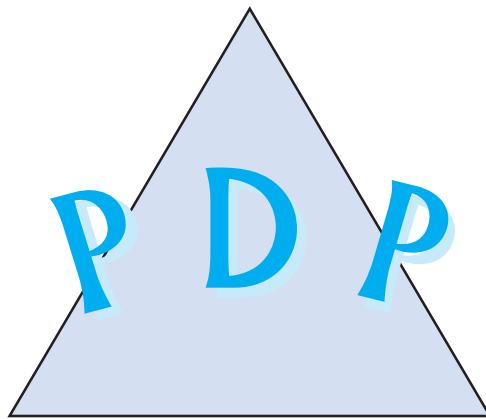


1997-1998



Professional Development Programme  
for Educational Psychologists in Scotland

A Summary

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 1 The Professional Development Programme for Educational Psychologists in Scotland is managed by the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists.
- 2 The Professional Development Programme gratefully acknowledges the support of the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department in funding and promoting the Programme.
- 3 The cooperation of education authorities in agreeing the themes of the Programme and enabling educational psychologists to participate in the projects is appreciated. Psychologists carry out the research, development and dissemination work for up to twelve days in the yearly PDP cycle.
- 4 The further assistance of Stirling, Clackmannan and Glasgow City Councils respectively, for providing secondment of Dr Ian Liddle, Dr Jenni Barr and Mr Gordon Phillips as Coordinators of the Programme is gratefully acknowledged.
- 5 The Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists is gratefully thanked for the services of Mr Alan Haughey who has acted as Moderator to the Programme.
- 6 The Programme is subject to the scrutiny of a Steering Group which meets on three occasions during the year. The participation of local authority representatives, Mrs Shannon Bigham (East Lothian Council), Mr Jim McGuinness (North Lanarkshire Council), Dr Cyril Hellier (British Psychological Society, Scottish Division of Educational Psychology) and Mr David Binnie (SOEID) is acknowledged with thanks. The Steering Group has been ably chaired by Dr Bill Maxwell, HMI.
- 7 **The views expressed in the various reports and the conclusions reached are those of the authors and are not attributable either to employing authorities or to the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department.**
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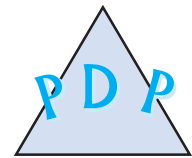
**ISSN 1364-5226**

# The Professional Development Programme for Educational Psychologists in Scotland: A Summary of the 1997-98 Projects

*Ian Liddle, Jenni Barr and Gordon Phillips, Coordinators*

*The Professional Development Programme (PDP) is managed by the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists (ASPEP) in collaboration with Local Authorities and funded by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department. This is the third cycle of the Programme, which involves groups of psychologists in cross-boundary project work and other professional development activities, around agreed themes, over a period of about one year. The outcomes from this work are disseminated to colleagues and others in the field of education.*

*This booklet gives a summary of the activities and findings of the three themes addressed by the 1997-98 programme, namely **ADHD, The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and Exclusions and Indiscipline**. The purpose of this document is to draw the attention of colleagues in applied psychology, education and related fields to the valuable pieces of work undertaken in these areas; those wishing more information should contact the authors, who will be pleased to discuss their projects and provide copies of the more detailed reports which have been completed. A list of project participants and contact numbers is given at the end of this booklet.*



Professional Development Programme

## **ADHD: driving us to distraction?**

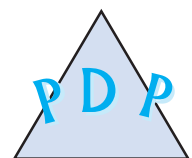
One of the most valuable uses of the Professional Development Programme is the opportunity it offers to examine in detail, phenomena which are perceived to be impacting in an increasing way on educational psychologists' daily practice, to draw together the relevant data on these phenomena for colleagues in the field, and to offer practical and reasoned advice on the issues.

This project on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a prime example of this mechanism in operation. Although increasing prevalence has been reported in other western countries since the late 1980s, it is only in the last three years that ADHD has impacted in a significant way on educational systems in this country. However, the burgeoning literature on the subject, the much higher public profile it now enjoys, and the growing anxieties of parents and teachers about identification and treatment all attest to the need for psychologists to be well informed and appropriately active in the field.

