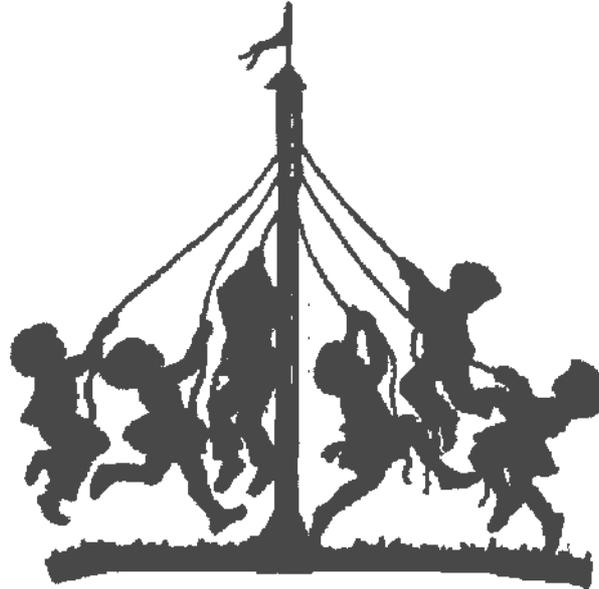


# **The Michael Sieff Foundation**

working together for children's welfare



The Michael Sieff Foundation Conference 2005

## **Every Young Person Matters**

Report of the Conference

hosted by

The Michael Sieff Foundation

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# I. Every Young Person Matters

*Anne Weinstock, Director, Supporting Children and Young People Group, DfES*

I was talking to a person from industry many moons ago. He was trying to coach me in planning, and he made a point about the need for vision that I've always remembered: if you set out on your holidays and you haven't decided whether you want to go to the Scottish Highlands or Cornwall, and therefore haven't got the map to get there, you could end up in the wrong place. So the vision of this Youth Green Paper is important, and, apart from it fitting with the five outcomes and *Every Child Matters*, I think its importance is not doing things the way we've always done them. One of the things I have found both working outside the department and trying to develop policy inside which is much more focussed around the customer, and around partnership, and around conceding territory, is that it's easier to say than to do. But it is important as we go ahead to listen to what young people are telling us, and we have tried, I promise you, to do that during the course of the Youth Green Paper and will do so through the consultation. And of course it has to be about a radical reshaping of services, integrating services, rationalising funding streams, and so on. So we have to do everything we can to realise funding for the front line to allow professionals to improve outcomes for teenagers. But finally on the matter of vision, and to me this is the most challenging thing that we have to do, entails shifting from where we are, which is very supply-side led, into a demand-led system, with young people empowered to determine what's on offer in their area.

You could be forgiven, if you read the press, for example the *Daily Mail* and the *London Evening Standard*, for thinking that youngsters have never had it so good: they have opportunities we didn't have, parents are over-indulgent, youngsters sit with PlayStations, they get pocket money in return for doing no housework, and so on. And they are also yobbos, they behave antisocially. Interestingly there's a perception that all of that's on inner-city estates, and I say an interesting perception because one of things I did notice reading the *Evening Standard* in London last night was 15 or 20 or probably more young chaps from Eton and Marlborough who've been banned from a beach in Cornwall. They said, 'Isn't it just spiffing stupid to think that we could get ASBOs'. Well actually, no, it's not. And the truth of where young people are at is just a little bit more complex than the headlines tell us. I do think that there are more opportunities than ever before, and actually most young people are doing really, really well. They're achieving at school, more are staying on at 16 – despite press reports yesterday on truancy and attendance at school – more are attaining, more are volunteering: 47 per cent of 16–24 year olds give of their time for the

benefit of others at least once a month according to a Home Office survey. And lots of key indicators are also improving: NEETs going down, smoking is actually also going down amongst 11–15 year olds, and teenage pregnancy has gone down since 1998 when we set up the teenage pregnancy unit and strategy – it's gone down by 9.8 per cent across the country. And lots of public services have done lots of fantastic things for young people, and for a spectrum of young people, and that includes the youth service, the voluntary sector, Connexions, and so on; and I hope that does come out of the Youth Green Paper. That's important, because I do remember coming into the department to establish Connexions, saying, when there was a thought that we'd just get rid of everything and start again, 'Doesn't it make sense to build on what we've got and use that as a platform?' and I hope that's what we will be doing with *Youth Matters*.

However, some young people face Everests in their lives, and some indicators are static or getting worse. It was reported in a survey in the press last week that one in ten teenagers was clinically obese. Binge drinking is a huge problem, medics are saying they're seeing earlier and earlier cases of sclerosis in young people in their 20s. Then there's voluntary substance misuse. Another survey reported that one in ten young people had problems of mental health, across a spectrum, including depression. And of course, some young people, and it is a very small minority, so I think we do need to keep this in perspective, get involved in criminal behaviour and in antisocial behaviour. A Home Office stat from the prolific youth offenders strategy shows that two per cent of 10–17-year-olds commit 20 or more offences each, and that two per cent are responsible for 60 per cent of all youth crime amongst 10–17-year-olds. So there's an issue of targeting here, and public services are often not responsive. There's a kind of one-size-fits-all solution, it's not tailored personally and around an individual young person, and around the way in which an individual young person lives their whole life, not just the specific problem that they come with. And we've got fragmented accountability and delivery.

We made a slide during the course of the Youth Green Paper for when Ruth Kelly arrived as Secretary of State. We showed her the slide, which showed there were nine major government programmes and 34 separate initiatives populating the lives of teenagers in terms of services out there. She said 'Goodness gracious me, who's done all of that?' and we said, 'You, minister, it's all happened since 1997'. And the point to make here is that if you were starting with a blank sheet of paper you would certainly not do that. You would not have people sitting in silos and

overlapping services for the same group of young people, it just wouldn't make sense. Whatever I did in my last life, I wasn't a good lass, because I've got responsibility for reducing the numbers of 16–18 year olds not in education, training or work, I've got responsibility for reducing teenage pregnancy, I've got responsibility for reducing drug use amongst teenagers. And a couple of weeks ago, because clearly Sir Humphrey thought that I needed more stretch, I got the departmental lead on Respect.

But what we have been doing during the course of this Youth Green Paper was to look at some of the interrelationship across different targets which have been set for us, and to try and understand the overlap between them. For example, because 50 per cent of all teenage parents are depressed, they are much less likely to finish education, and much more likely to have low birth-weight babies and problems of health, and so on. And one of the things that we discovered was that if we superimposed the attendance and attainment data on top of teenage pregnancy hotspots, and over and above indices of deprivation, there was another relationship there. And then we superimposed on top of the statistics the outcomes for young people in care: 25 per cent of care leavers have had a baby by the time they are aged 16, and just under 50 per cent were mothers within 18–24 months of leaving care. Now this is a problem of targeting where the most problems are. It's a kind of corporate disgrace really, on corporate parenting, but that is where we are and that's our starting point. So lots of overlap, supporting the logic of bringing services together.

So the specific proposals in the Youth Green Paper that I believe will get us to our vision are: things to do, places to go, more choice and influence on what's on offer, more opportunities to volunteer, building on the work of the Russell Commission – lots of extra money has been put down by the Chancellor for that. Also better information, advice and guidance about issues that matter to young people, delivered in the way they want, and in venues they want, and delivered by people who can engage with them on their territory, which means judgement-free, and better support to deal with problems. During the consultation young people offered their opinions about things to do and places to go and why they were fed up. As we start we're having a kind of fortnightly update on what the young people's online questionnaires and hard copy questionnaires are saying. It's early days – we've only had 460 yet – but the feedback does seem to suggest that the propositions in the Youth Green Paper are in the right ballpark and that this is important to young people.

We're going to legislate, probably through the Schools Bill, for national standards. This is part of our practical strategy to ensure that *Youth Matters* actually happens. We think this will help partners across the private, voluntary and public sectors to map needs

against a cohort of young people in an area, and use this as a benchmark to coordinate where they are now. Of course everybody says it's not proper legislation and it won't happen. Well, one of my ambitions is to make sure that we tell young people that these standards exist, to enable them to do some demanding of their local authority themselves.

Youth Opportunity Cards seemed to capture the headlines when we published *Youth Matters*. Contrary to popular opinion it isn't an ID card through the back door. Young people actually wouldn't mind if it were, because they quite like the proof of age. So maybe there's some kind of liberal intelligentsia out there who aren't quite up to where young people are. But the idea of the card is to provide discounts to pay for constructive things to do – it could be topped up, not just by parents and grandparents, but potentially by youth workers and teachers and so on. We're going to have eight pilots between April 2006 and 2008. At the moment, the thinking in terms of affordability is that we give everybody a sign-on fee at age 13, and then top-ups for 13–16 year olds who are the most disadvantaged, to make sure they get access to what a lot of other young people have by right of birth. And because Beverley Hughes was very keen to have a rights and responsibility ticket running through *Youth Matters*, we have said that it would be withdrawn for naughty behaviour. We haven't thought much more than that at the moment, but one of the thoughts young people have put to us is that they would quite like to be the panel, as a kind of peer group panel, that determines the criteria within which you might lose the card and for how long and so on. I think that's attractive to ministers at this stage. If it works, a young person may decide that they want to join Green's Gym in Sheffield, with their subsidy and their top-up card, but they may not want to go if all that's on offer and is funded is some crummy portacabin somewhere. So I think this is something very different, very challenging, very frightening to deliver.

The other part of the Green Paper that's also about empowering young people is the fund for young people. Every local authority will get an amount still to be agreed by the Secretary of State – we were discussing it again with Beverley Hughes last night – but say it was £25,000 or £30,000 as a sort of bottom level, which will be the young people's money, and which they determine how to spend. Different approaches can be taken to organising it, so long as young people are in the driving seat. I was quite pleased that the Green Paper was late because at the last minute Ruth Kelly found £40 million, £20 million over two years, 2006 to 2008, for capital funding. Everybody says 'It's not a lot' and 'What's that going to do?' Actually, it's a kind of seed corn pump prime. It's to send a signal that we need to look at everybody else's capital. One of the things I keep on saying is: have we not yet understood the stock of capital that's in the Connexions one-stop shops? And by the way, can more of them be open

beyond 9–5, because it's all capital stock and it's used by teenagers? And why not? A lot of them actually just want somewhere to hang out where they feel safe.

As for the proposals for volunteering, all of that will be delivered through the Russell Commission, which will have an infrastructure aligned alongside Children's Trusts. We did rather want to own that money as part of the Children's Trust, but Ian Russell, who chaired the Commission for the Chancellor wants to match the money that the Chancellor has put in with money from employers, and didn't think that would be so easy to do through local authorities. But the intention is to encourage a stronger volunteering ethos and to test approaches for rewarding volunteering.

A further part of the challenge is to give better support to teenagers as they go through the teenage years and make choices, and not just on careers. Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) is not just about careers: it's about lifestyle choice, and health, and sex, and drugs, and rock and roll as well. It's about all of that package, because the world is very different, and the 14–19 curriculum brings a whole sheaf of new opportunities: entry level, foundation level, and so on. Qualification starts to create a platform from which every young person, no matter what their starting point in learning or anything else, can climb, and it's important that we provide IAG alongside that. We want local authorities to have responsibility for commissioning that. One of the criticisms of Connexions in the National Audit Office Report was a lack of a clarity of interface between the Connexions service and guidance and schools, and we want to do something that will make schools take a greater responsibility than we think they sometimes feel for the progression of all their pupils, as part of careers education. So we will passport the Connexions funding down to local authorities to commission IAG services: we described this as Connexions going local. Again, had we had the Children's Trust framework and world when we'd started Connexions, we wouldn't, I think, have set up 47, as opposed to brigading it within the Children's Trust as part of the teenage arm, but ministers were very clear that they

expected to see high performing Connexions services continue to do business and to be commissioned against.

We've said words in the Youth Green Paper about the brand. I don't have any special views on that other than that it cost an awful lot of money, and it is well recognised by young people (each year we've tested this through surveys) as a service that's confidential, that can be trusted, and to which you might go with an increasing number of problems – in year one it was just about careers.

So, what happens next? Well, consultation ends on 4th November, we've extended it because we felt that if we released *Youth Matters* just on the eve of a long school holiday and said consultation closes on 15th September, we might be accused of trying to cook the books. We are involving young people in a range of ways. We've got an online questionnaire. We've just had to print an extra 50,000 because of demand, and we started with a print run of 30,000 hard copies. And we're working with the National Youth Agency, and with other groups in the voluntary sector, to get to young people whom we might not otherwise reach. We have to develop a delivery plan to do all this, and that's pretty scary, but we've set up a transition board, at least for the Connexions bit of it, which is quite big. There are implications for the role of DfES, and DfES is in any event looking at what its role is in a streamlined, thinner world. And I'm having a discussion with my own team at the moment to answer the question, 'If the world out there is integrated, how, in structural terms, do we shape ourselves up to deliver?' Ministers will have to make decisions in December and formulate the government response that takes account of all the views we collate during consultation.

*Responding to a wide range of questions, Anne Weinstock noted that departmental techniques of data gathering had greatly improved. She described her discussions with ministers about parenting strategies and the light-touch support required. Joined-up government action was needed, along with the involvement and empowerment of young people.*

## 2. The Five Outcomes

*Louise Morpeth, Dartington Social Research Unit*

Placing the five outcomes of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being at the heart of the Children Act 2004 was a bold and refreshing move by the government and one which has been universally welcomed. No-one would disagree with these aspirations. The implementation of this approach is a significant challenge and there are two

areas in particular which merit reflection, which I address in this brief presentation: (1) the definition and measurement of outcome, and (2) how to improve outcomes.

Initial work on the concept of outcomes can be traced back to Roy Parker, Harriet Ward, Sonia Jackson and their colleagues and their work on the assessment of looked-after children in the late 1980s and early

1990s undertaken for the Department of Health. They took a holistic approach to children (looking at seven dimensions of children's lives) and grounded the approach in child development. The Children Act 1989 was drafted and implemented in the same period and also took a child development approach but this time in the identification of 'children in need', defined in terms of actual or likely impairment to health or development. Despite these conceptual developments, the definition of these terms has caused problems.

For example, there has been little consensus in the children's social care research community about the meaning of outcomes. An analysis of the Department of Health research overviews published between 1985 and 2004 identified four different uses of the term outcome: (i) the system's response to a child, for example, the quality or stability of a placement, or placement on the child protection register; (ii) whether a child had their needs met or were protected from maltreatment, for example if an abuser was removed from the home; (iii) the resources upon which a child could draw, for example, greater security or improved social networks; and (iv) observable changes to the child's health or development, for example emotional adjustment or mental well-being.

There also seems to be confusion between the terms output and outcome. In the current context outcomes refer to changes in a child's well-being that are the product of a policy or practice input, for example good mental health, pro-social behaviour, secure attachment. Outputs are activity by or on behalf of children's services, for example provision of a foster placement, preparing a statement of educational need or undertaking a mental health assessment (Axford and Berry, 2005). An examination of the information collected by children's services agencies for government in early 2004 identified 129 child-related indicators (many of which are in the DfES 'Outcome Framework'), of which more than three quarters measured agency activity and only four would be considered actual measures of outcomes. Does the number of child protection re-registrations really measure children's safety, what would it mean if re-registrations went up? Despite outcome-focused legislation, the measures of children's services were until recently very output-oriented.

While we know a lot about some aspects of children's lives, there are also areas where our knowledge is sparse. For example, we have a good understanding of the way residential care systems operate in Western nations but we do not know which types of children are likely to benefit from which types of residential settings (Little *et al.* 2005). For many risks to child well-being our knowledge is poor, we do not know how these children will fare with or without services over time and there is much still to understand about the effectiveness of services. The emotional wellbeing of adolescents provides a good example. Recent work funded by the Nuffield Foundation has shown that

adolescent emotional wellbeing in the UK has been deteriorating over the last 25 years. Young people are more depressed and their behaviour is worse compared with children of the previous generation. The cause of this deterioration is unknown. Over the same period expenditure on children's services has increased. In light of this knowledge is it reasonable to expect children's services to be able to improve child mental health?

Re-organisation of agencies is one approach to improving outcomes. Most people who have worked in the public sector have witnessed or been affected by a structural reorganisation. This might be an internal change, for example merging two departments, or a national change, for example the creation of the Connexions services. It is a common feature of public sector organisations and although re-organisation is imbued with a capacity to improve outcomes, there is no evidence that supports this position. The few studies conducted in this area in the UK have found no relationship between particular organisational structures and better outcomes for children (e.g. Hall 2000). Evidence from the US provides a similar picture. Three significant studies of 'systems of care' – the US approach to inter-agency working in the child mental health field – have found that while there are benefits to an inter-agency approach these do not *appear* to translate into better outcomes for children (Kutash *et al.* 2005).

Why is structural re-organisation unlikely to effect outcomes? One possible explanation is that the emphasis on structural change is not accompanied by substantial change to what agencies actually do for families. Furthermore, the nature of re-organisation has a relatively narrow focus (changes to social structures) and is often superficial. It was this 'hypothesis' that I explored in my PhD, which led me to develop an alternative approach. The first step was to develop a broader conceptualisation of organisation to incorporate four aspects: (i) social structure – the relationships among the people, positions and organisational units within the organisation; (ii) physical structure – the relationship between the geography, layout and design/décor of the organisation; (iii) organisation of knowledge – the mechanisms and structures for collating, analysing and ordering information and knowledge underlying the activities that produce organisational outputs; and (iv) organisation of technology – the means by which outputs are created and the mechanisms by which the means are matched to the intended beneficiaries.

The second step was to consider the relationship between the elements, which led to the idea that there is an optimal order for the sequence of considering the four components. The third step was to ensure that thinking about organisation was driven by outcomes. Thus an organisation would first agree the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children, it would then organise the knowledge to support the achievement of these

outcomes, which would then inform the organisation of technology/services, which in turn would determine the roles and responsibilities required and the physical structures. The theory explains how failures in the re-organisation of children's services follow from a preoccupation with people (social structure) and plant (physical structure) and insufficient attention has been paid to the organisation of technology and the evidence.

This approach is a potentially more creative way to think about the integration of children's services since each component can be considered in the way that it is linked within (vertical integration) and between (horizontal integration) the agencies of children's services).

## Aspects of vertical and horizontal integration

### Aspects of vertical integration

- Have the goals and objectives of the service informed the design of mechanisms to assemble evidence about the prevalence of specified conditions in the area to be served?
- Have mechanisms for collecting and analysing management information been designed to inform thresholds for services?
- Does in-house evaluation inform the development of new services?
- Do professionals draw on published research to inform their decisions on complex cases?
- Does individual professional training and expertise match the disorders in their caseload?
- Do practitioners have research responsibilities within their clinical setting?
- Have changes to the distribution of roles and responsibilities been driven by the need to accommodate service innovation?

### Aspects of horizontal integration

- Do children's services undergo common professional training?
- Are there any cross-agency or cross-disciplinary journals for children's services?
- Do the agencies of children's services use common procedures and documentation for assessing children in need?
- Are there mutually agreed thresholds for access to services?
- Are children's services professionals accountable to the same bodies?
- Do children's services professionals approach the management of complex cases in the same way?
- Are children's services professionals located in the same premises?
- Do children's services agencies share the same boundaries?

Development work at Dartington over the past eight years has sought to address the main issues raised above, namely the definition, measurement and

operationalisation of the concept of outcomes in children's services and the pre-occupation with structural reform. Three pieces of work serve as good examples: (i) the development of a technique known as logic modelling to enable director-level staff from across children's services to agree the outcomes that they seek to achieve for children and the activity/services that will lead to these outcomes, (this approach was used with a large rural county in England and the product has formed the basis for their Children and Young People's Plan); (ii) a 15 module, child development focused training programme suitable for all children's services practitioners designed to foster a common language within and across children's services supported by a range of practice tools (a large children's charity is rolling out this training programme to all its staff to improve communication, increase consistency of assessment and introduce an outcome-focused approach to the provision of services); and (iii) a method for evidence-based service design (several organisations have been helped to collect local epidemiology and then taken through a 12-stage process to design new services).

We hope that the application of research methods and findings to the strategic development of outcomes, the building of a common language and the implementation of evidence-based services will, in time, improve outcomes for children. It is, of course, important that reliable measures are in place to monitor this.

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### 3. The Local Government Perspective as Seen by a Director of Children's Services

*Liz Railton, Director of Children's Services, Essex County Council*

Thank you very much for the invitation to this conference, it's a real pleasure to be here. I notice that I'm down to speak about the local government perspective. Well, I must have been in a grand mood when I agreed, and I'm not quite sure I can do it. There are 150 local authorities who have got a role in delivering in their individual localities. That's 150 very different authorities covering different localities, so I doubt if you'll find a single view, amongst all the local authorities, about this agenda, how they're going about it and what they think of it. But there are some broad themes, and I guess I'm well networked enough to have some sense of what my colleagues are doing and what different local authorities are doing. But if you'll forgive me, I'll talk a bit about my own authority, Essex, and the perspective I've got as the Director of Children's Services in Essex.

I suppose the first thing to say is that, overall, I don't think you'll find any local authority voices that are against the current agenda. I think we're for it, we're absolutely for it. In fact I think many of us are absolutely passionate about it, and are saying it's about time we had an agenda driven by government and enabling local government to focus on improving the lives of our children across all those five outcome areas. I think this is a fantastic opportunity to completely rethink how we offer our services to children. How we lead this agenda in our localities. How we work with children and young people themselves. How we work with our partners. And we absolutely see the *Youth Matters* paper as sitting within that particular framework, we can see no airspace between them. And we welcome particularly the shift in both papers – *Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters* – to prevention, and the whole notion of embedding the entire service offer, everything we do, in universal services, with accountability for leading the changes placed within local government. So we're absolutely on board, we welcome that.

The problem as always is that the devil is in the detail: how do you actually do it, and is it actually doable? I want to talk a little bit about that, particularly in relation to this challenge of prevention, universal services, and building the offer from that base. We absolutely welcome (you'd expect us to, perhaps there's some producer interest there!) the fact that, at last, local authorities are being asked and trusted to take the lead in this. It's a huge act of faith in local authorities, and we're up for it, and we really want to deliver on it. And we welcome it because it sits well in the overall agenda of local authorities. Our under-

standing of what we're about – we may not do it very well at the moment – but our understanding of what we're about is achieving wellbeing. We are there to serve our citizens, all our citizens, including our young people, and to promote their wellbeing, to promote better outcomes for them, better lives for them, better circumstances, better life chances. So I think we feel very comfortable with that agenda, we feel it's what we do, it's our purpose, our mission.

But there are huge, huge challenges. And certainly, as a Director of Children's Services, the more you get into this, and the more you try to address the cultural issues, the more you try to get alongside your children and young people, the more you realise what that challenge is actually about. For example, and I won't list them all, in local authorities we have to overcome a very long history of specialism and targeting – particularly on very high need. We've also got very heavily into doing the job ourselves, thinking we're the only people who can do it. So we have very deeply rooted cultures, in specialism, and yes professionalism too, the plus side of that and the downside of that, and of doing it ourselves, and actually being providers. And just looking at the wealth and the perspective of the particular local authority I'm in, this is where we spend the money that comes through the County Council – I haven't added in what other agencies spend on this particular agenda because it's quite difficult to tell. But the County of Essex itself spends roughly – terribly quick figures these, done on the back of an envelope probably – £700 million on the universal services, available for all children; just to give you a context, there are about 323,000 children in Essex.

Now the bulk of that money, it won't surprise you to know, is in schools. It's in self-managing schools, and it's there to provide the universal education system. Then, as you come up the levels of need, Children in Need and Acute and Complex receive the most of the money the local authority has in its kitty – £160 million or thereabouts. This is spent on targeted, specialist services. This leaves only roughly £20 million – and actually I suspect that's an overestimate – to be spent on children we would describe in some way as vulnerable, using the definitions we're starting to use: they've got a little bit of need but certainly don't require a social worker and are certainly not going to get into the care system. Yet this group account for about 24 per cent of our children's population. So you can see as we start to talk about universal services, preventative services and so on, we've got a huge

amount to do, just looking at it from the local authority perspective, to address that distribution of resources and effort and energy and expertise and attention. What that leaves us with is a system which doesn't actually work effectively as a whole; it's not a balanced system that's able to respond at every level and in every way.

One of the things I was doing yesterday, in my role as the Chair of the Child Protection Committee – which of course will have to become the Local Children's Safeguarding board in its new role – was reviewing the enquiry we had done on a high-profile and very, very sad case. Due to its nature we decided to take it at the main committee. The case involved two young girls who'd gone up to the top of a multi-story car park and jumped off it, in what appeared to be a suicide pact, killing themselves. I read this enquiry report, and these two girls had had sporadic contact with a whole range of public agencies. Some of it was with the specialist and targeted. Sometimes they hadn't got in through the doors of the specialist and targeted. It was all very disjointed, but actually when you looked at it and thought, 'Who got this wrong, who fouled this up?', you realised that probably nobody did really. There were some communication problems that you always get – people who didn't respond on time and letters that didn't arrive until two days after they should have done, et cetera. But the fundamental issue was that nobody in the systems knew anything, really, about these two girls. There was no sense of them. No sense of somebody trying to see them through the system. And, even worse, there was nothing at the point where they actually dropped out of the targeted specialist services, and genuinely didn't need them – there was nothing wrong with the mental health unit discharging one of these girls in particular at a particular point. She didn't need that unit. But there was nothing in that vulnerable children's arena that picked this particular kid up. That just brings it home to you, really, how much we have to do to address the way that we actually distribute our resources. And if you consider that vulnerable group, that tiny little £20 million budget catering for that large number of kids, the current approach is characterised by a few champions who really, really believe in it, get stuck in and do some fantastic things – and honestly we've got some really good things in Essex, lots of authorities have got some really good things – but who receive short-term funding. What do you do when the money runs out? And there's no sustainable platform via which you can actually keep these services going in a systematic way. The other day I heard one of Anne's colleagues, Naomi, saying that nobody, when you change a government, ever says 'Will there be schools anymore?' They never say that, because it's there, it's embedded, we have a whole system of universal education. But we don't have a universal system concerned with how you work with slightly vulnerable children who might

become more vulnerable children. And all the time there's the worry that the services we do have may be here today and gone tomorrow – wondering will it survive, can we embed it? I think that's absolutely crucial in what local authorities have got to address. As a contrast to that, I'll mention some of the good things we do have in place. Our child protection system, for all the bad publicity, actually protects a huge number of children. Our school improvement system may not have made the desired breakthroughs in closing the achievement gap, but we've done some fantastic things in rolling out some of the strategies, the primary strategy being targeting – and we've got much cleverer at targeting particular groups of children. We know quite a lot about improving children's levels of achievement, and we act on it systematically.

So, as we face the challenge of extended schools, the childcare offer and 'places to go, something to do', we will have to significantly increase our capacity and capability to work alongside young people that actually know that young girl's story. To get inside that young girl's head. We've no idea why she did what she did. One theory was that she and the other girl met one night – yes they were low, yes they'd had a history of a bit of depression, yes they came from broken families – they had a drink together, they got drunk, and maybe the booze tipped the balance. But we don't really know. We do a lot of good things, a lot of regenerative work, but unless we include the children's agenda in that sort of work and learn more about working alongside them, unless we involve schools, partners, health etc. in a very real way in this agenda, we simply won't be able to address it. We don't, as yet, I don't think, have anywhere near sufficient capacity and capability to actually deliver. That's not a counsel of despair because we will grow it, and we will do it, but we are not there at the moment. Local authorities are full of people like me who go home in the evenings and talk to the young people that live in their household and actually listen to them and hear what their lives are like: my youngest is absolutely dead keen on skateboarding, and as a result I know a lot about skateboarding, and I know a lot about the difficulty of actually getting the local council to find somewhere for them to skateboard. So we open our ears and our eyes to that at home, but when we go and work at our local authorities that listening becomes rather more difficult to do, and we institutionalise things in ways that distance us from all of this.

So lots of issues. It's a difficult challenge being in a local authority and knowing you've got to deconstruct and reconstruct the whole picture, and think very differently about what you're trying to do. It feels like you're on the football pitch and you can just about see the ball, but you're not sure you can quite see the goal mouth and the scenery around it is actually quite hazy, and you know in your heart that making an organisational change probably isn't going to get the ball in the

goal, and it's not going to change cultures and it's not going to get you to the outcomes. But you also know that you have got to get a clearer picture, you've got to have your route map, you've got to decide whether it's Scotland or Cornwall. That makes you realise how incredibly dependent you are on structural change to bring colour to that picture, and so there's a huge temptation to go into that in a big way.

The other issue which a number of people have alluded to is with implementation of what comes out of Whitehall at local level. I actually think that Whitehall has done pretty well. I don't think they're there yet, and there are some fissures in this agenda and, as always, these fissures get larger when you try to actually make it happen at local level. And there are some tensions around the youth justice agenda, the child welfare agenda etc., which do feel quite uncomfortable at local level. For example, at the moment we're having some very difficult negotiations with our police because they've got one set of targets and we've got another one, and the two don't always fit together. So it feels, at local level, as if you are trying to make the whole thing make sense. Things are moving, but it still seems not quite joined-together, and trying to achieve that is quite a challenge.

Resourcing is also a challenge. I'm not a great one for whinging about resources – if we whinged about them all the time we'd never have got to where we are now, and I think we're doing some very good things and have actually made some very good interventions. Of course the extended school money and the money that is behind the youth strategy are all very welcome. But what we are finding is that there isn't a lot of change-money, and that is a real issue for us in terms of deconstruct and reconstruct. For example, we've got, out of government money, a change-fund of

£186,000 in Essex. Now that sounds a lot, but there are at least 40,000 people in the County of Essex who have a role in this agenda, working either with us as the County Council, in partner agencies, in voluntary organisations, or in private organisations. That's probably quite a conservative estimate, and yet I have £186,000 to try to get everyone to have some understanding of the common sense of the Framework, to learn some of the core skills that we're aspiring to develop for everyone that gets involved in the Children's agenda, particularly listening to children and the whole participation/involvement agenda. I've spent it already. Of course I have. On getting people engaged: understanding, visioning, coming together, talking about whether there is a shared agenda. £186,000 hasn't gone a long way. Now, of course the council will put money in the pot, because there's always change. But this is huge, this is really huge. I don't think that's been recognised. Compare it, for example, with what's gone in on the NHS, not just around actually putting more services on the ground and more doctors and nurses, but what's been invested in leadership, in change, in helping the NHS to move from where it has been to where it is. There just isn't any comparison. I would argue that the agenda is not hugely different in terms of the scale of cultural change. That would, I suppose, be my main whinge. But I want to leave on a positive note and say that it's too important to sit back and say 'I haven't got any money, we're not going to do it'. It's much too important, for our children and young people, that we do actually do this deconstruction and reconstruction and actually address the issues. I'm going to think now for a while, about those two young girls. A dismal story. We can't go on like this.

## 4. Youth Service and Youth Work

*Tom Wylie, Chief Executive Officer, National Youth Agency*

At the beginning of the summer, one of my academic friends passed around a report on young people. I think it was written in the context of difficulties with getting army recruits, and it reviewed young people's living conditions, employment, sexual behaviour, health and much more. It was written in 1904 to 1905, and I think it was prompted by the Boer War and the British failure in the early stages of the war. I was struck by a number of themes: firstly, it said there was insufficient national data on many of these issues; secondly, it took evidence from a large number of bodies including youth workers of various different kinds; and then it reached a set of conclusions. Amongst the conclusions about youth provision was that the number of clubs was small and the sphere of

their operations too limited to produce any general effect. It made a set of recommendations: it should be a duty of municipalities to provide and maintain open spaces, which should include shelters fitted with gymnastic apparatus in the charge of competent instructors. It said that there should be a central body in touch with municipal activity established in every large town and charged with the duty of supervising and directing voluntary agencies, with a view to bringing them up to a minimum standard.

Naturally, of course, its recommendations were far too far reaching, and they were not implemented. I do wonder if things might have been different if people had taken the advice of the select committee a hundred years ago. When Shirley Williams was

Secretary of State for Education, she said that the Department for Education and Skills, as it operated then, was like the Vatican: it thought in centuries. And I sometimes wonder if someone deep in the recesses of Sanctuary Buildings and Moorfoot got out this select committee report, and has at last produced an implementation plan for it, because it seems to me that a number of recommendations, even down to the bloody gym, have been replicated!

I'm using that example to suggest that the position of the young has not greatly changed down the years. There are a set of social concerns which regularly reappear – if I was in a more abrasive mood, which I rarely am, I would call them moral panics. Moral panics about health, binge drinking, teenage pregnancy, anti-social behaviour et cetera. And could you make it up how the government is approaching the notion of the 'respect agenda' and the creation of a 'Respect Tsar'? And the hoody debate. And issues to do with education and whether standards are falling or rising and – issues that are less remarked at the moment, but will, I predict, come back – about jobs and employment. If we were in France in the textile industry, we'd be a damn site more worried about jobs and the challenge of China, but we haven't got a textile industry left in this country, so we're no longer worried to the same extent about Chinese competition etc.

Now there's a point about these moral panics and social concerns: they are not wrong – it is right to be concerned about antisocial behaviour, it is right to be concerned about health, etc. What is wrong is that the hype overtakes any serious thought about how social policy is formed and changed in contemporary conditions with young people. So I'm not against people being worried about these things, I just think we ought to approach policy-making about them with an eye to the needs and position of young people, rather than those of readers of the *Daily Mail*, splendid newspaper as it is. And secondly, there are deep structural underlying features to do with economics, to do with jobs, to do with family structures, to do with mobility etc. Many of these issues, in my view, are an interplay between the sociology and the social policy and the psychology. Why are young people using drugs? In part because they are self-medicating, they are trying to cope with issues in their lives: will I get a job, will I succeed, what if it's gone wrong with my girlfriend? Plus criminal pressures of one sort or another – drug dealers behave according to capitalist theory, that is they move into a market and try to build it up. And it wraps around many young people the kind of care and concern and expression that Liz has just been talking about. But those deep underlying pressures persist: for example, transition into adult life is taking longer and, not so often remarked, is often now reversible – moving in and out of college, moving in and out of the family home, moving in and out of partnerships with others. And that reversibility

maybe is something we haven't seen in recent times.

What I think we see, in asking what is happening to young people, is a set of concerns: where am I living and will I have a future living in that place? will I have an income and what level of income? what about my health and all those issues associated with drinking and smoking, pregnancy, etc.? what will I learn and will that learning help me to get a job? And, sometimes unremarked, there is a growing sense of insecurity amongst the young, about their own futures but also about much more prosaic issues: will I be bullied on my way to or at school? will I be roughed up on the street, is it safe to go out? All this creates or helps to boost a sense of anxiety amongst young people.

