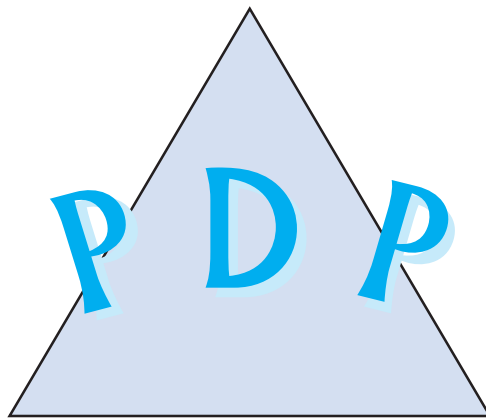


1997 -1998



Professional Development Programme
for Educational Psychologists in Scotland

Exclusions and Indiscipline

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EXCLUSIONS AND INDISCIPLINE

Gordon Phillips, Coordinator

FOREWORD

Recent months have seen a flurry of activity, comment and debate regarding the issue of exclusion and inclusion. Interest in the issue has been at the highest level with positive comment about progress being made by Scottish Education Minister Brian Wilson, who commented that Scotland is “ahead of the game” in seeking alternatives to exclusion from school and well ahead in the endeavour to reach the Prime Minister’s aim of reducing exclusions by a third. Brian Wilson observed that: “We are at an advanced stage of piloting alternatives to exclusion in a range of Scottish schools. There is excellent work being developed which will allow us to identify and extend best practice and help us to meet our targets...This is a complex, challenging issue but there will be great benefits if we can significantly reduce the number of exclusions”. (Wilson 1998).

Indeed, these comments by the Minister towards the end of the PDP project were the conclusion to a number of high profile government sponsored initiatives which had been launched during the short life of this current project. As the project began, The Alternatives to Exclusion Grant Scheme had pledged to provide local councils with funds to pilot innovative projects on alternatives to exclusion. 18 councils will receive funding of £3 million over three years until 2000. In April, the Scottish Office launched national guidance on exclusion. The guidance outlines good practice and advocates more consistency. It also emphasises that multi disciplinary, cross departmental approaches should be used (SOEID, 1998). In December 1997, the Scottish Initiative on Attendance, Absence and Attainment published “Close to the Mark”. This publication offers practical support material for schools, and pulls together the examples of good practice which have been identified in the Initiative’s work. March 1998 saw the launch by Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, of “Setting Targets - Raising Standards in Schools” which sets out targets for literacy, numeracy and attainment. Of note in the context of this project is that

it also states that there should be a national objective to minimise levels of non-attendance, within which authorities and schools would be expected to devise local targets and strategies. At the national conference on exclusions, earlier this year, the Secretary of State announced that there was a similar national objective to reduce levels of exclusion, within which schools and authorities would be expected to devise their own strategies and targets.

To this the heady political atmosphere in which the project team were working must be added the consideration of years of research and experience which raised concerns about the problems of definition and credibility of the available statistics on exclusions. Given the Government's emphasis on targets and reducing the numbers of exclusions, a matter of great concern arising out the research literature is the variation in definitions of exclusion and, consequently, the inconsistencies in practice and basic numerical data. More positively, within the research and intervention arena, and to echo Brian Wilson's contention that Scotland is "ahead of the game", it is clear that there are examples of effective practice. What appears to be lacking is effective dissemination and implementation on a wider scale of this good practice. More negatively, it is also clear that some features of practice have become somewhat hackneyed and cliched and have led some practitioners into a cosy complacency or cynicism. It can be argued that this is often the case in relation to the use of systems of case conferencing, multidisciplinary working, joint assessment teams. Are such multi-disciplinary forums genuinely and effectively working to promote the welfare of children and their families and to ensure their inclusion in the life of schools and communities? Or are they a bureaucratic hurdle to be traversed before excluding a child? In the light of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the implementation of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 how effectively are children and young people being informed and consulted about the processes of exclusion - and inclusion?

It was these four issues which informed the focus of the current project:

- the need for accurate information systems to inform policy and practice
- the need to disseminate information about effective practice

- the need to reflect on and move beyond the cliché of collaborative working
- the need to ensure that parents and young people are genuinely and positively involved in the process

The aim was to produce the foundations for a framework which schools, support professionals, parents and young people could use to reflect on the process of behaviour support from the individual to the systemic level and to move out of what Garner has termed the “shadowland where procedural vagaries remain apparent and student and parent advocacy are often absent” (Garner, 1993).

To this end the four interrelated strands of the project were to:

- produce a template for a system to monitor behaviour support and exclusions
- provide information about positive interventions to promote inclusion
- identify the key features of effective multi-disciplinary working
- gain the views of parents and young people about the exclusion process

To follow these four strands, the group formed into four sub-groups, but from the outset it was the intention to ensure that the practical requirement to divide labour in order to provide a focus on a particular area of work did not result in four discrete projects. The working method of the project team, therefore was to constantly feed ideas, hypothesis, findings, preliminary conclusions back to the whole team both electronically through e-mail and ‘live’ at a series of project meetings. For example, all members of the team were involved in the evaluation of the database material or provided data for the evaluation of multi-disciplinary forums. The resulting product, although not a fully realised system for self-evaluation to be used by schools, support services and local authority managers does, nevertheless, highlight these key areas and begin to integrate them within the beginnings of a coherent evaluative framework.

Because of the highly collaborative process which has produced this publication, it is credited to the whole team as co-authors. However, should readers wish to contact any members of the team for further discussion about aspects of the material, those providing the initial work,

coordinating particular sub-tasks for the group, or providing major first written drafts of material were as follows:

Fergal Doherty, Glasgow City Council and **Paula Dudgeon, North Lanarkshire Council** provided the basis for the work on the Behaviour Support and Exclusions Monitoring system (with acknowledgement to **Barry Syme, Glasgow City Council** for microtechnology assistance).

Jan Tavendale, Dundee City Council, produced material on good practice.

Michael Harker, Inverclyde Council; Jim Cumyn, Argyll and Bute Council and Ann Littlefair, City of Edinburgh Council, coordinated the evaluation of multi-disciplinary forums.

Jan Tavendale, Dundee City Council, and Shona Munro, Fife, provided the core of material on the involvement of parents and children.

of success. This current project is founded on a belief that a range of factors and interventions is likely to have a role to play at a systemic or individual level in reducing the incidence of exclusions and we attempt to look at some in detail to examine their impact.

A basic contention of this project is that no single or combined policy, approach or strategy can reduce exclusions without the fundamental underpinning of a positive school ethos championed by school management, shared and actively promoted by all members of staff. Essential features of this ethos is a climate of inclusion, mutual respect for and partnership with pupils and parents.

In attempting to come to terms with this difficult concept of ethos, researchers have produced a plethora of definitions:

- Rutter (1983) simply refers to ethos as that set of characteristics that distinguishes one school from another.
- Strivens (1985) describes it in the context of “.... good interpersonal relations which reside in the perceptions that teachers and pupils have of their experience”.
- Walton and Hill (1987) state: “The interest in the concept of school ethos stems from its use as a kind of global term which takes into account the quality of relationships between people in the school context”. They also argue that the quality of relationships has a profound effect on the learning process in school.

Perhaps Entwistle and Moss (1989) have produced the most helpful definition. They characterise ethos as having three general components:

1. **School Climate** - “relates to the quality of personal relationships within the school, involving SMT, the teachers and the pupils”
2. **Learning Environment** - “is the way that teaching is organised and carried out”

3. **Aims of the School** - “is the set of values about education and life in general”

The greatest strengths of this definition are that it moves between the macro and the micro in relation to individual class and whole school; it relates school ethos beyond mere pleasant social relations to the overall aim of effective learning; and it differentiates between the related concepts of school climate and school ethos.

Given the complexity of the topic, the aim of this project was to summarise the key issues and to identify the essential features of the processes involved in exclusion and inclusion. However, rather than producing yet another survey of the literature or a set of statistics the intention was to produce material which psychologists and schools could utilise in the endeavour towards creating a more inclusive educational experience for children and young people. Because of the time constraints of this project, this aim has not been fully realised. What has been produced, however, has been found, in the small scale evaluation work carried out, to be of valuable assistance in enabling schools to reflect on and evaluate aspects of practice. There is contained in the following four chapters, on the attached discs and in the appendices the foundation for a framework to improve practice and facilitate inclusion:

- a behaviour support and exclusions monitoring database
- a summary of support strategies
- an examination of the role of multi-disciplinary forums
- challenges in including children and parents in the process

BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT AND EXCLUSION MONITORING DATABASE

RATIONALE

As outlined in the in the introduction above it is clear that to date most education authorities throughout Scotland have not kept accurate data on exclusions from schools. This has inhibited the construction of consistent policies and the monitoring of effectiveness at local and national levels. The overall aim, then, in developing a template for a database is to create a 'mirror' on present practice for schools and authorities. Through its implementation future policy and practice can be informed and guided, and the number of school days lost through exclusion reduced.

FUNCTIONS

Under the overall aim of being a 'mirror' to guide future policy and practice, the following outcomes can be enabled by the database:

- improved communication within schools - between and within departments, guidance systems and senior management teams - regarding behaviour support and exclusion monitoring; as well as between schools and education department management.
- regular analysis of exclusion statistics using figures which are an accurate reflection of the actual situation.
- schools - departments, senior management teams and multi-disciplinary forums (eg., joint assessment teams) can monitor their own within school practice (eg., relation to indices such as: behaviour types; situation and location; year; gender; ethnicity).
- schools can monitor their own practice in relation to that of other schools.

- investigation of the relevant processes operating in those schools which have exclusion figures which would not be predicted on the basis of their school intake.

PROGRAM SPECIFICATIONS

Currently the database application program is Filemaker Pro for either Apple Macintosh or PC Windows. These have been chosen for the following reasons:

- secure database with facility for various levels of user access.
- requires little prior training for users.
- easily modifiable to individual school requirements.
- facility to link with other databases.

In the future, if required, the database can be made available in Microsoft Access.

IMPLEMENTATION

Early indications from feedback on presentations and initial implementation phases in Glasgow City and Fife Councils would appear to indicate that both schools and educational directorate see the benefits of the project database. Those involved in trial implementation tend to perceive benefits from a range of points of view. Perceived benefits of the database from these various perspectives are as follows:

Educational Directorate

- offers provision of administrative procedures within the legal framework.
- provides a potential framework to support relations between parents and authorities.
- expands the ability to monitor individual school performance.

Senior Management Teams

- offers a framework for administrative procedures within schools.
- encourages lines of communication within schools and between schools and education department management.
- facilitates identification of locii and 'type' of exclusion.

Multi-Disciplinary Forums

- provides a means to accurately record both behaviour support and 'exclusion incidents'.
- enables the investigation of the efficacy of multi-disciplinary forums
- enables the identification of problematic areas, subjects etc.
- encourages coordination between schools and the support agencies.

Parents

- clarifies information about exclusion incidents.
- clarifies which behaviour support strategies have been implemented.

SUPPORT STRATEGIES

The term 'Alternatives to Exclusion' could arguably be re-expressed as 'Towards Inclusion'. Research suggests that movement in this direction is most likely to be achieved through positive approaches and strategies for guiding the behaviour of teachers, pupils and parents in an effort to increase a spirit of partnership with shared values and goals. Scottish Office circular 2/98 reports that " a key characteristic of schools which have been found to be successful in minimising exclusion was the explicit adoption of the aim of meeting the needs of all pupils who were part of their school community, whatever their ability, background or social circumstances". Any consideration of alternatives to exclusion must begin from a position of seeking a school climate of inclusion and an expectation of providing a positive and appropriate education for all pupils. In the SCCC document, 'Teaching for Effective Learning' it is suggested that "we are more likely to learn when we are motivated to do so. Young people who feel good about themselves are much more likely to be highly motivated to learn". That such a target is not easily achieved has been recognised by generations of politicians of every persuasion. In December 1993, in Edinburgh, the then Minister for Education said "we cannot pretend that it is easy capturing and retaining the attention of pupils who have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. At times it is tempting to say that it cannot be done. That is not acceptable. Walking by on the other side is not assisting anyone least of all the children and young people. Effective education is essential".

