The education of pupils excluded from school for between 16-45 days - Report

September 2002 - March 2004

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2005
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1. **Introduction**

Between October 2002 and October 2003, Westby Education Directorate, in partnership with Barnardo’s, undertook an action research project to contribute to the development of good practice in working with pupils excluded from school for between 16-45 days in Westby, a town in the north of England.

The research was commissioned and managed by the Continuing Education of Excluded Pupils Group (CEEP Group). This group existed prior to the research being undertaken. This group was responsible for obtaining funding from the DfES and commissioning the Research from Barnardo’s Research and Development Team, North East.

**The policy context**

Through Circulars 10/99 and 11/99 (Social Inclusion Pupil Support) the government signalled its commitment to ensuring that, from September 2002, all pupils excluded from school for more than 15 days should have access to full time education during the period of exclusion. In particular, the school’s obligation to provide education continues while the pupil is on roll, and must be met during a fixed term exclusion. The Circulars direct that in all cases of more than a day’s exclusion, work should be set and marked and a head teacher considering whether to exclude a pupil for a longer period, for example for more than 15 school days, should plan:

1. How the pupil’s education will continue during the period of exclusion.
2. How the time might be used to address the pupil’s problems.
3. Together with the LEA, what educational arrangements will best help with the pupil’s reintegration into the school at the end of the exclusion?

One of the aims of the research was to ascertain how this was being carried out in Westby and establish a baseline against which service developments could be compared.
2. The aims of the research

The overall aim of this research has been to evaluate the educational arrangements made for those pupils excluded from school for between 16-45 days in Westby.

In doing this the research explored how the relevant sections of Circulars 10/99 and 11/99 were being implemented. In particular the research examined how the requirement, that LEA's should ensure that all pupils excluded for more than 15 days should receive suitable full time education from September 2002, was being implemented. The study aimed to inform future policy and practice for this group of pupils and provide a baseline against which future service developments could be compared.

In the school year 2000-2001 there were a total of 44 exclusions in Westby for a period of 16-45 days. In 2001-2002 there was a further 51 similar periods of exclusion.

It was assumed that during the school year 2002-2003 there would be an addition to these figures.

The Education Authority in Westby viewed these figures with a high level of concern and wished to enhance its service to such pupils and their families in order to ensure that all pupils receive the education to which they were entitled.

Research questions

The research has addressed the following issues regarding the period of exclusion:

- the reasons for and the context of the exclusions
- the nature of the education provided
- the processes for providing and monitoring this education
- any specialist provision made for pupils sitting exams
- the effectiveness of this education as judged by professionals
- the effectiveness of this education as judged by pupil / carers
- the input from other agencies
- the effectiveness of communication between home and school
- the impact of the exclusion on the pupil's personal and family life
- the impact of the exclusion on school
- the impact of the exclusion on other agencies
- the extent to which the period of exclusion facilitated or hindered re-integration back into school
- how the re-integration of the pupil was effected
- how successful this re-integration was
- how continuity in delivering the National Curriculum was achieved.

The action research model
The research has followed an action research model in which information is regularly fed back to key people within the relevant system (in this case Westby LEA) via reports, workshops, meetings, presentations and so forth.

For action research to be effective clear links need to be made between the research and service development processes.

In the case of this research the CEEP group (and in particular it’s Chair Person) was the critical link between the research and service development within the LEA. Each output from the research was fed back to this group when completed and further work then identified.

The “cycle” of work undertaken during the research period can be seen in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1. – The research work cycle

Each of these stages of this cycle is described and discussed below.

During phase one of the research (October 2002 – December 2002) interviews were undertaken with the following people:

1. A sample of 12 pupils who were subject to fixed term exclusions in the summer term of summer 2002 and their parents/carers. The aim of these interviews was to explore their experience of the exclusion and re-integration process.
2. Head Teachers of five secondary schools.
3. A range of professionals within the LEA.

Key findings

Interviews with pupils and parents suggested that, from their perspective, for the period of exclusion from school, service developments should aim to:

- relieve their sense of isolation and sense of dislocation
- provide continuity of education and a more structured education plan
- offer help in addressing the behavioural issues identified
- give more information about respective rights and responsibilities
- provide one key worker to co-ordinate an agreed education and re-integration plan.

Interviews with schools: whilst stressing the need to make avoidance of exclusion the first priority the following issues were seen as problematic:

- maintaining continuity of education beyond the first few days of exclusion
- providing and marking suitable work
- maintaining contact with pupils and parents
- working on the reasons for exclusion during the exclusion period
- recognition of the need to offer a co-ordinated support package to excluded pupils whilst recognising the resource implications of achieving this.

Emerging good practice identified in the interviews with schools included:

- allocating staff time (a learning mentor) to ensure work flows between home and school
- providing twilight sessions for excluded pupils to maintain contact, continuity of education and plan reintegration back into school
- existing models of good practice e.g. BOOST and the newly formed re-integration team based at Oxclose Education Centre, Washington.

Professionals commented that:

- They had had very little opportunity to consider this issue and think through the practice implications.
- There were concerns about what criteria were being used to access services and how the various services were co-ordinated.
- Services were perceived as being fully stretched with little spare capacity to undertake new work.
The importance of taking a system wide view and linking this group to other related groups rather than seeing them as a discrete group of pupils (e.g. permanently excluded pupils, pupils who refuse to go to school and so forth).

The need to change the mind set around exclusion (i.e. see it as an opportunity to bring a new initiative to a problem rather than seeing it as a period of time “to forget” about the problem).

Identify and build on good practice.

This information was fed back to the CEEP group in January 2003. The information had the potential to be a baseline against which to measure changes in practice over time. For example, the data suggested that some of the key requirements of circulars 10/99 and 11/99 were not being met (e.g. ensuring continuity of education during the period of exclusion).

The data both gave feedback on how the authority was meeting some of the requirements of 10/99 and 11/99 as well as other information from schools and professionals that could help plan future service developments.

See Appendix 1
4. Multi agency workshops – February 2003

During this phase of the research the findings of Interim Report were fed back to two multi-agency, multi-disciplinary Workshops (one for professionals involved with secondary pupils the other for professionals involved with primary pupils). These were held in February 2003.

The aims of these workshops were:

1. To give feedback on the research undertaken so far and consider implications for practice.
2. To consult on how the requirements of Circular 10/99 (amended from 20/01/03) might be implemented.

Outcome of the workshops

The workshops produced several suggestions namely the need to:

- Address the whole issue of co-ordination, clarity of roles, and collaboration between professionals and agencies through key worker systems and holistic care plans.
- Have one named person in the LEA to co-ordinate responses to excluded pupils
- Develop co-ordinated multi-disciplinary approaches.
- Develop more flexible and innovative responses.
- Build on current service strengths and develop systems for disseminating good practice.
- Update the audit of services within the LEA.
- Develop flexible work packs to be used with excluded pupils.
- Pilot, evaluate and disseminate the findings from service developments.

The suggestions from the workshops gave useful suggestions as to how services could be developed to meet the requirements of circulars 10/99 and 11/99.

The workshops were attended by members of the CEEP group and the information from the workshops was fed back to this group in February / March 2003.

See Appendix 2
5. Connexions pilot project – April 2003

Members of the Connexions Service attended the February workshops and were keen to explore how they might contribute to meeting the needs of excluded pupils.

Through meetings between the Research Worker and members of the Connexions Service a proposal for a pilot project was developed bearing in mind the findings of the research to date.

The main aim of the pilot was to develop the role of a Connexions' Personal Adviser to:

- support the rapid provision of an appropriate education plan
- engage other support services where necessary
- co-ordinate a holistic assessment of the needs of individual young people that will form the basis of a flexible and coherent support package to parents and young people
- act as key worker and co-ordinate and progress the support package
- support where necessary, reintegration into school of the young person
- feedback to all relevant agencies work undertaken with the young person.

Although this pilot was not progressed it did stimulate discussion within the Connexions Service about the possible role that the service might play in supporting this and related groups of young people.

The outline of this proposal was circulated to the CEEP group whose Chairperson represented the LEA on key Connexions’ planning groups.

See Appendix 3
6. Education Review Committee - March 2003

In March 2003, The Education Review Committee produced a series of recommendations re school exclusion. The Committee made the proposals “to allow for development of policy in relation to how the Council enables, where possible and appropriate, opportunity for all children to be educated within the mainstream environment and to provide adequately for young people out of school”. The findings of the research were linked to the main headings of the Report and fed back to the Chair of the CEEP group to enable links to be made between the research and service developments within the LEA.

Thus one recommendation from the Education Committee was that:

**LEA guidance should promote an expectation that governors will be required to receive introductory training followed by more advanced training in the issues around exclusion in order to fulfil their role on discipline committees.**

It was possible to link research findings to date to this recommendation thus:

*Feedback from both the research and the Workshops suggests that at present these meetings do little to promote the overall welfare of individual pupils. Parents and pupils perceive them as quasi-judicial “hearings” and feel as if they are on trial. Discipline committees, through the eyes of those who were interviewed as part of the research appear to be adversarial and are about the school “making the case for exclusion” rather than asking, “How can we best help the pupil, parents and school in this particular situation?” Parents also said that they would value more information and support prior to and during the meeting. These meetings often come towards the end of the exclusion period at a time when positive planning for return to school should be taking place; in effect they serve to further sour relations between pupil and school. Concern was raised at the workshops about the length of some of the meetings and the stress that parents and pupils were put under with very little benefit to anyone. In summary whilst these meetings have to take place, the focus of the meetings could be re-thought to make them more about “How can we deal constructively with a difficult situation” rather than “Is the case for exclusion proven”.*

Further information relevant to this was subsequently gathered via Governor Workshops and resulted in plans to develop a training video for Governors (see section 10).

A further example was:

**The LEA should investigate the feasibility of developing a mechanism whereby feedback / complaints can be obtained from parents/guardians on the exclusion process.**

It was possible to link research findings to date to this recommendation thus:

*The research suggests that, approached in an empowering way, parents and pupils are able to give useful constructive feedback on their experiences, which can be used to improve practice. Thought would need to be given to the best ways to gather this feedback on a regular basis.*
Thus this offered the opportunity to link the findings to date of the research to the strategic agenda of the LEA.

See Appendix 4

Governors are groups of people who make key decisions in respect of excluded pupils (in particular through the Discipline Committee process).

Pupils and parents/carers had made significant comments re their experiences of the Discipline Committee and it was felt important to engage with Governors to both give feedback from the Research and seek their experiences of the process.

This feedback was given via three general presentations during summer 2003 (attended by approximately 100 Governors) and a workshop held at the request of Governors in October 2003 attended by 15 Governors.