Policy and the young. We have had all those streams and threads of policy since 1997, and now we have *Youth Matters*. We know that there are a whole set of services which affect young people: they're affected by general health services, they're affected by transport services, they're affected by housing services, they're affected by policing services. Many of them are not designed to work with young people, but they have an effect upon young people and their lives, often under-remarked in thinking about how we create youth policy. One of the ways we create youth policy is in how the housing departments allocate people to particular types of housing estate and the kind of culture and networks it builds up there. We have then, inside that, services which are more directly connected with young people, with and for young people, which include, for instance, schooling, youth services provided by local authorities and voluntary bodies and others, the Connexions service, etc. And I just want to draw a distinction with another form of practice, which is what I understand to be called youth work; I mark it off from the services, as I think it's a particular form of intervention. Youth work is defined by distinctive goals, methods, and values, and for something to be called 'youth work', in my view, three things have to be present:

1. A set of goals, which in short-hand are concerned primarily with the personal, social and political development of young people, rather than their vocational development or their more formal academic development, important as those are. These goals are about promoting the voice and engagement of young people, as young citizens in their own right.
2. The application of a particular set of methodologies, mainly to do with learning from experience, promoting experience, and widening people's horizons, and often using small groups, as well as using individuals. (If there is a danger in any aspect of social policy, it's that it is excessively focused upon the individual, as if our lives were not also shaped by families, communities, where we grew up, and the social contours which can restrict

individuals' decision making.) Also key is the use of relationships – a relationship between the adult and the young is consciously used, almost in the way a therapist would use it, to build and to develop young people.

3. A set of values concerned with young people's interests, centred on the young person, that acknowledges their great diversity – that the young are not all the same, that they have different needs springing from their race and gender, class, sexuality, spirituality and much more – and which seeks consciously to move from just providing for the young to empowering the young.

*Every Child Matters.* Here are some issues which it seems to me bear upon youth work and youth-related services. I'm not going to talk in detail about *Youth Matters* because I see it as a subset – as I think government sees it – of the broader *Every Child Matters* agenda. It gives a clear role to the local authority, and I welcome that, that is the best body to join up much of the provision for young people, because it can better connect with housing etc. But I am concerned about the detail of the deeply complex arrangements regarding how these services should be governed and managed. What kind of body actually is a so-called Children's Trust? I know what a local authority is, and where its powers derive from, and what its values are. I know what a company is and where it gets its value and direction. I know what a voluntary body is and how it operates with trustees. What actually is a Trust, what kind of body is it, and, moreover, will that Trust have the appropriate levels of managerial competence? Directors, wonderful as they are like Liz, can't know everything about everything. Will they have a competence, at a level below that and on the board itself, to enable them to function across the range of business, in this case with young people and adolescents.

My second concern is the focus upon childhood, and upon protection. It's summed up in the titles – why are they called Children's Trusts, why are they called Directors of Children's Services? Young people do not define themselves as children. Moreover, beyond the semantics, the terminology risks taking the policy eye towards the early years, wonderful and cuddly as kids are, and away from the changing vulnerabilities of adolescence and the transfer into young adulthood and adult life. And if you look at *Youth Matters* in great detail, you'll see, I think, it's quite strong on the primary and secondary school transfer, the entry into adolescence, it's weak on how you move out of adolescence into young adulthood, and I think that's because of the focus upon children. So I would ban the use of the word children standing alone in this context. I do not understand, as I am told on the highest authority, why the Department of Education and Skills is blocking the wish of the Children's Commissioner for England to call himself a

Children and Young Person's Commissioner, which is the case in the other Celtic nations. There is some mindset problem in moving across to the adolescent years. The second anxiety is protection. Of course it's proper that we have safeguarding. We know that much of the ECM was driven by the Climbié and similar cases – much child care practice in this country is driven by scandal or other system failure of that kind. But if we just concern ourselves with safeguarding, then we neglect a whole set of other issues to do with children and young people.

Thirdly, I think relationships with schools could prove problematic, partly because of the autonomy agenda, but secondly because not all youngsters like going to school. They're not good places for them all, they don't feel good, and who on earth would want to go back to the school in his or her leisure time? Some will, but would you? Do I see Civil Servants running back to Sanctuary Buildings of an evening to play table tennis? No of course not. So why do we think that youngsters will get into the whole schooling story? And that's before we get into issues such as funding and the attitudes of head teachers.

Fourthly, issues to do with common assessment and associated tracking, and that takes us again into notions to do with multi-disciplinary work, into professional cultures etc. Just to lighten the atmosphere, I'll tell a whole set of changing light bulbs stories which speak about different kinds of professions. How many social workers does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: seven; one to change the bulb, six to write a paper called 'Coping with Darkness'. How many psychotherapists does it take to change a light bulb? Answer none, the bulb can only change itself. How many youth workers? Answer: four; one to change the light bulb, three to pick a fight with the electricity supply company. All of the issues which are expressed in caricatures such as those will be brought in once you begin to think of common assessment and how people work together and the tracking that goes with that. And is it really sensible to believe that the street-based youth workers will go out and track individual young people through all of this and report what's going on? Who actually will stand with the young, as distinct from standing with the state?

Fifthly, there are issues to do with workforce development. How do you build continued professional development? It's such a diverse sector. Why are youth workers being discriminated against in their initial professional training? Why do they not get the same kind of support for their professional development as teachers get, as social workers get? That's absolutely disgraceful. And something should be done – it can't be done by me. Something should be done by the government, if we are to have a genuine attempt at workforce development.

And finally, there is a philosophical question. It begins to bite most sharply in the adolescent years, and is less evident in the earlier years. It's the balance

between protection and development. How far do we want simply to shield and guard the very young, and how far do we accept that young people in adolescence need more help to extend beyond the contours of their family and community, and need support towards those ends? I think those, for me, are some of

the key issues which we will face in trying to move forward on *Youth Matters*. Prompted by events in New Orleans, I have already crafted for myself a little paper which is entitled ‘Youth Matters: what could go wrong?’ Happily, I’ve run out of time to tell you.

## 5. Youth Policy 1995–2005: From ‘the best start’ to ‘youth smatters’

*Bob Coles, University of York*

I have been asked to provide a brief and independent review of the development of youth policy – and I will concentrate on England, rather than the UK, mainly because I want to talk about the initial promise and premature demise of Connexions. You will see from the title that I intend to be generous in my praise for the development of youth policy in the early days of the 1997 Labour government. You may also guess that I regard the recent Green Paper on young people as disappointing – not so much building on successes as laying the foundations for a very significant step back in the support offered to young people. This final part is a deliberate, worst-case scenario, polemic.

1995 was chosen as the start point for this review for quite personal reasons. In 1995 I published a book on *Youth and Social Policy* which at the time I thought was a daring thing to do – both for me and for the publishers. It was daring because ‘youth policy’ was not really an academic sub-discipline in the UK and was rarely taught as an academic course. It was also daring because the importance of youth policy was denied by the UK government. I mention this so that we can appreciate how far we have come in such a short time. Prior to 1997, when youth policy was discussed in Europe, the Department for Education used to send along a spokesperson who declared proudly that the UK didn’t have a youth policy, nor did it need or want one. Government at the time claimed that such things were much more properly dealt with by the great departments of state which dealt separately with the institutions of education, crime, law and order, social security health and the like. The book argued that this was a huge mistake, encouraging different departments that were not just, by default, unco-ordinated, but sometimes pulling in completely opposite directions. The Home Office may wish to reduce levels of youth crime, but the DfES had presided over educational reform which had increased permanent school exclusions by 450 per cent in just seven short years (Parsons, 1999) – and school exclusion was known as a key correlate of youth crime (Graham and Bowling, 1995). This lack of coordination was wasteful of public expenditure and wasteful of young people’s lives.

*Youth and Social Policy* called for a Minister for Youth. It also developed a paradigm of young people’s rights through which youth citizenship could be enhanced and judged. Since 1997 we have had two ministers of youth. We now have a Minister for Children, Young People and Families, although most refer to her as the Minister for Children, which is symptomatic and worrying. We also now have those five *Every Child Matters* criteria against which we can judge the welfare of children and young people, but I will save my comments on these for another day.

This summer I have been (jointly) writing another book *Snakes and Ladders*, reviewing a nine-year research programme, covering around fifty independent research projects about young people, undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). All of these have been systematically ignored by the Green Paper. Two of these, that I was personally involved in, examined the Connexions Strategy, with the most recent specifically addressing how Connexions might be re-configured in the light of developments such as the *Every Child Matters* agenda and Children’s Trusts (Britton et al., 2002; Coles et al., 2004). I want to use this latter research to examine some the achievements and difficulties Connexions has faced in its short life, and what will be missed when it is eclipsed.

### ‘The Best Start ...’

The 1997 Labour government came in with a commitment to prioritising ‘Education, education, education’ and to being ‘tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime’, although few of us expected that this would translate into a radical development of coherent youth policy. Yet that is what we got, although Government chose to keep quiet about it. Under the midwifery of a new Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) it started with a number of reports on youth issues (Coles, 2000). The first three reports of the SEU were dominated by youth policy issues with reports on:

- Truancy and School Exclusion (SEU, 1998a);
- Homelessness (including youth homelessness) (SEU, 1998b);

- Bringing Britain Together – on Britain’s most deprived communities – including the plight of young people within these (SEU, 1998c).

This third report spawned 18 different Policy Action Teams (PATs), including one (PAT 12) on Young People (chaired by the head of the SEU itself). This was refreshingly honest in identifying the failures of the past and in helping to define the guiding principles of national youth policy at the turn of the century (National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, 2000). It even contained (what I took to be) a joke on p. 32 – a map of the proliferation of youth initiatives in a single London borough – a tapestry of overlapping confusion and muddle emanating from eight government departments, six units and at least another ten other agencies. The report pointed out that Britain was alone in Western Europe in having no minister, no ministry, and no cross-ministerial group to provide such co-ordination. As a result of PAT 12, we did get a minister, and for a short time a unit – the Children and Young People’s Unit – and a cross-departmental group, the chair of which alternated between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Education.

The fourth and fifth reports of the SEU in 1999 were also on youth policy issues, on:

- Teenage Pregnancy (on the 90,000 conceptions to teenagers in 1997, with 8,000 under the age of 16) making Britain the teenage pregnancy capital of Western Europe – with a rate twice that of Germany, three times that of France and six times that of Holland (SEU, 1999a).
- NEET (*Bridging the Gap*) and the estimated 160,000 young 16–18 year olds (around 8 per cent of the age group) not in any form of education, employment or training (SEU, 1999b).

There were similarities of approach in all five of these SEU reports:

- A recognition that many of the social problems associated with young people were related (‘joined up problems’) and associated with ‘social exclusion’;
- That ‘social exclusion’ could often not be blamed on the victims, but was often the direct or indirect result of the policies and practices of the powerful rather than the powerless. Often ‘social exclusion’ was the inadvertent consequence of national or local social policy for which the government was responsible. Head teachers were permanently excluding 12,000 young people (often for trivial reasons) who as a consequence were denied any education at all in contravention of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Health professionals and others were delivering poor sex education and/or user-unfriendly contraception services. Careers education and guidance were delivered too little

and too late to those who most needed it, and without due recognition of the other social, community and family factors which blighted a young person’s opportunity to succeed.

What government set about doing in all the areas was to demand action across departments, coordination of effort between them and, where necessary, the development of new structures and services to deliver policy initiatives across departments, and to try to achieve brave new targets to reduce truancy, school exclusion, homelessness, teenage pregnancy and NEET.

In all these areas there was also a recognition with PAT 12 of the inter-connectedness of the issues, but the dis-connectedness of the policy response. To take one example – NEET was certainly not neat. It was associated with previous failures and under-achievement in school and was a predictor of later unemployment. Some groups and categories were much more likely to disengage than others: those with mental health problems, young carers, young people ‘looked after’, and those involved in youth crime or in drug misuse. But when we examine the departmental responsibility for these issues, we see that this was spread across numerous, unco-ordinated, government departments and agencies.

Outside of the jurisdiction of the SEU other radical and far reaching reforms were afoot. These were to deal with the scandalous mismanagement of youth crime and youth justice (Audit Commission, 1996), and the care, and care leaving, systems (Utting, 1997). These reforms, however, were largely left to the Home Office (including a newly formed Youth Justice Board) and the Department of Health, responsible for children and young people in, and leaving, care. These led to changes in the law (The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act, 2000) both of which, when implemented, profoundly changed the policy landscape of youth support and intervention. There were similarities of approach, one of which was to develop multi-disciplinary or multi-agency teams, a strategy which was also adopted in Government’s approach to NEET.

### The origins of Connexions

*Bridging the Gap*, together with a parallel White Paper *Learning to Succeed*, brought a new strategy on youth policy – the Connexions Strategy announced by the Prime Minister in December 1999. This, Tony Blair said, signalled the development of ‘the youth support service’ – our ‘front line policy’ to give ‘the best start in life for every young person’. His introduction to the Connexions prospectus is worth quoting a little more – not to be tiresome – but because it quite easily could have been the foreword to *Youth Matters* four and a half years later:

‘As a Government, we have already taken steps to improve the way public services support young

people, especially those who are disadvantaged. [We are determined to make schools work better to equip their pupils for personal life, citizenship and the world of work. We have overhauled the youth justice system to help prevent young people sliding into a life of crime. Our Quality Protects programme is making social services more responsive to the needs of vulnerable children, young adults and their families and putting in place new arrangements for those in, and leaving care.]

‘But we know we must do more – not in isolated Government Departments, but jointly between our Departments and in partnership with external groups such as the police, social services, health services, schools, local communities, employers, and young people themselves.

‘This is why last summer, in our *Learning to Succeed* White Paper, we committed ourselves to setting up a single, coherent strategy aimed at all young people – the Connexions Strategy – with the Connexions Service, a support service for all young people, as its centrepiece.

‘The Connexions Service will be a modern, public service which works in a completely new way. ... Statutory agencies, the voluntary sector and specialist private sector businesses will work together to provide every young person with access to a Personal Adviser. The adviser will provide a wide range of support to meet the young person’s needs and help them reach their full potential.’

It is worth reminding ourselves about some of the main principles which lay behind the Connexions Strategy so that we can be clear what is potentially under threat under the *Youth Matters* agenda and what is simply being re-launched. (These principles are based on research rather than those contained in the initial prospectus – though I doubt Connexions personnel would disagree with this summary (Coles *et al*, 2004).) The Connexions Strategy was designed to support young people between the ages of 13 and 19 years:

- For all young people in that age group but with targeted support for those most in need;
- Espousing the ‘youth participation agenda’, that to be most effective, the Strategy should involve and include young people in the design, management, evaluation, and revision of the Strategy (including being involved in the appointment of Connexions staff and the development of a young persons charter);
- With intervention (more particularly targeted intervention) based on a comprehensive and holistic assessment of need;
- That the coordination of the intervention should be through a lead professional (the Personal Adviser (PA)) who would provide a focus point for ‘wrap-

around support’;

- That support should be young-person-centred with the Personal Adviser, where necessary, responsible for the ‘brokerage’ of specialist support from other partner agencies, and acting as ‘advocate’ on behalf of the young person where such agencies were remiss in their delivery of services;
- That to support such a sea-change in professional support for young people there should be an extensive and explicit nation-wide training programme to train Personal Advisers in their new work and the new approach and to familiarise adjacent professions about the Strategy and the work of PAs.

Connexions was organisationally complex from the outset. It initially had a Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU) responsible for issuing advice and guidance on the development of structures and practices. The next layer was a series of 47 sub-regional partnership boards matched in their geographical coverage by the 47 Learning and Skills Councils set up following *Learning to Succeed*. The partnership boards were designed to draw in key stakeholders from careers companies, constituent local authorities, education, schools and colleges, training, the police, health etc., and many boards were large. The sub-regional partnerships often covered a number of different local authority areas (as many as nine) some of which had little experience of working together sub-regionally. The development of Connexions operations at a local authority level was aided by separate Local Management Committees for each local authority area. These also typically had representation on the Partnership Board.

Most Connexions partnerships subcontracted the delivery of services to a number of agencies with front-line staff being re-designated as ‘Personal Advisers’ no matter what their previous professional training. What many called the ‘universal service’ was delivered by previously existing careers companies trained and experienced in careers education and guidance. Other, more targeted support was offered by teams of Personal Advisers (often multi-disciplinary) from a variety of backgrounds, including youth work, social work, educational welfare and work in the voluntary sector. These were often given the task of tracking and working with young people who were, or were at risk of becoming, NEET. Other Personal Advisers worked in multi-disciplinary teams in other agency settings such as leaving care teams, Youth Offending Teams, Drug Action teams, teams working on youth homelessness and housing provision.

### **The Building Better Connexions JRF research**

How did all this work out in practice? The research conducted for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation was based on around 300 hours of in depth interviews

which examined a vertical slice through Connexions – from strategic planning to operational delivery. During the first phase the research team interviewed members of partnership boards and local management committees about how they perceived their strategic aims and objectives for Connexions. This phase of the research examined the ‘policy intent’ of key stakeholders. The second phase of the research involved a series of case studies of work being conducted by Personal Advisers with vulnerable young people. The case studies were matched across the research sites so we could see how the different partnerships deployed PAs in different ways and how they worked with others in addressing problems. The matched groups included young offenders, care leavers, teenage parents, young asylum seekers and others who were, or were at risk of becoming, NEET. For each case study we interviewed the young person, their PA, and a number of other professional workers with whom they were engaged. The aim was to explore the problems confronted by, and barriers to, effective inter-agency working with vulnerable young people. To illustrate this one case will be summarised here.

### **Sal’s story**

Sal was an intelligent and bright young person who had a history of intermittent attendance at school. She was referred to a Connexions PA following a disclosure to a member of staff at a youth centre about potential physical abuse by the boyfriend of Sal’s mother. Sal’s attendance at school had also been patchy since the age of 14 years, for varying reasons. Latterly she had been experiencing panic attacks. At some point, Sal’s school had referred her to the local Social Services Department, owing to concerns they had about her lack of attendance, and what was potentially happening at home. Despite this, it appeared that Social Services were not expressing concern about what was taking place.

The PA took up the case when Sal was in Year Nine, i.e. 14-years-old. The PA worked in partnership with the school Educational Social Worker to try to get her to attend. This involved an agreement that she could skip some non-examination lessons. In year 10, and with the initial agreement of the Head of Year, a work experience placement was arranged for Sal at a local hairdressing salon for two days a week on condition that Sal attended school on the other three days. However, following a change in school personnel the PA received a letter from a school management group questioning the PA’s involvement with Sal, and overturning the decision to allow her to go on work experience. If Sal was allowed to do this, it said, then others might try and ‘get away with it’ as well. Following this, her attendance at school again dropped and, in association with Sal’s GP, she was referred to a psychologist who diagnosed agora-

phobia. The school promised to send work home but her mother reported that none ever arrived.

During the school holidays Sal’s health improved and she did manage to get out of the house more and she had a boyfriend, although this was of some concern to her PA who said he was much older and quite controlling. The PA and Educational Social Worker, however, tried to develop another package of educational opportunities for her. This involved a local college which was experienced in working with year 11 pupils. The school initially agreed that this could be explored and Sal became excited about finally having a fresh start. However, the day before the summer holidays, the PA received a FAX from the school saying the school would not fund the college course; that if she was fit enough to attend college then she should be able to attend school. The PA tried to negotiate about this but the school simply refused.

Meanwhile things were beginning to go wrong at home. Sal’s mother contacted the PA to say that, under the influence of her boyfriend, Sal had started to use drugs. Events spiralled, and Sal, then aged 15, went missing for six days, during which time neighbours saw her ‘squealing around the village’ in her boyfriend’s car. Sal’s mother ‘phoned the Social Services department, who told her to call the police. The mother’s house was ‘ransacked’ and she was increasingly frightened. When Sal and her boyfriend eventually turned up at the mother’s house, Sal was bruised, in a drugged state, and ‘hysterical’. The boyfriend assaulted the mother, who was afraid to call the police at first, but later was persuaded to do so, by the PA. A neighbour intervened and was threatened with a knife by the boyfriend. Sal and the boyfriend disappeared again, and Sal’s mother was very fearful, and felt that she would not be able to control Sal should she return. At this point the PA contacted Social Services, who said that they did not think there was anything they could do. When pressed by the PA, who put in writing her concerns for Sal’s safety, Social Services responded with a letter of their own:

‘Dear Maureen, I’m writing to let you know that following a consultation with my manager, it’s been decided that Social Services will not continue with involvement. Sal turns sixteen next week and is already involved with a large number of agencies, it’s not felt there is anything which Social Services could usefully add, I will therefore be closing Sal’s file at this office.’

Sal, herself, was left frustrated by all these efforts. She told us:

‘It gets me angry that they tell me something, tell me one thing and they don’t do it, you know. So each different person’s come out and told me they’re going to do something for me and they haven’t and then it makes me lose interest. I think,

“Well why should I do it? If you can’t be bothered why should I bother?”

One of the key ways in which Personal Advisers build trust and rapport with young people is being able to promise and deliver services others have failed to give. If other partners delay, deny or obstruct these services being made available, then that not only affects access to the services themselves, it undermines a relationship of reliability and trust. Part of the skill involved in partnership working is to be able to effectively negotiate and ‘broker’ services. Where services and obligations are not being provided or fulfilled, part of the PA’s task is to act as ‘advocate’ for the young person in ensuring that partners deliver such services. Some of this ‘brokerage’ and ‘advocacy’ can be ensured by senior stakeholders at Board or Local Management Committee level, or through agreements of senior managers of partner agencies. Yet some has to be carried out by PAs in their daily dealings with schools, school managers and others.

In the face of opposition, what was the PA to do? Sal’s PA was frustrated by both the school – in attempting to ‘broker’ services to benefit her education – and social services, who refused to take the child protection issue seriously. It should immediately be made clear that the research contains many other examples in which PAs proved successful in brokering support and in acting as advocate – being (what one young person described as) a ‘powerful friend’ – ensuring other agencies complied and needs were met. Yet this case study also raises some serious *structural* and *systemic* issues about the capacity of the Connexions Strategy in the face of opposition from other agencies: can it fulfil its aims without the co-operation of key partners? And what can be done with them to secure a more effective partnership? Our research drew attention to all of these issues and made recommendations about how they could be redressed. But this leaves open whether the new arrangements being proposed under *Youth Matters* would resolve Sal’s case in any different, or more constructive, manner. We think the same *structural* and *systemic* issues would remain and be compounded by others just as fundamental and which the proposals within the Green Paper would simply exacerbate.

### **Youth Matters or Youth Smatters?**

The Green Paper *Youth Matters* does, of course, contain some proposals which are to be welcomed. Firstly, many of the underpinning principles are sound, although familiar. ‘Making services for young people more integrated, efficient and effective’, ‘involving a wide range of organisations’, ‘improving outcomes’, ‘narrowing the gap between those who do well and those who do not’ could have easily felt at home in the Connexions Strategy in 2000. But ‘building on the best of what is currently available’ apparently could not embrace the Connexions Service in 2005.

Secondly, as we recognised in *Building Better Connexions*, the time had come for a re-positioning of the strategic planning of services for young people, back with local authorities and integrated with the planning of children’s trusts. The DfES five-year plan signalled this, and suggested that trusts should act as Connexions LMCs and that powers should shift away from sub-regional partnerships (DfES, 2004). But none of this could or should have meant the wholesale destruction of Connexions. Also to be welcomed are some of the proposals in Chapters Four and Five of the Green Paper: clarification of the ‘duties’ of local authorities on youth service provision; the specification of exemplars of ‘youth entitlements’ (although not put in those terms); widening ‘information, advice and guidance’ beyond the narrow confines of careers education and guidance. But these may be small gains compared to the losses contained in Chapters Six and Seven.

The choice of the word ‘matters’ in the title of the Green Paper I assume is intended to imply that ‘youth’ is something of importance. But ‘smatters’ is also appropriate for the gravitas of the document. The noun relates to ‘smattering – a slight and superficial knowledge’ and its use as a verb has a connotation of ‘dabble ... in the sense of to prattle – to talk in a childish or foolish way’. And this is certainly what the Green Paper does.

One of the hallmarks of this Green Paper is its mysterious avoidance or misuse of evidence. Given this government often insists upon policy being grounded in research and evidence, this Green Paper is almost entirely an evidence-free zone. The cabinet office requested, and was sent, a copy of our draft report on the JRF research prior to publication. They did not reference it at all – which is their prerogative. There was a parallel piece of research funded by the DfES (Hoggarth *et al.*, 2004) which was published virtually at the same time. It reached very similar conclusions about both the benefits and weaknesses of Connexions. This is referenced once in support of a point of marginal significance. The main findings of this report were also systematically ignored. JRF held a one-day conference to disseminate both the JRF and DfES reports in April 2005 with delegates from a wide range of different agencies and institutions. At this time there had been numerous leaks about the content of the long delayed Green Paper – that Connexions would be scrapped, and that the spoils would be divided between schools and colleges and Children’s Trusts. There was unanimous agreement amongst delegates to the conference that allowing schools and colleges to independently commission information, advice and guidance would jeopardise the impartiality and independence of it. Unanimity at conferences is a rare thing, however, and the conference agreed a communiqué which was sent to the Minister for Children, Young People and Families indicating the main conclusions of the conference. This was

acknowledged but its recommendations ignored. The Green Paper also chose to ignore the largely positive evaluation of Connexions made by the National Audit Office in 2003 and many of the Ofsted reports since then. Connexions is not without its critics, and I in my time have been numbered amongst them. The huge ambitions for Connexions meant that it inevitably faced huge challenges and not all of these were solved within the short time it was allowed to exist. Yet the wise council of those discussing the JRF and DFES evaluations were convinced that services could be reconfigured on the basis of what research told us worked and what evidence suggested could, and should, be reformed and refined. Instead the Green Paper suggests we start again with an evidence-free, blank piece of paper.

Ignoring overwhelming evidence is not confined to ignoring Connexions research. In assertively telling the readers what ‘we know’ and in leaping at ‘blue sky’ policy suggestions, the authors of the Green Paper are equally adept at the practice of ‘smatter’. The DfES commissioned a wide-ranging evaluation of the impact of youth work in England resulting in a 175 page report (Merton, 2004). JRF also reported in 2004 on its own research on the impact of detached and outreach youth work on practice with socially excluded young people (Crimmens *et al.*, 2004). None of this is used or even referred to in the Green Paper. Instead, bizarrely, we find a brief and hurried research report based on the British Birth Cohort – children born in 1970 (Feinstein *et al.*, 2005). Not only are the questions used in this research not designed for, nor appropriate, to the task asked of them, but the generational effect is also ignored. The 1970 birth cohort is the generation who, at the age of sixteen, found more than a quarter (27 per cent) conscripted on to the old youth training scheme. May this bleak economic context have impacted upon youth transitions in a different way to that of current teenagers?

But it is not just the sloppy, un-scholastic, immature coverage of research evidence in which the Green Paper ‘smatters’. Some of the Green Paper policy solutions also seem naively unaware of evidence that seems to suggest fresh disasters may loom. Because the young are deemed to live in brave new world of new technologies they are assumed to be gullible to the enticements of plastic cards – in this case ‘opportunity cards’. Yet in this evidence-free dream world, did no-one stop to think about what research could tell us about similar ventures? Had everyone forgotten about those wonderful Connexions Cards and how successful they were? Let me summarise some of the headline findings from the final report of the national evaluation published this year (Roger, and Cowen, 2005):

- Less than 4 per cent of 16–19 year olds redeemed any points at all from their cards;
- 0.8 per cent redeemed 5 or more rewards;
- Less than half of those who had used their card

could find anything positive to say about the scheme.

Given this track record of Government plastic cards tried with young people, wherein lies the optimism of the Green Paper that ‘opportunity cards’ will not be another unmitigated disaster?

This paper cannot deal with all aspects of the Green Paper but has chosen to mainly focus on intensive support for vulnerable groups of young people. We have already alluded to the fact that Chapter Six of the Green Paper sounds remarkably similar to the 1999 launch of the Connexions Strategy. But how will these be changed under the new arrangements?

First, responsibilities for the organisation of targeted services will be delegated to local authorities working through children’s trusts. Youth offending, drug action teams and teenage pregnancy strategies are organised at a local authority level and it thus makes coordination between these and action on NEET more feasible. Children’s Trusts are expected to allow ‘high performing Connexions services’ to be ‘preserved’ (in what it does not say). Yet Chapter Five also tells us that where schools and colleges believe that existing Information, Advice and Guidance is poor (and wouldn’t Sal’s school be likely to rate its service as poor?!), then they would be given the right to opt out of any arrangement made by Children’s Trusts and to commission services directly.

Second, integration and support for individual young people at risk of social exclusion is to be accomplished through the nomination of ‘a lead professional’. That sounds very much like the Personal Adviser being at the hub of brokered services. However the guidance for Lead Professional Good Practice issued simultaneously with the Green Paper (DfES, 2005) reads as if all reference to Connexions (and more specifically the Personal Adviser), has been struck from the vocabulary of the DfES. The main ‘lead professionals’ mentioned in this latter document are social workers, family workers and, because this multi-agency planning involved children as well as young people, health visitors. Where there is occasional mention of personal advisers in such multi-agency work, the capital letters of the Connexions Personal Adviser have been carefully stripped away. The post-Hodge message to the Green Paper re-drafting group, ‘Include some weasel words: stroke Connexions carefully and kindly on its way to muted oblivion’ obviously did not reach the group writing the document on ‘lead professionals’.

Third, to improve the efficiency of multi-agency working, the Green Paper proposes to merge a number of existing government programmes and their funding streams – including funding for Connexions – and for all this to be delegated to Children’s Trusts. Only Youth Offending Teams are to be exempt from this. This is because they (YOTs) ‘have had considerable success in delivering targeted crime prevention

programmes with a strong performance management culture’. With only YOTs ‘ring-fenced’ funding exempt from a pooling process, the budget previously spent by Connexions partnerships is open to ‘budget raids’ from a number of sources. Given the added emphasis within the Green Paper on preventative work rather than fire fighting, this offers further justification for Children’s Trusts to slant budgets towards services for children rather than services for young people.

Fourth, like Connexions, interventions by a joint ‘youth support team’ will be based upon comprehensive and holistic assessment of need – through a new Common Assessment Framework (CAF) (DfES, 2005c). Other assessments (such as ASSET used by YOTs) are recognised as important to supplement this, but there is no mention made of the APIR framework for which Connexions PAs spent years devising, refining and training. CAF is not only devised for children and young people as if their needs were the same, but CAF is applicable to babies and families as well. It is this combined assault on Connexions’ organisation, funding and assessment that suggests that, despite the weasel words in the Green Paper about valuing Connexions’ achievements (and especially its valued and recognised brand), there have been no second thoughts about what should stay and what should go.

Finally, why is Connexions being abandoned rather than re-aligned and reformed? A toothless or dead Connexions is both a realistic interpretation as well as a worst case scenario. What will be missing from the reconfiguration of services and support for young people? And what does the whole package mean in terms of what will be missed when Connexions is finally toothless or gone?

First, Connexions is being abandoned because other snouts wanted to feed in the same trough and gained the support of those in political power. These Green Paper reforms are not about improving services but the allocation of power and scarce resources between them.

Second, what seems to be missing from the proposed new arrangements is more complicated. But the list is quite daunting. It includes:

- any role for a Personal Adviser to ‘broker’ and ‘advocate’ on behalf of vulnerable young people;
- protocols on joint working with any clearly identifiable responsibility for an ‘advocacy role’;
- mechanisms and protocols to resolve inter-agency disputes;
- adequate management support for front-line workers;
- a wide-ranging, comprehensive, training programme for ALL professional workers working with children and young people.

Third, what will we miss about Connexions when its fall finally comes about?

The list is saddening:

- First, its distinctive ‘youth’ focus: an emphasis on the needs of the young person rather than the vested interests of institutions and agencies ostensibly committed to meeting their needs;
- Second, the voice of young people submerged beneath the voices of children, babies and families;
- And thirdly, and most importantly, the ‘advocate’ – the ‘powerful friend’ for a young person in need
- brokering for young people’s rights
- challenging non-compliance by agencies which have never embraced a young-person centred approach to meeting need (especially schools, benefits agencies and other local authority services such as housing and social services).

In summary, what the Green Paper represents is a disempowering of young people and what is threatened are important means to empower young people, to advocate for them, and to deliver the few rights they have.

And what is left of the Connexions vision after it has been allowed to ‘accidentally fall’ between the slippery, weasel words of appreciation? Little more than ‘a valued and trusted brand’.

It all sounds like the last verse of ‘Ten Green Bottles’.

\* Acknowledgement is made to the help received from Leslie Hicks at the Social Work Research and Development Unit at the University of York, and Liz Britton, now with Opinion Leader Research. Both were co-authors of *Building Better Connexions* and involved in the JRF research and its dissemination, including the formation of our initial response to the Green Paper.

*Bob Coles’ presentation was followed by responses from Anne Weinstock and Tom Wylie. Anne Weinstock apologised for not mentioning Bob Coles’ research, but emphasised the quantity and quality of work being done by her department and across Whitehall. She expressed her belief that the new system would make a difference, arguing that Connexions was not being dismantled but recontextualised, and that many features of its services would be kept.*

*Tom Wylie identified structural and personnel weaknesses stemming from the way Connexions had been set up, and believed that the Green Paper offered a chance to move on. But he was not wholly confident that the government had the political will to drive through the adolescent agenda.*

*Replying briefly, Bob Coles saw funding as the critical issue and lamented the failure to ring-fence the Connexions budget. After speakers from the floor offered their perspectives on Connexions and the new system, Anne Weinstock concluded by emphasising the serious commitment of the minister, Beverley Hughes, who would address the conference that evening.*

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## 6. Mental Health Issues

*Sue Bailey, Professor of Child and Adolescent Mental Health,  
University of Central Lancashire*

Across their lifespans, 450 million people in our world live with a mental disorder. Needs change over time depending on the situation, for example whether you're in Iraq or New Orleans, but overall one in three of us will be affected directly or indirectly in our lifetime, across the age range. One million people in our world commit suicide every year. Ten million people try to, including far too many children and young people. 121 million of us have depression, that's

three in every 100 of us. I think my first take-home message to a minister is that neuro-psychiatric disorders that start in childhood are responsible for one third of disabilities, 15 per cent of in-patient costs, 25 per cent of drug costs and 50 per cent of the case-loads of our social workers. Grandma with Alzheimer's costs money, and causes emotional trauma for the daughter who's trying to look after her at the same time as coping with troublesome children.

So we need to think across lifespans.

The prevalence of mental disorder is shown by the wonderful new edition of the ONS study produced by Howard Meltzer and colleagues, and published on the web. It's absolute must reading for the DfES and should be applied. It concludes that one in ten children and adolescents has a mental health disorder. This problem is everybody's business, and not just specialist CAMHs. These children and young people have been shown to be more likely to have: poorer physical health, special educational needs, special learning difficulties, parents with mental health problems, family discord. They also received more frequent punishment by their parents; quite often their parents have been punished by society and have experienced stressful life events – we're a bit obsessed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but most children who are looked after in care have episodes of Adjustment Disorder which is characterised by depression and anxiety, and which could be treated if we had enough skilled people to do psychological therapies for depression, since we've discovered that the drugs for this condition are somewhat toxic.

