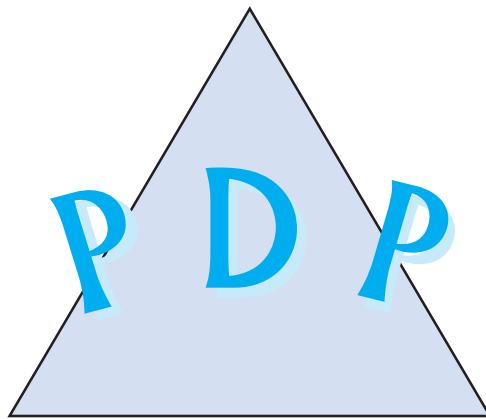


1998-1999



Professional Development Programme

Consultation with Children

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Consultation with Children.

Creating a Climate so that Children can Consult.

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Consultation with Children. Creating a Climate so that Children can Consult.

Cyril Hellier, Coordinator

Foreword

Last year's PDP on the Children Act (Scotland) 1995 was described as a project that teased out the implications of this new development in legislation for Educational Psychologists. It anticipated a follow on, in the form of this project and acknowledged the need for a more thorough "developmental treatment".

The group that elected to take on this challenge was aware of the distinction between the political, legal, moral and the pragmatic perspectives. It decided from the outset to take a broad view of the overall context in which practice is developing and to seek out positive examples of practice in both Psychological Services and other organisations, working with children and young people. The group recognised that it is first and foremost a political statement which is being made in statute with the potentially radical aim of introducing, through legislation, the concept of Children's rights into this country. The group was aware that the earlier ratification at national and local government level of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, had not lead to significant change in agency practices. Two Children's Rights Officers across Scotland were the only tangible manifestation located, these being within Social Work Departments. No radical practice could be identified within Educational Psychology, consequent to this ratification. As a result two subgroups focused upon different aspects:

The first included **Liz Conn, Jane Hazelden, John Jamieson, Archie MacLulich and Mary McKenzie, (Stirling, Edinburgh, Saltcoats, Western Isles and Gorebridge respectively)**, considering the legislative, political, theoretical and comparative context in which consulting with children is taking place. It was recognised that psychologists were working in rapidly changing times, with Ministers making statements in a pre - election period and with significant activity taking place across agencies, with new funds being made available for specific projects. The backdrop of movement towards social inclusion and more effective citizenship in an existing context of decentralisation, appeared to add to the

increasing climate of exhortation for agencies at all levels to recognise the rights of children. This required yet another consideration of all relevant guidelines and recent policy statement, as well as searching out any ongoing evaluation studies.

The second subgroup included **Elly Alexander, Alison Gardner, Cyril Hellier, Madge Hashagen and Carol McGarry, (Dunfermline, Clydebank, Perth, Dalmarnock and Glasgow respectively)**. It asserted that psychologists are in a unique position to work at the three levels of authority policy development, school development and case consultation, in helping to create a climate of consultation. It recognised effective practice to be an ongoing process which examines all systems within an education authority. Active networking rather than formal surveying characterised their approach, revealing a diversity of policies and practices. Sharing ongoing examples of development in practice, resulted in local working groups of psychologists within authorities being in effect, a part of the process of the PDP; this was a welcome development in its own right, representing a continuation of the spirit and experience of last year's project.

The value of networking within the group was evidenced by the collaborative decision to develop inservice training materials for schools; the PDP cycle did not allow these to be trialled before time of write up, but it was agreed to use the CPD conference in September as a time for the whole group to reflect on the outcome of their implementation. In this way the time of the PDP has been extended beyond the usual hectic May to April period.

A third subgroup working in an overlapping and a parallel manner responded to the request of ADES to develop court training for Educational Psychologists. It included **Cyril Hellier, John Jamieson and Mary Mckenzie**, It was not their intention to focus on work of psychologists in preparing children to be witnesses. Rather the link was made, that helping children to participate in an unfamiliar and potentially daunting process of communication and decision making, has parallels for psychologists who feel relatively deskilled in the area of presenting in court.

It was able to commission and evaluate, with the help of the whole group and other interested others, a training day. The outline included an overview of the Scottish Legal System, listening to children with understanding (taking account of contextual effects on what children and young people say), written reports for court and preparation for going to court. Recommendations and resources to assist others in offering complementary training to existing resources were made.

A list of contributors with current addresses is included in the Appendix, at the end of this document. Please make direct contact with the authors if you would like further information.

The Political Context

Introduction

This report starts by considering where 'consulting with children' sits within the current political frame of reference for education in Scotland. It is perhaps useful for educational psychologists and colleagues from other child-centred professions to focus on three particular areas of the current political agenda concerning education for children and young people in Scotland. First, 'participation and citizenship,' concepts which have been introduced into school curricula the length and breadth of Britain - what progress is being made at local policy level? Second, at the European policy level, in considering what is currently happening at grassroots level in Scotland - in the context of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention for the Child, how well do we compare? Finally, at governmental (Scottish Office) level, what are the policy and practice implications for consulting with children in light of the most recent guidelines for Raising Standards in Scotland?

Participation and Citizenship

There has been much political posturing regarding the notions of pupil participation and citizenship - Tony Blair in his 1997 election manifesto, highlighted the need to raise educational standards to create better, more informed citizens of the future. However this is not a new idea from New Labour - in the early seventies educationalists were promoting the idea of pupil participation in a bid to introduce democratic structures into British schools. There was political interest in developing participation at local grassroots level; community councils were also being encouraged by regional authorities to off-set the intimidatory effect of the larger regional administrations. Current political interest has promoted participation and citizenship in the community and in the school curriculum; pupil participation within democratic structures has been the norm in European schools for many years. As well as raising the concept of citizenship and participation in schools, local authorities are now also required to show evidence of their high level of awareness of the need for the inclusion of children and young people's views in their Children's Services Plans.

However a recent COSLA conference highlighted the lack of consultation with children and young people by unitary councils in drawing up their Children Services Plans, A survey of Scottish Service Plans indicated a high level of lip-service to consulting with children, in language used which was not matched by actual practice. It appears that there may be danger of undermining good practice by tokenism in policies and implementation systems. Further discussion of Children's Services Plans is continued below.

There is a clear political drive in Britain towards citizenship via social inclusion. The education sector is highlighted in political oratory as having a major role in defining and developing the European ideal of citizenship. That schools are viewed politically, as the ideal place to begin social education, is clearly indicated in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (Paris:UNESCO,1994); it states that a major part of the route to a wholly inclusive and just society is within the education system in which children grow up. The statement asserts that a commitment to educational inclusion will benefit the wider social community.

In light of this recent development, Save the Children in Scotland commissioned a report on how schools and the new unitary councils were progressing pupil participation. This report provides an overview of the different ways in which five schools and two local authorities have approached the development of pupil participation:

“The studies were carried out in order to gain an insight into how pupil participation is developed in schools or more widely by local authorities. There are very limited materials available to teachers on how pupil participation can be developed and no source in Scotland of training for pupils and teachers, who wish to develop pupil councils or other structures of participation.”

(Campbell, 1998)

A number of themes emerged from these case studies -

- All of the schools took a traditional 'election' approach to their councils; none had considered the less structured approach of open forums to allow pupils to express their views.
- Communication of information and issues discussed at council meetings appeared difficult to disseminate effectively or in an interesting way to the whole school; staff commitment was important for effective communication and in many cases, staff used councils for endorsement of new school policies.
- Some schools had set clear parameters for issues to be discussed at council meetings; no doubt fearful of contention? In most schools, agendas tended to relate to in-school issues, whereas two city-wide fora illustrated how pupils could consider broader educational issues.
- Concerning the comfort and style of meetings, the case studies indicated that while informal seating was viewed as an important feature there was still a reliance on the traditional conventions of minutes and agendas. There is perhaps more need for an innovative spontaneous approach?

- Time must be allocated to staff to support pupil participation more widely across local authority areas – in this way the potential for pupil participation to go beyond school issues is increased.
- Pupils interviewed were clearly in favour of pupil participation and did not expect that all their requests would be granted. They did expect their views to be taken seriously and, where possible, action taken. Pupils also wanted to understand the reasons for no action on requests.

The feedback from these case studies has clear implications for training for both staff and pupils if pupil participation is to be progressed seriously. Those local authorities who are sincere in their commitment to pupil participation will make provision for effective and innovative training. At present there is no national body in Scotland to provide the necessary framework for training and development in pupil participation. Save the Children's timely report serves to highlight that children's rights, as expressed in Article 12 of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, are not being given a high profile within Scottish education legislation and policy.

Article 12

In the UK we take pride in our statutory education system which has long established the child's right to full-time education between the ages of 5 - 19 years. On the face of it, this would appear to reflect the basic tenets of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However if we compare our own current legislation, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, with the full meaning of Article 12 of the Convention, we should recognise that there is no tradition of civil and political rights for children in the process of education. The Children (Scotland) Act asserts that the " needs of the child are paramount" but nowhere in the legislation is there a legal right for the child to have some control or say in their education. In future test cases, it may be extrapolated out of the Children's Act but to date, it is not a ' right ' within education law. Therefore the UN might rightly question the governments commitment to the ethos of the Convention; part of the international agreement was acceptance of the UN's role in monitoring the implementation of all 54 Articles, This process requires that each participating government report regularly to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, on progress towards implementation.

The Children's Rights Development Unit, an organisation independent of the government, was set up in March 1992 to monitor the UN Convention. It evaluates progress on how far the principles and standards of the Convention are respected in the UK. In collaboration with practitioners, organisations and young people, the Unit has produced the UK Agenda for Children; the Agenda includes the following:

- identifies where law, policy and practice currently falls below the standards in the Convention
- identifies gaps in knowledge which make it impossible to monitor how far the rights in the Convention are respected
- provides examples of good practice which illustrate how the Convention can be used to promote the rights of children and young people
- makes recommendations for change necessary to comply with the Convention's principles.

(King, 1998)

In considering the political context of consulting with children one should be aware of Article 12 - 'the right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any manner or procedure affecting the child' - this covers all matters, including education. To comply with, let alone willingly embrace, the spirit of Article 12, there is a need to address not only the right to statutory education provision, but also the right to equal access to it as well as the rights of children and young people to be heard, within the education system. Adherence to the ethos of Article 12 means ensuring the quality of every child's learning experience in schools and respecting children's civil rights in *every* aspect of their education.

'If we are to move towards the implementation of children's rights in the UK, we have to go beyond the traditional yardsticks of literacy levels and attendance rates, important though these are and develop more sophisticated measures of evaluating the extent to which our educational provision complies with all the principles embodied in the convention.'

(King, op cit)

Setting Targets

What does the Scottish Office say regarding consultation with children and young people? In the last decade there has been an avalanche of circulars, documents and guidelines pertaining to raising standards in Scottish schools. This has included a focus on developing an inclusive education system for all children with special needs; since Effective Provision for Special Educational Needs (SOEID 1994) education policy has targeted provision for children with special needs in mainstream schools. This circular was generally welcomed by parents and professionals - it is difficult to remember now but was there just an assumption that children were as happy with this policy? There is certainly a political assumption now that the views of children should be taken on board, in the development of an inclusive education system. Helen Liddell, Minister for Education , asserted:

“Professionals can use this Manual to evaluate key aspects of their practice, such as how well they work together, how effectively they involve parents and how well they take account of the views of children and young people.”

(SOEID 1998)

It is suggested here that whilst the concept of consulting with children and young people had been widely promulgated in policy documents, there is very little actual evidence of effective consultation with children in practice. The 1997-1998 PDP on the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 highlighted the staff development implications for developing the very specific skills required by professionals to ensure effective practice. Indeed it was suggested that within the Educational Psychology profession there was a need for honest reflection on the special skills needed to elicit the views of children and young people. In the course of researching this current PDP it was evident that those staff development implications have yet to be addressed in any area of education. The following section on SPIN attempts to unpick aspects of practice, including one’s underlying system of values, in order to develop this reflection. The pace of meeting the deadlines for quality assurance and curricular development in order to raise standards, represents major demands upon teachers. Psychologists may have slightly more time to reflect and plan staff development during summer holidays, but teachers have limited time to receive this. Staff development in building consultation skills may well have to compete with more pressing demands on head teachers for quality assurance targets.

During the final collation stages of this report, yet a further pace setter had been issued in the latest stage of Setting Targets (SOEID 1999). This document highlights the principles of good practice in setting clear, evaluable targets for IEPs in special education establishments and mainstream schools. Whilst this does not necessarily reflect good professional practice across education, it asserts that pupils will be involved in this process:

“It is important that the targets set are challenging and ensure that the level of attainment sought is as high as possible. For this reason, parents, pupils and other professionals all have an essential contribution to make.”

(SOEID 1999)

This combined with the requirements in the Good Practice Manual (Scottish Office 1999), which was being distributed at the time of writing, all add up to a powerful impetus to create a “culture” of consultation, actively involving children and young people. Pupils will in the majority of cases, need to be enabled to become effectively involved in the IEP target setting process. From the point of social equality it is those less articulate children in areas of social deprivation who will, once again, be disadvantaged by that opinion not being taken into account. Who should be consulting with and thus enabling these pupils? EPSEN states that responsibility for IEPs rests with the class teacher; it is widely accepted that many teachers

have yet to develop the prerequisite skills for effective consultation. Psychologists are cited throughout Raising Standards Setting Targets as having *an important role* to play in the process of target setting, It would not be unrealistic to foresee that many teachers will interpret this as meaning that IEPs are the psychologists responsibility!

In the real world of 'most classrooms' there are teachers who have still to recognise the pragmatic need to consult with children and are therefore unlikely to spend much time on this important aspect of target setting. It is likely to be viewed as part of the personal and social development programme, itself the Cinderella of 5-14 Curriculum and Assessment. Regretfully it is easier, although irksome, to produce tabulated evidence of IEP targets for quality assurance purposes; effective or otherwise, than it is to illustrate the effective and meaningful involvement of children and young people in this process

The date set for full implementation of this latest goal for quality assurance in Scottish schools is August 2000 - within the first year of the new Scottish Parliament.

Who Moved the Goalposts for Consulting with Children?

This section of the report has attempted to raise awareness of the political context of consulting with children. By highlighting where policy and practice currently stand in Scotland, at local and national level, this report does reflect how far removed practice is from the spirit and guidelines of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Legislation in the form of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 has made some provision for the civil rights of children and young people but recent surveys indicate that this has led to little more than tokenism at governmental and local authority level. Policy guidelines imply and assume the involvement of children and young people but the pace of the implementation makes it very difficult to put children's views in the educational frame.