The group of 12 psychologists began by conducting a survey, collecting data from a wide sweep of local authority areas. Subgroups then examined the concept of ADHD from three different perspectives. A group comprising **Robert Johnstone, Maureen Myant, Ken Sweeney and Lesley Thomson** investigated parents' experiences and views of the process of identification and follow-up of their children's difficulties; these observations offer much food for thought for the different agencies involved; the group also looked at examples of assessment facilities and early school provision for such children.

The largest subgroup, comprising **Linda Corlett, Claire Kerr, Clare McGorry, Shona McKechnie and Sue Reynolds** carried out wide-ranging classroom observations of children already diagnosed as having ADHD, with comparison groups of classmates, using a number of published indicators as well as their own observation schedules; additional information was collated using class teacher questionnaires.

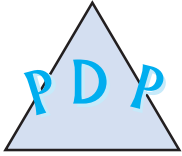
The third subgroup of psychologists, namely **William Allison, Mhairi Gibbons and Janice McClements**, were interested in the views and experiences of young people themselves; 22 secondary age children who had been diagnosed at some point as having ADHD were interviewed, and information on various aspects of their school progress ascertained from teachers who knew them well. These young people had some very pointed observations to make on their condition, medication and their school experiences.



ADHD: Rising public profile

The group's initial trawl of information elicited the following facts:

- ▲ prevalence in the US and Canada varies between 2% and 10% of the child population
- ▲ on current evidence, estimated prevalence in the UK lies between 0.5% and 1%
- ▲ boys with ADHD appear to outnumber girls by a ratio of 4 to 1
- ▲ a strong indication from research that ADHD often occurs along with other emotional, behavioural and educational difficulties which may interact with ADHD and impair educational performance.



Evidence from the literature on ADHD

The whole group of psychologists surveyed the reported incidence of ADHD in their Service areas across Scotland. The results are shown in Table 1.

	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	TOTAL
<b>Number of school returns</b>	107	327	68	42	544
<b>Population of schools</b>	8469	78634	57974	2208	147285
<b>Number diagnosed ADHD</b>	8	130	50	31	219
<b>% ADHD of Population</b>	0.094	0.17	0.09	1.4	0.14

**Table 1: Incidence: Aggregated Returns from all areas**

It was noted that

- ▲ the average incidence rate of 0.15 is clearly not as great as the reported incidence rate of between 0.5% and 1% in the rest of the United Kingdom
- ▲ the male to female ratio in this survey was 9:1 compared with 4:1 in other surveys
- ▲ the percentage of children with ADHD who are known to their psychological service varies from around 70% in mainstream schools to 100% in special schools
- ▲ the figures in this survey suggest that there is a high level of co-morbidity with other difficulties such as moderate and severe learning difficulties
- ▲ there is some evidence that incidence partly reflects the diagnostician; there are certain areas across the country where psychiatrists favourable to the concept of ADHD appear to be operating
- ▲ there are indications of a correlation between high prevalence and socio-economic class.



Group's findings at variance with national statistics

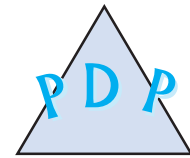
The focus of the **Preschool subgroup** was to explore issues of ADHD around the preschool and early primary school stages of development. There has been a dearth of prospective, longitudinal data but clearly these earlier developmental stages are particularly important in the assessment of and early intervention for the condition.

The group examined a number of facilities in Central Scotland which catered for the early assessment and provision for children with ADHD, and took evidence from parents' groups and individual parents.

Recurrent themes in discussion with parents were these:

- ▲ a pervasive feeling that professionals would not take parents' concerns seriously especially at the early stages

- ▲ parents felt that professionals blamed them for their child's behaviour
- ▲ large numbers of professionals were often involved, but there was often a lack of coordination, duplication and confusion over roles
- ▲ professionals were often surprisingly unaware of the possibility of co-morbidity
- ▲ obtaining a diagnosis was universally seen by parents as bringing a degree of relief
- ▲ psychologists could help by using less jargon, enabling parents to explore all the available options, and staff development with teachers.



Parental concerns regarding support and competence of professionals

The **Primary School subgroup** carried out a comparative study on a group of 20 youngsters identified as having ADHD in their own classroom settings, using their peers as controls. One objective was to examine a number of indicators including the ACTeRS rating scale (Ullmann et al, 1991) for effectiveness as detectors of ADHD. The group also developed their own instruments, the Classroom Observation Schedule (COS) and a Teacher Rating Scale. An innovative concept was that of a 'Suspect' pupil as one of the controls, in the shape of a child in the class who exhibited similar problematic behaviour but who was not diagnosed.