Mental health, especially in the young, is rarely given the attention and priority it deserves: eating disorders and behavioural problems are the visible if often misunderstood tip of the adolescent iceberg, and I agree that more emphasis needs to be put on adolescence. We're to some extent aware of the pressures of lifestyle, school, college, and early careers that can lead to stress and depression – though obviously not enough in government circles. I was told by the head of primary healthcare that student mental health care didn't need any more money because students were a group that didn't have many problems and were socially advantaged. They were obviously not aware of the DfES target of having 50 per cent of people in higher education, since, by definition, not all of that 50 per cent would be going to Cambridge and coming from privileged backgrounds. We are less aware of the physical and psychological impact on young minds of decisions taken even before the idea of conception has entered their teenage mother's head, and events occurring before or at birth and in the early years. I'm going to touch on mental health, but will particularly focus on health, because paediatrics don't seem to have much of a shout in these three days.

I will briefly mention mental health from an educational perspective. So 'it is our firm belief that if we want to change things, school has to be the place to do it' (Mental Health Foundation Report, *Bright Futures*, 1999). The Royal College of Psychiatrists, working with other colleges, is producing developmental awareness training for schools, and I just hope the DfES will fund us. In terms of partnerships between health and local authorities, the key issue is around the definition of 'need', and ensuring you plan a process which is an effective vehicle for change.

So what are the costs that are relevant to people

with mental health problems? Well, it isn't just tier three specialist CAMHs.

It's primary health care services – GPs and practice nurses. At the moment there's no specialist training for General Practitioners in Child Mental Health, but we're about to change that.

Secondary health care services – in-patients, out patients, day patients, and in A & E, where most of those who get the finger pointed at them by this government get their care (and therefore there's a desperate need for CAMHs training in A & E, both adult and paediatric).

I would hope that people take note of the Adolescent Health Implementation Group of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, working with the GPs and the psychiatrists, and I think that all the answers for the adolescent health implementation strategy are contained in that working group, which meets again next week. So we've provided training in A & E and for GPs with the Royal College of Paediatrics, we've done Child in Mind to help paediatricians to communicate with children, and we're about to roll out special interest training for paediatrics and paediatricians with three years of training in paediatrics; the programme will consist of two years of training in CAMHs, the idea being to try and address the workforce shortage in child psychiatry and mental health.

Social service and local authority care accommodation are huge costs.

Educational services – educational psychiatrists and education welfare officers.

The voluntary sector – for example, Barnardos, ChildLine, NSPCC, NCH and Young Carers. I'm pleased that Jenny Frank is going to talk about Young Carers later, and we're funding a project with her to do something with that.

The independent sector, we may love them or we may hate them, but we can't ignore them, and they're doing a lot of work around anorexia, bulimia and obesity.

The Youth Justice Service, who are often criticised for trying to be ahead of the game, but maybe they're just like anxious parents who want the best for their children, even if they are children who are deemed as naughty, antisocial or demonic.

And there are patient and family costs – let's be hard hearted, let's forget the emotional costs – let's just look at the cost of travel and child care if you want to be involved in services.

I don't normally talk hard-headed economics, but I think if you're talking to government it's a prerequisite. Economic evaluation measures, both costs and outcomes. I want to show you some studies that actually tell you how to do it over the long term: the study on deliberate self-harm by Byford and Harrington (1999), which showed how you could waste a lot of money doing the wrong thing, even though in that case it was a government target that

money was being thrown at. There are some problems in research design. There have been a few very good studies which don't look immediately very scientific, but I recommend the study of Judith Trowell (2002) on psychotherapy for sexually abused girls. The bane of the medical life is randomised controlled trials: if you want big money to do any research around children or adults you have to have RCTs. The problem with RCTs is that they exclude most of the children you want to treat in everyday practice, and maybe the lesson we've learned from paediatric medicines with antidepressants will stand us in good stead; and I'd like to publicly acknowledge Lord Warner for standing out and saying he'll do something about this with the drug companies. Studies powered on outcome alone will often be underpowered in relation to cost, and we can't ignore cost.

Misconceptions of the implications of genetic research for mental health are common. If we're under the delusional belief that genetics will remove the naughty gene in the next five years, (a) that won't be the case, and (b) it would be eugenics. So the role of much genetic research is not the identification of genes for disorders, but determining the role of genes in the pathogenesis of disorder. That's not from a weak, lily-livered psychosocial researcher like myself, but from an upmarket medical geneticist, Anita Thapar (2005). And this means doing what seems obvious to most – understanding the findings from genetic research and combining them with environmental, social and economic research.

I want to challenge the concept of health promotion, because I think it needs to be much better targeted and understood. Primary prevention stops conditions from occurring, secondary prevention applies the promptest and most effective treatment to curtail duration and limit severity – the lawyer's mantra, nature and degree – tertiary prevention reduces disability and deterioration. Of course, the government have chosen to aim for utopia in their definition of mental health, and have enshrined it in legislation. According to the *Youth Matters* scheme, mental health to be indicated by:

- Capacity to enter into sustained and mutually satisfying personal relationships.
- Continuing progression and development.
- An ability to play and learn (I'd like to develop the ability to play a bit more, but maybe they'll have a geriatric version) so that attainments are appropriate for age and intellectual development.
- A developing sense of right and wrong.
- The degree of psychological distress and maladaptive behaviour being within normal limits of the child's age and behaviour.

I want to challenge that. I think it's utopian and it's not achievable. I think what may be achievable is children as a 'commodity' (a nasty word I know): a mentally

healthy child will have enough health to successfully cope with adversity, whether they're starving in Kenya, being shot at in Iraq, or living in the toxic waters of New Orleans. Or even in Camden or Islington, or *even* Salford. Not everybody is born equal, we're born different, and I really don't like normalisation: why do I want to be like everybody else? And there are some children who are born with a state of less than adequate health. We do know that there's a genetic predisposition to schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, Tourette's syndrome, that is a reality. This thinking is relevant to types of prevention and promotion; so I think you might manage the Bell curve if you're lucky, but you won't get the two edges of the Bell curve. I do get tired of hearing about this condition which I don't recognise in the classifications of mental illness, 'antisocial behaviour'. And even substance misuse. They're proxies for disorder, they're not disorders. We have to make hard choices between universal and targeted approaches. The bad news for the government is that if you need an intervention, it has to be active, and it's expensive because it has to be persistent.

Children's psychiatric disorders are usually chronic, therefore factors maintaining them would be better targets than those known to initiate them. Intervention should include the child and the child's environment. Home visiting and outreach are important, and school is important, but mental health promotion in schools is expensive. What I'd like to see is an enhanced capacity of all to promote the health of others. So, personally, I'd like adolescents to learn cardiac resuscitation and a few other things that they're frightened they'll misuse.

I'm a bit worried about the cards that they're going to get, and the idea of young people's panels to decide who gets money and who does not, because I think bullying might enter into that. But maybe I'm just an old sceptic.

Harrington and Clark have done research on the danger of 'prevention'. Prevention is not harmless. Screening has ethical problems. A certificate of health for those only just below risk threshold is not really a certificate of health, it says that the person was screened at a particular point, and was OK, but that they may not be next week. Such programmes cost money, and that money could be spent on proven treatments. Most cases, once you've identified them, don't get treated at once anyway. It has been suggested that educational suicide prevention programmes may upset students and normalise suicidal behaviour – I don't agree with that, I think we've overcome that hurdle. But there have been some programmes that have been proven to make things worse, such as the Cambridge-Somerville Study (McCord 1992), which eventually produced a worse outcome than routine or no intervention. So I think it behoves us to think on that. And some interventions of proven effectiveness may be too expensive, and we have to acknowledge that. So if we get as far as health promotion and

limiting psychiatric morbidity, the questions that follow will be whether adverse effects outweigh the benefit, whether financial cost is warranted, with increased expenditure of treatment services an alternative policy with potentially greater returns.

I won't talk at length about the impact of parental mental disorder on children as Jenny Franks is going to cover that. But it is accepted that psychiatric disorder in a parent (taken to include the dreaded substance misuse) can cause disorder in a child, and that psychiatric disorder in the child can cause disorder in the parent. What I want to highlight is that a common factor may cause psychiatric disorder in both child and parent, and may be driven by many other factors that go with poverty and being in minority groups.

So what is good practice when it comes to parental mental health? There's a good Council Report on patients as parents from the Royal College of Psychiatrists (CR105 2002). Action 16 requires us all to implement good visiting arrangements for children whose parents have mental illnesses, and there are lots of other recommendations in this NIMHE project. But what it isn't underpinned by is a minimum data set which tells you which parents have children and which children have parents with mental disorder. So I think the cart's before the horse: we need a minimum data set. Medical students and all psychiatrists should be trained to understand that people with mental health problems may have children, and may have parents, and may have a life outside their mental disorder. There is good scope for prevention in the area of post-natal depression, yet we didn't do very well on maternal deaths. Postnatal depression is currently screened for in primary healthcare, and I would argue that this isn't the right place to do it, as I think the job requires more specialised skills.

Psychiatric disorders. We're doing a lot on suicide and self-harm – the Mental Health Foundation report is long awaited and I think it will be very interesting. We've tried to produce a simplified version of the NICE guidelines on self-harm. Treating depressive disorders is going to be a challenge as we haven't got the money or the workforce to provide psychological treatments. Early intervention treatments in psychosis have been a disappointment because most of the money has gone into people in their 20s and not adolescents. There isn't enough of it. We have evidence that the outcome for a young person with early onset psychosis, in comparison with adults who develop it in their 20s and 30s, is abysmal. These are people with chronic enduring illness, with poor quality of life, and they're going to need as much funding as people with chronic physical illness, and as much notice taken of them. Developmental disorders in children and adolescents are not picked up enough, they need earlier diagnosis, and that alone would reduce the population going into the Youth Justice system. Learning disability affects 2–3 per cent of the

population. Higher overall rates of psychological disturbance are known in children with learning disability, and they don't go away, they persist into adulthood, and they're often even more neglected in adulthood. There are lots of government initiatives, but I don't think they're tied in.

Services for 30 years have been based on a set of values: normalisation. I've seen children crucified in schools due to normalisation, situations where they can't cope in mainstream schools and never will, and they've gone on either to be very sad introverted children, ripe for bullying and ripe for suicide, or ripe to enter the educational programme of the Youth Justice Board. I know it's an unassailable philosophy now incorporated into legislation, but is it actually in the best interests of all children? Children have a right to be different. They have a right to have learning disabilities. We should celebrate that, they should get their needs met. The average lifetime cost for a person with autism and additional learning disabilities is £2.94 million; that ought to be a good little message to a government department.

In discussing young people with troublesome behaviour, I'd like to go back to the terms 'troubled' and 'troublesome' rather than 'antisocial' or 'naughty'. Forensic mental health services are developing inpatient services to take them out of the prisons. The community services are in jeopardy because the funding has been coming from the YOTs, and the plug's been pulled on several services – these services are at risk of folding. The only thing that I'm going to say about substance misuse is that there have been more strategies in this than anything else. There has been more money thrown at this than anything else – with less impact than on anything else. I question anything based on a cessation policy. You ask any young person are they going to not smoke, not drink, not try whacky baccy, and honestly are they going to say yes to you? If they are, I'm worried about their emotional wellbeing. So can we get real on our strategies?

For years we've looked at mental illness and physical illness as separate, and it has been, I think, medicine's own illness. Peter Hardwick coined the phrase 'the body-mind split' (1997), and it has begun to heal, we're doing a lot of work with paediatrics and GPs. Most children with chronic physical illness survive through adolescence into adulthood, and issues of transitions, and where they want those transitions, must be addressed. There are particular needs for children with visual and hearing impairment. Most visually impaired children don't like going round with a white stick. Grownups don't realise that this actually causes problems when out on the street: they don't get help to cross the road, they get knocked over the head. I don't know what's going to be said about ethnic minorities and refugee children, but my colleague Kamlesh Patel who leads the Ethnic Health NIMHE wouldn't let me out of the room without saying something about it. I think these are the headings:

- Vulnerability and prevalent influences – we were hearing about rivers of blood again today when future percentages of ethnic minorities in this country were being predicated – we can't ignore that, and we can't ignore the different needs, and we have to look at it face on.
- Ethnicity and culture – different child rearing practices, which in some circles are seen as anti-child protection.
- Acculturation and ethnic identity – we've heard MacPherson comes and MacPherson goes, and we all go on our training but does it make a difference?
- Education and welfare.
- Mental health commissioners – the people who really need to know about ethnic issues in this context.
- Professional attitudes.
- Inclusion and sensitivity.
- Lack of good research in the field.

So what are the critical issues for the future? In mental health, I think it's the impact of primary mental health care workers. I have an aversion to the word 'beacon': a beacon project for Plymouth might be a beacon project in Plymouth, but it might be a disaster for Barrow-in-Furness, and we have to use workers in the way they're best fitted for in terms of the local population's needs. We need to focus on strategy rather than operational, organisational matters – I think this is the Dartington mantra. We need to relate to functions that are intended to meet the needs of the population at risk, denote the nature of the service that children and young people are assessed as requiring, and promote doable working patterns which focus on the needs of children and young people and their families. We need

to do more listening to users and carers: young people in mental health services don't want to be called users, why don't we listen to that?

Finally, I've brought a user's view. This is a project which took 14 months to get ethical approval for because it was supposed we were going to ask prisoners in the Youth Justice System nasty questions. Eventually we got past the pin-striped suits, using the well-know female wile of getting our qualitative researcher to burst into tears half way through, leading the men in pinstriped suits said 'alright then'. I'm not giving a plug for prisons, but I am actually telling you what young prisoners are saying. This comes from a survey of service users in Feltham:

- Easy to access most healthcare services – just book an appointment in the morning and you get seen that day (now you can't do that with your GP!).
- Members of staff receptive to discussing problems – in reference to a drug worker, one young person said, 'I just talk to her about anything that's bothering me and she gets me the information'. So she doesn't patronise him, she doesn't tell him what to do, she gets what he asks for.
- Health education through all staff – 'tells me what sort of food to eat and how to exercise', and it followed on with 'but I don't have to do it if I don't want to'.
- Mental health service awareness services. In reference to suggesting help to a friend: 'I just talk to them myself and get them to talk to me, but I need to know more about mental health, so that what I'm saying is safe'. I think that's a young person who's got hope. He may continue to offend. But I think he'll be OK.

## 7. Beverley Hughes

### *Minister for Children, Young People and Families*

Thank you for inviting me to join you this evening. You have a very wide agenda with many expert contributors. The timing of the conference coincides with the recently published Green Paper, *Youth Matters*, that I know Anne Weinstock spoke to you about earlier today. I hope you will take advantage of this event, and the consultation we have launched, to feed back your thoughts on the proposals we have set out and how we can work together to take forward this ambitious and exciting agenda. I know you have a great deal to offer to the debate we need to have, from your experience as deliverers of services, as policy makers and, most importantly, as professionals closely in touch with the views of young people themselves.

*Youth Matters* is one important strand of the

Government's much broader commitment to every child: to make sure that they are giving children and young people the very best opportunities and the support they need to make the very best of them. And that's not just about schools, it's right across children's services: it's about schools, it's about social services, it's about Children's Trusts, it's about health. It's about that whole panoply of provision, particularly in the public and voluntary sectors, but the private sector also has a role to play.

Right across Government now we are working together to improve the life chances of all young people and to close the gap between the least advantaged and the rest.

To do so we have to transform the quality, the

accessibility, the coherence and the integration of services so that every child and young person can fulfil their potential.

Addressing the specific needs of young people is a vital part of this challenging agenda; we want to give all young people the opportunities and support they need to make the most of their teenage years and to make a successful transition to adult life.

The world today's teenagers inhabit is light years away from the experiences most of us had at their age. Society today gives young people opportunities that we could only have dreamed of a generation ago. Many young people are making the most of this new world; achieving more at school and contributing more to their communities through volunteering and other activities. Today greater numbers than ever before are going on to university. And the internet, mobile phones, PlayStations and MP3 players are transforming the way they live, the way they communicate, the way they entertain themselves and the way they get information.

At the same time, new hazards, risks and challenges present themselves – binge drinking, substance abuse, sexual freedoms and the ever increasing demands for skills in the labour market.

Changing times and circumstances require new and improved services. And services that give them more of a say in shaping what's on offer and making sure that all young people are able to participate, achieve and succeed.

But we are not looking at services for young people in isolation. The reforms we are engaged in for them are integral to the wider programme of change that goes under the banner of *Every Child Matters*. They are an essential part of this radical new approach, building services around the single over-riding driver of better outcomes for all children, young people and their families, especially those most at risk of disadvantage.

### **Improving social mobility**

We are committed to creating a progressive society where background is no barrier to success; where disadvantaged children and young people, in particular, can move up and beyond the circumstances of their birth; and where all young people have the opportunity to reach their potential; in essence, a society where social mobility is a reality.

In achieving this, we need to engage all of those who provide services to young people and their families. This means a new role for local authorities, some services working together for the first time, others finding new ways to collaborate, everyone taking a fresh look at what they do and how they do it from the perspective of '*How does this achieve better outcomes for young people?*' It means placing much greater emphasis on finding out what young people want *and responding to it*. All of this poses real challenges, and offers new opportunities, for those working in services for and with young people.

Education offers the surest route out of poverty for most young people and it will be a priority for all services to help young people make the most of opportunities to improve their qualifications. If we think, for instance, of young people in the care system, current outcomes are completely unacceptable, and it is the responsibility of everyone playing a role in their lives, regardless of their profession, to ensure that these young people achieve the best qualifications they can, and leave care better equipped.

But, as Ruth Kelly said in her speech to the IPPR in July, this does not mean a system where a small minority of academically able pupils from poorer backgrounds are 'rescued'; it means embedding a culture of lifelong learning for all, which starts early and continues; it means personalised learning and tailored support for children and young people throughout their developing years and it means valuing and investing in vocational as well as academic education.

The early years in particular are crucial. We know that investment in early education and childcare pays dividends in the longer term. Affordable childcare and early education give young children the best start in life and provide firm foundations on which to shape later outcomes, at school and beyond. They also give us a fantastic opportunity to tackle one of the biggest hurdles to improving levels of pupil achievement, which can be especially endemic in deprived communities – that lack of belief among some parents that education really does matter.

If parents believe that education matters and we can provide high quality education to all, from the early years onwards, we will do much to make sure that children continue to inherit all that is best from their cultures and families whilst reducing the negative impact of social and economic disadvantage.

The same goes for the teenage years where the challenges are particularly complex and young people are not always offered adequate support, information or opportunities. It's a time of transition when there are difficult choices to be made. Study, money, jobs, health, self esteem and relationships all loom very large in every teenager's mind. We want to help them make the right choices and decisions, so we are proposing to modernise and improve information, advice and guidance services and create more coherent and flexible systems of support, particularly for those with the greatest need. That support will take many shapes or forms, but always with the ultimate aim of enabling every young person to achieve their full potential.

We want all young people to know about the many opportunities that are out there for them. Already we can see the difference that is being made by pioneering initiatives like Aimhigher, the national outreach programme which aims to widen participation in higher education, and our Gifted and Talented programme, which targets the most able pupils and supports them to achieve their highest potential. For example, over a

quarter of young people benefiting from the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) Summer School come from homes where the family income is less than £20,000; they receive a full bursary so they can participate.

Our ambitions are not just for the most academically able. *Of course*, I want to raise attainment across the board, but it is equally important that every young person – whatever their individual abilities, aptitudes and interests – when they finish education, can look back and say they had a really good opportunity to realise their full potential – and have done well. So it's important that we acknowledge our historic national legacy of low participation in education and training beyond the age of 16 and that we work to reverse it. Not being in education, training or employment is associated with many negative outcomes so I'm very pleased the latest figures show the highest ever rates of 16-year-olds in full time education, as well as record numbers both sitting and passing A-Levels.

As we work in partnership with professionals and others to broaden young people's horizons and support them in their quest for knowledge and experience we must keep in the forefront of our minds their parents and families. Parents' contribution is absolutely critical to their child's engagement, attainment and success. The teenage years present fresh challenges for parents trying to help their teenagers to make the most of this exciting stage and develop into responsible adults. Stronger parental engagement and responsibility for their children's behaviour is also key to tackling anti-social behaviour, in the classroom and on the street. So we need to offer effective support to parents too.

As we consult on and carry forward this reform we need to keep asking ourselves whether we are doing enough to improve outcomes for all young people whilst closing the achievement gap between the majority and the most disadvantaged. I believe that acknowledging the importance of young people and giving teenagers more control over their lives and the activities that they choose to do will lead to the provision of better opportunities and improved outcomes for all young people.

### **Services designed around young people**

So, we need to respond to young people as they are today, not as they were a decade ago. That involves reaching out to them and listening to what they tell us; responding to what they need and want, including providing public services, like health care and leisure facilities, more tailored to their specific needs.

Greater personalisation and choice is one of our five principles of reform and forms an important part of wider public service reform. Tailoring teaching and learning in schools to meet the needs, aptitudes and interests of individual pupils and building partnerships beyond the classroom are already helping us to reduce barriers to learning and address

the needs of the whole child.

Similarly, by putting young people themselves in greater control of the services they use we ensure that in their local areas they will have more positive things to do that they actually *want* to do, and places to go that they actually *want* to go to. Of course, with the right to shape services goes the responsibility to behave in a way that contributes to safe, cohesive and prosperous communities.

In *Youth Matters* one of the ways that we propose to design services around the needs and wishes of young people is through the development of the 'opportunity cards' that Anne described earlier. By putting the 'buying power' in the hands of young people themselves they will have more direct input into shaping what is on offer. And our proposal for an opportunity fund in every local authority gives young people a direct say in how the fund should be spent.

But this is a two-way street. We must be clear that these new opportunities for young people will bring with them responsibilities to make educated and responsible choices. Some of this will come naturally from their involvement in designing, developing, delivering and evaluating the services that they use. However they will also require support and guidance to build a sense of confidence and maturity in selecting where they want to go and what they want to do. And they need to know that if they invest responsibly, then services will respond to their needs.

We also need to put young people more at the centre of our thinking about services which provide intensive and targeted support. Despite many innovations in practice by Connexions and others, we still have too many different services and programmes aiming to support young people who are at risk. *Youth Matters* argues that we need to integrate different services at local authority level around young people's needs and in line with *Every Child Matters* principles. That will help ensure that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people receive more joined-up and effective support.

Involving young people and putting them in control of the services that they use is already producing positive results. From Connexions to the appointment of the Children's Commissioner, young people are getting involved and making their views heard. I recently met with the DfES Children and Youth Board and was impressed by the level of knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment shown by all members. The Board's desire to make a difference to the lives of other children and young people deserves to be heard. And it's very good to see the Sieff Foundation's commitment to and belief in young people demonstrated so practically by the active participation of young people in this conference.

Our Presidency of the European Union offers us a great opportunity to share ideas and perspectives with our European partners, some of whom have similar concerns to us about the best way to support young

people, and have apparently awaited the publication of *Youth Matters* almost as eagerly as many of you! I am looking forward to meeting young people from across Europe, including 22 from the UK, at our Presidency youth event in Cardiff next month and sharing in their discussions with European policy makers about how the participation of young people in civic life can contribute to the development of skills and competences that will help to protect them from social and economic exclusion.

### Conclusion

The challenge that now remains is making our vision a reality for all young people. The Youth Green Paper is a turning point in defining how services need to respond to young people's needs and ambitions. We now need to ensure that the services are of the highest possible standard and available to all who need them, and especially those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable.

Michael Sieff was deeply committed to the education, welfare and future needs of the young. I share his belief in young people and his passion to ensure that they are all equally able to enjoy the opportunities that our society has to offer. It is that belief and passion that underpins the vision of *Youth Matters*.

We want to celebrate young people and support

them to make the most of their teenage years. We want to discover potential and liberate talent by extending opportunity. By putting young people at the heart of the services that they use and giving them more opportunities, more support and more challenge I believe we can extend life chances and improve outcomes for all.

*During an extended question-and-answer session, the minister said that central government action and reforms had been necessary to bring local government up to standard, but it was now time to move away from central control. In the new era, responsibility must be given to local authorities. She stressed the fact that the Green Paper laid a heavy responsibility on local authorities to involve all young people, not just the educated and articulate. Simpler ways must be found to feed in their views. She also felt that the trend away from parental involvement had gone too far and needed to be partly reversed.*

*While not in total agreement, the minister took a sympathetic attitude towards questions about frequent changes in fostering placements and the educational handicaps of fostered children. She also promised to look into issues raised concerning the moving of children in care and the trend towards short-term contracts.*

## 8. Young People and Disability

*Philippa Russell, Disability Rights Commissioner, National Children's Bureau*

It took me about twenty manoeuvres and about ten people to be here, in a week when, theoretically, I was being the support parent, because my son is on a drama course. I think that says something about the theme: that we're talking about young, disabled people with an enormous range of interests, abilities, aptitudes, but all too often the logistical difficulties in getting them through the door are enormous. I'm Philippa Russell, I was Director of the Council for Disabled Children at the National Children's Bureau, and I'm now seconded on a half-time basis as a Disability Policy adviser to DfES. I'm a Disability Rights Commissioner with a lead on their work for children and young people, and I'm also a policy adviser to the National Children's Bureau. And, as you will gather, I am a parent. I am what is called an 'older parent' – if you have a disabled child who is 12 or over you have that particular description attached to you, as if you were about to be worn out by the challenge. But it does actually mean that I know a lot of young, disabled people.

I just wanted to set the scene with a quotation from the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report, which came out a few months ago, on improving the life chance of

disabled people. Because, in my son's lifetime, we have seen a sea change in attitudes from extremely negative, medicalised views of disability, towards the view that disabled people have much to contribute. And the government and the Prime Minister said '[We are] setting out an ambitious programme of action that will bring disabled people fully within the scope of the 'opportunity society'. By 2025, disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society'. However, I'm convinced that we won't achieve that if we don't ensure that children and young people who have a disability or medical condition are integral to the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

There are really multiple challenges and new opportunities. A new focus on outcomes and life chances: the whole notion of having a career if you're a disabled young person is actually quite new. A young person said that to me the other day, 'Nobody's ever talked about me having a career', he said, 'I'm 16. Everybody else talks about career choices. Everybody talks about my placement.' But we are seeing increasing involvement of disabled young people in local and

national policy development. And we are seeing the development of citizenship. We have a range of legislation: the introduction of direct payments, which means that young people aged 16 or 17 can have responsibility for spending some of their own money on support, by the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2001, the National Service Framework, *Every Child Matters* and *Removing Barriers to Achievement*. But what we have to ensure is that disabled young people are equally represented in their development and delivery.

It's perhaps just worth reflecting a moment on a changing population of disabled children and young people; this may surprise you. Using the broad DDA definition of disability, it is estimated that there are around 11 million disabled adults and 700,000 disabled children aged 0–16 in the United Kingdom. That's about seven per cent of the child population. But, strikingly, since 1975 disabled children aged 0–16 have formed the fastest growing group of disabled people in the United Kingdom. Not the old people – children and young people. The numbers have gone up from 476,000 in 1975 to 772k estimated 2002. That's an increase of 62 per cent (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit Report, 2004). So disabled children and young people are a significant and growing section of our youth population. I should add that there is a marked and unexplained increase in children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders and with a range of mental health disorders. And one of the most significant growing groups of young disabled people is that group of children and young people who have those behavioural disorders: autism, ADHD. It's a very diverse group of children and young people, which I think one should emphasise.

But why is the population of disabled children and young people changing? First, improved neo-natal care and associated survival of low birth-weight babies or young children with complex special needs. Children are also living with complex and rare syndromes. When my son was born, his life expectancy was estimated to be six years. He was lucky. At the end of six years it had gone up to 18. Now that he is an adult, the expectation is that he'll live as long as myself or my husband. We're a long-lived family. So, actually, disabled children and young people are going to have pretty much the same life expectancy as the rest of us. But we need to think what that life is going to be like.

I wanted to talk about family dilemmas – and I'm drawing here on a number of consultations, focus groups and working parties, which I've undertaken for the DfES and with the Disability Rights Commission, and with young people who are part of our member organisations like Wizzkids, Ask Us, and Count Me In. At the heart of *Every Child Matters* is a good family life, which is where all children should begin, and these are some quotations from parents and children:

'Moving out and moving on' – some parents felt

that 'we don't know what to do with the rest of our lives'. We're often castigated for being over-protective, and perhaps we are, but if your disabled child becomes your parental career, then you're going to need a lot of help to let that young person go.

'Breaking point' – a MENCAP survey found that over 80 per cent of parents with disabled children with a significant disability never had a break, and the older the child the greater the problem. But in our DRC survey we also found that a lot of young people wanted a break from their parents. And don't all teenagers want a break?

'The stress gets worse!' – the 2004 Contact A Family found that 76 per cent of parents experienced high levels of stress. Parents felt that 'you get forgotten when you have older children'. But those parents underlined the fact that they did not feel their disabled child was a burden. The burden was negotiating the services to get that young person an ordinary life.

Looking at families, a study has just come out from Eric Emerson and Chris Hatton at the University of Lancaster. This was a big study looking at all the families with disabled children in the last general household survey:

- You are more likely to be a single parent if you have a disabled child: 30 per cent of families with a disabled child are single parent families, as opposed to the 14 per cent that applies to the rest of the population.
- You are more likely to work part-time, 32 per cent compared to 15 per cent of the rest of the population, and income matters.
- You are 50 per cent more likely to be in debt. A study I was involved in for the Family Fund found horrific levels of debt in families with disabled children; in fact we are proposing to offer debt counselling and financial advice as part of our package of services because families are robbing Peter to pay Paul, in order to give their children a life.
- You are 50 per cent more likely to live in temporary, poor or overcrowded accommodation. And if you've got a very active, noisy child with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, or a child who uses a big powered wheelchair, that matters more than it might for other families.
- You will have half the level of savings of other families. Very worryingly, thinking of *Youth Matters*, if you have a disabled child you are less likely to have holidays or treats such as days out or visits to the theatre; you just can't afford them. And yet these are the families of the young people who might benefit most. Many young disabled people don't go on school trips, not because of the access problem but because the parents can't pay up. So this means that any initiatives around *Youth Matters*, developing leisure, sporting or community activities, need to be properly supported if disabled young people are to be in.

And what about growing up with disability? There are some messages from a number of research studies. If you are disabled and have a significant level of disability:

- You are 70 per cent less likely to move out of the family home. Disabled young people are now much more likely than they were even 20 years ago to just continue staying at home. We know all our young people keep coming back to the family home to save up for mortgages and other things, but a disabled young person may not be able to move out.
- You are 50 per cent less likely to get paid employment, although the situation is getting better.

In our big DRC MORI survey:

- 65 per cent of disabled young people thought they were less likely to be in a good job and have a regular partner by the time they were 30. I'll say more about why they thought that later.
- 70 per cent said they had problems in accessing social life or getting a holiday. One young man said 'How can I hang out with my friends when my mum or dad have to come into town to pick me up?' He said, 'It's not cool having your mum sitting outside the disco at two in the morning waiting for you to come out. I can't just do what other young people do'.
- 65 per cent said they'd been bullied or felt unsafe.
- 40 per cent said they were heavily dependent on their parents in multiple areas of their life. You don't normally find young people saying 'What will happen if my parents die, or become incapacitated?', but in a number of our transition groups, young disabled people did say, 'We don't know what would happen if anything happened to our parents'. It's a very Victorian attitude – families matter, but you shouldn't have to worry about your ability to continue your life.

So what do young disabled people want? In some focus groups that we recently ran for our disability debate for the Disability Rights Commission, some key messages came through.

They want services to be ambitious, but also realistic, and to look to the future. And the ambition was particularly important when the young person had a degenerative condition. For example, one young man I know has just achieved five GCSEs, four at A, one at A\*. The tragedy is they are posthumous GCSEs. He died; he had muscular dystrophy. But he was determined to do his GCSEs, and he said the most important thing to him – this is a quotation from back when he was well enough to be part of a group – was that he was thought of as a student who could achieve.

There is anxiety with young disabled people about being pushed into what one called 'neat solutions', particularly when parents worry about what happens

after they are gone. A lot of young people felt they were pushed into placements, and were told 'the money's available now, you'd better take this placement or service' rather than trying things out like most young people do.

And then managing risk and letting go, and balancing independence with family lifestyle, culture and expectations. And if the young person comes from a black or ethnic minority community, there is a whole other dimension, and there may be no appropriate understanding of what disability means in that culture, or how opportunities should be presented.

Now these are the messages from a big Disability Rights Commission survey of 16–24 year olds from 2002, though we did some updating last year. What were the experiences of the young people, and what will they bring to the Green Paper agenda? They were a cross-section of young disabled people, and communication support was provided where necessary.

72 per cent said that they felt that their teachers valued their achievements. School was seen as hugely important by these young people, and they would love the idea of extended school, because for them it was a place they went out to where their friends were. But 45 per cent said they experienced some problems there through disability. Of those who did have difficulty, 90 per cent felt that this affected their school performance – this could relate to not being allowed to do certain GCSE subjects, it could be because they were not able to stay on for the homework club where they could use the computer after school for their projects because the school bus wouldn't wait.

49 per cent felt they missed out on PE and sport. There is a real problem with obesity in many young people; there is a *real* problem with obesity in young disabled people. My son is obese, the rest of the family is not. We've struggled, but we've been able to buy him into services which actually make a difference. Some young people don't get that opportunity.

30 per cent felt they couldn't go on to further or higher education for a reason relating to their disability, and to those of us facilitating the groups it was not at all apparent, in many cases, why their disability would have made a difference. But they had low expectations, and as one family said, limited lives.

What did worry us was that 69 per cent of young disabled people said they felt lonely some of the time – a lot of the time in many cases. This was attributed in some cases to negative attitudes to disability, but more often to what one young man described as 'the nightmare of trying to get out and about and meet people'. Having a social life and being engaged in your community – key messages in the Green Paper – are what define most of us and enable us to develop the skills to go forward.

86 per cent thought that it would be difficult to get a job because of their disability and expected to be earning less by the time they were 30.

I mentioned before that 35 per cent thought it was

going to be hard to find a partner. This wasn't because they thought they were unattractive because they were disabled; it was because, as one young man said, 'we can't ever get out and meet anybody'. Dependency on parents was something that was repeatedly reported. Of course, we want interdependence in families, but so often parents are assumed to be the automatic caregiver, when actually they're not appropriate.

