against each another, unified interest, if not action. The ‘problem’, as Wootton suggested about the consumption of social workers’ time, was the service, or services, and their conflicting purposes within the welfare state, *not* the family.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*/box 19/[no case number], Mrs AB (1966) HV report, 29 June 1966.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 2719, Mrs JS (1958) J. W. Marsh to W. Sharpe, 6 Oct 1958.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*/box 17/case number 2076, Mrs EW (1955) FSU report, 6 Apr 1955.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*/box 4/case number 2260, Mrs EA (1957) MRA report, 31 Jan 1957; HV report, n. d. [Jan 1957].

¹⁷⁸ BA: unlisted, LanCC HD12 (Bury), A. M. Matthias to T. Seymour Jones, 1 Dec 1965, T. Seymour Jones to A. Haworth, 10 Jan 1967; J. S. Stockton to T. Seymour Jones, 11 July 1966; J. Reid to T. Seymour Jones, 5 Nov 1969.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, C. H. Wright to T. Seymour Jones, 14 May 1965; LA: DDX2302/box 13/case number 2830, Mrs OEMM (1959) R. Stockley to E. D. Abraham, 3 Dec 1959; Lambert, ““In pursuit””.

The character of the working-class community where class, poverty, and the ‘moral economy’ were performed, was transformed in the post-war period through slum clearance and rehousing policies. Like other benefits of the welfare state, conditionality endured. Access to housing by undeserving groups including ‘problem families’ was restricted by councils, ‘many of which still looked down over tenants’ in the post-war period according to Peter Shapely.¹⁸⁰ Contrary to Todd, these attitudes were visible in the actions of housing officials. Sociologists Sean Damer and Ruth Madigan commented on their experiences of actions in Glasgow in 1974:

The actual behaviour of the [housing] visitors when in the house was sometimes frankly offensive: there were raised eyebrows, aggressive questioning, and ill-concealed grimaces – reflecting perhaps their ambiguous feelings towards us as observers, but definitely their definition of some of the residents as cheating and deceitful.¹⁸¹

Access and allocation of council housing remained paternalistic and assessed by domesticity and ability to pay;¹⁸² respectability was paramount and links with how ‘problem families’ were identified by poverty and difference within working-class communities, as described above. Moreover, slum clearance exposed families to unprecedented official surveillance, and fostered greater intervention by the welfare state. Evidence of this is abundant in the Brentwood case files. Mrs ML was referred by LanCC on behalf of Newton-le-Willows in 1965 because:

The pre fab in which they live is to be demolished during the year and the Chairman of the Newton-le-Willows District Housing Committee has informed me that he is very reluctant to rehouse this family because they have proved to be undesirable tenants during the time they have lived at the present address.¹⁸³

Competing jurisdictions between district councils responsible for housing, and county councils for social and welfare services compounded problems. Mrs MES from Askam-in-Furness, Lancashire was referred to Brentwood in 1959 to satisfy Dalton UDC (Urban District Council) and remove her family from welfare accommodation managed by LanCC in a cottage deferred

¹⁸⁰ P. Shapely, *The politics of housing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 74; see also; J. English, ‘Access and deprivation in local authority housing’, in C. Jones, ed., *Urban deprivation and the inner city* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 113-35; T. Manion, ‘Access to local authority housing’, unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University, 1982; I. Loveland, ‘Square pegs, round holes’, *Journal of Law and Society*, 19:2 (1992), pp. 339-61; A. Ravetz, *Council housing and culture* (London: Routledge, 2001), chap. 8; B. Jones, ‘Slum clearance, privatization and residualization’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 21:4 (2010), pp. 510-39.

¹⁸¹ S. Damer and R. Madigan, ‘The housing investigator’, *New Society*, 29:616 (1974), p. 226.

¹⁸² S. Parker, ‘From the slums to the suburbs’, *London Journal*, 24:2 (1999), pp. 51-69; P. Burnham, ‘The squatters of 1946’, *Socialist History*, 25 (2004), pp. 20-45; P. Shapely, ‘Tenants arise!’, *Social History*, 31:1 (2006), pp. 60-78.

¹⁸³ LA: DDX2302/box 21/[no case number], Mrs ML (1965) HV report, 8 Sept 1965.

for demolition.¹⁸⁴ Access and allocation in housing spatially and socially segregated ‘problem families’: seen as the ‘housing lumpenproletariat’ by David Byrne.¹⁸⁵ The housing experiments of the post-war period redefined the spatial and social landscape, and working-class lives and communities contained within them, exposing ‘problem families’ to the state, and contributing to their marginalisation and segregation.

Alongside providing restricted access to housing, and allocating it based on conditional performance of behaviour, officials used other strategies to manage ‘problem families’. The most visible manifestation of access and allocation policies removing undesirable families to the periphery can be seen in the overspill estates of the post-war period: Kirkby and Speke for Liverpool; Langley, Partington and Hattersley for Manchester; Worsley for Salford; and a host of smaller developments.¹⁸⁶ However, local authorities devised strategies, frequently through ‘problem family’ committees, to rehouse the most ‘unsatisfactory tenants’ separately from the working-class population. Intermediate, or substandard accommodation as noted in Chapter Three, was used by authorities, and can be traced through the addresses of families referred to Brentwood. In Liverpool, the inter-war tenement blocks became notorious dumping grounds for ‘problem families’: notably Speke Road Gardens, Dingle, built a considerable distance from the nearest amenities or communities.¹⁸⁷ ‘Problem families’ were concentrated in a corner of the Norley Hall Estate by Wigan’s local committee, comprised of 96 pre-fabricated concrete Orilt houses which were ‘grimy and depressing’ according to the MOH, J. Haworth Hilditch.¹⁸⁸ In Eccles, Nissen huts on a disused anti-aircraft site formerly occupied by squatters were used to rehouse ‘problem families’: as those ‘in need’ moved out, those needing to prove themselves

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*/box 16/case number 2804, Mrs MES (1959) HV report, 3 July 1959.

¹⁸⁵ D. S. Byrne, “*Problem families*” (Durham: Durham University Department of Sociology and Social Administration, 1973).

¹⁸⁶ Shapely, *Politics of housing*, pp. 135-51; id., ‘Council wars’, in B. M. Doyle, ed., *Urban politics and space in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 99-115; K. G. Pickett, ‘Merseyside’s population and social structure’, in Lawton and Cunningham, *Merseyside*, pp. 72-107; R. Meegan, ‘Paradise postponed’, in P. Cooke, ed., *Localities* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 198-234; id., ‘Urban regeneration, politics and social cohesion’, in R. Munck, ed., *Reinventing the city?* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), pp. 53-79; J. Stevenson, ‘The Jerusalem that failed?’, in T. Gourvish and A. O’Day, eds., *Britain since 1945* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 89-110.

¹⁸⁷ LRO: 352 MIN/HEA II/1 Liaison Subcommittee Minutes, 1951-8; LA: DDX2302/box 11/case numbers 1949, 2105 and 2789, Mrs ML (1953-60); *ibid.*/box 12/case number 2206, Mrs CM (1956); *ibid.*/box 18/case numbers 2679 and 3036, Mrs EW (1958-61); *ibid.*/box 20/[no case number], Mrs RD (1966); C. Pooley, ‘Living in Liverpool’, in Belchem, *Liverpool 800*, pp. 206-23; M. Whitfield, ‘Lancelot Keay and Liverpool’s multi-storey housing of the 1930s’, in E. Harwood and A. Powers, eds., *Housing the twentieth-century nation* (London: Twentieth-Century Society, 2008), pp. 37-50.

¹⁸⁸ J. Haworth Hilditch and W. Steels, *Operation phoenix* (Wigan: Wigan County Borough Council, 1970), p. 8; LA: DDX2302/box 6/case number 2796, Mrs EC (1959); see also D. Robertson et al., ‘The Raploch’, *Architectural Heritage*, 19:1 (2008), pp. 88-90.

moved in.¹⁸⁹ In rural settings such as Altrincham, pre-fabricated bungalows and caravan sites acquired for wartime use, or to alleviate post-war shortages, were incorporated into housing hierarchies, and used to rehouse ‘problem families’ after the occupants were rehoused.¹⁹⁰ The most visible form of this segregation was the use of deferred demolition: moving the original occupants out to new council housing, and moving ‘problem families’ in to properties due for demolition. In Bury, at the margin of the authority boundary, Duckworth Fold was used for this purpose.¹⁹¹ Elsewhere, Atherton UDC and LanCC colluded in the rehousing of a notorious ‘problem family’ in ‘isolated old property’ condemned for motorway redevelopment, miles from the nearest neighbour, lacking amenities and access.¹⁹² These varied intermediate and substandard forms of accommodation points to their role in reshaping and reconstructing the post-war working-class community. The spatial and social management of people and places were the extreme end of a spectrum of strategies intended to restrict access to the welfare state.

The redevelopment and housing allocation which redefined working-class communities was a process rather than an event; and strategies of exclusion existed alongside hierarchies of respectability in street-level bureaucrats’ segregation of ‘problem families’. Minayo Nasiali, in her study of similar processes in post-war Marseille, notes that ‘[c]ity officials... created... the slum they had imagined’ by social and spatial gradation.¹⁹³ Elizabeth Burney, writing about redevelopment in Manchester in 1967 noted perceptively that: ‘the more completely a local authority does away with cheap, decayed inner-city districts, the less it can avoid contact with poor, inconvenient, unconventional people’.¹⁹⁴ In short, the concerns and apparatus of the state advanced with the bulldozers and created and exposed more ‘problem families’. Concern with ‘multiple occupation’ and concomitant overcrowding in the surviving slums offered a coded vocabulary to concerns over containment.¹⁹⁵ By refusing to rehouse ‘problem’ populations –

¹⁸⁹ LA: DDX2302/box 14/case numbers 1873 and 1904, Mrs RP (1953); *ibid.*/box 17/case number 1959, Mrs GW (1953); on squatting see J. Hinton, ‘Self-help and socialism and the squatters’ movement of 1946’, *History Workshop Journal*, 25 (1988), pp. 100-26; H. Webber, ‘A domestic rebellion’, *Ex Historia*, 4 (2012), pp. 125-46.

¹⁹⁰ LA: DDX2302/box 4/case number 1745, Mrs EDA (1951); G. Stevenson, *Palaces for the people* (London: Batsford, 2003); P. Tarpey and J. McLaughlin, *Prefab days* (Liverpool: Enterprise Marketing and Publishing Service, 2006); *id.*, *More prefab days* (Liverpool: Enterprise Marketing and Publishing Service, 2008).

¹⁹¹ BA: unlisted, Bury coordinating committee minutes, 12 Feb and 22 Oct 1963, 30 Oct 1969.

¹⁹² LA: CC/HYM/1 LanCC Family Unit Accommodation Subcommittee Minutes, 10 Nov 1969.

¹⁹³ M. Nasiali, ‘Ordering the disorderly slum’, *Journal of Urban History*, 38:6 (2012), p. 1028; *id.*, ‘Citizens, squatters and asocials’, *American Historical Review*, 119:2 (2014), pp. 434-59; *id.*, *Native to the Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

¹⁹⁴ E. Burney, *Housing on trial* (Oxford: Institute of Race Relations, 1967), p. 172.

¹⁹⁵ LivCC Housing Committee, *Joint report on the condition of houses, etc. in the Granby Ward* (Liverpool: Liverpool Housing Committee, 1966); Burney, *Housing*, pp. 62-71, 147-78; E. Gittus, ‘Sociological aspects of urban decay’, in D. F. Medhurst and J. Parry Lewis, eds., *Urban decay* (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 27-35; D. Muchnick, *Urban renewal in Liverpool* (London: Bell, 1970), chaps. 4 and 5; see also J. Rex and R. Moore, *Race, community and conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 21-6.

racial or social – or those not considered to be proper citizens, officials created ‘twilight areas’, whose residualised populations consisted of white ‘problem families’ and black households: notably Granby in Liverpool and Moss Side in Manchester.¹⁹⁶ The final report of the Inner Area Studies, undertaken in the early 1970s by the Department of the Environment in ‘twilight areas’ in Birmingham and London, along with Liverpool, found that in the latter:

A characteristic feature of the inner area is the concentration of people confined to the poorest and least secure housing, restricted to unskilled, poorly paid or insecure jobs; discriminated against on grounds of race; suffering physical or mental handicap; or simply being poor.¹⁹⁷

This was also found in a 1970 report into ‘social malaise’ in Liverpool undertaken by Francis Amos, the city’s first Planning Officer. Amos used details obtained from other chief officers to map indicators of malaise for each ward: with the number of ‘problem families’ being one such indicator. The 149 ‘problem families’ on the city’s register were concentrated in Granby, Abercromby and other central wards containing tenements, along with outer estates including Speke.¹⁹⁸ The exclusion seen in the creation of ‘twilight areas’ shows that ‘problem families’ existed within other processes of social and spatial marginalisation engendered by the welfare state. ‘Problem families’ were not the only constituent element of the post-war ‘underclass’. By contextualising them in the changing working-class communities, the racial, social and even generational basis of poverty, exclusion and undeservingness becomes apparent.¹⁹⁹

‘Problem families’ did not exist in the imagination of street-level bureaucrats, but were ‘discovered’ in the spatial and social reconstructions of the post-war welfare state. Space was as significant as place, and ‘problem families’ were those who were financially and materially poor, subject to greater intrusion by a ‘phalanx of officials’ who assessed their deservingness, and were increasingly visible due to the advance of post-war slum clearance. Contrary to the

¹⁹⁶ A. B. Zack-Williams, ‘African diaspora conditioning’, *Journal of Black Studies*, 27:4 (1997), pp. 528-42; Brown, *Dropping anchor*, chap. 4; Belchem, *Windrush*, chap. 6; R. H. Ward, ‘Residential succession and race relations in Moss Side, Manchester’, unpublished PhD thesis, Manchester University, 1975; id., ‘Where race didn’t divide’, in R. Miles and A. Phizacklea, eds., *Racism and political action in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1979), pp. 204-22; I. G. Law, ‘White racism and black settlement in Liverpool’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 1985; J. Stanley, ‘Mangoes to Moss Side’, *Manchester Region History Review*, 16 (2002/3), pp. 33-43; L. Brown and N. Cunningham, ‘The inner geographies of a migrant gateway’, *Social Science History*, 40:1 (2016), pp. 93-120.

¹⁹⁷ DoE, *Inner areas studies* (London: HMSO, 1977), p. 6; id., *Change or decay* (London: HMSO, 1977).

¹⁹⁸ F. J. C. Amos, *Social malaise in Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool Planning Department, 1970), p. 18; id., *Social survey* (Liverpool: Liverpool Planning Department, 1970), p. 3. Kirkby did not come within the purview of the survey as it fell within administrative jurisdiction of LanCC.

¹⁹⁹ H. J. Gans, ‘Deconstructing the underclass’, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 56:3 (1990), pp. 271-7.

post-modern omnipotent state of Foucauldian fantasy, working-class families negotiated and engaged with the state and its 'shadow' to obtain material benefits, seek redress in conflict with neighbours, and access services otherwise available to 'normal' citizens. The professionalised separation of services and their view of 'problems' – social, medical, welfare, relational and others – contributed to creating 'problem families' by referring families to other services for specific issues. Increased visibility and greater contact with the state led to families being collectively designated a 'problem'. The apparatus of the state did not 'discover', but created and differentiated 'problem families' from within working-class communities. Post-war slum clearance and the responsibility of authorities to rehouse families served to restrict eligibility and access to benefits of the welfare state. Social and spatial marginalisation underpinned common experiences of poverty across a wider 'underclass'. Carolyn Steedman has written fondly of the sense of worth conveyed upon her by these material benefits of the welfare state:

I think I would be a very different person now if orange juice and milk and school dinners at school hadn't told me in a covert way, that I had a right to exist, *was worth something* [emphasis added].²⁰⁰

It could be argued that equally, for the families who were probed by asking for benefits, were denounced by respectable neighbours, or rehoused into Speke Road Gardens, knew very well what the welfare state thought of them: *they were not worth something*.

Conclusion

The personal encounter constructed in Chapter Four, between the 'phalanx of officials' and the 'problem family' was determined by local structures of governance. Decision-making about families did not exist in isolation, but was situated within a complex entanglement of competing personal, professional and political priorities. Chapter Five has reconstructed this process in three ways. First, by appreciating that every street-level bureaucrat was employed by statutory or voluntary agencies to perform a function. In turn, the choices they made, covered in Chapter Four, are conditioned by issues such as staffing levels, resources, and the low priority accorded to personal social services within government. At the local level, the chief officer designated as responsible for 'problem families' developed strategies based on their relationship with other services, and their own view of the 'problem'. Emphatically, it was not eugenically-minded

²⁰⁰ C. Steedman, *Landscape for a good woman* (London: Virago, 1986), p. 122.

MOsH interested in the ‘problem family’ who dominated proceedings, but every single social service in the post-war welfare state. Second, local structures were not uniform and were influenced by place. The Universities of Manchester and Liverpool contributed to producing knowledge about the ‘problem family’, whilst the social profile of families identified by street-level bureaucrats demonstrates the economic and racial boundaries of whiteness and poverty found in post-war citizenship. Third, space was as important as place, and the location of the ‘problem family’ in the working-class community, rather than isolation, is key to understanding the process of differentiation they represented. ‘Problem families’ were not a subcultural class apart, defined by their behaviour, but were singled out by street-level bureaucrats responsible for identifying ‘problem families’. Notions of deservingness permeated street-level decision-making because the structures of the state left them intact. The 1948 National Assistance Act had proclaimed: ‘The existing Poor Law shall cease to have effect’.²⁰¹ Enduring attitudes of ‘less eligibility’ embodied in policies and practices which considered the ‘problem family’ showed that it was continuing to affect the operation of the post-war welfare state.

Disparate, disunited but distinct local practices which developed around identifying and intervening in ‘problem families’ were evident in the post-war local state in the North West of England. This approached, but did not constitute, a shared regional model as the administrative boundaries of local authorities, the geographical basis for different professional organisations, and mobility of personal networks all ensured the fluidity of ‘problem family’ strategies in the North West. Brentwood remained crucial through the changes these underwent. Moreover, what this chapter has demonstrated is that ‘problem families’ were not understood in terms of their behaviour by eugenic or psychological frameworks applied by professionals, but were situated within departmental, local authority and operational structures of practice. The street-level bureaucratic context cannot be disregarded in understanding the processes of discernment and judgment whereby individual workers – together comprising a ‘phalanx’ – labelled certain families as a ‘problem’. Contrary to Todd’s contention, ‘problem families’ existed because they were willingly identified by a range of workers. However, this conceptualisation does not exist in isolation, or apply just in the North West; practices were in turn governed and structured by a wider national framework concerned with the ‘problem family’. Comparing other regional experiences with the North West allows for greater understanding of regional particularity. Moreover, it exposes the extent to which policies and practices surrounding the management of ‘problem families’ at the local level were influenced and shaped by national anxieties and

²⁰¹ *National Assistance Act, 1948*, part 2, clause 1.

processes. The personal encounter described in Chapter Four was shaped by local structures considered in this chapter. These were also determined in crucial ways by national dynamics, explored in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six:

‘Problem families’: standardisation, nationalisation and professionalisation

Introduction

The relationship between the ‘problem family’ and the local welfare state, discussed in Chapter Five, was used to frame the personal encounter between street-level bureaucrats and families which was explored across professions and services in Chapter Four. These were constructed around a historiographical, methodological and chronological framing of the ‘problem family’ provided in Part One. So far, Part Two has shown how junior and senior staff across social and welfare agencies – constituting a ‘phalanx of officials’ in the words of Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly¹ – which provided the core of personal social services in post-war Britain shared a regionally particular ‘folk sociology’ of the ‘problem family’. This was operationalised in policies created by chief officers and practices of street-level bureaucrats: ‘problem families’ were invariably ‘easy to recognise’, if ‘surprisingly hard to define’.² It was these encounters between the state and the family which supported Virginia Noble’s view that the welfare state was best understood through ‘decisions made by bureaucrats and in the interactions between those claiming benefits and those dispensing them’.³ Michael Lipsky’s notion of street-level bureaucracy has been utilised to contextualise competing personal and departmental pressures which exerted themselves on the decision-making processes around differentiating individual ‘problem families’.⁴ Undoubtedly the ‘problem family’ was a subject of concern in post-war discourse, as noted by John Macnicol and John Welshman,⁵ but it cannot be detached from the operational debates and changes which they reflected: ‘problem families’ existed. They existed in the minds of officials and experts because they were embedded in local welfare state structures which identified them, differentiated them from others, and pursued intervention.