Consulting with children and young people should be reflected in the way professionals interact in their work with them - it is not an add on. If one approaches working with children and young people as an interactive social process which accepts that they have something valuable to contribute to the understanding of issues relating to them, then the legislation becomes less necessary to ensure consulting with children. However, it is important to be aware of the political agenda and context, if the intention is to effectively consult with children.

When children and young people recognise they are being listened to in a meaningful way, the process creates a climate of trust; this theme is developed later in reflecting on the rationale for video interaction guidance. They trust that their views will be accepted as meaningful elsewhere; this is the democratic ethos. A government which espouses the concept of democratic citizenship and encourages its children and young people to embrace

this concept should ensure that it maintains a listening ethos. The future is in the hands of children and young people.

Legislation although a necessary step is not adequate in ensuring a listening ethos - individual belief in the moral and pragmatic need to consult and the political will to embrace the views of children and young people, would be more honest and meaningful within the spirit of Article 12.

There is much to learn from listening to and consulting with children and young people, as the following section which explores the work of non-statutory organisations highlights. The section discussing the theoretical concept of meaningful interactive dialogue with children and young people further highlights the professional skills psychologists might bring to the consultation process. Whilst the recent surveys, cited above, might suggest that there is still a long way to go in creating a culture of consultation with children in Scotland, the aim of this report is to explore the underlying principles involved and to highlight those 'pockets of good practice' the authors know are out there. Evidence of consulting with children and young people is produced from networking across services; these ideas are further developed with regard to the practice of psychologists and other professionals in schools, with illustration of ongoing development.

Legislation and Practice

Emerging Issues

In the report Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (PDP 1997-98) an initial attempt was made to define the context within which psychologists could execute their professional responsibilities as the Children (Scotland) Act was implemented by local authorities. The analysis of the degree of fit between the Children (Scotland) Act and other relevant legislation conducted at that time, still stands as an informed and focused contribution to the process of clarifying the nature of the impact which the legislation would have on professional practice. The report also explored other aspects which had to do with the convergence of good professional practice and the spirit and intentions of the Act as discerned by the working group.

Since the last PDP report a series of policy developments have been promoted by the Scottish Office and a number of these connect with the central thrust of those elements of the Act which concern consulting with children. These policy developments also reflect back on the legislative imperatives which demand or advocate consultation with parents concerning the education and welfare of their children. The following policy developments would appear to fit within this emerging framework; these shifts in policy will in the long term

influence the nature of professional practice within the educational system and also in its transactions with other statutory and voluntary bodies.

The Special Needs Discussion Paper issued by the Scottish Office talked of, “a society where every person has the opportunity to develop their skills and to participate in society to the fullest possible extent”.

(Liddell 1998)

The emerging set of policies that encourage various aspects of inclusion appears to rest strongly on adequate consultation with children, their parents and others concerned with their welfare. Inclusion is defined by the Minister in her address as “ the ongoing attempts of organisations to move away from systems, practices and procedures which exclude or marginalise or treat as different individuals or groups of pupils”.

Policy developments concerning measures to counter exclusion from schools and the proposed introduction of the pilot project to develop 60 community schools, carry with them a set of expectations which emphasise a renewed and more thorough commitment to working with children who experience difficulties in their growth and development. Further, these developments echo the underpinning principles laid out in the discussion paper, which concerned involvement of parents in the education of their children, closer collaboration between the school and statutory and voluntary agencies and, of particular significance, consultation with children. In the document issued by the Scottish Office in November 1998 it is stated:

“Proposals (for community schools) must demonstrate that, from the viewpoint of service users, (the pupils and their families), the new Community Schools will offer a coherent range of services. All pupils will have a personal learning plan”.

The manual of Good Practice which was recently introduced (op cit) and the publication of “Raising Standards” (Audit Unit, February 1999) represent further influences on the nature of practice which the Scottish Office would wish to develop within and between professional disciplines. It is clear in these documents that existing practices in relation to the development of individualised educational programmes, for example, will be subjected to more rigorous scrutiny and, also, that psychologists will have a central contribution to make:

“Psychologists have a particularly important role in helping teachers to make accurate predictions about a pupils potential for making progress”. (Paragraph 39 R.S-S Targets)

“Careful assessment of the pupils special educational needs. This should include teachers’ classroom based assessment and observation; assessment from psychologists involved with the pupil; parental perspectives of the pupil’s strength and skills; and pupil self-assessment where appropriate” (Paragraph 37 as above)

Such examples in the field of special education can be repeated and on revisiting the previous PDP report in the light of those developments, it can be discerned that a number of

these policy options were predicted with a fair degree of accuracy. In this respect, the emerging culture of collaboration and consultation - as encouraged by the spirit of the Children (Scotland) Act - will continue to influence the nature of professional practice as the proposed changes in policy gather momentum.

The document "Protecting Children" (HMSO 1998) also reflects a number of the policy initiatives, cited above, in relation to the field of child protection in the context of inter-agency co-operation . For example:

"The UN Convention on the rights of the Child and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 set out the principles and themes which underpin good practice in work to protect children. At the heart of these is listening to children and families and taking account of their views".

(Summary Overview 1.1 - 1.13)

The implementation of these legislative intentions in practice settings is expressed in explicit and unequivocal terms within the document:

"Staff working with children at risk should help the child to express his or her views and should take these into account when making decisions about what to do next".

(Paragraphs 1.14)

Further, in addition to making contributions to the realisation of the above practice developments, psychologist could also provide assistance in the design and implementation of personal safety programmes within schools which seek to emphasise the preventative dimension. The responsibility carried by staff in education and shared by all adults in contact with children, is stated as follows:

"Teachers are likely to have the greater level of day to day contact with children and they are able to contribute a great deal to the assessment of individual children".

In the previous PDP document, specific reference was made to the "special facility" which psychologists have, or should have, in terms of "ascertaining the child's wishes and feelings"; the field of child protection with its particular challenges is an example of a context in which such skills could be more securely located.

Finally, psychologists are likely to become more involved in the design and delivery of training courses which incorporate such considerations as consultancy with children and collaboration. The consideration above of emerging trends in child protection can be cited as a relevant area but in the general field of special education parallel developments in training are also being given more emphasis. The development of a National SEN Advice Service from April 1999 by the Scottish Officer carries with it enhanced emphasis on advocacy, mediation and consultation with children and parents:

"As well as parents, effective partnership must include the views of children and young people with special educational needs themselves. It is important that we listen to all our children and young people and where necessary assist them to express their views and

participate in the planning of their educational provision”.

(Liddell 1998)

It is noted that in conjunction with the proposals cited above, concerning policy development, the Scottish Office also intend to increase funding for the number of psychologists trained (from April 1999 to 34 trainees per annum).

The National SEN Training Coordination Project has also received additional funding and the nature and extent of training opportunities for all staff involved with children with special needs will be tackled at the local community level. Psychologists clearly have a significant contribution to make to those developments which are perhaps more ecological and contextual in emphasis, than other programmes in the past.

In the previous sections considerable emphasis on consultation with children and young people was discerned in recent policy documents from the Scottish Office and related training initiatives. The Beattie Committee on Post School Education and Training of Young People with Special Needs is due to report in mid 1999 and the recommendations are likely to influence policy on the processes involved in the conduct of effective future needs assessments.

A number of authorities have developed draft assessment papers which incorporate the views of young persons as a significant contribution to the process; in addition such assessment is by its very nature collaborative and should involve strong inter-agency linking. The central thrust of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 concerns corporate endeavour, yet accumulated research would suggest that collaborative working is more effectively grounded in pre-school assessment procedures than in the latter stages of secondary education. In 1997, Social Work Services Group stated in a guidance and regulations document on the Act:

“Education departments should notify Social Work Departments of impending assessments of special educational needs involving children with disabilities so that the Social Work Department may consider whether a conjoint assessment of needs under the 1995 Act should be undertaken”.

(Vol .I.T.Ch.(SC)Act)

As emphasised in the previous PDP documents (P18) the moral arguments for consultation with children concern their right to be listened to and to have their views taken into account across their life span and, in particular, in building bridges between school and employment and training.

Hubbard (1992) raised a number of searching questions regarding the adequacy of provision for young people leaving school; this area of work is likely to be subject to more scrutiny in the future. The Scottish Office launched a review of services for people with learning disabilities in December 1998 and a report will be submitted to Ministers in late 1999. It can

be anticipated that the quality of consultation with young people will be an important element in this review. The previous section of this report deals with the political context and traces some of the connections between the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. It is anticipated that there will be further detailed investigations into the effectiveness of the measures taken by local authorities in responding to the needs of children with disabilities and also to the demands of the distinctive Scottish legislative focus on children affected by disabilities.

In conclusion, it can be noted that a number of major legislative and practice developments have been initiated by Government in the past year. It is noted that the UN Convention itself was drafted without much direct consultation with children and this deficiency in practice was repeated in the formulation of the basis of the White Paper. The Social Work Services Group of the Scottish Office did, in fact, fund the "Speaking Out" consultation exercise with children in 1994 but this funding was not continued beyond that year. By the same measure it is noted that there was virtually no consultation with children in the establishment of the first Children's Plans across all Scottish local authorities. While hoping that good practice in consulting with children, in real terms, will emerge in the next round of plans, the statement by Kay and Tisdale (1997) does at this stage appear to depict the nature of challenge in this respect:

"While the 1995 Act is described as children's legislation, what the Act addresses is a largely state-run and adult-led system, organised not from a child's perspective but from historical and traditional ones".

The intentions of the Government are summarised by Sam Galbraith, Minister for Children's issues in Scotland as follows:

"Most of the time children have only limited opportunity to consider or comment on policies which directly affect them. In the vast majority of instances, adults in the wider community act effectively in their interests. However it remains the case that children have decisions made which affect their interests without their views being taken or needs properly considered. From now on, Scottish Office Departments will consider whether policies will have any direct implication for children's issues or whether they will directly affect children. Departments will also look at the impact of policy on the general welfare of children as well as its effect on organisations working with them."

One can anticipate that Psychological Services will increasingly operate in a political and legislative climate where quality assurance measures will be influenced by these emerging trends. The views of children and young people will be regarded with increasing importance in evaluating the relevance and efficacy of services delivered.

Research/Evaluation

In this section a brief review of relevant research work concerned primarily with the main theme of consulting with children is conducted. Research work has examined the nature of consultation with children in defined settings such as assessment has been conducted by Gersch (1992, 1995, 1996) and Galloway (1999). This area of work merits detailed consideration as a separate topic in its own right; however this section focuses upon studies of service delivery. Since the implementation of the Act and its legislative imperatives in Scotland are relatively recent, research findings are limited at this stage; a number of studies under the Scottish Office research programme on the Children (Scotland) Act are at the time of writing, in process of being commissioned. For this reason reference is made to research work in other relevant applied settings which are considered relevant to the theme of consulting with children.

In February 1997 the Scottish Office published details of the research programme which was focussed specifically on the implementation of Children (Scotland) Act 1995. In addition to the research programme, progress in this respect will also be monitored by the Scottish Office inspection procedures and the analysis of statistical returns. The research programme is concerned with three main themes covering the welfare of the child, legal interventions and children's views. In designing the programme, account was taken of the interests represented across Scottish Office departments and of the Children (Scotland) Act Research Advisory Group (CARA) which was established to 'oversee the development, implementation and dissemination of the programme in 1997'. Most of the current research was commissioned in 1998 and in the initial set of the projects which were supported, there was a heavy loading on Social Work and legal studies topics. In relation to the central theme of this report, consulting with children, it would appear to fit most appropriately into one of the research areas covered by the Central Research Unit (Social Work Branch) which has had responsibility for the evaluation of the issue "local authorities and children's views" (RB7 1997). This topic is one of nine subjects which concern different elements in the implementation of the legislation such as aftercare arrangements, safeguarders and child protection.

It is recommended that Psychological Services maintain close awareness of the emerging form and content of research activity concerning the implementation of the Act since at this stage there would not appear to be many topics which take full account of the contributions made by psychologists to the range of child care and welfare services cited above. This issue becomes even more pertinent if the Implementation of the Act at government and local authority levels is construed as requiring genuine corporate activity involving close collaboration between departments at these different levels (Kay & Tisdall, op cit). Further

consideration could be given to the contribution which psychologists could make to the design of research and evaluation in this area.

In the remainder of this section selected research findings from the wider literature on the general topic of consulting with children is highlighted to emphasise specific areas of interest which emerged during the work of this sub-group. In the first instance a review was conducted of recent and current research in the main institutions in Scotland on topics related to this theme. The Centre for the Child and Society at Glasgow University, for example, conducted a study over two years of the contribution by voluntary organisations in Scotland to the development of plans for children's services (Monaghan et al 1998). The interim report states, "the research suggested that at present local authority staff are mainly preoccupied with developing collaboration internally between departments and externally with other statutory services like Health". In the report there are, however, some examples of local authority planning staff taking account of the contributions of relevant voluntary organisations which have accumulated substantial experience in eliciting the views of children, consulting with them and advocating on their behalf. It is noted that in England, following comprehensive evaluation and critical comment on such plans during the 1990s, the Departments of Health and of Education and Employment considered it necessary to issue guidance to statutory authorities on the need to enhance the level of collaboration with voluntary organisations which represent the views of children and their interests. (Department of Health 1991).

One voluntary organisation, the NSPCC, developed an approach to measuring children's expectations and perceptions of service which could be viewed as having relevant application within the statutory sector. The report on this development which also describes the methodology, states, "By opening up services to comment by children and young people, and by being responsive to these comments, the quality of the service, its responsiveness to the expectations of users, improves".

A further example in the challenging field of child protection was provided by the establishment of a Child Advocacy Project by West Devon Area Child Protection Committee in 1993. In describing the genesis of the project Scutt states, "Ironically, one result of the Children Act is that more parents are attending child protection case conferences but there has not been a marked increase in children being involved". The project was established as a pilot venture to "address Social Services failure to consult young people who were subject to child protection investigation". The evaluation report on this project concluded that the children and the professionals involved in the cases studied, gained from this experience which had as its primary objective, the improvement of children's involvement through consultation and representation. In this respect it may be useful to consider the definition of empowering used in the Youth Work Statement for Wales:

"Empowering is enabling young people to understand and act on the personal social and political issues which affect their lives, the lives of others and the community of which they are part" (Tresieder 1997).