The aims of the October workshop, agreed with Governors were:

1. to feedback research findings to governors
2. to outline current policies relevant to Discipline Committees
3. to consult with Governors about their views of the current process
4. to identify current good practice in conducting Discipline Committees
5. to identify areas that need further consideration development

The issues raised in this workshop included:

General Concerns

- Concerns at the amount of research time spent on only 21 pupils in the research (“all this attention being focussed on such a small group”).
- The need to develop a wider range of services for parents.
- Governors feel let down by professionals who promise services and then don’t deliver on these promises.
- Governors feel let down by lack of resources / Change needed in resource levels.
- There was criticism of the ranking process (this appeared to relate to the requirement for schools to prioritise referrals for support service involvement/FSA referral).
- The need for more intervention at the primary level.
- The timeliness of LEA response was criticised – often being perceived as being too late.
- In some instances lack of attendance officers appeared to affect ability to respond in a timely fashion to pupils’ needs.
- Concern about the likely effectiveness of the proposed plan to use short term placements at alternative schools?
- The recognition of the crucial nature of support from parents (One suggestion was that parents come into class and support the pupil).
- Concerns about talk of children’s rights but not their responsibilities.
- Feeling of failure within schools when everything that has been tried has failed and exclusion appears to be the only solution. NB: some pupils end up being withdrawn and being educated at home.
Policy and Research Unit

Concern about the effect of badly behaved pupils on other pupils was noted and the need to consider how those pupils affected could be included in the consultation process.

The possible negative effect on the aspirations of other pupils.

Comments re Discipline Committees

- Useful to seek views of other pupils but concerns expressed at using other pupils as witnesses (another governor expressed concerns that including views of other pupils would prejudice the outcome and reduce independence of the DC).
- Governors need to know about procedures – written guidance is very helpful.
- Felt useful to have Discipline Committees for those pupils excluded for less than 15 days. These might prevent longer exclusions.
- Frustration caused by the inability of Discipline Committees to look at what strategies had already been tried.
- It is helpful for the chair to talk to parents beforehand and try to reduce some of the stress.
- Stress experienced by Governors through parents who presented as “anti” the process. There was a need to address negative emotions where possible prior to the meeting. This was presumed to be the role of the Chair.
- Follow-up to Discipline Committees would be helpful to track the outcome of the decision of the DC. Progress reports would be useful.
- Varied opinion about input from clerks + LEA officers (NB: there were complaints about “one liners reports from officers”).
- Criticism re unwillingness of some LEA officers to give a view.
- There needs to be an LEA rep that has both knowledge of the pupil at all meetings and sufficient knowledge to give a view.

Identified Needs of School Governors:

- School staff need to know what Discipline Committees are about – need to know about procedures to ensure that they are carried out in a professional way.
- Governors need to see good practice e.g. videos and shadowing.
- Staff need more support and training re general discipline issues. Reference made to previous Educational Psychologist input with NQTs, looking at videos of class management and involving experienced teachers in discussing discipline.

This workshop was attended by members of the CEEP group and the points raised at the Workshop fed back to the CEEP group.

See Appendix 5
8. Interviews with excluded pupils at the Pupil Referral Unit – July 2003

These were undertaken in July 2003 with pupils who were excluded from school and being educated at the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

The aim of these interviews was to consult with young people (Key Stage 3) on what they have or have not found helpful during the time that they were having problems at school. These were not intended to be “in depth interviews” but rather conversations to elicit views on what these pupils had found helpful or unhelpful during the problems they had encountered during their school careers. 12 young people were interviewed.

Based on these interviews a number of characteristics of preferred teaching style can be identified which include:

- being listened to by teachers
- the use of humour in class
- the feeling that staff are bothered about pupils
- congruence of style between pupils and staff
- being given the chance to leave a reputation behind (“fresh starts”)
- perception of fairness
- activity based teaching strategies
- talking pupils down rather than shouting them down
- small group work with ready access to help and support
- “thin”, flexible boundaries rather than “thick” fixed ones
- intensive help at points of transition.

This information was fed back to the CEEP group. It had the potential to contribute to practice development within the LEA.

See Appendix 6
9. Literature review

A literature Review was undertaken to identify what lessons might be relevant to service developments within the LEA.

The following is a summary of some of the literature, relevant to the subject of exclusion from school.

A comment in one of the research reviews (Risk and Protective Factors associated with Youth Crime and effective interventions to prevent it, Youth Justice Board, November 2001) is relevant to many of the studies included in this review- "A more basic problem in the UK is the lack of rigorous evaluation studies. Small numbers of participants and limited duration (often due to short term funding) have been a common feature of projects, contributing to the lack of any evaluation “culture”. Few evaluations of UK programmes referred to in this report included a comparable control group to increase confidence that positive (or negative) outcomes were attributable to the intervention. Studies, in future, need to be large enough to achieve high standards in terms of sampling and research design if they are to yield findings that are capable of generalisation. Ideally, the impact of interventions should be evaluated using randomised experiments.” (p.112)

Whilst bearing these methodological considerations in mind, it is of interest how common themes relating to effectiveness or non-effectiveness were repeated in the literature and the summaries presented here are indicative of these themes.

The literature review undertaken, as part of the research, would suggest a number of key factors for increasing the probability of successful interventions with excluded pupils. These include:

- A whole system approach owned across the LEA, informed by a set of simple principles and underpinned by the experience of service users.
- Geographically and “cluster based” services drawing on a range of local community resources.
- The skills of support workers which include: worker style, flexibility of role and level of commitment.
- Holistic approaches building on the client perspective and implemented through a key worker approach.
- Partnership working with the whole family.
- Accessibility and speed of response (including early intervention).
- A key worker approach which includes advocacy, referral and co-ordination of a range of services, readily accessible, pro-active and intensive support.
- Access to a reasonable level of resources, flexibility of role, minimal bureaucracy.
- A range of flexible alternative curriculum provision.

See appendix 7
10. **Governor training video - ongoing**

Out of the Governors’ workshop came the suggestion to produce a training video incorporating the relevant issues identified both through the Governors workshops and the Research (in particular the views of pupils and parents). This is being actively developed through collaboration between Westby L.E.A and the University of Westby.

The Research worker has highlighted the learning from the interviews with pupils and parents that could inform the development of this Video.

See Appendix 8
11. Involving young people and their parents / carers

The research undertaken which formed the basis of the Interim Report (January 2003) was specifically aimed at identifying the views of young people and their parents/ carers. These formed the main content of the Interim Report presented to the CEEP group and formed the main content of the feedback to the two workshops held in February 2003.

Throughout the research period the Research Worker has given feedback to parents and pupils re their contribution to the Research. This has been via letters and return visits. For example, at the time that the Connexions Pilot was being planned, the parents who had been interviewed during phase one of the research were asked to comment on what was being planned and specifically asked to comment if they thought that the proposed service would have been of help to them at the time they needed it. The overwhelming view was that it would have been of great help. This in turn was fed back into the planning of this pilot. Regular letters have also been sent to parents / pupils to give them information about what has happened to the information that they have given as part of the research.

A part of the consultation with pupils at the PRU a session was organised to give feedback to the whole group and to undertake further work with them.

The research suggests that, approached in an empowering way, parents and pupils are able to give useful constructive feedback on their experiences, which can be used to improve practice. Thought would need to be given to the best ways to gather this feedback on a regular basis.
12. Summary and conclusions

The research took place during a period of significant change within the LEA and schools.

In particular the following initiatives impacted upon service developments within the LEA:

- A policy review on exclusions by the Education Review Committee.
- The work and recommendations of the Secondary Head teachers / LEA Officer working party with recommendations.
- An OFSTED report published in February 2003 had a significant impact on service developments to this and related groups of pupils.

The research followed an action – research model and has tried to help the process of change within the LEA in a number of ways:

- feeding back all aspects of the work to the CEEP group
- initiating and responding to requests for workshops where it was felt appropriate
- making linkages with current planning systems where possible
- involving pupils and parents where possible.

The accountability to the CEEP group has been the key link between the research and strategic planning within the LEA and the research was linked to all of the above initiatives through the CEEP group.
THE VOICE OF EXCLUSION

Education provision for pupils excluded from school for between 16-45 days in Westby

Draft interim report

For discussion at C.E.E.P. group 16-01-03

Malcolm Stone
Barnardo’s
January 2003
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19. Appendix 1 - The Research Proposal
Executive Summary

The aim of this research has been to evaluate the educational arrangements made for those pupils excluded from school for between 16-45 days in Westby during the summer term of 2002. It represents the first phase of an action research programme addressing the needs of this group of pupils. This first phase has aimed to establish a baseline against which to measure the effects of future service development.

The policy context of the research is a new requirement from September 2002 that LEA’s should ensure that all pupils excluded for more than 15 days should receive suitable full time education from September 2002, is being implemented (Circulars 10/99 and 11/99). The study will aim to inform future policy and practice for this group of pupils.

The Education Directorate in Westby views the current levels of fixed term exclusions with a high level of concern and wishes to enhance its service to such pupils and their families in order to ensure that all pupils receive the education to which they are entitled. This report has been compiled to aid the work of the group concerned with the continuing education of excluded pupils (the C.E.E.P group) of Westby Education Directorate.

A key aim of the research has been to give a voice to excluded pupils and their parents. In particular their experience of and views have been sought on:

- decision making and consultation through the various stages of the process
- what helped or hindered the implementation of the education timetable
- the effectiveness of the education timetable
- the helpfulness or otherwise of the range of services they received
- the impact of the period of exclusion on the pupil and his/her family
- their experience of the process of reintegration.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 parents of pupils excluded during the summer term 2002. With the permission of their parents 5 pupils were also interviewed.

Interviews were also conducted with key staff in five secondary schools.

The data gathered suggests a number of ways in which the current pastoral, behavioural and educational support to excluded pupils could be improved and the requirements of circulars 10/99 and 11/99 achieved.
1. Introduction

The overall aim of this action research is to evaluate the educational arrangements made for those pupils excluded from school for between 16-45 days in Westby (see Appendix 1).

In particular the research will examine how the requirement, that LEA's should ensure that all pupils excluded for more than 15 days should receive suitable full time education from September 2002, is being implemented (Circulars 10/99 and 11/99). The study will aim to inform future policy and practice for this group of pupils.

The research does not aim to explain variations in the rates of exclusions between schools over time or to evaluate the range of interventions used to try to prevent exclusions taking place.

This draft interim report represents phase one of the research.

This phase explores the nature of the education that has been provided during the exclusion period and how re-integration of excluded pupils has been managed prior to the new requirements of circulars 10/99 and 11/99 coming into effect.

In particular the emphasis has been on giving voice to pupils and parents’ views of the exclusion process.