In 1997, Brian Wilson described 'Promoting Social Competence' (a Scottish Office funded project co-ordinated by Dr Keith Topping at Dundee University) as an initiative which "puts young people first by focussing on how schools can promote the acquisition of good social skills and positive emotional well-being in their pupils". This project has been seeking to explore 'How best can schools foster emotional intelligence?' and 'How best can schools encourage self-esteem among their pupils?' Further reference to this project will be made later.

Donald Dewar in 1998, again in Edinburgh, addressed a conference on 'Alternatives to Exclusion' saying that the first priority must be in prevention of exclusions and the emphasis must be on inclusion, based on an assumption that schools make a difference. He also recognised that "good communications with parents make an enormous difference to the educational well-being of pupils".

This PDP group believes that any consideration of alternatives to exclusion must begin from a position of seeking a school climate of inclusion and an expectation of providing a positive and appropriate education for all pupils. This belief is in keeping with the views expressed in the now popularly acclaimed work by Goleman on "Emotional Intelligence". In this work it is argued that Goleman argues that the emotional lessons we learn as children at home and at school shape the emotional circuits, making us more adept - or inept - at the basics of emotional intelligence. This means that childhood and adolescence are critical for setting down the essential emotional habits that will govern our lives. The key characteristics of emotional intelligence as abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and to delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathise and to hope. It would not be unusual to hear the needs of some pupils described in such terms as

- needs to learn to control his anger
- needs to learn to take responsibility for the outcome of his actions
- needs to learn to interact more socially with his peers.

If it can be stated that pupils need to learn these skills, it should also be true to say they need to be taught.

It can be argued that the crucial emotional competencies can indeed be learned and improved upon by children - if we bother to teach them. The necessary competencies included in 'emotional literacy' involve such skills as:

- anger management

- conflict resolution
- decision making and taking responsibility for decisions
- ability to interpret expressions/ body language.

This view is endorsed by the SCCC in 'Teaching for Effective Learning' where we read "learning involves developing our emotions and feelings along with our ability to think and act". Other than emotional literacy there is perhaps no subject where the quality of the teacher matters so much since how a teacher handles her class is in itself a model, a de facto lesson in emotional competence - or the lack thereof. Whenever a teacher responds to one student, 20 or 30 others learn a lesson.

This project, therefore, aimed to consider a sample of the areas of potential systemic development by a school. Such development would facilitate strategies by which schools could:

- cultivate an inclusive expectation among staff and pupils
- monitor behaviour so that an awareness of emergent issues exists
- foster a spirit of genuine partnership between teachers, parents and pupils.

It should be noted that the scope of this project was planned some months before the publication of Interchange 47 (Munn et al., 1997). It was encouraging to find consistency between the group's planning and the subsequently published document. Reference to 'In School Alternatives' described in Interchange 47 includes such statements as:

“There is no ‘quick fix’ which can be used instead of exclusion. However the work undertaken to create an inclusive school may result in a positive school experience for all pupils and hence reduce the use of exclusion”

and

“Alternatives to exclusion can be thought of in two ways:

alternative punitive sanctions seen as less severe than exclusion, or pro-active supportive measures designed to avoid the need for use of exclusion as a sanction.”

and from interviews with teaching staff:

“Pro-active supportive measures perceived as effective began in the classroom. These included advance planning and preparation by the teacher, differentiated and flexible curricula and using classroom seating arrangements to separate some pupils as well as specific methods such as circle time and the conscious use of praise and rewards.”

The ethos of any school will be reflected in its policy and procedures and in the range of interventions which it adopts as an individual or systemic response to the management of its pupils. Information about a number of positive interventions which lie along a continuum of sophistication has been gathered during the course of this project. These interventions will also vary in their level of familiarity to readers.

A list of interventions can be found in Appendix 1. They are also included in the Behaviour Support and Exclusion Monitoring Database. Further details of individual interventions should in the first instance be sought by contacting the local Educational Psychology Service. The list is neither claimed nor intended to be exhaustive but is rather a prompt to the creativity of those committed to the development of a positive and inclusive ethos in their school.

A bank of resources covering positive interventions can be accessed later this year from the databank created by Willi Bremner and Liz Holmes through the project, ‘Promoting Social Competence’. Resources will be available through SCCC from October 1998. A paper ‘taster pack’ will become available as will CD and computer disk formats. A website is also planned.

The Scottish Office document “Sharing Good Practice” (1997) also provides examples of positive interventions which have been shown to support pupils who are experiencing social, emotional and behavioural problems. The focus is on whole school and classroom approaches.

The examples in this document, the resources in the database and the interventions listed in Appendix 1 are all consistent with the positive and inclusive climate described above. Such a

climate is likely to create clear communication about expectations and outcomes for staff, pupil and parent behaviours and would prioritise constructive feedback and the acknowledgement of positive behaviour.

These are the conditions which allow two powerful interventions to be implemented jointly and so create a combination which has been shown to be successful in preventing the type of behaviour which so frequently leads inexorably to exclusion. These two are listed individually in the appendix. They are 'Positive Assertive Management' (PAM) and 'Video Interactive Guidance' (SPIN VIG). Together they are described as PAM/SPIN and a summary outline of this dual strategy is offered in Appendix 1.

PAM/SPIN is wholly consistent with guidance in Circular 2/98 on Promoting Positive Behaviour. This says that "with regard to the general management of school discipline, there is much that schools can do to promote good behaviour and relationships amongst their pupils and thus make it less likely that the circumstances which lead to the exclusion of pupils will arise. All schools should seek to develop best practice approaches in promoting positive behaviour in explicit and carefully structured ways".

Positive Assertive Management has also been successfully extended beyond the classroom to areas such as the dining hall and playground where complementary strategies such as Peacemakers and Positive Play have also been shown to play a useful role. Attunement Strategy (see Appendix 1) similarly builds on appropriate teacher questioning and feedback to pupils in the development of motivation and the encouragement of independent learning and self esteem.

Positive Assertive Management has also been introduced to parents, not only to complement what their children are experiencing in school but also to support those parents who feel the need to deal more effectively and more positively with the management and in turn the emotional lives of their children.

Goleman's work on emotional intelligence culminates in looking at innovative class work that aims to give a grounding in the basics of emotional intelligence. Goleman foresees a day when education will routinely include inculcating essential human competencies such as self

awareness, self control and empathy and the arts of listening, resolving conflicts and co-operation.

The existence of the range of positive strategies and interventions of which those described here are only a small sample, is testament to the commitment of so many professionals across this country and beyond to the achievement of such a routine in education. That the time and energies of so many in the fields of education, politics and journalism are caught up in the work behind such headlines as "Heads may exclude to raise results" (TESS May 1st 1998) is also testament to how far there is yet to travel in reaching this goal.

PICKING UP THE PIECES?: THE ROLE OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY FORUMS IN DISCIPLINE AND EXCLUSION

A DECADE OF INTER-AGENCY INITIATIVES

Over the past ten years local authority education departments across Scotland have promoted a range of multi-agency strategies to address discipline, support and disruption in secondary schools. (eg., Young People in Trouble, Care and Education Strategy for Young People, Youth Strategy, etc) These initiatives arose not only as a pragmatic response to local needs, but also in response to research in the area of effective schools, disruption, absenteeism and exclusions. (eg., McLean, 1987; Galloway, 1985; Rutter et al, 1981; Reynolds,1981).

When reviewing the influence of local authority policies and procedures on exclusion levels, MacPhee(1987) concluded that “inter-agency co-operation on policy and practice becomes not only desirable but necessary”. Policy and practice was seen to be in line with research findings if it, among other things, included a stress on inter-departmental policy making and practice.

It has also been recognised, however, that effective joint working is a complex process which goes beyond the contributions of the individual and agencies involved. There has been a growing recognition that policies, resources, procedures and attitudes all interact to influence outcomes within a multi-disciplinary context (eg Gill and Pickles, 1989; Brown and MacPhee, 1991).

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY FORUMS

In April 1988 Strathclyde Regional Council launched its policy statement “Young People in Trouble” - a multi-agency strategy involving Education, Social Work and the Reporters Department (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1988). The report emphasised the need for inter-

departmental cooperation and collaborative practice, making specific recommendations for all agencies involved (1.3.5.).

It was recommended that "...a team approach should be developed for dealing with young people in trouble" at a school level (2.5.3.). Each secondary school was to establish a multi-disciplinary team which would meet regularly to discuss pupils experiencing difficulty. The Joint Assessment Team (JAT), as they were termed, was seen as the key element or "building block" of the "Young People in Trouble" strategy. In other parts of the country, similar teams were being established in response to local policy and initiatives (eg., School Liaison Groups as part of the Lothian Youth Strategy).

The "Young People in Trouble" Report recommended that pupils should be referred to JAT when:

"i)...there are indications that (s)he is in difficulties and that early preventative action may reduce the likelihood of more serious problems arising later

ii)...(s)he is in danger of being formally excluded from school (i.e. for a period of more than 3 days)

iii)...it is considered that his/her needs cannot be met within the mainstream provision of the school

iv)...(s)he is returning from residential school or other specialist resource" (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1988).

With the developing recognition that school systems and processes could have a beneficial influence on pupil behaviour and levels of disruption, the hope of many educational psychologists and other professionals was that the establishment of such multi-disciplinary forums (MDFs) in secondary schools would help to further enhance positive school influences on pupils. Many educational psychologists saw MDFs as ideally placed to help schools develop

pro-active, holistic approaches for the support of troubled and troublesome young people within the secondary school context.

Six years later, in 1994, Strathclyde Regional Council's Revised Standard Circular No. 8 set out the formal legal requirements on schools in the event of pupils being excluded. The accompanying "Role of Exclusions in School Discipline Policy: Guidelines for Headteachers" emphasised the need for the Circular to be seen in the context of other Regional policies including "Young People in Trouble". This Standard Circular was adopted by the majority of the successor unitary councils within the former Strathclyde area.

The Circular formally enshrined JATs and other multi-agency forums within the exclusion process. Thus, as part of a whole-school approach to discipline, secondary schools were urged to consider "... the function and composition of JAT, the preventative nature of its work, the involvement of JAT in the exclusion process and the role of JAT in providing support during exclusion and in preparing for the return of the pupil to school: (5.2).

In a recent SOEID funded research project, Munn et al (1997) highlighted, "the importance of inter-agency collaboration in solving the school-based problems of disaffected pupils". Even more recently, SOEID Guidelines on "Issues Concerning Exclusion from School" (Circular No 2/98, April 1998), state that "multi-disciplinary and inter-agency approaches will be necessary to address many of the concerns which give rise to the consideration of exclusion for individual pupils".

One survey in Glasgow carried out by educational psychologists established that around 64% of schools surveyed had a JAT or equivalent. However, responses indicated that only 27% of these JATs dealt with discipline and exclusion. Criteria cited as justifying a referral to JAT included; 'behaviour', 'attendance', 'learning', 'home and community' and a wide range of other factors. If this survey is representative of practice across the country, it suggests that there may be significant differences between policy and practice in relation to the role of MDFs in exclusion.

The above finding raised a series of concerns about the nature of MDFs and their role in dealing with indiscipline and exclusion from school:

- 1 What do schools consider to be the role of their MDF?
- 2 Do school staff consider that it has a role to play in the exclusion process, despite what good practice and policy dictates?
- 3 If JATs are not involved in indiscipline and exclusion, what are they doing?

In the light of these kinds of questions and concerns, the project team wished to examine aspects of the processes involved in the workings of multi-disciplinary forums and to provide some pointers to improve their effectiveness.