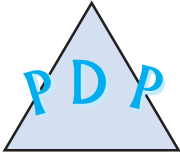
The following trends were noted:

- ▲ the Suspect group, followed by the ADHD group exhibited the most *off task, talking out of turn, time out of seat* and distracting behaviours
- ▲ there was a low overall incidence of disruptive behaviours in all comparison groups, including ADHD, Suspect and Random children
- ▲ teachers perceive ADHD pupils to have the poorest attention and social skills and Random girls to have the best
- ▲ similarly, the girls were seen to display less hyperactive and oppositional behaviour whereas the ADHD pupils were seen to display the highest levels of these behaviours
- ▲ when the category of overactivity was examined separately little difference was found between the activity levels of the ADHD and Suspect pupils
- ▲ although the ADHD and Suspect groups have more in common with each other than with any other group of pupils they are in fact dissimilar
- ▲ the variability found on the ACTeRS scale implies that there is not one typical profile for a pupil with ADHD. Observations suggest that this variability may be a response to classroom environment
- ▲ teachers' reports indicated dramatic improvements in the post medication behaviour of *some* pupils with ADHD
- ▲ the COS data for all groups of pupils indicated that there are statistically significant differences between age groups. P2 & P5 pupils exhibited more disruptive behaviours than the other age groups whilst P6 & P7 pupils on the whole displayed the most appropriate behaviours.



Pupils with ADHD in primary schools:  
How different is their behaviour?

Many strategies to support pupils with ADHD were reported, including reward systems, use of peers or extra adult support, refocusing the pupil and allowing extra time for tasks.



Usefulness of devised and published materials in detecting ADHD

Although the effectiveness of any of the strategies was said to be variable dependent on the mood and motivation of the child that day, extra adult support and reward systems were considered to be the most beneficial.

The group concluded that the instruments used were helpful in several ways: for functional assessment of pupils' difficulties, to inform the planning of interventions, for measuring the effectiveness of intervention using a baseline approach and in contributing to the diagnostic process.

Finally, a continuum of the behaviours across the groups was found, implying that *the behaviours exhibited by pupils with ADHD are not in themselves different from those displayed by their peers, but that they present at a more severe level.*

In the study undertaken by the **Secondary School subgroup**, diagnosed secondary aged pupils were identified from the initial School Survey Forms which were completed by psychologists and their respective link persons in schools. Twenty-two young people agreed to participate. Each young person was interviewed using a semi-structured interview format and data obtained on pupils views about medication, and solutions or general strategies which they believed to be helpful to themselves and possibly others with ADHD. Participants then completed a Conners-Wells Self-Report Scale (CASS). The CASS norms were standardised on a sizable North American sample. Basic background information was collated from the school's contact person on current attainments, discipline histories and exclusions. The background information revealed the following picture:

- ▲ 41% of the adolescents were reported by their teachers to be in the average range and 14% were said to be above average. Nonetheless the attainments of a sizable percentage (45%) were reported as relatively poor with many receiving learning support
- ▲ the behaviour of more than half of these youngsters (54%) were rated as frequently problematic. A variety of disruptive behaviours were mentioned including angry outbursts in class, peer conflict, talking out of turn and failing to follow instructions
- ▲ half of the survey had an exclusion history with 27% excluded more than five times. Those who had experienced exclusions were fairly open in talking about their difficulties; several mentioned that they were excluded more frequently in primary than in secondary school.