So what do they want?:

- A well-paid and interesting job, which is part of a career pathway. And the ability to change jobs if it doesn't work.
- To travel, and to be able to use a bus once in a while. A lot of these young people were very keen on the idea of a Child Trust Fund. They wanted to have a gap year, just like their peers. I know one young disabled man who has just come back from volunteering in a school for disabled children in a very poor part of South Africa. He's been a very powerful peer model, because nobody knows better than he does what the barriers are or how they can be overcome. And he's come back to go to university.
- They want to have a partner, family and FUN ('fun' was written in great big capital letters on most of the flip charts). One young man once said 'Oh, it's terribly serious, being disabled'. A girl said 'All I want is to be able to go out shopping for the same clothes and things that my friends do, and to have hair extensions' – I'm not sure that last part was anything to do with disability!
- They want to have a home of their own – 'Homes matter more when you spend as much time in them as we do!'
- They want education and training – 'real options, not being seen as problems'.
- They want good healthcare. There were a lot of complaints about the way healthcare works, like having to take virtually a day out to go and see the speech and language therapist or see your paediatrician. A lot are feeling they want healthcare to come to them; and if you are disabled, you are going to have a lot of health needs in most cases.

And some challenges. The DRC sponsored Rights into Action, which was the first international congress of young disabled people. I think it did make people here feel that in many respects we were a long way ahead of some other countries, but it was food for thought. They wanted, really across cultures:

- Better information.
- Practice in making decisions.
- Freedom to take some risks – 'We want a life'.
- Bullying and name-calling to be taken seriously – 'It isn't inclusion if you're scared to come to school'. Bullying and harassment and name-calling are real issues. Some schools tackle them well. It's not an issue of whether it's special or mainstream, it's a

matter of the ethos of the school.

- Parents are over-protective – these young people knew the parents needed help to let them go.
- We can feel a burden – 'make the DDA work'. What saddened me was how many of these young people thought they were a burden to their family, and felt guilty that they were repeatedly asking their parents to do things for them.
- 'See our potential, not our problems.'

So, what would help these young disabled people, thinking of the agenda for this conference? One young woman talked about the 'ring of confidence', encouraging young people to take responsibility for managing their own disability or healthcare. A Personal Adviser. Those young people who had pro-active Connexions Personal Advisers with a knowledge of disability thought they were fantastic. There's no doubt young people need somebody, be it a key worker, adviser, mentor, buddy – a peer buddy is becoming increasingly common and works very well. And getting out and about in the community and trying new things. Getting a Saturday job. That's important, because earning your own money was seen as a real mark of transition. And most young disabled people have no idea about how to get a Saturday job. I'll talk in a moment about one who did.

I just wanted to end with a few personal stories, with permission from these young people. This is from John: 'Nobody has ever explained my disability. When I was younger, I just listened to all these words – learning disability, special needs – and they sort of washed over me. Now I want to know – why am I assessed all the time? Other kids have SATs tests, but I have assessments! They'd ask me, why don't you just have tests like us? In the end I pretended to be ill on test days, I said I had homework, I said I had asthma and all that stuff. But really I just didn't understand WHY I wasn't like other kids. I needed to ask things on my own. Will I die when I am young? Will my walking get worse? Where will I live when Mum dies? Could I have kids? I want to know but Mum just cries if I ask her.'

And what about risk-management? This young man had a great whizzy wheelchair that could go upstairs purchased by his grandfather. 'Grandpa said I needed a Tardis like Dr Who to get me out of the house'; but when he took it to school, the school threw up its hands and said it was a risk. This lad said 'They told me I might squash some nerdy little kid and I had to go home'. The Disability Rights Commission sorted this out, but as this lad said, we wanted to hear 'Yes, you can', not 'No, you can't'.

An example of facilitating participation in the community when there may be a risk. One young woman was able to go on school trips thanks to the intervention of her nurse and doctor. She described her community nurse, who was able to work with the teachers, with the sports club, and with the organisers

of the school trips, to demonstrate how this young woman managed her diabetes, to explain that she had to keep biscuits in her pocket. ‘She made them let me use the staff loo to inject, you try injecting in a school toilet!’ said this young woman, ‘they’re dirty, there’s no locks on the door, and the kids call out he or she’s a druggie’. But, and she emphasised this, she needed the advocacy of her nurse and her doctor, because they were actually saying ‘Yes, she can’, not ‘No, she can’t’.

We need to help disabled young people to grow up with dignity. We need to assess whether the environment we place disabled young people in is appropriate. This young man loved his doctor, but he said ‘I hate the clinic, I have to sit there with all the kiddies stuff, Peter Pan and Noddy and all that on silly little chairs. I feel a fool’. One of the mums with a baby asked him ‘Which kid is mine?’ He was actually rather chuffed with this, feeling he looked old enough to be a parent. But he said ‘That clinic, the way things are done, it’s not cool. Why can’t we have clinics for young people?’.

I’m going to end with Janine. I’ve known Janine all her life. This is an example of a triumph of ambition over, if you like, reality. Janine’s dream had always been to work with big cats, but she felt it was impossible because of her learning disabilities and mild cerebral palsy. She did also have some behaviour difficulties at school. But her Connexions service thought otherwise. Janine was helped to get a Saturday job in a local pet shop. She was looking after small rodents, not large lions, though there was a sort of pet alligator there, believe it or not, that wasn’t on sale. Her literacy and numeracy skills improved enormously because she needed to identify and weigh the animals’ food. Her school encouraged volunteer-

ing, and Janine became a volunteer at a local animal rescue centre. She also started helping with the local riding for disabled people scheme. At 19 she left college and she got a job at the zoo. They were impressed by her track record. She uses direct payments to purchase some extra support, so that she can attend a local college where she’s taking animal studies – she never thought she’d go on to any kind of further education. She’s abandoned the idea of big cats now in favour of small ones. She works in the children’s zoo, and is currently helping the staff to develop a plan to improve access for disabled children and young people generally throughout the zoo.

I wanted to end with Janine’s story. We need to look for interests and talents and build upon them. Janine had enormous difficulties. She’s unreliable. She’s got a slight mobility problem. She’s not numerate. But she was ambitious, and she was given a chance. And if you see Janine now, developing an accessibility planning programme for the children’s zoo, you’ll realise that she’s using her experience, and I think that’s what is at the core of the Green Paper, at the core of *Youth Matters*. We need to listen to and learn from young disabled people, because they have a lot to tell us.

*Answering a question about disabled young people in schools, Philippa Russell said she favoured maximum inclusion. However, a period in a special learning environment could be valuable, provided it did not lead to permanent exclusion. She believed that, from the point of view of schools, behavioural difficulties were actually more challenging than physical disabilities.*

## 9. Practice Model – The Children’s Society Young Carers Initiative

*Jenny Frank, Children’s Society*

I am delighted to be here today to take part in this event. I have 25 minutes, and so will attempt to give you a whistle stop tour of the work of The National Young Carers Initiative.

The Children’s Society currently has four Pioneer areas which are the core areas of The Children’s Society work. The Pioneer areas of work are:

- Disabled children
- Children in trouble with the law
- Refugee children
- Children at risk on the streets

Although the Young Carers Initiative is not one of The

Children’s Society’s Pioneer groups, because the needs of young carers are complex and the impact of caring affects each one a different way, the work of YCI contributes to outcomes for these groups of children as well. Specifically, we are hoping to start some new work to develop specialist support guidance for those families where the parent is a refugee and is ill, disabled or experiencing trauma, resulting in the child taking on caring responsibilities.

The Children’s Society is the leading children’s organisation in England in campaigning for improved policy and practice to support young carers and their families. The Young Carers Initiative is a Beacon area of work for the Children’s Society. It works nationally

across England and locally across Hampshire to ensure that the voice of young carers is heard in the design and development of policies, practice, procedures and standards which relate to young carers and their families.

Our Goal is:

- Young carers are children first and should be free to develop emotionally and physically and to take full advantage of opportunities for educational achievement and life success.

Our Aims are:

- To promote preventative practice to work towards preventing children having to undertake inappropriate levels of care (i.e. where either the physical or emotional caring has a negative impact on the child’s development);
- To advocate and support the development of whole family models of assessment and practice throughout all agencies;
- To promote joined up, interagency and interdepartmental working.

Underpinning all our work are ‘Rights and choices for young carers’.

The Children’s Society feels that partnership working is vital to improvements for young carers. Currently we work very closely with The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Disabled Parents Network.

### **Why do we need a National Initiative for Young Carers?**

Because:-

- There are 139,000 young carers in England (2001 census). *The 2001 census figures show that there are 175,000 young carers in the UK.* This figure is likely to be too low, because the question asked made no mention of drug or alcohol problems and the form was filled in by parents on behalf of children under 16. (Note: the actual question asked was: ‘Do you look after, or give any help or support to, family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability, or problems related to old age?’)

The Home Office estimates:

- 250,000 young people living with parental substance misuse;
- 920,000 children live in homes where one or both parents have an alcohol problem.

We know:

- projects support carers as young as five;
- one-fifth of young carers miss school.

Also, research and practice has shown us that inappropriate caring affects a child’s personal development and life choices.

But most importantly because the young carers ask us.

So what do we mean by inappropriate care? When levels of care given to the person in need of care become inappropriate for that child’ and impact on their own:

- physical and emotional well-being.
- social, personal and educational development

Young carers experience traumatic life changes such as bereavement, family break-up, losing income and housing, and seeing the effects of an illness or addiction affect their loved one. Their education can be affected to a greater or lesser degree, from simply not doing as well as they wish, to dropping out of school altogether. From practice we know that projects support some young carers who are in trouble with the law and also those who run away because they just can’t cope anymore with the demands of caring for someone at such young age.

As well as those young carers who care for a parent, there are young carers who help care, often at significant cost to their own development, for brothers or sisters who have a disability. Its not just the practical tasks that affect the children but the emotional impact as well. (But it is important to remember that not all children in families where a member has a disability will necessarily be young carers.)

*‘It’s not just the caring that affects you. What really gets you is the worry of it all. Having a parent who is ill and seeing them in such a state ... you think about it a lot.’*

The recent publication by Professor Saul Becker and Chris Dearden of the Young Carers Research Group, Loughborough University, 2004, has statistics based on a survey undertaken with 6,178 young carers in contact with 87 projects, It is the third study undertaken in last ten years and found that:

- 56 per cent were girls; 44 per cent were boys
- The average age was 12
- 56 per cent were living in lone parent families
- 12 per cent were caring for more than one person
- 52 per cent of people receiving care were mothers

Educational problems were still high –

- Intimate care was still high at 18 per cent: sons caring for mothers, and daughters for father or brothers
- One in ten young carers were caring for more than one person
- A quarter looked after a disabled sibling, often when parents reach breaking point
- Only 18 per cent had been assessed (11 per cent Children Act)

The Children’s Society is not advocating that we should be measuring success by an increase in the number of assessments as a Child in Need, but actually increasing the number and effectiveness of assessments of the parents’ care needs, and of parenting

needs, to prevent the child caring at such a level becoming ‘in need’.

Many children are the unacknowledged component in many adults’ Community Care packages. In effect, Care Packages that rely on a young person to fill in the gaps may be responsible for those young people becoming ‘in need’.

Support needs to begin with asking *why* is the child caring and what ought to change to prevent them caring. Only a tiny proportion of young carers receive an assessment of any kind. Some families are not assessed until their situation deteriorates to the extent that there is deemed to be a child in need.

Few Local Authorities have protocols to help children’s and adult’s teams provide co-ordinated support on a whole-family basis. As a result, disputes result in a lack of support.

### **So why do children take on inappropriate levels of care?**

#### ***The nature of the family unit***

Is it because they may be caring for a lone parent because there is no other able adult in the home who can help with caring needs? Or that, in two-parent families, they may find themselves caring because the other parent may be working in order support the family financially? The parent has to leave the home early in the morning and does not return until evening. These times of day are often when care needs are high, (for example, getting dressed, preparing meals), so any caring tasks, including the care of younger siblings, may fall to the young carer.

In some families there may be more than one person who is ill: for example, a child with a disability and a parent with mental ill health, or both parents suffering from different illnesses or conditions.

Adults giving primary care may seek support from children in the family to help manage care needs because of the nature and volume of caring tasks. Some tasks may, for example, require or involve more than one person (lifting, physiotherapy, supervision, ensuring safety).

Nature of disability or illness. Caring needs vary according to the nature of an illness: whether it is a stable, managed condition, or degenerative, or periodic. Many families simply do not ask for outside help and as the illness or disability progresses, the caring role gradually increases.

#### ***Lack of effective or flexible services***

Children and young people are known to undertake inappropriate care in families where there is no external service provision, but also in families where services are being provided but perhaps not in an effectively targeted way, or where there is lack of flexibility and frequency. I was telephoned recently by a young man who had lost his EMA because he was regularly late or missing college because his mothers’

carer turned up late some days or not at all. He could not leave his mother on her own.

At least his mother had been offered a service. What happens when families are just below the threshold of eligibility for services but have high personal care needs? Moreover care plans do not always cater well for periodic care needs such as may be required by someone who has mental ill health or MS, where you can be fine one week but laid low the next; as a result children often end up providing emergency care until something can be put in place.

Families may also refuse to have ‘strangers’ in to care for them. Personal care may be being provided but if its not culturally sensitive it may be refused. What happens then? And yes, some parents do fear that to seek help may result in their children being taken into care.

We need to find ways of making services more responsive and accessible to what families want.

A child is caring because someone in their family has unmet personal care needs.

Joint working needs to meet:

- Care needs
- Parenting support
- Any support needs for the child – educational, emotional, physical and social
- For families whose child is ill or disabled. Assessments and services need to be aware that siblings may be involved in supporting parents and caring at inappropriate levels.

### **So what are we doing?**

#### ***Engaging and empowering***

We begin all our work by involving children and young people and their families – to listen, consult and empower in order to inform the direction of our work. We enable participation through our annual Young Carers Festival, parliamentary visits, a website and a newsletter called the Purple News, written by young carers for young carers. Throughout all our work we always consult and involve the young people and are in contact with them through a network of over 300 young carers projects.

Young Carers Festival. This is planned for young carers by young carers. The Children’s Society and YMCA Fairthorne Manor have for the last 6 years, organised a National Young Carers Festival. Over the last 6 years, a total of 7,000 young carers from all over the UK have attended the largest annual youth participation event. They camp for the weekend and have the opportunity to take part in activities such as abseiling, canoeing, archery, art and drama and circus skill workshops.

The children and young people who attend also take part in consultations about what they and their families need to improve their quality of life and to promote inclusion. This year the young people chose

the theme ‘Looking after Ourselves’. The Voice Zone offered information on the sort of support that is available for them but also asked the young people what else they needed in terms of emotional support, educational and career advice, and the role of young carers projects. It also offered information on promoting healthy eating and living for the young carers themselves. The weekend is chance for the young carers to have lots of fun and a respite, and to meet friends old and new.

The young people are involved during the year in planning the event, and during the event they are both asking the questions and giving the answers in their peer reporter group. They also plan and take part in a question-time event, and this year we had MPs from all 3 major political parties taking part.

Media coverage. We strive to gain positive coverage, which examines the reasons why children care, and what needs to change. We also, with the support of the media officer, enable young people to engage directly with media from all over England.

Parliamentary visits. During the year we support groups of young carers from across England to meet with ministers and parliamentary groups and enable them to say for themselves what needs to change. Although we still have along way to go with implementation of policy into practice, we do feel that the young people have been taken seriously and their views taken into consideration.

Our most recent visit to parliament was in February this year when young carers went to meet with members of the APPG for Children chaired by Hilton Dawson MP following the tabling of an Early Day Motion which called for *‘whole family, preventative support for young carers and their families; and regretted that services for adults and services for children often struggle to work in partnership’*. It also stated that young carers should receive appropriate recognition and support once at school; and called for services that support adults to recognise that many of their clients are parents and require support with that role in order to prevent their children having to take on inappropriate caring roles.

In October we will be taking 15 young people to visit the Children’s Commissioner.

### Information Sharing

We are providing information and guidance for professionals through a range of materials and services.

Practice Guide. We have published a good practice guide, ‘Making it Work’, which was published in partnership with The Princess Royal Trust for Carers.

Training. We deliver training and hold national conferences. This year we held a conference that examined the specific needs of Children in Refugee and Asylum Seeking Families where a parent has an illness or disability or is experiencing trauma.

We produce a range of information materials, and this year The Young Carers Initiative contributed to

the content of the Children’s Services Publication, which has been disseminated to all local authorities and elected members. It is a powerful but easy to read document that includes information on issues; practice and policy this year have helped inform the content of information materials.

*‘Social workers need to understand that all families are different and that it is important to consider ALL the family members and their needs, not just one member. Please also understand that family and individual circumstances change – the person cared for may not know how they will feel from day to day, or week to week, and this affects the level of support we need. Services need to be flexible.’*

### Whole Family Pathway

Funded by the Department of Education and Skills, the Young Carers Initiative is developing a Whole Family Pathway for assessment in partnership with three local authorities, Hillingdon, Oxfordshire and Hampshire, to ensure that whoever or however the family (parent or child) first make contact with an agency and need support, the same processes are followed.

We are advocating that providers of both children’s and adults’ services develop joint whole family assessment processes that focus on:

- How the assessment can support the person who needs care, including any parenting support needs.
- Recognising the needs of any young carer.
- Recognising the needs of the whole family.

The development of cross agency whole family assessments should provide an opportunity for service providers to be proactive rather than reactive. It also provides for effective partnership working inter-departmentally, across agencies, and helps to bridge the gap between children’s and adults’ services.

We are advocating that every Local Authority should have a Young Carers Strategy, and a Disabled Parents Strategy that includes protocols for joint assessment and support between adults’ services and children’s services. Children’s Trusts should be required to have a procedure for working with adults’ services.

### Principles of Practice

Funded by The Department of Education and Skills, The Children’s Society is developing Key Principles of Practice. These are intended to be used alongside legislation and guidance already in place, and to support agencies to respond to the recommendations of national policy that affect young carers and their families in ways that are sensitive to their needs. Using the Key Principles of Practice will help to ensure the best use of resources and promote whole family working. They will also enable practitioners to deliver practice based on the 5 aims of *Every Child Matters*:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve through learning
- Make a positive contribution to society
- Achieve economic well-being.

The principles will help to focus on early intervention, based on timely and comprehensive assessment of a child and their family's needs.

**Key Principle 1:**

*Staying safe and being healthy – There is a need to safeguard children by working towards the prevention of children undertaking inappropriate care of any family member.*

**Key Principle 2:**

*The key to change is the development of a whole family approach to needs-led assessments to ensure that service provision is child focused and family orientated – delivering what children and parents want.*

**Key Principle 3:**

*Engaging and empowering -Young Carers and their families are the experts in their own lives and as such must be fully involved in the development and delivery of support services. 'When people do something without asking, it won't be right.'*

The experience of being a young carer does have positive aspects. Young carers can be highly self-motivated multi-taskers coping with and achieving at school while undertaking a caring role. Many transfer their caring skills into career and job choices (Frank, Tatum and Tucker (1999)) having developed many key skills and competencies that were needed for their families to function. Such skills include effective communication and management capabilities, often coupled with a mature outlook which would be an asset to any employer although there is currently no way of accrediting these skills so that colleges or employers recognise them. (Dearden and Becker, 2000b). This is an issue that was recognised by the Tomlinson Inquiry (Tomlinson 2005), which proposed to remedy this through a new diploma that recognises home responsibilities alongside academic achievement.

However, it is important that such recognition does not inadvertently encourage the continuation of inappropriate care or making caring become a cause for celebration and not action. It is also important that careers advisers do not assume that the care profession should be the only career path but assist young carers to explore all options. It is also important to acknowledge that their ability to cope and achieve must not be used to mask their need for support. *'I missed a lot of school because he wasn't well and I didn't like leaving him in case he fell over and he couldn't reach a phone or pull the cords... I went to it twice a week, that was it.'* (Growing up caring, 2000, Becker and Dearden)

**Key Principle 4**

*Young carers will have the same access to education and career choices as their peers.*

**Key Principle 5:**

*It is essential to continue to raise awareness of young carers and their families, especially among those who have regular contact with them.*

**Key Principle 6:**

*To support and influence change effectively, work with young carers and their families must be monitored and evaluated regularly.*

Our vision for the future is to continue to:

- *Influence policy and practice to prevent children caring inappropriately which impacts on their own development.*

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## 10. Practice Model – Extended Schools

*Vanessa Wiseman, Head Teacher, Langdon School*

It was nice to be able to listen to the last speaker. Of course lots of those young carers are in school, and what I wanted to talk about, in the slot that I've got this morning, are the roles of extended schools, and particularly about the school of which I'm the head teacher, and what we've found helpful and important in developing our role as an extended school.

I wanted first just to say a little bit about our context. We are in Newham, in East London. It is an area with lots of challenges, but also an area that's very upbeat in many respects. And an area that's tried to pilot lots of things. Lots of challenges in terms of social services, and in terms of education. And at times there have been some not very good aspects to some of that

work. But I think what I can say this morning is that there is a sort of growing confidence, and that there is a lot more work going on, and the extended schools aspect has been one of the success stories. We're a very large school, because we're 11–16. In fact, we're the largest 11–16 school in the country. Newham is tertiary, so our young people go on at 16, although we still have lots of links with many of them in a range of initiatives where we work together. We're an inclusive school. Newham was an LEA that went very much for mainstream education for the majority of young people, and we've been very much a part of that as a school, with young people with a whole range of learning and physical needs. Particularly we have some specific provision – and by specific provision I don't mean separate provision – and some very specific skills for working with young people with autism or visual impairment. But across the school we've got a whole range of needs. Three-quarters of our young people come from different ethnic communities, and something like 11 or 12 per cent of our young people would be regarded as refugee students. Over 50 languages are spoken. We're a sports college, and you'll see later that sports college status is very much a foundation of the work that we do. We're also a beacon school. I guess by 'beacon' we don't mean that we're shiny and lovely, but that we work with lots of other people and try to be part of a more collaborative way of working, and that we have a long and consistent record of raising achievement. I think that's very important for us because we're not top of the league tables, we're not selective, we have a very wide range of abilities within the school.

But what we can show, in absolute terms and also, most particularly, in value added, is that we have got a really strong and consistent record of raising achievement for all young people. One of the nice things I had to do at the start of term was meeting those young people from last year who had taken their exams and seen some great successes. It was particularly rewarding to see, as we've analysed those results, those young people who have done extremely well in spite of particular challenges, whether they are looked-after children, whether they have physical challenges or learning challenges, or whether they have very, very difficult home circumstances. It was lovely to see that. That to us is a source of pride, just as much as how many As and A stars young people have got across the school. And it's also not just a source of pride, but a means of seeing: do these things work that we're doing? We believe that they do. We have lots of very strong student participation in the school, and our young people get out here, there and everywhere and have a lot of impact in the school. Again, I think that's very important because raising young people's self-esteem is of major importance, particularly for some of those young people whom we're thinking about who have got challenges that can be barriers to their learning. We try to work very hard on making

sure that all young people have an opportunity, both to influence what we offer and to support one another. That's a part of extended schools: young people working with young people.

Strong partnerships are important to us – across all of the people that we work with, but particularly in our partner primary schools. The cluster that we work with as an extended school is very strong through all sorts of other work, not least our Summer University, which we've just held. We also have Saturday School for young people in the primary schools. And those are things that link us very firmly, I'll say a little bit more about those in a moment. We involve ourselves in a wide range of projects. We don't take anything on board that might divert us from our focus, but our motto is that we will have a go at most things, and I think that *is* important. Particularly at the moment, looking at the greater links between education and social services, and health and other services. It's really important, and we do try to embrace things, and I think more schools are taking on that role. There are some schools that do not embrace so easily, but I believe things are moving on a great deal.

So, what are extended schools? It is worth looking again at the brief that they meant to be fulfilling. We all know what the five outcomes are of the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme, and I guess the mission for extended schools is really to deliver those in the widest sense, with the emphasis very much on achievement. But taking in all of the other aspects too: the health work that we do in schools, security both in school and beyond school and in the local community. Enjoyment is just as important as achievement for us, and making a positive contribution, not just within the school but beyond. And making sure our young people are able to be young citizens, and are able to have some control over their lives. And helping them to achieve economic well-being, through helping them to attain those qualifications that young people need. People concentrate very much on A to Cs, but what really reduces young people's choice over where they go next when they leave school is not going out with some form of accreditation from the wider range of examination grades. If young people have achieved, they are going to have something that they can go on to and do well.

So, we're about providing services and activities within and beyond the school day. It is not just about extending hours, but about extending what we do and extending our partnerships. The government has the aim of being open from 8 till 6. I think that sounds good in terms of making additional support available, particularly at the start and end of the day. But obviously there are a lot of other times of concern: holidays particularly, but also weekends for many young people. Because holidays are a particularly vulnerable period for many of the young people that we work with, we've looked at providing services for

them to give them an opportunity to continue to be involved in something more collective; and that is also a way of monitoring those young people's wellbeing over that period of the holidays. So I don't think you can just say 8 to 6, because 8 to 6 becomes then more about people going to work. Parents going to work is very important to families, but we're also talking about the young people, and about them being looked after, supported, encouraged, and having activities to do at other times as well.

We're about developing innovative and coherent links. I know it's a major challenge, but that's a part of what we have to do. We're about creating partnerships, particularly with parents as part of shaping services and being at the heart of a network, empowering young people, empowering their families. Sometimes the things that empower families are very, very small things, very modest things; sometimes it's about resources, but it's also about confidence, the confidence of the people in those families. Part of our role is not just about our young people, but about some of the parents too, about giving them an opportunity to develop, or maybe to come in and do some mentoring, and to develop some of their skills as well. We're mostly talking about the mothers, but sometimes others within the family. We seek to be firmly rooted in the local community.

The part I wanted to say more about is what we've been doing. This is not an exhaustive list. We were an extended school before 'extended schools' became a sort of title. I think we were part of that group of schools that helped to shape that, by showing the success of some of the things that we were doing. That has helped to show people that schools can be places in which we can work very productively with other services, and can actually help young people beyond the purely academic. So lots of these things haven't just happened in two minutes: I'm not just giving a list of things we've done since we became, not that long ago, formally an 'extended school'. These are things we've been working on for quite some time. Within the school we now have specific people looking at that work. It is I think really important that leadership of the extended schools is at a very senior level in the school. For anyone thinking about what schools in their area are doing. I think that's really important. It is not just a little add-on. It's not just a little project on the edge. It's about the whole school being an extended school, everything that we do, and the staff of the school seeing themselves as part of that, not just project-based work.

And so, within my school, Barbara, our Assistant Head, leads that work, and Hazel, our Deputy Extended Schools Coordinator, is our Senior Mentor. She has been with us now for some years, working with the mentor team that came in through Excellence in Cities, and which has been a really successful part of moving on the support for young people in the school. They work together with coordinators in the primary

schools; we work particularly with five main primary schools. We are in a very nice position, in that something like 95 per cent of our students are from those five primary schools. I think at most of those primary schools 90-odd per cent of the students come to us. So that is a good partnership. I know there are greater challenges than that for some schools, because they're working across many more primary schools. But the reason that young people want to come to us is because we've gone and built up those relationships over the years from when fewer of those young people came to us. We've got clear roles and responsibilities within the school, and we've got a lot of people working with a lot of different briefs: we've got teachers, we've got teaching assistants, we've got coaches, we've got mentors, we've got our attendance support team, all sorts of people who work in school. It's very important that our roles are clear about where all the responsibilities are and how those dovetail together, and that we are part of one team. That is really important. And again this way of working links in with us being inclusive. It is about including everybody across the school and looking and being aware of the different needs of the young people and families that come to the school. The inclusion team that we have operates in the widest sense. It's not just about young people with special educational needs who have been statemented, it's about young people who have not been statemented, but who still have needs. It's about young people with a range of social needs, which they sometimes come into the school with, and which sometimes come up at particular crisis times for those families. And we all know of the young people that come in sometimes and everything's hunky dory at that transition time, but as they go up through the school something happens within their families. There are lots of issues around the emotional wellbeing of young people, which are very, very important too. So our inclusion team is a very wide range of people in the school, who give different types of support to different groups of people, but who also have a holistic agenda and also have some core skills that we try to develop in everybody across the school – both teachers and other adults working in the school.

Managing transition is a very important part of our work. That transition at 11 from primary to secondary is probably the biggest task for us – but also at 16 for many of our young people, particularly young people in care. We go into the primaries and we work with them; we're not just talking about a couple of weeks before the children come, we work with them beyond Year 6 even, very often in Year 5 and possibly even in Year 4 in the case of some young people for whom long-term planning is needed. We work closely with them, and that's really important because it means that when those young people come they're known within the school, and also that they themselves know young people within the school. Our links mean that we can plan appropriately and give that support. Students,

particularly students we think are going to have a behaviour challenge within the school or where the family has real issues about schooling, come in before they start with us. We try to get some success going before the autumn term begins – I'll come on to the Family Support project in a moment. We have a summer fun week where we try and get them to see school as something positive they want to be in. And the work goes on beyond working with people before and over the summer, it goes on afterwards.

The Family Support project has been a very successful project. It started off as a little idea that we had: wouldn't it be nice if we could get better links between the social services and school? We did a little bit of quite modest work. It's grown, funded through the Children's Fund, and it will be part of mainstream provision as time goes on. What we have got are people working in the school who are hands on sort of people who have achieved success before and who we think are going to be able to work with our young people; they are not necessarily people with a full social work qualification, though some have, but they are people who have worked within social services. We went through a period where they were managed by social services, then we had joint management of the service, and the situation now is that we manage the service but liaise regularly with social services about what we're doing. When it first started, social services seemed quite anxious about handing over management of the project, as they were unsure whether we'd be able to do it. But I think that through really good relationships there and work together it's been great. They work with all sorts of challenging young people over the summer and with their families, particularly doing things like going on family outings, doing lots around life skills, families cooking together and coming together. But particularly going out and about, and making it something that's fun, and getting parents who last year were part of it to come back this year and help take young people out. And then many of those families have come into school in other sorts of ways after that, and that's been really positive.

Student involvement is, as I have said, really important for us. We've got a lot of work where we use young people to work across other schools and to work outside the school. So, for example, young people in Year 7 go and work with Year 6 students, helping them to realise that the school is going to be a friendly place and helping them to be a part of the school when they come in. And many of those young people who are working with them will be young people who had challenges when they first came in, particularly where there were worries over whether they would settle. In all of these things that we do we have a cross-section of young people involved. Young people like to use their experiences – where they've been able to sort something out – to help other young people do the same.

We have a study centre, which operates before and after school. We have also had a breakfast club for some time now, nothing grand: toast, crumpets, cereal. It's used by children across the board, but it's also used by staff if they want to go in there. So it's not stigmatised in any sense; people can go in there if they've not managed to have breakfast that morning, and things in there are very modest. Those young people who have free school meals have a smart card which they can use, so they don't have a separate thing, they just have their credit on that that they can use. The mentors run that, and it's not some large cafeteria, not a full English breakfast place or anything like that, but it's making sure that people have got something first thing in the day. And they can go into the study centre before school and after school, where lots of staff and volunteers work.

The Saturday School, Summer University and sports programme are worth saying something about. Saturday School is open to all the young people who come to primaries in the locality, not just people who are coming to us. It's run by our staff as an extra project, for which they're paid community rates, and by primary staff, by young people, by our Millennium volunteers – and many of them are ex-students of the school and are at college or have stayed with us when they've gone on to university if it's in the London area; and some of the young people from the school help. Summer University was originally financed through the New Opportunities fund, but is now funded through the local authority's Community Education Fund and by the school, and that is for young people aged 7–17 in the area over the summer holidays. It is two weeks long, but the sports activities go on all through the summer holidays, so again they can come and get involved. Some will come to us, some don't come to us; it's about working in the community, and particularly about making sure those vulnerable young people are not on the streets and are getting supported.

I think – and I'm standing here as the head of a sports college who's not very sporty – that people, particularly those working in services beyond schools, often have a misconception that sports colleges are something like the Hitler Youth. They imagine that we're all out there every morning in bracing weather walking around together, and you've got to be really great at doing things. Sports colleges are not like that. Sports colleges are about supporting young people who are gifted and talented, but primarily they are about participation rates and also very much about health and social inclusion. And for us this is one of the greatest things about getting young people involved across the summer. It was fantastic to see the performance this week of a young woman, in her last year now, who was from an extremely challenged family who have been through all sorts of things, and when she first came into school was not very 'on board' and got into all sorts of anti-social activity

outside and so on. For her the saving grace has been in sports, playing in a netball team which is run by our community coaches, one of whom is a single parent who had two boys go through the school, became a mentor, then became the netball coach and mentor, and now is our senior coach and works to develop these opportunities. A very formidable lady. And she's worked so much with this young woman, helping her, working alongside her, and it was a really important aspect of her life. She's got something now, she wants to go on and do something in football, and she's sorting that out. It was really great just to see how much things had changed. And I guess what I'm saying is that some of what we do is not about new things, but about being able to take things to a different level, and to have a little bit more resourcing, and to be a bit more holistic in the way we do it, so that it's social as well as academic.

I've already mentioned the importance of building self-esteem. We do lots of thing there. We have lots of recognition in school. Lots of recognition of things done outside of school; for instance you've talked about young people carers – that would be celebrated in school as part of the Millennium work, or part of the citizenship work, and that young person would be brought in as having skills that they had to share, as opposed to just looking at it as a burden (which obviously it is in many respects).

So I think we've made progress. I'm not pretending everything is hunky-dory, and that we all love each other all of the time, that we and social services are as one, health is doing everything we want and we and the police get on all of the time. But I guess we do understand each other a lot more, and a lot more common language has developed, so there's a lot less likelihood of, for example, teachers having a go at social services, social services having a go at teachers – the stereotypes we all know. We work quite positively with the police in the area and they've taken quite a lot of initiatives with young people. And with health we're making modest steps. They are modest steps, but we are moving forward and doing more things, such as our young people getting involved in projects and doing things in health, and better working out of services which could be school-based for a little bit of the time, particularly in relation to mental health etc. So what I'm saying to you is that we've got a long way to go, but that we are making progress. Having that partnership and having some of those services based externally and internally, and particularly focusing on the role of young people, is getting increasing recognition within school that the agenda for young people is an important one across everything. It's not just about raising academic achievement all the time – the other bits are important and actually go alongside it.

## II. Leadership for Leaders

*Anthony Douglas, Chief Executive office, CAF/CASS*

What I'm going to do is to emphasise the importance of leadership. You're all leaders in your field, so it's not a question of leadership being about somebody else. The work I used to do for a number of companies on leadership classes is how I first got into this, so it's not something purely for this sector, although I've tried to make it relevant. And the principal theme is that leadership is the single most important aspect of successful services. But leadership comes in many, many shapes and forms, and it doesn't just lodge in one person or a small group of people. In any organisation, the ideal state is that every single person plays a leadership role, and I just want to start with an illustration of that by a story from the John F. Kennedy era. When he was at Cape Canaveral for a space launch, on a moon mission, and the red carpet was being rolled out in front of him, a cleaner was desperately trying to clean the carpet before he walked onto it. He asked the cleaner – because he liked a photo opportunity – 'What do you do?' and the cleaner said, 'I send men to the moon.' The significance of the story being that of course the cleaner played as important a part in the enterprise as the astronauts, at least in terms of the way he clearly thought about what he did.