¹ B. Taylor and B. Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly is a dirty, lazy type’”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 18:4 (2007), p. 438.

² E. E. Irvine, ‘Research into problem families’, *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, 2:9 (1954), p. 24.

³ V. A. Noble, *Inside the welfare state* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.

⁴ M. Lipsky, *Street-level bureaucracy* (New York: Russell Sage, 1980).

⁵ J. Macnicol, ‘In pursuit of the underclass’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 16:3 (1987), pp. 293-318; J. Welshman, *Underclass* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), intro. and chap. 4.

‘Problem family’ operational policies and practices were not, however, confined to the North West. ‘Problem families’ were emphatically a subject of national interest in post-war governance, and it is these national structures which shaped the local and personal encounters covered in Chapters Four and Five which forms the basis of this chapter. It follows a similar process of re-examining both welfare and the state through individual episodes developed by the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies in their 1978 study *Policing the crisis*.⁶

This re-examination is developed in three ways. First, how the ‘problem family’ was *standardised*. The ability of chief officers and local authorities to develop policies concerning ‘problem families’ was far from autonomous, being circumscribed by both central government and their service’s supervising ministry. The ‘problem family’ was not a central imposition, and the circulars and legislation which informed local responses (Figure 4) were a consequence of professions and localities lobbying for action. This standardisation of the ‘problem family’ is reconstructed through an examination of how ‘problem family’ policies were formed and disseminated, and reflects on how the influence of ideas and the involvement of expertise worked in post-war governance. Second, how the ‘problem family’ was *nationalised*. The local studies of Leicester by Welshman, Bristol by Pat Starkey, Norwich by Taylor and Rogaly, and Sheffield by the author provided a basis for the regional study of the North West developed in Chapter Five and will be used to compare developments in local authorities across post-war Britain.⁷ Here, the case files of mothers referred from authorities outside the North West to Brentwood offer a sense of engagement with operational practices. Common and continuous national ‘problem family’ policies despite political changes in government provide substance for ‘problem families’ being considered one of Richard Toye’s ‘pertinent silences’ in post-war consensus.⁸ Third, processes of *professionalisation* embedded in discourses of the ‘problem family’ are reconsidered through the lens of their connectivity to operational practices. Rather than seeing ‘problem family’ discourses as falling from favour through negative connotations, their centrality and continuity throughout the ‘golden age’ of the welfare state from 1945 to 1974 is affirmed. Consequently, ‘problem families’ should be considered as much a part of the post-war welfare state as the NHS (National Health Service).

⁶ S. Hall et al., *Policing the crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

⁷ J. Welshman, *Municipal medicine* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 241-7; id. ‘In search of the “problem family”’, *Social History of Medicine*, 9:3 (1996), pp. 447-65; P. Starkey, ‘The Medical Officer of Health, the social worker, and the problem family, 1943-1968’, *Social History of Medicine*, 11:3 (1998), pp. 421-41; Taylor and Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly’”; M. Lambert, “‘In pursuit of the welfare trait’”, *People, Policy and Place*, 10:3 (2016), pp. 225-38.

⁸ R. Toye, ‘From “consensus” to “common ground”’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48:1 (2013), p. 23.

Almost not a policy: central government standardisation of the ‘problem family’

The ‘problem family’ was not the subject of a specific policy document in the post-war period. Instead, the ‘problem family’ permeated operational practices, with changes disseminated via circulars, legislation and guidance papers. Pat Starkey has noted of FSU (Family Service Unit) in their post-war heyday, that they were ‘almost not an organisation’ due to their decentralised and changeable local forms.⁹ A similar view is adopted here in central government, arguing that ‘problem family’ policies in the ‘golden age’ of the post-war welfare state were almost not a policy, and this has meant they have been underplayed in the historiography. Welshman, Starkey and Todd have considered how successive circulars and the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act informed change, but their role in standardising local authority ‘problem family’ policies has not been sufficiently explored.¹⁰ In addition, the ‘problem family’ represents the presence of an absence, or a ‘pertinent silence’ of post-war consensus, with bipartisan support emphasising the accepted and administrative basis of developments.¹¹ Here, the state structures which made the ‘problem family’ *almost* not a policy are reconstructed in three ways. First, complex and dynamic central-local government relations are considered, and how these reflect plural, financial and personal pressures for change concerning ‘problem families’. Second, the bipartisan and consensual basis of policies is discussed. The binary Labour-structure and Conservative-behaviour dichotomy of post-war poverty debates is challenged by seeing the ‘problem family’ as a common concern of the state, and not reflective of debates over welfare. Third, the dismantling of the ‘golden age’ post-war welfare state and the demise of consensus is used to situate the transition from the ‘problem family’ to the ‘cycle of deprivation’. The bifurcation of operational and discursive practices around the ‘problem family’ are discussed to understand this transition. Crucially, concerns over ‘battered babies’ transferred operational structures developed around ‘problem families’ into those for child protection; whilst discourse changed from being plural, paternal and professional to more central, national and political in the 1970s under the direction of Keith Joseph, although some continuities endured.

Shifting relations between central government and local authorities underpinned the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ in the post-war welfare state; much as changes at

⁹ P. Starkey, *Families and social workers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 212, chap 7.

¹⁰ Welshman, ‘The social history of social work’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 29:3 (1999), p. 466; Starkey, ‘Problem family’, pp. 432-3; S. Todd, ‘Family welfare and social work in post-war England, c. 1948-1970’, *English Historical Review*, 129:537 (2014), pp. 362-87.

¹¹ Toye, “‘Common ground’”, p. 23.

the local level, competition amongst professionals and services was mirrored in ministries and secretaries at the national level. J. A. G. Griffith has accurately captured this complexity:

Relationship[s] between central government departments and local authorities... can be [seen as] formal, informal, statutory, non-statutory, legal, extra-legal, financial, official, personal, political, functional, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral.¹²

As recounted in Chapter Five, the erosion of local government autonomy has been a common feature of the historiography.¹³ Undoubtedly, post-war chief officers had less control than their pre-war predecessors. However, this simplifies a complex and nuanced relationship embracing professionals, local authorities, central government and supervising departments. Although changes in secretaries, ministries, departments and their functions were political and reflected partisan and factional conflicts, ‘problem families’ remained a constant administrative concern of civil servants.¹⁴ Like the ambiguous influences on policy-making at the local level seen in Chapter Five, the role of civil servants in comparable national processes has been contested in the historiography.¹⁵ Moreover, the impact of social science and expertise on welfare policy, particularly after 1945, has been a subject of interest.¹⁶ This also encompasses specific forms of expertise in each ministry, such as medicine in the MoH (Ministry of Health) and DHSS (Department of Health and Social Security), and criminology at the HO (Home Office).¹⁷ The

¹² J. A. G. Griffith, *Central departments and local authorities* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), p. 17.

¹³ B. Keith-Lucas and P. G. Richards, *A history of local government in the twentieth century* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), chap. 5; G. T. Stoker, *The politics of local government* (London: Macmillan, 1988), chap. 1; K. Young and N. Rao, *Local government since 1945* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), chap. 3; J. A. Chandler, *Explaining local government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), chaps. 9 and 10.

¹⁴ P. Hall et al., *Change, choice and conflict in social policy* (London: Heinemann, 1975), chaps. 4-6; C. Pollitt, *Manipulating the machine* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984), chaps. 4-7; M. J. Hill, *The welfare state in Britain* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1993); S. Thornton, *Richard Crossman and the welfare state* (London: IB Tauris, 2009); M. Pugh, *Speak for Britain!* (London: Vintage, 2011), chaps 11-12; R. M. Page, *Clear blue water* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), chaps 2-4.

¹⁵ J. B. Christoph, ‘High civil servants and the politics of consensualism in Great Britain’, in M. Dogan, ed., *The mandarins of Western Europe* (New York: Wiley, 1975), pp. 25-62; R. Rose, ‘The political status of higher civil servants in Britain’, in E. N. Suleiman, ed., *Bureaucrats and policy-making* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984), pp. 136-73; P. Hennessy, *Whitehall* (London: Fontana, 1990); R. Pyper, *The British civil service* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995); K. Theakston, *The civil service since 1945* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995); R. Lowe, *Reforming the civil service, vol. one* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁶ Rog. Davidson and R. Lowe, ‘Bureaucracy and innovation in British welfare policy, 1870-1945’, in W. J. Mommsen and W. Mock, eds., *The emergence of the welfare state in Britain and Germany, 1850-1950* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 263-95; S. S. Blume, ‘Social science in Whitehall’, in M. Bulmer, ed., *Social science research and government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 77-93; J. Higgins et al., *Government and urban poverty* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); A. Seldon and R. Lowe, ‘The influence of ideas on social policy’, *Contemporary British History*, 10:2 (1996), pp. 160-77; R. Lowe, ‘Modernising Britain’s welfare state’, in L. Black and H. Pemberton, eds., *An affluent society?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 35-51; S. Sheard, *The passionate economist* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2013), chaps. 7, 8 and 10.

¹⁷ D. B. Cornish and R. V. Clarke, ‘Social science in government’, in Bulmer, *Social science*, pp. 166-96; T. S. Lodge, ‘The founding of the Home Office Research Unit’, in R. Hood, ed., *Crime, criminology and public*

culture of certain ministries and central departments over their local authority counterparts also had an influence on policy and practice changes. The MoH pursued a line of formal adherence to legislation whilst the HO encouraged officials to maximise permissive powers.¹⁸ As noted in Chapter Three, this influenced the changing operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ in the post-war period. Ministries and departments did not exist in administrative isolation, and they were squeezed from above and below. From below, they were pressured by, and consulted with, local authority associations.¹⁹ From above, they were subject to demands by the Treasury to curtail expenditure and produce efficiency savings.²⁰ The production of ‘problem family’ policies and practices (Figure 4) reflects a plurality of interests and a myriad of conflicting and competing purposes across networks of governance in post-war Britain.

Capturing the dynamism of the complex processes described above is difficult, given the partial historical record, discussed in Chapter Two. However, traces can be found through the creation of the joint 1950 circular on ‘Children neglected or ill-treated in their own homes’ by the HO, MoH and MoE (Ministry of Education). As noted in Chapter Three, the circular began as a response to questions in Parliament from Labour MP Barbara Ayrton Gould, who was influenced by the WPGW (Women’s Group on Public Welfare) and their 1948 report, *The neglected child and his family*.²¹ The WPGW had also been a key backer of the 1948 Children Act.²² Complaints over insufficient powers to prevent child neglect reflected the prominence of future COs (Children’s Officers) in the report.²³ Stalwart Labour figure Somerville Hastings

policy (London: Heinemann, 1974), pp. 11-24; S. Sheard, ‘Quacks and clerks’, *Social Policy and Administration*, 44:2 (2010), pp. 193-207.

¹⁸ Griffiths, *Central departments*, chaps. 4-5; J. Lewis, *What price community medicine?* (Brighton: Wheat-sheaf, 1986), chap. 2; B. Holman, *Child care revisited* (London: Institute of Child Care and Social Education, 1998), pp. 27-32, 68-72; J. Croft, ‘The Home Office Children’s Department Inspectorate, 1948-1970’, *Prison Service Journal*, 142 (2002), pp. 29-33.

¹⁹ E. J. O. Gardner, *The Association of Municipal Corporations, 1873-1973* (London: AMC, 1972); K. Isaac-Henry, ‘The Association of Municipal Corporations and the County Councils Association’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1980.

²⁰ R. Lowe, ‘Resignation at the Treasury’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 18:4 (1989), pp. 505-26; R. A. Chapman, *The Treasury in public policy-making* (London: Routledge, 1997), chap. 3.

²¹ Hansard (House of Commons), ‘Child welfare’, 22 July 1949, cols. 1740-82; J. Welshman, ‘Evacuation, hygiene, and social policy’, *Historical Journal*, 42:3 (1999), pp. 781-807; WPGW, *The neglected child and his family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948).

²² R. A. Parker, ‘Gestation of reform’, in P. Bean, and S. MacPherson, eds., *Approaches to welfare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 196-217; C. Ball, ‘Regulating child care’, *Child and Family Social Work*, 3:3 (1998), pp. 163-71; A. James, ‘Supporting families of origin’, *Child and Family Social Work*, 3:3 (1998), pp. 173-81; S. M. Cretney, ‘The state as a parent’, *Law Quarterly Review*, 114:3 (1998), pp. 419-59.

²³ LMA: 4016/IS/A/03/33 WPGW Neglected child committee minutes, 5 July 1946; TNA: MH 55/1644 WPGW Neglected child committee minutes, 21 Aug 1947.

was among those pressing for reform.²⁴ The working party established by the HO, MoH and MoE were acutely aware of the difficulties in providing concerted, coordinated action and their first draft report extensively and exhaustively listed the legislation for which each service held responsibility.²⁵ When the first draft considered ‘problem families’ they were not operating in a vacuum. The report drew on the work of the Problem Families Committee of the Eugenics Society, all of whom were MOsH (Medical Officers of Health).²⁶ Subsequent drafts – and the circular – drew upon their recommendations which reflected existing practices in authorities by MOsH: form local committees, create registers, and develop services for mothers.²⁷ The final report removed explicit mention to the work of the Eugenics Society, and drew attention to FSU and Brentwood as ‘voluntary’ models of success.²⁸ The recommendations in the final report and the ensuing circular, published on 31 July 1950, delicately balanced the interests of its authors. Preference for permissive practices for local authorities over the establishment of new legislative powers was widespread, particularly given the recent legislative upheavals in creating the welfare state. Local authority associations were not consulted, but ten days prior to the circular being issued, they unanimously backed a memorandum on coordinated action against homeless families presenting ‘social problems’ and incurring disproportionate service expenditure.²⁹ Problems and solutions were largely the same. Despite the centralisation and standardisation embedded in the circular, its construction *and* implementation reflected and relied upon plural, shared and competing interests.

The compromise solution of the 1950 circular in encouraging the use of existing powers to effect greater cooperation and coordination not only reflects the plural forms of governance; it also reflects the significance of financial imperatives of central and local departments alike. Austerity remained a key narrative of early post-war Britain;³⁰ and the ‘problem family’ was

²⁴ TNA: HLG 101/297 P. Cox 9 Dec 1949; on Hastings see J. Stewart, ‘Hastings, Somerville (1878-1967)’, in H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, eds., *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, accessed 25 Aug 2016 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5037>.

²⁵ TNA: HLG 101/297 HO, MoH and MoE, ‘Children neglected in their own homes’, provisional draft, 27 Jan 1950, pp. 4-8, appendix pp. 1-6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11; Problem Families Committee, *Problem families* (London: Eugenics Society, 1948), p. 1.

²⁷ TNA: HLG 101/297 HO, MoH and MoE, ‘Children neglected in their own homes’, second draft, 21 Mar 1950, pp. 16-17, 20-4; S. W. Savage, ‘Rehabilitation of problem families’, *Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute*, 66:4 (1946), pp. 337-43; C. F. Brockington, ‘Problem families’, *Medical Officer*, 77 (1947), pp. 75-7; R. C. Wofinden, ‘Problem families’, *Eugenics Review*, 38:3 (1946), pp. 127-32; Annual report of the MOH for Norwich, 1942, pp. 11-12, cited in Taylor and Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly’”, p. 437.

²⁸ TNA: 101/297 HO, MoH and MoE, ‘Children neglected in their own homes’, final draft, 26 Apr 1950, pp. 7-8, 11.

²⁹ *Ibid.* CCA, AMC, UDCA and RDCA, ‘Accommodation for homeless families’, 25 July 1950.

³⁰ I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); J. Hinton, “‘The tale of Sammy Spree’”, *History Workshop Journal*, 58 (2004), pp. 86-109; C. Flinn, “‘The city of our dreams’?”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 23:2 (2012), pp. 221-45.

no exception. Efforts to construct universal welfare policy by the Labour Government in an era of austerity underpinned growing concern with the ‘problem family’.³¹ The 1952 report from the Select Committee of Estimates drew attention to the potential savings of preventing and rehabilitating ‘problem families’:

The number of children coming into care might be substantially reduced, and much suffering and frustration avoided, if more attention were directed towards the means whereby situations that end in domestic upheaval and disaster might be dealt with and remedied before the actual break-up of the home occurs.³²

These sentiments echoed across ‘problem family’ policies following the 1950 circular. Unlike central government policies developed for local authorities by both Labour and Conservative Governments, such as housing or education,³³ ‘problem family’ equivalents did not attract new funding. Instead, circulars and guidance documents recommended new or different ways of spending existing permissive monies to prevent or rehabilitate ‘problem families’, and accrue savings for services and local authorities. Only the administrative expenses of the chief officer designated as ‘problem family’ officer were met under the terms of the 1950 circular.³⁴ The appendix of the circular reproduced a statement made by the Secretary of State in Parliament:

The resources of local statutory and voluntary effort cannot, however, be used to the best advantage unless there is effective coordination. It is of the first importance that help where needed should be given at an early stage, and that information should reach the service which could be of most assistance before valuable time has been lost and harm has been done.³⁵

Consequently, the development of strategies, the balance of power among services and chief officers, and interest in ‘problem families’ within local government discussed in Chapter Five, were determined by administrative concerns around maximising returns and securing status emanating from Whitehall, rather than political concerns coming from Westminster.

³¹ I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ‘Rationing, austerity and the Conservative Party recovery after 1945’, *Historical Journal*, 37:2 (1994), pp. 173-94; J. Tomlinson, ‘Why so austere?’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 27:1 (1998), pp. 63-77.

³² Select Committee on Estimates, *Sixth report (child care), 1951-52* (London: HMSO, 1952), paras 67, 69.

³³ See: R. E. Jennings, *Education and politics* (London: B T Batsford, 1977); P. Dunleavy, *The politics of mass housing in Britain, 1945-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) K. Young and N. Rao, *Local government since 1945* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997); Ken Jones, *Education in Britain* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015).

³⁴ TNA: HLG 101/297 HO, MoH and MoE, ‘Children neglected or ill-treated in their own homes’, Joint Circular 157/50, 78/50 and 225/50, 31 July 1950, p. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, appendix.

The administrative and technocratic grounds for developing ‘problem family’ services to save money was a common trope in post-war networks of governance. These applied equally at the central and local levels. However, behind the rhetoric of savings – financial, social and moral – were concerns to stake the claims of services amidst post-war changes. The 1954 MoH circular on ‘Prevention of break-up of families’ stated that fuller use of HVs would help prevent intergenerational ‘problem families’ who ‘cost the community an expense out of all proportion to their numbers’.³⁶ Commitments to securing savings was not straightforward. An internal 1951 MoH report on ‘problem families’ argued that greater returns were evident in prevention, particularly FSU, and MOsH should maximise their permissive spending to attract Units:

In our opinion, so urgent is the need to tackle this hard core of socially sick families that even a very moderate expenditure on [FSUs] would pay as good, if not better, dividends than the present much greater expenditure on the socially stable families.³⁷

Equally, *Unsatisfactory tenants* by the CHAC (Central Housing Advisory Committee) of the MHLG (Ministry of Housing and Local Government) saw more than social benefits in using intermediate and substandard accommodation, as:

Quite apart from humanitarian considerations, we believe that our recommendations for keeping the family together as a unit will result in financial savings to the community, both immediate and long-term.³⁸

The 1959 MHLG and MoH circular also reiterated the ‘saving to the community’ which could be found by providing alternative accommodation, keeping families together, and children out of care.³⁹ Crucially, narratives of savings were not always compartmentalised by professions, but existed within local authorities, seeing coordination and cooperation as desirable. Although there was an explosion in social services, and attendant spending,⁴⁰ actors across the state were keenly aware of the actual and rhetorical savings for the state found within ‘problem families’.