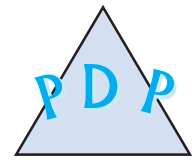


Secondary pupils' performance as perceived by school

The group were able to make very pertinent observations regarding the young people's own perceptions; in this summary space does not allow the poignant illustration of many of their views. Readers are referred to the main projects for this detail. Conclusions by the group were:

- ▲ participants tended to be fair, realistic, and candid in reporting their problems
- ▲ whilst many made positive comments about medication, there was also a measure of uncertainty or ambivalence as to whether it helped them to the extent that teachers and parents may perceive
- ▲ despite observing a number of trends and similarities in the way youngsters with ADHD view their situation there were also a large number of differences. Pupils with ADHD are **not** a homogeneous group
- ▲ the greater problems being reported in the school setting could be said to be indicative of the difficulties they had in accommodating to the structural demands of book and classroom based learning; their higher satisfaction in practical classes, where movement and/or talking is allowed suggests that there is merit in considering more overall curricular adjustments

- ▲ the importance of the teacher-pupil relationship as a means of limiting conflict was very much recognized and valued; it was felt that teachers can do a lot to ease or head off problems before they occur in school. Small adjustments in the teacher's approach and attitude to the child's weaknesses can make a crucial difference
- ▲ the reassurance that many adults may feel when provided by a diagnosis was not necessarily shared by the pupils; diagnosis tended to leave them anxious or confused. These feelings we suspect might have a lot to do with the manner in which information was supplied to pupils, whether through the psychiatrist and/or parents, and the appropriateness of this information to the age and understanding of the child or young person.



Valuable insights from young people themselves

It is the hope of the authors that this project will serve to raise awareness among colleagues about ADHD, and provide valuable information in terms of diagnosis, assessment of need, advice that can be given to schools, the importance of listening to children and their families, sharing information with colleagues and, in general, the benefits of a solution focused approach to intervention. The authors would welcome further discussion and can be contacted at the numbers given at the end of this document.

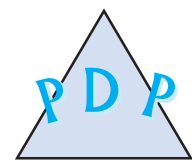
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## PSYCHOLOGISTS AND THE CHILDREN (SCOTLAND) ACT 1995

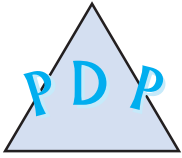
### Rationale

It is barely a year since the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 was implemented and psychologists, along with a range of other child care professionals, are very much a part of the rapidly evolving process of rethinking practice in the light of these developments. For those involved in the PDP project - *Ken Dutton (Scottish Borders)*, *Charles Gow (East Dunbartonshire)*, *Julia Johnson and Pamela McIlwain (City of Edinburgh)*, *Stuart Taylor (Dumfries and Galloway)*, and *Ruth Wheeler (West Dunbartonshire)* - there were two distinct strands, one hands-on involvement, the other a reflective element. Each psychologist became a nominated representative within his or her own authority to contribute to local developments arising out of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. This involved individuals in activities as diverse as sitting on work groups, collaborating on inter-agency planning, being identified as a consultant when aspects of the Act were being implemented and, on occasions, highlighting gaps within authority processes, such as when planning for Children's Services was proceeding without an invitation to a key player, such as education or the health board.



Professional Development Programme

If there were occasions when this felt like being thrown in at the deep end, the PDP psychologists have drawn support for these new roles from the second strand in the experience - involvement in the Children Act group, with opportunities to share lessons from the five authorities represented and to develop with psychologist colleagues an



The Act:  
Implications for Psychological Services

understanding of the more pressing implications of the Act. Arising from the project involvement there have been openings to attend a range of conferences, to assist in planning a national conference, to deliver together an in-service morning for three Psychological Services, to speak - singly or in pairs - at a range of other venues. This twin approach of hands-on involvement at local level together with support from a group of peers from different services has proved a highly successful combination, and offers a useful model for fostering the skills and confidence of professionals as they take a lead on new developments.

The paper produced by the group reflects the developmental nature of this project. The scene is changing rapidly as implementation of the Act proceeds. During the period of the project, initial training for staff and development of integrated Children's Service plans were key activities at local authority level, but as these have become established, so new layers of development come into play. The paper does not aim, therefore, to be the definitive word on the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, but rather to continue the task begun by Gordon Phillips (1997) in asking, what are the key implications of the Act for psychological services across Scotland? Three main areas are identified for examination:

- ▲ comparison of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 with other important pieces of legislation
- ▲ the call to councils for effective multi-disciplinary working
- ▲ an examination of the opportunities offered by the new requirement to consult with children.