And the best story I've got about what leadership is – after years and years and years and years – is from a five-year-old girl. It comes from a time when I was still in the world of local government, an Acting Director of Education, which was one up or down from when I was Director of Libraries and a few other things that I knew absolutely nothing about – in those days the assumption was that you could run any service while knowing not very much about it, and I think things have moved on a little bit, perhaps. I was in a primary school, sitting with a five-year-old girl, and she said 'I can read, I can swim, I can climb mountains, I can do everything.' We chatted for a bit, and I then went to the little boy next to her. As I was talking to him, the little girl turned to me and tapped me on the shoulder and said 'Well, you know I said that I can swim? Well, I can swim, but not yet'. So, that's my best story about leadership for all of us.

I'm just going to raise a few, just a few, key messages about leadership. Why bother about it? Why don't people just do what they're told? When I was a social worker and journalist and one or two other things, people in management used to get very infuriated when no one took any notice whatsoever of

whatever they said. And of course that's just an occupational hazard being a manager or a leader, and you get used to it. But at that point many of the managers I knew would always say, 'Why doesn't he or why doesn't she just do what they're told?' And that was about twenty years ago; and now generally people do even less what they're told than they did. There are some very obvious reasons for that and here are some of them: that we're in a consumer world, we're in an era of rampant consumerism, that we're in an age that focuses a little bit on citizenship and human rights – unless you're a child of a deportee in an immigration and removal centre, when you will have no rights whatsoever – but quite often these days every one of us will feel we have more say and more right to do what we want, not what anybody else says, be it an institution or parents or anyone else who might deem themselves justified in advising to do something differently. My own staff, particularly in private law cases, will say the biggest shift they've detected over the last ten years is an increase in aggression when anyone tries to advise someone that their lives might be led a little bit differently.

And I have a word to say to those of you who are worried about your organisations being disbanded. If you were in CSCI or are in CSCI, or if you're in Sure Start or Connexions or HMICA, or for that matter most of the childcare sector at the moment, you might start to worry, but I think again the underlying point is that, although institutions are transient and this government is keener than most to dismantle organisations and change structures (even though a lot of the research suggests that's the last place you start to make anything different), the work itself usually carries on. To my own staff who ask 'Will we be abolished in the next two to three years?' I say: you can't tell. The decision to abolish or to shift CSCI was made quite late in the day, politically, in advance of the last election, and you can't now say this will survive or that will for whatever reason, rational or not; but generally speaking the work carries on in some shape or form. Just before we started, I was chatting to a colleague who's here about a change in her organisation, but there again it's being recreated in some other form and that's just the way it is. But during such a time of great instability it does put a great onus on professional leadership, because otherwise people will be all at sea. In fact many people are, and you do in leadership terms have to try to give some inspiration, some stability, some confidence, not a reckless confidence, but some confidence, because otherwise it could all get incredibly gloomy, which doesn't help anyone at all.

Finally, the common factor from industrial research findings which applies whether it's in the professional sectors, services sectors, or whatever you do, is that most employees – and that covers people who work for themselves and are linked to organisations – feel undervalued and misunderstood. That's quite normal these days. 'I'm not paid enough.' 'Nobody cares

about what I do.' 'Nobody values it enough.' And it's hard to find anybody, probably from the Prime Minister down, who doesn't feel like that, unless they've lost the plot entirely, because it is quite usual and quite normal and not unusual to feel pretty depressed about some of the things that go on, and especially in this work. Having worked in most of the public sector, I do feel, very powerfully, that child protection work and safeguarding work is its most difficult work area. It's the only area that I've lost sleep over at night. I've never lost sleep as a Director of Housing, or doing anything else whatsoever. Because the anxiety levels and the risks are so high in that environment, the function of leadership is to try to motivate colleagues who feel cut off, dispossessed, and fairly cynical.

Like anything else – if you can learn the saxophone, or if you can learn to read and write – you can learn about leadership, and there are some quite good manuals around. What you of course can't learn about is personality and communication. If you have a zero personality and you're a sociopath then you might just struggle a bit. Generally leaders try to change the way people think, and that's obviously the hardest thing of all. But if you're working in childcare, you're normally trying to change the way that people think, sometimes you're having to act with rules and legislation to control people, but you're really trying to change attitudes, the way that people think about themselves or their situation or their children or their family. The example I'd use is where we waste a lot of time in CAF/CASS in some private law cases: one of our practitioners told me two weeks ago about a couple, a chief constable who was a woman, a mother, and her ex-partner, a guy who was a head of planning in a local authority. So in their own spheres they were responsible, professional people. They must have been behaving perfectly normally in their day jobs to survive in them, but the social worker spent three hours trying to get them to agree basic arrangements for seeing their children after they'd split up. In other words, in the situation that they were in they became utterly unreasonable. And it was a phenomenal waste of time to be having to do that, but it had to be done, somebody had to do it, and the social worker was trying to change the way the people thought about their situation, and that's what I think you do whether you're working with your own staff, with partner agencies, or with ministers. All of us are trying to pressurise, influence, persuade, negotiate, and those are the skills that you need these days for leadership.

You do have to be big enough for the job, and the illustration I think of for not being big enough for the job comes from Michael Moore's film of George Bush when he heard about 9/11. He was in a primary school, and a parent with a home video camera was filming him. He was sitting in front of the class, looking blank and saying nothing, and an aid came in – it only showed you George Bush, not the class room or

the children – and an aid came in and whispered in his ear when the first plane hit the first tower. His expression didn't change and he looked straight ahead and didn't move and the camera stayed on him and kept staying on him. There was no reaction. And then, about six minutes later, I don't know what he was doing – yes, all sorts of things might have been going on amongst the kids that he probably couldn't cope with – but six minutes later the aid came in and said that the second plane had hit the second tower, and he still just sat there. Then, a couple of minutes later, two people came in and took him away to the helicopter to fly to the emergency bunker or wherever it was. And he did it again with Hurricane Katrina. He was daft enough to allow photographers to picture him on his ranch on holiday after the hurricane had hit New Orleans. And it took him about 36 hours to begin to – or to be told that he must begin – behaving responsibly like a president, and he suddenly put a suit on and called a press conference. But he didn't do it within an hour or so.

Generally these days you don't follow people out of curiosity, but you follow them because they're interesting and they teach you something. The difference from being a bureaucrat is that if you're just a bureaucrat these days you won't find many people take you that seriously, even if you're a brilliant bureaucrat, which gives the Civil Servants amongst you a real challenge, because I would say that these days, even with ministers and with pressure groups, you have to be your own person in your own right, not somebody with a role and a job. You have to get known as a person and to have something that goes with that that people can find vaguely interesting.

In leadership theory, the two key parts of leadership are transactional leadership and transformational leadership, and I think you need both to do most jobs we're involved in these days. In transactional leadership you're trying to make an existing system better, you're trying to look at something, a process, a bureaucracy, a way of working, and to just change it a little bit so that it's more effective and efficient. An example I'd give, which you can apply to a child coming into the care system, and this is where you'll think I'm really crazy, involves an exercise I did with some invoices that came into my services. Of course the point about an invoice is that you should just receive it in an organisation, validate it and pay it. It's very simple. It's not a complicated process you need a business degree for. And in the best organisations the operation is based upon trust, and invoices are scarcely scrutinised, because the time spent to process them is time that you could use to be doing something better. You tolerate a low risk of mistakes. You even tolerate the outside risk of fraud. But you don't create a massive system to do something that it then takes all your time to do. But in the organisations that are incredibly risk averse, an invoice may start here, on day one, it'll go to the first in-tray on day two, three, four, five, or it may stay

there for a bit and then go on somewhere else, it may suddenly have an electric process and go somewhere else very quickly – and then it might stop there for a bit. When we tracked some invoices, they were in the system for weeks, a lot of the time people didn't know where they were, although in the end they got paid, because everything tends to get paid in the end. Now apply that to children coming to the care system, particularly with multiple placements. Apply it to the life of a child who might be moved – a young child – as many as two, three, four times a year, and in some of the more extreme cases we have in my organisation, fifteen times within a year, then the consequences of that are absolutely frightening. So I think the need for organisations and services to work in terms of their basic processes is important, but many parts of leadership are actually about being transformational and changing things completely. So with the invoices, the example of transformational leadership is not to scrutinise them at all, to take a sample, maybe five per cent, that you check, and to pay the other 95 per cent on trust, and you make that decision as a leadership decision. And you can apply that in all sorts of other ways to all sorts of things.

I did some work in local government for the Local Government Centre leadership process, and we found that there were four main types of leadership that were needed across the public sector, and that rather than one or another, all four tended to be needed in some shape or form. You'll probably score very highly on professional intelligence as a group: you will know the work, you will know how to do it correctly. Which matters, because there was a period in the public sector when there was some thinking that anybody could do anything – you could work at Tesco and then run the railways. But luckily that thinking has changed a little bit and nowadays you'll mostly find people staying in the same sector for much longer, and experience being a little bit more valued than it was 10 or 15 years ago. You'll probably be very good at cultural intelligence, with shared purpose. And emotional intelligence, connecting with people. But if you're like the average group, you'll be pretty weak on entrepreneurial intelligence, and that means being innovative, and doing something completely different. Transformational leadership. So when we set up the Local Government Leadership Centre, its first focus was on transformational and entrepreneurial leadership, particularly to give managers and leaders the confidence to do things differently in a very regulated environment, but often where the regulation was excessive.

Now just to mention four people whom I've loved and seen as role models over the past 25 years: Peter Brown, Jerry White, Joyce Moseley and Mandy Martin. I'd encourage you to think of people who did that for you. Peter Brown was the first team manager I respected as a social worker, and I had been a social worker for six years before meeting Peter. Why did I

respect Peter? Well, I respected him as a person, I respected him in terms of his character and in terms of his knowledge. What a contrast to my first team manager! When I first had to admit an elderly woman to a psychiatric unit, I asked, 'What shall I say to her?' My manager replied, 'Go and tell her she's going on holiday and bring her to the office, and the car will be coming to take her away'. So I think things have improved quite a bit, you'll agree, since then. Mandy Martin, with whom I co-chaired the Suffolk Learning Disability Partnership, was a woman with profound learning disabilities who had found a way of communicating through voice boxes and various equipment, and had been an advocate and a leader for several thousand people in Suffolk with learning disabilities. I think the achievement of people like Mandy is one of the real changes in the last 30 years.

Here are some personal reflections on things which help me to be a better leader. I'm better when I know what I'm talking about – you may feel that hasn't been the case today – better when I feel physically and emotionally strong. This is a job where if you feel less than 110 per cent you'll struggle. I'm better when I work intuitively, responding to signals, better when I'm passionate about what I'm doing, and better when I feel at home in my organisation. I think there's not very much work done on that, but lots of people do well in some organisations but not in others, for all sorts of reasons, and it doesn't mean they're incompetent, it just means they're working in the wrong place, sometimes with the wrong people. The ancient Chinese art of Feng Shui would tell you on leadership and networking to work out through Kua numbering who you should talk to and who you shouldn't. Kua numbering, which is a complicated mathematical formula, will tell you that there are some people you should avoid and never ever sit down and do anything with, and other people you can happily work with for ten years. So, I offer you Kua numbering, perhaps in your own workgroup, if you want to look

at what's behind some of your worst relationships. Finally, don't hesitate to do what you can, however insignificant it seems. All of you, and I think all people working in the sector, make a tremendous difference day in day out, and it's very easy to forget that. The final story I want to tell, just to be optimistic about leadership, is about when I was visiting one of my teams in CAF/CASS and waiting for a particular team meeting. One of our social workers came up and said to me, 'Nice to see you again', and I was racking my brains about where I might have worked with him, because I've worked at a few places over the years, and he was about 45 and looked familiar. I couldn't think of it, and in the end I said, 'Look, I don't know' and he said, 'You were my social worker'. So he's one of our children's guardians – he's a highly effective children's guardian – and I was his social worker in Hackney when he was nine-years-old. His mother had killed herself, and what he remembered was I took him and his brother to watch a Spurs game and then for a burger, which was especially odd as I'm an Arsenal fan, and also of course buying burgers ... Do you still do that? What he said was, 'You took an interest in us.' And the fact that someone I worked with 30 years ago, who was nine remembered that as taking an interest in him was a salutary lesson for me that in a world obsessed with targets – for good reasons – sometimes just getting alongside people and working directly with people to support them is the best leadership of all.

*Responding to a question about 'target obsession', Anthony Douglas remarked that some targets handed down from above could be useful. But too many could demoralise first-line management by taking away their professional control. He also observed that everybody was managing underfunded organisations, thanks to the current Treasury-led environment.*

## 12. Practice Model – Kids Company

*Camilla Batmanghelidjh, Founder and Director, Kids Company*

On my way here I was thinking what was I going to share with you, so perhaps I'll give you a context and then share with you my personal experience of working with children and leading an organisation under very challenging circumstances. To give you context, I'm a psychotherapist by training, with 16 years of psychoanalysis five days a week, so I've developed quite an in depth analytic thinking. I've known since I was a child that I would work with children, and I think it was a gift really, because there was nothing of it in my background. I grew up in a very wealth family

in Iran, and my experience of childhood was to have two police bodyguards following me everywhere. And it wasn't until the Iranian revolution that I ended up in Britain as a refugee, and my life changed dramatically. So I've lived both spectrums, I've lived with completely no money, and I've lived with money beyond belief. So that's my background.

I first set up in my early twenties 'The Place to Be', which is a therapeutic project in schools. When I set that up everyone thought it was impossible to replicate it nationally, and it's now nationally replicated. In

my thirties I set up Kids Company and that was very much more challenging. Now why was it so challenging and what did we end up doing? Basically, Kids Company works in 22 schools across London, and what we do is put a team leader in the school, who is usually a psychotherapist or social worker by training, for about two and a half days a week, and around the team leader we build up a team of therapists, social workers, artists, musicians – people who love children and have something to contribute – and these people stay in that school and work with the children over a long period of time. The majority of our schools we've been in for around seven, eight or nine years, so we've really made a fundamental contribution to the environment of the school. The way that programme works is that we create therapy rooms in the schools, which are play rooms, and we equip them really well, and then we speak in assembly and let the children self-refer to any service that they wish to. Now that could be football and art club or it could be one-to-one therapeutic support, or social work. At the same time we do an audit of need within the school, to identify any children that the school are concerned about; but our primary role is to take self-referrals; that is very important. And if a child is left off then we will identify that child and try and engage them. It's a very good model, because you get about 98–99 per cent consent from parents, because they're not nervous about the fact that this is some clinical social work thing, and also you afford children genuine access to mental health services and interventions, because it's not reliant on the parent making a commitment to take the child to the sessions. It's a very, very good model. And you work very, very closely with the school environment, and therefore it's quite a cohesive model.

So that's the work in the schools. We see about 4,000 children a year in that programme through our interventions. And we recently had the University of Exeter come in and do an evaluation of the contributions volunteers make to our organisation, and the report was just completed showing that £1.9 million worth of services were contributed through volunteers and trainees. In addition to that there were donations from businesses, and in total the organisation benefits from nearly £2.6 million in voluntary contributions – I have to raise about £2.6 million to actually run the organisation. We have about 161 clinical trainees doing placements with us: those are psychotherapists, social work students, people who are doing various training. And we try to encourage people to do their placement in our schools so that the children get something out of it. So that's that bit of the business.

The other bit, which is the most challenging, and the bit I would really like to talk to you about, because I think it's a challenge we all face, is the work we did at the Arches. The Arches were six railway arches that we used to occupy in Camberwell and Peckham; we were happily located there until a block of private

apartments started being built opposite them and we got rudely evicted. But I will leave that story to emerge in time. The way the Arches developed was quite by accident. We were planning to be a service for children who were in schools that we were worried about, and we took over two railway arches – we were a group of psychotherapists trained in the schools of Hampstead, all of us really eager to get going. The plan was to bus the children down during the holidays, look after them and then return them to school. But when we opened about 100 Afro-Caribbean adolescent boys and one ginger-haired white boy turned up on our premises – and we were open from three o'clock to seven o'clock – and I was completely out of my depth. They were unbelievably aggressive: they used to turn up at three o'clock, get their little pen knives out, rip the furniture, spit, try and roll up their spliffs, and I remember standing there absolutely terrified by the fact that I didn't understand a word they said to me. I didn't understand their culture. I didn't understand how they survived. And the group of therapists I had with me were diving behind the doors, shutting the doors, and they wouldn't come out. Very early on I realised that I had to employ some black males from the community, because I really had no concept of this culture at all. So we ended up with a very combined workforce, because initially I advertised for workers and I was getting these characters with thick ties and briefcases looking like they wanted to leave their cultural background behind, whereas I wanted people who were familiar with the culture of these children. Eventually I asked the kids and they told me that there were several DJs that they liked so I went looking for them, and I ended up with a workforce of highly trained, predominantly white psychotherapists, and then black males who were absolutely brilliant with the kids but had no qualifications, no history of work, and no training, and I had to get these two work forces working together. And the only thing that they had in common was that they absolutely despised the children. Thinking about leadership, I remember the kind of difficulty I had trying to create a team out of this group, and trying to create some kind of common understanding about what these children stood for, where as a leader I didn't know myself.

So as time went on I began talking to the children and I used the males to translate for me. I had the standard difficulties of these guys who were really great with the kids but you know they used to say things like 'Don't worry, Camilla, I'll take him round the corner and beat him for you.' And I used to say 'Noooo!' We had to develop all the policies and the thinking and everything, and as time went on these kids started talking to me, this first hundred, and on top of that a further hundred had arrived because the word had spread around the neighbourhood. And the second hundred were predominantly white children of drug addicts, so they were very under-developed, they were failing to thrive. Whereas the first group of

boys had been surviving through robbery and drug dealing, these younger ones were scavenging in bins and shop lifting, so they were a completely different group and had a very different profile. And to cut a long story short we ended up with about 500 children within a year, so it grew quite fast and quite organically, and I began writing these children's life stories because I began meeting with them individually.

And when I started meeting with them individually, nothing could have prepared me for what I began hearing, because, universally, it was the story of very vulnerable young children who from an early age were clearly pleading for help and experiencing extensive abuse and neglect, but behind closed doors. And the characteristic of all these children was that at that young age nobody had been able to intervene, for whatever reason, that the professionals and the agencies weren't there when it really mattered. And then you could identify a cycle as these children described how they developed, initially what I call protest – there was a lot of begging and pleading for the abuse in the household to stop – and then when the child saw that they were effecting no change in the environment, they actually shut down their capacities to feel, so they became emotionally cold and numb in order to be able to cope with their circumstances. And I have this actually coming from the kids – you get to a point where they say, 'I couldn't feel any more, I couldn't care anymore', and then you get an emotional repertoire in which their capacity for empathy diminished, because emotional learning is something that is achieved through reciprocal exchange, you elicit emotionality from someone and you return it. Nobody wanted to pinch the cheeks of these children and say, 'You're so cute, I love you', or 'Give me a hug', because they were usually quite cold, quite frozen, quite unresponsive, so their defence mechanisms were then further entrenched by the way people behaved towards them. The kids, I think, got to a point where they actually forgot what it felt like to feel. That was another characteristic amongst them, that they would often describe that they can't feel anything, and when you can't feel anything over a long period of time, you lose your emotional repertoire, and you lose the memory of feeling. And in that state these children are capable of creating great harm and hurting someone, because they don't have their internal barrier to causing pain, because they don't have their pain thermostat intact and they can't experience empathy; they can't imagine what pain feels like, put themselves in the position of the victim, and by proxy comprehend the victim's pain and then feel sorrow about it. So a whole repertoire of emotional exchanges is not available to them. The starting point being the defence of shutting down the capacity to feel.

Now what does that mean? You have the individual child who can't feel. How do you then explain the gun culture, the knife culture? The capacity not to feel gets to a point where the child also becomes fed up with

being a victim, because they've had years of being victimised and they get to a point where they then make a transition from being a victim to taking matters into their own hands. Now how a young person takes matters into their own hands is culturally and environmentally determined. In some neighbourhoods the drug economy is the economy of survival – and whether people like it or not the drug economy is currently turning around more money than the oil industry. There are families being kept above the poverty line because of the drug economy, so it's not an economy that can be easily dismissed, and the police do not have the resources to carry out the surveillance to address it. So you get this young boy or girl standing on the balcony noticing that another child who is similarly vulnerable has suddenly got a bike and Avirex jacket, and he's thinking and she's thinking, how did he get it? Go and ask, and they say, 'I've got someone who's looking after me.' It's invariably an adult drug dealer, who then uses these kids as couriers to carry the drugs between dealers. Initially a 16-year-old boy will carry the class-A drugs, but may run a much younger child like a 9- or an 8-year-old to carry the class-B drugs, and that's how the whole economy works. And in this perverse apprenticeship the kids are learning how to manage their business, and the business of drug dealing or prostitution can't be managed through legal means, it can only be managed by violence, because violence is the currency of delivery: if drugs aren't delivered you stab someone, or you shoot them, or your honour is not preserved, and in that way they learn how to carry out violent acts, and violent acts are carried out against them.

So in a context like that, how do you deliver a service? We had adult drug dealers drive a car on the premises to run us all over, we had someone turn up with a gun to shoot us. How do you run a service in a context like that? When you've got children referring themselves off the street and you've got no commissioning agent paying for them. When you're in social work boroughs where social workers are so snowed under that they do everything they can not to take a case because they can't. How do you honour the Green Paper in an environment like that? And I think this is a question we really have to ask ourselves, because the intrinsic difficulty relates to the concept that a young person has about what society means, their comprehension of society. Tony Blair talks about respect. But respect is always deemed to be the prerogative of the adult, the adult is owed the respect; yet respect is a reciprocal experience, it has to be emotionally learnt, and how do you get children whose experience of civil society is one of corruption, perversion, the unavailability of help, the culture of 'We'll do everything we can not to take you', how do you teach a child like that, who perceives the society around as actually endorsing their individualistic and self-centred survival, about respect?

Which brings me to the next point, how do you develop services for kids like this? Because many people will sit here and say, 'Well, there's a college placement, there's Connexions, there's this one and there's that one, why doesn't the kid just make their way to it and make use of all these wonderful resources we've made available to them?' The answer is that the resources are structured the way a relatively healthy adult would access them, they are created by people who conceptualise services the way they take them and the way they function. Now, I want you to think about the service from the perspective of a kid like this. For a start, a child before the age of 11 – how is that child supposed to differentiate between social services, psychiatric services, the Benefit Office, and the police? That's number one, how do they know what all your professions are? Secondly, how do they get to your offices, how do they know the names of your secretaries, your emails, your telephone numbers, how do they know how the referrals system works? And if your mother's never taken you to the

GP, how do you know how to get to the doctor or to the dentist? You don't know. On top of that, you have culture – the neighbourhood, the parents, which tells you, 'Don't tell anyone because they won't help you, and they'll take you away from me.' That is the communication that these children inherently are receiving all the time. How do you expect that child to access these wonderful services we conceptualise in these papers? The other key factor is the way in which British culture thinks about bad behaviour. The difficulty we still have is that the bad behaviour of children is seen as symptomatic of moral flaws. Actually, the truth is that the majority of the adolescents we see are physiologically and neuro-biologically unable to calm down and access the programmes that we provide. I think the biggest challenge for us as service providers is to conceptualise the service in a way that a terrorised child who can't sit down, and who cannot tolerate adults because they've been betrayed so much by them, can access them. And I think those are the questions that we should be asking.

### 13. Practice Model – Alford House

*Tim Saunders, Manager, Alford House Project*

I've been asked to come along to talk about my experiences of working with disadvantaged young people. One of the first recruited was a 16-year-old who'd been a member of the youth club for over five years, and, at a glance, he was a young man who had a tendency to commit petty acts of vandalism, lacked basic reading, writing and numeracy skills, and was very much overweight. At 15, through his engagement in the youth club, he was encouraged to take part in the Youth Achievement Awards. It was through the Youth Achievement Award that he acknowledged his lack of basic skills. With the support of a youth worker he enlisted his friends to help him record his learning and build evidence for his portfolio. At 16 he was recruited for the Reconnect project via the youth club, where he began to learn Information and Communication Technology. He used these new skills to continue with his Youth Achievement Award. He received his award at bronze level, and began to receive job search and application support. He applied for and received several jobs, but was never able to hold them down for very long. After two and a half years on and off the project, there was in his own words 'a growing realisation that I was finally seeing other people move on, and seeing what other people could wear and I couldn't'. Now 22-years-old, down from nineteen- and-a-half stone to 13 stone, he cycles to work every day. He also volunteers once a week to manage the youth club snooker room. 'Doing different

things at the project and youth club kept me active, I wasn't just at home watching TV and eating. It gave me something to look forward to'. That's a case study that comes from the project [reconnect@alford.now](mailto:reconnect@alford.now), which is a Neighbourhood Support Fund project.

Neighbourhood Support Fund is a DfES funded programme which was launched in 1999, with the aim of re-engaging hard to reach young people aged 13–19. The pilot lasted three years at a cost of £60 million. The NSF was delivered by 650 voluntary and community sector organisations in 40 of the most deprived areas in England. The DfES has continued to fund the NSF for a further two years. Delivery was overseen by three managing agents: the Community Development Foundation, the Learning Alliance, and the National Youth Agency, with whom we were funded. The host organisation of the project is an organisation called Alford House Club. Alford House is a charitable trust, founded in 1884, and it has extensive premises and is based in the local authority of Lambeth.

In the years leading up to the project, Alford House was in the main delivering generic youth work. Within that generic youth work, a number of interconnected developments either underway or about to commence became significant factors to us to seeking NSF funding. We were operating the Youth Achievement Award, and had just obtained funding for a full time Youth Achievement Award worker. We were establishing procedures for working with young people aged

15-plus on their progression paths through school, employment, training and further education. We had established a partnership with the Workers' Educational Association, and they were providing an activity which helped young people to become more confident writers, readers, and computer users. With the Workers' Educational Association, we made a successful consortium bid for an awful lot of ICT equipment, which was to be based at Alford House for the purpose of establishing an open-access computer centre. And we'd also just completed a sponsorship deal with one of the country's leading companies, which was both worth a fair sum of money and had the potential of leading to us having work placements with them.

The key external drivers were: the national local authority report citing the need for youth work to concentrate more on young people's progression paths; continuing questions about the benefits of youth work; and Lambeth Council's previous mismanagement of finances leading to budget pressures and the need to demonstrate the benefits of youth work even more clearly (I don't think that's very controversial, I think they would own up to it themselves). The rationale for the project was based on trying to establish procedures to look at young people's progression paths. The procedure was a fairly simple one at that time, it was an individual interview with all members that were 15 plus, and we just asked, Had they left school? What were they doing if they had left school? Had they completed a careers action plan? Were they carrying out their careers action plan? If not, what were they doing and how did the change come about? Had the club played a role in their personal development? Had they prepared a CV, and had they included club activities on their CV? Finally members were asked if they would like us to arrange further careers advice for them at the club – and this is about 1997–98, before *Bridging the Gap* and before real talk of a Youth Support Service. And we were able to offer them careers advice because somebody from the careers adviser's offered voluntarily to come down and see young people. Some of the members were loosely targeted, but even those whom we initially believed were in little need of extra support displayed an enormous amount of appreciation for the effort the club was making, and wanted further assistance. And this was OK. It was not particularly sophisticated – hardly the Common Assessment Framework – but we'd made a start.

However, it soon became apparent that we really didn't have enough resources to build on this work. We had 68 members in the 15–19 age range, and we'd set ourselves a target of interviewing 40. In the end we only managed to interview 21 in the whole year. And then NSF came along. If successful, we would probably have more resources than we actually needed; so we explored what we could do using additional resources, and in the end we came up with a project that would not only benefit members of the host

organisation, but could play a bigger role in the local community and perhaps beyond. The project aim would be to engage with young people, exploring and addressing the reasons for their social exclusion in order to connect them to services, which they in turn could value and which would lead to them establishing progression paths in training, employment and education. The target group would be those under-achieving or failing at school, permanently excluded from school, now or in the past in the care of the local authority, unemployed, addicted to gambling, experiencing difficulties at home, homeless, lacking family support or discipline, with low literacy and numeracy skills, involved in persistent criminal damage, cautioned by the police, with childcare responsibilities, or involved in drug misuse.

The method and approach we were going to use was in seven stages, the seven stages that former HMI inspector John Huskins detailed in his book *From Disaffection to Social Inclusion* (1998). Stage one was to make contact, through the club's membership base or outreach work, with young people experiencing difficulties. The idea was to establish credibility and to give information, and to encourage a response. Stage two would be about establishing trust, to prepare a profile, identify interests, achievements and aspirations. Stage three would explore their experiences, behaviour, values, assess their social skills and identify further needs. We would also make a plan of action, seek to motivate them and seek commitment. Stage four would be about trying to connect young people to appropriate services and activities, based on the young person's needs – either those offered by Alford House or by other organisations. Stage five would be about supporting young people through the initial action plan, and six would be about facilitating young people to take on full responsibility for their progression and continued learning. This could include work experience, training, education and job search. And at stage seven aspirations would be reviewed in light of the experience they had undergone, and a plan for future learning would be constructed. I was quite a strong supporter of this approach, but it did get slightly overtaken by the approach of Connexions to personal assessment. And it was quite difficult trying to keep the two going together – it was a bit time consuming, both for the worker and the young person.

The project activity would be centred around ICT sessions. This would include digital music, web design, internet access, digital photography, word processing, spreadsheets, computer art, database and the rest of it. Many of these, and more, would be incorporated into the OCR level one and level two ICT syllabus for accreditation. Also, support was offered with CV writing, making college applications, job search, and basic skills – although basic skills really only came two and a half years into the project, when some extra resources became available.

In the end NSF had enabled us to develop a project

that provided a sophisticated magnet activity, together with its own personal support for young people in a secure and welcoming environment. A young person said 'This is a cool setting, you can come here and just be yourself. You can work at your own pace and there is no one at your back.' We hoped the benefits would be that the young people would gain a sense of belonging, appreciate the benefits of education, move away from risk behaviour, develop an understanding of the environment in which they lived, a sense of purpose, a sense of capability, and gain a chance to explore their own interests and aspirations, and the opportunity to begin following those aspirations. And, through the Youth Achievement Award and the OCR ICT syllabus, the opportunity to have their own interests and aspirations assessed at NVQ level.

One young man's experience. Despite two sustained periods of association with the youth club from the age of ten, including taking part in a ski tour to the French Alps, at 16 this young man was a member of a group committing crime in the local area. He eventually joined the project through a friend who was already participating. After a year the young man had successfully completed six OCR Computer Literacy and Information Technology topics and a work placement. His continued attendance was not supported by his friends, who tried to draw him away. But with support and encouragement from the project he was able to balance the need to be accepted by his peers with a need to develop skills and experience to gain employment. The project helped him to secure a New Deal placement for six months, and he now works part-time for another NSF project and part-time for Lambeth PAYP, at first carrying out data input duties. And now he's actually seconded back to the Reconnect project as an assistant to the project worker, supporting other young people through their ICT syllabus. Two of the friends that tried to draw him away now also benefit from the project.

There are a host of critical factors for success. A report is coming out on that, so I'm not going to go into too much detail, but for us here are some of the most important. Staff stability has been vital. We could ill afford to spend months advertising and re-employing staff. The project would lose credibility with young people, partners and the local community. The project worker has had to show patience and a commitment towards his work. There can be let-downs but there is a need to be both patient and resilient. Being part of a larger organisation has allowed the project to establish itself quickly within the local infrastructure, and consequently it has quickly gained credibility with young people. Alford House itself offers stability and continuity. It has an established location, and a tradition as a safe place to go. It is trusted by the local community and the local authority. Young people can gain access to a wider range of provision. A host organisation already has networks established, and there is a chance for staff

skill-sharing and other in-kind support. It can be easier and quicker to establish partnerships. It has also been important for there to be no time limits on young people's engagement. A 10–12 week programme in the above example just wouldn't have worked. It has also been helpful that the managing agent, the National Youth Agency, has had a light touch. Working with other agencies and organisations has facilitated occupational development. Statutory partners have been a source of referrals and in some instances additional funding. They've included Connexions, the Youth Offending Team, the Social Inclusion Unit, Health Action Zone, Community Reparations, Positive Activities for Young People and the local secondary school. Working with voluntary partners has been a source for expanding service provision. The Workers' Educational Association led courses in web design, music technology and digital film. Actors' Touring Company delivered a series of workshops which led to two members of the project putting on a show at the Young Vic. Community and Voluntary Education delivered our basic skills sessions, and through Saver Employment Agency young people were offered additional advice, consultancy, a job matching service, additional help with application forms and CVs, interview support, job start support, induction training and career development.

Over five years there have been 152 participants. The cost to NSF of each participant in the target group was £1184. Last year the cost of each face-to-face youth worker hour was £107, and the cost of each registered attendance was £105. When the NSF first started, the feedback that everybody was getting was that if you weren't spending between £1100 and £1400 you probably weren't doing the job very well. But of course in youth work costs that looks enormously high.

Recognising achievement is important. 25 per cent of our young people have received accreditation on the project. Which is not bad because it's not a project which is all about accreditation, we might recruit young people for whom it's just a question of CVs and introduction to the right services, so it's not everybody that's going for an ICT course or through the Youth Achievement Award. Of those 25 per cent, 50 per cent have achieved the full CLAIT level 1 certificate, five per cent the level 2 certificate, 16 per cent have achieved the Youth Achievement Award, 21 per cent have gained a CLAIT topic certificate, and 8 per cent have received Open College Network Credits.

The destinations of young people from the project: 35 per cent into full time college, eight per cent are still using the service, 16 per cent have gone into employment, two per cent remain unemployed, three per cent received a custodial sentence, eight per cent have gone back to school, six per cent have gone into full-time training, and 21 per cent are whereabouts unknown. In the summer of 2004, a 15-year-old young woman arrived from Portugal. Faced with a lack of school places in Lambeth, she was referred to the project by

the Connexions personal adviser based in Lambeth Social Inclusion Unit, formerly Education Welfare. During her 11 months at the project she took and passed the OCD new CLAIT syllabus, NVQ level 1, completing 11 topics. She also took part in the basic skills sessions, and in July 2005, took her entry level 3 and level 1 exams in numeracy and literacy through City and Guilds. We're still waiting for the results. Through her engagement in the project she was supported to enrol for ESOL dancing and cooking courses at two other projects. She was also encouraged to join the youth club and during the summer term became a regular member on a Friday night. She wants to be a doctor, and the project supported her in making applications to college. This month she begins a course in human medical science for ESOL students at pre-access level and a prelude to taking A-Levels. 'The project was a really nice place to go. It really helped me in my English and to make friends. I probably

wouldn't have done anything in the past year if it weren't for the project.'