The situations depicted above, covering aspects of the planning process, advocacy and child protection, illustrate some of the deficiencies that can arise in different contexts if consultation with children, as recipients of services, is not given priority.

In this respect it is perhaps interesting to mention some of the key public publications and research reports which have influenced policy and practice in human care services in the past two decades concerning the views of clients. Mayer and Timms (1970) presented an influential comment on the extent to which clients and practitioners had different perceptions of casework and they also drew attention to the inequalities in the distribution of power in these relationships. A review of the literature from the time of this study would indicate that most investigations of such issues as client satisfaction, consultation and participation have been focused on adult clients and their views of this power relationship. In the field of child protection, for example Thorburn et al (1992), Wescott (1995) and Barford and Waltam (1992) in combination conclude that:

- little research has been conducted about children's involvement with practitioners;
- involving children in child protection contexts is more difficult in some respects than involving adults;
- good training and preparation is necessary if agencies wish to facilitate the involvement of children in these contexts.

Henderson (1995) states that in the development of services, "the organisation of children's services and facilities had generally had the effect of reinforcing a 'sectorised' approach to working with children." On this basis the search for quality control measures in adult services through the Citizen's Charter, for example, has to take account of the views of adult recipients of services being elicited, yet there is substantial accumulated evidence that these principles have not been extended into children's services. As Croft and Beresford (1990) maintained, persons using services have the right to be consulted about their planning and delivery. The statement made by Arnstein (1969) can be applied to the current lack of involvement of children in significant decision-making:

"Participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows policyholders to claim that all sides were considered but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo."

Arnstein's ladder of participation has been used as a metaphor to describe eight levels of participation for young people in activities. These levels range from manipulation of children at the lowest to 'child initiated and shared decision made with adults', (Flekkoy 1992).

The Children's Act in England imposed a statutory requirement on all Social Services departments to establish complaints procedures concerning services to which children would have access. Lansdown (1995) in reviewing the evidence for the extension of such procedures into the education sectors concluded that children used such procedures in a reasonable and responsible fashion and did not, as was feared, abuse the right to complain. The organisation, Voice for the Child in Care (1992) conducted research that indicated 80% of the complaints were upheld.

In conclusion, Galloway's work (op cit) in particular, draws attention to the impact which legislative and consequent administrative changes can have on professional practice within the special education field. His contributions provide useful caveats regarding the changes in work patterns which can be perceived as being reactive to increasing administrative demands. In the future, research activity is likely to focus on the boundaries between legislation practice and the meeting of the child and the adult in the working context: the above review points to the interplay between these different factors.

Good Practice in Other Organisations

This section considers other organisations with a view to identifying good practice. Brief mention is made of some of the activities of three organisations, namely, the Children's Hearing system, Children in Scotland, and the SOED/SCRE/Quality in Education Centre, University of Strathclyde. A comparatively more in depth look at two others is taken, Who Cares? Scotland and the Castlemilk Youth Voice.

Children's Hearings

The system of Children's Hearings came into operation in 1971. In Scotland it became the responsibility of Hearings rather than courts for dealing with children who may require compulsory measures of care and supervision. There were of course some exceptions, for example, serious offenders continue to be dealt with by the courts.

A Children's Hearing was meant to be much more informal than a court and is made up of 3 voluntary members, at least one man and one woman in the group, of whom one will act as chairperson. An official, known as a Reporter, is responsible for deciding whether or not to

call a Hearing, but it is the panel members who decide what measures of care and control need to be adopted, giving first and foremost attention to the “best interests of the child”.

The most recent legislation to affect the working of the Children’s Hearing system has been the Children (Scotland) Act, 1995. Part II of the Act makes it clear that a Children’s Hearing (a Sheriff, if a court is involved) must take into account the age and maturity of any child with whom they are dealing and in so far as is practicable, they must:

- “give him an opportunity to indicate whether he wishes to express his views;
- if he does so wish, give him an opportunity to express them; and
- have regard to such views as he may express.”

In addition, the Act makes it clear that any child of 12 years of age or over should be considered old enough to form a view. In effect this permits a 12 year old to have their own legal counsel. With this kind of statutory obligation in mind, the Children’s Hearing System in Scotland has responded by extending its customary efforts at consulting with children to soliciting children’s views by use of a standard letter, a copy of which can be found in the Appendix .

While a child could be consulted prior to the Hearing by making use of technologies such as audio tape, video tape, E-mail, etc, in practice, this letter is the main way in which children are invited to share their opinions, prior to the face to face meeting with the panel members.

Children in Scotland

Children in Scotland (CIS) is a national agency which emerged from the Scottish Child and Family Alliance (SCAFA) and the National Children’s Bureau (NCB). Its membership consists of voluntary, statutory and professional organisations as well as individuals working with children and families in Scotland; its *raison-d’être* is to identify the needs and promote the interests of children. It tries to ensure that relevant policies, services and provisions are in place and are of the best possible quality to benefit children. Proper and effective consultation with children and young people is near the top of its agenda. For example it has produced a training manual for professionals called ‘Onwards and Upwards’. The manual is devoted principally to involving disabled children and young people in decision making. It was written by Jane Griffiths of the Consultation and Involvement Trust (Scotland) and contains major sections on why children/young people should be involved in making decisions, what involvement in decision making really entails and how involvement in decision making can be facilitated.

It makes use of the concept of a ladder of participation, referred to in the next section (p38);

how to involve children's and young people's views in the services provided for them, is considered in some detail at both the organisational and Council wide levels.

SOED/SCRE/Quality in Education Centre, University of Strathclyde

The Scottish Office Education Department (SOED), the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) and the Quality in Education Centre at the University of Strathclyde were in fact three separate organisations, all of which have contributed substantially as separate groups to the debate on why and how consulting with children should take place. They were brought together briefly for the purposes of commenting on some good practice evident in a staff development video tape, *Teaching with Care*.

This video was made as a follow-up to the SOED/SCRE publication *Schooling with Care? (1994)* that concerned the development of provision for children and young people who present with serious social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) in school. It was produced by *John MacBeath et al (1996)* in collaboration with Who Cares? Scotland and the then Strathclyde Regional Council. In essence the video consists of edited interviews of five young people (10 minutes) about their experiences in mainstream primary and secondary schools in this country. By consulting with children on film in this way, descriptions of the difficulties they faced in and out of school, the support they got from teachers whom they believed cared about them, and the lack of support from those who apparently did not care, were graphically illustrated. Ways in which school life for these children and young people could have been made more emotionally supportive and more educationally beneficial were suggested by the children themselves.

To avoid the accusation of failing to consult with adults, the producers went on to interview a number of primary and secondary school teachers (5 minutes) on the issues raised by the children. The adult responses completed the video consultation exercise. A more in-depth and creative use of video in the form of Video Interaction Guidance (VIG), better known by its Dutch abbreviation SPIN, was also explored by the PDP Consulting with Children group and is commented on in the next section.

Who Cares? Scotland

In the summer of 1975 the National Children's Bureau began a project which they called 'Who Cares?' (Page and Clark, 1977). Its main function was to provide a forum for children, now called 'looked after' children, who live away from their families of origin, often in residential schools, children's homes or foster families. The emphasis was on taking the child's view into account and hopefully providing more meaningful, effective and efficient Social Services. By listening carefully to children talking about their experiences, wants and needs, it was hypothesised that more satisfactory ways could be found for caring for them.

By 1979, the International Year of the Child, the movement had spread to many parts of the UK, including Scotland, though in our country the name 'Speak Out' was used initially. Hanvey (1979) reported on the first few groups that had been set up and on how interested parties could go about starting one, if they wished. In different parts of Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales, they developed along slightly different lines, though there was general agreement about two main purposes; firstly to engage 'looked after' children in dialogue with one another and interested adults on topics which covered the content and quality of their life experiences; secondly to agree on various tasks that could legitimately be pursued by small groups of children. These tasks in themselves should be examples of consulting with children in practice and it was hoped that the processes involved would shed light on what the consumers, customers and stakeholders actually believed and what they needed to promote their development as healthy, happy individuals. An assumption was that young people in care had opinions on what happened to them and their perceptions should be able to contribute substantially to adults' abilities to provide caring and stimulating learning environments.

Who Cares group meetings were usually held on neutral territory, not in offices of any adults participating in the groups or in the residential 'homes' of any of the children. A relaxed atmosphere was encouraged where adults and children were able to operate on a level that was as equal as it could be and in which the rudiments of running meetings were taught. Children were elected as chairpersons, minute takers and treasurers of the groups, with adults acting as 'shadows' for these positions. Participation was on a purely voluntary basis and no selection took place other than a child's willingness and ability to attend meetings.

Some of the adults involved had previously been in care (looked-after children) themselves, while others were simply professional workers with a vested interest in helping young people. The only qualifications or qualities demanded of the adults were that they were 'good with children' and were prepared to do less talking and more listening. In the words of Anthony Bloom (Torrie, 1979):

"It is not enough to look and to see, we must also learn to listen in order to hear. How often it

happens that in a conversation when opinions differ or clash, instead of hearing what our companion says, we glean from his discourse enough materials to be ready, the moment he falls silent (if we can wait that long), to contradict him. The one speaks, the other does not listen. And after the first round one changes places so that in the end each has spoken and none has heard”.

Some of the groups were quick to devise internal rules for their members. The Wakefield Who Cares Group (Hanvey 1979), for example, stipulated at the outset that there was to be complete confidentiality with respect to the information brought to the group. Once established, no outsiders were to be allowed to join except by invitation. No social worker (field or residential) was eligible for membership if he/she also held a statutory responsibility for a boy or girl in the group. This meant that a social worker who was supervising a child by order of the court or by reason of residence in the same establishment, was to be excluded. Finally, only if the group gave permission, could action be taken outside it on the basis of work that had taken place inside it.

Other Who Cares groups produced similar but not identical rules in other parts of the UK, all of them believing, as Raisa Page (1977) succinctly put it:

“Children and young people in care can contribute to providing real remedies in their situation, if only we will take time and infinite pains to pay attention to the minute happenings and details of their daily life as it is lived”.

In London and the Home Counties a group of about twenty members held workshops for over one hundred magistrates, social workers and teachers on themes such as involving children in decision making, reviews and the courts. Experiences at school, leaving care, and corporal punishment were also covered. A similar number of group members in Wandsworth held an open day for professional and lay people. Out of this came a meeting with the Director of Social Work to make recommendations about reviews and the development of video tapes on the experiences of children from residential homes at day school. A Midlands group of only fourteen members was instrumental in setting up another two independent groups, and a Yorkshire group, drawing its members from eight local authorities and one voluntary agency, concerned itself with arranging meetings with lawyers, magistrates and teachers and making video tapes of children’s experiences when leaving care. Also in London, after a large meeting of ‘Who Cares’ groups from all over the UK, an action group was set up with representatives from many groups to publish more widely the opinions of the children. Areas such as the privacy afforded children in residential care, the review system, training for social workers and teachers involved with looked-after children, racial prejudice by staff, leaving care and changing the image of care were commented upon in detail (Who Cares? Action Group, 1979).

In Scotland as well as organising conferences and producing numerous newsletters, a

booklet (Who Cares? [Scotland], 1981) reviewing the progress of the Scottish groups was produced. The opinions of dozens of children and the experiences at the conferences of residential care workers, field social workers, drama tutors and others were recorded in detail. From its humble beginnings as 'Speak Out' in 1978 the Scottish organisation later changed its name to be in line with the rest of the movement and became Who Cares Scotland. It has blossomed into one of the most powerful voices for looked-after children and has become adept at knowing how to consult meaningfully with children. As well as having the committed involvement and participation of an army of children and adults, there is now a paid group of individuals who run the organisation from their main base in Glasgow and sub-offices in other parts of the country. The staff group is made up of young and not so young adults with vast experience of dealing with children's issues, some of the staff having previously worked in the care system and others having been look-after children themselves. At present, most of Scotland is serviced by a Principal Officer, Depute Principal, Clerical Assistant and eight young persons workers, as well as an occasional project coordinator when the organisation has been asked to research a particular topic from a young person's perspective. An example of the latter is the mental health project report 'Listen Up : young people talk about mental health issues in care' (1998).

In discussions with looked-after children and staff of Who Cares Scotland, it becomes abundantly clear what they consider to be the essential elements of meaningful consultations with children:

- active and genuine participation by the young people is necessary if they are to be consulted properly. (Incidentally, the term 'young people' rather than 'children' is their preferred title).
- there should be a fun side or leisure aspect to any events which are organised in order to tap into the young people's views.
- there must be an outcome or a product that is visible to them, if not immediately then shared with them later.
- the young people must be given at least a glimpse of the 'big picture'. This may be done by arranging for them to meet decision makers such as counselors, directors of services, etc. By so doing professionals begin to feel that the young people 'have the ear' of top officials or employers and consequently begin to treat them not 'clients' at all, but as young people who matter.

Castlemilk Youth Voice

The information cited here is based on 10 years of personal involvement of one of the authors as a statutory agency representative to Castlemilk Youth Forum, Glasgow; with approximately four years as a member of the Youth Forum Project's Management Group. It was with some sadness that involvement ceased in 1993 to undertake other professional development. A great deal was learned about listening to young people (and adults) during the Forum's early development years.

The update on developments and reflection on the process of youth involvement were discussed recently with Charlie Johnstone, Project Leader since the outset of this successful project. Indeed, reflective practice has always underpinned his commitment to "consulting with young people".

This youth group has evolved gradually over a period of fifteen years. It was initially conceived in 1983 out of Strathclyde Regional Council's Youth Strategy as a statutory response to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The council initiative called for the development of Area Youth Development Teams (AYDTs) to provide grass roots fora for young people so that they could "express an opinion and have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting them".

Like most AYDTs, this forum initially comprised adult representatives from the voluntary, community and statutory sector youth organisations (eg Jeely Piece Club, church groups, Social Work, Community Education and local schools). This group quickly became known as the Castlemilk Youth Forum and, from the outset, asserted its independence from statutory control. Fifteen years on it continues as an independent advocacy service for the young people of Castlemilk.