#### **The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Education (Scotland) Act 1980**

The philosophies on which these two current, parallel pieces of legislation are based differ in certain important respects. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, leans heavily on concepts that go back to the Act of 1872 and is strong on the rights and duties of the education authority and of parents. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 includes within its philosophy the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK in 1991, and introduces twin notions of parental responsibilities and children's rights. Some key arguments are developed:



Children (Scotland) Act:  
Harmonising with other legislation

- ▲ the Children (Scotland) Act replaces previous Social Work Acts but sits alongside the Education (Scotland) Act 1980
- ▲ there are possible tensions for educational professionals arising from the different bases of the two Acts
- ▲ there are some differences in key definitions, for example 'parent'
- ▲ there are some new duties introduced by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 not incorporated into the procedures laid out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

In the long term, these tensions may be resolved by testing in the courts, minor amendments to the existing legislation or provision of new legislation. At the time of writing two typical responses by education authorities have been emerging:

- ▲ 'wait and see' but meantime, if it is an education issue, operate according to the guidance in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980
- ▲ go beyond the strict prescriptions of the legislation, identify the spirit underlying each of the Acts and seek to develop practices and procedures that honour both.

The sections of the paper that follow, on multi-disciplinary working and consulting with children, are an attempt by the PDP psychologists to develop this latter approach.

### **Collaborative working under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995**

Relevant sections of the Act that imply departmental collaboration concerning the assessment and provision of services to children include:

- Section 19 Local authority plans for services for children
- Section 20 Publication of information about services for children
- Section 21 Co-operation between authorities
- Section 23 Children affected by disability.

Part Two of the Act directs authorities to build on existing good practices with collaboration and partnership between voluntary and statutory agencies, the parents, children and young people involved through the creation of Children's Service plans.

'The general aim of planning is to ensure that these services are provided in a co-ordinated way, making the best use of available resources to provide help where it is most needed and in the way it is most needed'.

(City of Edinburgh 1998)

'The development of Children's Services Plans presents a major challenge to reconcile value systems, policy stances and operational practice across a range of services'.

(Telfer, 1997)

The paper looks in some detail at the barriers as well as the facilitators of effective multi-disciplinary working, highlighting issues under separate sections concerning:

- ▲ exchange of information
- ▲ assessment and identification of needs
- ▲ the meeting of needs: planning, delivery and review
- ▲ training.

By tracking back over developments in Scotland since the late 1960s, the writers demonstrate that this is not a new emphasis. There have been examples of good inter-agency planning and provision for some time, but these were often isolated initiatives. The introduction of a requirement for joint planning of Children's Services challenges not just provision at the grass roots, but the need for administrative structures at various levels within a council that can facilitate such developments as:

- ▲ the exploration of one-door entry to services
- ▲ development of joint assessment, information and management systems
- ▲ the possibility of shared as well as independent funding.

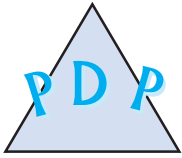
Planning for Children's Services goes well beyond collaboration between local authority services alone. It includes parents, the voluntary sector and the health boards too. The fact that many health boards boundaries are now significantly different from local authority boundaries since local government reorganisation is seen as a regrettable barrier to the establishment of common structures and common policies for the sharing of information and decisions.



Collaborative Working:  
Support from the Act



Collaborative Working:  
Barriers and facilitators



Consulting with Children:  
Rationale

### Consulting with Children

Children are now to be viewed as clients and partners with rights. The arguments for consulting with children and engaging with them as active participants are ones which resonate with good psychological principles and practice.

These arguments are:

- pragmatic - children have information to contribute
- moral - they have a right to be listened to
- legal - we have a duty to ascertain their views.

(Gersch, 1992)

After examining the legal principles within the legislative framework, the paper focuses on practice - what does it take to create a listening ethos? In early 1998 all principal psychologists in Scotland were asked to provide details of initiatives in their area designed to improve consultation with children arising from the Children (Scotland) Act. Over 80% reported some activity, and examples are offered in the paper to show the range of work underway, reported separately for authority level, whole school, classroom and the individual child. In broad terms, the initiatives cover



Consulting with Children:  
Current Scottish initiatives

- ▲ consultation exercises with children regarding school or other council services
- ▲ a fresh look at how to consult with children over their involvement with the psychological service
- ▲ inviting and recording children's views at various stages within the recording process
- ▲ how to help children make a meaningful contribution to case conferences
- ▲ partnership schemes between children and teachers for assessing and monitoring work
- ▲ lessons in PSD time concerning children's rights.