Central government departments, both individually and collectively, also mediated the strategies of local authorities and their chief officers in the use of permissive spending. Every

³⁶ *Ibid.* MH 134/181 MoH, ‘Health of children: prevention of break-up of families’, Circular 27/54, 30 Nov 1954, p. 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.* H. Campbell, ‘Problem families’, 26 Oct 1951, p. 4.

³⁸ MHLG CHAC, *Unsatisfactory tenants* (London: HMSO, 1955), p. 22.

³⁹ LMA: MCC/CL/HS/4/348 MHLG and MoH, ‘Homeless families’, Joint Circular 17/59 and 4/59, 18 Mar 1959, p. 3.

⁴⁰ B. Davies, ‘Personal social services’, in W. F. Maunders, ed., *Reviews of United Kingdom statistical sources*, vol. one (London: Heinemann, 1974), pp. 7-121.

request for permissive spending required approval. This bureaucratic centralism meant central departments determined the strategies available, and showed preferences for certain courses of action. As mentioned above, permissive spending to incentivise FSUs was encouraged by the MoH; but their scarcity – noted in Chapter Five – led to the fostering of alternatives, such as NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) Women Visitors. Director of the NSPCC, Reverend Arthur Morton, along with Anne Allen, claimed: ‘From its inception this scheme has had the support of the Children’s Department of the [HO]’.⁴¹ However, the HO was far from supportive. Cumberland CO, Miss M. Silva-Jones, secured local approval for a Woman Visitor to supervise ‘problem families’ at the squatted Mireside and Hallburn airfields, but took months to obtain HO consent.⁴² Subsequently, the HO sustained a campaign questioning whether any authorisation for expenditure under section 46 of the 1948 Children Act had been given.⁴³ The HO then stymied attempts to employ a further Woman Visitor, with Cumberland TC (Town Clerk) complaining to the Under-Secretary at the HO: ‘May I say that I remain of the view that it is very unfortunate that the [HO] shouldn’t encourage what is a most promising experiment’.⁴⁴ The TC then approached the MHLG, hoping to fund a Woman Visitor under section 136 of the 1948 Local Government Act.⁴⁵ Correspondence from Bolton CO Bill Freeman to Silva-Jones exposes the real reason for opposition by the HO: preference for COs to directly employ qualified staff, despite the problems many authorities experienced attracting suitable candidates.⁴⁶ Cumberland’s TC vented his views to his Bolton counterpart:

I do not appreciate the Secretary of State’s point of view as to the undesirability of voluntary organisations employing staff at the expense of local authorities. In this instance, the NSPCC appear to be able to recruit satisfactory personnel and to train them. The need for the rehabilitation of problem families is, in my opinion, so strong as to outweigh the disadvantages which the [HO] consider to exist.⁴⁷

The slow expansion of FSUs in the post-war period meant the HO eventually, if unwillingly, embraced and supported alternative intensive casework organisations as illustrated in the above example. Central-local tensions then, were as important as inter-professional rivalries.

⁴¹ A. Allen and A. Morton, *This is your child* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 57.

⁴² CAC: C/C/3/2/72/GP350 (AH) A. Morton to M. Silva-Jones, 24 Sept 1952, M. Silva-Jones to G. N. C. Swift, 23 Oct 1952;

⁴³ *Ibid.* G. N. C. Swift to P. L. Taylor, 27 May 1952, reply 26 Sept 1952, response 13 Mar 1953.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* G. N. C. Swift to P. L. Taylor, 21 Jan 1954.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* G. N. C. Swift to MHLG, 2 Feb 1954.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* J. W. Freeman to M. Silva-Jones, 16 Feb 1954, 2 and 5 Apr 1954.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* G. N. C. Swift to P. S. Rennison, 13 Apr 1954.

The plural and financial pressures which structured official responses towards ‘problem families’ were not simply the concerns of faceless bureaucrats, but were shaped by professional and governmental personalities and networks. Undoubtedly, Permanent Secretaries, and the Chief Medical Officer in the MoH and DHSS, influenced policies and provided continuity across governments.⁴⁸ However, they were essentially reactive: balancing competing demands from professions, local authorities and experts, and rebuffing claims from other departments. Key individuals inside central government developed both active and directive strategies with ‘problem families’. The recruitment of Joan Cooper to the HO Inspectorate for the Children’s Department in 1965 represents one instance, solidifying gains made by COs after the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act, and later shaping SSDs (Social Service Departments) at the DHSS.⁴⁹ Todd has argued that Cooper embodied modern social work ideals, with ‘confidence in the ability of ordinary working-class families to look after themselves and their children’.⁵⁰ Undoubtedly, she was ‘in the forefront of that talented band’ of post-war COs as Bill Utting describes, serving in the post at East Sussex from 1948 until her departure to the HO.⁵¹ Whilst CO, Cooper saw ‘problem families’ in terms of a ‘problem’ for services:

I think that given the history and geography of East Sussex and the quality of committee membership, we were able to develop a pretty sophisticated service. *We were not deeply involved in poverty* [emphasis added].⁵²

East Sussex, like other authorities, used family caseworkers to supervise ‘problem families’, and following the death of Maria Colwell in 1973, hosted debates over the efficacy of ‘problem family’ operational structures,⁵³ discussed below. Despite representing technocratic interests, central government was entwined in post-war ‘problem family’ debates. Cooper’s subsequent involvement in both CDPs (Community Development Projects) and the DHSS Working Party on Transmitted Deprivation serve as a reminder to continuities.⁵⁴ Her involvement at the heart

⁴⁸ M. Loney, *Community against government* (London: Heinemann, 1983), pp. 44-53, 71-5; Phyllis Willmott, *A singular woman* (London: Whiting and Birch, 1992), chaps. 9-13; P. Barberis, *The elite of the elite* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), intro; S. Sheard and L. Donaldson, *The Nations’ doctor* (Oxford: Radcliffe, 2005), chaps. 3-4.

⁴⁹ K. Brill, ‘The Curtis experiment’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1991, pp. 276-83.

⁵⁰ Todd, ‘Family welfare’, p. 371.

⁵¹ W. B. Utting, ‘Cooper, Joan Davis (1914-1999)’ in Matthew and Harrison, *Oxford dictionary*, accessed 25 Aug 2016 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/71955>.

⁵² Holman, *Child care*, p. 31.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-3; J. Cooper, *The creation of the British personal social services, 1962-1974* (London: Heinemann, 1983), pp. 37-8, 54-64, 83-4; I. Butler and M. Drakeford, *Social work on trial* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012), chap. 5.

⁵⁴ P. Hall, *Reforming the welfare* (London: Heinemann, 1976), pp. 67-8; Loney, *Community*, 80-4; J. Welshman, *From transmitted deprivation to social exclusion* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012), pp. 29-32, 63-4, 83-4.

of government after 1965 should be regarded as advancing social work interests, particularly operational changes surrounding the ‘problem family’.

Other key individuals within central government apparatus also informed discourse and knowledge about the ‘problem family’, alongside changes in operational structures. Here, Dr Mary D. Sheridan, noted in Chapter Three, was another important personality. She cut across professional sectionalism represented by Cooper, working as a Senior Medical Inspector in the Children’s Department of the HO before moving to the MoH.⁵⁵ Sheridan was less influential as an administrator, and more a source of medico-social expertise at the heart of government. Sheridan, along with Geraldine Aves – Chief Welfare Officer at the MoH 1946-63, seconded during evacuation, and bridging central, professional and local divides⁵⁶ – was prominent in promoting ‘problem family’ residential centres in central administration.⁵⁷ In memorandum promoting the use of such centres, Aves also noted the distinction between probationary and voluntary cases, detailed in Chapter Three, was artificial: ‘The types of family are probably indistinguishable, as a rule [emphasis in original]’.⁵⁸ Sheridan’s influence was more tangible in legitimating ideas which individualised the ‘problem’ in the family, and in the mother. Her studies of ‘neglectful mothers’ based on women sent to ‘problem family’ centres informed her influential publications on child development and normal motherhood.⁵⁹ Sheridan used notions of ‘problem families’ and substandard mothering to *define* the normality which they offended:

[M]y own work has brought me chiefly into contact with the mothers who represent the lower end of the normal curve of intelligence... [but]... the competent mothers at the other end of the scale are even more worthy of study, encouragement and support. We are beginning to realise the material and spiritual cost to the community of the problem family. It is time that we took stock of the actual and potential worth of the promising family and the wise, strong, affectionate mothers who produce them.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ ‘Mary Dorothy Sheridan’, *Lancet*, 1:8061 (1978), p. 456; ‘Dr Mary D. Sheridan’, *Lancet*, 1:8062 (1978), p. 512; ‘Mary D. Sheridan’, *British Medical Journal*, 1:6119 (1978), pp. 1059-60.

⁵⁶ G. Aves, *1924-1983* (London: NISW, 1983); Willmott, *Singular woman*; A. Cohen, ‘The Cohen interviews: Geraldine Aves – interview no. 2’, *Social workers speak out*, transcript by L. Knight, Speaking Archives! MRC, accessed 3 Jan 2015 http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/speakingarchives/socialwork/929.publ_no_2_aves.pdf.

⁵⁷ M. D. Sheridan, ‘The training of neglectful and unsatisfactory mothers’, *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 75:7 (1955), pp. 466-74; id., ‘The intelligence of 100 neglectful mothers’, *British Medical Journal*, 1:4958 (1956), pp. 91-3; id., ‘Neglectful mothers’, *Lancet*, 273:7075 (1959), pp. 722-5.

⁵⁸ TNA: MH 134/181 G. M. Aves, 8 Mar 1957.

⁵⁹ M. D. Sheridan, *The developmental progress of infants and young children* (London: HMSO, 1960); id., *From birth to five years* (London: Routledge, 1973).

⁶⁰ Sheridan, ‘Unsatisfactory mothers’, p. 471.

Although less successful, Sheridan also sought to introduce comparable ideas of segregating ‘asocial families’ pioneered at the Zuidplein centre in the Netherlands, into ‘problem family’ discourse and practice in post-war Britain.⁶¹ Direct social and spatial isolation of the variety propounded in the Netherlands was certainly evident in post-war practice, as noted in Chapter Five, but less significant discursively. Far from being impersonal and separated from changing attitudes towards the ‘problem family’, key individuals within post-war bureaucratic networks were influential in determining operational structures from the local to street levels.

Overseeing the plural, financial and personal tensions operating in central departments were changes in political control and government. ‘Problem family’ policies were not a stated commitment of any government, although there were allusions in publications and discussion documents.⁶² It should not be inferred that neither ‘problem families’ nor political control was insignificant. Changes in Secretary or Minister invariably brought change in policies, practices and priorities, although unevenly explored in biographies.⁶³ Secretaries’ or Ministers’ views, and whether the ‘problem’ was structural or behavioural in terms of poverty, had a bearing,⁶⁴ although the lack of directed policy changes suggests that concern over ‘problem families’ at an operational level were an accepted part of the post-war consensus. Despite the welfare state, ‘problem families’ existed, and sustained administrative notions of eligibility and service costs as the main operational issue. As noted in Chapter Three, where political interest *was* explicit, it was within the Labour Party and Fabian Society; reflecting the positions of social workers, administrators and academics in aiming for more effective and efficient services. Campaigns for a ‘family welfare service’ which underpinned both the Ingleby and Seebohm Reports were spearheaded by such ideas, seeing the ‘problem’ as inadequate or ineffective services, and *not*

⁶¹ M. D. Sheridan, ‘The rehabilitation of unsatisfactory families in the Netherlands’, *Public Health*, 69 (1955), pp. 62-4, 7, 80-3; for contemporary reports see: A. Querido, ‘The problem family in the Netherlands’, *Medical Officer*, 75 (1946), pp. 193-5; R. C. Wofinden, ‘Unsatisfactory families’, *Medical Officer*, 94 (1955), pp. 386-7; J. van Mill, *The Zuidplein project* (Rotterdam: Municipal Welfare Department of Rotterdam, 1953); id., *The Zuidplein project, continuation* (Rotterdam: Municipal Welfare Department of Rotterdam, 1957); M. V. Becher, ‘The Zuidplein project, Rotterdam’, *Accord*, 2:4 (1957), pp. 3-5; see also: A. de Regt, ‘Unacceptable families’, *Netherlands Journal of Sociology*, 18 (1982), pp. 139-56; F. van Wel, ‘A residential school for antisocial families’, *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 23:2 (1993), pp. 1-20.

⁶² C. Latter, *The outsiders* (London: Progressive Tory Pressure Group, 1973), pp. 7-8; Labour Party Research Group, *The deprived child* (London: Labour Party, 1973), pp. 4-5.

⁶³ M. Foot, *Aneurin Bevan* (London: Paladin, 1975); R. Shephard, *Iain Macleod* (London: Pimlico, 1995); id., *Enoch Powell* (London: Pimlico, 1997); A. Howard, *RAB* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987); J. Campbell, *Roy Jenkins* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983); V. C. Honeyman, ‘Richard Crossman’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2005; K. O. Morgan, *Callaghan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); A. Denham and M. Garnett, *Keith Joseph* (Chesham: Acumen, 2001); A. Perkins, *Red queen* (London: Pan, 2004).

⁶⁴ Welshman, *Transmitted deprivation*, pp. 52-8, 182-3, 192-4.

poverty alone.⁶⁵ Ian Butler and Mark Drakeford have viewed the campaign for such a service by the Fabians as a progressive move from stigma towards universal services.⁶⁶ However, a 1958 Fabian pamphlet by David Donnison and Mary Stewart makes it clear that ‘family welfare service’ meant *problem* ‘family welfare service’:

The system breaks down when people need something more than specific forms of help to meet specific needs. It becomes confused and wasteful when the services, endeavouring to cope with this problem, attempt to extend their work in all directions and find themselves overlapping and competing with each other. *It fails altogether the small minority who are too ignorant or too apathetic to make use of the services offered to them* [emphasis added].⁶⁷

Later, Donnison and Stewart commended the ‘more comprehensive service designed for the family as a whole’ developing in some local authorities, and dealing with ‘problem families’ for ‘whom the normal service seems to be inadequate’.⁶⁸ Structural or behavioural views of poverty associated with the Labour and Conservative Parties were not reflected in operational changes for ‘problem families’, and the issue was framed as one of professional practice and administrative efficiency. Politics mattered because it did not, signifying a ‘pertinent silence’.

The dismantling of post-war consensus and the accompanying welfare state apparatus was central in precipitating the move from concern over the ‘problem family’ to the ‘cycle of deprivation’. These changes, recounted in Chapter Three, encompassed an end to autonomous committees, authorities and services which were central to embracing the ‘problem family’. The 1967 Maud Report on management in local government, criticised ‘committee empire-building’, their ‘centrifugal tendencies’, and professional problems of cooperation among chief officers.⁶⁹ The resulting ‘management revolution’ shifted emphasis onto stronger political control and direction in local government along with a reduction in the power and number of

⁶⁵ A. Harvey, *Casualties of the welfare state* (London: Fabian Society, 1960); H. Glennerster, *National assistance* (London: Fabian Society, 1962); D. V. Donnison and M. E. H. Stewart, *The child and the social services* (London: Fabian Society, 1958); D. V. Donnison et al., *The Ingleby Report* (London: Fabian Society, 1962); S. Hastings and [P.] M. C. Jay, *The family and the social services* (London: Fabian Society, 1965); A. Sinfield, *Which way for social work?* (London: Fabian Society, 1969); P. Townsend, ed., *The fifth social service* (London: Fabian Society, 1970); id., ed., *Social services for all?* (London: Fabian Society, 1970); see also: Hall, *Reforming the welfare*, chap. 3; Cooper, *Personal social services*, chap. 2.

⁶⁶ Butler and Drakeford, *Social work*, pp. 65-74.

⁶⁷ Donnison and Stewart, *Social services*, p. 3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁹ *Report of the committee on management of local government, vol. five* (London: HMSO, 1967), pp. 201-2, 221-7.

committees, eroding the independence of chief officers.⁷⁰ Compounding these administrative changes were alterations in local government boundaries, suggested by the 1969 Redcliffe-Maud Report.⁷¹ The replacement of county borough and county councils with a two-tier system of unitary and metropolitan authorities dismantled the parochial personal social services which identified and intervened in ‘problem families’.⁷² Crucially, the eclipse of health, welfare and children’s services by newly constituted SSDs and AHAs (Area Health Authorities) following the 1968 Seebom Report and 1972 Grey Book recast professional identities associated with ‘problem families’.⁷³ Operational structures were also reinvented around the physical welfare of children and ‘battered babies’. Here, Jenny Crane has argued:

In its brief lifespan the battered child syndrome functioned to challenge the secrecy around child maltreatment, and the syndrome left in its wake increased medical, social and political concerns about child abuse and child protection.⁷⁴

The ‘discovery’ of ‘battered babies’ was more timely than this ‘brief lifespan’ reveals. The establishment of ARCs (Area Review Committees) in 1974 after the death of Maria Colwell transplanted concerns about ‘problem families’ from coordination committees into specific interest in the protection of children and identifying families ‘at risk’.⁷⁵ Operational structures remained, but professionalised from concerns over ‘problem families’ into visible indicators of harm and child protection.⁷⁶ The parallel centralisation and politicisation of the ‘underclass’ discourse accompanying Keith Joseph’s ‘cycle of deprivation’ was the final rupture; fissuring operational structures around ‘problem families’ into new professional practice concerned with child protection, whilst shifting the discourse into one of national and academic concern around transmitted deprivation. However, commonalities and continuities persisted.⁷⁷ Ultimately, 1974 heralded the end of bureaucratic paternalism which defined the ‘problem family’.

⁷⁰ C. Cockburn, *The local state* (London: Pluto Press, 1977), chap. 1.

⁷¹ *Royal Commission on local government in England, 1966-1969, vol. three* (London, HMSO, 1969), pp. 1-5.

⁷² B. Wood, *The process of local government reform, 1966-74* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976), chap. 5; P. G. Richards, *The reformed local government system* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), chap. 3.

⁷³ *Report of the committee on local authority and allied personal social services* (London: HMSO, 1968); DHSS, *Management arrangements for the reorganised National Health Service* (London: HMSO, 1972).

⁷⁴ J. Crane, “‘The bones tell a story the child is too young or frightened to tell’”, *Social History of Medicine*, 28:4 (2015), p. 788.

⁷⁵ C. Hallett and O. Stevenson, *Child abuse* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1980), chap. 1.

⁷⁶ R. W. J. Dingwall, J. M. Eekelaar and T. Murray, *The protection of children* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), chaps. 1-2; C. A. Sherrington, ‘The NSPCC in transition 1884-1983’, unpublished PhD thesis, LSE, 1984, pp. 399-431; H. Ferguson, *Protecting children in time* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), chap. 5; Burnham, D., *The social worker speaks* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 153-8.

⁷⁷ N. Parton, *The politics of child abuse* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), chaps. 3-4; B. Jordan, *Poor parents* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), chap. 5.

In the ‘golden age’ of the post-war welfare state from 1943-74, concerns over ‘problem families’ reflected more than discursive anxieties; they constituted an attempt to standardise and operationalise discretion throughout central and local government. ‘Problem families’ were not, though, the subject of policy pronouncements by any government, and could almost be considered not to be the basis of policies. However, the mundane and routine administration involved in cultivating ‘problem family’ policies did not typically reach ministerial levels, and were managed within central government structures in three ways. First, fluid central-local relations within networks of governance reflected plural, financial and personal pressures to strengthen the status of professions, agencies or departments. Second, these relations existed across party divisions, representing an aspect of post-war consensus, with neither Labour nor the Conservatives contesting the need to govern a residualised, impoverished and seemingly backward section of the population. Third, the operational structures of the welfare state which sustained concern over the ‘problem family’ bifurcated following the collapse of consensus around 1974. Local ‘problem family’ committees easily transformed into ARCs and professional concerns about child protection; whilst Keith Joseph centralised and politicised the underclass discourse around the ‘cycle of deprivation’, removing the plural and complex components which had constituted its contested operationalisation at the local level. Crucially, these day-to-day decisions made by bureaucrats, identified by Noble as crucial in capturing experiences of the welfare state, were equally directed, informed and limited by their central counterparts. Chapters Four and Five have demonstrated their consequences; but it is important to recognise that concerns about ‘problem families’ were not imposed upon local authorities. They were transmitted by professions, agencies and services across networks of governance both locally and centrally, and the resulting legislation, circulars and guidance documents represent a plural, participatory and professional concern with ‘problem families’ throughout *all* branches of the post-war welfare state. ‘Problem families’ represent a ‘pertinent silence’ of post-war social work, professional narratives and discourse, as much as consensus.