AIMS

The aims of the project were to:

- clarify the nature of the relationship between MDFs and the discipline and exclusion process.
- determine if MDFs are involved, in what ways, and to what extent in the discipline and exclusion process
- examine and describe the range of roles and nature of involvement of MDFs in the discipline and exclusion process.
- describe the perceived relationships between support and discipline in the secondary schools sampled.

METHOD

The project comprised two distinct stages described below.

Stage One: Questionnaire on MDF Involvement in Exclusion

Every secondary school in the project members' local authorities (6 authorities, 84 secondary schools) was sent a brief questionnaire (see Appendix 2) to establish the extent and nature of MDF involvement in the exclusion process. Schools were also asked to indicate their interest in

taking part in a more detailed study involving structured interviews with a small number of staff from their school.

Stage Two: Structured Interviews

On the basis of the questionnaire returns in Stage One, 6 schools were selected to take part in a more detailed follow up study involving structured interviews with a number of staff in each school (see Appendix 3). The schools selected had all indicated that they would be prepared to take part in a follow-up study. Schools were selected on the basis of their responses to Question 4 of the questionnaire which asked them to specify details of their involvement in the exclusion process. Thus some schools selected, indicated that their MDF did have an involvement in the process of exclusion, while other schools indicated that their MDF had none or minimal involvement in the exclusion process.

A range of staff who had an involvement in the MDF were interviewed :

- Head Teacher
- SMT Representative
- PT(Guidance)
- PT(Learning Support)
- Unpromoted Teacher (with an involvement in/knowledge of JAT).

In this way staff opinion from across the secondary school hierarchy would be sampled. Thus the plan was to interview a total of 30 staff from 6 local authorities. An early decision was made not to interview external agency staff due to the availability of a recent survey of external agency staff attitudes (Curnyn, unpublished survey, 1996).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stage One: Questionnaire on MDF Involvement in Exclusion

Responses indicated that a large majority, 55 out of 65 (roughly 85%), of the schools sampled had a MDF of some form which met on a regular basis (Appendix 2). This percentage was higher than that indicated in the survey carried out by the psychologists in Glasgow. The largest percentage of MDFs met on a monthly basis (49%) with only 20% meeting on a weekly basis. The frequency with which a MDF meets may have an influence upon the nature of its role and functioning within a school. Those meeting on a weekly basis are much more likely to be integral to the ongoing management of pupils and more able to take up a proactive role, while MDFs meeting on a monthly basis or less frequently are much less likely to be central to the day to day management of pupils in the school. Around 11% of schools indicated that their MDF met less than once every 6 weeks.

38 of the 55 schools who said they had regular MDFs indicated that their MDF had some level of involvement in 'the process of exclusion'. In other words 69% of 'MDF schools' have a MDF that is involved in exclusion. This constituted 38 out of the total number of schools sampled (65). Thus, around 58 % of the whole sample of schools reported themselves to have a MDF with a stated involvement in the process of exclusion.

It would appear that a large number of the schools sampled (approx 40%) do not have a MDF which meets on a regular basis to discuss issues and strategies relating to the process of exclusion. However, follow-up revealed that schools and teachers had interpreted the phrase 'process of exclusion' in a number of different ways. Some schools who were originally classified as having a MDF with no involvement in exclusion, were revealed later during follow-up to have interpreted the above term in a very strict sense and actually were more involved than they originally indicated. Thus responses to this question need to be interpreted with caution. As a result of this ambiguity, a decision was made not to carry out a more detailed

systematic comparison of schools in terms of whether or not their MDF had an involvement in the process of exclusion. However, this issue remains an interesting area for future research.

Question 4 asked schools to indicate the stage at which they were involved in the exclusion process and to what extent. These responses were used to select schools for follow-up interviews. They revealed that those schools who reported that they were involved in the process of exclusion, tended to select the 'sometimes' category more often than the 'always' category, indicating that MDFs are not always consulted in exclusion process. Most schools indicating an involvement in exclusion, tended to be involved throughout the process, ie., before, during and after exclusion (74%).

External and political factors seem to have had a contaminating effect upon the responses made by some schools. In one council area the questionnaire coincided with a memorandum from the education department directorate to all schools to the effect that all exclusions must be accompanied by multi-agency discussion of one form or another. This seems to have resulted in schools in this particular area unanimously indicating an involvement in the exclusion process. It is possible that such factors may have subtly affected the responses made by many school staff.

The aim of this initial survey was to determine the extent and nature of MDF involvement in the process of exclusion. 65 schools were sampled across 6 different council areas. The following conclusions can be drawn from the responses obtained:

1. MDFs are very common in secondary schools.
2. Not all MDFs are perceived to have an involvement in 'the process of exclusion'.
3. Most MDFs which are involved, tend to be involved throughout the course of an exclusion, ie., before, during and after a pupil has been excluded.
4. Many schools do not routinely involve their MDF in the process of exclusion. Only about one third of schools report that their MDF is always involved in the exclusion process.

Stage two: Structured Interviews

A large amount of very rich data was obtained from the structured interviews. For the purposes of the present report, it was decided to focus on the following three areas:

- Teachers' perceptions and understanding of the relationship between discipline and support.
- The perceived role of MDFs in discipline and exclusion.
- Teachers' ideas on the development of MDFs in their schools.

Questions pertaining to parent and pupil involvement are discussed in a separate chapter below.

Teachers' Perceptions and Understanding of the Relationship between Discipline and Support.

Within the current survey of the role of MDFs in exclusion and indiscipline, it was considered important to ask school staff about wider school structures and processes, and how they saw MDF relating to these. It was considered that MDF operation would depend, not only on its internal structure and relationships, but also upon how, as a body, it related to discipline and support structures and processes in a school. A number of questions in the structured interview guide sought to elicit teachers' views on these issues (see appendix 3).

Teachers were asked to consider four Venn diagrams representing a range of types of relationships between support and discipline and to indicate which one they considered best described the relationship between support and discipline in their school. Most teachers selected either diagram A or B or combinations of these two, in response to this question. Only one teacher selected diagram D which represented a situation where discipline and support systems are totally separate and do not interact.

Thus 4 different relationships between support and discipline were described.

A: Discipline as a Subset of Support

Diagram A represented a situation within which discipline is a 'sub-set' of a more global support system in the school. Some teachers who selected other diagrams, said that that situation A was the 'ideal' but that their school was not (yet) at this stage. This was seen as something of a development aim. For example, one Depute Head Teacher responded:

“Trying to aim for this one (A). Support is there for all pupils from day one. We are trying to get pupils to have the idea that the school is here for them. Discipline is only brought in if I see a pattern that's repeated.....I would see the discipline as part of the support”

Another SMT representative commented:

“Should be Diagram A. We're moving this way. Looking for a 'resolution to indiscipline' rather than 'retribution for indiscipline', therefore support has got to be a part of that. Children will need support to act, behave and interact appropriately. Has to come right through the whole community of the school. Support is a solution to indiscipline. Sanctions that are applied have to be measured, considered and have to be appropriate to the level of indiscipline....Reaction has to be immediate. But we have to balance the rights and responsibilities of pupils”

One teacher voiced her dissatisfaction with the existing system (which she saw as represented by diagram D):

“.....Needs to be dealt with more holistically...need support to be embroiled within discipline...need to be more pro-active.”

Teachers described situation A in various ways:

“ Diagram A, a discipline process, that supports pupils and learning”,

“ Diagram A. The school takes the view that pupils and staff are responsible for their actions and that we can support people in a number of ways”

“HT has built a caring ... school. In discipline matters it’s a caring attitude that is offered. When we’re talking about discipline we’re looking at areas to support the pupil”

Thus teachers selecting diagram A generally explained discipline as a positive approach to support pupils in making appropriate choices in their lives. These teachers saw discipline as simply one way to help support pupils.

B: Support as a Subset of Discipline

Fewer teachers selected this option. One Head Teacher selected and then modified the diagram to create his own option which he described as:

“Support and discipline as subsets within an overarching aspect of ethos”.

He went on to clarify:

“discipline can only function within the overall ethos which includes how young people are supported”.

One PT(LS) provided a clear account of her perception of the relationship:

“The main ethos of the school in terms of managing behaviour is, for almost all pupils and staff, the idea of discipline, external and internal. For a few who can’t for various reasons cope with this system there is a range of support mechanisms including the Joint Assessment Team”.

Two unpromoted teachers explained their view of the relationship:

“To me it would be model C. Every child needs discipline, but it reaches a level when support becomes really important”

“Discipline must be in place to let (support) teaching go on”.

It would seem that teachers selecting diagram C perhaps viewed support in a more technical sense, viewing it as the provision of specific support arrangements, rather than support to pupils in the sense of supporting members of the wider ‘school community’. In these responses there is also the sense that discipline is something which is applied first. If it is unsuccessful, support is then considered. Support in this context was considered to be for pupils who, for various reasons, can’t cope with, or don’t respond to routine discipline.

However, the view that ‘naughty’ children who do not respond to routine discipline and sanctions need a more supportive almost ‘therapeutic’ response was a theme running through several of the respondents’ comments. An associated idea is the implied sense of the ‘deserving few’ for whom mitigating circumstances deem them worthy of more caring supportive measures. This leaves ‘those who should know better’ to be dealt with in a straightforward discipline way. This notion was also evident in the responses of these teachers selecting diagram B.

C: Support & Discipline - An Interaction of Sets.

Teachers selecting diagram B viewed discipline and support as separate systems which often overlap and interacted in various ways:

“Main focus has to be support for children in school....there are some cases in which discipline has only a “peripheral” relationship to support, support is core. There are cases where children need straightforward discipline, rules, structure, and for most this does not need to be followed up by support - the supportive nature is understood. For the few it is not and we need more explicit support. Terminology is complex and important here, discipline is really about developing self-discipline, discipline is not about punishment”.

Another teacher in the same school:

“Sometimes these have to be separated ie., discipline where simple sanctions without any background difficulty or history. But in any more complex case there is a need for

any sanctions or discipline to be essentially part of a support strategy, ...particularly where there is a history of EBD...”.

Some teachers selected diagram B because they felt that neither principle was dominant, eg.:

“Diagram B....link, neither overrides. Support could give ideas how to manage discipline eg., “needs anger management”

One teacher selected B because he felt that:

“Guidance teachers are not agents of discipline..(their role is to)...encourage pro-active steps and early intervention before discipline problems appear”.

Another teacher felt that a more holistic approach was sometimes not possible due to the pupils reaction, ie.:

“Embeddedness is the wish, but practically there are pupils who distance themselves from support opportunities and discipline measures take over.’

D: No Interaction

Only one teacher described the relationship in her school in terms of diagram D. She was not happy about this state of affairs and indicated that diagram A represented a more appropriate relationship:

“.....static guidance team has nothing to do with discipline...(discipline) needs to be dealt with more holistically....staff frustrated with the discipline system, don’t get feedback....Need support embroiled within discipline. Needs to be more pro-active”.

Where does the MDF lie?

Having selected their representation of the relationship between support and discipline, teachers were then asked to place the MDF within the diagram. The aim was to elicit teachers’ perceptions of the ways in which the MDF fitted into the wider school context. Was it seen as a peripheral body? Was it central to support but not involved with discipline matters etc.?

All the teachers who responded to this question directly placed the MDF within the ‘Support’ circle in one way or another. This suggests that the MDF is generally seen as a support body which operates within a schools wider support system. Those who viewed their discipline and support systems as embedded (ie., diagrams A or C) tended to place the MDF within the support system, not in the discipline subsets. Only one teacher placed the MDF on the line between discipline and support.

If this finding represents a general perception, then it has implications about the role prescribed for MDFs within discipline structures and exclusion guidelines. However, most of the teachers selecting diagram B, tended to place the MDF in the intersection of the discipline and support sets. This suggests that these teachers saw the MDF as in some way positioned to act as a link or interface between discipline and support.