The paper then examines in some detail concerns which adults might have about consulting with children, and ways in which psychologists might assist through provision of training and appropriate models. Knowing how to share information is as important as knowing how to listen. However, establishing a genuine climate for welcoming children's views is far more important than any number of techniques and tips. A specific project within PDP 1998-9 will develop this further, including consideration of one area where some of the most crucial decisions are made about children - the courts.



Consulting with Children:  
Adult concerns and training needs

At one level the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 presents nothing new in terms of what has always been seen as best practice for educational psychologists. However, here is a chance to review a significant part of what psychologists can do, likely should be doing, and now will have to do.

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## EXCLUSIONS AND INDISCIPLINE: TOWARDS INCLUSION

Interest in the issue of exclusion has been at the highest level with positive comment about progress being made by Brian Wilson, Minister of State for Education and Industry at the Scottish Office. He 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).

These comments were the conclusion to a number of high profile government sponsored initiatives which had been launched during the short life of the PDP project on Exclusions and Indiscipline. 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. 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”. At the national conference on exclusions earlier this year, the Secretary of State announced that there was to be a national objective to reduce levels of exclusion, within which schools and authorities would be expected to devise their own strategies and targets.

Added to this heady political atmosphere in which the project team were working was the consideration of years of research and experience. Consideration of this work raised issues 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, it is clear that there are examples of good 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 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, and 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?

The following four issues provided 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 the “shadowland” of procedural vagaries and the marked absence of student and parent advocacy (Garner, 1993).



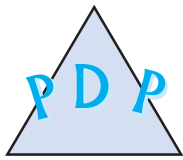
Alternatives to Exclusion:  
Political context



Alternatives to Exclusion:  
Practical implications



Major issues for the Exclusions Group



The four strands of the PDP project

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 subgroups. From the outset, however, 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, hypotheses, findings, preliminary conclusions back to the whole team. 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.

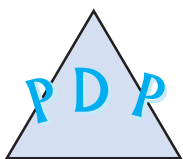
The work of the project team was a highly collaborative process: every member contributed to all aspects of the study. At various stages of the project process there was a division of labour and particular members of the team took on responsibility for particular aspects of work. *Fergal Doherty, Glasgow 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 E Harker, Inverclyde Council, Jim Curnyn, Argyll and Bute Council and Anne Littlefair, City of Edinburgh Council*, coordinated the evaluation of multi-disciplinary forums. *Anne Littlefair, City of Edinburgh Council, Jan Tavendale, Dundee City Council, and Shona Munro, Fife Council*, provided the core of material on the involvement of parents and children.

A basic contention of the 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.

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 a range of issues and to identify some of the features of 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.

### **A Behaviour Support and Exclusions Monitoring Database**

Most education authorities throughout Scotland have had difficulties in maintaining reliable data on exclusions from schools. This has inhibited the construction of consistent policies and the monitoring of effectiveness at local and national levels. A computerised database programme is offered in disk form 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



The call for a positive school ethos

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. 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.

### 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. These interventions will have most impact where the strategy facilitates clarification of expected behavioural outcomes, pupil responsibilities and recognition of choice. The interventions are also included in the Behaviour Support and Exclusion Monitoring Database.



Interventions to support inclusion

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

Numerous reports and policy documents emphasise the requirement for multi-disciplinary forums - almost to the point of 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 and an account of staff perceptions of the relationships between support and discipline. 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 it is not the existence 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 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.



Factors influencing the effectiveness of multi-disciplinary forums

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 authority education services 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.

### Including Children and Parents

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. Although most schools would be aware of the need and usefulness of such involvement, this remains an area of development for many. 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

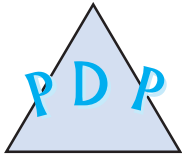
of staff interviewed were aware of the importance of pupils' views, but few schools had developed guidelines for pupil involvement and feedback. There was wide variance in the attitude of staff towards this.

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. 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:

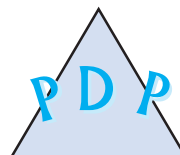
- ▲ implementation and evaluation of the database program
- ▲ development of the prompt list of support strategies
- ▲ study and evaluation of parent-pupil-school communications
- ▲ more detailed retrospective and prospective study of parent and pupil involvement in the exclusion process.



Recommendations for future work

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