In order to track changes over time as policy changes are implemented a sample of pupils excluded in the summer term 2002 for 16-45 days and their parents have been interviewed to collate base line data against which to compare changes in practice.

Additionally, interviews have been conducted with five schools to start to identify schools’ perspectives on the provision of education to excluded pupils.
Fixed term exclusions in Westby – the last three years.

The pattern of fixed term exclusions in Westby for the past three years can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001 – 2002</td>
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The Education Authority in Westby views these figures with a high level of concern, and wishes to enhance its service to such pupils and their families, in order to ensure that all pupils, however challenging, receive the education to which they are entitled.

Research questions

The research set out to address the following questions regarding the period of exclusion:

1. The reasons for and the context of the exclusions.
2. The nature of the education provided.
3. The processes for providing and monitoring this education.
4. Any specialist provision made for pupils sitting exams.
5. The effectiveness of this education as judged by professionals, pupils / carers
6. The input from other agencies.
7. The effectiveness of communication between home and school.
8. The impact of the exclusion on the pupil’s personal and family life.
9. The impact of the exclusion on school.
10. The impact of the exclusion on other agencies.
11. How the re-integration of the pupil was effected.
12. How successful this re-integration was.
13. How continuity in delivering the National Curriculum was achieved.

The Research Worker, following an assurance of confidentiality, found everyone he spoke to very willing to engage in discussions about how to develop services.
2. Methodology

Sampling

Interviews with parents and pupils

There were 21 fixed period exclusions of 16+ days during the summer term, 2002.

All parents of those pupils excluded from school in summer term 2002 were initially contacted by letter. The letter gave both information about the research and offered an appointment for a home visit. The letter indicated to the parents that permission to have contact with their children, who had been excluded, would be discussed with them during the home visit.

These initial appointment letters were followed by a mixture of successful home visits, abortive home visits, and second letters to try to establish contact and re-negotiation of appointments by telephone.

Through this process 12 parents were interviewed and permission was given to talk to 5 pupils. All of these pupils opted to be seen with their parents present. All interviews took place at home.

As relatively no new information was being found at the end of the 12 interviews no further contacts with the remaining families were pursued.

The 12 pupils, who comprise this study, represent 9 schools (7 Secondary and 2 Primary).

On the basis that the majority of exclusions during the summer term were from secondary schools (19 out of 21 exclusions) and that there are 18 secondary schools in the City of Westby the sample was considered to be representative (i.e. 7 out of 18 secondary schools).

Interviews with schools

All secondary school Head Teachers were contacted twice asking for an appointment for the Research Worker to either meet with the Head Teacher or a nominated member of staff. In the event five responses were received and appointments made and interviews conducted (two of these with the Head Teacher of the school). Time has not permitted chasing up the remaining Head Teachers for further interviews.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with parents and pupils in their home.
Questions were based on the research questions outlined above.

Notes were made during the meeting, typed up as soon afterwards as possible and a copy sent to parents/pupils for them to check the accuracy. Through a follow up telephone call by the Research Worker to the parent any amendments were agreed and made.

Similarly, summaries of discussions with schools were sent to schools and additions / amendments were invited and received.

An assurance of confidentiality has been given to anyone who has been interviewed during this stage of the research. Information is presented in aggregate form and quotations have been anonymised. This has been very important in the process of engaging parents, pupils and professionals and encouraging openness of expression.

Data analysis

The data gathered has been primarily qualitative in nature. The data has been analysed in two stages: firstly by collating relevant data from the interviews and categorising this data under the headings of the research questions and, secondly, through content analysis identifying key themes.

A key part of the data analysis has involved discussions between the research worker and professionals who have a working knowledge of this group of pupils. The analysis and understanding of the data has been significantly informed by these discussions which have served as an invaluable source of clarification and understanding of the issues raised. In particular regular contact with the newly established multi-disciplinary re-integration team based at Oxclose, Washington has proved very helpful.

A major aim of this study has been to give a voice to pupils and parents. With this in mind the key themes arising from the data are illustrated by these voices through direct quotations from, or paraphrasing of comments by, parents and pupils.
3. Profile of the excluded pupils

Type and range of schools

The 12 pupils, who comprise this study, represent 9 schools (7 Secondary and 2 Primary).

Age range of the sample at the time of the exclusion

The age range of the sample forming the focus of this study is as follows:

- 16 – 4
- 15 – 1
- 14 – 1
- 13 – 4
- 11 – 1
- 8 – 1

Ethnic minority groups

None of the pupils were from ethnic minority groups.

Gender

In the summer term there were 21 fixed term exclusions. This comprised 19 male and 2 female pupils. The research sample was all male.

Home circumstances

In only two of the 12 families were behavioural problems identified as an issue at home. The Social Services Directorate was involved with these two families. In one case two siblings are in foster care and care proceedings on-going in respect of these. This pupil's name had previously been on the Child Protection register following incidents of domestic violence.

In the other case the Social Services Directorate became involved when the young person ran away from home and the parent refused to have him back. Social Services brokered his return home with no on-going support provided.

Two pupils were living with grandparents.
4. The reasons for the exclusions

Reasons given for the exclusion were:

- Aggressive outbursts towards staff - 8
- Interrupting the learning of other children / regular defiance – 1
- Theft from school premises – 1
- Letting off smoke bomb – 2

There were two main groups of excluded pupils.

Group 1 (3 pupils) – This group consisted of pupils where there had been no longstanding history of behavioural problems at school other than the occasional detention and exclusion of no more than a few days. The reasons for exclusion of these pupils related to theft from school premises and letting off a smoke bomb.

He was excluded because he let off a smoke bomb at school next to the maths lab. No one was hurt. There was disruption in the area of the smoke. School was concerned that it might have set off the smoke alarm and the fire brigade would have been called out.

There have been some minor incidents in the past – nothing major. He had been excluded for a day after fighting with another pupil. He’s had some detentions – just little incidents really.

Group 2 (9 pupils) – consisted of those pupils excluded for aggressive outbursts (primarily towards staff) and interrupting the learning of other pupils. For this group of pupils there had been significant previous periods of exclusion and disruption to their education. This group could be further subdivided into those where problems had been evident from early in the pupil’s school career (2(a)) and those where problems seem to have appeared in secondary school (2(b))

2(a)

He did not get on with certain of the teachers. He was removed for some of his lessons and was sat with Mr X. He has been a problem for a long time. He was diagnosed ADHD when he was 5 years old and prescribed Ritalin. This seemed to knock him out and make him a “zombie”. His mother was here at the time and we had words because I didn’t like to see him so knocked out. In the end we just stopped giving it to him. His problems are lack of concentration and he soon loses his temper. That’s why he was excluded – because he lost his temper again with one of the teachers.

2(b)

He’s been excluded before from school. It’s the same thing as before – he won’t be told – he always thinks that it’s the other person’s fault and not his. He swears and shouts. There was an incident when he hit someone with a piece of wood. So, yes, there have been some problems since he went to the Comp. There were no problems before then at Primary school.
In both sub-groups 2(a) and 2(b) what was evident in a number of cases was the pupils’ feeling of being stuck in a pattern of behaviour and of not being able to move beyond an established reputation. One pupil remarked:

> It’s just that whatever I did I couldn’t do right – I felt that everyone expected me to kick off so I did. If that’s what they expected then that’s what I’d give them. Whatever I tried it didn’t seem to change things.

**How were parents informed of the exclusion?**

In all of the cases the exclusion was effected by a telephone call to parents and a letter followed this.

In one instance parents were invited to school to discuss the incident prior to the exclusion being officially confirmed.

> We were asked to go and meet the Head after the latest incident. We were asked to keep him at home until it was sorted. We think the Head was sympathetic but was being pressurised by his staff – so in the end P. had to be excluded again.
5. Parents and pupils’ responses to the exclusions

Parents

In the case of those pupils who had been disaffected for some time the exclusion came at the end of a period of attempts to maintain the pupil in school and of ongoing contact between home and school. The relationship with school was viewed as mainly positive by most parents. Parents frequently expressed general admiration for the work that schools did and the difficulties that teachers in general can experience.

Specific concerns included:

The length of the exclusion period and the fact that the majority of these exclusions ran into the long summer holidays was a concern that was raised frequently. Parents were concerned about the negative effect that such prolonged absences from school might have.

It’s just that I think that 18 days was too severe. It didn’t seem so long at the start but when I worked it out it was nearly 4 weeks and with it running into summer holidays it was just too long.

The fact that education would be missed.

It’s important to know that M. has learning needs. When in the junior school the intention was to keep him a year behind with years 5/6 instead of moving up to the Comprehensive. This was the decision of the Educational Psychologist and I agreed with this. He needed to stay behind a year to catch up the year that he’d missed. The head teacher disregarded this and against my wishes sent him to X Comprehensive where he struggled because he’d missed a year. This struggle has affected his self-esteem – he always sees things negatively – I think because of his struggle with his schoolwork and the failures he has had. No information was passed onto X Comprehensive about this.

My main concern was that his schooling would suffer. He needed all the help he could get and they excluded him for all that time when he needed to catch up.

That the reason for the exclusion was not being addressed by the exclusion.

I accept the school had to do something but the exclusion seemed too severe to me – how did it help?
Pupils

This was more difficult to judge given the limited contact with pupils but there are some clues in what they and their parents said. One parent commented:

> I can see he’s lost some of his confidence – it’s difficult to give examples – but I’m his mother and I can sense this.

Another parent said:

> He just cried and cried – he was so upset.

One pupil said:

> It was great to begin with – all the pressure lifted – I could stay in bed – play computer games – but I soon got bored and started to miss my mates at school. I just felt different in some way – didn’t want to bump into people and have to explain what had happened to me.

In four cases comments were made which suggested loss of confidence in teachers. This centred on marked differences in versions of the incident for which the pupil had been excluded.

> P’s trust in his teachers was hit because he trusted the teacher who made the allegation against him. P. was reluctant to complain against the teacher because he did not want to get him into trouble.

To try to identify the impact on pupils it would take a greater period of contact to establish confidence and trust to enable them to express what might very well be difficult feelings.
6. Arrangements for setting and marking work during the period of exclusion

In 5 out of 12 cases the letter informing of the exclusion referred to work that could be collected from school. Usually a specified member of staff was referred to. In the remainder no indication of work arrangements was given.

In one case the pupil had already been allocated a place at the Stannington Unit. He attended there three days a week. No work was allocated for the remaining two days.

In 6 out of 12 cases no work at all reached home. In the remaining cases it was patchy. None of the parents knew if the work had been subsequently marked. Concerns were expressed about siblings and friends having to collect the work from a range of teachers in the school and the pressure put on them to do this. Where work was sent home pupils and parents found it hard to see the relevance of this work to the work that was being done at school. There were concerns that pressure from parents to do the work might create more problems at home.