*In a joint question and answer session with Tim Saunders, Camilla Batmanghelidjh further described the work of Kids Company and its 35-strong multi-disciplinary staff. Her client group mostly consisted of young people rejected by all other agencies. In a welcoming, walk-in environment they were first of all de-stressed. Further treatment aimed to revive the children's capacity for hope, vital if they were to have a motive for achievement.*

*In answer to a question from Tom Wylie, Camilla Batmanghelidjh said that local authorities tended to 'lose' the most difficult (and therefore the most expensive and time-consuming) cases. But this was mistaken, since these young people were frequently suicidal; and they also tended to become leaders, influencing the behaviour of local young people.*

## 14. Does Every Child and Young Person Really Matter?

*Al Aynsley-Green, Children's Commissioner for England*

This is a very important opportunity for me to meet you and to set out my stall, as I'm two months into my post as the first Children's Commissioner in England. I intend to move very quickly, I intend to be provocative. Fasten your seatbelts now. If you disagree with what I'm saying, then that's good – please respond to it. And I hope that you may feel moved to contact me at the Commission, in the light of what I'm about to say, if you have any suggestions, proposals and comments on where we are on the development of this particular engine. And I've taken as the title quite a provocative one: Does Every Child and Young Person Really Matter? And of course the answer is no. And I would argue it's our collective responsibility as organisations, as commissioners, and as a society to make sure that every child and young person really does matter.

You see, I've become an amateur student of the history of childhood, and I do believe that the current welcome focus from government, with the extraordinary policies that we have, is unique in history in being driven despite public pressure, rather than because of pressure for change for children. If anything it is to the contrary. And so we should celebrate where we are, and find ways and means to embody and to embed the principles of the policy. So, provocatively, I don't think in English society we really do value every child and young person, and we have to work together to try to achieve that. So what I want to do in the next half hour or so is to give you three messages: firstly to inform you that the Children's Commission is actually up and running, secondly to

share with you some of our emerging policy function – and we really do want your input and advice and help, from all your organisations, in helping us to shape our policy – and, thirdly, to seek your active support, your advice, and your engagement.

I show a slide repeatedly in my presentations – a lovely image from Anne Geddes, a New Zealand photographer, showing you this vulnerable, defenceless, human newly-born baby. We've all been there. We won't remember it, but every one of us in this room has looked like this after our birth and you can see how the defenceless human citizen – this baby's a citizen now, not in twenty years time – is enfolded in the hands of a caring adult. And this defenceless citizen requires every aspect of support and nurture to allow her or him to achieve full potential, and that's our collective responsibility. I wanted to show this slide to remind people that my responsibility as commissioner encompasses all the seven ages of childhood, even before birth, and some of our work will undoubtedly be focused on the needs of the very smallest and most immature of our children, as well as those transiting into adulthood. So my remit from the Children Act was established last year: essentially I am here to promote the views, interests, needs and rights of children and young people in society. I have an extraordinary remit in being able to consider or research anything that relates to the interests of children and young people; I can publish reports and, most importantly, I am obliged to present an annual report to Parliament; and we are already thinking of the structure and scope of my first report, due in

summertime next year. I am also obliged to consider the operation of complaints procedures relating to children and young people, and I do have some responsibility for UK-wide non-devolved matters. It's a delight to see Nigel in the audience, because the four UK commissioners and the Irish ombudsman met for our very first summit last month, and we had an incredible time. I've been to all of their patches to see for myself how they develop their commissions. We've agreed we will form BINOCC which is a British and Irish Network of Ombudsmen and Children's Commissioners, and the four UK commissioners have a timetable now for regular meetings for ourselves and for our staff to learn from each other, and we are starting to scope what will be our joint positions on a number of matters. And you won't be surprised to hear, because it has been leaked to the media already, that asylum was one of the issues that concerned us greatly at our very first summit.

What's the added value of having someone like Nigel or me as commissioners? Well my post in particular has been created by an Act of Parliament, and I must report to Parliament. The Secretary of State can't block my report; it may be conduited through her, but she cannot change it, and she cannot block it. And so I have direct access to Parliament with whatever I say. This is a huge public profile which on the one hand is extraordinarily exhilarating, but on the other hand gives me great fright because of the expectation that people have of what's going to come out of this activity. But the key word is independent. The Act made me to be an independent watchdog for children and young people. I've lifted the word watchdog from Nigel, because I was really impressed by his logos and his marketing for the Commission in Northern Ireland. Interestingly, I was talking to some six year olds about this role a little while ago, and they were very puzzled; they didn't know how a 'washed dog' could actually help them. It just shows the pitfalls that you can get into when talking to children and young people. So 'independence' is a word I'm going to guard very jealously, despite what may be coming our way from a government, or from the voluntary sector, or from wherever. Our legitimacy must arise from understanding and conveying the views and interests of children and young people. That's our starting point. That's the added value. We should be able to convey, by listening seriously to all who are concerned, the views and interests of children and young people. Therefore participation is going to be important. And then our credibility and authority will have to be earned. Just the fact that we have a commissioner and I'm standing here doesn't by itself create legitimacy, or credibility, or authority. We will have to persuade you and all our stakeholders that we're serious by the wisdom of our commentaries and, above all, the benefit that arises from our actions. And so there's a tactical game plan here: how do we get one or two quick wins that convey an impression of our

seriousness, whilst not being afraid to tackle the stratospheric issues, of which there are many which may take years to take forward effectively?

So where are we now? Well, I was appointed in a so-called part-time capacity on the 1st March, at the time when I was still National Director for Children in the Department of Health. We had just produced the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services. I was also Professor for Child Health at Great Ormond Street Hospital. So on the 30th June I stood down from those positions, and from 1st of July I have become full-time as the commissioner. As for our activities so far – clearly we have had an extraordinary learning curve to negotiate in setting up the commission: being given a clean piece of paper and being asked to draw the commission on it has been quite a challenge. So we've had to go forward from the very earliest beginnings: our human resources, our finance arrangements, our memoranda of understanding with government, government departments etc.

All incredibly time-consuming, and we are still going through it. We have temporary accommodation in Caxton House, which is the last place that I want to be. I do not wish to be located, and have no intention of being located, in a government office. We have a search committee looking for premises, and there are important issues about how we are going to be accessed by and can access all 11.8 million children and young people across the country. We are focusing in the first instance on a London presence for obvious reasons. And we are hoping to find our premises very quickly. Secondly, we are raising awareness in key stakeholders of what we're up to. The shoes are being worn out rapidly, as I tour key stakeholders, some in this room, and share with them our fledgling thoughts on this Commission. We are relating to children and young people seriously, that's our legitimacy. Already I've been exposed to well over 500 children and young people since I've been in the post by a variety of processes, and that has to continue. And I really enjoy it. At least one night each week I'm doing my own private field work, unannounced, unsung, unheralded, out in the field myself going to listen and talk to children and young people in different settings. We're beginning to articulate our vision, our range and objectives; we'll be publishing those soon. We are defining our policy function, and from that our priorities and our work plan, and as I've said we're working with the other UK commissioners, and with BINOCC, to look at the non-devolved matters, as well as finding areas where we can speak with collective authority, thereby getting synergy, we hope, and increasing the power of what we say about key issues affecting all children and young people across the UK. This weekend is an important milestone: we should be seeing in the media our advertisement for a senior management team. We're advertising for three key colleagues. We have developed deliberately art work to give an

impression of looking out of the box – we’re exploding out of the box, like the Jack-in-the-box in our advert. We’re creative, we’re dynamic, we want to do things in a way people haven’t done them before, and so we’re seeking to recruit a Chief Operating Officer, a Head of Communications and Participation, and a Head of Policy and Research. We hope to have these people appointed in November, and ideally in place by the turn of the year. Concurrently, we’re developing seriously a proposal to appoint a small number of Assistant Young Commissioners, people who will work with us at the highest level in the organisation for limited periods of time, and who will have specific responsibilities within the commission, because I do believe with some passion that young people are best able to speak to young people, rather than an old fogey like me coming along and talking to them.

Moving on to our key principles. We have lifted straight to the Commission the very words we used for developing the National Service Framework, and by the way I hope everyone in this room has seen the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services. The principles we had in developing that were of openness, honesty, transparency and ownership, and that’s exactly what I want to fly from the flagpole of this Children’s Commission. All of our work will be based on evidence and fact. You won’t be surprised to know that I am bombarded with requests from all directions to comment on everything. I am declining those tempting invitations because it’s dangerous; we will only comment on things where we have hard evidence, and above all where we are informed by the views of children and young people. I’m the spokesperson for children and young people. I may well have private views, as someone at my stage of life, but I intend to make sure that everything we say is based as far as we can on what children and young people themselves are feeling about an issue. We will embed our work in the UNCRC, have no doubt about that. There’s been froth in the media as to whether I really have the same powers as other commissioners in the UK to make sure the rights of children are being upheld. I intend to make sure that all of our work is based on the rights of children.

All of our work must be directed to generate change and improvement. There’s no point saying something about something if there’s no hope of it being translated into serious action and serious improvement. And it must be delivered by engaging with children and young people through effective participation. Now that’s a key word in our lexicon, and it’s not consultation, because I believe there is a very important distinction between consultation and participation. Consultation means that adults ask questions and adults decide. And there’s an industry out there of consulting children and young people, and many that I speak to now are fed up with being consulted. They have no idea why they’re being consulted. They have no feedback as to what the value of their consultation

was. And they’re pretty disillusioned and actually getting overburdened by this consultation industry. To us, participation means that children and young people are seriously engaged in making decisions that affect their lives.

And I come with impeccable credentials, because of the ordeal I endured with everybody else who was in the running for this particular post. It’s by far the most difficult process I’ve ever experienced in 32 years of public life. It lasted two months with six stages, and three of those six stages were owned entirely by children and young people. A youth board had been set up and, with Children’s Express across the country, there had been residentials and a great deal of work – all of which is available on video if you want to see it, from Children’s Express – on what they wanted from their Commission, and how they thought their commissioner should stack up in terms of attributes. So the first shock to me was sitting a one-hour written test, set and marked by children and young people. The last time I did that was when I was 16, I think, for my GCE O-Levels. A one-hour tightly invigilated written test, with some pretty penetrating questions. I then had two interrogations, and that’s the right word, by two panels of 11–18 year olds, each for 45 minutes, and they had been incredibly well prepared. They went straight for my throat with no finesse, ‘What you going to do Al? Why should we appoint you as a Children’s Commissioner?’ And their views were listened to seriously in the decision-making process, and talking to the young people afterwards who had been engaged in this process, they felt incredibly empowered by it. They had been respected, they’d been listened to, their views had been taken into account, and they started to understand how important organisations made important appointments. And many of them had been motivated to continue working in public politics in the future. So I do commend to you this word participation and I urge you to move away from the tick-box consultation mindset that so many people seem to be stuck in. Participation is real: we’re going to include children and young people in all policies and products, we’re going to involve them in all key decision-making, we’re going to appoint Young Assistant Commissioners, we’re going to recruit committed and skilled staff with participation as part of their job description, we’re going to involve our stakeholders in staff selection, and we will give our staff time, training and resources to make sure participation really is important. Example: we commissioned some work with five- and six-year-olds to tell us what they wanted for the persona of the Children’s Commissioner’s office. How it should look, how it will be child friendly, and what they wanted from us. And some pretty powerful things came from those six-year-olds, about how they wanted to be received if they came in to the Children’s Commissioner’s office, and what they’d really like to have there to make them feel very safe and very com-

fortable. So, participation is important to us.

I was interviewed by the *Sunday Telegraph* about a month ago, and was sharing with reporters some of these thoughts about participation, and I happened to mention that I thought this principle could be extended to other areas of appointment, and this article appeared on the following Sunday, coupled with an incandescent response from some of the unions, who said that this proposal should be kicked into oblivion and got rid of and lost forever. But some of those unions appear to be living in cloud cuckoo land, because it's already happening: here's Children Now, with four youngsters interviewing somebody who's up for a head teacher appointment. And other unions sprang to my defence, I'm pleased to say, and I've heard glowing examples from across the country of how children are engaged in the selection of teachers and head teachers and schools. It goes further than that. I was told – and I haven't been able to verify this – that in one school the pupils or students have a hand held clapometer, and that at the end of each lesson they dial in their rating of its content, of its delivery style, of its value. Those ratings are aggregated, and they go towards the teacher assessment. Now, that's pretty impressive and fighting talk, is it not? But remember, 30 years ago McMaster University was the first university in the world to pay its lecturers and its professors by the feedback ratings from the people they were teaching. So perhaps it may not be too fanciful to argue that involving children and young people is incredibly important, and to engage them in the thinking about these very difficult matters.

So what's in my postbag already from talking to children and young people, and what's coming in to us? We haven't yet declared our website; we've just put out a tender for our website development, and once it's up and running we hope that children and young people will be accessing it as much as possible. This is what's coming from listening to children and young people:

- *Bullying.* Top of the list, repeatedly, is an end to bullying. No question of it. That's what kids want. Stop it, Al. Please stop it. And I honestly hear from the children and young people that many schools appear to be in a state of denial that there is anything wrong with their policies concerning bullying.
- *Security and safety.* This is massively important in the US. There's been a lot of research in the US about what children are fearing in their lives, and they fear insecurity, and they're craving a sense of security – they have their family break up, they have child abuse, they have bullying at school, and now, of course, in the US, they have not only terrorism, but they have the effect of Hurricane Katrina. And children feel very, very threatened indeed, and they want their lives to be more stable. As a result of this anxiety, stress and depression are prevalent, and of course suicide is an extremely important indicator in the health of adolescents. This is one

I'm very concerned about.

- *Alcohol and drugs.*
- *Sex and sexuality,* inevitably. Where to go for confidential information. Where to go for young-people-friendly premises where difficult things can be discussed.
- *Racism.* A lot of young people are very angry about the adult world, about the racism that's rampant in the adult world, and they don't think that we've done a very good job, actually.

The school environment is of concern to young people. Remember that in Wales one of the first things Peter Clark engaged in as the Children's Commissioner was a campaign looking at school toilets. I sat in an audience when Peter presented his plan soon after he was appointed, and the audience was largely adult-centric and you could almost hear the groan around the audience – my God, is that all he can think about, school toilets? But when was the last time you went to a school toilet? They are absolutely appalling. There are health and safety regulations about toilets for staff in school, there are no health and safety regulations for toilets for children in school. It's where bullying occurs, and as a consequence children decline to drink water during the day. Yet water is important for concentration and therefore for academic achievement, and so what may be thought to be irrelevant to the adult mind is critically important to the child's mind about the school environment. Have our school governors actually thought enough about what environment they're creating for children in their schools? Example: how is it that on average only 35p per child is being spent on a primary school child's lunch? What's the responsibility of governors to be looking at the best interests of children, as well as looking at their SATs and their performance indicators?

So these are some of the things that are coming through to us. But the one coming through repeatedly is that children and young people are asking me to provide somebody locally who will listen, who will understand, who will make things different for them. They have no confidence in the statutory system, by and large, and whichever sector we're talking about – health, education, social care – children are asking to me to provide somebody locally whom they can trust, and who they can believe will act for them at the local level. This is a big, big challenge for Children's Trusts. A big challenge for local authorities. A big challenge for statutory and voluntary organisations. How, at the local level, do we provide someone for every child to turn to, no matter what the problem?

So our policy function is beginning to emerge, and we've selected eight themes. I make no apology for the fact that each of these is stratospheric in its own right, and we can spend many months and years tackling any one of them, but I think it's important that we've a construct around which we are building our policy function, and these are the eight themes that we're working to at the moment. We've appointed a whole

range of incredibly talented and valued advisers, many of them from the voluntary sector, to work with us on contractual bases to help us shape this policy function.

The first one is children and young people in society. I make no apology for putting this top of the list, because, as I will show you very shortly, there is something very peculiar about us English, and how we do not value children, and particularly young people, in our society. There are all sorts of issues: rights, the interface with parents and carers, and this new word, very much on the political street, 'respect'. What does that mean for us in our work? Youth justice, again, very difficult issues there, ranging from ASBOs onwards. I'm concerned as commissioner by the anecdotes I'm hearing and by talking to young ASBO owners. I'm concerned about the difference in the readiness to apply ASBOs from one part of the country to another and by the application of ASBOs to young people with behaviour disorders – with autism – and by young people being 'named and shamed' by having ASBOs publicised in the local media and, of course, by ASBO breakers being criminalised for a civil offence. So there's a big set of issues about ASBOs. Are we on the right track? Not least, of course, because many young people are seeing this as a badge of honour, and they actually want to have an ASBO; this is, I think, a very worrying trend. And young offenders. I've been to prison to listen to young offenders and hear their stories, and I'm very angry about how society has failed them right the way through. They're still citizens, even if they have misbehaved. They've got rights, and they need to have education, health, and proper support, not least mental health support, whilst they are incarcerated.

Bullying I've mentioned already. Anti-bullying week is in November. We have already started working on this, and we're planning to describe nine journeys, as we call them: different scenarios of young people and children walking through the bullying experience, looking at the milestones for each journey, and the needs and the competencies that should be there and when they were not there, and from that offer a commentary, perhaps, on what we can think of doing collectively to address bullying. Immigration and asylum seekers are big issues here, especially with Section 9 and the pilots in local authorities, with the threat to families whose application has been turned down that they will have their benefits withdrawn, perhaps leaving them destitute, and the threat of perhaps having their children taken into care pending their deportation. Is that the nature of a civilised society? And does every child matter? Every child? Even if the child is in the asylum system? Disability too. We'd rather not know about disabled children. I know from my work as a children's doctor and from the National Service Framework of the incandescence that families have as they wade through treacle, trying to get their statutory rights met, and the difficulty of

actually accessing the resources. Why does a child have to wait three years for a wheelchair? Why does a family have to shake the tins in pubs and clubs for £8,000 to buy a proper wheelchair which allows their child to have appropriate mobility? I'm concerned about vulnerable children – a bit of a catchall phrase – but, for example, I'm concerned about children who are bereaved. I've been one myself: my childhood ended when I was ten, and I was brought up by a single mother in hardship. I have great empathy for children who've been bereaved and know how awful the services are for them. And then young carers – many children and young people caring for other children or for adults – are we looking at their needs properly? Minority groups are a big focus for us at the moment, not least because of the recent events around terrorism, and how we're going to be seen to be credible in the minority groups, particularly amongst Muslim children. This is a very big challenge to me personally, because obviously I'm white and Anglo-Saxon. How do we as a commission relate to all the difficult-to-access groups and the minorities? And then, finally, health and wellbeing. A big set of issues, and perhaps a little mischievous comment, if I may, to today's event? I'm concerned to see from the organising committee and from the cast list that there's nobody here from the DH. I think I'm the only paediatrician. I'm not sure if there are any other children's nurses or people engaged in the health community. I worry about this, because I know from my work as National Director, I know from my work in trying to push the NSF forward, that health is on the margins. And yet health is relevant to everything that we're doing, in terms of the five outcomes, and especially important for the health of adolescents. And the adolescent age group is the one age group where everything's going wrong in terms of indicators of their health, so my plea to the Michael Sieff Foundation is: please embed mainstream health in your debates. Yes, we have psychiatrists here for this event, but I'm a little concerned that we don't have any children's doctors or children's nurses to contribute to your debates.

My question: what can the Commissioner add to these enormous areas of policy? Well, we hope our activities will expose issues, particularly when we're informed by what children and young people themselves think are issues. We hope to influence public attitudes towards children, and I argue that this is where we must start, because politicians respond very much to public pressure, and where's the public pressure for things to get better for children? If anything, the public pressure is to punish them more and more. We want to inform and we want to scrutinise policy; we're working with the Children's Legal Centre already to find a methodology to allow us to scrutinise emerging legislation. There should be some kind of children's impact assessment, and I know other organisations including the All-Party Parliamentary Group are looking at this, but I think we can be much more

rigorous at looking at the emerging legislation and then scrutinising the impact of it once it has appeared.

And, finally, we wish to examine practice and to hold organisations to account. We can only do this through collaboration and partnership with others, where appropriate, and through effective research, evidence and communication. And here's my reality check, my plea to you for some understanding. There is huge expectation. You mentioned, Chairman, that many of you have been arguing for years for this position. There is a massive expectation out there that we're going to wave magic wands and transform things overnight. Let me just remind you that I have £3 million. Proportionately, per head child in England, that's far less than Nigel has in Northern Ireland, and much less than in Scotland and Wales. What does that say about the value given to English children? So I've got only £3 million, it's a tiny, tiny amount of money when we have to lease premises, we have to employ staff and so on. By the way, I'm already thinking about where the commission should be in five and ten years time; I shall be very upset indeed if we still have £3 million in five years' time, and I need your support in getting more. The enormity of the agenda and the massive expectation against the reality of our capacity mean that we will have to focus, and we will have to work with other organisations in partnership and collaboration, while maintaining our independence. So the exam question for you: what do you want for the Commission, and what can you give to us in the way of resources, gifts in kind or expertise? I have to say the response and reaction so far from the voluntary sector has been incredible, enormous support, and we're already tapping in to much of their expertise by secondments to the Commission.

Lastly, a very quick canter through one or two of my hobby horses, just to alert you to the sort of things that I'm concerned about. Do children and young people get a good deal? Yes and no. The majority of children and young people are fantastic. They're loved. And they lead rich and fulfilled lives way beyond the expectation of their grandparents. But there are widening, not narrowing, inequalities, with increasing numbers not benefiting from society, and there's profound societal turbulence. And can I please ask you to remember this? I beg you to look at the social construct of childhood, because that influences profoundly where we are and the issues emerging. I won't go through this in detail – I've written about this in some of my publications, you're welcome to access them – but I do make the point that we are going through an incredibly turbulent period in our society, with all the values many of us have been used to collapsing around us, with great pressures on children, not least because of changes in family structure, the decline in marriage, controversy over gender roles, and an emerging anti-baby movement and denial of the importance of fathers. So please let us look at how we can think about influencing society's views towards

children. We're ambivalent towards children. On the one hand we have incredible concern for our own children – nothing matters more to me than my daughters and my grandchildren, and the same applies to you – but do we care enough as a society for the children of others, especially those on the margins? On the one hand we have sentimentality and protection, on the other we have demonisation. We blatantly ignore the human rights of children. Nobody wants a disabled child. But nobody chooses to have a disabled child. Any one of us can produce a child with a disability. Surely, as a humane society, we should be making sure they are looked after to the best of our ability? The denial of child disadvantage and ignoring the effects of poverty on children's lives and health allows the problems to worsen.

I think the situation is summed up by a cartoon – Pugh in the *Times* – depicting a 'historic child-free village' as a cause for joy. I think it was meant to be funny. I find it very sad. And it does reflect my perspective of how so many children and young people are viewed with disapproval in our society. You've only to go to Majorca, or to Italy, or Greece in the summertime and see just how Spanish, Greek and Italian children are much more welcome in society. 'No dogs, no children, no ball games, no children here.' That's the story of much of the attitude towards children in our society. 'Young people love luxury, they have bad manners, contempt for other people and talk nonsense when they should work. Young people do not stand up any longer when adults enter the room, they contradict their parents, they talk too much in company, they guzzle their food, they lay their legs on the table and they tyrannise their elders.' Is that familiar? It's a quote from Socrates (c. 470–399 BC). And Shakespeare said 'I would there were no age between sixteen and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancients, stealing, fighting'.

The point I'm making is that the rite of passage, the transition from childhood to adulthood, has pre-occupied human societies for millennia. It is a challenging time for adults when they see the new generation coming through but, in 2005, it's got worse. I think there's been an explosion of negative stereotyping of young people, I find it shameful, and I think we should be tackling it head on. Two exemplars: two screaming headlines in December of last year – 'YOB UK!', 'YOB Britain!'. I have a comprehensive dossier of press clippings that I've kept, portraying young people in particular as 'the thug generation'. 'Half of all pupils admit to breaking the law.' Well, hang on guys, I smoked my first cigarette when I was 13. I drank my first pint of beer when I was 14. And some of the things I did when I was 15 would have ASBOs put on me now. So can anybody in this room put your hand on your heart and say you did nothing in your childhood you would rather not people know about

now that you're a pillar of society? Let's just remember where we came from. I'm not denying crime and anti-social behaviour, I'm asking for some empathy with our children and young people. And this is supported by hard evidence – Young People Now with their research reminded us that one in three articles about young people concerned crime. 71 per cent of press stories are negative, but only 8 per cent of the journalists actually asked the young people what they thought about the matters they were condemning so vociferously. In 74 articles young people were referred to as 'thugs' 26 times and as 'yobs' 21 times. Other words used of young people: evil, lout, monsters, brutes, scum, menace, feral, sick, menacing, inhuman.

Is it any wonder from this research that 66 per cent of young people would not trust a journalist further than they can see him? What a savage indictment of the media. And what about hoodies? The latest media feeding frenzy – 'shopping centre bans hoody youths'. But did anybody in this shopping centre actually ask why the young people were there, and did they have anywhere to go and things to do when they were there? I understand the concern about crime, I'm not denying it, but 30 years ago I set the trend for hoodies; when I was a young doctor in Oxford, a hooded cardigan was a fashion icon, and here I am as a fully-signed up member of hell's granddads. I've still got a hoody, because my family loves skiing and surfing. We go on holiday together – they invite me to join them, I'm privileged as a granddad to be invited to join my young people's activities – and we wear hoodies because they are very sensible and functional garments. So let's please climb off this frenzy of demonising children just because they are involved in a fashion icon. I think this demonisation is a major, major issue because it affects the public support for the cause of adolescents, and it directs political pressure and direction of policy towards punishment rather than understanding, and it causes anger, alienation and frustration in young people themselves.

So what are we going to do? What are you going to do, tomorrow, to get some mature debate about this? Is there a need for a media code of practice, and what

should local authorities and communities do to promote and celebrate children and young people? On Thursday last week I went to Oxford, to a fantastic day put together by Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Young People's Activities, 16 voluntary organisations with children and young people. The day was set there to celebrate the existence of children and young people. And last week, in Swindon, the Swindon local newspaper ran every day an article about young people: their views, what they thought about things. I had a contribution on last Saturday and the City Council acknowledged that they were out of touch with young people. So I think there's something very, very important for us to be getting on with here. My challenge to you is what are you going to do about it? What can we do collectively about this demonisation of young people? I could go on much longer, but I know you're short of time so I will stop my presentation at this point.

I will conclude by saying, coming back to my three messages: I hope you now know there's a Commission that's up and running, I hope you understand where we're coming from and you have some sympathy for us, given the enormity of the expectation, and the mismatch with the resources and the difficulty of the time scale. I hope you agree with some of the things I'm saying in terms of our policy function, and when eventually we go live with this at the turn of the year, I hope we can engage with you seriously in addressing these matters. And I have no apology, again, for putting right at the top this whole issue of society's perception of children and young people. We have an awfully long way to go.

*Taking questions, Al Aynsley-Green again commented forcefully on Britain's fundamentally child-unfriendly society, deploring children's restricted access to legal services and abuses of their human rights. He invited those present to inform him of abuses: he was not allowed to take up individual cases, but he was empowered to research those that raised generic issues concerning children.*

## 15. The Michael Sieff Lecture

*Hilton Dawson, Chief Executive Officer, Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa*

It's a tremendous privilege and an honour to be here, and I am well aware of the distinguished contribution that the Sieff Foundation makes to the development of children's policy, and these are very, very positive times, on the whole, for children's policy, for children's services, for children's lives. Every Young Person Matters, which is what you've been discussing over the past couple of days, is only the latest manifestation of really an extraordinary round of children's policy

development. To me, frankly, some of the Green Paper sounds like adults talking at young people and doing things to young people, but I do regard it as a very positive document, and I do regard it as a very green document. It's emphatically a green paper, and there is room for discussion and development of it. There's a lot of progress on the policy front, but it's not all progress on policy, and the greatest challenge for all of us is that of implementation. So I would say that, given

the situation we're in, your influence was never more needed than it is at this time. I've been discussing a whole range of issues with Elizabeth over dinner and finding all sorts of common ground, and I'm very impressed to see the way in which the foundation is challenging some of the boundaries which are laid down.

I suppose my concerns go deeper than this, but I do think that there's a massive contradiction between all the hope for the future that's clearly been reflected by your programme over the last couple of days, and the public perception of young people. I don't think that anybody arriving from the planet Mars or anywhere else could easily recognise that in this country 'every young person matters'. For sure we're highly ambitious for some of our young people, but others we give up on very early indeed, and our Martian visitor might well be excused for thinking that, actually, we don't like children and young people very much, and that we're rather afraid of those terrible people, those young people. Only this week, on Tuesday, we had a headline in the *Times*, in what purports to be the social work bit of the paper. 'Psycho children: spotting the natural born killers,' it declared. Other broadsheets tell us about 'feral' kids, whatever they are, and the rest of the media is frankly unspeakable. We have the sentimentalising of some sorts of victims and the utter vilification of those who express their distress, their despair, their neglect, their abuse, their poor learning, their poor health, in different ways. And thanks to the naming and shaming of young people we now have the local press joining in with gusto, in a 21st century version of the stocks. I was horrified coming out of Crossharbour DLR station just a couple of weeks ago that right at the entrance to the station there are photographs of young people who are barred from the area. Now, I've walked down that road many, many times, and I've never seen any nefarious activity other than young people hanging around being young people. But apparently if you do that now you get a big photo of yourself stuck up on a placard outside the local railway station. So, at a time of so much public despair about young people from the Prime Minister down, I think it's ironic that we actually have the best opportunity that any of us here – well, most of us here anyway – will have in the whole of our working lives to make a difference to young people's services and to young people's lives.

I'm a politician who got out of social work into Parliament to try to bring about change for looked-after children, and I'm now a social worker who's left Parliament because I want to help implement the policies and progress that I would have thought unbelievable only eight years ago. I'll come back to some of the contradictions later. Some people say to me 'What on earth are you doing leaving all that power and influence on the back benches of a Labour government with a vast majority?' And I would have to say that I enjoy the novelty of having an £11 million

budget instead of about £100,000 to spend, and it's quite good to have 250 staff instead of three. Somebody said to me coming in here today 'You're looking younger'. Well, it's because I'm serving 800 young people now instead of 80,000 bawling, puking adults in the Lancaster and Wyre constituency. So these are good times. And these are good times for the voluntary sector. And I'm already experiencing a huge network of support, particularly from young people themselves, from some of their families, and from a network of partners – local authorities, and the voluntary and private sectors. I've seen real opportunities to influence the national agenda, and am involved heavily in the DfES project to improve the educational outcomes for looked-after young people. I have served this organisation for the last eight years, but now I feel that I'm serving a principled and value-driven organisation committed to partnership, with the ability to be flexible and really with a wonderful opportunity to make change happen on the ground.

Some people don't know what Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa actually does – can you believe that? It's got an odd name which I think reflects a fine history rather than its present work or our huge potential, but we claim to be pretty old. We were founded in 1843 by a chap called William Williams, and originally we were the Refuges for Homeless and Destitute Children and Ragged Schools. So when you read that, Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa begins to have a bit of a ring to it. Shortly after that foundation, it was taken up by the seventh Lord Shaftesbury, I suppose as a practical expression of Christian and Victorian benevolence, which certainly caused him to be involved in the removal of children from chimneys, the removal of children from coal mines, and the restriction of the work of young people in factories to a mere 63 hours per week. You thought you were here to talk about the Children Act 2004, but I want to turn your attention to the Factories Act of 1833, and of 1847, the Coal Mines Act of 1842 and, of course, the Chimney Sweeps Act of 1875. My illustrious predecessor had very good contacts in government, and by 1866 he had acquired a redundant warship from the royal navy, and he turned the hulk – shades of Charles Dickens again, I suppose – into a home for a thousand destitute boys, where they could learn the skills that would fit them for a life at sea.

We have most of the records. I haven't waded through more than a tiny fraction, but apparently you had to learn to swim very quickly, as soon as you joined this organisation, and for a hundred years the society trained young men for both our navies and latterly in the Arethusa, which is where that part of the name comes from. You can see her next time you go to New York: the Arethusa is happily safely berthed in the harbour. And we looked after girls as well, often preparing them for work in service. And we've had many schools and children's homes, and for a time in the 1880s had an off shoot in Canada, because like

most voluntary organisations – I suppose like most people – at the time, they actually thought that the export of children to the colonies was a good thing. And to be fair, there are also records of young people who did prosper in some of those circumstances. But it's remarkable to think that I work for an organisation that must have had half a million children in its care over those years. I don't think that the organisation coped very well with the advent of the Welfare State, I think it was a bit of a foreign concept. The organisation had virtually run out of steam by the time of the 1989 Children Act, but over the past eight years, under my predecessor Alison Chesney, the organisation has markedly revived, and I think that we will get round to changing the name as we embrace the opportunities which are before us.

Over the next year we will be radically developing the whole way the organisation works and improving the range of services that we offer. And just for the record, Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa runs residential care for Southwark and Lambeth and is based in Wandsworth, offers residential care to a number of other London boroughs, runs Leaving Care in Ipswich and Islington, has supported housing across London and Suffolk, and an adventure centre on the Medway. We work with a particular emphasis on the education of young people in care and on healthy outcomes for them. By next September we hope to be providing foster care and new, more intensive models of residential care, increasing the range of supported housing, working with young people in their communities, working with children with disabilities and their families, and above all intervening far more effectively in the systems which bring children into care. And I think, too, we should be working much more effectively with local authorities, and I hope, as somebody who worked for a local authority for 15 years, that we will be seen as a really effective and thoroughly professional partner for local authorities. We will really be working to divert people from the care system, to bring about much more effective planning within the care system, and to ensure that transitions from the care system much more fully reflect the reality of young people in this country leaving home in their mid-twenties. It's time to get away from the delusion, which I have to say persists even after the Leaving Care Act, that young people can somehow leave care at 16. This seems bizarre to me.