Membership of the Youth Forum fluctuated considerably during the first ten years, however a core group of adults continued, committed to the moral and ethical concepts of giving children and young people a voice to be listened to. The core group recognised that the promotion of a realistic and viable Forum of young people required full-time commitment from adults; young people need to become aware of their rights to express their opinions before learning how to voice them effectively, in the adult world.

The Youth Forum successfully applied for funding under the Urban Aid scheme; this facilitated the employment of an independent youth development team. The team initially comprised a Project leader, three full time youth workers and a part-time administrative assistant - Castlemilk Youth Forum Project. This team worked under the general direction of the Youth Forum Management group and aimed to provide a direct link between young people on the street and local authority agency decision makers/budget holders. This direct interface slowly generated youth energy and ideas which eventually galvanised into a youth

led Forum.

The Project aimed to have all three youth workers on the streets in the evenings; it aimed to encourage these “street youngsters”, most of whom have been banned from the local authority-run youth clubs, to use the Project offices as a “drop-in” meeting place. Tea, coffee and music were available at no cost - the Project workers would also drop-in for a ‘chat’. Over time, small groups of youngsters with shared interests began to emerge; a music group, a girls’ group, a drama group. The youngsters were beginning to air their opinions regarding the kinds of activities they wanted, but more importantly, they were taking a lead in how these activities should be run. They did want adults to be involved but they wanted adults who listened to their ideas and helped them to reach their goals. The Project enabled the development of these activities via funding materials and sessional staff who had the necessary expertise.

Interwoven into this activity and chat based interaction between young people and Project staff, was the ethos of discussion, decision-making and action. Eventually a few youngsters were keen to come along to Youth forum meetings to listen and put forward their opinions. There was much emphasis on ensuring youngsters were learning good public speaking skills from the adults involved therefore enabling them to convene and effectively run the meetings. The first young person to chair the Forum was voted in approximately nine years after the first Young Forum (AYDT) meeting; she had gained confidence from being involved in many Project meetings as well as taking active part in television political debate. Other young people followed her example and joined the Forum as members, making the Forum, at long last, youth-led. The first Castlemilk Youth Council met in 1993 - ten years after the initial concept was introduced through the Youth Forum.

The Youth Council increased its membership and credibility and in 1993-94 applied successfully to Strathclyde Regional Council for control of the £2m budget, ring-fenced for the full “ground-up” development of Castlemilk Youth Centre. The council decision was greeted with some dismay and concern by local statutory agency managers; the idea of young people having such a high level of “control” in the development of local provision did not sit comfortably with the very adults who were responsible for implementing the council’s youth policy!

Members of the Youth Council, along with a small group of selected adults, became the elected executive directors of the new venture. This group of young people had “hands-on” decision making powers in all areas of this development. In consultation with Youth Project staff, this group were directly involved in interviewing and hiring adult youth workers. The young directors knew instinctively the kind of staff they wanted for their Centre; the criteria for employment included proven experience of working “alongside” young people.

Surprisingly full participation in the design and building of a new centre was achieved, mainly due to the difficulties with technical language and complexities of planning involved! The Youth Centre opened in 1994 and has become a great asset to the amenities for young people in Castlemilk. Five years on, there are still some of the original members of the Youth Council on the executive management team working jointly with the professionals they selected and employed! New members of the Youth Council have since joined the team providing continuity in the concept of real youth participation.

The Youth Council concept continues in Castlemilk and is currently known as Castlemilk Youth Voice. It is still nurtured by the work of the Youth Forum Project. The Youth Voice now constitutes the grassroots level of youth participation in local affairs. Those youngsters interested in pro-active involvement have become involved in the Youth Services Group (or Coordinating Group), which in turn feeds into Castlemilk Partnership. The Partnership group is the community action group with direct links into Glasgow City Council committees and the Scottish Office. Youngsters who are keen to become more directly involved, tend to develop their skills and confidence via the Youth Voice group.

For the purposes of this paper it has been useful to reflect on the principles and processes of this apparently successful Youth Council. According to the Youth Project Leader, from the outset it was clear that the majority of the youngsters in contact with the Project were underachieving in education, many had been regular truants, or had been excluded from school. The youngsters regarded themselves as being “unclubbable” and many had been banned from local statutory clubs. Several youngsters had suffered severe social-familial adversities - some had been on the Social Work Department's child protection register at some point. The Project aim was to target and enable this large group of socially disadvantaged young people.

The philosophy of the Youth forum and Project team was based on a firm belief in the moral and ethical rights of children to be listened to and to have their views taken into account in those matters which impinged on them. Their local community impinged on them; it did not always nurture them and was most certainly not always safe for them. They were viewed as having the right to be involved in changing this for the better. The Project staff were appointed on the understanding that they would fulfil this listening ethos, by engaging with and enabling these youngsters. The Youth Council concept was to be the vehicle which would empower the Castlemilk youth voice; it was vital that this concept was not undermined by lip-service and tokenism.

From the outset, the Forum sought a positive partnership with young people out of which would evolve a mutual exchange of ideas and skills that would lead to a continuing sense of empowerment. So what was the process of this engaging and enabling young people? What was actually happening over this period of time?

Helping young people gain positive interaction and public speaking skills was central to the enabling process. Reflecting on this now, from the perspective of learning theory, it is the concept of “scaffolding” which emerges as the most cogent explanation of the enabling process. By providing a framework for inducting youngsters into the “how and why” of public meetings and by working alongside them in the process, the youngsters were enabled. In theory then, did these youngsters learn how to manage meetings and convey their opinions effectively in exactly the same way as toddlers learn how the world works by playing alongside adults who “scaffold” their learning?

At the first point of contact with the Youth Project, all of the youngsters were there for the fun of it - this was somewhere safe, a place where the adults didn't tell you what you should be doing, they were listening, they were involved in activities alongside you and not doing them to you. Fortunately for these young people there was a listening ethos with the Youth forum. The young people were enabled to safely generalise their learning to this new situation. As far as the young people currently involved in the Youth Services Group are concerned their involvement and their skills are being utilised for the city council. For a handful of this group this learning process has contributed to their personal development and they have broken out of the circle of social disadvantage. Hopefully others will follow their brave lead.

It is interesting to note that the Project was up and running prior the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Also the Youth Forum was not governed by policy guidelines which is most certainly the case for many other voluntary sector children and youth targeted projects nowadays. This project therefore suggests that legislation is not necessarily a sufficient condition to bring about a context in which consulting with children and young people takes place; rather the process of engagement is a critical element.

Conclusion

The contributions above evidence the fact that there are innumerable organisations involved with children and young people in one capacity or another. Some claim to speak for children directly and others to be providing information, advice or activities which children want or need. They all play lip service at least to the value and importance of consulting with children. According to most professional adults in the field the days of ‘children being seen and not heard’, are well and truly over.

Psychologists have much to learn from other professionals and other organisations in considering their own practices of consulting with children. Some good practice clearly does exist ‘out there’. One lesson is that psychologists need to develop strategies to learn from the children and young people themselves. They need to find appropriate ways of actively listening and objectively observing what it is children and young people are trying to

communicate to others.

It feels right that the last word in this section should go to a child:

“Do people think we are Martians,
Just come down from the moon?
Or, perhaps we don’t even matter.
People gotta realise soon.”
(Who Cares News, 1978)

Although written twenty ago, teachers, social workers, psychologists and adults in general, still have to respond to the last plea.

Reflections on the Process of Consultation using SPIN *

*This section represents an edited version of a fuller paper which is available from the author, Jane Hazelden.

Doing Better What We Do Anyway?

In reflecting on the special facility psychologists may well have in ascertaining children's wishes and feelings, last year's PDP report quoted Gersch, (1996): "Listening sincerely to children is not simply doing what children ask." It also stated that, "While sensitivity and empathy are vital, they can only be enhanced by the learning of skills which involve the ability to build up communication" and "Practical help and suggestions to enable adults to listen in this way will help build confidence and personal and professional skills that may in time lead to attitude change."

However the previous sections reflect an understanding that one is not just talking about skills; rather the need to develop a climate including contexts in which skills can be used by psychologists and others. Once again last year's report anticipated this:

"Techniques and procedures are ultimately less important than creating a climate in which children feel able to talk to adults freely."

This section argues that the rationale underlying SPIN is helpful in further developing principle and practice from the above conclusions. It takes account of the caveat about techniques without context and is essentially non-prescriptive. If applied, SPIN can be combined with good practice in such a way that the techniques of communication become personally meaningful to the users in their context.

Communication is the fundamental building block in working with children; this is particularly pertinent in the development of personal and social development; itself a goal of teaching.

"Taking a Closer Look at Promoting Social Competence", (Scottish Office 1998) states:

"Promoting social competence implies an integrated understanding of how children develop emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively. As your staff develop shared understanding in their discussion of the separate aspects of feelings thought and action, you should be able to draw out insights and influence each other."

This document suggests that all staff in schools have a responsibility to "draw out insights" in these aspects of children's developments, "emotion" and "cognition". A challenge given that they are difficult to define in practice.

From the literature on early communication, we know that adults' close observation of what children do, combined with willingness to attribute meaning (to assume the child has a

personal view) is essential to the creation of a context in which children will communicate. The question arises, what can psychologists do to detect and reflect whether such a climate is present?

The document further advises that schools should provide contexts in which children can learn to behave and express emotion "effectively and appropriately", recommending a search for practice in other schools, using their resource guide. By this means, schools would gain familiarity with techniques which psychologists would endorse as supporting communication, such as Circle Time, described later in this report.

The document also touches on ethos factors which are similarly difficult to define, but which are nonetheless influential within a school or other setting; the role of staff in "modelling socially-competent behaviour" and their "acknowledgement of areas which require development." Having defined social competence earlier, to include "the ability to understand another point of view" and "knowledge of how to interpret other people's emotional states and behaviour", it is evident that to assess whether a setting is one in which staff and children show such competence (and are creating a climate in which they listen and consult with one another), it is necessary to demonstrate not only what the staff say and do towards children/parents/each other, but also what the children say and do towards staff/parents/each other.

Important though this evidence for "social competence" is, what is also needed is to evaluate what actually happens at the points of contact between the people, the evidence that shows how the saying and doing are done; showing that these contacts are not merely transactions but interactions.

David Wood (1982) provides compelling examples of the contrast, in transcripts of interchanges between two teachers (of hearing impaired children) and their pupils. He demonstrates that interaction is essentially a two way exchange and is distinct from a transaction in which one delivers and the other is delivered to.

In a setting for children where the staff have worked together in recognising that the core of their work is this process of interaction, of human to human contact, then this continual recognition creates a "listening"/ "consultation" climate; this promotes relationships in which consultations with children arise in the natural course of events. Consultations which are interactive allow adults and children to experience small revelations, new or unexpected understandings; these are the touchstones of human/human encounter. This is what adults may hope and expect will arise from a "consultation" between a child and psychologist.

There are conditions which support relationships in which a sense of safety and trust can help overcome these fears of revelation, of how they will be received or the effect their views will have on others. For much of the time, psychologists do not have the dedicated time and

do not work in conditions in which they can build such a relationship with a child. So, often, as they work with those adults who do have regular contact, and who are in a position to build the relationships, they are looking for what can be done, to help promote conditions that move the relationship towards trust and empowerment of the child; shifting the locus of control within the relationship so that the child is actively listened to.

Techniques which facilitate the flattening of power operate at different levels; Table 1 offers examples of practice that can help schools to promote a culture of consultation. They are becoming more widely known in schools in Scotland and resources available are publicised through for example, "Taking a closer look at promoting social competence " (op cit). Where implemented, they should help schools to become more "listening" so far as the conflicting demands placed upon them allow.

However one cannot easily teach consultation, any more than one can teach democracy. What can be done is to promote conditions in which school staff, families, child-workers etc and the children can experience and understand how it feels to be consulted, i.e. to have their individual voices heard and included at times of decision which are important to them. In effect SPIN provides one method of promoting this process of understanding, of readiness to hear the individual voice in a child. Its purpose is to systematically create a heightened awareness of the verbal and non-verbal actions which promote positive interaction; it is a tool which makes intangibles more easily described and discussed. It is because of this that its underlying rationale is useful in drawing out a rationale for consulting with children.

Table: 1 Strategies which help schools to promote a culture of consultation.

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What SPIN adds	Examples	Techniques
The self-modelling process to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Contact Principles for Communication develops peoples' ownership. (when people can see what they are doing that works well, come to understand how and formulate why)	Jenny Mosley and others Paired reading Golden time (chance for upper school pupil to play with young pupil as reward) Good friends (chance for upper school pupil to play with those who have not got a friend today)	Circle Time Peer/cross age Tutoring/mentoring
Research-founded support for apprenticeship as the way to acquire and transmit communication and social skills Supervision structure ensures "effectiveness of delivery"- Quality Control.. cf. "taking a closer look at promoting social competence, p.18)	"Circle of Friends" "Peacemakers" (teaches active listening to children using circle time and drama workshop format	Peer-mediation Anti-bullying strategies Attunement strategy PAM(positive assertive management) Negotiated classroom rules (the useful part of Batpak) Pupil Council (potentially) "Drop-in" consultancy

The Contact Principles in Table 2 are the basis for analysing communication in SPIN. The Contact Principles are the observable elements of behaviour (verbal and non-verbal) which mediate the development of children's and adults' communication, and combine to form patterns of communication promoting development for adult and child. In day to day communication these patterns and elements are largely responded to automatically. The contact principles and their use in SPIN were developed by Harry Biemans in the Netherlands originally to help restore contact between adolescents 'in care' and their families, but are now widely applied across a variety of settings. The inspiration for Biemans' approach was Colwyn Trevarthen and Penny Hubble's work on mother-infant

interaction, from their micro-video analyses they formulated the Theory of Primary and Secondary Intersubjectivity, where adults assume the potential for purposeful agency in children; children learn this from adults and communication evolves jointly between them. Bieman's approach also draws on theories of mediated learning (Vygotsky, Brunner, Feuerstein), and theories of change using self-modelling and video-feedback (see Dowrick and Biggs, 1983). Biemans' V.I.G. approach follows an explicit belief system in common with other approaches based on the values of empowerment.

How can SPIN help psychologists to support work in developing a culture of consultation and listening to children? Underlying principles of positive communication and a belief in empowerment underpin the development of a culture of consulting and listening to children. The key question arises, how can one ensure that these principles and intentions manifest in practice? The monitoring and feedback of representative interactions provide a systematically supervised method to simultaneously model and develop good practice, in receiving children's initiatives. It revalues one's skills as an observer, providing a precision method of (verbal and non-verbal) discourse analysis which is clearly observable and can form a shared focus of attention, from which further discourse evolves (again verbal and non-verbal).