A final question asked teachers to elaborate on the way in which they saw the MDF link with the discipline system. Responses varied in terms of how involved the MDF was considered to be in discipline matters. Many respondents assumed the link and responded by explaining the procedure by which the MDF became involved in disciplinary situations. A large number of responses indicated that the MDF did have a significant role in, and links with, the discipline system. Various roles and relationships were outlined in responses.

‘End of the Line’

Many teachers described MDFs as becoming involved only after a great deal of effort and work had gone into supporting a pupil eg.:

“JAT is a strategy for dealing with EBD/ LDs. JAT is at the end of the discipline system. Discipline is just one aspect of JAT. JAT develops from discipline. There are a range of strategies, one of which is JAT”.

“...might be referred to JAT.....after a lot had been tried , and found not to have worked.”

“we are passed simple discipline issues with those we usually discuss at the JAT”

In one school the MDF was not perceived to have a role in disciplinary matters. In this school the MDF seemed to have evolved mainly within the context of support to children with educational needs, ie.:

“It doesn’t have a link with the disciplinary system in the sense that it is there to support young people within the curriculum. JAT is there to support young people in accessing the curriculum. JAT is not another arm of discipline within the school. It is designed for pupils who are at risk”.

In this school the SMT representative described the MDF as a:

“safety net for kids who are experiencing difficulties”.

A pro-active, advisory role was outlined.

Bigger/Wider Issues

Some teachers saw the MDF as operating in parallel with more day to day school discipline matters, addressing wider issues and more individual concerns eg:

“JAT deals with bigger, or rather wider issues, discipline often deals with what has to be tackled here and now”.

Discipline was regarded as only one of the many issues dealt with by the MDF:

“SLG sees the pupil from a different perspective, slightly more removed from problems in the classroom..... presents a more softly, softly approach to disciplining pupils than SMT, but we have to help colleagues work out the way discipline and support should go together”.

Advice on Discipline

Other responses indicated that the MDF often acted to give advice on discipline issues. Many teachers commented upon the good communication there was between year head, guidance and the MDF, eg.:

“the JAT gives a wider range of approaches on how we deal with difficult children”.

“outcome of a discipline situation could be a referral to JAT to look for a solution”.

“JAT do advise on discipline...make recommendations”.

Several teachers indicated that they would like to see the MDF spend more time in an advisory capacity, dealing in a pro-active way with pupils and wider issues rather than simply at the end of a series of disciplinary measures. As one member of a SMT commented:

“we’re not into fire fighting....”

Teachers’ Views: Conclusions

The interview responses have indicated that most of the teachers surveyed perceived support and discipline to be related in one way or another. A wide range of views and perceptions have been outlined. The two most commonly selected scenarios described the relationship either as an interaction of sets, with support and discipline operating in parallel and interacting as and when required; or alternatively, discipline being a sub-set of a larger ‘support’ set, to be viewed as one of many ‘supportive’ strategies to be employed appropriately within the context of a supportive and caring school community. A third scenario, less frequently selected, viewed discipline as the overarching principle, to be applied first. Support was viewed as available to those pupils who could not, or did not respond to the general disciplinary requirements of the school. There was a slight trend in the responses to view the situation represented in Diagram A as the ‘ideal’ or most appropriate state of affairs, while a large number felt that B was the realistic and inevitable nature of the relationship.

These questions have enabled the description of a range of views about the nature and purpose of support and discipline in the secondary school. It has also enabled an initial description of the ways in which teachers perceive the relationship between support and discipline. These perceptions and attitudes will tend to set the context for the ways in which these teachers act and function as members of the MDF.

These perceptions and views need to be centrally considered when developing national, local council, and school level strategies and policies for discipline and support. In particular local council policies and practices which implicate MDF in discipline and exclusion procedures will have to consider the way in which the MDF for any particular school operates and perceives its role and function.

The Role of the Multi-disciplinary Forum in Discipline & Exclusion

What Role does the MDF Play in Exclusion?

The response to the structured interview very clearly highlights, not only a broad range of practice with regard to the actual role of MDF in the process of exclusion, but a broad spectrum of opinion as to what the ideal relationship should be.

“there is no link between exclusions and the role of the MDF “ (HT)

“the idea is to come up with strategies of prevention to allow pupils to avoid exclusion” (AHT)

“not linked, certainly not in any decisions about who should be excluded” (AHT)

Despite the very explicit directive in the YPIT (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1988) document concerning the need for MDF involvement in all exclusions many of those surveyed, clearly operated a system which deliberately avoided this as inappropriate practice for a forum whose concerns are in working to improve the ethos of the school and to support pupils - and not to get involved in narrow “disciplinary” issues. This view tends to see the MDF as having a proactive and preventative role and would, in a sense, see a direct role in exclusion as being tantamount to a failure of the *raison d’être* of the system.

“I don’t think we are (involved), the SMT make all decisions about exclusion” (PTLS)

“not formally involved before exclusion unless in a preventative manner through support” (PTG)

In the “middle ground” there appear to be those who see the MDF as inevitably having an involvement with exclusion but stressing that this should not be an automatic involvement.

Several criteria were forwarded as a basis for MDF involvement where exclusion is concerned, the most common being the frequency of exclusion and the nature of the “infringement” which led to the proposed exclusion. Thus it may be that a MDF will only be involved after a certain number of exclusions have taken place - and hence the process is proving to be ineffective - or where the precipitating incident is seen as having some underlying psychological or sociological dimension. It is interesting that quite a few of those interviewed seemed to feel that certain types of activity and certain individuals could clearly be identified as falling outside these criteria and hence could be eliminated as appropriate MDF referrals.

“mostly there is ongoing support and an exclusion cutting across that is regrettable, but for some pupils/ staff a necessary respite” (HT)

“never involved prior to 1st, 2nd or 3rd exclusion. If a pattern develops a referral may be considered” (HT)

“depends upon the persistence of a problem and also judgments about factors underpinning the problems” (PTG)

“not appropriate if there is a one-off blow up, or some daft behaviour” (PTLS)

At the other end of this spectrum there are those who see the MDF as being actively involved in the exclusion process. The responses to the interviews suggest there are fewer MDF members at this end of the spectrum. However, here there appears to be a general view of the MDF as having an informative role in the “judicial system” leading to exclusion. Thus the MDF may ensure that a broader range of background information is gathered, involving the social work department, the psychological service etc. prior to any decision to exclude. Or to ensure that the whole available range of alternatives has been tried before exclusion is imposed.

“..(some pupils) frequently excluded but never referred, seen as wild bunch, persistent breaches of discipline, no big issues so no MDF. What could MDF do? Would be wasting out time.” (PTG)

“may be a group of pupils who are in regular infringement of discipline issues but no suggestion of deeper problems - here MDF involvement is not appropriate.”

“It would be very rare for a pupil at risk of exclusion not to be discussed at MDF. We want to maximise the amount of information.” (Unpromoted staff)

“a decision can be taken to exclude the next time ...x... happens.” (HT)

“often a pupil might be referred to the MDF for cumulative, fairly minor disruptiveness, year head may express view that things too trivial for exclusion but MDF may say, yes, go on exclude.” (HT)

Interestingly, it seems that not only is this wide range of opinion on the role of the MDF in exclusion expressed within most of the MDF groups interviewed, but individual group members themselves frequently expressed a wide range of, sometimes apparently contradictory, views.

The results of the interview study indicate a wide range of practice in MDF's as regards exclusion. They also suggest that there is a significant degree of uncertainty, if not actual confusion, as to what exactly the role should be.

When is the MDF involved?

When the question of what stage an MDF might become involved was discussed with those interviewed - before, during, after exclusion - responses tended to be more frequent and more elaborate regarding involvement during or after exclusion.

Some do see the MDF as having an active role prior to exclusion. The responses, however, highlight a spectrum of opinion as to the effectiveness of this early intervention. In contrast with those who clearly see the MDF as preventing exclusions there are other cases where there is a rather negative perception of the MDFs effectiveness.

“could be involved where minor things are beginning to build up...I don't think our MDF stops kids from being excluded but I don't think that's its only purpose so it doesn't bother me.” (HT)

“Ideally involvement is early on..most effective in looking at S1 and S2 pupils ...MDFs involvement has avoided exclusion.” (PTG)

“ A range of supports can be used before exclusion including extended support base, behaviour sheets and usual reporting to guidance etc.” (HT)

The most common response regarding involvement before exclusion referred to situations where the young person arrived at the school with a “track record” of difficulties and noted the importance of good communication and liaison with feeder primaries and other schools in this respect.

“The short answer is - usually when the school routine discipline system breaks down for a pupil .” (PTG)

“ MDF tends to be involved on return from exclusion, before this the support role is more a guidance one.” (PTG)

“ If a child comes to the school with a history of difficulties then referral straight away to look at support” (AHT)

“Some young people are identified on Primary liaison visits and may also be allocated a place in the support centre. Information is the key to it all.” (AHT)

Again it was noted here here by a number of MDF members that there were certain categories of problem, or certain “types” of pupil, for whom MDF involvement prior to exclusion was not appropriate.

“MDF is not used for some kids - eg if they are involved in criminal activity.” (HT)

“Involvement before depends upon the nature of the behaviour pattern. If its not the “fault” of the pupil ie if they are not just being “bad” they are more likely to be discussed at the MDF.” (HT)

The responses to the interview show more commonality and less controversy as regards the possible roles for the MDF during exclusion or on the return to the school of the excluded pupil.

Direct contact with families and with the young person at home is mentioned commonly by all staff. The main focus of this is preparation for return to school and there are some interesting initiatives referred to, eg., one MDF which organises home based anger management courses using Youth Strategy support.

What is the Focus of Discussion in the MDF?

In the responses to the questionnaire on the topic of how the discussion in the MDF tended to be focussed when exclusion, or possible exclusion, was on the agenda there was agreement, across all schools and posts, that the multidisciplinary nature of the MDF was central to its potential effectiveness. The idea was frequently expressed that the school itself was likely to have run the gamut of ideas and the “outside” perspective of other agencies brought the possibility of new ideas and strategies.

“ We must accept that we do not have all the answers, we need a broad remit to look at possibilities and support strategies involving other agencies - that is what it is all about.”

(HT)

“ at this stage trying to look at the whole child, involvement of other agencies” (PTLS)

The need for the MDF to try and actively engage parents at this stage is stressed in several of the returns and , interestingly, almost exclusively by the management staff (HTs and AHTs).

“ ways of involving parents and working in the community is vital.” (HT)

The importance of a creative problem solving emphasis was mentioned by many. In several of the responses, however, there was a rather pessimistic note to the effect that there is probably a limited repertoire of things that can be tried, that even the most dynamic creativity and inventiveness can be stifled by the reality of limited resources.

“ hypothesising as to why this might have happened, inadequacy of support, possibilities ..” (AHT)

“ disappointed recently, not getting a lot of alternative strategies - so difficult thinking up something else, looking for help.” (AHT)

“ talk is initially problem focussed and can get stuck but we usually move on to solution ideas and proceed” (PTG)

One guidance teacher noted that the MDF can, in this type of situation become counterproductive in that, where discussion and ideas end up going round in circles, this can serve to entrench the problem.

“ solutions tried and don't work and we can find same things said again and again. Problems can grow in this way, become bigger because of the sense of frustration, can become distressing, negative.” (PTG)

There is a clear emphasis on the importance of a positive, solution focussed approach as regards how the MDF should operate in these situations. It is interesting to note, however, that there is no reference to organisational strategies or operational procedures which might systematically promote such an approach.

One respondent, a member of the management team herself, stressed the importance of the MDF not getting pulled into the business of uncritically lending support to management decisions at this stage. Here, as elsewhere in the interviews , the tenor of the responses mostly implied that, although a partisan stance was to be avoided, if anything the MDF should act as an advocate for the young person, rather than the for the “school system”.

“ We must not get involved in rubber stamping Management Team decisions, this is totally against the ethos of the MDF.” (AHT)

What is done as a result of MDF involvement?