From the capital to the provinces: nationalising the ‘problem family’

The ‘problem family’ was as much a feature of the post-war landscape as the NHS, and was similarly nationalised through standardised local welfare state structures described above. The varieties of street-level decision making discussed in Chapter Four, and their operationalisation in the regional context of the North West, considered in Chapter Five, formed part of a larger

national pattern. The strategies, networks and working-class communities were specific to the North West, but they were not unique to Britain. The studies of Leicester by Welshman, Bristol by Starkey, Norwich by Taylor and Rogaly, and Sheffield by the author provide glimpses into the prevalence of practices across the post-war welfare state. Joel F. Handler, writing about the forms of practice around ‘problem families’ in his 1973 work *The coercive social worker*, commented: ‘[C]entral government was interested in the most general policy considerations; not unexpectedly, they were unaware of many of the details of operation’.⁷⁸ It is these ‘details of operation’ in local authorities across Britain that constitute the subject of discussion here. First, the practices of prominent ‘problem family’ advocates are explored, contrasting the more prominent MOsH with the less familiar COs. Second, the differences of regional specificities are considered. It was noted in Chapter Two that each of the residential centres had a profound regional dynamic, and in Chapter Five, that networks of knowledge informed interpretations of the ‘problem family’. In this section, they will be considered outside the case study of the North West. Third, wider national differences will be examined: particularly, the prevalence of resources, expertise, staff and their relationship to strategies. Throughout, other referrals for Brentwood are used to offer an insight into the less familiar practices of smaller, peripheral and less vocal local authorities. Despite differences by region, profession and local authority, the common operationalisation processes encountered across post-war Britain provide substantial evidence for the view that welfare state structures nationalised the ‘problem family’.

Key proponents of the ‘problem family’ discourse, particularly MOsH and the Eugenics Society as discussed by Macnicol and Welshman,⁷⁹ were not unsurprisingly at the forefront of strategies concerning ‘problem families’. Robert C. Wofinden, when Acting Deputy MOH for Rotherham, researched deprived children in the ‘social problem group’, advocating the creation of a register and intensive visiting, which was initiated after his departure to Bristol in 1946.⁸⁰ Whilst MOH for Bristol, Wofinden served as the designated officer under the 1950 circular, and used a combination of decentralised visiting, FSU, and the concentration of ‘problem families’ on the interwar Knowle West estate.⁸¹ Brentwood was also seen as ‘being a great benefit to

⁷⁸ J. F. Handler, *The coercive social worker* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973), p. 84.

⁷⁹ J. Macnicol, ‘From “problem family” to “underclass”’, in H. Fawcett and R. Lowe, eds., *Welfare policy in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 69-93; Welshman, *Underclass*, chap. 4.

⁸⁰ Annual reports of the MOH for Rotherham, 1945, p. 35; 1946, pp. 10, 80, 87-8; Wofinden, R. C., ‘Problem families’, *Public Health*, 57 (1944), pp. 136-9; id., ‘Problem families’, *Social Welfare*, 6:8 (1946), pp. 223-29; id., ‘Homeless children’, *Medical Officer*, 77 (1947), pp. 185-7; C. P. Blacker, ed., *Problem families* (London: Eugenics Society, 1952), pp. 29-79; D. J. Donaldson, *Off the cuff* (Richmond: Murray Print, 2000), pp. 76-8; LA: DDX2302/box 17/case number 1917, Mrs IW (1953) Rotherham Coordinating committee minutes, 20 May 1953.

⁸¹ R. C. Wofinden, *Problem families in Bristol* (London: Eugenics Society, 1950); id., ‘Unsatisfactory families’; ‘Bristol’s problem families’, *Lancet*, 1:6646 (1951), p. 100; R. H. Parry, ‘Special families in Bristol’,

selected mothers and children' in the annual reports of the MOH.⁸² However, Wofinden was not a capable designated officer, and was displaced after the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act, although he trenchantly defended his role.⁸³ Undoubtedly, his exacting differentiation of 'problem families' led to an unmanageable register which grew from 798 in 1958 to 1,142 in 1968, with few families deemed 'rehabilitated' and removed from the committee's files.⁸⁴ As CMO (County Medical Officer) for Herefordshire, Sidney W. Savage wrote on rehabilitating 'educable' 'problem families', and his policies of differentiation were kept by his successor, J. S. Cookson.⁸⁵ In 1947, on becoming CMO for Warwickshire, Savage retained his interest in 'problem families', but the CWO (Chief Welfare Officer) was appointed the designated officer, resulting in homelessness becoming the main policy, and reflected in Warwickshire's referrals to Brentwood.⁸⁶ Southampton's MOH, H. C. Maurice Williams, was an influential figure in 'problem family' discourse, although not directly affiliated with the Eugenics Society survey.⁸⁷ He was, however, unequivocal: 'The moral life of the individuals is a major cause of problem families'.⁸⁸ Maurice Williams became designated officer, and undertook a separate survey of 'problem families' in the city with Professor Percy Ford and Southampton University.⁸⁹ He also supported the domiciliary family planning service for 'problem families' in substandard accommodation started by Dr Dorothy Morgan and the Marie Stopes Memorial Foundation,⁹⁰ later incorporating the strategy into the Public Health Department.⁹¹ In short, the MOsH

Medical Officer, 93 (1955), p. 38; M. Worgan, 'The care of special families in Bristol', *Health Visitor*, 34:11 (1970), pp. 358-60; J. Tucker, *Honourable estates* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1966), pp. 62-76; Knowle West is also the setting for M. Lassell, (pseud. J. Longford) *Wellington Road* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966).

⁸² Annual report of the MOH for Bristol, 1957, p. 15.

⁸³ Starkey, 'Problem family', p. 435.

⁸⁴ Annual reports of the MOH for Bristol, 1958, p. 15; 1968, p. 46.

⁸⁵ Savage, 'Rehabilitation'; id., 'Rehabilitation of problem families', *Medical Officer*, 75 (1946), pp. 252-3; id., 'Intelligence and infant mortality in problem families', *British Medical Journal*, 1:4437 (1946), pp. 86-7; Annual report of the MOH for Herefordshire, 1949, p. 6.

⁸⁶ Annual report of the MOH for Warwickshire, 1954, p. 12; Warwickshire County Council, *The downward spiral* (Warwick: Warwickshire Social Services, 1974); LA: DDX2302/box 16/case number 1425, Mrs BJS (1949); *ibid.*/box 10/case number 1510, Mrs MH (1950).

⁸⁷ H. C. Maurice Williams, 'Coping with "submerged" families', *Municipal Journal*, 61:3152 (1953), pp. 21-2; id., 'Laziness, low moral values:', *Municipal Journal*, 61:3153 (1953), pp. 13-5; id., 'Rehabilitation of problem families', *American Journal of Public Health*, 45:8 (1955), pp. 990-7; id., 'Problem families in Southampton', *Eugenics Review*, 47:4 (1956), pp. 217-23; id., *Public health in a seaport town* (Southampton: Southampton Council, 1960), pp. 93-4.

⁸⁸ Annual report of the MOH for Southampton, 1951, p. 43.

⁸⁹ P. Ford, C. J. Thomas and E. T. Ashton, *Problem families* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955).

⁹⁰ WL: SA/EUG/K/37 Marie Stopes Memorial Foundation committee minutes, 15 July 1959; D. Morgan, 'The acceptance by problem parents in Southampton of a domiciliary birth control service', in J. F. Meade and A. S. Parkes, eds., *Biological aspects of social problems* (London: James Edward, 1965), pp. 199-204; id., 'Family planning: a domiciliary service', *Health Visitor*, 40:2 (1967), p. 56; id., 'Family planning in problem families', *Public Health*, 82:3 (1968), pp. 125-8.

⁹¹ Annual report of the MOH for Southampton, 1965, pp. 137-8.

constituting the vanguard of ‘problem family’ discourse in the post-war period were frequently, but certainly not always, also leading local figures in shaping policies.

Less well known in ‘problem family’ discourse, but equally significant in developing strategies, were COs. Oxford County Borough and County Councils under Lucy Faithfull and Barbara Kahan respectively, were the epicentre of practices for Children’s Departments.⁹² Both developed preventive work before the transformations brought by the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act. Faithfull, formerly a Regional Inspector for the HO, inherited the duties of the designated officer from her predecessor, Miss M. D. Simpson, who perceived ‘problem families’ in terms comparable to her public health counterparts:

The problems to be dealt with are nearly always occasioned by mental defect or instability, emotional immaturity, or other personality defects in the parents, which lead to social incompetence, and complaints of rent arrears, children inadequately clothed or fed, or not attending school, or left alone, overwhelming debts, inability to keep in employment, and generally unsatisfactory relationships with neighbours and relatives.⁹³

Faithfull’s strategies were indistinguishable from her predecessor and those of MOsH: she used a disused hutted camp at Slade Park to concentrate ‘problem families’, and in 1966 opened a small residential centre at Garden House modelled on the ‘residential option’.⁹⁴ Although aspirations of a unified ‘family welfare service’ of both Fabians and social workers failed to materialise, Faithfull created a ‘family case work’ section dedicated to ‘problem families’.⁹⁵ Kahan, as noted in Chapter Four, appropriated the FSU model and appointed Frank Rumball in a preventive role whilst CO for Dudley; ideas she kept once she became CO for Oxfordshire in 1951. Like Faithfull, Kahan was an advocate of a ‘personalised’ service around families, and considered prevention and rehabilitation through intensive supervision as the best form of

⁹² J. Niechial, *Lucy Faithfull* (Beckenham: Aldersmead, 2010); J. Rea Price, ‘Faithfull, Lucy, Baroness Faithfull (1910-1996)’, in Matthew and Harrison, *Oxford dictionary*, accessed 24 May 2015 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/62151>; T. Philpot, ‘Kahan [née Langridge], Barbara Joan (1920-2000)’, in Matthew and Harrison, *Oxford dictionary*, accessed 24 May 2015 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74446>; J. Packman, *The child’s generation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), pp. 68-9.

⁹³ MRC: MSS.378/ACO Report on the work of Oxford Children’s Department, 1948-58, p. 22.

⁹⁴ TNA: BN 29/1921 C. P. Hoggard, ‘Discussion with the Children’s Officer’, 23 Dec 1965, p. 1; London CSS, *Residential centres for family rehabilitation* (London: NCSS, 1967), pp. 9-10; MRC: MSS.378/ACCO/C/12/8/2 L. Faithfull, ‘Measures to prevent homelessness and to provide accommodation for homeless families’, Apr 1967; LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/YORK/1/59/4 J. I. Flute and E. Mary Kay, Report on conference at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 23-25 Sept 1968.

⁹⁵ TNA: BN 29/1921 C. P. Hoggard, ‘Staffing arrangements and organisation of Children’s Department’, 28 Nov-2 Dec 1966.

social work with ‘problem families’.⁹⁶ Failing to attract a local FSU, Kahan used workers from the NSPCC and MWA (Moral Welfare Association) in a comparable role.⁹⁷ Following the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act, Kahan made full use of permissive powers, and from 1966 differentiated chief officer from area committee meetings, and worker case conferences dealing with individual families.⁹⁸ In 1969 she also appointed Tony Lynes, future Secretary of CPAG (Child Poverty Action Group) and advisor to the DHSS, to the post of ‘family casework organiser’, largely responsible for ensuring families received all the benefits to which they were entitled.⁹⁹ Although the 1963 Act ‘unleashed... a growing diversity of approach[es]’,¹⁰⁰ COs, like MOsH, formulated strategies around the same circulars as other designated officers.

The role of the designated officer under the 1950 circular was crucial in determining which departmental or professional strategies were prioritised in local authorities. Tables 7 and 8 reflect the dominance of COs in authorities across England and Wales, when compared with MOsH. The 1959 Younghusband Report painted a subtler picture. Younghusband saw an array of ‘problem family’ arrangements, reproduced in Tables 15 and 16, encapsulating the complexity of local variation detailed in Chapter Five. However, this quantitative aspect masks a qualitative dimension of operationalisation within authorities. In Halifax the CEO (Chief Education Officer) was nominally appointed designated officer, but the duties were carried out by the CWO as chair of the ‘problem families’ committee, replaced by the CO after 1963.¹⁰¹ Throughout, strategies hinged on saving the authority money: with judicious use of Brentwood, encouraging ‘problem family’ mothers to use day nurseries, substandard accommodation, and relocating a ‘hard core’ of families to derelict cottages at Needle Row, the outermost boundary before West Yorkshire.¹⁰² In Burton-on-Trent, the CO held a dual appointment as an ACO (Area Children’s Officer) for Staffordshire County Council. Although the CO served as the

⁹⁶ ‘What’s the set-up? Oxfordshire’, *Accord*, 1:3 (1955/56), pp. 13-7; B. Kahan, ‘Keeping the family together’, *Accord*, 3:1 (1957), pp. 4-9; id., ‘Oxfordshire County Council Children’s Department’, *Child Care News*, 5 (1960), pp. 10-11; id., ‘Preventive work by Children’s Department’, *Social Work*, 18:1 (1961), pp. 18-23; id., ‘Prevention and rehabilitation’, *Approved Schools Gazette*, 55:12 (1961), pp. 374-87.

⁹⁷ Holman, *Child care*, pp. 57-8; MRC: MSS.378/ACO B. Kahan, ‘The work of the Children’s Care Committee and Children’s Department’, June, 1963, pp. 21-2.

⁹⁸ MRC: MSS.463/EY/A6/30 B. Kahan, ‘The work of the Children’s Care Committee and Children’s Department’, Oct, 1969, pp. 8, 21-3.

⁹⁹ Packman, *Child’s generation*, pp. 71-2; Sheard, *Passionate economist*, pp. 110-2; his experiences informed his involvement at CPAG, the Claimants’ Union and the Penguin guide to benefits in 1972, reaching five editions by 1985: T. Lynes, *The Penguin guide to supplementary benefits* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972); H. Rose, *Rights, participation and conflict* (London: CPAG, 1972), pp. 4, 6.

¹⁰⁰ Packman, *Child’s generation*, p. 69.

¹⁰¹ CA: 13645/1 Halifax Problem Families Joint Subcommittee minutes, 18 Sept 1956, 28 Nov 1963.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* G. H. Smith to Problem Families Joint Subcommittee, 16 Nov 1955; E. Simpson to G. C. F. Roe, 5 Apr 1956; Problem Families Joint Subcommittee meeting of chief officers, 22 Apr 1965; *ibid.* CMT1/23/3 Annual report of the MOH for Halifax, 1960, p. 36; *ibid.* 13648 J. W. Busfield to R. Martin, 16 July 1965.

Coordinating arrangements	England		Wales		Total	
	County Council	County Borough Council	County Council	County Borough Council	County Council	County Borough Council
Designated officer and coordinating committee(s), area committees or local case conferences	31	56	11	2	42	58
Designated officer only: no coordinating committee(s) or case conferences	8	4	0	2	8	6
Coordinating committee(s) or case conferences only: no designated officer	7	10	1	0	8	10
No appointment and no committee(s) or case conferences	3	9	1	0	4	9
Total	49	79	13	4	62	83

Table 16: ‘Problem family’ coordinating arrangements for England and Wales, 1959.

Source: Ministry of Health, *Report of the working party on social workers in the local authority health and welfare service* (London: HMSO, 1959), appendix F, table 52, p. 359.

designated officer and chaired the policy and case committees, most referrals originated from the Education Department; with children being much older, emphasis was placed on averting truancy and juvenile delinquency, with cases of poverty and material deprivation being referred to the NSPCC.¹⁰³ There are no surviving cases of referrals to Brentwood, suggesting maternal concerns of public health officials were muted. Again, policies of concentration prevailed, and liaison with the Housing Department led to families being rehoused in substandard property on Richmond Street.¹⁰⁴ In Kent, the CEO was the designated officer in returns sent to the MoH, but responsibility for the duties fell on the CMO, Adam Elliott. Elliott also acted as the CWO, and marshalled a ‘phalanx of officials’ including a family help service of specialised home helps, accommodating families at a disused military site at King Hill, along with the use of residential rehabilitation centres.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Reading appointed the CO as the designated

¹⁰³ LiCRO: BD26/5/3 Burton-on-Trent Coordinating committee minutes, 10 Apr 1956, 17 June 1958, and 13 Feb 1959.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* Burton-on-Trent Coordinating committee minutes, 25 Oct 1961.

¹⁰⁵ A. Elliott, ‘Kent County’s “family help service”’, *Medical Officer*, 97 (1957), pp. 25-6; id., ‘Family help service in Kent’, *Social Welfare*, 10:3 (1957), pp. 48-54; id., ‘Problem families in Kent’, *Medical Officer*, 100 (1958), pp. 87-91; id., ‘Power to rehabilitate problem families’, *Medical Officer*, 107 (1962), p. 253; Annual report of the MOH for Kent, 1961, pp. 16-7; MRC: MSS.463/EY/A1/28 Working Party on Social Workers, Kent County Council Family Help Service, May 1956; A. Anderson and J. Radford, *KCC versus the homeless* (London: Radical Press, 1966); LA: DDX2302/box 22/[no case number], Mrs BES (1968).

Designated Officer	Total	Main committee only		Main and area committees or local case conferences		Area committee(s) or local case conferences only		No committees or case conferences	
		County Council	County Borough Council	County Council	County Borough Council	County Council	County Borough Council	County Council	County Borough Council
Town Clerk	19	4	5	0	0	7	0	3	0
Medical Officer of Health	38	2	17	1	5	6	6	1	0
Children's Officer	54	7	15	2	8	11	1	4	6
Other	3	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0
Total	114	13	38	3	13	26	7	8	6

Table 17: Designated officers in relation to ‘problem family’ coordinating arrangements for England and Wales, 1959.

Source: Ministry of Health, *Report of the working party on social workers in the local authority health and welfare service* (London: HMSO, 1959), appendix F, table 54, p. 361.

officer, but strategies were proposed, developed and implemented by the MOH.¹⁰⁶ Certainly, the chief officer designated responsible for ‘problem families’ under the 1950 circular was a key figure in operationalising the ‘problem family’ in local authorities. However, generalising about strategies from central returns masks a myriad of local particularities outside professional discourse of the ‘problem family’.

Operational structures and strategies concerning ‘problem families’ were not the whim of chief officers or isolated within local authorities, but existed within regional networks. Table 18 demonstrates that despite the national prominence of COs noted above, designated officers for ‘problem families’ varied regionally: the South had more TCs, the West Midlands balanced arrangements, whilst MOsH dominated the North West and Yorkshire. As noted in Chapter Five, Brentwood was central to strategies in the North West, and was similarly influential for Yorkshire: as Table 1 shows, Yorkshire was the second largest source of referrals. Prior to the opening of Spoffoth Hall in 1952, representatives from Yorkshire sought to open a residential

¹⁰⁶ TNA: BN 29/1920 Review of child care work in Reading County Borough, March 1967; Annual report of the MOH for Reading, 1960, pp. 55-6; CHAC, *Unsatisfactory tenants*, pp. 29-30; LA: DDX2302/box 9/case number 3145, Mrs JRG (1963); *Reading Standard*, 31 Aug 1956.

Region	Children's Officer	Medical Officer of Health	Education Officer	Town Clerk	Councillor	Existing Arrangements	Undecided
Wales	10	1		4			2
North	8	3		1		2	
Yorkshire	4	6	1	2		1	
North West	6	12		1		3	1
West Midlands	4	5		2		4	
East Midlands	8	2	1	1		3	
East	6	1		3	1	3	1
South East	5	3	1			1	1
South	2	2		7			
South West	4	3	1	1		1	
Total	57	38	4	22	1	18	5

Table 18: Designated 'problem family' officers in England and Wales by Registrar-General regions, 1952.