Table: 2 Contact Principles derived from SPIN

Table: 2 Contact Principles derived from SPIN

<u>CLUSTERS</u>	<u>PATTERNS</u>	<u>ELEMENTS</u>	
1. Initiative and reception (readiness to receive, showing that you receive q.v. "active listening")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being attentive 	Turning towards someone Looking at someone Friendly intentions Friendly facial expressions Friendly postures	Primary intersubjectivity (2 subjects in any interaction. Mutual recognition of feelings.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attuning oneself 	Participation Nodding Naming Saying "yes"	
2. Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming a group 	Involvement in group looking round acknowledging reception	Secondary intersubjectivity (Sharing a task. Development of co-operative understanding.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making turns 	Giving and taking turns Evenly sharing turns	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operation 	Joint transactions Helping one another	

<u>CLUSTERS</u>	<u>PATTERNS</u>	<u>ELEMENTS</u>	
3. Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming opinions Giving content Decision-making Developing effective learners 	<p>Giving/accepting/exchanging/ investigating opinions.</p> <p>Mentioning / developing /in-depth discussion of subjects</p> <p>Proposing /accepting/ amending agreements</p> <p>Inviting and supporting prediction: Task description / judgement of time needed / approach /difficulties /result</p> <p>Inviting and supporting review: Progress description / evaluation of predictions / attribution of achievements / accessing prior knowledge/ goal setting</p>	Mediated Learning
4. Conflict management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naming contradiction Restoring contact Making transactions 	<p>Investigating intentions</p> <p>Return to 1-2-3</p> <p>Establishing viewpoints</p> <p>Complying with rules</p>	

Table: 2 Contact Principles derived from SPIN (continued)

As we are aware from Gentle Teaching, children's (and adults') initiatives are often fleeting and low-key, (even in the able-bodied, expressed in glances, gestures- almost never in writing!). Receiving initiatives positively is not straightforward. It can be very difficult for those low on the ladder of power to be received, to have their voices heard. This is especially so for children as well as those who support and care for them (both unpaid), or work with them (often on low wages), in our society where money and power are closely related.

The experience of having your voice heard is the essence of consultation, the human encounter. It is an empowering experience. It can happen at any level; but often, parents and workers do not notice initiatives, they can respond to them negatively or take over and dominate the interchange. When this becomes a pattern, positive initiatives reduce; they never disappear entirely. Even "People with severe disabilities go on trying to communicate in the face of constant frustrations, misunderstand and ignorance," (Children in Scotland 1998). However the opportunity for mediated learning is lost. Where the spontaneity of positive interchange ceases, children and adults may separate themselves or attempt to maintain contact by more negative initiatives. In this way a cycle of negative contacts develops, no-one's voice is well received. The result is a disempowering experience, which can happen at any level

The qualities that the practice of SPIN brings, are in the creation of conditions of trust, safety and flattening of power, which promote "consultation" i.e. willingness to explore and reveal, risk imaginatively, play and make initiatives. Where adults are doing all the work, there is too much control. In SPIN the focus is on the child's initiatives; One looks for what the adult does/can do to encourage the child to make initiatives. The Contact Principles are about creating a climate in which children offer initiatives - this can therefore be one definition of a "listening ethos".

SPIN, although generally non-directive in content, continually requires the Guider to model "low power" moves, which are known to promote initiatives (taking short turns, leaving spaces, giving time and receiving help). This creates a climate in which unexpected contributions are encouraged, a climate for creative encounters. "The imagination, like certain wild animals, will not breed in captivity" (George Orwell 1942). This openness is seen as likely to foster better two way communication; it argues for example, for the consideration of less formal opportunities for exchange within pupil councils suggested earlier.

In SPIN, even where the child is contending with disabilities, every action, gesture or utterance can be seen as a potential initiative, as a sign the child is making human contact. As in Solution Focused Therapy, SPIN does not focus on "the problem", or "the deficit ". The

focus is shifted to look for what works, what supports meaningful intention in the child's action: "let's see what you do well together".

SPIN specifically aims to enhance good communication and in the course of feedback, the client comes to their own solution. It provides a distance regulator. It is easier, following the images of successful moments on the screen, to talk about hopes, fears and expectations, and to take the perspective of a responsive parent. This creates a climate of safety and trust. In services trained to use the methodology, diverse application is now evident. This includes training teaching staff from mainstream and special schools to promote a listening and reflective ethos. It also includes direct work with children and young people in providing feedback on social processes and positive initiative.

In consultation it is not just what is said and done, but how and why it is said and done. Where the 3 levels are congruent, the interaction will be perceived as genuine. The ladder of participation in Table 3 graphically illustrates the potential range of involving children in decision making at personal, organisational and Council wide levels.

It usefully offers a yardstick and conceptual framework against which practice can be measured. It explicitly raised issues of participating power sharing which is central to the process of genuine communication and consultation described within the SPIN methodology.

Table: 3 The Ladder of Participation

Table 3: See original publication

Creating the Context for Consultation to Develop

Listening to What Children Have to Say - Effective Education through Consultation

Since the publication of the Plowden report in 1967 a wealth of educational literature has been published exploring the intricacies of the home - school relationship. This work, which includes papers on increasing educational opportunity, improving literacy skills and effective school management, emphasises the central role that parents have in their child's education. Indeed the concept of active parental partnership in education is now firmly embedded in policy, practice and parental expectation.

Background

Despite the acceptance of the importance of parents in education, the role of children within the Scottish educational process remains to be fully explored. Children are, for the large part, the passive partners in the educational system. However as outlined earlier, there now exists a climate which will allow this situation to begin to change and develop. Helen Liddle M.P., Scottish Secretary of State for Education said in a recent speech, "We recognise (however) that the needs of children have to be carefully assessed and the views of parents and children taken into account before decisions on the most appropriate schooling can be made."

This comment can be seen as a clear reference to the importance of consulting with pupils. The implications for schools of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 are now beginning to become clear. Notwithstanding the emphasis on corporate roles and responsibilities contained in the published Children's Service Plans, the current practice would seem to indicate that, as yet, schools and education authorities generally perceive there to be little impact except for children "in need" or those "looked after". The opportunity to widen consultation practices to include all pupils as part of policy and practice development now presents itself, albeit at an early stage. This process is recognised in the Raising Standards document with particular regard to development of individualised education plans, (IEPs) a key feature of which is pupils' self assessment. It is also explicit in the guidance in the Manual of Good Practice (SOEID 1999) which exhorts schools to create a "culture" of participation, with children and young people being central in any decision making process.

As previously mentioned it has become received wisdom within educational practice that a parent who is actively involved in the education of their child has a measurable positive impact on that child's learning style and attitude.

The work on parental involvement and reading attainment by Hewison and Tizard (1980) and Topping (1984) represent well known examples of the wide range of publications on this and related topics. It is a widely held assumption that pupils are active in their own learning; however experience tells us that this may not be the perception of pupils.

Ownership of Learning

Pupils are rarely given the opportunity to comment on or review their own progress or learning style in a structured way. Educational psychologists are aware that this is an often voiced concern of class teachers, that they lack adequate time to discuss individual pupils experiencing difficulties, let alone review the progress of more able class members. Psychologists further have the impression that children find it difficult to discuss their schoolwork and seem to exhibit little in the way of ownership of their learning. If one accepts that pupils' views on their education are to be sought at decision making points, that they have a valuable contribution to make to their education and planning, then a key question arises - can means to help pupils become more aware of their learning processes be identified? In short how can pupils be assisted to develop the confidence and skills needed to become more active, engaged and effective learners? The wider questions raised, relate to the context in which the practice of psychologists takes place.

Developing Effective Child Participation in Practice

Developing effective practice is an ongoing process, which involves examination of all relevant systems within the education authority; these include authority policies, school procedures, staff pupil relationships and opportunities for training for staff and pupils. Educational psychologists are in a unique position to support progress in encouraging effective child participation by working simultaneously at the three levels of authority policy development, school development and case consultation.

Local Authority Level

The Children Services Plans as described earlier embrace the principle of encouraging young people to express their views and wishes in relation to matters which concern them. There is an expectation in the rhetoric of both the Scottish Office Strategy Statement (May 1998) and in the Children Services Plans that young people will not only be more fully involved in the planning of their own individual education and care plans but will have a collective voice in Council planning of services which directly effect them. For children and young people to be equipped to participate in these new roles and responsibilities requires: practice in negotiating and assertiveness skills, certain attitudes and beliefs about the value and possibilities for active participation, as well as an understanding of what makes participation 'constructive'. Children and young people first need the experience of participating in everyday decisions and the positive benefits which result, as a foundation to participate meaningfully in critical decisions and in wider matters.

The priority task at the local Authority level is to ensure that the twin principles of:

“The best interest of the young person are paramount”

and

“The views of young people will be taken into consideration,”

are integral to any policy development which will have an impact on families and young people.

Whole School Approaches

There are important social and political reasons why pupils should be involved in decision-making processes of schools. Direct involvement provides valuable learning opportunities that have educational benefits for individuals; this is consistent with society's need for a population of school leavers to have a sense of the importance of community and of their role in helping the community develop [Cooper 1996]. Clearly the “school communities” which are best placed to foster this type of development for pupils are schools which also have an ethos and structure for consultation with staff and partnership with parents.

There are many ways in which schools, as institutions, can pay more attention to the pupil's opinions and to encouraging more active involvement by, pupils. A few examples of initiatives which schools are developing to increase effective pupil participation are described below:

Circle time

One of the recent developments in many schools in Scotland has been the introduction of Circle Time, (Mosley 1996). Circle Time is a method used to involve pupils in a democratic process of considering a wide range of issues affecting their own particular class or the whole school community. It is a method which has been borrowed from Industry where “Quality Circles” have been used since the 1960’s to involve workers in greater ownership of the decision making and planning process. In the school setting, Circle Time usually involves a class group sitting in a circle and taking an equal responsibility for the solving of problems and issues which they themselves have identified. The teacher adopts a facilitative role, by structuring the session to develop the children’s skills and encouraging a supportive ethos for active participation. Active non judgmental listening is the key to good circle times. The teacher needs to both role model this behaviour in her everyday interactions with children and young people and explicitly teach listening skills. Non judgmental listening enables children to express their ideas and feelings in an atmosphere of acceptance. Active listening requires children to let go of their own agenda and to consciously give their full attention to the speaker, showing with their non verbal behaviour and body language that they are doing so. A class that has developed good listening skills is able to use circle time for sharing, negotiating and resolving conflict. It also puts the teacher more in the role of gentle guide to learning.

Pupil councils

What is a pupil council?

Dobie and MacBeath (1998) offer an overview; a pupil council is a group of pupils, democratically elected by their peers, charged with the responsibility of representing the need, interests, opinions and aspirations of all pupils within the school. It:

- provides a forum for pupils to talk about issues which are important to them and put forward their ideas on a wider range of school related issues.
- is one way of enhancing personal and social development, encouraging pupils to have a voice and a degree of ownership in the life of the school community and promoting active citizenship.
- provides for all pupils the opportunity of gaining direct experience of the democratic election process and the part played by that process in bringing about change through reasoned discussion.

For those elected to be pupil representatives the council provides a context where the key attributes of citizenship can be developed. These attributes can be identified as follows:

Working as a team	Compromising
Listening to other points of view	Taking responsibility
Making own views clear	Exercising initiative
Speaking up on behalf of others	Negotiating
Being involved in the decision-making process.	

The research study by Dobie and MacBeath [op cit], looking at Pupil Councils in both the Primary and Secondary Sectors of Fife Schools illustrates the wide range of different ways that schools have set up councils. There is no evidence of a “best model” as schools need to be sensitive and responsive to their own context but their joint experience suggests that key features essential for an effective pupil council are:

a democratic election process	regular meetings
pupil led agendas	involvement of senior management staff
action seen to be taken on pupil suggestions	effective feedback / communication procedures

In addition it is recommended that pupil councils should be given a high profile in the school and ways sought of demonstrating that they are highly valued.

School procedures / discipline

The Elton Report [1989] stated that “students who practice making their own decisions are likely to have fewer discipline problems”. Most behaviour management systems which are derived from training initiatives such as Promoting Positive Behaviour [Strathclyde Regional Council 1992] BATPACK and Assertive Discipline [Cantor and Cantor 1992] have pupils in an active role even if it is limited to being involved in choosing appropriate rules and sanctions. The effectiveness of the use of self-management programmes in supporting young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties is well documented e.g. Topping [1983]. Hanson [1996] describes the way in which pupils can be encouraged to take more control of their own behaviour through the use of self-monitoring schemes. Self-monitoring is an alternative strategy to teacher controlled “on report” programmes and has the advantage of encouraging greater independence and self reflection skills. Other initiatives demonstrating good practice in relation to developing effective pupil participation in

behaviour management systems are Peer Mediation and Peer Counselling Projects e.g. Sharp et al [1994] Mellor and Waller [1995].

Involving pupils in curricular issues and learning plans

The Scottish Office [1999] publication *A Route to Equality and Fairness: Self Evaluation using Performance Indicators*, makes specific reference to the need for active involvement of all pupils in the planning and assessment of their progress in learning (p. 11). A recent project undertaken by MSc Trainees at Dundee University looked at pupil participation of S3 pupils in a large secondary school in Fife. They used a combination of group discussion and questionnaires to elicit pupil's views on not only their current involvement but also areas for development. The information asked for in the questionnaire would be a relevant baseline assessment for any school wishing to develop this area of work.

Do pupils plan their own learning by:

- choosing resources, their work area, their work group and project topics for own work
- planning investigations/experiments, choosing topics for class work
- setting their own targets, contributing to an individual education plan?

Do pupils monitor their own progress by:

- marking their own work to improve/re draft it
- attending teacher/pupil interviews and parent nights
- contributing to Record of Achievements, to pupil reports and to review meetings?

Explicit guidance on the need to involve children and young people, who require additional consideration within school because of learning and/or behavioural difficulties in the planning and review process, has been issued to all Scottish Schools: *The manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs* [The Scottish Office op cit] defines the role of the Local Authority, the school and the support services and provides a checklist for auditing current practice.