Some parents commented that the work was too little.

I was asked to go and collect some work. I went to school and they gave me 5 pages to do. I sat with him and he did this in less than a day. When I went back the next week they gave me about the same amount of work and told me to make it last a bit longer. This time he just wouldn’t do it and I didn’t want to push him because I didn’t want things to become like they had at school.

Some parents gained a greater insight into their child’s problems as they tried to help with any work that was sent home.

Sitting doing his work with him I realised more than I had done before how difficult he found it.

There seemed to be a lack of continuity between work sent home and work being done at school.

We collected work the second day and for the first week it was OK. D. tried to do some of it. Then problems started. Some of it was too easy and D. said that he had already done it at school. Some of the work he was not able to work out what to do.

By chance a week after he was excluded we went to an open evening and asked staff for work for D. to do. The teachers were really helpful and work was sent home after that.

Parents generally tried to help but felt limited by their own lack of knowledge both about the subject matter and advice to give. There was also concern both at the lack of feedback on any work that was completed and returned to school and at siblings having to spend time collecting the work from various teachers in the school.

His brother brought back some work for him. Just scraps of paper with some notes written on. There was no guidance about what to do and how to do it. They do things differently in school these days and I was not sure how to help him with his work. Some of the work was new and F. didn’t know what to do. I spent a lot of time helping him and I really think that it helped him – he
needs that one to one – school were trying to get him a mentor but this didn’t happen for some reason.

No one contacted us from school. I returned the work but got no feedback at all. I still don’t know if it was marked or not. The other thing is that it was his brother who was doing all the running round at school to get the work and return it. It shouldn’t have been his responsibility to do that. I did mainly Maths and Science with him. School commented on how much better he did in these subjects when he got back.

At times the impact of the negative attitude of some excluded pupils was referred to.

Given the exclusion, G. was very negative towards the work sent home. He did not understand all of the worksheets that were sent. These did not seem to relate to the work that G. was doing at school. Some of the work was sent back to school but we didn’t get to know if it was marked or not.

Some parents expressed fear of causing problems at home by exerting too much pressure on their child to adhere to a school day.

We did not want to put too much pressure on N. as, during the previous exclusion, this had created problems at home.

In a number of cases parents expressed concern about their child’s ability to catch up.

Much of his course work did not get done and he has not caught up to this day.

There was little evidence that work was marked and feedback given.

No one. No one rang from school. I sent work back but no one ever contacted me to say whether or not it was correct. I still don’t know.

Parents commented on the difficulty of getting their children to work at home with all of the distractions that there are.

I tried to get him to do as much work as I could. It was difficult keeping onto him all the time as he was trying to get out of it by offering to do jobs for me, which he never normally does. This lead to me getting all stressed with him. He did do a lot of the work – but this was down to me sitting with him and keeping onto him – even though I wasn’t totally sure how I should be teaching him. He didn’t do as much as I wanted him to do – there are too many distractions at home.
7. Support to pupils and parents during the period of exclusion

Contact between home and school during the exclusion period

The majority of parents expressed a sense that they and their child had been forgotten. There was very little evidence of ongoing contact between home and school during the exclusion period.

The over riding view of all parents was of being forgotten and isolated.

When J. was excluded it was like we dropped into this abyss. It just felt like we had all been forgotten.

One mother said she felt let down at the lack of support after she had worked with school to try to avoid the exclusion.

After all the effort I made to support school, I just feel let down and forgotten.

In one case a parent appreciated the fact that a professional had both rung her to give advice and support, had spoken on behalf of her son and had also visited her at home to offer support and advice.

...this is what we needed all along

Support from agencies other than schools

In only two instances was there any evidence of involvement by other professionals during the period of exclusion. The involvement was with Social Services Directorate and this has been referred to above.

We just had to get on with it ourselves – no help offered from anyone really.

There was no help – I had to deal with everything myself. I had good support from my family.

Some parents expressed a sense of having to do battle with the “system”.

I felt that I was battling all the time for R. – I had no help from anyone (other than my family). I kept ringing places but no one rang me back. I did have a solicitor advising me. No one came to see me to advise me or talk about what was happening.

The need to be able to access relevant information
You are on your own – no support – having to battle all the time. Not really knowing what rights you have – what you are entitled to or not. No one really sits down and explains things. All the meetings become battles.

There was evidence of involvement of Educational Social Workers in two cases as part of arranging alternative provision to mainstream schooling after the period of exclusion.
8. The provision made for pupils sitting exams

Schools did appear, in the main, to address the needs of those pupils required to sit exams.

J. had end of year exams and he was able to do some revision at home. He sat one exam in school (Mrs B. and a member of staff sat with K. for this). He sat the second exam at home. Some exams he did not sit at all and we are not sure why this was so.

One mother felt that this was to her son’s advantage as she had been able to explain the questions to her son in a way that she felt would not have happened at school.

His brother brought his end of year exam back home with him and I supervised this. I explained what the questions meant so he could then do it. He needs someone to spend time with him explaining what to do – once he knows he can be quite confident. He did well in the exam – top in science.

However this was not always the case.

E. missed exams relating to his GCSE’s. He also missed much of his course work for his GCSE’s. This made it more difficult to catch up when he returned to school and reluctant to return to school. Going back to school was hopeless.

Where pupils were due to sit exams parents commented that their child had not had the same revision support as other pupils not subject to exclusion and their child’s attitude could not be positive given their situation.

How could he be expected to sit exams when he was excluded and had had no support?
9. The impact of the exclusion on the pupils’ personal and family life

In all instances there were signs of increased stress within the families. Some of this resulted from the pupil not having enough to do; some of it was a result of negative feelings resulting from the exclusion; further stress resulted from parents trying to encourage their child to do some work at home whilst at the same time wanting to preserve home as “home”. In some instances initial relief soon turned to boredom.

Some parents were worried that the boundary between home and school was breaking down and that home might cease to be the kind of place that it should be.

In one case relief after a lengthy period of pressure was noted.

*He was just relieved that he did not have to go to school – the pressure was off of him. He has been no problem at home – just the usual cheek that I can deal with.*

For some parents there was a sense of the exclusion issue taking over their lives.

*It’s unbelievable. It has taken over my life. Things just take too long. When other family problems occur it can become almost unbearable. There is a need for support, more and better communication – keeping families informed.*

A sense of life being put on hold.

*He lost trust in his teachers. He missed all that education. There was a great stress put on our family life – as if life was put on hold until it was all sorted out.*

Boredom setting in and parental guilt at being at work and not being able to supervise as much as would have been preferred.

*Inevitably he got bored being at home. I felt bad about being at work. We had arguments - mainly because of the boredom.*

One carer talked of her health being affected.

*It put me under a lot of stress. I’m sure the stress has affected my health. I had an ulcer that burst…… we argued a lot.*

There were fears that the young person might become involved in criminal behaviour (in the event there was little evidence for this).

*I’m concerned that M. might get into crime – some of his friends are in trouble with the Police and I’m worried that M. might get into trouble as well – so far he has been able to keep clear of this.*

One parent had given up work because of the disruption that the exclusion process had created to her work life.
I gave up work in July because the ‘phone calls from school were interfering with my work and I couldn’t do the job because of the time I was having to spend trying to help sort out the school problems. Until E. is settled into something I don’t feel able to return to work.

There was concern that the care of siblings was being neglected.

I was stressed out – it was as if everything stopped during the suspension – I just had to spend all the time I could with him and I have other children to see to. The youngest one needs a lot of my time. I often had to off load to my husband at night if J. had been reluctant to do much work. It was embarrassing having to explain to people what he had done and why he was off school. We were all under stress. It was like having this big cloud over us.

In some instances negative attitudes hardened through the exclusion period.

His attitude to school became more negative. S. is saying that he wants to be the same as others and he doesn’t want to go back to school if he is going to be singled out.

In one instance, as pressure and tension built up at home, parents started to argue over how best to deal with their child. There was also concern that an otherwise good relationship with their child might be disrupted.

Relationships at home have become more tense. We have arguments/discussions about how to handle S. We are trying to support him but also keep his respect for school. S. is starting to say that we aren’t listening to him. He has never really been a problem at home but he is starting to get angry with us. We feel sorry for him but we also want to ensure he has respect for school. Up to now S. has always been very open with us and we don’t want to lose that. We are becoming very stressed – afraid to answer the ‘phone in case it is more problems.

Several parents expressed concern that home was ceasing to be what it should be for their child and that the boundary between home and school was breaking down.

Because of what has happened and the way that it has progressed we are worried that S. will not be happy to come home. We just don’t know how to balance support for S. and support for school.
10. The re-integration process

Where pupils did return to school the general return process appeared to include a meeting with a member of staff on the first day back and then a return to normal lessons. In no cases was there a meeting between home and school prior to the first day back.

The exclusion period ran into the holidays. He went straight back into school at the beginning of this term. There were no meetings that I was aware of. He just had a normal timetable as far as I know. He seemed happy to go back – no signs of any anxiety or unhappiness. He never has been unhappy about going to school – it has always been when he was there that the problems started. Both he and his brother enjoy the breakfast club.

In five cases pupils were said to be apprehensive before going back to school.

D. was frightened before he went back. He did not know what to expect. Just someone ringing us would have been helpful

In one instance the young person refused to go back initially as he thought things would be just the same. His mother went to school to try to sort this out – eventually persuading her son to return.

E. did not want to return to school at the beginning of this term. He said that he just thought he would continue to be picked on by staff. It would just be the same again and he would end up in the same situation. I went to school and tried to sort this out….he eventually agreed to return.

Two parents felt that the return process was not realistic and had made it more difficult for their child to re-integrate.

The school placed him on report. At the Discipline Committee the governors promised a clean slate when he returned to school but really this didn’t happen – putting him on report just kept the whole thing going.

Everything he does gets noted that much more because he is on report. It’s as if he’s expected to be perfect when he is on report. Because he is on report what he does gets dealt with more severely. S. is starting to get a really negative attitude towards school. He is saying that school does not want him there and just want him out.

In two cases parents were expected to attend these meetings on the first day back.

I went with him on his first morning back. We met the head, who told B. what they expected of him and he then went off to his normal lessons. But the head also still banned him from being on the premises either at lunchtime or after school – so he couldn’t go to any of his clubs again. The YOT Social Worker helped me to challenge this and school then withdrew this and he was allowed on the premises to attend his clubs.

One pupil talked of the difficulty of settling in on his return to school.
On my first day back at school after exclusion I just felt embarrassed at not being able to answer some of the questions because of the work that I had missed. I couldn’t remember what happened when.