Source: NA MH 134/181 Local authority officers designated under the Home Office Circular 157/50 and Ministry of Health Circular 78/50, Aug 1952

centre to cater for the high demand they were creating for places.¹⁰⁷ As noted in Chapter Five, regional boundaries and tendencies were permeable and elastic. The CMO for Staffordshire, Gerald Ramage, was a major source of referrals to Brentwood and his academic background at the University of Manchester meant he knew many of his counterparts in the North West.¹⁰⁸ He continued to sponsor families, even after Crowley House opened in 1956, and straddled the networks of the North West and West Midlands.¹⁰⁹ In addition, he opened a residential centre at Broadfield House, Kingswinford in 1953, providing mothercraft training for families with ‘problems’, *not* ‘problem families’: they remained the domain of the coordinating committee and were sent to other centres.¹¹⁰ Ramage also plugged into new sources of ‘problem family’ expertise, sponsoring HVs (Health Visitors) for training at Keele University.¹¹¹ As with the Universities of Manchester and Liverpool for the North West, elsewhere they also created and circulated knowledge on ‘problem families’. The Departments of Social Medicine and Social Science at the University of Sheffield trained health and social workers, and developed local and national discourse.¹¹² At Bristol University Roger Wilson and John C. Spencer bridged research, discourse and training,¹¹³ whilst in Newcastle the inclusion of ‘problem families’ in the *Thousand families* study of James C. Spence reflected connections between the University and the Public Health Department.¹¹⁴ The North East also demonstrates other regional trends. In 1952 Northumberland and Tyneside CSS (Council of Social Service), established a Family Care Committee, employing ‘problem family’ caseworkers across many local authorities and referring families to Brentwood.¹¹⁵ In 1955, Northumberland County Council appropriated the

¹⁰⁷ Annual report of Sheffield CSS, 1947, pp. 5-9; *Sheffield Star*, 1 Dec 1950; Annual report of the MOH for Sheffield, 1951, pp. 21, 83; LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/York/1/59/5 L. Waddilove, ‘Home for mothers and young children’, 17 Dec 1951.

¹⁰⁸ MUSC: GB133 MMC/2/RamageG/1 MD Entry 1939; W. D. H. McFarland and G. Ramage, ‘An experiment in hospital social work’, *Lancet*, 2:7320 (1963), pp. 1267-8; LA: DDX2302/box 12/case number 2742, Mrs JRW (1957) E. D. Abraham to G. Ramage, 25 Feb 1957, and reply 23 May 1957

¹⁰⁹ BAHS: MS 517/A/3/2/1 Crowley House minutes, 18 Sept 1956; Annual report of the MOH for Staffordshire, 1959, p. 64.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1953, pp. 51-2; 1954, pp. 59-60; 1957, pp. 61, 79.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1966, p. 5.

¹¹² Lambert, “‘Welfare trait’”.

¹¹³ R. C. Wilson, *Difficult housing estates* (London: Tavistock, 1963); J. C. Spencer, *Crime and the services* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1954); *id.*, *Stress and release in an urban estate* (London: Tavistock, 1964); *id.*, ‘The multi-problem family’, in B. Schleisinger, ed., *The multi-problem family* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1970), pp. 3-54.

¹¹⁴ J. C. Spence et al., *A thousand families in Newcastle upon Tyne* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 142-6; TWA: CH.CSS1/1/11 Annual report of Northumberland and Tyneside CSS, 1952, pp. 4, 6; *ibid.* MD.NC/PH/1/1/1958 Annual report of the MOH for Newcastle, 1959, pp. 15, 53-4; D. Court, ‘Sir James Spence’, *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 50:2 (1975), pp. 85-9; J. W. Miller, ‘Sir James Spence’, *Journal of Medical Biography*, 5:1 (1997), pp. 1-7; A. W. Craft, ‘Spence, Sir James Calvert (1892-1954)’, in Matthew and Harrison, *Oxford dictionary*, accessed 24 May 2015 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36206>.

¹¹⁵ W. P. Smith and H. A. Bate, *Family casework and the country dweller* (London: FWA, 1953), pp. 13-8, 42-7; CHAC, *Unsatisfactory tenants*, p. 29; *Scotsman*, 18 April 1956.

Committee, serving as the nucleus for its reconstituted coordinating committee.¹¹⁶ In short, the regional interconnectivity and specificity recounted in Chapter Five about the North West, was mirrored through comparable institutions, networks and processes across Britain.

Regional interconnectivity did not just relate to individual and institutional networks, but to wider processes of operationalisation; notably the disproportionate influence of London. Lara Marks' study of maternity services before 1939 has exposed the contradiction in London's atypical problems and services serving as a template for national action.¹¹⁷ A similar situation prevailed in the operationalisation of 'problem families'. Although the LSE (London School of Economics) was at the forefront of national discourses in sociology,¹¹⁸ social work,¹¹⁹ and psychology,¹²⁰ they too had a parochial dimension of expertise. Ken Ruck, research officer for the Greater London Group at the LSE,¹²¹ commented in 1963: 'Problem families, though the term has its critics, are a *pretty generally recognised social phenomenon* [emphasis added]'.¹²² This general recognition followed the national pattern: DMOs served as the designated officer for LonCC (London County Council) and ACOs for Middlesex with each chairing a divisional committee on the terms of the 1950 circular.¹²³ A number of strategies were operationalised,

¹¹⁶ TWA: CH.CSS1/1/14 Annual report of Northumberland and Tyneside CSS, 1955, p. 4; LA: DDX2302/box 8/case number 2310, Mrs RF (1957) HV report, 3 July 1957 discussing 'Dr J. B. Tilley's Committee'.

¹¹⁷ L. Marks, *Metropolitan maternity* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996).

¹¹⁸ See the work of Richard Titmuss and the 'Titmice': R. Titmuss, ed., *Essays on the welfare state* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958); P. Townsend, *The last refuge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962); P. Townsend, and B. Abel-Smith, *The poor and the poorest* (London: Bell, 1965); A. Oakley, *Man and wife* (London: Flamingo, 1997); id., *Father and daughter* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2014) J. Welshman, 'The unknown Titmuss', *Journal of Social Policy*, 33:2 (2004), pp. 225-47; H. Glennerster, 'Townsend, Peter Brereton (1928-2009)', in Matthew and Harrison, *Oxford dictionary*, accessed 24 May 2015 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/102310>; Sheard, *Passionate economist*.

¹¹⁹ See particularly the role of Eileen Youngusband and her conflict with Richard Titmuss. E. Youngusband, *Social work in Britain* (Edinburgh: CUKT, 1951); Kathleen Jones, *Eileen Youngusband* (London: NCVO, 1984); L. Faithfull, 'Youngusband, Dame Eileen Louise (1902-1981)', in Matthew and Harrison, *Oxford dictionary*, accessed 24 May 2015 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31866>; A. Oakley, 'The history of gendered social science', *Women's History Review*, 24:2 (2015), pp. 154-73.

¹²⁰ Such was the influence of Clare and Donald Winnicott that Joan Beckett, a CCO who attended LSE in the early 1960s described being 'Winnicotted'. Holman, *Child care*, p. 25. C. Winnicott, *Child care and social work* (Welwyn: Codicote Press, 1964); D. W. Winnicott, *The child, the family and the outside world* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965); J. Kanter, 'The untold story of Clare and Donald Winnicott', *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 28:2 (2000), pp. 245-61; id., ed., *Face to face with children* (London: Karnac, 2004); A. Phillips, *Winnicott* (London: Penguin, 2007).

¹²¹ G. Rhodes, *The government of London* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1970); G. Jones, 'The Greater London Group after 50 years', in B. Kochan, ed., *London government 50 years of debate* (London: LSE, 2008), pp. 15-22; R. Dahrendorf, *LSE* (Oxford, OUP, 1995), pp. 399-400.

¹²² S. K. Ruck, *London government and the welfare services* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 86.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 88; Annual report of the MOH for London, 1956, appendix A, pp. 150-85; LMA: LCC/CL/Estab/1/301 Joint report by the MOH, CEO and CWO, 'Prevention of break-up of families', 13 Feb 1957; London County Council Public Health Department, 'Preventive mental health in the maternity and child welfare service', *Health Education Journal*, 14:1 (1956), pp. 3-17; D. V. Donnison, *Health, welfare and democracy in Greater London* (London: LSE, 1962), pp. 14-20; TNA: MH 102/2101 LonCC, 'Report on the results of the problem families

including domiciliary family planning for ‘problem families’ in halfway houses.¹²⁴ County boroughs adopted similar and familiar strategies. James Fenton, MOH for Kensington and a member of the Problem Families Committee, helped establish an FSU which became the heart of local policies.¹²⁵ The reforms wrought by the Herbert Report after 1965 transformed, but did not destroy, ‘problem family’ policies. LonCC’s former domiciliary family planning was continued by Haringey, among others, into the 1970s.¹²⁶ In 1969 J. Kerr Brown, MOH for Greenwich, reported ongoing use of the ‘problem family’ register, whilst the GLC (Greater London Council) continued to concentrate ‘problem families’ in substandard properties.¹²⁷ In Hackney, both strategies were combined in 1968 with the appointment of a ‘problem family’ unit working on the Kingsmead Estate.¹²⁸ Nationally, the unique situation in London informed the development of chief officers’ careful cultivation of permissive powers and strategies. The 1966 and 1967 circulars, although encompassing a national problem, specifically dealt with the city’s housing problems.¹²⁹ London authorities were subject to burgeoning pressure on waiting lists, resulting in more punitive and stringent assessments of ‘problem families’.¹³⁰ Provincial concerns were similar but remained secondary and peripheral,¹³¹ and had less significance on structuring government action. Although strategies developed at the local level informed the plural participation of professions and authorities in operationalising the ‘problem family’, as with most other areas of policy, London remained the model.

sample’, Sept 1956; Middlesex County Council, *Neglected or ill-treated children* (London: Middlesex Public Health Department, 1952), pp. 1-2; ‘Middlesex’, *Accord*, 2:4 (1957), pp. 16-20.

¹²⁴ ‘Camberwell Reception Centre’, *New Society*, 5:134 (1965), pp. 18-21; E. Barton, ‘Family planning and the homeless’, *Family Planning*, 14:1 (1965), pp. 9-11; E. Mitchell, ‘Domiciliary visiting in London’, *Family Planning*, 15:4 (1967), pp. 107-9; F. Solano, ‘A journey of a thousand miles’, *Family Planning*, 16:2 (1967), pp. 48-50.

¹²⁵ WL: SA/FPA/NK/159 J. Fenton to M. Spring Rice, 10 Sep 1947; Blacker, *Problem families*, p. 29; LMA: MCC/HS/LH/63 Kensington and Paddington FSU, ‘Problem family work in Willesden’, 7 Jan 1963; J. Dearlove, *The politics of policy in local government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 156-9; Starkey, *Families*, pp. 55, 84, 86.

¹²⁶ Annual report of the MOH for Haringey, 1972, pp. 49-51; E. Christopher et al., *A survey of the Haringey domiciliary family planning service, 1968-1975* (London: North London Polytechnic University Department of Applied Social Sciences, 1980).

¹²⁷ Annual report of the MOH for Greenwich, 1969, pp. 110-1; LMA: GLC/DG/HG/11/032 Coordinating Committee report on vacant property, 1 Dec 1969; *ibid.* Schools Subcommittee to Housing Committee, ‘Lambeth – problem families’, 4 Dec 1969.

¹²⁸ MRC: MSS.378/ACCO Annual report of the CO for Hackney, 1968, pp. 18-20.

¹²⁹ TNA: MH 57/627 LonCC, ‘Homelessness: committee of inquiry’, 2 July 1962; *ibid.* HLG 118/353 D. C. Millefanti to P. Summers, 12 Sept 1966; *ibid.* 118/354 R. Fish to R. T. P. Pronger, 30 June 1967; *ibid.* HO 361/20 DHSS, ‘First report of the Joint Working Party on homelessness in London’ 24 May 1971; C. Ungerson, *Moving home* (London: Bell, 1971).

¹³⁰ N. Timms, *Rootless in the city* (London: NCSS, 1968); J. Greve et al., *Homelessness in London* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1971), pp. xiii-xix; R. Bailey, *The squatters* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973).

¹³¹ TNA: BN 29/1931 M. Wilson to J. F. D. Buttery, 20 Jan 1970; B. Glastonbury, *Homeless near a thousand homes* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971).

The racial bounding of citizenship represented by the operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ discussed in Chapter Five, extended beyond the confines of the North West. Defining which families were eligible for rehabilitation, and which needed containing or other forms of intervention, reflected an implicit process of racialisation. As Noble argues, this ‘differential treatment did not come from formal rules, but from the room for interpretation and discretion’ exercised by street-level bureaucrats.¹³² The concurrent marginalisation of racially and socially undesirable elements, the problem of housing, and notions of status and citizenship found in Liverpool and Manchester, were repeated in several post-war studies of ‘race’.¹³³ Despite the difficulties of ascribing the presence of an absence with intentionality, the surviving records of ‘problem families’ suggest differentiation by ‘whiteness’. The *only* instance of a non-white mother in *any* of the materials consulted, was of a ‘West Indian family’ attending West Bank, York, in 1959. They received special mention as they were unable to secure accommodation on departure, and the Management Committee purchased a house in a slum district of York to house them, eventually being rehoused on an undesirable council estate six years later.¹³⁴ Race existed within ‘whiteness’ and the increased visibility of families with Irish or EVW (European Volunteer Worker) members is also found outside the North West. From a study of 88 families attending Crowley House before 1965, nine had at least one member who was either Irish or an EVW.¹³⁵ Another family intended for Crowley House in 1957, attending Brentwood due to the waiting list, was referred from London due to the ‘Irish temper’ of the father, along with the ‘slothfulness’ of his wife.¹³⁶ The visibility of Mrs KK to the ‘phalanx of officials’ visiting her home on the Ashmore Park Estate, Staffordshire, and her labelling as a ‘problem family’ was undoubted; her HV commenting: ‘She has the usual Irish temperament and is married to a Yugoslavian who is perhaps not as sympathetic or helpful as he might be and encourages her to feel incompetent [sic].’¹³⁷ The regional character of the post-war North West meant that race was a defining feature used by officials to limit access to scarce resources. However, the case

¹³² Noble, *Welfare state*, p. 99.

¹³³ K. Little, *Negroes in Britain* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1947); M. Banton, *The coloured quarter* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955); A. H. Richmond, *The colour problem* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955); id., *Migration and race relations in an English city* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); J. Rex and R. Moore, *Race, community and conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); C. Duke, *Colour and rehousing* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1970); K. Pryce, *Endless pressure* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979); A. Simpson, *Stacking the decks* (Nottingham: Nottingham and District Community Relations Council, 1981); on the history of social anthropology in post-war Britain see: D. Mills, *Difficult folk?* (New York: Berghann, 2010).

¹³⁴ LULSC: MS/DEP/1981/2/YORK/1/59/4 EFMT Management Minutes, 18 Dec 1959, 12 Feb 1960 and 22 Oct 1965.

¹³⁵ BAHs: MS517/A/9/1/4 Schedule of information relating to families formerly resident at Crowley House, c. 1965.

¹³⁶ LA: DDX2302/box 6/[no case number], Mrs EQ (1957) Application form for Crowley House, 2 Sept 1957.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*/box 11/case number 3003, Mrs KK (1963) HV report, 21 Apr 1961.

files of other residential centres, and families referred to Brentwood from outside the region, indicates that the identification of ‘problem families’ signified ongoing concern with protecting racial as well as social boundaries of reproduction and citizenship across post-war Britain.

The above strategies framed by national structures considered at the start of this chapter capture the varied regional complexity recounted in Chapter Five, and the street-level decision-making of Chapter Four, across post-war Britain. Strategies of management, indicators of the ‘problem’ and propensities of judgment were all, ultimately, reified in the mundane discretion of a ‘phalanx of officials’. The process of deciding which families were *not* a ‘problem family’ was equally important: it reflects the primacy of the paternal professionalism of welfare state officials ‘knowing best’.¹³⁸ Nowhere is this process more apparent than in the case of Maria Colwell, with the subsequent inquiry putting social workers and their ability to distinguish the ‘problem family’ ‘on trial’, in the view of Butler and Drakeford.¹³⁹ The Kepple family, named after Maria’s step-father, lived on the Whitehawk Estate, Brighton in the early 1970s, but came under the supervision of Joan Cooper’s former authority, East Sussex. Areas of the estate itself, along with neighbouring Moulescomb, were used to rehouse ‘problem families’.¹⁴⁰ One of the Kepples’ neighbours reported in the inquiry that Whitehawk had ‘a fair number of problem families’.¹⁴¹ Bill Kepple, Mara’s step-father was an unemployed Irish casual labourer with ‘quite a wild reputation’¹⁴² including regular bouts of heavy drinking, whilst his wife Pauline had four other children from her first husband who died shortly after Maria’s birth, along with three with her new husband. Domestic difficulties, poor housekeeping, neglect of the children, and poor school attendance were frequently reported.¹⁴³ The characterisation of the Kepples would not be out of place in many of the descriptions considered in Chapter Four.

Crucially, *none* of the ‘phalanx of officials’ involved thought that the Kepples were a ‘problem family’. Arthur Mildon, the counsel for the inquiry, was astounded: ‘From what we know of the family, it is incredible that anybody could say it was not a problem family’¹⁴⁴ A litany of evidence by officials opposed his judgment. George Smith, Area Housing Officer on

¹³⁸ B. Wootton, ‘Daddy knows best’, *Twentieth Century*, 166 (1959), pp. 248-61

¹³⁹ Butler and Drakeford, *Social work*, pp. 145-9.

¹⁴⁰ B. Jones, ‘Slum clearance, privatization and residualization’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 21:4 (2010), pp. 510-39; id., *The working class in mid twentieth-century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), chap. 3.

¹⁴¹ Evidence from the Maria Colwell Inquiry, day 3, p. 17 in Butler and Drakeford, *Social work*, p. 107.

¹⁴² DHSS, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the care and supervision provided in relation to Maria Colwell* (London: HMSO, 1974), pp. 11-7

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* pp. 11-7.

¹⁴⁴ Day 26, p. 30 in Butler and Drakeford, *Social work*, p. 146.

Whitehawk emphatically replied ‘no’ when asked if the family were a ‘problem family’.¹⁴⁵ Dr Barley, the family’s GP said he ‘would not have thought this was a problem family’.¹⁴⁶ Mrs Kirkby, the NSPCC Woman Visitor stated: ‘I do not think at that time I would have called it a problem family’.¹⁴⁷ Diana Lees, Maria’s social worker, carried the responsibility of discerning gossip from allegations and concern, as noted in Chapter Five. Despite the notorious reputation the Kepples obtained on the estate, ‘when Miss Lees [Maria’s social worker] was told of certain allegations, she did not appear concerned or interested,’ according to the published report.¹⁴⁸ The report commented extensively upon the role the neighbours played in raising concern and noted that: ‘the Kepples were not regarded by the nearby residents of the Whitehawk estate as desirable neighbours’.¹⁴⁹ The inquiry, however, averred and stated: ‘It will always be a matter of professional judgment whether the allegations are sufficiently serious’.¹⁵⁰ The only official to label the Kepples a ‘problem family’ was Miss Edwards, the social worker for Maria’s older brothers. Miss Edwards had no qualms in making her feelings plain:

I would say it was a very poor house. It sounds rather trite, but *it was what we would call a family with problems*, and there was a family-with-problems-type smell, the look of the furniture and the general décor [emphasis added].¹⁵¹

The Chair of the inquiry Thomas G. Field-Fisher, ‘somewhat ruefully’ in the words of Butler and Drakeford, concluded that: “‘problem family’ is not a term of art’.¹⁵² Moreover, there is no mention of any of the ‘problem family’ operational structures throughout the report, *unlike* later inquiries such John George Auckland or Graham Bagnall.¹⁵³ The professionalisation of the ‘folk sociology’ officials used to distinguish ‘problem families’ into concerns about ‘risk’ and ‘battered babies’, resulted from wider scrutiny of these everyday processes. Mr Mildon’s comment encapsulates the dilemma that since ‘problem families’ *were* ‘easy to recognise’, yet the ‘phalanx of officials’ failed to spot such stark signs, new indicators were clearly needed.