There is an increasing understanding of the benefits of more active involvement by pupils in terms of the efficacy of the intervention strategies. Pupils have important information to contribute about themselves e.g. interests, strengths, perceived difficulties, learning styles, attitudes, hopes and fears. The process of involving young people in planning for their own learning and making decisions about their educational support can increase their self confidence and self esteem, which will positively affect their educational progress. Educational psychologists are regularly consulted in assessment planning and review processes in relation to pupils who have special educational needs or who are not meeting

teacher expectations for learning or behaviour. The next section explores how educational psychologists can facilitate and promote active pupil involvement in these processes.

Implications for the Practice of Educational Psychologists

Psychological Services' understanding of consulting with children

Psychologists are aware that parents should always be consulted when considering their children's education. Psychologists are now at the stage of becoming aware that they should also consult children. Practice varies at both individual and service level, but few practitioners can yet be said to always involve children from the earliest stages of their involvement, or to consult them on all issues.

Over the coming years, it will be important that psychologists develop methods in which children's views are sought as a matter of course in every piece of work. Psychological services will need to revise or develop practice procedures and guidelines that reflect this Philosophy.

Implications for practice in casework

Every school will be developing their own ethos and methods of consulting with children, but when external agencies, such as Psychological Services, are to become involved with the child, their methods and ethos will be a factor to consider. Psychological services need to work with the schools to develop ways of consulting with children that take the legal and philosophical framework into account when becoming involved with the child. This will occur at service level, where referral procedures, information packages etc are being developed and also at school level where individual psychologists are working with schools to develop practices of inclusion and consultation.

When it is felt that it would be in the best interests of the child or young person to be referred in order to involve a psychologist, careful planning for the child's involvement will be crucial from the start. Several services have spent time considering some of the ways children can be most productively and ethically involved. There are several stages to any involvement, and each stage can be considered with a view to the child's perspective.

Pre-referral information

Before the child has any contact with a psychologist, it will be important that they have as much information as possible about who the psychologist is, what the psychologist does, why they are being considered for referral, what is likely to happen and what are the possible outcomes.

Psychological Services are now trying to devise leaflets which, can be given to children prior to them meeting a psychologist. These leaflets will only to be as useful as the explicit and implicit messages which accompany them, within the pre-referral process. In many instances, the leaflets will have to be explained by an adult who may have their own feelings about the referral, which will be intimated to the child. However, at the very least, basic information about what a psychologist is, the reasons for seeing one and what is likely to happen, should be covered. This process should be seen as the start of the relationship between the child and the psychologist.

Other methods of informing the child about what to expect rely largely on verbal methods, and are more open to bias and idiosyncratic expectations. It therefore seems appropriate that Psychological Services should produce information leaflets for children about the services offered, which are appropriate to differing age groups. Some services have produced a Primary and a Secondary version for pupils (Appendix)

Introduction to the psychologist

There are many different practices in the way a psychologist is introduced to a child. In some instances, the psychologist meets first with the parent and then has the parent introduce the psychologist to the child within their own home. This is considered by many to be the best way of engaging the child in a known environment, in the presence of trusted adults (Helen Myers 1998). However, there are significant challenges arising in considering this way of working. Firstly, the practicalities of time available make this a difficult goal to achieve in all cases, even if it were to be a service aspiration. Secondly, many authorities now have procedures concerning home visits, which would sit uncomfortably with this method.

Some authorities have developed referral methods, which involve not only the parents, but also the child. These often involve a consultation meeting between the family, school staff and the psychologist, where a semi-structured interview considers the background to the situation from all perspectives, and negotiates the role of the psychologist in the piece of work. Where it is felt appropriate, children can join all or part of these meetings, depending

on the age and maturity of the child, and the likely nature of the discussion. Children would need to be given enough information about what this meeting would be like (possibly by a leaflet, or discussion with parent or teacher), in order to decide how to be involved.

At best, this method allows the child to be a partner from the beginning. At worst, if badly managed, it puts the child and parent in the uncomfortable position of hearing things which might be inappropriate. It is therefore always important to make sure that the understanding and expectations of all those present are appropriate and realistic. Psychological services will need to consider guidelines for the way children are introduced to psychologists, consistent with their other procedures and practices.

Involvement of the child in negotiating the psychologists' role

Involving the child at an early stage in any work done by the psychologist is likely to make that work meaningful and, as a result, more effective. There are advantages to involving the child at the point of referral to ensure that they understand why this is happening and what the next steps would be. When negotiating the work to be done, it will be important to have the child's perspective represented, either by them directly, or on their behalf by someone who knows them well. It is also important that the questions they have about the nature of their difficulties and what might be done to address them are included in the negotiation of the work done by the psychologist.

Some services have started to consider the practical implications of how to involve children and young people in the process of referral and decision making. An example is given in the Appendix of a referral form which does imply that children are consulted in the referral process. Table 4 offers an example of service guidelines in this respect.

As outlined earlier, practices to develop consultation with children can be identified at various levels, namely the authority, the school and at the individual level. While psychologists can comment and advise on the first, the locus of their input will be greatest with the second and third of these. A very few schools already have policy statements on consultation with pupils (see Appendix). Psychological Services could usefully offer INSET to schools to promote the development of policy and practices on consulting with children. This would seem to be essential given the potential enormity of the need to promote greater participation throughout the education system. Psychologists can develop their own practices with children in this respect; they can model effective consultation; but they also need to act as facilitators for other colleagues working with children and for parents.

At the level of individual school and individual pupils, input from the psychologist in the consultation process will be decided by a careful consideration of:

- the stage the school has reached in developing its own practices and policy in consulting with pupils.
- the ability of the parent to contribute to preparing the child in presenting their own views.
- the characteristics and the nature of the child's difficulties
- the quality and quantity of resources available to all involved.

In focusing on current practice across Psychological Services, it was apparent that evidence is growing to suggest that children could and should attend meetings which were once the domain of adults only; also it is clear that time must be allocated to prepare the child for attendance at these. The process of involving children has been assisted, where the child can prepare, or be helped to prepare, their own report for such meetings (See Appendix for examples of 'This is my Meeting Book'). The approach taken to such preparation cannot be prescriptive and booklets, information leaflets etc. must be tailored individually to the needs of the child and their educational setting. Initial evaluation indicates that children are keen to be actively engaged in preparing for meetings about themselves, that the process of preparing empowers them so that their participation in meetings is enhanced and that both school staff and particularly parents, view the child's input and therefore the child, very positively.

The level of active contribution of the child in completing meeting booklets will depend on numerous factors, not least the child's language and literacy levels. Early experience shows that supportive staff can successfully adopt a reader/scribe role to facilitate the recording of the child's views.

The content, in particular, answers to specific questions generated to fit different circumstances e.g. a P4 pupil with moderate specific learning difficulties/dyslexia, an S1 pupil with global delay or an S3 pupil with cerebral palsy, will all need tailoring. Some core questions might well remain such as Who helps? What helps? However once the staff in a school and the children involved, have an idea of preparation for participation as a central process, these tools can be developed at a local, whole school level.

TABLE: 4. Involving children in the psychological process - guidelines

Full account should be taken of the nature of concern, age/stage of development throughout the following:

1. Ensure that parents have discussed the psychologist's involvement with the child.
2. Ensure that the child leaflet has been made available to aid 1.
3. Get a third party, known to the child to introduce you to the child (eg teacher/parent.
4. Introduce yourself; explain what your role and aims are
5. Discuss confidentiality aspects with the child
6. Explain what you are intending to do during the meeting and give reasons eg I am here to see how you are getting on at school and I would like to look at your reading.
7. Explain that you will give feedback to the child/ teacher/parent about your results and what format this will take (home visit, report, discussion at school .etc).
8. Explain (where appropriate) that there will be a meeting to share the information about areas of concern / need.
9. Ensure that the child has every opportunity to describe their view of events/the concern. Consider offering a 'Named' child.
10. Where possible, offer choices to the child to determine eg the order in which activities are completed - would you like to read now or look at your jotters?
11. Check with the child their feelings about the areas of concern, your feedback, the proposed meeting etc.
12. Explain what is likely to happen after your meeting(s) and once again offer choices, where possible (Would you like to attend? Would you like a separate copy of my report?)
13. If possible give the child some responsibility to take positive action eg will you draw a picture, keep a diary, talk to ... ?
14. Ensure that in the course of the meeting, guidelines in the school guidance notes are followed in involving the child.
15. Explain how the child can contact the psychologist before any agreed subsequent meeting (Tell your Mother/teacher that you would like to see me).

When children cannot contribute directly to the preparation of their own reports, booklets can be completed on their behalf by a known adult who can represent the child's views through interaction and observation of their behavioural responses to all aspects of school life. Under such circumstances the child's contributions at meetings are also viewed by adults as enhanced. Consultation with children therefore should be viewed as always possible for all children, including those with complex learning difficulties or problems with language and communication, either through their direct engagement or through the gathering of relevant information that will reflect their views.

Inservice Training Programme

Introduction

The following represents the work of the PDP group to generate materials that could serve as the basis of inservice materials for school staff. It takes account of the context outlined above and aims to stimulate discussion at a whole school level about issues arising in developing practice. It is not intended to be comprehensive but each section stands on its own to be utilised in planned activity or inservice time.

Effective education through consultation with pupils

Over the past thirty years since the publication of the Plowden report educators have recognised the benefits of parental involvement in children's education. This expectation of parental involvement is now enshrined in policy, practice and parental expectation. However more recent political and legal developments are highlighting the role of children within education. It could be said that children in many cases are passive recipients of education and have not been consulted, in a structured way about their progress or important decisions affecting their schooling. This may be set to change following from the Children's (Scotland) Act 1995, the implications of which will cause us to examine how we undertake to listen to our pupils views and to develop effective systems in our schools which will allow for good, age appropriate models of consultation.

Pupils have a valuable contribution to make to the development of their educational plans.

How can we assist our pupils to develop the skills needed to create more active and effective learners?

The Legislative and National Context

An INSET handout:

The Legislative and National Context

An INSET handout

In recent years there have been several pieces of legislation which have contributed to thinking on the issue of consulting with children. While many of them do not have a direct impact on schools, it is important for teachers to be aware of the development of thinking on children's rights, and to develop school ethos and practice in the light of current thinking.

The legal argument for consulting with children derives from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN in 1989, ratified by the UK government in 1991 and reflected in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. The Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 is also of interest in considering the age at which a child is presumed to have the maturity to understand.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child includes the statement:

'States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.'

Although the UN Convention was ratified by the UK government in 1991 this process, unlike some other countries, does not automatically incorporate the conventions into the legal system. Even so, it has become a driving force behind certain legislation and new practices and approaches.

One of the three underlying principles of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 concerns children's views: any person fulfilling parental responsibility or exercising parents rights, the local authority, the Children's Hearing and the court are to have regard to the views of the child, if the child is capable of expressing them and wishes to do so.

There are also responsibilities laid on local authorities when drawing up Children's Service Plans to take into account the views of potential users, the children and families who are currently using or receiving services and those who have previously received services.

The Act introduces a new legal framework for assessment, services and support to children with disabilities, children affected by disability and their families. Children should be 'actively involved in assessments, decision-making meetings, case reviews and conferences' and they 'should be given help to express their views and wishes and to prepare written reports and statements for meetings where necessary'. Additional arrangements may be needed to establish a child's views where a child has complex needs or communication difficulties.

The Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 states that children and young people under 16 have the capacity to consent to their own medical examination and treatment where, in the opinion of the medical practitioner, he or she is capable of understanding the nature and possible consequences. There is a presumption that children over the age of twelve have the necessary maturity to understand, but a younger child may understand, just as a child over twelve may not.

(Adapted from 'Psychologists and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995' (1998).

School Case Studies

1. The School Context

The head teacher of the school should be expected to contribute to the INSET at this point. It will be important for him/her to summarise ethos factors in the school and the work which has already been done; for example developing a listening ethos, procedures where children's views are canvassed and taken into account, and plans for developing these further.

The types of work the school have been doing might include: the personal and social development curriculum

- vocabulary and language development
- involving pupils in self-assessment
- drawing up class or school rules
- harnessing class or school ideas in school developments
- circle time
- school council.....

The list is potentially endless, and each school will have its own unique approach

2. Whole School Issues

Schools frequently identify areas they need to consider or develop which affect groups of pupils in the school. Often these will concern areas or resources used by all members of the school at some time during the week, or the development of new resources or areas. Some examples of these might be:

- playground behaviour management
- developing an area of the school playground as a nature resource
- designing a room in the school for use as a library or reading centre
- developing a new system for pupils accessing the dinner hall at lunchtime

Attached (below) is an example of the questionnaire used with the middle years of one primary school, to gather information on how to alleviate problem behaviour in the playground. Some of the ideas expressed by the children were integrated into the plan for tackling the problem, and then the children's views on the effectiveness of the plans were canvassed after the project had been running for some months.

Consider whether there are any issues which affect groups of pupils in your school. These might be a small group of children, a whole class, a department within the school, or the entire school. How might you go about consulting the children involved about their views on the matter, and eliciting their suggestions about how to resolve the issue?

Primary : Pupil Questionnaire/ Interview: see next page

Primary : Pupil Questionnaire/ Interview

Boy / Girl P4 P5

1. Do you think the changes have made the playground better or not? Better / Not better

2. What do you do in the playground?

3. What do you learn in the playground?

4. Please tick all which apply to you:

In the playground I learn to:

play games

swear

play safely

fight

be part of a group

bully by watching people

be kind to others

bully others

make friends

keep my mouth shut

understand each other

keep out of some people's way

share

stick up for myself

stay out of trouble

realise that my friends mean a lot

5. Do you feel safe in the playground? Yes / No

6. Are there any other changes to the playground that would make it better?

School Case Studies (continued)

School Reports

Attached are some examples of different formats (see Appendix) for pupils to contribute to their school reports. These examples are from pupils of varying ages and abilities, and the nature of the tasks reflects this. Young children or those with learning difficulties are given colouring tasks, or asked to show their feelings through drawings. Where more detail is wanted, an adult has scribed their words. Older or more able pupils can express their views in longer pieces of writing or more sophisticated drawings.

Consider methods you might use with your pupils to help them express and record their views on their strengths, interests and learning targets.

How might this fit with aspects of your current classroom practice?

What further measures might you need to develop to allow pupils more scope for self-assessment and reporting of their views on their education?

Helping individual children to participate

Task 1 - to be completed in pairs

Think back to your schooldays and talk with your partner for 5 minutes about any incident in school when you felt a teacher was listening you to.