Nothing seems more important to me than this: that we fully engage and empower children and young people. Last Saturday night I had a leaving do in the Lancaster and Wye constituency (this is about the ninth or tenth now). While there, I came across a young woman of 27, whom I first encountered about 19 years ago when she lived in a children's home. I spent a lot of time working with her over the time that she was in care, and managed some of the services that she was involved in, and it was just fantastic to meet up with her again, someone who at the age of 27 has

two children, has a house, has a job, has a partner. Everything is going well for her, and this is somebody who came into care through tragedy, went through really tough experiences through her whole childhood and adolescence, and is now visibly happy and well. We never ever hear of such things happening. All of us know that rotten practice can come back to haunt anyone who's worked with children in whatever sphere, but we should celebrate our successes a lot more than we do – and good social work and good work with children and young people can really make you feel proud. Good social work helps people make a success of their lives every single day of the week, and I think that we should stand up for the sort of work that we do much more effectively than we do and be proud of what we do. But more than that, this woman had very clear memories of being 15 and 16, and of speaking out, and I remember how well she could speak out at 15 and 16 about the circumstances of being in care and about the stigma that she felt about being looked-after, the image of young people in care. She felt that at that time that she was heard, and I don't think that we should get away from this at all, it seems to me absolutely right: children and young people know far more than we do about what it's like to be there and have really good and often extremely practical ideas about the way that services can be improved.

Given a chance, young people can be brilliant partners in raising standards and innovating. Their participation enriches everything that social workers set out to do, and the message that I'm giving to Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa is that you simply cannot be an effective children's organisation or a proper children's worker if you don't empower children. Whatever job they do, everyone at Shaftesbury is a children's worker; everyone at Shaftesbury is responsible at the end of the day for their own good practice as a children's worker. This is not difficult. First rule of social work, measure every action every day against 'Would this be good enough for my own child?' And if it wouldn't be good enough for your own child, then don't blooming well do it! And if somebody's making you do it, then complain. But take the responsibility for that. And if you need guidance, and we all do, on what you should be doing for children, then the final arbiter of what you should be doing is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some people are afraid of rights. I forget how many times the word 'rights' was removed from the Children Bill as it came from the House of Lords into the House of Commons. A right is just a need that is so significant for you that those who hold power should be given a duty to meet it. A right is particularly significant if you don't have any other means to uphold it. Children cannot vote and by definition are powerless. If you have no power, and we see this across the whole world, never mind in our day to day practice, you are wide open to abuse, exploitation, poverty, neglect and death, to a much greater extent

than those who cannot be similarly overlooked. If you have rights, someone somewhere believes that you are a person of significance. Those who are unjustifiably timid of rights try to balance them with responsibilities, but I was a social worker when the 1989 Children Act came in, and I know that the 1989 Children Act places responsibilities firmly with parents. And of course children and young people should be allowed to take on responsibilities as appropriate as they develop. Autonomy and responsibility are major things which should be offered to young people, but this should be done at young people's own pace: the decision to take on the welfare of the family hamster is something that is a decision for parents and children. But rights are absolutely fundamental, and they come into the world with you. Some people, and certainly this happened in the debate on the Children Bill, had a big line from government, trying to tell us that rights were some sort of academic argument. People who argue that rights are academic haven't seen the look on a young person's face when you tell them that the fact they've got rights means that they don't have to put up with whatever sort of rubbish is going on in their lives.

Shamefully our government continues to hold a reservation to the UN Convention in respect of children caught up in the immigration and asylum and criminal justice systems. In immigration and asylum, young people can be held in custody with their parents and can scandalously be rendered completely destitute. Caught up in the criminal justice system we have young people who are imprisoned on a greater scale almost than anywhere else in Europe. We have young people who are dying in the prisons in this country at the rate of one every six months. I was a member of Parliament for eight years, and 16 children died in what passes for the care of the state in this country. This is the greatest scandal of our times. As we sit here tonight, there are possibly 3,000 children sitting in prison. As we sit here tonight, we have children experiencing isolation, experiencing strip searching, experiencing the over-use of restraint. Adam Rickwood who died last August at the age of 14: the youngest person ever to die in prison in modern penal history. Every Young Person Matters. Adam Rickwood, Joseph Scholes, Gavin Myatt, Gareth Price, the list is very long, of young people who've died in prison. Another incident like that could be happening as we sit here tonight. If we don't respect the rights of the child, we're quickly drawn into treating children disgracefully. If our government used the UN Convention properly they would actually find it a great ally, a useful tool, an instrument of education in breaking down the barriers to ensuring that Every Young Person Matters. If the government stopped trying to reinvent so much as a province of the Home Office, and implemented the 1989 Children Act properly, as well as actually implementing the 2004 Children Act, we'd get a lot further than we are now. If children are children are children whoever they are

and whatever they've done, if the Minister for Children had responsibility for all children, they'd have a much greater chance of convincing me that every young person matters, *Every Child Matters*. Despite all my criticisms, I believe that the government should be heartily congratulated on the clarity, simplicity and profundity of the statement that *Every Child Matters*. It is underpinned by what I regard as an inspirational commitment to end child poverty in this country by 2020. It seeks to place the child, family and community at the centre of service provision. It seeks to break down the barriers between professions and organisations and institutions. It emphasises the key roles of elected local authorities, inspected against the outcomes that they achieve for children. Focus on outcomes. Being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic wellbeing. This is our great opportunity, and I believe that the massive cultural change which *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, and the Children Act 2004 require of us is about children services but it's also about politics. Change for Children got me off the green benches of the Commons because I couldn't bear to be diverted by all the myriad issues that come to the attention of MPs when something so important, so exciting is going on.

If every child and young person matters, we've got to listen to them and engage children well in the life of their community and in the development of their own services. We've got to tackle the really hard issues, the poverty of expectations, the disengagement of some young people, the gang culture among some young people, and provide credible, relevant and fulfilling activities. We've got to have the common core of training and common core of assessment that will help to break down the barriers between professions, and will underpin personalised intensive support for young people who need it. But we've also got to have respect for others doing the work. I recall a cleaner in a children's home who frankly was far more use to one young woman than all the well-paid managers in the entire department; who was far more use, actually, than her appointments with the local consultant child psychiatrist, because this was the relationship that mattered to her – and I don't know why it did, perhaps because they met every day, or perhaps because the adult had such little status, perhaps just because the cleaner applied her own knowledge of how to parent her own kids and build a rapport, perhaps they just hit it off. But there was somebody who engaged far more successfully with a young person who'd been written off by a whole list of professionals than they ever had. We must never overlook the absolute importance and significance of young people in engaging with other young people. I think that peer mentoring is a rich area for development in our children's services. We've got to build a capacity of our children's workforce, all our children's workforce, by valuing and validating their experience. We've got to enable people to move up

and down, and also across, the work force, and we've also got to have the humility to break down all the organisational edifices, all those job titles, all those fancy ways of doing things, all those labels, the grand titles, the practices established on goodness knows what. All no doubt well-meaning work, but actually we build up such barriers to identifying and meeting the child's needs in a way and over a time scale that is effective and meaningful and timely for them.

I think that we've got an excellent man as our Children's Commissioner, but we've got to use him well. I think there's a huge responsibility on us to show how Al Aynsley-Green can do his job really well. I think that working with children and young people is great work. I think it's some of the best work that anybody can do. We've got to show that; we've got to shout about that more; we've got to demonstrate that to people more. But we've also got to stop just making some things so difficult for ourselves, and start addressing the needs of all children, and the acute desperate needs of some children, much more effectively than we do. I actually do not believe that looking after all children well, especially with all the advantages that this country enjoys, should be such a difficult task, but it should be an utter priority for this government, and, for goodness sake, it should be an exciting one. There's nothing that's excited me more in the last year than the work of Sue Gerhard, who's set out in ways that even a non-scientist who failed Chemistry O-Level like me can follow the new work on understanding brain development in the first days, weeks and months of a child's life. She has set out clearly the insight that there is an observable physical corollary to attachment theory, that the way we communicate with and treat of children – the degree to which we give them security and good experiences of attachment in the early stages of life – have profound effects on the physical development of the brain, with massive effects on the emotional and intellectual capacity of people across the whole of their lives.

My own staff think I'm Stevie Wonder when I say this, but I actually do believe that children are the future of our world. If we parent them well, if we support them with really good integrated services, we can not only hope that they'll actually treat us decently when we're old and infirm and desperately need them, but we set in train changes that can affect the whole future of our society in ways far more fundamental than the manifesto commitments of even a succession of governments led by a tough and principled and ambitious Prime Minister. Whoever that may be. I think that what we've got before us is the biggest agenda of all. It's great work. Great childcare. But it's also great politics. And I think children are wonderful: every individual unique, extraordinary in themselves. But if we treat them properly, we can really change our world. And on Tuesday evening we set up the SHA Young People's Development Group, and once again I was just amazed at how articulate and potent and

powerful young people can be if you just give them some space. Two weeks ago I met with some young asylum-seeking people supported by Save the Children, and I was enthralled by the passion and knowledge and interest that they showed in the politics of this country. And, time after time, when we held the All -Party Group for Children and Young People in Care in Parliament, visiting MPs were stunned by the input and insight of some of the most undervalued young people in the land.

Contrast that to the lack of attention paid to children's issues by any political party during the recent General Election. Compare it to the sort of reception that any bright, challenging young person gets if they try to join one of our dinosaur political parties. And let's just consider how a radical agenda for young people is going to succeed, when the lazy self-interest of the gutter press holds such a sway over people in this country; when the huge majority of people, frankly including people who work in children's services, don't know what the agenda is and don't know what's really happening, at such a time of profound change for children; and when nobody ever contacts vastly influential elected councillors about children's issues; when hardly anybody, especially including those who receive children's services and work in children's services, ever talks to the Member of Parliament who is responsible to them. Another thing that drove me from being a Member of Parliament was the weight of post about animal welfare – the welfare of pigs! The welfare of chickens attracted more interest than the welfare of children for people in my constituency, and I don't think they're any different from anywhere else. And the bit that's missing from Change for Children (and I think actually starts to come back a little bit into *Every Child Matters*) is the idea that young people can have some control over a budget and actually spend according to the priorities that they identify.

But the bit that's missing from all of this is the political bit. We complain that in this country people have no interest in politics. If we're not interested in politics and we don't make politics work for us, we won't make Change for Children work for us. We cannot simply leave it at a professional level, there is so much more that must be done. We need to use the Children's Commissioner effectively and we need to use Parliament. The Hansard Society are doing some brilliant work through programmes like Heads Up, contacting young people across the country, and really trying to engage them in democracy. We need to support the UK Youth Parliament, Youth Forums, Young Mayors. This is happening in some parts of the country, but I suspect not all parts of the country. We need to avoid tokenism – I think tokenism is so easy to fall in to, where the young person is just brought along to make up the numbers. We need to ensure that young people do have autonomy and are given responsibility. We need to dare to give them autonomy

and responsibility. We need to allow them to fail over things, and learn the lessons from failing. We certainly need to remember that the state of children is an international concern. We need to engage with ministers and civil servants, and we need to get political. And that's all adults, because adults have the political power; we need to use it on behalf of young people who have none, by everybody with votes going to talk to those they've elected or who represent them – even if you didn't vote for them – about children's issues. We need to make sure that all the good intentions are carried out by campaigning on the issues that are still to be resolved, and by fighting back when unthinking adults stupidly put young people down. This is our chance. This is the chance of our working lives to put things right. It will not come again for most people in this room. This is our chance to address the utter, utter outrages of the way that some young people in our country are dealt with, to ensure that that radical

statement every child matters, every young person matters, is actually implemented, and to make every young person matter, because frankly today, September 8th 2005, we can.

*During the discussion that followed, Hilton Dawson argued that the present situation was different from anything that went before, since it was related to an anti-poverty agenda. He believed that poverty underpinned the problems of 'all the people we're trying to help'. He urged maximum participation in political action at all levels, including challenging media misrepresentation. Adults should always act in conjunction with young people, and Dawson acknowledged that Youth Matters would have been different if young people had been involved in its drafting. He also noted the launch, in October 2005, of an alliance to achieve child-centred care in the UK.*

## 16. Participation of Children and Young People – What Does It Really Mean?

*Nigel Williams, Northern Irish Commissioner for Children and Young People, and Stephen Bermingham, Scottish Commission for Children and Young People*

**Nigel Williams:** Let me explain how we're going to run this session. Stephen's going to be speaking in a moment – speaking first – in relation to the issues and the principles of participation: why it's a good idea and how they are approaching setting it up within the office of the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People. After he has dealt with that overview of the approach that a Commissioner's office can take, I will make a few general remarks that will focus more on a case study of how our office has tried to use participation in relation to a very particular issue. I think that at this stage of a conference like this, it may be helpful to be thinking about examples of good practice, particular tips that you would want to pass on, as well as things that haven't worked, but particularly focusing on the positive. If there are particular ways that you have seen participation work well, then this would be a good opportunity to share them and, hopefully, there'll be a reasonable amount of time at the end of this session to deal with questions, comments and those sorts of tips and suggestions. So I'm going to hand over to Stephen now to run us through his presentation.

**Stephen Bermingham:** I'm Stephen Bermingham, I work for the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People, and I'm here today to talk about children's participation within our office. What I'm particularly interested in – I think it's a unique oppor-

tunity for us – is how we can involve children and young people in the management of the organisation. But I've been involved with children's participation for – well, quite a short career, but for my entire career so far. I've seen quite a lot of projects that have managed to involve children and young people, but what I haven't seen is young people's involvement in making corporate decisions on behalf of our organisation, and for me that's the main challenge of my work. What I would say, and I think it is also relevant to the other commissioners' offices, is that we're in a unique position as a new organisation to embed children's participation within our principles and our work ethos from the beginning, and I think that is a unique opportunity, because if you're talking about changing an organisation and involving children at a later stage, that sort of cultural change is a much bigger challenge. So I think for us and, particularly, for the English commissioner it's a unique opportunity to involve children from the onset. I've taken a lot of what I'm going to talk about today from our participation strategy – it's a strategy that we have to present to the Scottish Parliament as part of our annual reporting process.

I'm first going to talk briefly about some of the benefits of involving children and young people for the organisation, because I think if you can't identify the benefits there's little point in doing it. One of the key things is, in my experience, that the young people

bring a distinct perspective to the management of organisations – they can often come up with new ideas which are slightly out of the box, which perhaps professionals used to working a certain way wouldn't think about. Also, I think that if you provide them with the right opportunities and the right support, their involvement can really further their own personal and social development, and their lives in general. Also showing them how to bring about change, how you actually go about effecting change. We all know about the current democratic deficit, which is particularly marked in Scotland, where you've got a turnout amongst 18–21 year olds of less than 35 per cent. And some of the constituencies of the Scottish Youth Parliaments – I used to work for them prior to working for the Commissioner's Office – had more votes in that age range than were cast in the General Election. The problem is particularly marked in rural areas, such as the Shetlands, which feel very disengaged from the decisions that are being made at a Westminster level, and I think this is a serious concern, certainly for Scottish government. If the numbers keep on dropping, we're going to end up in quite a grave situation in terms of our democratic processes. I hope that by involving young people our functions and our services will be more responsive to their needs – I think that almost goes without saying. And if we do it well we can share and promote the value of involving children and young people. I think that a lot of the participation projects that I've seen aren't particularly good at that. Even the good bits of work I've seen at a local level often don't have strong enough communication behind them. I think if you can do it at a national level and promote it to other public bodies, that's quite a unique opportunity.

Next, the practical side: the way in which we're going to involve children and young people. I think we need to start with a few principles. A key one is allocating additional resources to harder-to-reach groups, I think that's really important. Make the participatory element visible in your organisation, obviously well resourced, and value it across all areas of your work; not just little projects, but also in terms of the management of the organisation. I keep harping on about that because I do feel it's important. Make it integral to the staffing of the organisation. We do that, we've got a staffing complement of 15 including the commissioner, and five of those, one-third of the posts, are just participation posts. So a third of our organisation's workforce is dedicated solely to participation. We have two participation worker posts which are only for young people, so applicants have to be aged between 16–21; they're reasonably paid jobs – not at the bottom of the pay scale – and carry an 18-month contract, because obviously we want to ensure that young people stay within the organisation. They have real responsibility, quite a high level of training and mentoring goes into that, though this is also because when they reach the end of the 18-month contract we

of course want to support them to move on to something else. And when we recruited we made a particular effort to promote the posts amongst disadvantaged groups. We used outreach workers to go to the most disengaged communities, and I think, to blow our own trumpet, that that's apparent in terms of the two successful candidates.

We want policy priorities to be informed by the views of young people. This is really about consultation, which Al Aynsley-Green identified as different from participation, but it is part of participation. We're going to involve children and young people heavily in the monitoring and evaluation of our services, so a lot of our benchmarks will be based on what children and young people say in terms of how responsive we are to their needs. We're having our national consultation this autumn, and we're doing it with Young Scot, which is the national information portal for Scotland. We're using its consultation tools, and over a five-week period we'll go out with two space vans – space vans are big vans that have satellite dishes and about twenty laptops inside – to shopping centres, again focusing on the harder-to-reach communities.

The level of influence that young people have over our organisation is proportionate to their age. We have a responsibility, a core responsibility under the Act that established the Office, to involve children and young people. So it's not an add-on, it's an absolute core responsibility. But their level of influence will be proportionate to their age, and I think that reflects what is said in the United Nations Convention, Article 12, about due weight being given in accordance to the age and maturity of the child or young person. The first structure that we're establishing is a reference group of children and young people, that's 10–12 children and young people aged 14–21 that will take part in regular meetings, particularly with the management team. The meeting will be located around Scotland: that's actually a matter of principle, because of the problem of geographical isolation within Scotland. And the participants get paid like an expert advisory group, and that to me is an important principle, because you're asking children and young people to be involved on an equal basis to adults. People often say to me 'How do you involve children and young people?', and I always turn around and ask 'Why are you involved, fundamentally and structurally why are you involved?', and I think 95 per cent of the time it's because you get paid to be involved. I won't make any apology. When you talk about involving the most excluded groups of children and young people, and think of some of the examples of council estates where you really do get excluded groups of young people, how do you promote it within those groups? How do the young people actually justify to their peers the fact that they're taking part in this sort of participatory structure, which they probably find quite hard to explain? If they can say 'We do it because we get paid' their friends will think that's fair enough. They won't

be paid with tokens either, like asylum seekers. So that's the group. They'll be involved in the governance of our work, they'll take part in management meetings, and they'll be involved in policy work, although that's not their key area. They'll help us when we need to make responses to the Scottish executive, but they're not going to set the policy priorities of the office, that will be done on a much larger scale. They'll be involved in publications. That means that any publication that goes out will go through a series of 'quality control checks', where children and young people say 'Yes, this is appealing, I don't understand this bit, I do understand this bit'. And that is to make sure that it's accessible to that group.

They will also be involved in recruitment. Indeed, they have been heavily involved in recruitment already, for all of our posts including the commissioner. We have two panels, one of children probably up to the age of 12, and the other the formal panel with 50 per cent young people aged 14–21. They absolutely influence decisions – we're documenting it with *Save the Children* as part of our good practice guide – and there have been members of staff who have been appointed on the basis of what young people have said.

They are involved in our communications. I've mentioned publications. They'll be involved in research. We're setting up a training programme so that the reference group can be active researchers, as in examples such as *Lifting the Lid* from the Welsh Office. We anticipate that children and young people will actually be going into the schools, carrying out case studies and doing research, once we've equipped them with the skills. They'll comment on our methods of working, on our premises and venues, and report in making sure that these are accessible. We've already done that with our new office: groups of young people have come in and commented, including groups of wheelchair users. They help us design and formulate one-off events; for example, we're developing a Children's Champion Award at the moment, which is about children and young people inviting nominations for adults who have been particularly effective at promoting children's rights. We're doing that with a national media partner, and we hope to get a fair bit of gravitas and coverage with that.

The second structure we're setting up is for slightly younger age groups, we call it a consultation group. Again they'll have the quality-check function in terms of publications, and also in terms of policy, though on a less regular basis. We're establishing this group in partnership with the Children's Parliament, which already has about ten different groups allocated around Scotland. The Children's Parliament is establishing new groups in local areas, and four of our staff are becoming ambassadors for a new local group, so we have that ongoing link with the same group of young people. We're also setting up an Early Years group, this is 0–5 year olds. We have to involve all

children and young people – that's quite explicit. It is challenging. How do you involve 0–5 year olds? In my experience they do have views on certain things, and we have four regional events with play workers and parents and the like, and we've recruited professional storytellers who will adapt popular fairy tales, adding a rights-based theme to it. And then we can have a resource pack at the end of it, which will be our branded pack of fairy tales/rights stories. I don't know how it will actually work out, but one of the stories will be Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, with each of the dwarfs representing a different right. This is really about developing our own understanding about how we're going to consult with this early group.

I think in any participation work it's very important to be absolutely crystal clear about what young people can and cannot influence. Failure to realise this will result in disengagement and disillusionment. And, in my experience, you usually have only one chance with a young person. As soon as you build up an expectation which can't be met, they vote with their feet. So there are some areas where young people really won't have much influence. For example, the corporate finances. We might share some of the decisions with the older reference group, but ultimate responsibility would lie with us, and in particular with the commissioner. Staff management is another. My experience of having been managed by children and young people leads me to think that those skills are the kind of skills that you can only develop through experience, and just as you wouldn't want a plumber that's had no experience of plumbing coming into your house, I don't think you would want to be managed by someone who's got no experience of staff management. Also premises issues. That's just about responsibility – we're responsible for the health and safety within our office. Again, internal policy: we have our own responsibilities in terms of child protection, risk assessments and so forth. I think an important one is office tasks, because sometimes people mistake participation for delegation. I don't want young people stuffing envelopes and cleaning cups. That to me isn't real participation at all, it's more like exploitation. Our age range is 0–18, but it extends up to 21 if the young person has ever at any point, even for a day, been in care or been looked after by social services, so we have a particular responsibility in this area, which reflects the extreme disadvantage that care-leavers face. So we're going to establish a separate group, which is the Looked-After and Accommodated Action Group – it'll probably be renamed once the young people have got hold of it and got some kind of ownership, because it is a bit wordy. This will be very much a lobby group that will be looking at issues in terms of care provision, and from the perspective of young people in care. And this is the sort of support that we'll provide them: staffing support (they'll get paid the same as our reference group) and training in research methods and campaign skills; and we'll also give them the political

backing of the commissioner. We're doing this with the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum, which is probably the leading forum in Scotland in terms of having young people's voices from the care system.

So these are some ways in which we are going to measure the success of our participation programme. That will be part of our annual report process. We want evidence that children and young people have influenced certain management decisions. We want our offices to be accessible; we will be monitoring that – we have a research officer who sits within the participation team and will be responsible for the research element of the work. We want Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People to routinely seek the views of children and young people in decision-making. And again that runs through all our work, it's not just the participation team, it's actually the participation team, the management team and the policy team, which are the three key teams. We want young people continually employed as paid members of the staff, and to take feedback from that and see where they go afterwards, to see if we can actually make a positive difference to their lives.

The policy priorities will be decided by the national consultation. The way in which we're doing that is to come up with a list of probably six very tangible, concrete changes which children and young people have identified. From that they'll vote on one or two, which they will ask the commissioner, Kathleen Marshall, to carry forward for a two-year period. We want to engage all children and young people, and I think that again it's a question of allocating additional resources. It is tempting sometimes, particularly when you're stretched in terms of resources, to use the more articulate, the more easily accessible children and young people. In order to change that, you have to allocate these additional resources and think a bit more about the process and the way in which you're doing it in terms of the outcome. Then there's the question of making sure our publications are accessible to all; we have signed versions and Braille versions and, I think, 13 different languages. The Looked-After and Accommodated Action Group will hopefully track some changes in the way in which they've influenced government decision-making, because in my experience the government in Scotland is very accessible (I don't know that much about an English context) and they really do want to change things. You can meet with them quite easily in a day or two days, and they do want to listen to the views of children and young people. I think they struggle in terms of how to do that, and that's always what I come up against, but they are receptive. We need to make sure our communications are age-appropriate. We have the resource packs for the very young children, and we'll be dividing it into three age groups: 0–5, 5–12 or 14, and 12 or 14–21. Children and young people will share the research programme, being involved in commissioning research and deciding what sort of bodies should

undertake research on our behalf, as well as undertaking it themselves. And then all of the above will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated with the involvement of children and young people.

**Nigel Williams:** Thank you, Stephen, that was great. Al Aynsley-Green mentioned our dog emblem yesterday. The idea behind the dog was not least because the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People is an incredible mouthful, and also because the word commissioner doesn't actually resonate with young people. What is a commissioner, for goodness sake? And anyway we use commissioner in different ways, don't we, because we talk a huge amount about commissioning of services, and any young people who start getting involved in this process get really confused about what kind of commissioner you are. So the idea of being a watchdog seemed like a simple way of putting across the role: a watchdog for young people to see our government keeps its promises. And the other huge advantage for me is that the border collie illustrated here is the main dog used on Northern Irish farms, and, believe it or not, there are not Protestant border collies and Catholic border collies, there are just border collies. And thankfully they're black and white rather than orange or green. You'll have noticed that the rainbow approach to our lettering has been quite carefully chosen – it has to be in the environment in which we work.

I just want to say a couple of words about the overall approach of the office. This is my legislative mandate: what I'm supposed to do each day, 24 hours a day, is to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people. UNCRC is firmly embedded within my legislation, and has been from the beginning as the guiding light, but I'm also required – and there's a bit of a difference here from some of the other commissioners – to specifically take account of the important role of parents in the development of their children. And I have no problem with that, I think one of the difficulties that we have in our community is that the rights agenda has an entirely different twist to anywhere else in the UK. For some from a Unionist background, the very talk of rights immediately makes them think that it must be a Republican initiative. That is a challenge, because clearly children within families from a Protestant or a non-Catholic background have just as much need of recognition of their rights as anyone else, and so there are some interesting challenges that I face that other commissioners don't face, in terms of threading my way through all of this. The Unionists are very keen on the role of parents, and that helps them, and I don't mind that.

There are three functions in the office – you'll see the difference from those of other commissioners.

The ombudsman function, and that includes assisting legal action and initiating legal action on behalf of individual children or groups of children, so it's a very

significant function that involves dealing with individual complaints. Now I wouldn't wish that on some of the other commissioners because of the practicalities; within a small community like my own population of 1.7 million, of which about 500,000 are under the age of 18, that is doable. I don't think it can be delivered by a national office in the other jurisdictions.

Research and service review. I have to comment to ministers on the adequacy and effectiveness of services. Ministers can ask me to do that or I can just decide to tell them. And at the minute it's mainly me telling them that there are issues that need to be addressed, but I have to say, particularly over the last few months, we've seen a very open door to ministers and a real desire to use the commissioner's office as an agent for change, which is exactly what I want to be. I work with children and young people to establish what the changes should be, and then persuade ministers that that's what they need to be.

And then the third leg of the work is about communication and participation. My participation role is very similar to what Stephen has described, so I'm not going to repeat that. We have a statutory requirement to provide two-way communication with children and young people across Northern Ireland. That is a challenge even though we're in a small place; obviously we have the issue of delivering to all communities and young people, whatever their background. I see a key role in getting the government to understand what it means genuinely to listen to children and young people. I've had some crazy conversations. The Northern Ireland Department of Education came to me and said 'We are producing our overall strategy for our work with young people, and we want to involve young people. What do you think we should do?' And I said, 'Well' – they were already quite a long way down the road – 'when do you need to do this by?' They said 'We've got to have it finished within six weeks.' Six weeks to start thinking about how you're going to involve children and young people. I asked if they had been involved to date in writing the policy. No, not at all. So we have a bit of an uphill road to help people understand what this really means, and I think it's crucial and, as Stephen has shown beautifully in his presentation, we have an enormous onus in our own offices to model what good practice is, and to learn constantly what that means, by constantly listening to children and young people and revising.

We have made mistakes already within the office, I openly admit that. We did one event where an outside agency was involved helping us – this was in the early days when we had very few staff – and the agency cut totally across the participation agenda by telling young people what to do. It took three months to unpick that with the young people involved, and to restore their confidence that it was worth staying involved with the office. So we have made mistakes, and no doubt will do so in the future. We're not per-

fect, but we're committed to learning and to trying to do it right, and that is a challenge. It seems to me that participation is not an activity as such, you can't put it in a box and tick it, it's much more the way that you operate, the way that the office is, and again I think Stephen has illustrated the way that participation just suffuses the way the Scottish Commissioner's Office works, and we aspire to that. It's an attitude of mind, how you approach things; it's not an afterthought, it's not a matter of thinking, like that Department of Education team, 'Oh, for goodness' sake, we haven't talked to children and young people – who can we ask and how can we tick that box?' It is not that.

These are some of the things that we have done, and you'll see some similarities with what Stephen has said. We have a Youth Panel. We're 15 months in now with the Youth Panel, and I think it's growing in confidence. We initially brought in support for them from the Northern Ireland Youth Forum, which is similar to the Scottish Youth Parliament, but now we've got our own staff who can support them. We've gone for secondees for our regional participation workers – it will be interesting to see how that model works out – so we're having people seconded from different organisations within Northern Ireland to work with us. With my background you'll not be surprised that we're experimenting with and trying to find new ways of using technology – texting, the web – excitingly. I think the whole issue of peer-led search and consultation is actually key. And we have got some exciting things happening shortly. We are doing a project on child-centred care, which is going to be led by young people' to find out more about how they are actually treated within the care system.

I want to come to a specific example, a case study. I want to talk about our work so far in the area of mental health and suicide. Northern Ireland has a higher suicide rate amongst young people than other regions of the UK, and it became very clear to me early on that there really was a fundamental crisis in the area of services for adolescents, and in particular for mental health. At every stage, from the acute stage (insufficient beds) right down to the gross lack of community services. Just a desert, really. Of course in a desert there are always oases, so there are some good people struggling and doing some fantastic stuff, but the overall picture was not good.

I went out and just started talking to young people about this issue, and I remember one event in particular. I was taken on a drive by a youth worker in Ardoyne, an interface area – that's where the Holy Cross School was, you'll remember the little girls who had to walk past jeering crowds to get to school a few years ago. Well, that area's still very tense, and also has an incredibly high suicide rate. I went with the youth worker, who took me along a street. There were a couple of young people in the car as well, and they just pointed and said, 'Oh the person in that house took a drugs overdose and just about survived; the person in

the next house had problems with anorexia, eating disorder, they don't think she's going to make it; next house somebody took their life last week'. This was just going up one street, and at its end was a little shrine, with pictures of young people and candles. These young people had taken their own lives. It gets fire in your belly, and you think 'We are going to do something about this.'

So we did a huge research project, which I initiated just after I took office, to try and establish where Northern Ireland was on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. That was very much action-oriented research, by a research team from Queen's University in Belfast. They enlisted the help of whole teams of young people, including exactly the hard-to-reach groups that Stephen was talking about. Not surprisingly, mental health came out as a key issue. So we decided we had to do something and we got together a steering group, 50 per cent young people, 50 per cent adults, from different groups, and asked, 'What shall we do?' And we had our own ideas about what might happen. But they came up with a proposal to run a conference which we called Hope earlier this year, with a hundred professionals and a hundred young people, that's an interesting balance to have, led by young people. They determined the agenda, they decided what kind of speakers they wanted; then of course the professionals could help identify what individual should speak, but the young people said what kind of people they wanted to speak. And some very interesting things came out of that conference, which was a very moving event.

We got very wide media coverage. My tip for the day is here. I found the *Independent* very open to taking speeches for their Podium column, and they took my speech from that particular conference. But when I was thinking about it afterwards, I felt I had made a mistake. I should really have put forward the speech that one of the young people had made, not my own speech. But there you go. You learn. But the opportunity is there to get your actual words, not the journalist's spin on it, into the paper.

One of the things that came out of that was that the government set up a suicide task force. Young people said, 'You've really got to get the message across to the top', and I had a number of meetings with government ministers. I thought, I'm not sure that the voice of young people is really getting through here, even though we've done this work and young people have been very involved in it. It felt as though the policy process had been kicked off by the work we'd done, but that young people were now apart from that policy process. A task force had been set up with no young people on it, and that made me wonder what the next step should be. How do we keep the pressure up, how do we actually get the voice of young people into this? So yesterday we launched a website with a rolling message that says 'Send your message to the minister about mental health and suicide: click here.'

And when you click you get a page which allows anyone to fill in their details and what they want to say to both the minister and the suicide task force. We launched this yesterday morning in Belfast, which was why I couldn't be here any earlier. And one of the youth panel who'd helped us design this actually demonstrated to the assembled hordes just how easy it was to do. We have an internet facility in our downstairs, so the young people who were there could go immediately and actually start writing their messages to the minister. It's going to be open for six weeks, and we are then going to collate those responses. But not in a statistical way, because the last thing that I want to do is for this to appear like some further report of the kind that ministers get all the time. I actually want the words to scream off the page, so it will be about getting the quotes and directing those to the minister and the suicide task force, and then looking to get a group of young people to go and present that and to see how we go forward.

I think that gives us a flavour of one individual issue. And I suppose it's pretty obvious from that that it's multi-faceted, it has to be in each stage of the process; this really is not a click box, because it just won't work. And the other thing I'd say is that you have to be very on guard to evaluate as you go along whether the participation work you're doing is having an effect; and I think we are very tempted to think in terms of participation as leading to events. We had a major event in the middle of that process I was describing, but that event was very successful in terms of the young people feeling very empowered. It achieved a lot in its own terms, but we realised that even though it had had huge media coverage, the important thing was not so much the *Independent* (which of course the civil servants liked – they were amazed that I'd managed to get into the *Independent*) but the TV coverage locally and the coverage it was getting to young people with the young people themselves speaking. But in spite of all that good stuff, it hadn't influenced the structure of the suicide task force or the message getting through to the minister, and so we've now had to take another step. So you can't sit on your hands and think 'We have done this participation bit', even if you feel like you've got it, you've really got it in your heart. You have to evaluate all the time. That's the challenge.

I just want to finish by saying that we are trying to set an example. As Stephen has said, you can see that the Scottish Children's Commission has really taken this on board, and I think it is ahead of us. My big concern is whether the government policy process will follow in what we're trying to do. Will they change their policy process in relation to listening to children and young people? There are shining examples of flagship consultation where it's exemplary in listening to children and young people. But I'm actually concerned about the day-to-day stuff. The decisions about policy on leaving care. The decisions about policy on

bullying. The decisions about the raft of policies that affect our children and young people's lives. Are those infused with listening to children and young people? I don't think so and that I think is the challenge. So I brought with me two sets of leaflets – please do take them. One is the general leaflet about the role of my office. The other is hot off the press yesterday, is called *The Rights Stuff*, and is about the 42 commitments, the promises, which are made in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is really intended to inform children and young people of their rights.

*In the joint question and answer session that followed, Nigel Williams described the problems experienced by the Northern Ireland Youth Forum in getting support and funding. Being governed from Westminster was a serious disadvantage, not least because of the strain placed on ministers constantly shuttling between London and Belfast.*

## 17. Young Reporter's Report

### Alice

#### **What did you hope to get from this conference?**

To be given the opportunity to be listened to by people in positions where they can really affect the impact of young people's involvement was fantastic. Through past experiences meeting people that weren't very aware of the importance of young people's involvement, I was a bit sceptical before coming to this conference as to how well we would be received. But I would like to say thank you for the warm, welcoming and supportive interest that has been displayed over the last few days. It has been refreshing to meet people that are as enthusiastic as we are about young people's rights, protection, and participation. My aim has been to share my views and perhaps give an insight as a young person to what goes on in my world, and I hope this has been achieved well.