There were also hints that some pupils found it hard to catch up on missed schoolwork.

No one talked with him about what he had missed. Some of the work did not make sense. He has not caught up since.
11. The outcome of the re-integration

As this group of pupils was excluded during the summer term 2002 and these interviews took place during the following November it was possible to see what had happened since the exclusion and return to school.

Eight out of 12 pupils returned on time to school at the end of the exclusion period. The outcome of the exclusion for the remaining four was as follows:

One – K. had already been allocated a part time place at the Stannington Unit prior to his exclusion. He attended there for three days a week during the exclusion period and was at home for the remaining two days. He has remained there and a transfer is being planned to a new mainstream school.

One - attendance at Castle Green arranged to commence at the end of the exclusion period.

During the exclusion period we had discussions with the Head. It was agreed that J. would attend Castle Green after the summer holidays. We would both have preferred main stream schooling but felt that they we were virtually given no alternative. If we had refused we are sure that J. would not have been able to return to his school any way and would have been permanently excluded. We were told rather than asked.

One – attendance at NETWORK arranged to commence at the end of the exclusion period.

One – mother was not sure why her son had not gone back and had recently attended a meeting in school to discuss alternative provision. This was after the exclusion period had ended.

He hasn’t gone back to school yet! I’m not sure why he didn’t go back when he should. We went to school last week to meet with the Head Teacher. I got a letter from Education Social Worker, to say they are coming to take D. and me to school. So we went to this meeting at school last Wednesday-- just the four of us. This was the first time I’d met the Social Worker. We agreed at the meeting last Wednesday that D. would go part time to the Stannington Unit. And then gradually get back into school.

For the remaining 8 pupils the outcomes at the time of the interview were as follows:

Four – in full time education in school (no further periods of exclusion).

At this moment in time 4 of the 8 remaining pupils excluded pupils are still in mainstream schooling. It is of interest that three of these four are in that group of pupils with very little previous history of challenging behaviour (see Reasons for Exclusion above).

In one of these cases some improvements in schoolwork were noted following the intensive help mother had given him during the exclusion.
School has said how much better he has been. They say that they have seen a change in his attitude and he’s made good progress with the subjects I was able to help him with when he was excluded.

Parents of these four pupils had little information of how the missed education had affected their child’s subsequent education.

I’m not aware of any problems. There was a topic in science that M. struggled with on his return because of what he had missed but he got help from the others in the class.

The current situation of the remaining four pupils who returned to school is as follows:

One – a further period of exclusion and currently attending NETWORK and SNYP.

In this instance the return to school was followed by further problems.

The ‘phone calls started to come again and I went to school to discuss D. with Mr K. We agreed that D. would be able to miss some of the lessons of the teachers who he did not get on with. But problems continued. For example, a female teacher felt intimidated by D. and he was removed from class for two days. Eventually I agreed that D. could go to NETWORK part time. This was organised by ESW. He then started missing the days when he should have gone to school so it was agreed that he would attend SNYP. He does not go to his Comp now. He appears to have settled well into both these places although he says that SYNP is boring.

One – permanently excluded. Mother unaware of any plans being made for her son.

E. went back to school on the basis that changes in his timetable would be made. He returned to school and it lasted a couple of weeks and he was excluded again for a couple of days. He went back into school for a few days and it was then half term. After half term there were other incidents and E. has now become excluded permanently. Nobody has contacted me to discuss this. I don’t know what is happening.

E said:

I was just put back into the classes that were a problem for me. I had just got too far behind with my work. I didn’t do any work in year 10 – I’m a year behind the rest of the class. I just felt that I was being picked on because of my reputation – others were doing similar things but not being punished as I was.

One – currently at home following a further fixed term exclusion during the autumn term.

At the time of the first interview with parents M. had returned to school but was clearly struggling. When I visited prior to the most recent exclusion parents commented:

Since returning to school M. has been excluded for 3 days for swearing at a teacher. Since he went back to school he feels that the teachers are picking on him more. The report process appears to be affecting M’s attitude. M. feels singled out. He recently had a 7.30am detention for not having
his shirt tucked in. He said that lots of his friends do this and they did not get punished in the same way.

When I then returned two weeks later to meet with M. he had been excluded again for 25 days. It was alleged that he set off a fire alarm – which he denied.

M’s parent expressed concern about the amount of education her son was now losing.

M. has hardly been at school since before his summer exclusion. The mixture of exclusions, half days, being sent home early – it’s all meant he is missing a lot of school – nearly two terms now

One – further period of exclusion. Currently awaiting a place at Maplewood School.

Not successful really. He went back and the first week of term he needed to have a stone removed from his ear so he was off school for that. Then he needed an operation on his toe and school promised to send some work home but when I went to collect it they could not find it.

He had two short periods of exclusion (2 days each time).

In the end I’ve agreed with school that I will not send him back because he is so unhappy. He is being assessed and is being considered at a meeting tomorrow and they have said that he will be placed at Maplewood. I don’t really want him to go there – I’d rather he was in a normal school but he’s so unhappy something has to happen. So from today he’s at home until another placement is found. I’ve got no work for him to do. His absence has been discussed and authorised by school.
12. Issues remarked on in the making of alternative placements

Where alternatives to mainstream schooling had been made parents wanted further concerns to be noted.

In one case there was confusion over the arrangements for the new placement.

At the beginning of this term no transport was provided for P. to get to Castle Green. There had apparently been confusion between the two schools, about where P. was supposed to be and who was responsible for providing the transport. [Father transported for the first week.]

A place was then agreed for P. to attend YMCA to do a motor mechanic’s course – but the place was not booked and for weeks 2 & 3 of this term P. played football at the YMCA until the matter was sorted out.

Concerns were expressed about continuity of education and the ability to continue with GCSE courses already started.

We are worried that P. is not able to continue with GCSE Science which he has a predicted grade of C/D. School is sending science work to Castle Green but they have not got time to do this with P. His GNVQ in computing had stopped.

Lack of knowledge about who to contact if problems arise was noted.

He is not finding SNYP as challenging – he has already done some of the work that he is doing at SNYP. It’s just repetition for him. He is wondering about going to the YMCA. But we are not sure whom to approach about this. I need to talk to someone to try to avoid him just dropping out.

In one case no arrangements had been made for the parent to visit the new service prior to the pupil starting. In this case she insisted on visiting before letting her son attend. She also expressed concern that relevant information had not been passed to the new service.

When he went to NETWORK I was given no information at all. I had to get all of this. I went to see NETWORK for myself. I wasn’t going to let him go somewhere I had not seen beforehand. I had to organise all of this myself. I’m worried he can’t sit any GCSE’s now. No information was given about his ADHD or previous problems.

In one case a parent had wanted to attend a meeting of professionals to put her views. This had not been allowed and she had struggled to find out the outcome of this meeting.

At the end of June I got a ‘phone call from the school. A meeting of professionals had been held. I had tried to get an invite to this but this was refused. I was told that school had wanted the Stannington Unit to take E. onto their role full time. The meeting had not agreed with this. It took days for me to hear the outcome of this meeting. I kept ringing up but no-one returned my calls.
13. The Discipline Committee

Where parents and pupils attended these meetings the overwhelming experience was negative. Coming, as they do, towards the end of the exclusion period they were seen as no help at all in re-integrating pupils back into school, rather the reverse. Because of the perceived adversarial nature of the Discipline Committee parents and pupils felt that the meetings served to make the relationship between home and school worse at a time when the reverse should have been happening.

We both found the Disciplinary Committee an ordeal. It was on the last but one day of term. Very negative – five years of problems all listed at once as if they were recent. None of M’s positives were mentioned. It sounded that bad that I started to think that he would not get back into school. M. attended but did not say anything at the meeting. I found it a humiliating experience. I didn’t see what the point of it was. It certainly didn’t help us at all. It was very humiliating.

In two cases the previous experience of the Committee was so negative that they did not attend any subsequent ones.

It was like a “kangaroo court”. J. went with us and he wondered what the point of it had been. The chance to contribute was made by us not given – had we not been firm enough we don’t think that our views would have been asked for.

We felt that our views had been totally ignored. The Committee was no help at all and in fact made relationships worse than they were.

Some parents found the experience frightening and like being in court.

This was a frightening, very intimidating experience. It was like a courtroom and we were on trial. If we felt like that how does it make child feel? There was a lot of pressure. It was frightening to say anything. We felt that the decision was already made. It was all the bad things about S. – but he’s got good points as well.

Some parents expressed concern at the effect that hearing so much negative information might have on their child.

Not a good experience at all. It was held not long before he went back. It was all negative – all the bad things about him were said. D. went with me but didn’t say anything. I wondered what effect it had on him listening to all of that.
14. Parents and pupils’ suggestions for improvements

Parents and pupils were keen to give ideas about how things could be improved.

All parents suggested that an alternative to school should be available right at the outset to the exclusion period.

\[ \text{I think that there should be some alternative education straight away – something for C. to do – someone to work with him – somewhere for him to go.} \]

Many of the parents said that they needed someone to talk to.

\[ \text{It would have been helpful to have had someone to talk to like this discussion today [referring to research interview. This was referred to on several occasions].} \]

Parents strongly felt that there should be ways to stay in touch with school during the exclusion period and in particular for the re-integration to be planned better with their involvement.

\[ \text{It was very upsetting for both of us. I just think there should be some way for the likes of D. to be kept occupied in some way if they are excluded. We felt forgotten by everyone. D. was frightened before he went back. He did not know what to expect. Just someone ringing us would have been helpful.} \]

Concerns were expressed about how some parents who worked would manage to supervise their children during the exclusion.

\[ \text{There were no other problems at home that I needed help with. I do wonder though, how parents would cope if they did not have someone to help them with the supervision needed. I know that D. is old enough to be left on his own but I still felt I needed to have someone look out for him and I’m lucky because my mother and father live close by and they can help out. I just couldn’t stop going to work. Some people might not have the support that I have.} \]

Some parents wanted more information about their rights.

\[ \text{There should be more information about the process – about what rights parents have. Without information I can’t challenge. When we have meetings in school, I think the member of staff should be there – not just the head of year reading from a piece of paper. These things are never one sided – but you never get to really see the other side. E.’s problems have always been with members of staff – not other pupils.} \]

Two parents commented that there was a need for a “clean slate” to give the pupil the best chance possible of re-integrating was referred to.

\[ \text{When S. went back he should have been allowed to start with a clean slate and setting realistic demands of him rather than setting him off on report – he has to be perfect – which he can’t be.} \]
One small step out of line and he is dealt with severely. All of this should have been planned better.