Task 2 - to be completed in pairs

In your pairs decide who will be the listener and who will be the speaker. Sitting back to back the speaker should talk for a minute about a way in which you like to spend your free time.

After a minute change around so that the listener becomes the speaker.

For this part of the exercise turn to face each other but as the speaker talks about a hobby or a sport, the listener should look away, look at the floor, a watch, a picture, look anywhere except at the speaker.

Do this for one minute.

Task 3 - to be completed in pairs

In new pairs decide who will be the listener and who the speaker. The speaker should talk for two or three minutes about any pleasant or unpleasant memories of primary school. This could involve the teachers, the buildings or your friends.

The listener should say very little and should not interrupt or take over. After the time is up the listener should sum up in their own words what they've heard checking out with the speaker that they have understood correctly.

Repeat the exercise with the listener becoming the speaker.

Notes to accompany tasks

The aim of these tasks is to help group members elicit descriptions of behaviours which enhance communication.

Task 1

Group members are being asked to reflect on their own experiences with school pupils. The quantity and quality of responses will vary between groups and the leader is likely to have to direct and curtail discussion.

Task 2

This task highlights features of poor listening

The group leader could ask

'What did you notice?' and 'How did that feel?'

The objective is for group members to realise the importance of turning their bodies to others and looking at others while they listen.

Task 3

The aim of this exercise is to help group members understand that positive listening can convey a sense of being understood and being respected. When the listeners are summarising what has been said by the speakers they should be encouraged to comment on feelings they noticed that may not have been mentioned, to check out with the speakers what they have understood and both should feel free during the summary sessions to interrupt each other and to seek clarification. Still in pairs after the completion of both parts of the exercise they should be asked to talk to each other about what they noticed and what they learned from the exercise. They should then be asked for feedback in the whole group.

The leader could ask,

'Did you find it difficult to talk for a few minutes?'

'Did you feel differently during tasks 2 and 3?'

'What helped you to talk?'

'How did you know you were being listened to?'

'Was it difficult to do the summing up?'

'How did you feel when you heard somebody summing-up what you had said?'

It is likely that teachers will highlight the constraints on their opportunities and ability to consult - time, role, skill etc.

Case Study 1

Graham recently diagnosed as having Asperger Syndrome is in P. 7 of a school for children with moderate learning difficulties - his Special Educational Needs are recorded. He is of well-above average ability non-verbally and has a dyslexic problem which has affected his acquisition of phonics. His reading skills are around the seven-year old levels while his understanding of mathematical processes are reasonably well developed.

There are three options for his education at secondary level: a large local secondary school (attended already by his older sister), a unit for children with communication difficulties within a mainstream secondary school and a secondary school for children with moderate learning difficulties (which all of his classmates will be transferring to). His single-parent mother is a sensitive and intelligent woman who fully understands her son's difficulties.

How could you help this child develop an informed view of his secondary school choices?

Case Study 2

Ewan is in P.7 of a mainstream secondary school and has recently been diagnosed as having Asperger Syndrome. He is of low average ability and receives support for his learning. He is aware that he has social and communication difficulties with his peers and tries very hard to co-operate and take on advice given although with limited success, especially when unsupported by adults (for example, in the playground).

There is a unit for children with communication disorders in a mainstream secondary school some distance away from his home which both his teachers and the EP feel would be highly appropriate. His mother agrees with this in principle but continues to be concerned about travel and any additional expenses involved although she has been assured on these points. She also has communication difficulties.

How could you inform Ewan about his options at secondary level?

Case Study 3

Roger is in P.7 of an EBD school. He suffered serious emotional and physical neglect as a young child while in the care of his alcoholic mother, now deceased. He lives with his much older sister who also had similar childhood experiences and suffers from depression.

He has made considerable progress educationally in his EBD school and has achieved Level C across the curriculum. Within a very small class his behaviour is manageable in the main and his sister maintains good links with and receives considerable support from the school staff.

The options now for Roger are EBD secondary, which offers a very restricted secondary curriculum, his local mainstream secondary that provides minimal support for learning and for behaviour and a distant mainstream secondary school that has significantly better support systems. Places in the latter are limited and would involve his sister making a placing request.

How would you help Roger contribute to any decision about his educational future?

Case Study 4

Kevin is in P.5. and is dyslexic. His spelling and ability to write are particularly affected and he has become very reluctant to put pencil to paper. Orally he contributes very well. His mother has been asked to explain the nature of his difficulties to him but has only been able to do this in a superficial way. It seems likely that both Kevin and his mother do not yet have a clear understanding of the nature of his specific difficulties and how they affect Kevin's learning and his motivation.

How could you fully inform Kevin of the nature and implications of his dyslexia?

Case Study 5

The daughter of a depressed and isolated mother, Rose is 4 years old and is due to go to school at the age of 4 years and 6 months. She is generally of low average ability with motor and expressive language difficulties probably due to dyspraxia. It has been accepted by her mother and by the professionals involved with Rose that she would benefit from an additional year in her nursery school. The child talks often about going to primary school and her mother has already bought her a school uniform. Because of irregular attendance at

nursery school Rose has not really settled there or had the chance to make friends. Also as a result she has not been able to access the speech and language therapy made available through nursery.

How could you ascertain Rose's view of remaining in nursery for another year and inform her of her specific learning difficulty?

Case Study 6

Lachlan is ten years old and in primary 6. Since P3 he has received individual learning support assist him with a severe number difficulty. Other than the number problem, Lachlan's schoolwork is of average standard. Despite his school positive feedback and good system of regular reviews with his parent feedback to Lachlan, he is still confused about his situation. In a conversation with another pupil who is dyslexic Lachlan asked, "Am I number dyslexic? Will I always need help".

How could this school assist Lachlan to participate in his review meeting and help him further understand the nature of his difficulty?

Case Study 7

Stacey is fourteen and is a pupil of a school for children with moderate learning difficulties. As she has a Record of needs she is due to have a Future Needs Review soon. She is aware that she will be seen by the careers officer, the psychologist and a social worker prior to this meeting and knows that they will all provide reports on her. Stacey has also had some difficulties in school and is therefore very worried about this meeting.

Stacey will be asked to join the meeting at some point.

How best could this situation be handled? How could Stacey be prepared for her meeting to allow her an opportunity to contribute?

Recommendations on consulting with children

In making recommendations, there are two key influences on the scene at time of writing which can be predicted to have a significant influence on practice over the coming years. Both impinge on the policies, guidelines and practices of Psychological Services. The draft document on “Developing performance indicators for educational psychology services in Scotland” (April 1999), proposes:

“Children are in all cases treated with respect and as active partners in the process of assessment and intervention. Staff listen to and take account of their views, and they know that their feelings and opinions are valued. Children and young people know why the psychologist is involved and staff communicate clearly with them regarding the aims, nature, extent and outcomes of any work undertaken. Well designed written information about the service is available to children and young people and the service has structured arrangements for obtaining feedback from them regarding the quality of service delivery.”

And

“All work involving children and young people conforms to established ethical standards and guidelines. Staff are fully familiar with relevant legislation policies and best professional practice regarding the rights and involvement of children and young people and all work relating to them reflects commitment to the belief that their welfare is a primary concern. All contacts and planned actions for children and young people are marked by promptness, reliability and efficiency and staff have their ability to put them at ease in all their work with them. Staff support and enable children and young people in expressing their views and they have confidence that the psychologist will deal with their problems as effectively as possible.”

Further, the Manual of Good Practice (op cit) makes explicit the requirement to ensure that children and young people are central to any processes of decision making. With regard specifically to schools, it says (p23) that there should be:

“...written guidelines and professional development for staff in schools and support service to promote the active involvement of children/young persons in the assessment and planning of their educational future.

...procedures to assist and encourage children/young persons to make written comments on the reports and forms for referral to support services or other agencies.”

This clearly has implications for psychological services to develop training and procedures within the service and also for delivery to school staff. The inservice materials contained in this report will therefore be timely and relevant in this respect.

With regard to support services, the Manual makes the following stipulations:

“The written structures and procedures of the service ensure that priority is given to responding to the needs of children/young persons.

There are written guidelines and professional development opportunities to ensure that all staff are fully conversant with the legal framework of the rights of children/young persons and with the duties and policies of the authority for identifying and meeting special educational need.

There are procedures to enable children/young persons to express their views and feelings and for these to be acted upon.

There is published information available for children/young persons explaining how various aspects of the services of the services provide could be of assistance to them. Included in this information is an outline of the child’s rights vis-à-vis consent, confidentiality, consultation, complaints and access to advocacy services.

There are clear guidelines on the distribution of reports, case conference minutes and other documents to children/young persons.”

It is clear that the content of this PDP report has anticipated many of the above recommendations and will be useful to services for review and development purposes; however a considerable amount of work remains to be carried out in this area. More specific recommendations for psychological services to consider, therefore include:

- Service aims and values should explicitly refer to the centrality of children and young people and their status as active partners.
- Practice guidelines should be revised or developed to reflect an ethos of consulting with children throughout.
- Referral procedures should be reconsidered in the light of the need to involve children in the process as far as possible.
- Practice guidelines need to be developed on the way in which children are introduced to the psychologist.

- The production of information leaflets for children and young people outlining the role, methods of working and likely outcomes of involving a psychologist.
- Practical operations should be made explicit to ensure that the views of children and young people are taken into account when specific tasks are negotiated for psychologists.
- Active monitoring and evaluation of operations are in place to ensure that the aims of making children and young people central in decision making are effective and continuously improving.
- Ongoing consideration of strategies to consult children and young people about the overall operation, delivery and development of services to them. Pupil councils could be considered in this respect.

As psychological services in Scotland approach the millennium in the context of new government and more regional control and influence, there is considerable prospect of developing the culture of increased consultation with children; certainly the legislative and political context is clearly in place and practice is required to follow on. It is hoped that the psychological services will play their part in what will be exciting and changing times, to develop a climate in which children and young people are empowered to actively participate in educational decision making.

Court Training for Psychologists

Rationale - Becoming better prepared

Knowledge and understanding of a process brings with it the power to make best use of that process. An individual is thus enabled to contribute and to ensure their voice is heard and their opinions evaluated along with other points of view. The experience of being heard reinforces the feeling of acceptance, participation and of ownership. It does not guarantee agreement, but increases the chances of positive involvement in the process.

This is true for young people as it is for the professionals working with them. There is a parallel between helping a young person to understand the personnel and the process involved in educational or multi-disciplinary decision making, and educational psychologists learning about the personnel and processes involved in legal and court contexts.

Children will start out naïve in the process of special educational information gathering and decision making and will require ongoing support to understand their role in the processes involved. Many psychologists and other colleagues in Education will lack experience and feel relatively deskilled in anticipating presentation in court. The British Psychological Society booklet, "Psychologists as Expert Witnesses in Scotland" (1998) emphasises:

"Psychologists must also ensure that they are well prepared....this refers to both written and oral evidence"

To be good advocates and effective representatives of young people, with whom educational psychologists work in a court setting, they need to know and understand more about the personnel and the legal processes involved in this difficult discipline.

There are materials available, which will further develop particular skills e.g. BPS "Expert Testimony: Developing Witness Skills". However the planning group felt that a wider and more general training course could be piloted which gave more emphasis to the Scottish context.

With this aim in mind, a pilot Court Training Day In-Service was organised for a group of twenty five educational psychologists, who undertook to offer evaluation. This group represented all levels from maingrade to principal and were from over one third of all Services in Scotland. Although their representativeness of the entire profession cannot be guaranteed, they did appear to cover a wide cross section.

An independent educational psychologist, Brenda Robson, experienced in presenting a professional opinion of a child or young person's view in court, was asked to produce and

present the material for the day. The course comprised lecture, small group workshops and plenary sessions; handouts specific to the content were made available (see Appendix). The whole day was recorded on video as the following four separate sessions:

1. An overview of the Scottish Legal System
2. Listening to children with understanding
3. Written reports for court
4. Preparation for going to court

It was envisaged that the resulting tapes and handouts could form the basis of introductory training, for presentation of evidence by educational psychologists in court.

Evaluation was therefore sought from the twenty five participating psychologists; the results are discussed below:

The success and relevance of the course is reflected in the fact that sixty per cent of all participants would fully recommend the course to colleagues. Ninety two per cent of participants would recommend the course with the additional tailoring of the content and presentation as discussed in these sections below.

Educational Psychologists' expectations of the course, entitled Psychologists' Children and the Scottish Legal System largely agreed with the four sections into which the course was split.

Section 3, listening to children with understanding was the one topic that Psychologists felt they already had expertise in, given that they spend much of their time communicating directly with and on behalf of children.

Evaluation of content and presentation resulted in potential amendments/developments of course content and presentation to be taken account of by future course organisers. The main themes to emerge were as follows:

Course Content

- More emphasis on the roles of educational psychologist, in relation to education department issues; of particular concern was the potential conflict of interest in representing how the child's needs might best be met, and in observing local education department policy on placement A specific need to know about legislation on placement issues in detail was raised.
- Case exemplars illustrating the above points, as well as section 2 Listening to Children with Understanding, and in section 3, Written Reports for Court, could usefully be

developed. The possibility of some video example of listening to children with understanding was suggested by one participant.

Presentation

- Improved quality of handout materials to act as a resume; the materials arising from this pilot are available as an Appendix.
- Exemplar reports including phrases to include or to avoid would be helpful.
- In preparation for going to court, role play could usefully be considered within a workshop format. The vast majority of participants saw this section as the most useful.
- Maintaining the task-focussed discussion groups stimulating discussion with outline case examples.

Outcomes

Participants were asked, as an outcome of the course what influence it would have on their practice, for example in approach to assessment, interview or report writing.

The thought provoking nature of the course was well expressed in one observation of the realisation that “every encounter is important”. Sixty per cent of participants commented on the need to be aware of good practice, and to take greater care in the writing of reports and good record keeping. ‘We are all more likely to be examined on our previous work’ than to be asked to provide a current report.

Other comments on the outcome of the day highlighted particularly the need to avoid jargon. Other outcomes mentioned were to review assessment tools and interviewing strategies, and to ensure that any evidence presented was robust.

Just over half the psychologists sampled had been involved professionally in some way in work for court purposes. Eighty per cent of the work had been in relation to social issues such as custody, access, child protection and adoption, in contrast to the twenty per cent of work in relation to educational issues such as placing requests.