The responses to this question make it clear that the MDF's central role in facilitating communication is seen by many participants to be, in itself, one of its major practical

achievements. The sharing of background information and the opportunity to quickly gain a broader view of a young person's situation in school, the family and the community, are all likely to make the planning of the next step easier and speedier.

“increased awareness and shared information among agencies .. all these things are speeded up.” (PTG)

“Through sharing information more likely to come up with ideas...may open up issues.”
(HT)

Clearly the MDF facilitates appropriate referral to Social Work and Psychological Services, etc. and helps clarify remits and involvement.

When we look at the role of the MDF in initiating practical “in-school” strategies, although there is the suggestion that the repertoire of possibilities is likely to have been tried before MDF involvement, the majority of respondents clearly indicate a wide variety of these being initiated by the MDF.

“ as regards in-school strategies I think most of these have been tried and would suggest not much of a role here for MDF, certainly school support not the biggest area of focus.”
(HT)

Indeed this seems to be the main focus of innovative strategies. The strategies noted include the following:

Timetable changes

Curricular modifications

Removal from certain classes

In-school peer support

Part-time education

Monitoring systems

Increased learning support

Social skills group work in-school

Relaxation lessons

Use of support base

Anger control training

Introduction of modular courses

A few teachers mentioned the lack of time to plan and engineer innovations in support provision and one MDF member (notably one where the HT indicated that there was little scope for in-school strategies) noted that the MDF took place outwith school hours and required the voluntary participation of all involved. There does appear to be a very wide variation in the extent to which management makes time for, and gives status to, MDFs.

“ Our MDF takes place after school, in our time, the Chair is conscious of this, I think it limits things..shouldn't be voluntary.” (PTG)

“ we do not have time to consult or make the detailed plans we really need, to convince them of the need, to encourage new approaches’ (PT:LS)

The use of the MDF in initiating useful contact with the family and home was mentioned in many of the interviews. The importance of gathering this type of background information is noted and the inadvisability of using exclusion without it is suggested.

“Communication can improve the parent's understanding of the child's situation.” (HT)

“ We must know what we are excluding the child to!” (PTG)

The shared knowledge of the MDF regarding appropriate community groups and activities can also prove very useful and referral on to these as part of a support strategy is a commonly noted

“ identifying community supports, evening groups, SWD Youth Strategy work, clubs etc. “ (PTG)

“ group work for self-discipline, self-control, family counselling but any advice (to teachers) is there as part of Learning Support or Guidance policy.” (PTLS)

The results of the interview suggest that the nature of the MDF’s influence upon the school “system” tends to be limited to the gathering of information and occasionally making recommendations about management of a young person in class. There is little evidence of an influence or involvement at a “policy “ level in school although the MDF’s role means that it is likely to see the flaws and potential pitfalls in support practice and possibly has a better overview of this than even the Senior Management Team.

It is interesting that the MDF has grown up in an period of time when support professionals, including educational psychologists, have emphasised the advantages of breaking away from an exclusively “child-deficit” model, and moving towards a “systems” perspective, in promoting positive change. The origins of the MDF idea in the Strathclyde “Young People in Trouble” (YPIT) document certainly had this clear emphasis. The current relative absence of reference to a role for MDFs in a “systems management” approach to strategies for supporting challenging behaviour may suggest we need a relaunch of the initiative via an OSIT document (Old Systems In Trouble).

Developing Multi-Disciplinary Practice In The Secondary School

Several questions in the structured interview focused on the development and changes staff would like to see in their school MDF. Analysis of the responses offered three general themes across staff groups. Firstly, most of the MDF participant groups felt that they should raise the awareness of school staff in general about the effectiveness of the forum in bringing about change in school. Some staff particularly wanted to target the senior management to raise their awareness of the work undertaken on their behalf in school. Secondly, many staff appreciated

the links with outside agencies, their support, input to discussion and ideas. Linked to this appreciation was the reality of the commitment by outside agencies despite cuts and exigencies of each professional remit. Lastly, the recurring theme of limits on staff time, the need for efficiency and planning around the MDF to maximise the multi-disciplinary support for the school.

As might be expected from staff in schools at different levels and remits within the professional structure, there were notable issues that mirrored their particular perspectives. Principal teachers (learning support) felt that there was too much emphasis on behavioural difficulties and learning issues were not given equal time. Principal teachers (guidance) tended to look to the community and concerned themselves with relationships with parents and external agency liaison to raise awareness and develop working links. Senior management staff highlighted the MDF as demonstrating the strength of inter-agency working that supports the schools efforts.

The Head Teachers sampled wanted the MDF to be proactive across school, offer general strategies for behaviour management to work across all subjects effectively to bring about change for all pupils not just a few. This whole school view might be expected from the manager of the system, but also reflects most closely the views expressed by the unpromoted members of staff. Both groups expected the MDF to take a proactive role in school, bringing about change for pupils and staff. A number of suggestions were offered including to offer surgeries when all class teachers are involved in decisions about pupil management. There was a high profile for involving parents more in the process.

Members of the MDF expect to raise the awareness of staff to the tensions there are between in-school and out-of-school support, time for meetings versus teaching time and in-class or out-of-class support.

Looking at the general satisfaction with the MDF in their schools, most staff rated their MDF in the 7-8 range hoping that the ideal would be nine. One staff member gave the reason why 10 was awarded very seldom: "Teachers do not give 10/10".

The positive shift of one or two points was fairly universal across schools and staff. The changes or developments each teacher wanted to see reflected very much the individual solutions, the structure and opportunities their school offered.

Four headteachers felt that their MDF was operating quite well. Two suggested explicitly that total agreement about the decision making with MDF would not be achieved. Ultimately the headteacher made decisions about indiscipline that led to exclusion which was entirely appropriate. The other heads were undecided about the purpose and role of the MDF in relation to exclusion and were unsure what this forum could offer the school. In one of these schools the other senior management representative sampled suggested that the whole staff needed to support the ethos of the MDF to represent a comprehensive team approach to manage youngsters who challenge the education system. Unfortunately this manager felt the staff were no where near this ideal at present.

Generally, PT guidance and learning support personnel centred their wish for change around improving time allocations for effective strategies for support like increased group work or in-class support, improved attendance at meetings and reinstatement of youth strategy work.

The theme of effective strategies for diminishing indiscipline in school was reflected time and again in responses from staff at all levels. The different priorities noted by each school was usually mirrored across staff within the schools suggesting some coherent policy was under discussion. Unfortunately specific information on this aspect of on going MDF development was not sampled.

In conclusion the general comments about the process and management of the MDF were positive. There were notable benefits to having multi agency representation on the MDF and clear disappointment within some schools when all agencies were not engaged. Disquiet expressed about time and personnel constraints were balanced by statements on good referral processes and the need for improvements in information collation and dissemination. Evaluation of the effectiveness of MDF was voiced but not clearly defined. Parents and

children's views were given mention as important elements in the work of the MDF but not necessarily pivotal to the large multidisciplinary meetings themselves. Raising the profile of the MDF and its role in the support for the learning and management of all pupils not just the chosen few, was an aspiration for many working within the school system. Evaluating the effectiveness of practice was not, however, named as a key to indicating the direction for the future.

These MDF represent schools' attempts to discuss and co-ordinate the relative contributions of all agencies working together to promote the educational future of any given youngster within their family and community. This forum is a unique opportunity to put into practice the main tenet of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to promote a corporate approach to the promotion of the welfare of children and young people. There are many concerns voiced by staff but also positive opportunities to be built upon in schools if the time is taken to review processes and procedures, and to question the effectiveness of the strategies employed to support the young people.

THE ROLE OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY FORUMS IN DISCIPLINE AND EXCLUSION:

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This aspect of the project set out to determine the extent and nature of MDFs involvement in discipline and exclusions and to sample and describe the nature of this relationship. It also attempted to give an account of staff perceptions of the relationships between support and discipline in the secondary schools sampled. It has been possible to provide both quantitative and qualitative information about the level, extent and nature of MDF involvement in support, discipline and exclusion.

The following main findings have emerged:

- the majority of schools sampled (85%) indicated that they had a MDFs of some type which met on a regular basis.

- not all MDF are actively involved in discipline and exclusion. In some schools this seems to be a deliberate policy decision.
- teachers view the relationship of support to discipline in a range of different ways. Their views in this regard have an influence on whether or not teachers consider the MDF should have a role to play in exclusion and discipline. These views would also set the context for the way staff function as members of the MDF.
- There was an overall feeling from staff that support and discipline should operate in a holistic and coherent way.
- The MDF was generally viewed as supportive forum which was well placed to act as a link between support and discipline system in a school.
- There was a wide range of views expressed as to whether or not MDFs should be involved in discipline and exclusion. This wide range of opinion was evident both within and across schools. These views tended to guide and shape practice.
- There was evidence to suggest a level of confusion and indecision about the role of the MDF in general and its particular relevance to exclusions.
- The multi-disciplinary nature of MDFs was considered to be central to their effectiveness.
- There was a clear emphasis on the need for positive, pragmatic, problem solving approach within MDF meetings.
- In general most staff expressed satisfaction with their schools MDF.
- Many staff wanted to see the development of a more pro-active role for the MDF within their school. However, little evidence was obtained that MDFs were having significant effect on school systems.

These findings have clear implications for both local authorities and schools. The government has recently reiterated the importance of a multi-disciplinary, inter-agency approach to the prevention and management of exclusions (SOEID Guidance, 1998). Such inter-agency working is clearly a process which has to be nurtured and developed within the 'whole community' of the secondary school. However, MDFs would seem to have a central role to play in this developing process.

The Scottish Office guidelines will provide the backdrop for the development of local council policy for exclusions and indiscipline. The finding that not all MDFs are actively involved in discipline and exclusion requires to be held in focus when local council policy makers are drawing up new policies in this area. In order to minimise any potential disparity between policy and practice, local education authorities should review the role ascribed to MDFs within exclusion guidelines. In this the aim should be to ensure that this ascribed role is compatible with the range of MDF practice in the local council schools. Schools should continually review the role and remit of the MDF, enabling its members to express and consider their beliefs and attitudes in relation to support, discipline and exclusion. This could be a significant staff development requirement within which joint agency training and development would be important.. Senior school staff have a lead role in clarifying the remit and role of MDFs in the management and prevention of exclusion.

PARENTS AND PUPILS AS PARTNERS

Over the last twenty years, the political and educational discussion on partnership between home and school has gathered momentum. The process of opening a Record of Needs was one of the first significant steps in giving parents a say in their child's education, as was the development of Devolved School Management.

These steps might be regarded as minor, but parents are now clearly

- increasingly involved in schools as helpers and via School Boards
- provided with more information about school and their child's progress
- recognised as important educators and innovators in their own right

There has also been a shift in the recognition of an individual's right to education. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) indicates that children can provide 'important and relevant information' and that they have a 'right to be heard'. The Convention explicitly states that pupils should be involved in decision making. The principles of the Convention are now enshrined in Scots Law through the implementation of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. This latter Act and Circular 2/98 "Guidance on Issues Concerning Exclusion from School", describe the respective rights and responsibilities of the education authority, school, parents and pupils.

Indiscipline and exclusion rates are seen as indicators of the climate or ethos of a school. Data on exclusion rates, although notoriously inaccurate (Munn et al 1997), still represent the most common indices of how a school is coping with its most difficult pupils.

The quality and effectiveness of partnership between pupils, parents and schools to manage indiscipline, and thereby exclusion, is more difficult to quantify. However, an analysis of the development of such a partnership would lead to a better understanding of the mechanisms required to:

- reach agreement over any future action

- acknowledge the respective rights and responsibilities of the participants

A number of studies have highlighted the need for more work in the area of parent and pupil involvement with schools (Hayden, 1997; Garner, 1994). In particular, the need to identify parent and pupil perceptions of exclusion and discipline processes is evident. Parents are often reported as being frustrated and confused by the exclusion process (Hayden, 1997). They may understand their legal responsibilities to ensure their child is educated, but after an exclusion may feel unsupported regarding their options.