We need more support to deal with these issues. We have been very much on our own – uncertain about what to do. We need help to get S. out of the negative spiral he is in. We are afraid that they are going through the procedures to get rid of him. Its difficult to discuss these things with school – although we do have faith in Mr G. who can see positives in S.

Parents queried why the length of the exclusion needed to be so long.

I don’t understand why it was so long. For someone like J. who needs help with his work and self-esteem it was too long. He should have been made to do more work not less. There should be a Unit that they could go to.

If education of excluded pupils is addressed by sending work home parents wanted guidance on how best to supervise this work and support their children and consideration to be given as to the best way to get work to and from school.

...............more contact with parents to offer them guidance on how to supervise the work. There should be a better way for work to be sent home and back again – it isn't J's brother's responsibility to do this.

Where pupils are referred to other units concerns were expressed about the distance that some pupils then had to travel from home.

There should be more local provision – rather than K. having to travel great distances to Castle Green.

Parents highlighted the need for work to be done with the pupil on the reasons for exclusion during the exclusion period.

If nothing happens whilst he is excluded how can they expect things to be any different when he goes back – they can only be worse can’t they? What purpose does it serve?

Concerns about continuity of education were raised on a number of occasions.

There should be some way to ensure that education that is going right is continued Like J. could get GCSE science, and GNVQ computer studies – but both of these have been disrupted and it looks like they won’t happen.
15. Schools’ perspectives

Discussions have been held with five schools. In two cases this was with the Head Teacher. In the other three cases it was with a teacher with responsibility for inclusion. These interviews were carried out after interviews with pupils and parents.

At this stage it was not the intention to follow up the case of individual pupils but rather to engage schools in discussion about the general issues surrounding the education of excluded pupils. During these discussions the following issues were addressed:

- How is the education of excluded pupils managed now?
- What facilitates or constrains the provision of full time education for this group of pupils?

In the process of addressing these issues the rationale for excluding pupils was also explored.

Rationale for exclusion

The rationale for exclusion included:

- the need to give a message to both the individual pupil and other pupils about the inappropriateness of certain behaviours
- to avoid permanent exclusion
- to draw a line to try to bring a difficult period to an end
- to ensure that the education of other pupils is not disrupted.

All schools recognised the need to avoid exclusions but emphasised that the aim of an exclusion was as much to send a message to other pupils as it was to discipline the pupil.

*If the incident is serious enough then exclusion is used. At certain times it is important to give a message to the rest of the school that certain behaviour is not acceptable and exclusion can be the only way to do this.*

The provision of education during the exclusion period

All schools recognised the difficulty of trying to replicate the school day when a pupil is excluded from school. It was felt that some thought should be given to what education provision could be acceptably called “suitable full time education”.

At this time, it is not felt realistic to provide full time education off the premises during the exclusion period. The difficulty of replicating the school day in the home and of ensuring continuity of course work was highlighted. Schools were unsure how to ensure 100% continuity of course work for excluded pupils.
It would be possible to set relevant work for the early period of the exclusion but after this it would increasingly be anything that could be found. Selecting and marking relevant work over a long period would be a significant and difficult task to achieve for hard pressed staff.

The problems of marking and returning work were also referred to.

It is difficult to provide work for pupils to do at home. Putting together appropriate materials at the right level is time consuming for staff under pressure. Staff may also wonder what the point of the exercise is if the pupil is unlikely to do the work. It is not possible to ensure work is returned and marked and feedback given to the pupil. I have to be honest and say that there is little checking of what work is done.

The number of teachers who will be involved with one pupil and the work that would be involved in arranging for these teachers to compile work for excluded pupils was highlighted.

For each pupil this could involve up to 14 teachers and pieces of work. The work sent home would generally be photocopied work and work sheets to avoid the loss of text books which might not be returned if they are sent home for work.

Pupils who are excluded might not be the most motivated to undertake independent study.

There is concern that newer textbooks may not be returned to school.

Keeping in touch with excluded pupils and their parents during the exclusion period

There was recognition that excluded pupils may have experienced dislocation in the broadest sense of the word prior to exclusion and that there is a need to recognise this and therefore try to mitigate the further dislocation that could follow from the exclusion.

However the ability to keep in touch with excluded pupils and address educational, behavioural and pastoral needs was felt to be very limited.

Schools recognised the need to look for vocational education for some disaffected pupils.

There is not enough time to keep in personal contact with excluded pupils.

Equally the problem of working with excluded pupils during the exclusion period was noted.

There is a gap in how work to address behavioural issues is dealt with during the exclusion period.
There was clear recognition of the need to offer a range of support to excluded pupils and the need for this work to be co-ordinated through one person. This was balanced by concern about the resource implications of this.

Generally schools recognised the need to ensure that pupils be enabled to sit relevant exams. There was recognition, however, of difficulties in setting and monitoring work related to these exams and in particular of facilitating revision work where pupils are excluded.

**Current practice developments**

A number of examples of recent innovations suggest ideas for addressing some of the issues raised by pupils and parents.

In one school a learning mentor has been employed three days a week to ensure that work goes between home and school for excluded and long term ill pupils. The focus of this is schoolwork rather than behavioural issues. This mentor will also facilitate the re-integration process and feed relevant information into weekly meetings with Heads of Year.

In one school twilight sessions are held. These are primarily for excluded pupils who are in the final part of the exclusion period. These sessions are intended to be a first step to preparing pupils for the return to school. Learning Support Teachers, Learning mentors and student counsellors run the sessions. Both educational and behavioural issues are addressed in these sessions. 5 sessions are seen as optimal for this re-integration phase.

One school recognised that sending appropriate work home could not be sustained. Twilight sessions (twice weekly) were set up and work was set and marked during these sessions. The aim of these sessions was as much to try to avoid the pupil becoming dislocated from school as it was to try to ensure continuity of education. It was felt that full time education could not be sustained solely by sending work home.

None of the pupils in this study received any of these supports.

**Suggestions by schools for addressing some of the key issues**

Schools made the following suggestions:

Extend the brief of existing units (Castle Green was quoted here) to provide education for excluded pupils to keep the structure of the school day in a way that cannot be done at home. Through the use of such units it might also be possible to address the reasons for the exclusion and try to increase the probability that re-integration into school will be successful.

Develop a “work pack” for excluded pupils that was Quality Assured and which addressed primarily basic skills (including behavioural skills). This should be a city-wide development to avoid
individual schools having to “re-invent the wheel”. This could include the development of appropriate software that could be used to provide work for excluded pupils (laptop provided if necessary).

Explore how schools might collaborate by, for example, having one worker to be key worker for a group of excluded pupils. This worker would co-ordinate educational and pastoral provision to pupils and parents. It was suggested that expanding the role of learning mentors (who are generally viewed as a great success) could do this.

Consider what part the Internet might play in the provision of education for excluded pupils.

Mitigate the dislocation of excluded pupils (and their parents) and prepare them for re-integration through (weekly?) ½ day attendance in the Learning Support Unit (perhaps also involving parents).

Developments should be in partnership with and lead by LEA – preferably on a collaborative basis between schools and other service providers. One school quoted a positive recent experience of collaborative working to address a problematic year group. This involved working closely with a school with the same catchment area and a range of professional groups.
16. Changes in the provision of education for pupils excluded in the autumn term 2002

Although this initial phase of the action research has focussed on those pupils excluded in the summer term 2002, there is some information which indicates the extent to which the new requirements of circulars 10/99 and 11/99 are being implemented.

Firstly, interviews with schools described above suggest that (at least for those schools who were interviewed) significant challenges exist to providing suitable full time education to excluded pupils and there appeared to be little on-going work to address these challenges. Issues identified from the school interviews also cast doubt on whether any changes in the education provision for excluded pupils have occurred.

Secondly, it should be noted that three parents of pupils excluded during the autumn term 2002 have been interviewed after the exclusion period was completed. The picture was the same as that seen for pupils excluded in summer 2002. However, all three were from one school and no conclusions can be drawn from this other than that, in the case of one school, no changes in the education of excluded pupils has taken place since the change in policy came into effect.

Thirdly, one pupil (M.) who was excluded in the summer term was subsequently excluded for 25 days in the autumn term 2002. Both the parents and the pupil commented that there was no change in the provision of education during the second exclusion.

When I visited, in November, for a second time to talk to M. his mother said that she had seen information in the local press regarding the change in policy affecting the education of excluded pupils. A friend had given her similar information compiled by the Consumer Association. She and her husband had also been sensitised to the issues through participating in this research. She had contacted school quoting this information and asking for full time education. She was told that they were not aware of the information she had and the school offered no further support.

M’s mother then tried to use one of the telephone numbers given at the bottom of the letter, which is sent from school to confirm the exclusion. The telephone number was that of the Civic Centre. After some effort to explain why she was ringing she quoted the information she had and queried why her excluded son was not receiving full time education, as she understood that he was entitled to this. She was told that the policy change only related to permanently excluded pupils.

She then contacted the Advisory Centre for Education (A.C.E). This is the second telephone number on the exclusion letter. She found A.C.E. very helpful. They sent her information and suggested points to make when ringing the Civic Centre. She rang the Civic Centre again and initially got the same response as previously. She then insisted on speaking to the “top person”. This person confirmed her understanding of the legal situation and suggested that she make her points to the forthcoming Discipline Committee.

The parents attended the Discipline Committee (two weeks into the four week exclusion) and quoted all the information that they had collated. Initially the Committee said that they were not aware of this. However, the Head teacher did make further enquiries following the Discipline
Committee and subsequently contacted the parents back to say that they were correct in their understanding of the legal situation. The Head Teacher gave her the telephone number of Tudor Grove and asked her to make contact with the staff there to arrange for M. to attend there. The head teacher had contacted Tudor Grove to discuss M’s situation and agree that M. could go there. The parents then contacted Tudor Grove and M. attended for the short time that remained of his exclusion period (half days, Monday to Thursday).

M. enjoyed Tudor Grove. He was with other pupils who were not permanently excluded and seemed much happier. This greatly relieved the stress at home. Mother is now concerned that M. might prefer Tudor Grove to mainstream schooling.

When M. and his mother went into school on the last day of the autumn term to arrange for him to go back into school in January, the head teacher said that information had just been received informing the school of the changes in policy affecting the education of excluded pupils.

All of the above together would suggest that any changes in the provision of education for excluded pupils during the autumn term will have been minimal. This will need to be taken into account when planning the next phase of this action research (see Chapter 18).
17. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this initial phase of the research has been to obtain a “snapshot” at one point in time of a system in transition as a new policy change is implemented.

As such this study offers a baseline against which to measure the effectiveness of future service developments.

It is of interest that the issues raised by schools mirrored concerns expressed by parents and pupils.