¹⁴⁵ Day 11, p. 14 in *ibid.*, p. 148.

¹⁴⁶ Day 14, p. 57 in *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Day 12, p. 38 in *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ DHSS, *Maria Colwell*, p. 74.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-49, 72; see also Butler and Drakeford, *Social work*, pp. 119-26.

¹⁵⁰ DHSS, *Maria Colwell*, p. 74.

¹⁵¹ Day 10, p. 8 in Butler and Drakeford, *Social work*, p. 149.

¹⁵² Day 12, p. 40 in *ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁵³ DHSS, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the provision and coordination of services to the family of John George Auckland* (London: HMSO, 1975), pp. 30-1, 69; Shropshire County Council, *Report of the inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Graham Bagnall* (Shrewsbury: Salop County Council, 1973), pp. 26, 30.

Despite the standardisation and nationalisation of the ‘problem family’ from the capital to the provinces, differences persisted across Britain due to resources, staff levels and training, and regional dynamics of designated ‘problem family’ officers and their strategies. Common to all authorities were operational networks of governance which identified and intervened in ‘problem families’. Resources underpinned the operation of services. Limited political interest in personal social services resulted in their marginalisation in most authorities, with the role of individual councillors and chief officers being of greater significance.¹⁵⁴ Nationally, however, local authorities in the South were more affluent than those in the North, enabling higher levels of overall spending on services.¹⁵⁵ This had concomitant consequences in attracting qualified staff, with higher wages offered in the South creating national disparities adversely affecting the North, particularly older county boroughs in the North West.¹⁵⁶ Similar financial and staff differences existed between county council and county boroughs.¹⁵⁷ Vacancies were routinely re-advertised across the North¹⁵⁸ leaving chief officers with limited scope for their strategies. Equally, trained and intrepid chief officers were harder to recruit in the North, with Burnley Children’s Committee begrudgingly appointing John Morwood as CO due to his longevity, and the withdrawal of all other candidates after advertising the position twice.¹⁵⁹ The financial constraints of local authorities and the ability to attract trained staff as a *national* issue had an impact on the regional *and* local appointment of ‘problem family’ designated officers. Poor authorities in the North had entrenched MOsH who continued to secure permissive funding in contrast to their newer, more precarious and typically gendered equivalent COs. In contrast, affluent authorities in the South buttressed their Children’s Departments, attracting qualified graduates, and eclipsing their public health rivals. The relationship between the location and type of authority, and the appointment of designated officer shown in Tables 7, 8 and 18 suggest that local and regional structures were shaped by national dynamics. However, regardless of the profession of the designated officer, the location or political hue of the authority, or whether

¹⁵⁴ N. T. Boaden, *Urban policy-making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), chap. 7; B. Davies et al., *Variations in children’s services among British urban authorities* (London: Bell, 1972), chap. 1.

¹⁵⁵ C. A. Moser and W. Scott, *British towns* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), chap. 3; B. Davies, *Social needs and resources in local services* (London: Michael Joseph, 1968), pp. 294-305; id., ‘Welfare departments and territorial justice’, *Social and Economic Administration*, 3:4 (1969), pp. 235-52.

¹⁵⁶ J. Packman, *Child care needs and numbers* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968), pp. 19-24, 175-89, 228-33; E. Grey, *Workloads in Children’s Departments* (London: HMSO, 1969), chap. 1; E. Younghusband, *Social work in Britain, vol. two* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), chaps. 1-4.

¹⁵⁷ V. George and N. Hazel, ‘The work of two Children’s Departments’, *Social Work*, 27:1 (1970), pp. 23-5.

¹⁵⁸ For instance: *Child Care News*, 20 (1963), p. 23; 25 (1964), p. 24; 32 (1965), p. 29; 59 (1967), p. 31; 74 (1968), p. 24.

¹⁵⁹ LA: CBBU/17/2 Burnley Children’s Committee minutes, 25 Sept and 12 Dec 1961, 9 Jan 1962, 27 Oct and 24 Nov 1964.

staff were conversant or oblivious to contemporary social work theories, authorities throughout Britain forged strategies which operationalised the ‘problem family’. Brentwood case files and supporting records show that from Somerset¹⁶⁰ to Stoke,¹⁶¹ Gloucestershire¹⁶² to Grimsby,¹⁶³ Caernarvonshire¹⁶⁴ to Cornwall,¹⁶⁵ Devon¹⁶⁶ to Derbyshire,¹⁶⁷ and Eastbourne¹⁶⁸ to Essex,¹⁶⁹ ‘problem families’ were emphatically part of the post-war landscape and social policy.

The operationalisation of the ‘problem family’ was nationalised by the post-war welfare state through a framework of legislation, circulars and permissive powers fostered by central government. These provided a standard template whereby chief officers developed their own strategies from a range of approved alternatives. This process was not, however, a centralised top-down imposition, and its construction reflected the plural, competing and shifting interests of governance at local, regional and national levels. Here, the ‘details of operation’ considered by Handler have been explored in three ways. First, the development of convergent strategies by COs and MOsH despite their professional differences have been considered. Second, the role of regional specificities in shaping the definition of ‘problem families’ has been compared across post-war Britain, particularly in relation to the case study developed in Chapter Five. The case of Maria Colwell from Brighton and East Sussex in 1973 was explored in detail to highlight the complex basis of decision-making by street-level bureaucrats noted in Chapter Four, as well as the issues around child abuse, ethnicity and operational practice which delimit the ‘problem family’. Third, national differences concerning resources, staffing and designated officers have been explored to contextualise the structural constraints surrounding the creation

¹⁶⁰ TNA: BN 62/2566 A. K. Pick, ‘Bawdrip House, Bawdrip, Somerset’, 1 May 1967; MRC: MSS.378/ACCO Biannual report of the CO for Somerset, 1961-63, pp. 2-11; M. G. Joynson, ‘Somerset’, *Accord*, 9:1 (1963), pp. 11-12; LA: DDX2302/box 21/[no case number], Mrs PFK (1967) CCO report, 26 Oct 1967.

¹⁶¹ LA: DDX2302/box 21/case number 3241, Mrs SMM (1964) Letter from Councillor A. E. Allen to M. E. Oag, n. d. [Aug 1964]; MRC: MSS.378/ACCO Annual report of the CO for Stoke-on-Trent, 1959, p. 15-16.

¹⁶² LA: DDX2302/box 5/case number 2955, Mrs JB (1960) G. F. Bramley to E. D. Abraham, 4 Oct 1960.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*/box 18/case number 2998, Mrs MAW (1961) Deputy MOH Report, 21 Mar 1961.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*/box 11/case number 1681, HV report, 11 Apr 1951; Annual report of the MOH for Caernarvonshire, 1956, p. 33.

¹⁶⁵ LRO: 364 PSS/6/3/6 Cornwall County Council report on a venture in social casework among substandard families in Camborne-Redruth, 1963; MRC: MSS.378/ACCO Annual report of the CO for Cornwall, 1962, p. 10; LA: DDX2302/box 18/case number 2656, Mrs JAW (1958) CWO report, 13 Feb 1958.

¹⁶⁶ Devon County Council, *Children neglected or ill-treated in their own homes* (Exeter: Devon CC, 1955); *id.*, *Devon child care service* (Exeter: Devon County Council, 1965); ‘What’s the set-up? Devon’, *Accord*, 1:2 (1955), pp. 11-12; LA DDX2302/box 7/case number 3068, Mrs JD (1962) HV report, 13 Jan 1962.

¹⁶⁷ LA: DDX2302/box 21/case number 3273, Derbyshire divisional coordinating committee minutes, 25 Mar 1965; DRO: D5088/1/67 Annual report of the MOH for Derbyshire, 1957, pp. 52-6, 58-9, 101.

¹⁶⁸ J. C. Aspden, *A municipal history of Eastbourne, 1938-1974* (Eastbourne: Eastbourne BC, 1978), pp. 129, 150, 206, 237-8.

¹⁶⁹ Essex County Council, *Report to the Ministry of Health as requested in the joint circular* (Colchester: Essex County Council, 1967); LA: DDX2302/box 7/case number 2330, Mrs MCD (1957) HV report, 5 Sept 1957; CIJW: XH39/ VII.2 GB PO report, 10 Mar 1962; *Evening Standard*, 16 May 1951.

of strategies by professions across authorities in post-war Britain. Throughout, the supporting documentation found within the case files of families referred to Brentwood have been used to reconstruct the mundane but widespread practices which operationalised the ‘problem family’. Ultimately, regardless of professional, regional, racial and national differences in defining and understanding the ‘problem family’, they remained ‘easy to recognise’ due to the standardised and nationalised welfare structures of the post-war state.

Professionals, politics and the poor: discourses of the ‘problem family’

The nationalisation and standardisation of ‘problem family’ practices was inextricably linked to wider processes of professionalisation. This professionalisation was, in turn, linked to shifting discourses of the ‘problem family’ in post-war Britain. Elsewhere, Welshman has offered a thoroughgoing analysis of the significance of professionalisation and the ‘problem family’ to post-war social work, and its interrelationship to the wider ‘underclass’ discourse.¹⁷⁰ The discussion here does not seek to repeat or refute his insightful analysis, but instead consider how Toye’s ‘pertinent silences’ bounded the debate of the ‘problem family’ and the post-war poverty puzzle. Welshman’s conclusion that the history of the ‘problem family’ was a debate ‘*contained* within professional circles [emphasis added]’ is key to framing these ‘pertinent silences’.¹⁷¹ Contrary to Todd’s narrative which sees social science, professional practices and campaigning organisations eroding the ‘assumptions of family casework’ which individualised poverty,¹⁷² professionalisation strengthened the discretionary decision-making of street-level bureaucrats. Welshman too, has stated that the concept was subject to ‘sustained criticism’ and was in decline by 1970.¹⁷³ Whilst this is certainly evident in terms of published professional content, Chapter Four noted that the ‘problem family’ was still found in the reports of a ‘phalanx of officials’. The ‘problem family’ represented a persistent and ‘pertinent silence’ of post-war welfare consensus throughout the ‘golden age’. Here, discussion focuses on five areas which bound the ‘problem family’ discourse: eugenics, international currents, political consensus, unpublished and incomplete research projects, and other published sources and social studies. What the bounds of the ‘problem family’ discourse show is that the process of professionalisation, rather than offering a new approach, reaffirmed the existing role and status

¹⁷⁰ Welshman, ‘Social history’; id., *Underclass*, chap. 4.

¹⁷¹ Welshman, *Underclass*, p. 97.

¹⁷² Todd, ‘Family welfare’, p. 384.

¹⁷³ J. Welshman, ‘Troubles and the family’, *Social Policy and Society*, 16:1 (2017), p. 116.

of expertise. Mike Savage's suggestion that post-war social science did not break with the past but deepened 'old identities through the same processes by which they [were] reworked',¹⁷⁴ applies likewise to the 'folk sociology' and operational practices of street-level bureaucrats. Similarly, as noted in Chapter One, social work historiography on professionalisation imitates social scientists' efforts to 'systematically conceal their own tracks' in claims of progress.¹⁷⁵

Eugenicist dimensions to the 'problem family' discourse have been prominent across the historiography. As noted throughout, both Macnicol and Welshman have detailed the close relationship between the Eugenics Society and MOsH, whilst Starkey has explored comparable links with FSU.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, it is these well-established connections between senior officials and eugenic ideas which Todd has criticised. In Britain, eugenic ideas permeated discourse and local practice rather than national policy. Neither the racial fitness policies of Scandinavian welfare states, nor the sterilisation programmes of North America, had equivalents in Britain.¹⁷⁷ However, eugenic sympathies ran deep within the technocratic outlook of officialdom, and is reflected in 'problem family' operationalisation across professional narratives. Anxiety over global population problems legitimated a resurgence in discussion over differential fertility.¹⁷⁸ Restricting the fertility of the unfit underpinned domiciliary family planning across the political divide,¹⁷⁹ and received support at local and national levels¹⁸⁰. Additionally, the 'rediscovery of poverty' did little to abate these concerns, contrary to Todd's suggestion. Dorothy Morgan, an ardent eugenicist and pioneer of domiciliary family planning noted: 'No one can deny that poverty and problem families exist in our towns and cities – this was starkly revealed by... *The*

¹⁷⁴ M. Savage, *Identities and social change in Britain since 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 236.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹⁷⁶ Starkey, *Families*, chap. 3.

¹⁷⁷ On eugenicist welfare connections in Scandinavia see: N. Broberg and N. Roll-Hansen, eds., *Eugenics and the welfare state* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2005); D. Porter, 'Eugenics and the sterilization debate in Sweden and Britain before World War II', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 24:2 (1999), pp. 145-62; A. Spektorowski and E. Mizrahi, 'Eugenics and the welfare state in Sweden', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39:3 (2004), pp. 333-52; on North America see: R. Hansen and D. King, *Sterilized by the state* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); I. Dowbiggin, *The sterilization movement and global fertility in the twentieth century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

¹⁷⁸ R. A. Soloway, *Demography and degeneration* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1990); L. Marks, *Sexual chemistry* (New Haven, CT: Harvard University Press, 2010); K. Ittman, *A problem of great importance* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 2013).

¹⁷⁹ Domiciliary family planning featured in Labour's Urban Aid Programme as well as the Conservative 'cycle of deprivation'. See Loney, *Community*, chap. 1; Welshman, *Transmitted deprivation*, chap. 3.

¹⁸⁰ DHSS, *Domiciliary family planning* (London: HMSO, 1971); on local schemes, see Cardiff: TNA: FD 23/578 A. L. Cochrane, 'An evaluation of free oral contraception services for problem families', n. d. [Oct 1964]; and Manchester: I. Allen, *Domiciliary family planning service in Manchester* (London: PEP, 1975); Manchester City Council Social Services, *Family support scheme* (Manchester: Manchester Social Science Department, 1977).

poor and the poorest'.¹⁸¹ Similarly, eugenics continued to shape 'problem family' discourse beyond the publications of the Problem Families Committee in the early 1950s. Paul Cadbury, the financier of the 'residential option' in Birmingham, was a member of the Eugenics Society and used his private research of families attending the centres, considered in Chapter Three, to refine definitions of the 'problem family'.¹⁸² Crucially, as Welshman has argued, these debates were *contained* within professional circles. When private professional debates did transgress public limits, disquiet ensued. In 1953, John Reid Graham, MOH for Chesterfield, advocated that 'problem families' should be sterilised in his annual report.¹⁸³ This caused furore in the national press.¹⁸⁴ Graham defended his views to the *Municipal Journal*, emphasising that 'he was only throwing out a suggestion', but the editors noted: 'Memories of Nazi Germany are too fresh to permit even consideration of such a possibility'. The editors sympathised with Graham's point however, agreeing that the 'survival of the fittest eliminated a certain amount of bad stock in the bad old days. Now State and local aid enables them to exist and increase'.¹⁸⁵ Graham continued to voice concern over 'problem families' in later reports.¹⁸⁶ Despite their reduced public visibility, eugenicist ideas thrived in private professionalised practices.

Discussion of 'problem family' discourse has been framed in parochial terms, with limited consideration of international dimensions. Although Welshman has noted how US social work attitudes shaped change in Britain, he gives little credence to their influence on the 'underclass' discourse until the late 1960s surrounding the 'culture of poverty'.¹⁸⁷ International dimensions should not be ignored, despite the national emphasis of the 'problem family'. John Stewart has shown how child guidance and psychiatric social work gained traction in Britain through professional, discursive and financial exchanges with the US.¹⁸⁸ Similarly, 'problem family' discourse was internationally plural and contested, based on reciprocal exchanges of ideas and practice. Early 'problem family' advocates, particularly the inheritors of the 'social problem group', exported their analysis across the Atlantic with mixed success.¹⁸⁹ Later debate

¹⁸¹ D. Morgan, 'Family planning in problem families', *Public Health*, 82:3 (1968), p. 128.

¹⁸² BAHS: MS517/A/3/3/3 Lee Crescent Minutes, 9 Dec 1957.

¹⁸³ Annual report of the MOH for Chesterfield RDC, 1952, pp. 8-9.

¹⁸⁴ *Daily Worker* and *News of the World*, 27 Sept 1953; *Daily Express*, *Daily Sketch*, and *Scotsman*, 28 Sept 1953.

¹⁸⁵ 'Limiting problem families', *Municipal Journal*, 61:3153 (1953), p. 4.

¹⁸⁶ Annual report of the MOH for Chesterfield RDC, 1955, pp. 7-9.

¹⁸⁷ Welshman, 'Troubles', p. 115; id., *Underclass*, chap. 5.

¹⁸⁸ J. Stewart, 'Psychiatric social work in inter-war Britain', *Michael Quarterly*, 3:2 (2006), pp. 78-91; id., *Child guidance in Britain, 1918-1955* (London: Routledge, 2016), chap. 2.

¹⁸⁹ D. C. Jones, 'The social problem group', *Canadian Bar Review*, 23:3 (1945), pp. 183-226; C. F. Brockington, 'Letters from Great Britain', *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 42:19 (1951), pp. 410-26; H. C. Maurice Williams, 'Rehabilitation of problem families', *American Journal of Public Health*, 45:8 (1955), pp. 990-7.

surrounding professional and administrative operationalisation of ‘problem families’ was also sustained with North America.¹⁹⁰ Undoubtedly, US social work changed how the ‘problem family’ was conceived and understood. The import of psychodynamic casework approaches into university courses was at the heart of this process.¹⁹¹ Moreover, a shortage of basic texts at universities compounded reliance on US approaches,¹⁹² although this was tempered by the burgeoning publication of textbooks in social administration from provincial universities, of which Penelope Hall’s *Social services of modern England* was foremost.¹⁹³ The most tangible sign of US influence on the ‘problem family’ was its transformation into the ‘multi-problem family’ due to the studies of the Family Centred Project, St Paul, Minnesota,¹⁹⁴ although similar projects were found throughout the US.¹⁹⁵ International dimensions extended beyond North America. As noted earlier, Dutch experiments segregating ‘asocial’ families were a continued source of fascination, if exerting minimal influence on policy. These currents extended across the Empire, from Australia to Malta.¹⁹⁶ Although eugenicist dimensions slowly faded from discourse in Britain, they remained in countries with explicit commitments to such policies including Finland, where Wofinden’s research on ‘problem families’ appeared long after it was fashionable in Britain.¹⁹⁷ Operational strategies concerning ‘problem families’ run by several local authorities including Liverpool, Kent and Essex, including the domiciliary and residential ‘options’ of Brentwood and FSU, were the subject of a 1961 tour by the French anti-poverty

¹⁹⁰ H. S. Magnay, ‘Liverpool’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 302 (1955), pp. 94-6; G. M. Kammerer, *British and American child welfare services* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1962); Handler, *Coercive social worker*; Schleisinger, *Multi-problem family*.

¹⁹¹ Younghusband, *Social work*, vol. two, chap. 5.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 85; E. E. Irvine, ‘Renaissance in British casework’, *Social Work*, 13:3 (1956), pp. 187-94; P. Seed, *The expansion of social work in Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 65.

¹⁹³ Interview with Paul Wilding by Michael Lambert, 31 October 2016; M. P. Hall, *The social services of modern England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952). The book reached its ninth edition by 1975.

¹⁹⁴ L. L. Geismar and B. Ayres, *Patterns of change in problem families* (St Paul, MN: Family Centred Project, 1959); J. C. Lagey and B. Ayres, ‘Community treatment programs for multi-problem families’, in Schleisinger, *Multi-problem family*, pp. 55-73.