Exclusion is often justified as being in the pupil's best interests or, more commonly, because of the effects on other pupils in the school (Hayden, 1997). Less often is it suggested that the system, and thereby the education professionals within that system, may have failed the child either through inappropriate curricular provision or inadequate management techniques.

Understanding the perceptions of pupils and parents in the areas of exclusion and discipline is seen as being integral to any within-school initiatives, and it was on that premise that the following studies were carried out.

Method

Alongside the database development, the analysis of the role of the multi-disciplinary forum within the school, and the identification of positive interventions, this study looked at two aspects of parent-pupil-school partnership:

- the communication between pupils, parents and schools in discipline procedures
- the schools' perspective of the role which parents and pupils are given within the multi-disciplinary forum

Communication

Separate interviews were conducted with a pupil, their parent and the appropriate member of school staff regarding the process of communication about a disciplinary incident. The aim was not to discuss the nature of the incident as such but to focus on the perceptions and understanding of each participant on:

- the content of the communication,
- its clarity of purpose, and
- the effectiveness of the outcomes ie., future action and support.

Sample

Pupils and Parents

Pupils from P6, S1 and S3 were randomly selected for interview. The age groups were chosen to reflect:

- pupils who may have had a history of difficulty in primary but were not yet involved in transfer to secondary school
- pupils who had recently transferred to secondary school
- pupils who may have become increasingly disaffected with school but were not about to leave.

These groups often feature highly in referrals to Psychological Services and other agencies.

Interview protocols were followed (appendix 4 and 5).

As the sample group was small, it is suggested that the study is regarded as an illustrative pilot.

School Personnel

Interviews with key school personnel involved in the MDF were held in the six schools visited.

An interview protocol was followed (appendix 6). The aim was to elicit perceptions of the

effectiveness of the process in dealing with pupils who challenge the system because of their learning difficulties and, more frequently, because of their behaviour. Two specific aspects were explored:

- the nature of parental involvement (ie, how are parents encouraged to be involved in the MDF process)
- the level of pupil involvement (ie, how much pupil participation is there in MDF)

Results and Discussion

Gaining access to all three groups was not achieved in a number of cases and therefore implementing the interview schedules was difficult. In some cases parents were reluctant to consent to interview; others who had consented, were subsequently unavailable for interview. This may be indicative of the views parents have of the whole exclusion system. These problems notwithstanding, the investigative process itself yielded valuable information which is worth noting for future studies.

Two main factors were evident:

- not surprisingly, the parents and pupils interviewed had difficulty dissociating from the incident
- school staff interviewed found the process of involvement of members of the project team very helpful as a prompt to developing their subsequent involvement with parents and pupils.

It was clear that for school staff, existing practice was often being implemented because other approaches had not been considered. Almost without exception, staff commented on the fact that they valued this opportunity to reflect on the implications of current strategies and to open up the possibility of alternative approaches.

The key issues focused on:

- communication by the school with parent and pupil about the incident
- perception of the nature of the incident and appropriateness of sanctions
- understanding of respective responsibilities regarding subsequent interventions

Views of Parents and Pupils

From the interviews it was clear that effective communication is required - of expectations, outcomes and focus on negotiated targets. One pupil said:

“don't know how to make better..... once in a blue moon

I don't get my name on the board”.

The same child's parent said that there was no point in child being at the meeting because they either do not say anything or are not listened to. It is also unhelpful to hear nothing but criticism. This raises questions about the conduct of meetings and the training of staff, children and parents about their operation. It would also suggest that more solution-focused rather than problem focused discussion may be more effective. Interviews also suggested that schools did not always act on the decisions taken at meetings. This can lead to disappointment and loss of trust.

Views of School Personnel

The MDF was described by most staff in the six schools sampled as too large a group to involve parents. There was a clear impression that the size of the group would be overwhelming and counter-productive in terms of negotiating and decision-making. Notwithstanding the issue of management and problem-solving, it was found that some schools felt little requirement to inform parents or pupils that they were being discussed in a large inter-agency forum that planned management strategies.

It was evident that the majority of staff interviewed were aware of the importance of pupils' views, but few schools had developed guidelines for pupil involvement and feedback. There was wide variance in the attitude of staff towards this:

“Pupils don't ever attend meetings. I assume they hear through their parents what's happening. There is no routine feedback to pupils” (secondary school senior manager).

“There is very little more powerful than a group of adults taking time to talk about a pupil, his work and behaviour, in front of him. Pupils need to learn to be accountable and are encouraged to say what they are thinking in as calm a way as possible. It is a great learning experience for life. They need to acknowledge something wasn't right - how they intend to mend their ways, appeal to the good and positive interests and respects of their life and aspirations” (secondary school headteacher).

An assistant headteacher, who chaired the MDF, spoke clearly about the importance of involving pupils in any agreement negotiation and the need to encourage their active participation if an effective and realistic outcome was to be reached.

It was evident that the management stance on pupil participation affected school staff responses. In particular, guidance and learning support staff interviewed focused on the importance of negotiation. They were often involved in the development of informal contracts with parents, and had day-to-day contact with the pupils giving cause for concern.

It was recognised by all staff that particularly in secondary schools, the subject teacher-pupil relationship was a key determinant to the success of any intervention. Whilst guidance staff had regular contact with the pupil, the time spent disseminating the plan and explaining it to subject teachers was equally important and complex. One staff member discussed the need for subject teacher and pupil to meet together with a third party to negotiate ways forward, recognising that discussions held two or three times removed from actual events is unlikely to achieve the necessary commitment.

Given the recognition that the MDF is too large, many schools described as preferable, smaller case conferences or group meetings involving parents, pupils and key personnel. However, there was variation in opinion as to whether the pupil should attend the whole of these meetings. Staff frequently described meetings where pupils came in ten minutes before the end not to express their view but to hear what had been agreed in their absence. This suggests the notion of partnership in schools does not readily extend to include the pupil but rather encourages the belief system that pupils must do as they are told. The effect is to undermine the pupil's right to be heard, for them to be encouraged to take responsibility and to be accountable for their actions. De Pear (1996) examined excluded pupils' views on their needs for inclusion, control and affection. Pupils reported difficulty in feeling significant and worthwhile as a responsible and competent partner in the decision-making process when not truly part of that process. Contrary to the beliefs frequently held about excluded pupils, De Pear's study highlights that these pupils had a general commitment to mainstream education, an ability to appreciate the professional qualities of teachers, and the need for an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Much of what has been highlighted here will be familiar to educational psychologists. However, the study highlights that developing effective partnerships with parents and pupils remains a key area for development. Parents are unlikely to feel able to work with schools to achieve the best for their child without a clear understanding of the processes and procedures in exclusion and other sanctions. The majority of pupils recognise and have insight into the inappropriateness of their behaviour. They are likely to be more responsive where they feel they have a voice and can work towards realistic alternatives.

The positive responses of pupils, parents and school staff in this study indicated that a larger project would be worthwhile. It is important that all intervention developments in the area of exclusions and discipline take into account the perceptions of parents and pupils in the evaluations.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear from research and practice that the topic of exclusions and indiscipline is highly complex. Given the complexity of the topic, the aim of this project was to summarise the key issues and to identify the essential features of the processes involved in exclusion and inclusion. It was not the intention to produce yet another survey of the literature or a set of statistics. Instead, the project team intended to produce material which psychologists and schools could utilise in the endeavour towards creating a more inclusive educational experience for children and young people. The foundations for a comprehensive set of materials has been laid by the project and should be of valuable assistance in enabling schools, psychologists and other professionals to reflect on and evaluate aspects of practice. This is offered as a framework to sit alongside existing pupil database information, and to provide an effective way of gathering information about pupil behaviour (positive and negative), the range of interventions implemented and their outcomes, and to prompt alternative ways of approaching discipline difficulties. With regard to individual pupils, it also allows analysis of whole school and subject department strategy implementation.

The programme can be customised by school or authority as required. Its aim is to help effect good practice and record-keeping whilst not adding to workload. However, any programme is only as good as the user. It cannot do the work - it can only act as a prompt and guide. Practice will be defined by how often alternatives are tried and how the gathered information is analysed and acted upon.

A range of alternative interventions is held within the programme. This is presented simply as a range of prompts but should serve as a useful checklist for those schools who are interested in finding alternatives to exclusion. It is hoped that the report, the attached discs of the database and the appendices will be used to improve practice and facilitate inclusion:

- **a Behaviour Support and Exclusions Monitoring Database**

Most education authorities throughout Scotland have not kept accurate data on exclusions from schools. This has inhibited the construction of consistent policies and the monitoring of effectiveness at local and national levels. The overall aim, then, in developing a template for a database is to create a 'mirror' on present practice for schools and authorities. Through its implementation future policy and practice can be informed and guided, and the number of school days lost through exclusion reduced.

- **A Summary of Support Strategies**

Any consideration of alternatives to exclusion must begin from a position of seeking a school climate of inclusion and an expectation of providing a positive and appropriate education for all pupils. From the survey of the workings of multi-disciplinary forums, the research literature and discussions with colleagues, a list of interventions was generated and placed within a context of a positive and inclusive climate. The interventions are also included in the Behaviour Support and Exclusion Monitoring Database

- **An Examination of the Role of Multi-Disciplinary Forums**

Following numerous research, local and national government reports and policy documents, the requirement for multi-disciplinary forums has become almost a cliché. Given the growing recognition that policies, resources, procedures and attitudes all interact to influence outcomes within a multi-disciplinary context and that effective joint working is a complex process which goes beyond the contributions of the individual and agencies involved, it was the intention of the project team to begin

to examine in detail the processes underlying the operation of such teams and to move beyond the taken for granted.

Examined in this aspect of the project was the extent and nature of MDFs involvement in discipline and exclusions. Also, sampled and described is the nature of this relationship. It also attempted to give an account of staff perceptions of the relationships between support and discipline in the secondary schools sampled. It has been possible to provide both quantitative and qualitative information about the level, extent and nature of MDF involvement in support, discipline and exclusion.

The study of multi-agency forums showed that again it is not the having but the effectiveness that is important. The need for regular review and evaluation of purpose and effect is vital. There is little doubt that these groups are important and useful but their role in the exclusion process is often confused and ill-defined. There is opportunity to use these groups to examine more closely the status of pupils in danger of exclusion. The following main findings emerged:

- the majority of schools sampled (85%) indicated that they had a MDFs of some type which met on a regular basis.
- not all MDF are actively involved in discipline and exclusion. In some schools this seems to be a deliberate policy decision.
- teachers view the relationship of support to discipline in a range of different ways. Their views in this regard have an influence on whether or not teachers consider the MDF should have a role to play in exclusion and discipline. These views would also set the context for the way staff function as members of the MDF.
- There was an overall feeling from staff that support and discipline should operate in a holistic and coherent way.

- The MDF was generally viewed as a supportive forum which was well placed to act as a link between support and discipline system in a school.
- There was a wide range of views expressed as to whether or not MDFs should be involved in discipline and exclusion. This wide range of opinion was evident both within and across schools. These views tended to guide and shape practice.
- There was evidence to suggest a level of confusion and indecision about the role of the MDF in general and its particular relevance to exclusions.
- The multi-disciplinary nature of MDFs was considered to be central to their effectiveness.
- There was a clear emphasis on the need for positive, pragmatic, problem solving approach within MDF meetings.
- In general most staff expressed satisfaction with their school's MDF.
- Many staff wanted to see the development of a more pro-active role for the MDF within their school. However, little evidence was obtained that MDFs were having significant effect on school systems.

These findings have clear implications for both local authorities and schools. Such inter-agency working is clearly a process which has to be nurtured and developed within the 'whole community' of the secondary school. MDFs would seem to have a central role to play in this developing process.

The finding that not all MDFs are actively involved in discipline and exclusion requires to be held in focus when local council policy makers are drawing up new policies in this area.