Thus the sense of isolation felt by pupils and parents was mirrored by schools’ inability to keep in touch; parents and pupils’ perceived lack of appropriate schoolwork was mirrored by schools’ difficulty in providing this and so forth.

Previous research by Educational Psychology students based on an analysis of four interviews with parents of pupils who had been permanently excluded had also suggested that parents felt that the way they were informed of the exclusion was impersonal; they felt unsupported following the exclusion; they identified a need for appropriate levels of work to maintain a school ethos; their experience of the Discipline Committee was overwhelmingly negative; and all parents expressed unhappiness at the level of disadvantage their sons had experienced both prior to and after the exclusion i.e. they felt that the use of part-time education and informal exclusions did not necessarily address the problem.

Although this is a study of one small specific group of pupils who are excluded from school, professionals within the education system have also raised concerns about other related groups such as those permanently excluded, those excluded for periods of less than 16 days, self excluding pupils and those absent due to long term illness. Whilst this research did not address the needs of these groups it is quite plausible that some of the issues raised in this research are as applicable to these other groups as they are to the pupils who are the focus of this study.

What can this study tell us about the effectiveness of exclusion?

From the point of view of the school it is likely that relief from a difficult situation is achieved for both staff and other pupils. It is also true that a message is sent to both the “offending” pupil and other pupils regarding the unacceptability of certain behaviour and the need to adhere to school codes of conduct. How this message is received and acted upon by the “offending” and other pupils is less clear. There is no evidence to either prove or disprove the hypothesis that exclusions serve as a deterrent to other pupils. Equally, assuming that there is a deterrent effect, there is no evidence to suggest how long an exclusion should be to achieve its maximum effect as a deterrent. Thus, for example, it might be that an exclusion needs four full weeks to achieve maximum effectiveness (however “effectiveness” might be defined). On the other hand, it may be the case
that beyond one week there is no marginal increase in the deterrent effect. Indeed, it could well be the case that, overall, the longer the exclusion period the more likely it is that the overall “costs” are greater than the overall “benefits”. This lack of evidence might suggest that some further consideration be given to this matter.

Some of the pupils in this study, following their return to school after exclusion, continued to exhibit challenging behaviour. For them it would appear that the exclusion did not have a deterrent effect. Neither can it be said that exclusions lead to either pastoral or educational benefits to them. Indeed in some instances new ones arising from the exclusion compounded previous problems.

Thus, whilst it is difficult on the basis of this research to make a definitive judgement about the effectiveness of the exclusions studied, the mixed picture presented should encourage further debate on this issue and encourage discussions about alternatives.

In conclusion, one parent commented:

\[\text{He needs help with his temper – not excluding because of it.}\]

Fixed term exclusion could be interpreted as an indicator of significant need (i.e. need of pupil, parent(s) and school). At present this need is addressed by excluding pupils from the very system which might offer help and, through this exclusion, increase rather than reduce stress for these pupils and their families.

The information provided by the initial phase of this action research and in particular the suggestions from pupils, parents, and schools as to how the current system might be improved could be used as a positive starting point and catalyst for discussions about how to address the needs of this group of pupils in particular and the general needs of the wider range of excluded and self excluded pupils.
18. The future direction of the research

The current plan for the action research is that further interviews will be undertaken with those pupils excluded during the autumn term 2002 and their parents. The aim of these interviews would be to identify what changes in practice, if any, have taken place since September 2002, when the new policy requirements for the education of excluded pupils came into force.

In the light of the information gathered so far, the C.E.E.P. group will need to:

- Review the current research plan (see Appendix 1, p.45) and consider if it still represents the best use of the Research and Development time available to it.

- Consider what service developments might be appropriate in the light of the research findings.

- Consider how the current findings can be disseminated to influence the development of good practice and to ensure that the partners in the research are kept fully informed of its findings.

- Consider how parents and pupils can continue to contribute their expertise to the process of service development.

- Relate this research to current policy reviews in Westby.
Appendix 1

Education provision for pupils excluded from school for between 16-45 days in Westby - A research proposal

Introduction

The aim of this research is to evaluate the educational arrangements made for those pupils excluded from school for between 16-45 days in Westby.

In doing this the research will explore how the relevant sections of Circulars 10/99 and 11/99 are being implemented. In particular the research will examine how the requirement, that LEA’s should ensure that all pupils excluded for more than 15 days should receive suitable full time education from September 2002, is being implemented. The study will aim to inform future policy and practice for this group of pupils.

In the school year 2000-2001 there were a total of 44 exclusions in Westby were for a period of 16-45 days. In 2001-2002 there were a further 51 similar periods of exclusion.

It can be assumed that during this school year (2002-2003) there will be an addition to these figures.

The Education Authority in Westby views these figures with a high level of concern and wishes to enhance its service to such pupils and their families in order to ensure that all pupils receive the education to which they are entitled.

Research questions

The research will address the following questions regarding the period of exclusion:

1. The reasons for and the context of the exclusions.
2. The nature of the education provided.
3. The processes for providing and monitoring this education.
4. Any specialist provision made for pupils sitting exams.
5. The effectiveness of this education as judged by professionals,
6. The effectiveness of this education as judged by pupil / carers
7. The input from other agencies.
8. The effectiveness of communication between home and school.
9. The impact of the exclusion on the pupil’s personal and family life.
10. The impact of the exclusion on school.
11. The impact of the exclusion on other agencies.
12. The extent to which the period of exclusion facilitated or hindered re-integration back into school.
13. How the re-integration of the pupil was effected.
14. How successful this re-integration was.
15. How continuity in delivering the National Curriculum was achieved.
Sample to be studied

The original proposal focused on the academic years 2000 – 2002. The research has commenced in September 2002 and is funded for one year – the latter part of which should focus on dissemination of its findings (in particular) highlighting areas of good practice and the preparation of training material.

There has been a significant change of policy at the start of this academic year namely that, from September 2002, all pupils excluded for between 16-45 days should receive a suitable full time education. In order to implement this requirement new approaches to working with excluded pupils will be implemented. An example of such a service is the Intervention and Re-integration Team for Excluded Pupils based at Oxclose Education Centre.

It is suggested that the research should become a study of the process of implementing this new requirement to provide suitable full time education to this group of pupils. Should it prove feasible to analyse the data term by term it should be possible to give useful and timely feedback to those working with this group of pupils and identify changes over time. In these circumstances the final report would summarise the data for the whole of the academic year and provide the basis for producing training materials.

Were we to continue with the original plan to study those excluded for the academic years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 we would, in effect, be studying a redundant system.

Clearly the quantitative data for 2000-2002 will be invaluable in plotting trends across the three years across a range of relevant data items (see Data Set for Individual Pupils).

How useful any qualitative data for this period would be is questionable. Firstly, it would refer to a time period covered by a significant difference in policy requirements. Secondly, the reliability of such qualitative data, relying as it does to a large extent on memory, would be questionable (some of the exclusions occurred over two years ago).

Locating and accessing key people from this time period might also be time consuming and problematic.

It is proposed that the main focus of the research should be those pupils excluded for between 16-45 days during the academic year 2002-2003.

The previous pattern of exclusions for this group would suggest that there could be approximately 16 pupils excluded in each term. The amount of time available for the research would suggest that it is feasible to study the first 9 pupils excluded from Comprehensive Schools and the first pupil excluded from Primary Schools.

The experience of interviewing the proposed sample of 10 from term 1 will inform decisions about what data collection might be feasible in terms 2 and 3.

What could also be helpful would be to use a group of those excluded in the summer term of 2002 (there were 21 fixed period exclusions of 15+ days during this term) as a “control group”. The problem of memory would still apply although this should not be so great as for those excluded, for example, two years ago.
The focus of the research

It is suggested that the main focus of the research should be the pupils and parents/carer's experience of the exclusion and re-integration process.

In particular their experience of and views on:

- decision making and consultation through the various stages of the process
- what helped or hindered the implementation of the education timetable
- the effectiveness of the education timetable
- the helpfulness or otherwise of the range of services they received
- the impact of the period of exclusion on the pupil and his/her family
- their experience of the process of reintegration.

All of this information should help understand the effect of new policy and styles of service delivery on users.

Research methods

1. Analysis of written records in respect of the excluded pupils.
2. Analysis of written policies and procedures within the Authority.
3. Interviews with a sample of the pupils and their carers.
4. Questionnaires completed by relevant professionals.
5. Interviews with a sample of professionals involved with this group of pupils.

Research outcomes

The research will support evaluation of services to the target group of pupils by providing the following information:

1. A range of quantitative data showing trends over a period of time.
2. The overall range of intervention strategies during the period of fixed term exclusion.
3. The range of education provision during the period of fixed term exclusion.
4. Pupils' and carers' views on the effectiveness of this education provision.
5. Pupils' and carers' views on what facilitates or hinders intervention strategies during the period of fixed term exclusions.
6. The impact of the exclusion on pupil and family.
7. The nature of multi-disciplinary working during the period of fixed term exclusion.
8. The nature of communication between pupil, family, school and other service providers during the period of fixed term exclusion.
9. The range of re-integration strategies.
10. The outcomes of reintegration strategies.
11. The affect of the exclusion on delivering the National Curriculum.
12. Pupil and carers' views on what facilitates or hinders re-integration to school.
# Timetable

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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>September - October 2002</td>
<td>Update research proposal. Clarify research questions in the light of national and local policy.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Draft out Interview Schedules.</td>
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<td>November 2002</td>
<td>Agree the focus of the research and the research questions/methodology with CEEPS Implementation Group. Agree procedures for contacting schools/pupils/parents/professionals. Discuss what incentives might be possible to encourage pupils to participate. Pilot methodology (with those pupils excluded in summer term 2002).</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2002 – January 2003</td>
<td>Data collection term 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>January – April 2003</td>
<td>Interim analysis of data for term 1</td>
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<td>Report writing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Presentation of data for term 1</td>
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<td>Data collection term 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>April – July 2003</td>
<td>Interim analysis of data for term 2</td>
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<td>Report writing</td>
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<td>Presentation of data for term 2</td>
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<td>Data collection term 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>July – August 2003</td>
<td>Complete data collection for full academic year</td>
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<td>Complete analysis of data for full academic year</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Compile report for full academic year</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prepare training material</td>
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<tr>
<td>August – September 2003</td>
<td>Present final report for the academic year 2002-2003</td>
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<td>Preparation of training materials</td>
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N.B. It should be noted that decisions about the feasibility of gathering data in terms 2 and 3 should be taken in the light of the experience of data collection in term 1.