¹⁹⁵ CIJW: XH116 VII.2 GB/3 Erie County family-centred project: a memorandum reviewing potentialities, 15 May 1959; Baden Street Settlement Staff, *Final evaluation of the Volunteer Case Aid demonstration project* (Rochester, NY: Baden Street Settlement and Junior League of Rochester, 1959); Huntington Family Centre Social Work Staff, *Multi-service project for troubled families* (New York, NY: Huntington Family Centre, 1961); Indianapolis Family Service Association, *A three year demonstration in the rehabilitation of sixteen families* (Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Family Service Association, 1961); Douglas County United Community Services, *Family rehabilitation program* (Douglas County, NB: Douglas County United Community Services 1962); J. E. Weinandy, *Families under stress* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Youth Development Centre, 1962); G. E. Brown, *The multi-problem dilemma* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1968).

¹⁹⁶ G. A. Bishop, *Rehabilitation of families in England and Holland* (Melbourne: Brotherhood of St Laurence, 1955); R. J. Lawrence, ‘The development of professional social work in Australia’, unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1962, pp. 346-52; LHUSC: NA237 ‘Problem families’ in St Anne Welfare Committee for the Old, Social Welfare Conference, Malta, Jan 1961, pp. 26-30.

¹⁹⁷ R. C. Wofinden, ‘Ongelmaperheet’, *Duodecim*, 82:23 (1966), pp. 1178-84; on Finland see: M. Hietala, ‘From race hygiene to sterilization’, in Brobergand and Roll-Hansen, *Eugenics*, pp. 195-258.

campaigner and founder of ATD4W (Association aide à Toute Détresse Quarte Monde), Father Joseph Wresinski.¹⁹⁸ Crucially, awareness of the international dimensions of ‘problem family’ discourse expose its parochial, professional and seldom public influence in the ‘golden age’ welfare state.

Exploration of the significance of professional discussion of the ‘problem family’ also strengthens its status as a accepted and unquestioned within post-war politics. As discussed earlier, binary Labour-structure and Conservative-behaviour dichotomies of understanding post-war poverty belie the uncontested basis of the ‘problem family’ as a legitimate subject of state expertise. J. A. Scott, MOH for LonCC, a trenchantly Labour authority, encapsulates this complexity. Scott was a member of the SMA (Socialist Medical Association), yet undertook a major study of ‘problem families’, served as designated officer, and possessed a technocratic commitment to improving services.¹⁹⁹ Conversely, the MOH for Kensington, as noted above, also saw the ‘problem family’ as a subject of concern, but reflected Conservative commitments to avoiding expensive statutory powers, reducing local rates, and responsabilising the poor.²⁰⁰ Scott was not representative of the SMA, and in 1966 their Social Workers’ Group criticised his Fabian conception of the state, seeing the poor as ‘casualties of the welfare state’²⁰¹:

[T]here is, *even among socialists*, a tendency to believe that by an expansion or re-organisation of the social services and by the employment of more social workers such problems as delinquency, homelessness, mental ill-health and child deprivation will, in some magical way, be reduced [emphasis added].²⁰²

Recounting how the ‘rediscovery of poverty’ transformed attitudes towards poverty around this time, Todd argues that CPAG ‘quickly recruited a large number of social researchers and social workers who were sympathetic’ to views that poverty was structural, and not behavioural.²⁰³ Significantly, Harriet Wilson and Elizabeth Gittus, who previously studied ‘problem families’ in Cardiff and Liverpool respectively, were among the first to join the national organisation in 1966.²⁰⁴ Although Liverpool was the first authority to publicly report on problems of poverty,

¹⁹⁸ CIJW: XH40/VII.2 GB/4 Programme Voyage Angleterre, 17-26 July 1961.

¹⁹⁹ J. Stewart, *“The battle for health”* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 212; J. A. Scott, ‘Problem families in London’, *Medical Officer*, 100 (1958), pp. 83-6; id., ‘Problem families’, *Lancet*, 1:7013 (1958), pp. 204-8.

²⁰⁰ Dearlove, *Politics of policy*, chaps. 9-10.

²⁰¹ A. Harvey, *Casualties of the welfare state* (London: Fabian Society, 1960).

²⁰² Social Workers’ Group of the SMA, *A socialist view of social work* (London: Today and Tomorrow, 1967), p. 9.

²⁰³ Todd, ‘Family welfare’, p. 385.

²⁰⁴ P. Thane and Rut Davidson, *The Child Poverty Action Group, 1965 to 2015* (London: CPAG, 2016), p. 11.

and undertook a study of poverty in Toxteth and Dingle with Merseyside CPAG, involving many FSU members,²⁰⁵ it did not revolutionise attitudes in the manner seen by Todd. Although individual FSU members participated, their annual report for 1970 opened: ‘With families we emphasise, as the Unit has always done, how *they* are the most important factor in the resolving of their difficulties (emphasis in original)’.²⁰⁶ Equally, CPAG felt the Liverpool report was useful, only when it rises above the ‘subjective prejudice’ of its authors.²⁰⁷ Attitudes towards the state, citizenship, welfare and professionalisation were inseparable from, but not dependent upon, party political views; and the poor, not poverty, were the ‘problem’ for the state.

Further ‘pertinent silences’ which contribute to the position of the ‘problem family’ as an accepted orthodoxy of the post-war ‘golden age’ welfare state consensus are the unfinished, unpublished and unpublicised research studies on the subject. These present efforts to establish or advance knowledge which failed to significantly affect discourse, but whose traces signify the legitimacy of the subject for investigation. The most interesting of these was an abortive study by the FWA (Family Welfare Association) backed by a substantial grant of £1,500 per year for four years from 1951-55 by the CUKT (Carnegie United Kingdom Trust).²⁰⁸ It aimed to define the ‘problem family’, study its causation, and the ability of casework to affect family rehabilitation.²⁰⁹ The study approached 30-35 families known to FWA in London, including one family referred to Brentwood in 1953. On her departure, the researcher, Douglas Webster, asked Miss Abraham twenty questions about Mrs NB, from her relationship with her children and husband – sexually, physically and emotionally – to her attitude towards the FWA and her experiences of childhood. None of the questions concerned material conditions.²¹⁰ The study remained unpublished due to ‘unfavourable comment’ received on the draft from the external referee, Professor Wilson at Bristol University. Following this, CUKT recommended that the unspent balance of £120 should be used to publish portions of the report ‘which might be useful

²⁰⁵ Liverpool City Council, *Evidence of poverty and its ill-effects in Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool City Council, 1967); Liverpool City Council Welfare Committee, *Welfare benefits* (Liverpool: Liverpool Welfare Department, 1969); LUSCA: D495 (LI)C1 Many of the Liverpool FSU case paper duplicates are on the reverse of Merseyside CPAG publicity; on CPAG branches see Ruth Davidson, “‘Branches ‘blossom and flourish like leaves on a tree, and wither and perish’ but the poor are always with us’”, in C. Rochester, ed., *Old problems, new solutions*, forthcoming.

²⁰⁶ LUSCA: D495(LI)M11/23 Annual report of Liverpool FSU, 1970, p. 1.

²⁰⁷ ‘Lessons from Liverpool’, *Poverty*, 5 (1967), p. 21.

²⁰⁸ Annual report of the CUKT, 1951, p. 3 <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/search-archive/>, accessed 25 May 2015.

²⁰⁹ Bishop, *Rehabilitation*, pp. 5-6.

²¹⁰ LA: DDX2302/box 4/case number 1878, Mrs NB (1953) M. Whale to E. D. Abraham, 16 Dec 1952; D. Webster to E. D. Abraham, 17 June, and reply 27 July 1953.

to social case-workers or social science students'.²¹¹ The only output from the project was a 1954 article in the FWA mouthpiece *Social Work*.²¹² At the same time, the CUKT also backed the FSU to undertake a comparable study, which became Fred Philp's *Family failure*.²¹³ Both FSU and FWA were also involved in a study along with NAMCW (National Association for Maternity and Child Welfare) into designated officers, coordination committees and their ability to prevent or rehabilitate 'problem families'.²¹⁴ Unfinished and unpublished research into 'problem families' was not confined to voluntary organisations. In 1962 the HO Research Unit undertook a 1962 study into defining the 'problem family'.²¹⁵ Similarly, under the rubric of Newcastle Social Rehabilitation Committee, a study was commissioned with the University into 'problem families', funded by the Rothley Trust and released in 1966.²¹⁶ These incomplete studies also provide a means of gauging how the 'problem family' discourse was bounded, and subject to fluctuating and shifting concern as a subject of statutory and voluntary expertise.

Complementing the hidden dimension of the 'problem family' discourse suggested by unfinished sources, and providing further evidence of their centrality as a subject in post-war Britain, are published sources, textbooks and other social studies on other areas which take the existence of 'problem families' as given. As noted above and discussed in Chapter Five, the creation of such texts within civic universities was of importance in generating and circulating knowledge of social administration and studying society. Even alleged critics of the problem of 'the problem family' such as Noel Timms did not discount their existence.²¹⁷ Noted child care pioneer John Stroud readily discussed his own experiences of 'multi-problem families'.²¹⁸ Contemporary works on the development of children's services were replete with narratives on

²¹¹ CUKT Community Services Subcommittee Minutes, 7 Dec 1956 <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/search-archive/>, accessed 25 May 2015. I have been unable to locate a copy of the report.

²¹² M. Whale, 'Problem families', *Social Work*, 11:1 (1954), pp. 881-7.

²¹³ Annual report of the CUKT, 1951, p. 3 <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/search-archive/>, accessed 25 May 2015; LUSCA: D495(SH)M5 Annual report of Sheffield FSU, 1953, p. 4; D. L. Woodhouse, 'Casework with problem families', *Case Conference*, 5:2 (1958), pp. 31-39; A. F. Philp, *Family failure* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963).

²¹⁴ National Association for Maternity and Child Welfare, *Child neglect and the social services* (London: NAMCW, 1953); the records of the NAMCW Problem Families Group were unfortunately destroyed in a fire. Personal correspondence with Danielle Dewhurst at Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education, 1 and 6 Sept 2016.

²¹⁵ MRC: MSS.378/ACCO/C/15/3/31 HO Research Unit research in child care, Nov 1967, bibliography including HO Research Unit, 'Problem families', 1962. I have been unable to locate a copy of the report.

²¹⁶ TWA: MD.NC/113/1 Joint Social Rehabilitation Subcommittee minutes, 23 Nov 1964; *ibid.*/2 Joint Social Rehabilitation Subcommittee working party on problem families report, Jan 1966.

²¹⁷ A. F. Philp and N. Timms, *The problem of 'the problem family'* (London: FSU, 1957); N. Timms, *Casework in the child care service* (London: Butterworths, 1962), pp. 134-44.

²¹⁸ J. A. Stroud, *Child care officers and their world* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965), pp. 26, 76-7.

developing specialisation around ‘problem families’.²¹⁹ Texts on child care and health visiting unthinkingly discussed ‘problem families’ as simply another duty.²²⁰ Throughout the post-war period, textbooks on social administration included ‘problem families’ alongside other social problems,²²¹ whilst research included discussion of the ‘problem family’ without debating definitions or considering criteria.²²² Conversely, the *Canford families* studied links between parenting and juvenile delinquency in impoverished urban areas, excluding ‘problem families’ considered to require the service of a [FSU]’ or known to the coordinating committee.²²³ Alongside child care, social administration, and sociological texts were psychologists, who saw ‘problem families’ as given. Perhaps most revealing is the discussion of the ‘problem family’ by John Bowlby, whose influential *Child care and the growth of love* criticised the 1948 WGPW report for insufficiently accounting for ‘personal factors’.²²⁴ After considering a litany of factors and ‘disabilities’ in mothers of ‘problem families’, Bowlby surmised:

Admittedly, many such problem parents do not show *all* these features – in some the disability may be only partial – *but it seems beyond doubt that they are at bottom the same thing* [emphasis added].²²⁵

Bowlby subsequently served as the guest speaker on ‘problem families’ at the British National Conference on Social Work in 1953.²²⁶ The indefinable ‘same thing’ which Bowlby struggled to grasp, but felt was ‘beyond doubt’, is recognisable as Elizabeth Irvine’s view that ‘problem families’ were ‘easy to recognise’ if ‘surprisingly hard to define’. It is this elusive certainty which both created and bounded ‘problem family’ discourse; legitimating the subjectivity of

²¹⁹ A. E. Leeding, *Child care manual* (London: Butterworths, 1966), chaps. 9-10; E. Pugh, *Social work in child care* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 18-22; P. Boss, *Exploration into child care* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), chap. 3; Seed, *Social work*, chaps. 5-6.

²²⁰ E. J. Holmes, *They look to me* (Birmingham: Birmingham Children’s Department, 1957), p. 5; J. M. Akester and A. N. MacPhail, *Health visiting in the sixties* (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 44, 52, 60.

²²¹ Hall, *Social services*, chap. 10; D. V. Donnison and V. Chapman, eds., *Social policy and administration* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1965), chap. 6; R. G. S. Brown, *The management of welfare* (London: Fontana, 1975), pp. 129-31.

²²² L. A. Shaw, ‘Impressions of family life in a London suburb’, *Sociological Review*, 2:2 (1954), pp. 190-1, 193; B. E. Pollard, *Social casework for the state* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962), pp. 18-9; M. P. Hall and I. V. Howes, *The Church in social work* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 184-9; Davies, *Social needs*, pp. 75-7, 245-7; C. Himsworth, *Early difficulties with young families* (London: HK Lewis, 1969), pp. 108-10, 133, 141-2, 171-2; Greve et al., *Homelessness in London*, pp. 81-5, 153-5, 192-3.

²²³ E. Howarth, ‘Aims and development’, in P. Halmos, ed., *The Canford families* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1962), pp. 13, 15-6.

²²⁴ J. Bowlby, *Child care and the growth of love* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 90-1

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

²²⁶ J. Bowlby, ‘Special problems: problem families, neglectful parents, the broken home, illegitimacy’, in NCSS, *The family* (London: NCSS, 1953), pp. 21-9.

the ‘problem family’, but entrusting their identification to professionals who derived status in performing and operationalising their expertise on behalf of the paternal state.

Professionalisation did not transcend ‘subjective prejudice’ but instead entrenched the expertise of officials and their ability and legitimacy to pass judgment on ‘problem families’. ‘Problem family’ discourse cannot be disentangled from that of the ‘underclass’ as articulated by Welshman, and reflects a traditional interpretation of poverty which locates the problem in, or of, the poor.²²⁷ However, the binary structural and behavioural demarcation of proponents or antagonists of the ‘problem family’ does not capture the ‘pertinent silence’ they represented in the post-war networks of governance. The ‘problem family’ certainly existed in the official imagination. The professional and private debates which aimed to improve the state apparatus which identified and intervened in the ‘problem family’ were largely conducted beyond public gaze and scrutiny. Welshman’s detailed survey of the professional and disciplinary narratives around the ‘problem family’ fails to fully capture the concealed aspects of this discourse. The ongoing relevance of eugenic ideas; wider international social work connections’ uncontested political position of the ‘problem family’ as a subject for intervention; unfinished, unpublished and unseen efforts at expanding the discourse; and the unthinking inclusion of the ‘problem family’ in a litany of disciplinary texts all signify the contextual relevance of the discourse as one reflecting professional operationalisation. Old identities were not reinvented, but recycled. Professionals may have become more aware and interested in the problems of poverty, but their subject of action remained the poor. This continued street-level relevance of the ‘problem family’ in discourse meant that regardless of the whether officials had psychological, ‘folk sociological’, eugenicist, sociological or other professional toolkits, each equipped them to use their knowledge and expertise to recognise, if still unable to define, the ‘problem family’.

Conclusion

On a mundane and daily basis, ‘problem families’ were operationalised by the post-war welfare state in the ‘decisions made by bureaucrats’ according to Noble. A ‘phalanx of officials’ judged whether a family was experiencing a ‘problem’, or constituted the ‘problem’. This judgment legitimated diverging courses of intervention. The myriad of professional lenses and forms of expertise, along with a shared ‘folk sociology’ which differentiated families was considered in

²²⁷ Welshman, *Underclass*, p. 2.

Chapter Four. Decisions by officials were not made in isolation. Lipsky's conception of street-level bureaucracy captures this process of decision-making as part of a system of competing demands on limited resources and workplace pressures. The impact of this system of decision-making upon the strategies of chief officers, the expertise they generated and circulated, and the working-class communities where they were enacted informed a case study of the North West, recreated in Chapter Five. However, street-level bureaucrats and their chief officers did not operate autonomously, and their actions were further subject to discretion, constraints and other requirements of central government, as explored in this chapter. Crucially, the 'problem family' was not a top-down, state-constructed subject imposed from the centre, but was the result of a plural, negotiated and contested interaction by many professionals, local authorities and branches of central government. Although the decisions of the street, local and national-level officials were structured, shaped and constrained, the role of agency cannot be ignored. 'Problem families' were consciously produced and operationalised in the official imagination by fluid and dynamic forms and networks of governance, as much as through elite discourses concerned with an 'underclass'. They existed in the minds of professionals, elites and officials across Britain because they were embedded into operational practices of the welfare state.

This chapter has demonstrated how the 'problem family' was emphatically part of the landscape of the 'golden age' of the post-war welfare state. 'Problem families' were as much a part of this era as the NHS. However, they have received either specialised or comparatively limited attention as they were a 'pertinent silence' of the consensus, reflecting the shared values or the state as much as competing visions of welfare. Three particular processes contributed to this unnoticed but universal operationalisation of the 'problem family' in the 'golden age' post-war welfare state: standardisation, nationalisation and professionalisation. Whilst Chapter Five demonstrated the role of local and regional strategies, forms of expertise and the working-class community in the North West, these derived from a standardised template which was the result of a constant dialogue between professions, politicians, and government. Moreover, the forms of operationalisation considered in Chapter Five were not just found in the North West, but across post-war Britain. Evidence from Brentwood, along with several smaller case studies of regional areas, strategies developed by chief officers, and means of differentiating 'problem' from normal families, exposed how the 'problem family' was a common experience to officials because processes of managing them were nationalised. Behind the normative and nationwide patterns of operationalising 'problem families' were debates over professional knowledge. The extensive study of discourse provided by Welshman was not revisited, but supplemented by an

exploration of the unspoken boundaries of debates over welfare which bounded the ‘problem family’ as a subject of legitimate state action. Across a host of disciplines and professions, the ‘problem family’ remained ‘easy to recognise’ but ‘surprisingly hard to define’. Later muted debates over definition and causation did not reflect a lack of concern, but a tacit acceptance of the existence of the ‘problem family’, which continued to be the subject of street, local and national-level action at the very heart of the post-war welfare state.

Whilst the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies studied how structures of policing were formed by crises through an exploration of individual episodes of alarm, this chapter has sought to study how structures of governance operated in an era of supposed calm and certainty in a similar manner. ‘Problem families’ cannot be studied in isolation to the post-war ‘golden age’ welfare context which operationalised them. Individual episodes whereby families were subject to professional expertise, bureaucratic discretion and concerted action reflect the larger processes of state governance which empowered their legitimacy. Whilst easier to recognise in times of crisis, the accepted, unquestioned and often unthinking incorporation of ‘problem family’ policies into everyday governance reflects their substance as a ‘pertinent silence’ which is much harder to define in times of calm.

Conclusion

The key contention of this thesis is that ‘problem families’ existed, and were as much a part of the post-war welfare state landscape as the NHS (National Health Service). ‘Problem families’ *did not* exist as a distinct subcultural social group with different behaviour, possessing ‘stone age standards of conduct in the cities of an age of steel’ as suggested by a range of experts, officials and professionals.¹ The work of John Macnicol and John Welshman has exposed the elite anxieties that such views represented, and their longevity in industrial Britain as part of a longer ‘underclass’ discourse.² However, ‘problem families’ *did* exist. They existed as an amorphous, subjective and professionally understood category held by a range of statutory and voluntary officials in post-war Britain, whose precise definition was contested, but were instantly recognisable and once identified, subject to a range of interventions seeking to ensure their rehabilitation. The post-war welfare state saw the development of a succession of policies, strategies and practices concerning this process of identifying and intervening in ‘problem families’. The thesis has reconstructed these in a number of ways. First, through a reinterpretation of the historiography of the post-war welfare state, local government and social work. Second, by using a methodology examining the records of the Brentwood Recuperative Centre (1943-70) to reconstruct the day-to-day practices which identified and intervened in ‘problem families’. Third, in reconsidering the chronology of the ‘problem family’ as an administrative process rather than as an elite discourse concerned with an ‘underclass’. This reconstruction has subsequently been applied in a series of encounters: at the personal, local and national level. What they suggest is that the ‘problem family’ is best understood as an operational concept at the heart of the welfare state. Emphasis on the family reveals the same underlying assumptions and marked continuities with the current TFP (Troubled Families Programme). Far from taking the opportunity to ‘not repeat the failed attempts of the past’ as Louise Casey adamantly argued, the similarities of ‘troubled’ and ‘problem’ family policies extend beyond their names and into the way they perceive the subject of the poor family as a legitimate site of state intervention.³

¹ C. O. Stallybrass, ‘Problem families’, *Social Work*, 4:2 (1947), p. 30.