In order to minimise any potential disparity between policy and practice, local education authorities should review the role ascribed to MDFs within exclusion guidelines. Schools, also, should continually review the role and remit of the MDF, enabling its members to express and consider their beliefs and attitudes in relation to support, discipline and exclusion. This could be a significant staff development requirement within which joint agency training and development would be important.

- **Challenges in Including Children and Parents in the Process**

Parents are now increasingly involved in schools following shifts in attitudes, practice and legislation. The latest challenge comes from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the implementation of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. These provide an impetus to ensure that children have a 'right to be heard' and to be involved in decision making.

The involvement and participation of parents and pupils in discipline and exclusion processes could have been a study in its own right. Although most schools would be aware of the need and usefulness of such involvement, this remains an area of development for many. The methodology used here served to show how difficult it can be to access reliable views of parents and pupils, and confirmed that more work is required to help schools implement effective participation.

The MDF was described by most staff in the six schools sampled as too large a group to involve parents. There was a clear impression that the size of the group would be over-whelming and counter-productive in terms of negotiating and decision-making. Notwithstanding the issue of management and problem-solving, it was found that some schools felt little requirement to inform parents

or pupils that they were being discussed in a large inter-agency forum that planned management strategies.

It was evident that the majority of staff interviewed were aware of the importance of pupils' views, but few schools had developed guidelines for pupil involvement and feedback. There was wide variance in the attitude of staff towards this.

It was evident from the comments of staff that while there have been major strides in the involvement of parents, the notion of partnership in schools does not readily extend to include the pupil but rather encourages the belief system that pupils must do as they are told. The effect is to undermine the pupil's right to be heard, for them to be encouraged to take responsibility and to be accountable for their actions.

The study highlights the need to develop effective partnerships with parents and pupils. Parents are unlikely to feel able to work with schools to achieve the best for their child without a clear understanding of the processes and procedures in exclusion and other sanctions. The majority of pupils recognise and have insight into the inappropriateness of their behaviour. They are likely to be more responsive where they feel they have a voice and can work towards realistic alternatives.

The positive responses of pupils, parents and school staff in this study indicated that a larger project would be worthwhile. It is important that all intervention developments in the area of exclusions and discipline take into account the perceptions of parents and pupils in the evaluations.

- **Recommendations - Towards Inclusion**

The group accepted that the timescale afforded initial investigation only. Further work is particularly recommended in the following areas -

- implementation and evaluation of the database programme
- development of the prompt list of alternatives to discipline issues
- study and evaluation of parent-pupil-school communications
- more detailed retrospective and prospective study of parent and pupil involvement in exclusion process

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 POSITIVE INTERVENTIONS

Emphasis on Curricular Aspects

support for Learning / Behaviour support staff
differentiated curriculum
modified, alternative or part-time timetables
modular courses
work experience

time out
support centre

Emphasis on Personal Development Aspects

Daily/ weekly monitoring through behaviour card/diary
Circle time
Attunement
PAM
SPIN
PIKAS anti-bullying approach
peer support; co-operative learning; peer modelling; befriending scheme
target setting
P7-S1 transfer preparation

pre-exclusion meetings
solution-focused post exclusion conciliation sessions

group work
anger management skills development
social skills (turn-taking; conflict resolution)
self esteem raising
relaxation sessions

Solution Focused Brief Therapy

key person

outside agencies/ specialist assessment

APPENDIX 2. PDP / MDF Initial Questionnaire Results

Return Rates

| | | % |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Argyll & Bute | 7/8 | 87.5 |
| Inverclyde | 8/8 | 100 |
| North Lanarkshire | 15/26 | 57.7 |
| City of Edinburgh | 19/19 | 100 |
| Dundee City | 8/8 | 100 |
| SE Glasgow | 8/9 | 88.9 |
| All 6 Areas | 65/78 | 83.3 |

Q1 Does your school have a 'Multi-disciplinary Forum' (eg Joint Assessment Team/ Extended Learning Support Team) which meets on a regular basis?

N=65

Σ YES
55 (84.6%)

Σ NO
10 (15.4%)

Q2 How often does it meet?

| | Σ | |
|---------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Weekly | 11 | (20%) |
| 2/3 weekly | 9 | (16.4%) |
| Monthly | 27 | (49.1%) |
| Bi-monthly | 1 | (1.82%) |
| 6 weekly | 1 | (1.82%) |
| 8 / year | 1 | (1.82%) |
| Termly | 2 | (3.64%) |
| When Approp. | 2 | (3.64%) |
| Newly formed | 1 | (1.82%) |

Q3 Does the 'Multi-disciplinary Forum' have an involvement in the process of exclusion

Σ YES
38 (69.1%)

Σ NO
17 (30.9%)

If 'yes', please specify the stage(s) of the exclusion process, and the frequency with which the 'Multi-disciplinary Forum' is involved, using the grid below.

| | ALWAYS | SOMETIMES | NEVER |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| BEFORE EXCLUSION | 13 (35.1%) | 24 (63.2%) | 0 |
| DURING EXCLUSION | 10 (26.3%) | 21 (55.3%) | 5 (13.2%) |
| AFTER EXCLUSION | 11 (28.9%) | 22 (57.9%) | 0 |

Q5. Please tick the box below if you are interested in taking part in a more detailed study.

Σ Interested
32 (58.2%)

Appendix 3 MDF Structured Interview

1. WIDER CONTEXT - POLICY ON EXCLUSION

Questions to ask Head Teacher

Response Guide

written policy?

1.1 What is your policy on exclusions?

1.2 Is exclusion an issues of concern for your school?

1.3 Roughly how many exclusions have there been this session?

| | | | |
|-----|------|-------|-----|
| 0-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | >15 |
|-----|------|-------|-----|

2. MDF STRUCTURE/FUNCTION/PROCESS

2.1 What do you see as the role of the MDF in your school?:

2.2 Composition of MDF:

2.3 Who Chairs?:

2.4 Frequency of Meetings:

2.5 Referral System :

2.6 Agenda. Who draws it up? What does it look like?:

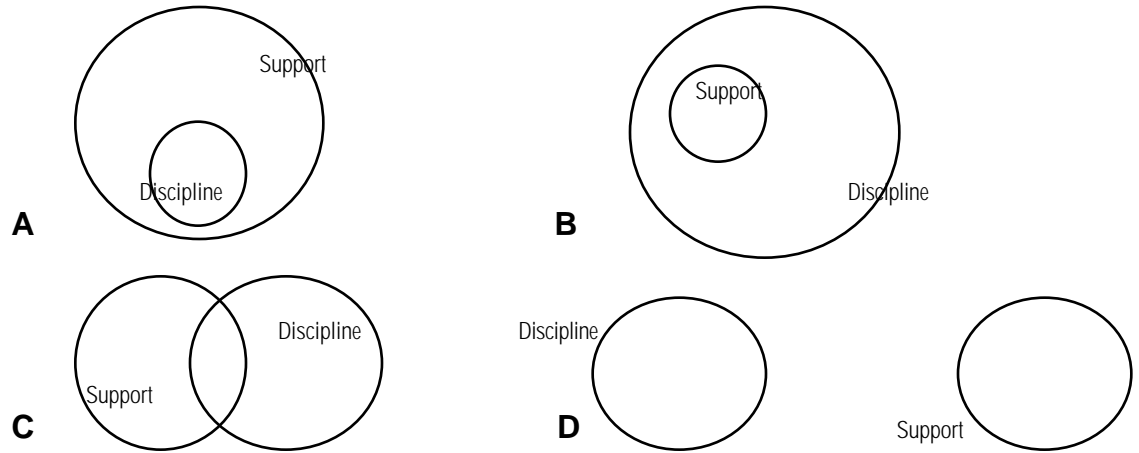
2.7 How is information feedback to school staff?:

2.8 How does the MDF link with the guidance team?:

2.9 How does the MDF link with the SMT?:

2.10 How do you see support relating to discipline in your school?

Please indicate which diagram best describes the relationship between support and discipline in your school



2.11 Could you tell me more about the relationship between support and discipline in your school?:

2.12 Where does the MDF lie within your selected diagram?
(Mark with an X)

2.13 How does the MDF link with the discipline system?:

3

NATURE / ROLE OF MDF IN EXCLUSION

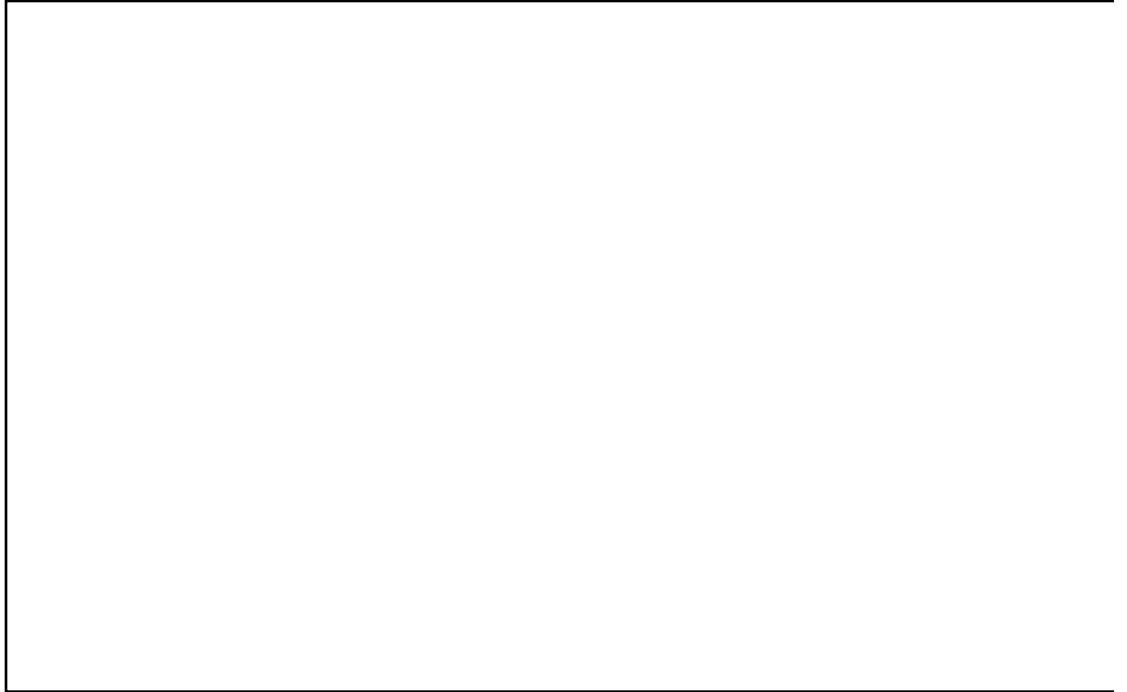
3.1 Tell me something about how the MDF is involved with pupils at risk of being (or who have been) excluded?

Routine aspect of MDF function?

only if 'known' to MDF?

exclusion lead automatically to MDF discussion?

referred by HT- for advice? rubber-stamping? before decision to exclude?



3.2 At what stage does the MDF become involved? (How is this achieved? - procedures / mechanisms?)

examples of MDF involvement before

examples during exclusion

examples after

Procedures/ mechanisms?



3.3 What might be the focus of discussion at MDF meetings in these situation?

problem focus?

solution focus?

development
of support
strategies?

rubber-stamping?

collation
of evidence to
support exclusion
decision?



3.4 Could you give me some examples of what happens as a result of MDF involvement in these situations?

Outcomes?