Just over half the psychologists thought they would be unlikely to use course information personally in court in the next year. Twenty per cent of the total thought they might make personal use of the course information in court – and sixteen per cent of the total said they thought they would make personal use of the course information in court in the next year.

It can be seen from the above comments on the course that such training could have potential valuable in preparing psychologists in a preventative way, over and above the provision of guidance for those involved in contentious cases.

Conclusion

The pilot training resulted in firmer conclusions about the shape and content of an optimum training day for educational psychologist and others involved in special education who may have to go to court in Scotland.

It would be important to involve:

- a) an experienced Local Authority solicitor who can speak with confidence about issues arising from Educational legislation, placing requests, Recording, the Children Act etc. Implications about potentially overlapping and contradictory legislation would need to be addressed.
- b) an experienced Educational Psychologist who has acted on behalf of a local authority in court and who can speak about issues arising in out of authority placement, statutory assessment and custody issues.
- c) an independent psychologist who has considerable experience of working in court representing children.

The four sections on the pilot would remain as relevant and could usefully be supplemented, namely:

1. An overview of the Scottish Legal System
2. Listening to children with understanding – taking account of contextual effects on what children and young people say.
3. Written reports for court – giving guidance and exemplars
4. Preparation for going to court.
5. Case studies – an additional opportunity to discuss scenarios which combine the above and which can be discussed in small groups as well as with the panel of experts in a plenary session.

The four videotaped sessions (available from the authors) and the printed handouts (see Appendix) derived from the course could potentially be made available to run another in-service day, possibly with additional support from the private practitioner involved and perhaps also tailored to include input from the local authority solicitor, with particular regard to education legislation on placement and recording.

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List of Appendices

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Appendix: 1 **To the Panel Members from (child's Name)**

I would like you to know what I think before you make a decision at the children's hearing.

(Write what you want to say here and remember that a copy will be given to your parents or main carers and any safeguarder. You can say as much as you like but you do not have to fill the page. If you want, you can ask someone to help you write down what you want to say).

Please bring this to the children's hearing or send it to the reporter at the address below

Further information on the aims of Children in Scotland and in particular what it does to promoted good practice in relation to consulting with children can be obtained from *Children in Scotland, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh, EH2 4RC, Telephone: 0131 228*

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Appendix: 2

See original publication

**EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE
REFERRAL CONTRACT**

PART 1: SCHOOL/REFERRAL AGENT TO COMPLETE. The Parents' section overleaf should be completed **after** the referral agent has filled out this section.

PSYCHOLOGIST SIGNATURE:..... DATE OF CONSULTATION:.....

CHILD'S NAME: DATE OF BIRTH

SCHOOL: CLASS/YEAR

HOME ADDRESS:

REASON FOR REFERRAL:

(Please append a recent School Report, IEP if available)

AS A RESULT OF REFERRAL WHAT CHANGES ARE HOPED FOR

(a) BY THE REFERRAL AGENT:

(b) BY THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON*

(* Where ever possible the child's/young person's view should be sought and noted)

SIGNED:.....

DESIGNATED:.....

DATE:.....

Appendix:

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

COMPLETION CHECKLIST		
1.	CONSULT CHILD AND COMPLETE PART	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	ENSURE PARENTS COMPLETE PART 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	RETURN ORIGINALS TO EPS PERTH.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	RETAIN COPY FOR SCHOOLS RECORDS	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	COPY TO PARENTS	<input type="checkbox"/>

REFERRAL CONTRACT

PART 2: PARENT/CARER:

NAME OF PARENT/CARER:

HOME TELEPHONE NO:.....

WORK TELEPHONE NO:.....

REASON FOR REFERRAL:

AS A RESULT OF REFERRAL WHAT CHANGES DO YOU AND YOUR CHILD HOPE FOR?

I have read the referral agent's section overleaf and am in agreement with the involvement of an Educational Psychologist to help my child.

SIGNED.....

.....

DATE:

Appendix: (continued)

SCHOOL POLICY STATEMENT

CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS

DRAFT PROPOSALS

“Local authorities will have a duty to take the views of children into account when making any important decisions about them. This will have major implications for parents, teachers, educational psychologists, social workers”

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995

RATIONALE

In School we need to carefully consider how we can prepare our pupils to play a full and productive part in society. We also need to ensure that they are capable of making their own meaningful contribution to society. It is also important to remember that society itself is undergoing rapid change and our pupils need to be equipped to respond to this at their own level.

The ethos and learning opportunities offered must reflect these factors by developing qualities and skills that will continue to be valuable to our pupils. The education we offer in should ensure that we foster in our pupils the ability to learn and develop new skills and improve their existing one throughout their lives.

By the time our pupils reach School we should be able to form a clear picture of their interest, strengths and aptitude along side a developing sense of independence and responsibility, at their own level. Our curriculum must offer a bridge from pupils' previous experiences and educational opportunities to their future placements.

In order to progress this we need to have a clear set of curriculum aims with emphasis on the development of personal qualities, skills, knowledge and understanding. The involvement of our pupils in the 5 – 14 Div. Plan Elaborated Curriculum and “Higher Still” through their undertaking of Access Level Band 1 & 2 will ensure that our pupils learn through a coherent curricular system that provides the opportunity to attain recognised qualifications for all.

SECONDARY FOCUS

Attendance at reviews also sits well with our Secondary School Focus as detailed below:-

- **PREPARATION FOR FUTURE:**

Secondary school pupils : we need to carefully consider how we can prepare our pupils to play a full and productive part in society.

- **CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY:**

Need to ensure that pupils are capable of making their own meaningful contribution to society. It is also important to remember that society itself is undergoing rapid change and our pupils need to be equipped to respond to this at their own level.

QUALITIES & SKILLS:

The curriculum offered must reflect these factors by developing qualities and skills that will continue to be valuable to our pupils.

- **LEARNING FOR LIFE:**

Seniors stage should ensure that we foster in our pupils the ability to learn and develop new skills and improve their existing one throughout their lives.

AIMS OF PUPILS ATTENDANCE AT REVIEWS

These aims are taken from a fuller list of Newhills School Aims. These ensure that pupil attendance at reviews is not an isolated activity but it fits in with our whole school ethos, as stated:

- To develop a positive ethos where all the members of the whole school community, including parents, are respected and valued.
- To ensure pupils always reach their full potential and are able to take their rightful place in society.
- To develop a collaborative approach to teaching and learning ensuring progression and continuity throughout the school.
- To offer a wide range of learning opportunities that are appropriate to a Secondary School provision.
- To empower pupils in self advocacy by offering them opportunities to make informed choices and decisions.

ATTENDANCE AT REVIEWS IN ACTION

- All pupils have an individual consultation with their class teacher and their EP as outlined.
- On a termly basis all pupils 'Termly Targets are set out and previous terms targets are reviewed.
- All pupils' ideas and opinions are given serious consideration and respect.
- Before each review the young person is prepared by:
Visiting the review room with class teacher.
Class teacher tells pupil who will be there and who they are.
Helps the young person think out their statement and questions.
- After the review the class teacher gives the young person feedback and listen to their comments.

ROLE OF PERSONNEL AND PARENTS ATTENDING REVIEW

To ensure that at all times the young person feels included, respected and is fully entitled to be there by:-

- Using where possible and appropriate simple and clear language.
- Including young person in all aspects of the discussion.
- Listening and attending to their communications.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING

These are draft proposals and ideas which are being piloted during Session '98 – '99.

Teaching staff will review how these have developed and how best to progress them.

Appendix: 5 Example of a pupil booklet for transition to secondary schooling; Other forms could be adapted for differing purposes including early primary, future needs etc.

THIS IS MY MEETING BOOK



Next year I will go to Secondary School

Soon I will be invited to a meeting

in _____

To talk with people who know me well about how I am getting on with my work and what I enjoy in school

The meeting will be

on _____

at _____

and will be held in _____

At the meeting will be

and of course me

About the meeting

I will come in at _____

for _____ minutes. I can use this workbook to let everyone know what I think about school and about my work.

There is also space for me to write down what I think about going to Secondary School. I can copy the workbook for the others or I might just talk at the meeting.

After I leave the meeting the adults may talk on their own for a while and someone will let me know about the things I missed.

_____ will talk to me afterwards and answer any questions which I have.

Facts about me

My name is _____

I am _____ years old

My date of birth is _____

I go to _____ school

I am in _____ class and my

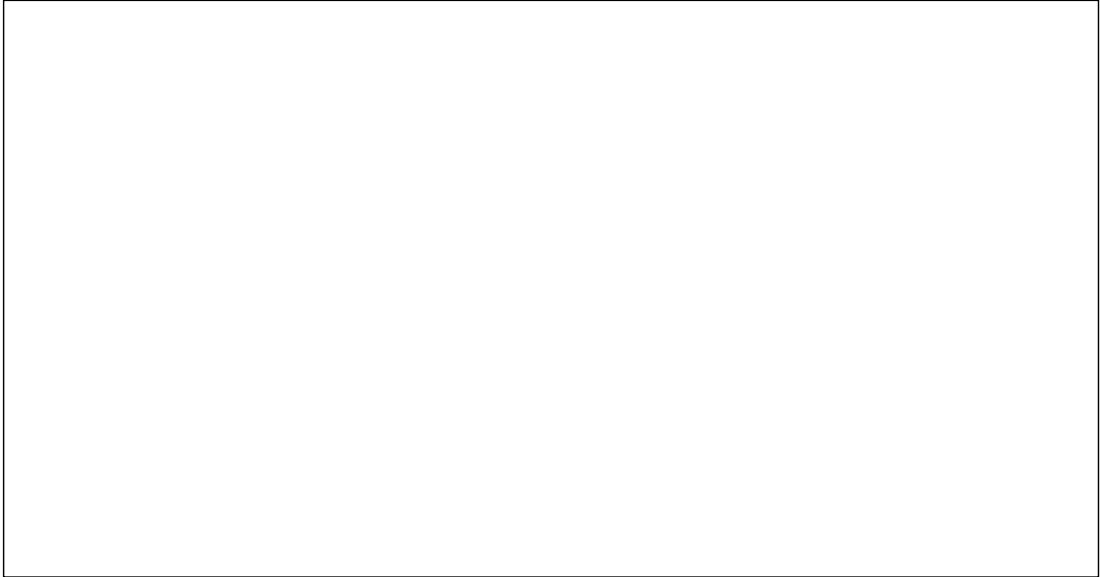
teacher is _____

My favourite thing at school is

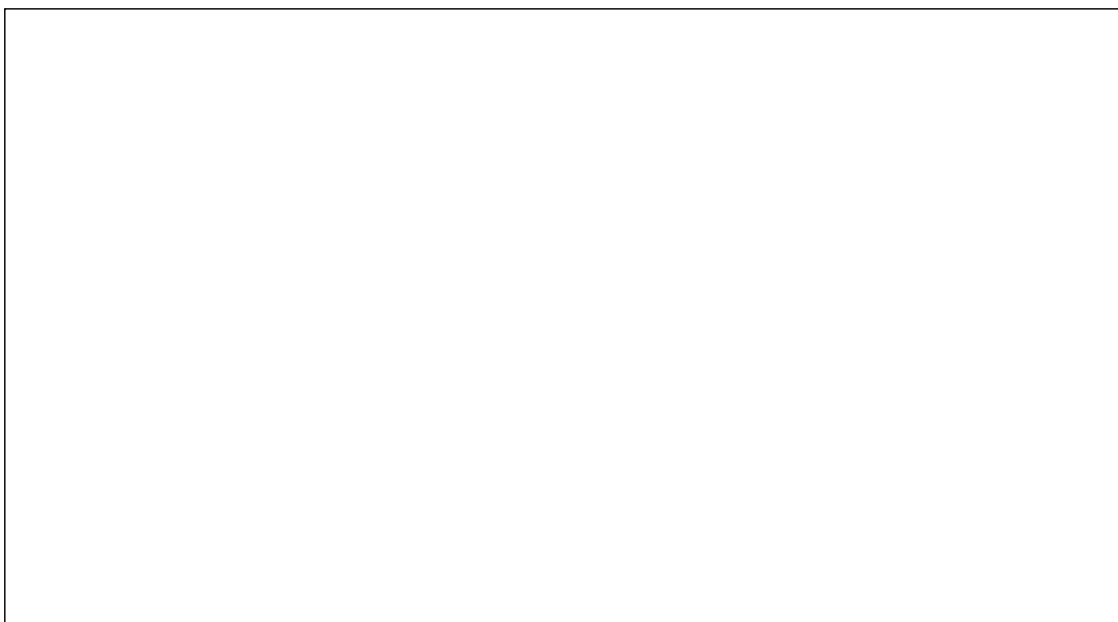
My hobbies are _____

Today's date is _____

At home I like

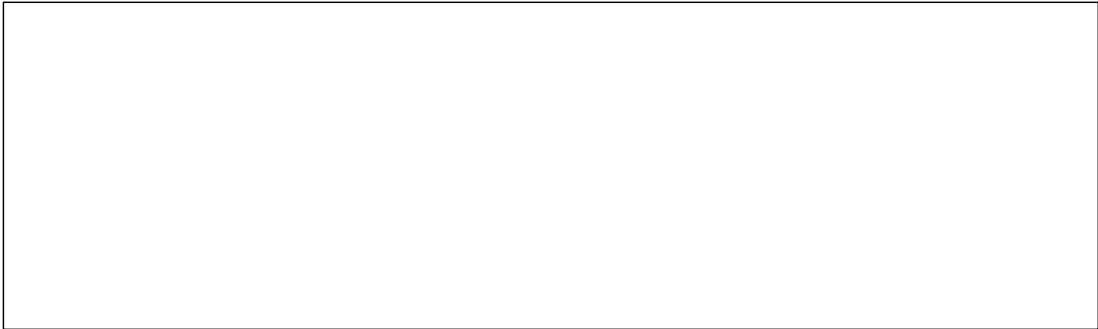
A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing or written response related to the prompt above.

At school I like

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing or written response related to the prompt above.

School

I am good at



I want to get better at



What helps me learn best



Things that make learning hard are



Friends

My friends are

Why I like them

What they like about me

I would get on better with others if

My plan for Secondary School

I am looking forward to

I would like to learn

I would like help with

I can write my comments here

Appendix: 6

See original publication

Appendix: 7

See original publication

List of Participants

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