² J. Macnicol, ‘In pursuit of the underclass’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 16:3 (1987), pp. 293-318; J. Welshman, *Underclass* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

³ L. Casey, *Listening to troubled families* (London: DCLG, 2012), p. 3.

Reconsidering the historiography of the welfare state, local government and social work has been central to approaching the ‘problem family’. Histories of the welfare state have tended to focus disproportionately on welfare aspects, rather than those of the state. Accordingly, as Virginia Noble suggests, experiences of the welfare state should be approached not in terms of provision and legislation, but ‘in decisions made by bureaucrats and in the interactions between those claiming benefits and those dispensing them’.⁴ The ‘problem family’ represents one such instance of how such discretionary decision-making was essential in delineating eligibility and citizenship in accessing the welfare state. Furthermore, ‘problem families’ constitute what Richard Toye terms a ‘pertinent silence’ of post-war consensus, in that although a degree of politicised debate and flexibility existed, both Labour and the Conservative Parties took the ‘problem family’ as given.⁵ This has particular significance given the historically politicised basis of local government, as it was local authorities who possessed the greatest responsibility in shaping policies and implementing strategies concerning ‘problem families’. Acting upon policies and strategies were a host of junior officials undertaking duties at the behest of their departmental chief officers. As with the historiography of the welfare state, social work has been dominated by Whig narratives of professionalisation and celebrations of a ‘golden age’ of casework which overlook the punitive, paternalist and prohibitive practices that these often entailed. Whilst the chief officer of the Public Health Department, the MOH (Medical Officer of Health), along with their ‘shock troops’ in the form of HVs (Health Visitors), have received coverage in the historiography,⁶ the ‘problem family’ existed as a subject of concern for *all* post-war personal social services including Children’s, Welfare and Education Departments. Although less visible than the NHS, the ‘problem family’ constituted a cause for concern by the national, local and personal forces of the welfare state. Their significance rests in their very embedding in the post-war landscape, whose invisibility provides a testament to the everyday and mundane operations of the welfare state in motion which both imagined and identified the ‘problem family’.

Tracing the process of mundane identification and intervention of ‘problem families’ by the professionals, experts and officials of the welfare state informed the methodology for the thesis. Reconstructing the history of Brentwood has been key to this process of everyday

⁴ V. A. Noble, *Inside the welfare state* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.

⁵ R. Toye, ‘From “consensus” to “common ground”’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48:1 (2013), p. 23.

⁶ P. Starkey, ‘The Medical Officer of Health, the social worker, and the problem family, 1943-1968’, *Social History of Medicine*, 11:3 (1998), pp. 421-441; J. Welshman, ‘In search of the “problem family”’, *Social History of Medicine*, 9:3 (1996), pp. 447-65; B. Taylor and B. Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly is a dirty, lazy type’”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 18:4 (2007), pp. 429-52.

decision-making. Welshman has previously identified the relationship of the Centre with the ‘problem family’.⁷ Understanding the everyday identification of ‘problem families’ can be seen from a 1975 DHSS (Department of Health and Social Security) inquiry into the death of two children at the hands of their father: ‘*the family can almost be seen as a demonstration of how the welfare state operates*’ [emphasis added].⁸ The family was a ‘problem family’, with the mother attending Brentwood in 1968. She was one of roughly 3,400 mothers who attended the Centre from 1940-70, each offering a glimpse into the daily decision-making into deciding who was, or was not, a ‘problem family’. The surviving 1,817 case files, comprising 1,702 mothers who attended Brentwood from 1942-70, were used to establish how a ‘phalanx of officials’⁹ identified ‘problem families’, and how their expert toolkits were used to identify underlying ‘problems’. Although Welshman has noted how competing social work and public health professions debated and contested the definition of the ‘problem family’,¹⁰ these debates did not prevent them from singling out certain families as ‘problem families’ and subjecting them to specific forms of intervention. Elizabeth Irvine captured this operational basis by noting: ‘Problem families are easy to recognise and describe, but surprisingly hard to define’.¹¹ Crucially, it was the fact that ‘problem families’ presented a ‘problem’ to more than one service which was central to their definition and identification. It was only by coming to a collective decision that the term gained legitimacy. These shared everyday experiences by officials led Barbara Wootton to comment pithily:

[A] problem family might well be defined as one whose consumption of social workers’ time greatly exceeds the average of the local community.¹²

Recovering these mundane, everyday and intimate judgments about families by agencies and officials of the post-war welfare state from the case files of Brentwood has opened a window onto the operational basis of deciding who was, or was not, a ‘problem family’.

Approaching the ‘problem family’ as an operational process undertaken by a ‘phalanx of officials’ also raised the issue of chronology, in contrast to the wider ‘underclass’ discourse

⁷ J. Welshman, ‘Recuperation, rehabilitation and the residential option’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 19:4 (2008), pp. 502-529; id., ‘Wardens, letter writing and the welfare state, 1944-1974’, in A. Borsay and P. Dale, eds., *Mental health nursing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 190-212.

⁸ DHSS, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the provision and coordination of services to the family of John George Auckland* (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 13.

⁹ Taylor and Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly’”, p. 438.

¹⁰ J. Welshman, ‘The social history of social work’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 29:3 (1999), pp. 457-476.

¹¹ E. E. Irvine, ‘Research into problem families’, *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, 2:9 (1954), p. 24.

¹² B. Wootton, *Social science and social pathology* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959), p. 55.

suggested by Welshman. The ‘problem family’, as the subject of strategies and policies rather than elite anxieties, is specific because of its emphasis on the *family*. As Pat Starkey has noted, efforts at intervention and rehabilitation with ‘problem families’ focused on domesticity, child care and housekeeping, rendering the real subject of concern the ‘problem mother’.¹³ It is the family as a site of reproduction which underpins the recent Coalition and Conservative Governments’ attempts to ‘turn around’ the lives of ‘troubled families’, stemming from New Labour’s FIPs (Family Intervention Projects) and also representing a ‘pertinent silence’ of neoliberal consensus. Here, the similarities between ‘problem’ and ‘troubled’ families as a gendered site of policy intervention to rectify behaviour come clearly into focus. Contrary to Welshman’s suggestion that ‘problem families’ were ‘never central to discussions of social policy’,¹⁴ they were at the heart of discussions over social policy between professions, officials, politicians and others at the local level and point of administrative operationalisation.

The periodisation offered by both Macnicol and Welshman suggests a decline of the ‘problem family’ from the mid-1950s, and that of Starkey after the 1963 Children and Young Person Act.¹⁵ However, it extends beyond both dates. The chronology of the ‘problem family’ reflects this operational basis, emerging due to the administrative requirements of state intervention in wartime, and declining due to the dismantling of the ‘golden age’ welfare state by 1974 through a series of social service, local government and NHS reforms. Although continuities persisted, the ‘problem family’ represents more than another iteration of the ‘underclass’, and encapsulates post-war efforts at normalisation and reconstruction of the family, as well as society, following the disruption of war. The decline of the concept was accompanied by two ‘rediscoveries’ in the 1960s, child abuse and poverty, which heralded greater central government scrutiny of official discretion, and professionalisation of social work around ‘battered babies’. The demise of the ‘problem family’ was as much linked to reform of the state and administrative structures as it was the stigma and unpopularity of the label.

The history of the ‘problem family’ is that of the exercise of official and professional discretion in personal encounters by a ‘phalanx of officials’ in the post-war welfare state. It is,

¹³ P. Starkey, ‘The feckless mother’, *Women’s History Review*, 9:3 (2000), pp. 539-557.

¹⁴ J. Welshman, “‘Troubled families’”, *History and Policy Research*, posted 1 Oct 2012, accessed 16 Jan 2015 <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-136.html>.

¹⁵ J. Macnicol, ‘From “problem family” to “underclass”’, in H. Fawcett and R. Lowe, eds., *Welfare policy in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 88; Welshman, *Underclass*, p. 93; P. Starkey, ‘Mental incapacity, ill health and poverty’, in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey, eds., *Child welfare and social action in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), p. 270.

at root, a study of what Michael Lipsky terms ‘street-level bureaucracy’.¹⁶ The decisions of street-level bureaucrats experienced by families in effect *become* policy. Joel Handler, an academic contemporary of the ‘problem family’, considered the social workers he studied to be ‘coercive’, using discretion to secure compliance.¹⁷ As noted above, it was only when officials collectively agreed that a family was a ‘problem family’ that action was legitimated. These shared assumptions comprise what Andrew Sayer terms a ‘folk sociology’, and existed beyond professionally determined definitions.¹⁸ Contrary to Selina Todd’s contention that ‘the casefiles of individual social workers demonstrate that... eugenicist and psychological explanations of poverty were not particularly significant’,¹⁹ the case files of mothers who were referred to Brentwood by a host of officials from across England and Wales suggest that the opposite is the case. Although officials may have been sympathetic or empathetic with the poverty and the personal plights of families they encountered – indeed, an enduring and common motivation in social work – the purposes of the agency which employed them prevented them from seeing the ‘problem’ except in and of the family. Across a range of statutory and voluntary social, welfare, health and other services families were readily and willingly identified by a ‘phalanx of officials’ as ‘problem families’ and subject to action. Intervention, across professions, consisted of diagnosing the ‘problem’ as maternal incapability and seeing the solution in gendered normalisation and domesticity. These personal encounters between officials and families throughout the ‘golden age’ post-war welfare state ultimately decided which families were ‘problem families’ and which were normal families temporarily experiencing ‘problems’. The decisions by officials in turn exposed families to forms of action and had many outcomes in reducing their access and eligibility to the welfare of the state.

Street-level bureaucrats worked within street-level bureaucracies and the specific local context in which they operated had a profound bearing on the structure of personal encounters. The range of officials and workers were not assigning personal judgments, but professionally informed decisions based on the requirements of the organisation for whom they worked. Here the role of chief officers was vital, with professional strategies – notably MOsH in the historiography²⁰ – informing operational practice, particularly around ‘problem families’.

¹⁶ M. Lipsky, *Street-level bureaucracy* (New York: Russell Sage, 1980).

¹⁷ J. F. Handler, *The coercive social worker* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973).

¹⁸ A. Sayer, *The moral significance of class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chap. 8.

¹⁹ S. Todd, ‘Family welfare and social work in post-war England, c. 1948-1970’, *English Historical Review*, 129:537 (2014), p. 387.

²⁰ L. Diack and D. F. Smith, ‘Professional strategies of Medical Officers of Health in the post-war period – 1’, *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 24:2 (2002), pp. 123-9; S. McLaurin and D. F. Smith, ‘Professional strategies

Studies of local ‘problem family’ practices including Leicester by Welshman, Bristol by Starkey, Norwich by Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly, and Sheffield by the author, all highlight the importance of place.²¹ The use of Brentwood, located in Marple near Manchester, dictated that case studies of chief officers’ strategies must be based on local authorities in the North West. From the surviving 1,817 case files, 1,196 originated from the North West. This points towards the existence of regional as well as local tendencies and strategies. The importance of regional dynamics to the ‘problem family’ also drew attention to the role which the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester played, particularly the Departments of Social Science and Social Administration, which produced and circulated knowledge, and trained officials. Professional associations also played a prominent role, and provided a forum for debating and sharing strategies and best practice.

Recovering local and regional operational practices also indicates the existence of other aspects of post-war consensus which are less visible because they are taken for granted. The prevalence of Irish and EVW (European Volunteer Worker) families as ‘problem families’ exposes a racial dimension to citizenship, and the exclusion of black and Asian families from Brentwood also points to how such notions reflected ideas of ‘whiteness’. Moreover, the spatial dimension of such strategies found within the hierarchy of housing which formed part of the slum clearance process of post-war Britain also served to marginalise and exclude ‘problem families’. However, officials did not possess unfettered autonomy to designate certain families as a ‘problem’, and the role of neighbours and networks in working-class communities in signifying or denouncing certain families to the authorities played a key role. Context played a significant role in shaping personal encounters between officials and families, and the role of place, space and services was just as important as the application of professional toolkits and official discretion.

The personal and local encounters between the state and the ‘problem family’ were not pursued autonomously of central government or in the North West alone. Reconstructing the operational mechanisms for identifying and intervening in the ‘problem family’ throughout the national post-war welfare state is central to its interpretation as an aspect of consensus. Unlike

of Medical Officers of Health in the post-war period – 2’, *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 24:2 (2002), pp. 130-5.

²¹ J. Welshman, *Municipal medicine* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 241-7; id. ‘In search’, *Social History of Medicine*, 9:3 (1996), pp. 447-65; P. Starkey, ‘Problem family’, *Social History of Medicine*, 11:3 (1998), pp. 421-41; Taylor and Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly’”; M. Lambert, “‘In pursuit of the welfare trait’”, *People, Policy and Place*, 10:3 (2016), pp. 225-38.

the TFP, there is no single policy document or pronouncement concerning ‘problem families’. Instead, ‘problem families’ were the subject of a number of circulars, legislation and guidance, and policy precedents which constituted a wider network of governance for local authorities to manage them. These were not imposed centrally, but were created and cascaded through a plural process of negotiation between leading public health and social work professionals, local authority associations as well as Whitehall and Downing Street. These also informed the wider chronology of the ‘problem family’: the 1950 circular led to the formation of ‘problem family’ committees and designated officers; the 1954 circular strengthened the MOH and HV; the 1959 circular increased the role of Welfare and Housing Departments; whilst the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act effectively gave Children’s Departments priority in local operations. The complex negotiation between professions, officials and authorities also underpinned the range of options available. Starkey has focused on the central importance of P/FSU (Pacifist/Family Service Units) to the ‘problem family’ in both discourse and practice.²² Undeniably, P/FSU and their casework method of ‘friendship with a purpose’ was influential, particularly given the emphasis on prevention which underpinned the expanding operationalisation of ‘problem families’, although there was no substantial difference between prevention and rehabilitation in practice. However, the scarcity and difficulty of attracting P/FSU led to other established organisations including the FWA (Family Welfare Association), NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) and the WRVS (Women’s Royal Voluntary Service) among others to create units and appoint caseworkers along similar lines. Moreover, the case study of the North West, although possessing some unique characteristics in terms of industrial decline and urban decay, was not the only place which identified and intervened in the lives of ‘problem families’. The central government framework served to standardise, nationalise and professionalise the ‘problem family’ as a legitimate subject of intervention recognisable across the ‘golden age’ of Britain’s post-war welfare state.

Above all, ‘problem families’ were an operational subject and reflect a complex process of action. Street-level bureaucrats were primarily those responsible for determining who was, or was not, a ‘problem family’ based on their professional toolkit, expert discretion and official purpose. However, they did not operate in isolation. The competing pressures of chief officers of departments including staff, resources, political and committee support were all managed, and served to determine the contours of the personal encounter. Equally, chief officers did not possess unlimited freedom, and were subject to demands within their local authority as well as

²² P. Starkey, *Families and social workers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

competition from professional rivals. The central government structures which operationalised the ‘problem family’ in a standard national pattern, whilst still permitting significant degrees of discretion, all aimed to balance the competing demands placed upon them. Crucially, at no time was the existence of the ‘problem family’ ever brought into question. As Welshman has noted, their definition remained contested and often elusive, but contrary to Todd’s claim, the ‘rediscovery of poverty’ in the 1960s did not profoundly transform attitudes and action towards ‘problem families’. Throughout the ‘golden age’ of the post-war welfare state, officials were authorised to use their shared professional discretion, or ‘folk sociology’, to determine which families were, or were not a ‘problem family’. It is for precisely this reason that they were ‘easy to recognise and describe’. By looking beyond official, printed and published sources, the ‘problem family’ has been reconstructed as a ‘pertinent silence’ of post-war consensus. The everyday decision-making by officials, structured as it was by chief officers and central government dictates, exposes processes of mundane governance and networks of power and authority which underpin the state. The personal recollections of chief officers, including the MOH for Liverpool, Andrew B. Semple, testify to the difficulties of time in committing the operational practices of their service to paper, and publication.²³ This points to the partial and incomplete record presented by the archive, but found in considering case files individually and as a corpus. The state was not, however, of the totalising Foucauldian imagination, but plural, contested and with a number of blind spots due to the negotiation of such processes by families labelled a ‘problem’. The ‘problem family’ did not exist in isolation but had to be found and discovered in the working-class communities and landscapes of post-war Britain. Here, it is important to remember the very material realities of the welfare state beyond the discourses of the ‘underclass’: ‘problem families’ existed.

‘Problem families’ represent more than a conflict between behavioural and structural interpretations of poverty, and wider concerns over an ‘underclass’. Between 1943 and 1974, the ‘golden age’ of the post-war welfare state, a ‘phalanx of officials’ using their professional discretion individually, but a ‘folk sociology’ collectively, sought to differentiate the ‘problem family’ from the normal. Regardless of the political hue of central or local government, or the disposition of the official, ‘problem families’ were a subject of acute concern. Affluence, full employment and rising prosperity supposedly exposed the public and the state to the squalor and ‘drab lives of mothers’ who headed ‘problem families’.²⁴ Street-level bureaucrats readily

²³ Interview with A. B. Semple by Sally Sheard, 19 Oct 1994.

²⁴ C. Moffatt, ‘An experiment in social therapy’, *Social Service*, 7:2 (1950), p. 168.

and willingly used their professional expertise and position to identify these ‘problem families’ – those in poverty amidst prosperity – and subject them to a spectrum of interventions in order to rehabilitate them as normal citizens. They may have been unable to agree upon a definition of ‘*the problem family*’, but they differentiated ‘*problem families*’ from within working-class communities on a day-to-day basis. Debates over structural or behavioural causes and effects of poverty rumbled on as part of an ‘underclass’ discourse, but this did not limit the legitimacy of the concept at a noperational level. The abundance of correspondence, reports, memoranda, minutes, notes and records included in the Brentwood case files, individually and collectively all attest to the concrete, material and mundane ways in which family policy was put into practice by the apparatus and agencies of the post-war welfare state. ‘Problem families’ existed because a host of street-level bureaucrats willingly found and labelled them as such, pointing to the enduring presence of the state, despite growing awareness of the place of welfare.

However, the other side of the encounter, as exposed from the Brentwood case files, fails to show a subcultural and behaviourally distinct underclass, but the everyday struggles and experiences of families living in poverty. Far from offering full employment, affluence and prosperity to all, access to welfare was limited. The problems of precarious, casual or seasonal work, the burdens of lone or unmarried mothers, the impact of disability or illness, and the often shared experience of dismal slum living show clear limits to the myth of ‘golden age’ Britain. The existence of ‘problem families’ points towards the continuation of poverty despite welfare due to the conditionality of the state. The very reason that these poor working-class families encountered the state was due to poverty. This wholly uneven balance of power legitimated the expertise of officials in determining what the ‘problem’ was, and what action needed to be taken. The ‘problem family’ does not just represent a discursive construct of elite alarm, but a very real and material product of the operational structures of the welfare state to condition access to benefits based on the performance of gendered norms which can only be reconstructed through the records of everyday actions and decisions of officials. The presence of ‘problem families’ attests to the ‘pertinent silences’ of the state in consensus and welfare in post-war Britain, in the unspoken, unseen and unheard agreements which underpinned the governance of society.

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