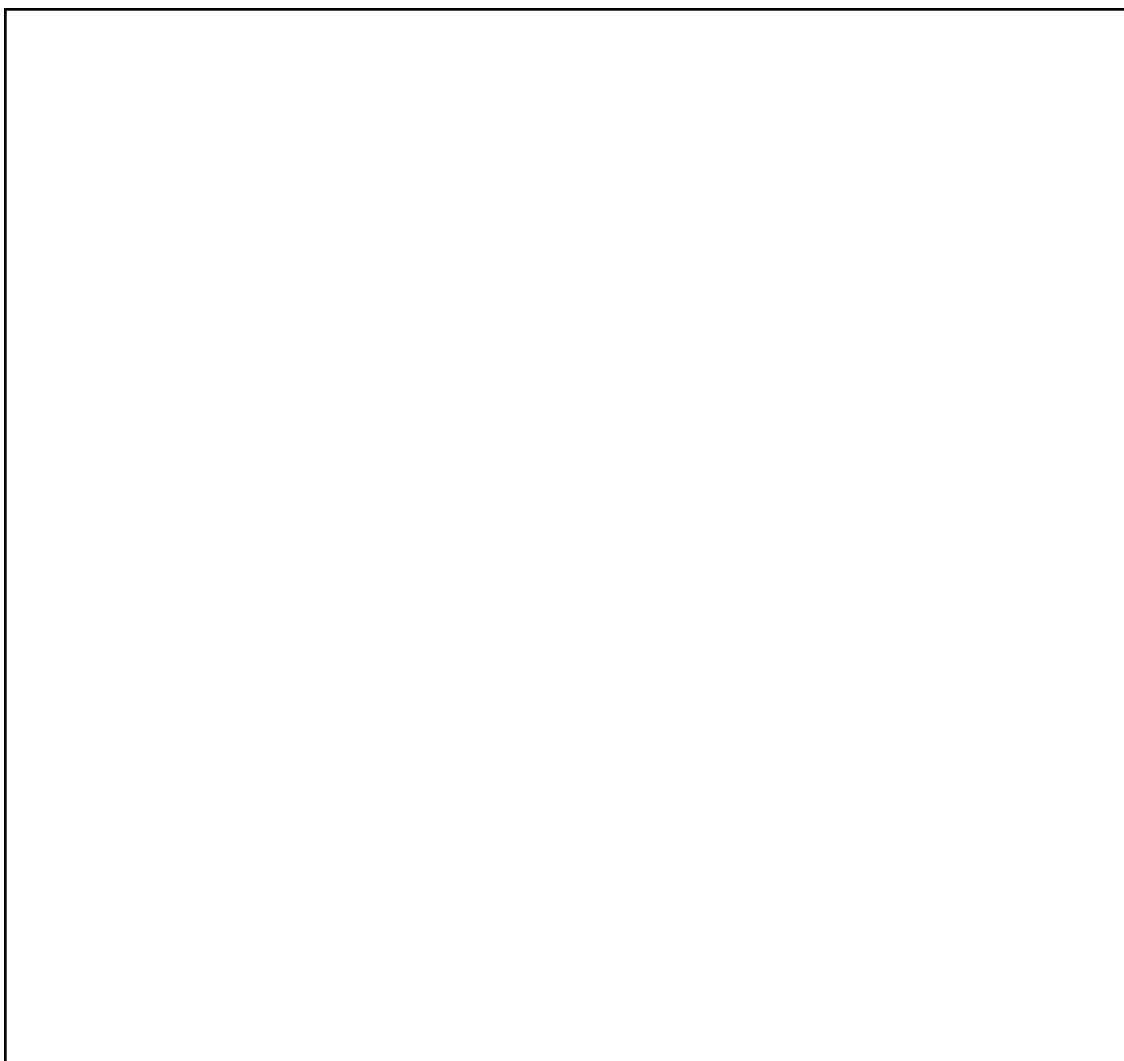
in-school
support strategies?

community
supports?

rubber stamping of
exclusion decision?

curriculum
modifications?

Case conference
involving parents?



3.5 Could you give me some examples of when the MDF might **not** be involved with pupils at risk of, or who have been, excluded?
(How is this decided?)

This Q of particular importance in schools in the 'sometimes' category

Deliberate policy?

Specific criteria?

Who decides?

Arisen more by chance?

4 **PARENT/PUPIL INVOLVEMENT (in MDF)**

4.1 What is the level of parental involvement?:
(How much participation is there by parents in the MDF?)

4.2 Nature of parental involvement?:
(How are parents encouraged to be involved in the MDF process?)

4.3 What is the level of pupil involvement?:
(How much participation is there by pupils in the MDF?)

4.4 Nature of pupil involvement?:
(How are pupils encouraged to be involved in the MDF process?)

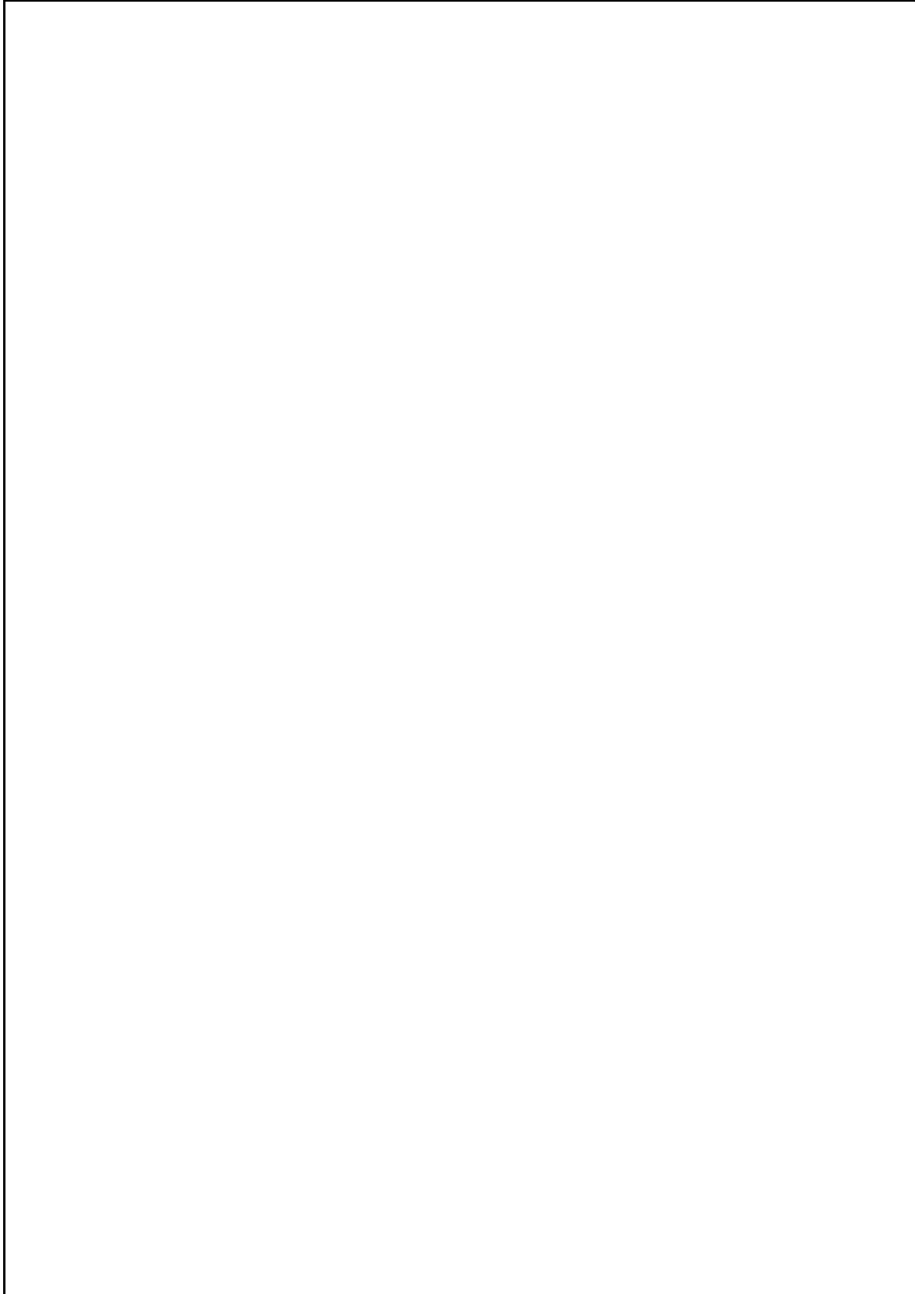
5

NATURE / ROLE OF MDF (when not involved in exclusion)

5.1 The first Questionnaire indicated that the MDF tends not to be involved in the exclusion process.
Could you tell me something about this?

Deliberate
policy
decision?

Arisen by chance?



FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

6.1 What sort of developments/changes would you like to see in the MDF?

6.2 Where would you place the MDF on the following scale?
What number?

10 MDF is central to the support & management of pupils with EBDs in your school.



1 MDF is a peripheral 'talking shop', of little value in the support & management of pupils with EBDs in your school.

6.3 Ideally, where would you like the MDF to be on the above scale?

6.4 If the MDF were at this ideal number, what would be different about it?
What changes would have been made to bring this about?

Appendix 4 Pupil Interview Schedule

Pupil's Sheet

PREAMBLE RE FRIENDLY PEOPLE WHO COME INTO SCHOOLS TO TALK!!!!

Section 1 - Communication

1 *"Has the school ever been in touch with your parents about your behaviour?"*

2 *"How do you know about that?"*

Section 2- Follow-up Action

3 *"Have there ever been any meetings about you in school?"*

4 *"When did you find out about it?"* (PROMPT: *before, during, after*)

5 *"Who went?"*

6 *"Did you go?"*

YES NO

If NO.... *"Would you have liked to go?"*

YES NO

If YES.... *"What was it like?"*

"Did you have a choice about going?"

YES NO

"Is it a good idea for pupils to be at meetings?"

YES NO

7 *"Did anyone explain to you what the meeting was about?"*

YES NO

8 *"Did you get a chance to say what you thought about what was going on?"*

YES NO

9 *"Did they listen to what you had to say?"*

YES NO

**Section 3 - Tasks and Responsibilities
(further action)**

1 *"What was decided at that meeting?"*

2 *"Had you to do anything?"*

YES NO

3 *"Did mum or dad have to do anything?"*

YES NO

4 *"Did the teachers have to do anything?"*

YES NO

Section 4 - Experience

1 *"Did that seem fair to you?"*

YES NO

2 If NO... *"What else could have been done?"*

3 *"Who do you talk to about how things are going?"*

Appendix 4 Parent Interview Schedule

Parent's Sheet

Section 1 - Communication

We're here because we know you've had a communication from the school regarding _____'s behaviour.

"Can we talk for a minute about that communication?"

1 *"What form did that take?"*

2 *"Is this the first time the school have got in touch?"*

3 *"Was there an adequate explanation of the school's concerns?"*

4 *"Did you discuss this with your child?"*

5 *"Did your child think it was an adequate explanation?"*

6 *"Were you left in any doubt about what to do if you disagreed?"*

7 *"Was there a clear indication of what would happen next?"*

Section 2 - Follow-up Action

"Can we talk for a minute about follow-up action?"

Was there any?"

8 "Were you called in to school?"
If YES, "Who made the contact?"
"How was it made?"
"If you went into the school who did you see?"

"Was your child involved?"
"Was it helpful?"
"Was any further action planned?"

If NO. "Do you think the school should
have taken follow up action?"
"Do you think you should have
done anything?"

"What do you think would have been a helpful follow-up action
- by the school?"
- by yourself?"

Section 3 - Tasks and Responsibilities

9 If further action was planned,
Can we talk for a minute about that further action?
"Who is responsible for taking action?"
"What do you have to do?"
"What is the school doing?"
"What is the pupil to do?"
"Helpful?"
"If not, what would be helpful?"

Section 4 - Experience

10 "Are you clear about what tasks were agreed?"
"
11 "Do you think you had an opportunity to
contribute to agreeing tasks?"
12 "Do you have a contact person in the school?"
"How do you communicate?"
"Do you find it easy to be in touch?"

*"How do you experience this contact
- positive?
- helpful?
- constructive?"*

*"Do you think all teachers share the
same view of your child?"*

"Do they share your view?"

"Do you feel an equal partner?"

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