#### **What motivates you to do what you do?**

I am inspired by working with other people and I like to be able to keep my view firmly on what's really happening in the world. I feel that more politicians and people in the position to make decisions for others should share the same view of working on the ground level. Working with Youth Consultation Peterborough has enabled me to support young people in developing their community culturally, educationally, and socially. Through my involvement as a young person myself I have been motivated to share my opinions and take action working in partnership with adults to make real positive changes. Seeing those changes happen and making a difference encourages you to continue doing what you do.

### Jibran

#### **What did you hope to get from this conference?**

I hoped to get a number of things from this conference such as meeting new people, making links with other organisations and having a good time. I was a bit nervous about coming because I thought that people would be a bit posh and wouldn't really want to talk or listen to young people.

When I got to the conference and got to know people my view changed and I realised that they do want to listen to us and take our views on board to help to change the way that things are done at the moment and make life better for young people.

I've had a very good time here – and my pool skills have improved lots! I've learnt to socialise with different types of people, speak my mind, the role of a reporter and getting people to answer questions. From listening to the lectures and talking to people I've got useful and valuable information which I can use later to help both myself and other people.

#### **What motivates you to do what you do?**

I'm a member of Youth Consultation Peterborough and have been for 4 years. In this time I have become Deputy Member of the Youth Parliament, been to conferences and taken part in projects around Peterborough. These have ranged from projects to do with unity and encouraging different cultures to work together, getting young people to vote and the Focus Video project which worked with young people from different backgrounds coming together to make a documentary/sitcom about Peterborough as a multi-cultural community.

I've been involved for so long because I believe that through what I do I can make things change to help other young people. It also helps me to develop skills, meet and work with people that I wouldn't do otherwise and enjoy myself!

### Mel

#### **What did you hope to get from this conference?**

The conference for me has been a huge eye opener. I have met such a wide range of people from different backgrounds and professions. It's great to see people taking our views seriously. It was a surprise to be invited to the conference but because of such a warm welcome from everybody it's also felt very motivating and has given us confidence to share our views.

What I wanted to get from the conference was an idea of how everyone views the Green Paper and the

issues surrounding it. I also wanted to be actively involved in sharing my opinion.

**What motivates you to do what you do?**

I have been involved in youth consultation for over three years. It has been a really positive experience for me and has helped me to grow and become independent in my thinking and my day to day life. Respect has a huge part to play in youth consultation, and I feel, because we are a team and work together, we as young people respect the adults who help us to get our voices

heard and the adults respect us for sharing our opinion.

My motivation comes from when people listen to my opinion and take it on board and do something with it. The more adults work in partnership with young people to get things done the quicker we'll see things change.

In my eyes having a strong opinion is better than not having one at all and I believe all young people have views and opinions; they just need to be given the chance to express them.

## 18. DfES and HO Response

**Anne Jackson (DfES)**

Well thank you very much and thanks again for the opportunity to be involved in the conference this year. As ever it's been a really interesting set of discussions, and I know Beverley Hughes and Anne Weinstock who were here all of yesterday took away a lot of valuable impressions from you and from the young people here which will be really helpful as we move through the consultation on *Youth Matters*. There's been an enormous amount covered in the discussion, and I just want to pick up on four things by way of kicking off this session on, if you like, what the government is trying to do on some of those themes. Three of substance and then one point about process and management.

I guess the first thing is the important point that Tom and others were raising about getting universal and targeted services to work better together to address the needs of every young child. Because that's really at the heart of what *Every Child Matters* is about; it was responding to a feeling from practitioners and professionals and the whole people that actually services were too broken up. There were too many individual initiatives, too many funding streams, too many different sets of people with different accountabilities, and too many assessment processes. That was leading to confusion and too much time spent on process to the detriment of practical support to the children and young people. And so the whole thrust of *Every Child Matters* has been about trying to bring together services at all levels – and this starts from government, of course – and to move away from ring-fence budgets, to move away from initiatives, and to give a key role to authorities working through Children's Trusts and other partners to bring together the local priorities including listening to children and young people and their families about what those priorities are and then deciding together how best to provide them in a sort of commissioning role.

So this is about government setting the framework but increasingly giving power to local areas to decide how it is implemented. And *Youth Matters* has been

helping to flesh out how that can work in practice. Earlier, at the end of last year, there was a childcare strategy which looked at the creation of an early years childcare service across England. We had an extended schools prospectus just after the election, and you heard from Vanessa Wiseman the implications of some of that for the school bit of the system. So *Youth Matters* is saying 'What does this thinking mean for the way in which we can support young people?' And basically the core proposition is that it will be most effective if the needs analysis and provision around services for young people are part of the mainstream of this thinking within children's trusts. Now that doesn't mean, of course, that when you get to the delivery of those services you neglect or ignore all of the good things that have been built up through Connexions, and I hope that Anne Weinstock was able to say more about that, because where you have got an effective service, a really good valued service from Connexions, that is naturally the service which would be commissioned to deliver. But what we were trying to do in *Youth Matters* was to say that there were things we wanted all young people to have entitlement to, and particularly this idea of things to do and places to go; and we wanted to put in some national standards around it, asking local areas to say 'This is our offer, our local offer, that we will make available to young people.' Similarly important are advice and guidance, which again all young people need. But we must also make sure that those services, and the school, and the FE colleges, can pick up on the particular needs. So that is where we were coming from, and we will be needing to look in response to Tom's point around inspection and an assessment criteria, once the consultation ends, about how those expectations are fed into, if you like, the sort of process measures through which local areas measure performance.

The second key point is around the workforce. Yes, people have rightly stressed the importance of supporting the workforce and making available the very best of emerging practice and good practice in how to handle particular types of issue. We have just finished

a consultation on the children's workforce strategy, which many of you may have fed into, so ministers are pondering the messages. There'll be a response to that later in the autumn and you can see all of these documents on the *Every Child Matters* website, plus an up-to-date news section on what's happening. We tried in the workforce strategy to single out three priority routes to look at: social workers, foster carers and early years workers. Obviously the workforce is much wider than that, but we took the approach, pretty much endorsed by consultation, I think, that these were appropriate areas to start from.

While we've been consulting we've been trying to develop some very practical tools to make things happen. In the course of the conference many of you will have spoken to Jane Haywood from the Children's Workforce Development Council. She is putting a set of propositions to her board next week about how the Workforce Council can start making some practical offers of development. At government level we've also been developing and are now trialing a number of tools and good practice kits. Key to these are the common core, which is a set of expectations, principles for all of those working in the workforce, and that includes things like the importance of listening to children and young people and being able to communicate with them. We've got a Common Assessment Framework which is now being trialed in something like 88 local areas with an evaluation focusing on 15 of those, which is trialing out an assessment, which can then be the bedrock for multi-agency working and the best response to each child's needs. There's a toolkit around multi-agency working, looking more deeply at the role of the lead professional. The idea is that all of these get evaluated and updated on the website in the light of evaluation and practice as we identify it, and I think increasingly we see *Every Child Matters* moving from the stage where we've had the visions and we've had the outcomes. A lot of sign up to that, but what people really need to focus in now is effective practice in specific areas. So, for example, one that Ruth Kelly is very interested in at the minute is best practice in supporting looked-after children. We know that there is quite a lot of variation from one authority to the other in the outcomes that they achieve for looked-after children, and we want to pin down the principles of good practice and share those more widely.

My final point of substance is to pick up on participation and say that the approach I think chimes quite a lot with what people have been saying here is to embed participation at every level of the system we are trying to create. I know we're not there in practice, but that is certainly the aspiration. So, for example, with respect to guidance to children's trusts on their statutory children and young people's plans, which they're now doing. The guidance says they must have a way of feeding the views of children and young people, and their parents, into that analysis. We have

built in the child and young person's voice into the inspection process, into the assessments of our local authorities. It's also about day-to-day practice. I've talked about the common core, but we need to make sure of the effectiveness of the concrete examples on good practice which we identify and share. We are looking at the impact of this on young children and young people in terms of the service that they get.

And then there are some quite specific things, notably opportunity cards and the Youth Opportunity Fund. I know there's been a bit of debate about whether those are going to work or not, but now the aspiration is to put some real power in the hands of young people in getting the sort of services locally that they want, and so that's pretty powerful. Embedding participation locally doesn't, of course, excuse government from making a continuing and strengthening drive to make sure that we listen to young people. We've now got the four children's commissioners in the UK, who will be a very powerful network. And Al Aynsley Green of course has a specific remit to speak on behalf of children from more vulnerable backgrounds, those who may find it more difficult to get their voices heard. I think we're all looking forward to the debates we'll have with him and his colleagues; they won't always be comfortable for government and it's right and proper that they shouldn't be. I think Al will also be wanting to take a wider look outside government at some bigger issues around society as a whole and how we all treat young people, and that's a very important dialogue for us to develop as we move into the next UK report on the UN CRC in 2007.

I think government does pretty well on the big consultations, you know. *Youth Matters* had a big set of specific targeted occasions to listen to young people, and we're currently talking to colleagues in the Department of Health about the primary care consultation which has been launched. There's a big conversation over the autumn to make sure that we've got some young people's views, and we've also got a Children and Youth Board within the department which Beverley Hughes mentioned, which actually sets its own agenda, although we have to try and encourage it to pick up on topical issues which government is interested in, such as bullying.

My final point is really just a bit of background about across-government cooperation in all of this, which is a mechanism for taking forward the messages from this conference. The Cabinet Committee's structure was revamped after the election, so the committee we used to have, which was called MISC 9D, is now called DACP (Domestic Affairs – Children's Policy). The remit is on the Cabinet Office website, but as before we look to that committee to bring together, under the chairmanship of Ruth Kelly, ministers from right across government who have got a key interest in making sure that we get this right, and it's supported by the Senior Officials Group, which Tom Jeffery the director general for children, young people and

families within DfES brings together, and again Diana's colleagues, Department of Health, DCMS, the inspectorates, are all on that committee. Al Aynsley Green has observer status on that committee, so he's right in there, not if you like complicit in the workings of that committee, but open to all of the discussions that that senior committee has about general progress, and about how we are doing in particular on outcomes, focusing initially on the particular PSA targets that the government has.

The committee has also been crucial in putting together the outcomes framework which we talked about at this conference last year. And that is the practical tool that takes the five outcomes and maps against them all of the PSA targets which different government departments are responsible for, many of them supported jointly; and there is a line of sight from those through to the work that the inspectorates have done in identifying assessment measures for measuring local performance and the criteria in the inspection regime. Now it's probably a bit big and unwieldy at the moment, it's not perfect, but it is much better than anything we have had before in terms of putting together an overview of how local areas are doing against all of those indicators. In the run-up to the new joint inspection arrangements each local authority has had for the first time a complete set of performance indicators, it's called the annual performance assessment data, which puts together all of its indicators, the baseline data, plus some comparative data from statistical neighbour-type authorities; that's the sort of data which will be used for the inspection arrangements. The inspectorates will be reporting on that and the department will be wanting to pull together the messages from all of that information, plus the statistical information that we have on progress against those targets. So again, although none of this is perfect, it is a big ambitious journey, there is an awful lot under way, we have got a lot of buy-in and enthusiasm which I think is the most encouraging thing about this, both at official level and with our partners in this great endeavour. The Ministry of Defence is included. I've spoken to the official at the MoD who was setting up a children and young people's team there, to mirror this agenda for forces children overseas, so it is something that the MoD is conscious of and keen to work on.

### **Diana Luchford (HO)**

I'll just speak for a couple of minutes because Anne has covered most of the themes which have emerged, and that reflects the fact that the Department of Education actually has the lead on youth issues generally. As far as the Home Office is concerned, our main objectives are reducing crime and the fear of crime and reoffending, and so we're essentially at the sharp end in dealing with children and young people who offend, and trying to prevent children from starting to offend in the first place. But the holistic approach that

Anne described is absolutely critical for achieving our outcomes. Let me give you an example. We have a child who offends, who has a history of playing truant, who may be sent to custody and who may be removed immediately from the school roll. If, when that child comes out of custody, the school won't have them back, then we're not doing anything to reduce the risk of their reoffending; so it's absolutely critical that we work in a joined-up way with DfES and also, for example, with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on issues like housing and suitable accommodation for children that are either at risk of offending or coming out of custody. So that operates to absolutely reinforce our joined-up approach to everything.

Also I want to echo what Anne said about the governance structure, and also echo the fact that having Beverley Hughes as the Minister for Children and Young People is a very positive thing. Because she was Minister for Immigration in the past, she has an excellent understanding of the crime prevention and offending issues in the Home Office, and she is in a very good position for bringing things together generally. One theme that's emerged is about groups of special needs children, and the children of asylum seekers were also mentioned – again something that Beverley knows a lot about. I should just emphasise that as far as asylum seeking children are concerned, they are treated with exactly the same protection and needs as a child that's born in Britain while they're here. That is certainly what underpins government policy, and that is what National Asylum Support Service is doing a lot of work on. One group that hasn't been mentioned, to my surprise, is the black and minority ethnic population, though we've heard stuff about disabled children and young people and special measures for 16–19 year olds. Certainly in the offender profile, something like 20 per cent of children and young people in custody are BEM, and that is an over-representation in terms of the population as a whole that the Home Office is very, very concerned about. It's something that Patricia Scotland, who as you know is the minister in that area, is particularly interested in. So that's just a quick overview from the Home Office perspective.

During the discussion that followed, Anne Jackson described the functioning of the common assessment framework, of which a prototype was to be tried out in 2005; it was an initial assessment of children which might be used to refer those with complex needs to specialist assessments. In answer to a question about the treatment of young asylum seekers, particularly those who were unaccompanied, Diana Luchford felt that it wasn't possible to get into a discussion of immigration, but did promise to refer the point to the Immigration and Nationality Directorate. On terrorism, a major issue for everybody since 7 July, she said that forums were being held with leaders of the Muslim community; however, reaching Muslim young people directly was more problematic. On another

issue, young people in the armed forces, it was pointed out that this was part of the Children's Commissioner's remit. Implementation of the EU Commission White Paper was the responsibility of the Department for Education and Skills.

Responding to a question about funding, Anne Jackson instanced the department's response to the Education and Skills Select Committee, detailing heavy investment in different areas of core funding, in schools, social services and the NHS; however, she acknowledged that it didn't always feel as though it had filtered through. The government's efficiency

drive was not about cuts but about shifting resources into the front line; this was one reason for staff reductions in government departments.

Questioned about the youth justice system, Diana Luchford said that as much as possible was being done following a number of deaths in custody. Custody was seen as a last resort. The forthcoming Youth Justice Bill would promote advocacy and support for young people, and would make provision for video links so that children would not be compelled to come to court.

## 19. Recommendations from Discussion Groups

### Recommendations from group A

#### Preamble

*Youth Matters* constitutes a major programme of change and development. To be successful it needs design and implementation calibrated to the specific youth matters agenda whilst also contributing to the wider agenda of *Every Child Matters* and other initiatives such as respect. We commend the approaches used in the implementation of quality protects, sure start and specific programmes for schools.

1. Essential for successful implementation are:

- a continuing communications programme for different audiences e.g. councillors, arts providers, and the media
- the presence of a full range of youth specialists in national reference groups and also as regional change agents
- specific guidance on commissioning for the *Youth Matters* agenda
- dedicated resources for implementation and change programmes for a transitional period of three years.

2. Young people are young people before they are offenders, refugees, homeless.... they require better integrated, differentiated and pro-active delivery in both mainstream and targeted services. *Youth Matters* needs to provide high quality, holistic services to promote the well-being of all young people. These services must include properly funded psychosocial assessments, leisure and housing provision. This also requires comprehensive integrated legal services, courts and custodial systems which should be harmonised with the five outcomes.

3. *Youth Matters* places importance on consultation with young people. We recognise that some readily identifiable groups are often marginalized. We recommend these groups must be enabled to participate fully in, and access the services they need. A responsibility must be placed on local authorities to ensure the direct participation of specific groups in the design, delivery and evaluation of policy and

services. These include young people with disabilities and/or special needs, young people who offend, those in secure facilities, refugees and young carers.

### Recommendations from Group B

We want to be sure that this time round services are planned and

1. Participation and planning

- Involvement of young people right from the beginning
- (active participation of young people to ensure they can buy in)
- Incorporate methodology we know will work,
- Incorporate new ways of working (carefully researched, planned and promoted, marketed before introduced to young people)
- Which can be continually accessed by young people.

2. Enabling those working with Children and Young People

#### *Development of trust*

- Ensure we have a confident well trained workforce able to engage with Children and Young People.
- Working with young people involves complexity and risk that has to be managed
- There needs to be a new partnership at all levels to re-establish trust.

3. Sustaining good work

#### *Youth is too short to fail in long-term planning*

- Ensure that things that are working are not allowed to stop through arbitrary decisions
- Re-invest in success, validate and continue
- Reinforce and support effective services and maintain the funding stream for projects which we know are working well
- A key test of the inspection system lies in the degree to which it sustains services that are successfully delivering the outcomes for young people.

## Recommendations from Group C

Local Authorities should have full discretion to decide how to incentivize provisions for young people under the Green Paper; opportunity cards are only one way of doing this and subsidies of various kinds may offer better value for money; experience of use of daycare vouchers and Connexions cards offers important lessons.

Taking forward this Green Paper the government should give more emphasis to the special and distinct needs and circumstances of young people in the 16 to 19 age range; those with disabilities and special education needs; and young carers of any age.

Taking into account existing PIs and Annual Performance Assessment, a dataset should be established by the government which enables it and LAs to establish a base line, monitor developments and review; and assess the effect of service provision on the five outcomes for young people. A particular emphasis should be on demonstrating that young peoples' lives have been positively affected.

## Recommendations from Group D

### 1. It's the people stupid

People are the key resource in delivering *Youth Matters*. They need training, valuing and nurturing. It takes time to build skills. Workforce development is critical. Working with children must be valued and rewarded if we are to recruit and retain people who can provide stability and promote continuity/secure attachments for children. A key mechanism for working with young people is through relationships and these need to be maintained over time where possible. Lead professionals will also need to have the authority to be able to challenge other professionals /agencies. This authority needs to come from the support of their own agency and through representing the young person's views.

### 2. Measuring the right things

If YM sets a framework that is implemented according to local need it is vital that monitoring/ performance management/ quality assurance is carried out properly. If not the balance between universal and targeted provision may get distorted. If we measure the right things i.e. the important outcomes, this will influence delivery in a positive way. It will be critical to identify and disseminate good practice and identify and pick up on poor practice swiftly. For example if schools are performance managed on academic outcomes that is what schools will focus on, if they are monitored on emotional well-being and inclusion they will behave differently.

### 3. Young people in the driving seat

It is easy to say we listen to young people but usually organisations get put first. There is a real

challenge to putting young people's needs first. We don't need to always follow the advice of YP but we do need to be honest and transparent about how we deal with their views and explain why when we disagree. Participation works best in the context of trusting relationships, as this tends to foster constructive suggestions for change.

In performance managing we should ask how YP have been involved and seek specific examples of how services have changed as a result of YP participation.

*All of the above will require sustained investment, although there is evidence that an investment now will save money from the public purse in the long run.*

## Recommendations from Group E

In each local area there needs to be a system of 360 degree appraisal of inter-agency working for all partners doing work relating to children and young people. The results and action plan for improvement should be published annually.

*Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters* need to include the impact of the legal system on children and young people, including family proceedings; criminal proceedings; children as witnesses etc. It follows that the Minister for Children, Young People and Families should have lead responsibility for *all* children, including children and young people in prison and CYP involved in the wider criminal justice system.

There should be mandatory quality standards for participation of CYP in the design, management, delivery and evaluation of all services and inspections.

## Recommendations from Group F

There needs to be strong political leadership and challenge to drive *Youth Matters* forward:

- at cabinet level
- through a senior member within the Children, Young People and Families Directorate
- a local voice specifically for young people

This agenda can only be delivered by an innovative 'can do' work force which requires excellent and inspiring leadership at all levels of the system and we recommend the Children's Workforce Development Council puts, at the top of its agenda, mapping the current initiatives, activities and training on leadership to enable best practice to be captured, disseminated and applied.

Encourage the development of innovative children and young peoples' plans to ensure that mainstream services, such as schools, together with complementary effective and sustainable services are able to meet the needs of all children including those within the youth justice system and asylum seekers so that every child and youth does matter.

## List of Participants

<b>Caroline Abrahams</b>	NCH
<b>Al Aynsley Green</b>	Children's Commissioner for England
<b>Sue Bailey</b>	Professor of Child and Adolescent Mental Health, University of Central Lancashire and Registrar, Royal College of Psychiatrists
<b>Willma Bartlett</b>	Senior Training and Development Consultant, NSPCC
<b>Camila Batmanghelidjh</b>	Founder and Director of Kids Company
<b>Carole Bell</b>	Head of Commissioning, Quality Assurance and Review at Hammersmith and Fulham's Children's Trust
<b>Stephen Bermingham</b>	Head of Participation, for Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People
<b>Louise Brown</b>	Lecturer in Social Work, University of Bath
<b>Julie Burns</b>	Director, Joint Educational Trust
<b>Hamish Cameron</b>	Hon. Consultant Child Psychiatrist, St George's Hospital, London
<b>Bob Coles</b>	Senior Lecturer on Social Policy, University of York
<b>Felicity Collier</b>	Chief Executive Officer, BAAF
<b>David Cottrell</b>	Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Leeds University
<b>Colin Cripps</b>	Deputy Chief Executive Officer, In-Volve
<b>Hilton Dawson</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa
<b>Erica De'Ath OBE</b>	Board Member of CAFCASS, Trustee of the National Children's Bureau and National Council of Voluntary Organisations
<b>Catherine Doran</b>	Assistant Director of Social Services, London Borough of Camden
<b>Anthony Douglas</b>	Chief Executive Officer of CAFCASS
<b>Michele Elliott</b>	Founder and Director of Kidscape
<b>Barbara Esam</b>	Lawyer, Public Policy Department, NSPCC
<b>Sue Everitt</b>	Director, Planning, Policy and Practice, Home-Start
<b>Jenny Frank</b>	National Programme Manager, Children's Society Young Carers Initiative
<b>Liz Goldthorpe</b>	Chair, Association of Lawyers for Children
<b>Andrew Haines</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Boys and Girls Welfare Society
<b>David Harris</b>	Director of Operational Services, Norwood
<b>Peter Harris</b>	Trustee, Michael Sieff Foundation
<b>Lady Elizabeth Haslam</b>	Trustee and Founder, Michael Sieff Foundation
<b>Jane Haywood</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Children's Workforce Development Council
<b>Barbara Herts</b>	Director, Young Minds
<b>Baroness Valerie Howarth OBE</b>	Deputy Chair, CAFCASS
<b>Beverley Hughes MP</b>	Minister for Children, Young People and Families
<b>Rupert Hughes CBE</b>	Fellow, Centre for Social Policy, Warren House, Dartington, and Chair, Michael Sieff Conference Planning Group
<b>Anne Jackson</b>	Director of Strategy, DfES
<b>David Jefferies</b>	Trustee, Michael Sieff Foundation
<b>Alice Johnson</b>	Active Involvement Representative, Youth Consultation Peterborough
<b>Maggie Jones</b>	Chief Executive Officer, NCVCCO
<b>John Kemmis</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Voice for the child in Care
<b>Jibran Khan</b>	Deputy Member, Youth Parliament
<b>Sushila Khoot</b>	Principal Youth Officer and Deputy Head of Community Education and Youth Service, London Borough of Newham
<b>Eva Learner</b>	Independent Consultant in children's services
<b>Louise Morpeth</b>	Dartington Social Research Unit
<b>Mel O'Brien</b>	Active Involvement Representative, Youth Consultation Peterborough
<b>Alison Paddle</b>	Lecturer, Lancaster University, and Chair, NAGALRO
<b>Arran Poyser</b>	Director of Inspection of CAFCASS, HMCA
<b>Liz Railton</b>	Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Learning and Social Care, Essex County Council
<b>Bob Reitemeier</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Children's Society
<b>Peter Rouncefield</b>	Young People's Office Manager, Youth Consultation Peterborough
<b>Wendy Rose</b>	Senior Research Fellow, Open University

<b>Philippa Russell</b>	Founder, Council for Disabled Children, and Trustee, Family Fund
<b>Tim Saunders</b>	Manager, Alford House
<b>Becky Sharp</b>	Active Involvement Team, National Youth Agency
<b>Catherine Simon</b>	Lecturer, Bath Spa University
<b>Daphne Statham</b>	Independent consultant in children's services
<b>Chris Stanley</b>	Head, NACRO Youth Crime Section
<b>Robert Tapsfield</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Family Rights Group
<b>Joyce Thacker</b>	Executive Director, Connexions South Yorkshire
<b>Clare Tickell</b>	Chief Executive Officer, NCH
<b>Jane Tunstill</b>	Professor of Social Work, Head of the Department of Health and Social Care, Royal Holloway, London University, and Director of the Implementation Module within the DfES National Evaluation of Sure Start
<b>Paul Verity</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Birmingham and Solihull Connexions
<b>Eileen Vizard</b>	Director, The Young Abusers Project
<b>Chris Warren-Adamson</b>	Head of Social Work Studies, University of Southampton
<b>Anne Weinstock CBE</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Connexions, Director, DfES Supporting Children and Young People.
<b>Liz Wharfe</b>	Consultant, Public Sector Service Integration
<b>Richard White</b>	Chair, Michael Sieff Foundation
<b>Nigel Williams</b>	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
<b>Vanessa Wiseman</b>	Head Teacher, Langdon Secondary School, Newham, and Trustee, ContinYou
<b>Sarah Williams</b>	Conference Administrator and consultant, child welfare issues and organisational development
<b>Tom Wylie</b>	Chief Executive Officer, National Youth Agency

# Roving Reporters Newsletter

## (produced during the conference)

*Edited by Alice, Mel, Jibran, Becky and Peter*

*with thanks to everybody mentioned and who commented throughout the conference*

### Talking with the minister

From previous experiences with politicians it seems that many are so far detached from reality that when they try to talk to young people they tend to sound condescending or patronising, and most of what they say is a dribble of jargon and broken promises.

So it was a breath of fresh air to talk to a minister who didn't have their head in the clouds. She was someone who listened to young people and gave them clear answers to their questions. Not many politicians are very approachable but we all thought that Beverley gave the young people the attitude they deserve.

It was a big opportunity last night to sit and talk to the Minister for young people over dinner. We spent the time talking about the real issues we face as young people everyday. We touched on issues such as young people seeing pregnancy 'as a fashion statement' and a lack of confidence in the government.

The most interesting question posed to us as young people at the dinner table was 'why do you think teenage pregnancy is so high?' It made us think about friends and their experiences. It's something that isn't seen as taboo any more and is almost seen as a free ride to a council house, benefits and any support or help they need. Young people are giving up their childhood to have a house over their head or enough money in their pocket. This is a daunting thought but it's real and it's happening all around us. In answer to 'why do people take drugs?' we were able to look at it from the position of our generation. We know about the consequences - and it's not just about continually stating them. It's about raising self esteem amongst some young people so that they care about their own well being.

After dinner Beverley gave an impressive speech and answered questions in the session, where she raised many people's confidence on the 'Green Paper' and the issues on whether it will work or not. It's simple. Things can't stay as they are so any change will be good. No one really knows if the Green Paper will work, but people just need to take an interest and get involved in developing it. Just like young people are doing at this conference.

### Coles lights a fire

A few concerns were raised and clarifications dislodged slightly by the research of Professor Bob Coles, in relation to 'Youth Matters' or 'Youth Smatters', as he renamed it. His case study of 'Sal's story' provided a lot of weight to his arguments, showing the incompe-

tence of the cohesion work between schools and services, and the continual efforts of a Connexions PA advisor. But the story also beautifully showed the disjointed approach that the 'Every Child Matters' document is trying to overcome, and Coles argument that the 'structural and systematic issues would remain just as fundamental' and that the 'green paper would exacerbate the proposals' hardly seem strong enough against the flowing tide of positive notion that there will be change for the better.

'Smatters', is a noun that relates to 'smattering - a slight and superficial knowledge'. Yet the information made available to us and the insistent involvement of young people in this conference show that if this is the case - it won't be for long. The active participation of young people being recognised at top level will pave the way for young people themselves to recognise gaps in the way things are interceded, and start to glue the services together. After all, they are the experts in how their own lives are affected.

The real issue that seems to be coming across is that people are concerned about power shifts, and those that will take over from others won't have the knowledge and experience that's already been gained. A wise philosopher once said that you cannot build your house upon the sand, and it's not advisable to try. But to take previous knowledge and to strip away the services that have bad reputations amongst young people might be the best way. A fresh start enables you to cut your losses and take what you've learnt. The criticism isn't a problem - and Cole's research is very impressive. But as young people: we have one clear message. We don't care how you offer information advice and guidance, or what name you give it. We just want to know that things are getting better and that there are less and less case studies like Sal. And if you're positive about doing that, then we are too.

### Meet the team!

**Youth Consultation Peterborough** is an involvement project to include all young people in decision-making. It's base is the Young People's Office, which resourcefully supports young people in decision-making, whilst empowering young people's ownership. The project works with many young people and individual statutory and non-statutory agencies to promote a joined up approach and bring the benefits of partnership work back to the young people. **Jibran Khan, Mel O'Brien** and **Alice Johnson** have all had active roles within the project and are here represent-

ing both their own and other young people's views from Peterborough. **Peter Rouncefield** works at the Peterborough Youth Service managing and supporting the Young People's Office. **Becky Sharp** works at the National Youth Agency in the Active Involvement Team working with authorities to encourage young people's involvement in decision-making.

### What does Participation mean to you?

- Involving in shaping services
- The right of young people
- Having a voice
- Being heard
- Changing things
- Having a meaningful role
- Joining in
- Able to influence
- Empowered
- Genuine respect
- Being consulted
- Given information
- Giving young people power
- Being equal
- Involves serious understanding
- Inviting them to democracy

### My Feelings – Jibrán Khan

From my first impression to my impression now of how I see things here at the conference there is a lot of difference. I did feel a bit awkward about the place I was in and by the people I was surrounded by, however when I got talking to people and telling them about us and finding out what they do I felt very welcomed. I think that the lectures have been interesting and have given me some valuable information that I can use some time later in the future. The thing I most like about this is that we have the opportunity to meet and socialise with loads of different people and to me I think that this is opening new gateways that enable me to go further in life. I hope that this will lead to decision-makers listening to us, going out to listen to other young people, see what they really have to say and make sure they do something about it.

### And some others ...

**Philippa Russell:** A passionate speaker who really told us about how it is to live the life of a disabled young person. Within her examples she had spoken to lots of young people and throughout her work had taken on board their views, listened and responded to their needs. Her tear-jerking stories made me feel that more needs to be done to make sure that this marginalized group of young people get what they really deserve, so they can live their lives as every other young person.

**Anne Weinstock:** She outlined the opportunities available in the Green paper and touched on issues

such as the Opportunity Card, rights and responsibilities and empowerment. Her speech was delivered in a laid back and young person friendly way.

**Louise Morpeth:** This addressed the issues behind organising and restructuring – it's not just about how you rearrange the furniture! It's obvious that a lot of consideration and thought went into her input that was clear, researched and relevant.

### Deliberations

The discussion group's task for this conference is to come up with three recommendations for the green paper. As it is in the consultation stage changes can still take place on the Green Paper if issues arise about it's content.

Some subjects talked about within the groups included ongoing funding for good youth projects; how do we get young people to buy into the opportunity card system? One of the things raised in most groups was where the impetus for the Paper had come from – will young people be able to see the change and will it make their life better? Without this there seems little point in spending more public money on schemes that might not help the people that they are supposed to be reaching out to.

It's difficult being in groups discussing the Green Paper. Some people are quite optimistic whilst others find it easier to talk about the negative points. My group seem more positive questioning how the changes will be supported and promoted. These groups and the people within them do however show a real commitment to trying to make this work.

### Do you know what Article 12 of the UN Convention is?

Of the sample asked 77 per cent knew what Article 12 was about and only 23 per cent didn't.

**Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child gives children and young people the right to have a say in decisions made affecting their lives.**

Our government signed up to this in 1994 and the last report from the UN in 2001 were highly critical of the systems in place to make sure that young people were involved. This statistic is encouraging as it shows that many of the people who are working with, and on behalf of children and young people today are aware of this and can continue to make improvements.

### Youth Matters to Us

As young people, we know the secret to making this document work, and we're happy to share it. Young people are key stakeholders in their own rights and services. As an adult or a young person, you would expect to be able to walk into a medical clinic and be consulted with about the choices that are going to be made about your health. So why is that different for education services, public services, or the workplace?

Consultation does not mean allowing a young person to make all the decisions or take all the power, but it is about respect and equality. Young people respond to consequences positively as long as they exhibit fairness. A young person in the EMA scheme will receive £30 if they go to school every day of the week and hand in all their coursework, and they understand they will lose that privilege if they don't. It's as simple as that. That is consequence.

Thinking about it, how many people develop their self-confidence and developmental skills after they reach adulthood and come across equal respect? More could be done if this existed without fearful boundaries or a lack of communication amongst adults and young people. We have a unique opportunity to encourage young minds to challenge and question their surroundings from an early age. The assumption is often made that young people aren't interested, when really it is the question that is being asked wrongly. So what's the secret?

Active Involvement is a way of accelerating change; involve young people in your interview panels, on your discussion boards (yes, they really are interested) and in your conferences. They can identify issues that you might never actually see, as well as providing solutions for the ones that you can.

### **Young People's Views**

The Roving Reporter team has consulted with other young people on aspects of the Green Paper, here is what they had to say:

#### **Staying Safe**

- 'Feeling safe to go outside and to be around where I live. Feeling that I can do what I want without being

hurt'

- 'There's been a greater presence of police in my area recently and that's made me feel safer'

#### **Achieving Economic Well Being**

- 'Starting at the bottom and working your way up the ladder of life'
- 'Having the chance to get involved in some youth work for me has presented other opportunities and opened other doors'

#### **Enjoying and achieving**

- 'If you help to water the seeds, the flowers will grow'
- 'Meeting targets and dreams and enjoying it along the way.'
- 'A state of mind'

#### **Making a positive contribution**

- 'Be mindful that young people might tell you what you want to hear, but that it's not really what they've got to say'
- 'Lets work in partnership and arrange more projects so that young people can volunteer and contribute.'

#### **Being Healthy**

- 'Healthy communities breed healthy people'
- 'Don't reinforce the medias perception of healthy living and lifestyles.'
- 'Be flexible in your approach.'
- 'More information on binge drinking, there's enough information on dieting.'
- 'You know what all of this comes down to? Active Involvement, for everyone.'