MALCOLM STONE
NOVEMBER 2002
Appendix 2

THE CONTINUING EDUCATION OF EXCLUDED PUPILS
RESEARCH FEEDBACK AND CONSULTATION

Tuesday 25th February 2003

Feedback Summary and Action Plan

Strengths

Good practice in schools
Excellence in Cities (LSU’s / Learning Mentors)
Alternative placements
Excel Network Clubs
NSF projects (only in certain areas)
Task Forces
Youth Offending Teams
School partnerships
Safe / civilised place
Links to other agencies

External Agencies

BOOST
I.R.T.
Connexions
Parent Partnership
Training Providers
(Inclusion Team
Behaviour Outreach
EPS)

Wide range of prevention strategies.
Staff passion, commitment – staff do not want pupils to be excluded.
Differentiation in lesson planning and monitoring.
Early intervention – year 7.
Pastoral and mentoring systems.
Focus on people not systems.
LEA Support – IRT / Parent Partnership / ESW.
Involving parents / pupils.
Giving work to excluded pupils.

Good practice in schools / agencies that is not celebrated and shared.

Circular 10/99 is clear and precise in what is required.
Wide range of agencies available (but too few).
Wide range of action plans with some pupil involvement.
Some multi-agency reviews.

Many different localised effective initiatives going on for the group of pupils for whom preventative measures usually work. Hardest to reach / help lack resources / expertise – need for greater multi-agency approach.

**Developments**

**Named person in the LEA – central contact.**
Named person in the school (e.g. Inclusion Manager).
Develop multi-disciplinary meeting process.
“Excluded pupil” package
  Workbook / work pack / appropriate to pupils personal development rather than curriculum led plus information for parents.
Weekly contact between home and school.
Reintegration Programme.
Early intervention.

More use of small term exclusions (i.e. 5 days).
Work related learning opportunities (Y 9; KS4).
Limited timetables - Year 11.
Flexible use of LSU / BSU.
More flexible use of learning mentors as a link between home and school in providing work.
Personal Advisors – Connexions.
Flexibility in timetable – selectively concentrating on certain aspects of curriculum.
Managed moves – rationalised funding
  speed of access
  review BSP.
Consortium arrangements (local areas).
Consistency of criteria for exclusions.

Audit what is currently good practice across the City.
Proactive access to resources to prevent exclusions.
EARLY INTERVENTION – listen to professionals.
NO BLOCKING.
Focus on transitional issues.
Develop successful reintegration processes.
Work with staff in schools
  - Training issues
  - Sharing good practice.
Staff resource for schools (e.g. learning mentor) who can liaise with parents / agencies.
Multi-agency reviews (as with e.g. SEN) for behaviour.
Project – to involve pupil / parents proactively.

Localised / neighbourhood approach.
Use the mini EAZ model
  - Allocating resources
  - Local plan according to need
  - Identification and intervention at an earlier age
  - Identify right criteria to identify problem start point pre-school.

Action plan

“Successful change emerges when curiosity, creativity and inspiration are present. What we anticipate is what we enact and give life to as organisation reality.”

a) Compile resource pack of good practice (modify existing one?).
b) Arrange a “celebration of good practice” event.
c) Identify one person in each school who would act as the link person to disseminate good practice (to create an effective communication network).
d) Agree a vision of good practice with excluded pupils.
e) Develop relevant work packs for the use of excluded pupils and their parents (ASDAN?).
f) Develop re-integration strategies (link this to issues raised relating to Discipline Committee).
g) Pilot and evaluate Connexions Project with excluded pupils (keep a tight focus initially to enable evaluation).

All of the above will be taken back to the next CEEP group on March 13th.
THE CONTINUING EDUCATION OF EXCLUDED PUPILS

RESEARCH FEEDBACK AND CONSULTATION

Wednesday 26th February 2003

Feedback Summary and Action Plan

Strengths

Ongoing family support groups (e.g. at Millennium Centre) which parents are drawn into as problems arise (Family Links nurturing programme).
Induction of new HT's to Authority does highlight much of what is available.
On Track doing some good work with excluded pupils (EiC / IRT / Children’s Fund)
Governor with remit for behaviour and exclusions
  - Pupil Welfare Committee.
BOOST works to support pupil / school and family Holistic approach).
Response times of non-statutory agencies is good (unfettered by “system”).
Internal SEN systems in school often very supportive / preventative.
Very few Primary Exclusions.
Training and Inset for primaries can be on a whole school basis (is this possible in Secondaries?).
Primaries are more local for home and possibly other agencies – this facilitates home/school agreements.
Utilising code of practice.
Other agencies (BOOST, Inclusion Team, PRU / Behaviour Outreach / IRT / ESW / EPS / Parent Partnership /Children’s fund (managed by SSD) / Home/School partnership / health and child & family/ School and Family Nurturance.

Developments

Address the whole issue of co-ordination, clarity of roles, collaboration, overlap etc of current services – through key worker systems, holistic care plans.

Named person in the LEA – central contact.

Develop multi-disciplinary meeting process / improve networking.

“Excluded pupil” package

  Contents – PSHE, Nurturing, Therapeutic, citizenship, info for parents
  Workbook / work pack / appropriate to pupils personal development rather than curriculum led plus information for parents (hard copy / on-line).
Expand the role of mentors (focus these roles more towards this group of pupils).
Regular contact between home and school.
Clarify where behaviour fits into the SEN process / Develop SEN systems in school.
Develop alternative support settings.
Develop more effective ways for parents to be involved in the process (e.g. parents not involved in BSP).
Develop better means of communicating information re effective practice round the “systems”.
Explore and evaluate use of twilight sessions for excluded pupils and parents.
Key personnel working with pupils in year 6 (support services) to follow child through Y7.
Develop role of BSP to include representatives of other services and parents.
Develop use of SIMS / PULSE / ICT to have up to date information and contacts for support services.

**Action plan**

“Successful change emerges when curiosity, creativity and inspiration are present. What we anticipate is what we enact and give life to as organisation reality.”

h) Audit of current services – access criteria etc – examples of good practice.
i) Adopt key workers systems / holistic plans for individual pupils.
j) Identify one key person in the Authority who will co-ordinate and progress chase the Exclusion Agenda.
k) Identify one person in each school who would act as the link person to disseminate good practice (to create an effective communication network).
l) Agree a vision of good practice with excluded pupils.
m) Develop greater multi-agency co-ordination (see (b) above).
n) Early intervention - schools get the help / support they need before exclusion (linked to early identification / intervention.
o) LEA training programme to disseminate good practice.
p) Develop support for parents / pupils.
q) Develop relevant work packs for the use of excluded pupils and their parents.

All of the above will be taken back to the next CEEP group on March 13th.
Appendix 3

Connexions Pilot Project
The education of excluded pupils

A pilot intervention to address the needs of pupils either subject to, or at risk of, fixed term exclusion from school.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to outline a pilot project to address the needs of pupils who are either at risk of, or subject to, fixed term exclusions of 16 – 45 days from school and their parents in the Westby Local Education Authority (LEA).

Background to the Pilot Project

The policy context

The government is committed to ensuring that from September 2002 all pupils excluded for more than 15 days should have access to full time education whilst excluded (Social Inclusion Pupil Support – Circulars 10/99 and 11/99). The school’s obligation to provide education continues while the pupil is on roll, and must be met during a fixed term exclusion. In all cases of more than a day’s exclusion, work should be set and marked. A head teacher considering whether to exclude a pupil for a longer period, for example for more than 15 school days, should plan:

1. how the pupil’s education will continue during the period of exclusion
2. how the time might be used to address the pupil’s problems
3. together with the LEA, what educational arrangements will best help with the pupil’s reintegration into the school at the end of the exclusion?

When a young person has been permanently excluded the aim is to ensure that they are engaged quickly in some from of structured activity pending the meeting of the school’s discipline committee.
Research within the LEA

Westby Education Directorate, in partnership with Barnardo’s, is undertaking an action research project to contribute to the development of good practice in working with pupils excluded from school for between 16-45 days in Westby.

The focus of phase one of the research (undertaken in autumn 2002) has been pupils and parents/carer’s experience of the exclusion and re-integration process. Interviews with a small number of schools have also been undertaken.

Interim findings

Interviews with pupils and parents suggest that, from their perspective, for the period of exclusion from school, service developments should aim to:

- relieve their sense of isolation and sense of dislocation
- provide continuity of education and a more structured education plan
- offer help in addressing the behavioural issues identified
- give more information about respective rights and responsibilities
- provide one key worker to co-ordinate an agreed education and re-integration plan.

Interviews with schools: whilst stressing the need to make avoidance of exclusion the first priority the following issues were seen as problematic:

- maintaining continuity of education beyond the first few days of exclusion
- providing and marking suitable work
- maintaining contact with pupils and parents
- working on the reasons for exclusion during the exclusion period
- recognition of the need to offer a co-ordinated support package to excluded pupils whilst recognising the resource implications of achieving this.

Good practice identified in the interviews with schools included:

- allocating staff time (a learning mentor) to ensure work flows between home and school
- providing twilight sessions for excluded pupils to maintain contact, continuity of education and plan reintegration back into school
- existing models of good practice e.g. BOOST, the Intervention and Re-integration team and the parent partnership service.

Consultation workshops

The above research findings were then fed back to a number of key professionals and organisations within the LEA via two Consultation Workshops. Some of the key developmental needs identified by professionals during these workshops included to:
address the whole issue of co-ordination, clarity of roles, and collaboration between professionals and agencies through key worker systems and holistic care plans
- have one named person in the LEA to co-ordinate responses to excluded pupils
- develop co-ordinated multi-disciplinary approaches
- develop more flexible and innovative responses
- build on current service strengths
- update the audit of services within the LEA
- develop flexible work packs to be used with excluded pupils
- pilot, evaluate and disseminate the findings from service developments.

**Literature review**

Research shows that more than a third of young people excluded from primary schools and two thirds from secondary schools never return to mainstream education (Parsons, 1999). Those who never return to the mainstream spend the rest of their education either in pupil referral units, being taught at home or disengaged totally from education.

**Pupils**
- perceive that in school they are seen as troublesome and do not perform as well as their peers, therefore school is a happier place without them
- lose confidence in their teachers and in themselves and their low self esteem impacts on learning.

**Parents**
- feel with long term exclusions both forgotten and isolated
- parents also felt let down at the lack of support available.

It is not difficult to see that repeated exclusion and disruption of school life has a profound effect on education achievement. Exclusion from school not only means that young people miss out on learning, they also move further away from their “mainstream” peer group. This considerably increases their chances of engaging in risk behaviour such as offending.

It is well documented that a young person out of education is at risk of becoming involved with anti social behaviour, which often leads to crime and a criminal record. In a recent National Children’s Bureau Conference, Lord Warner, chairman of the Youth Justice Board spoke of “the correlation between offending behaviour, school non-attendance and the failure to attain skills for employability”. He spoke of the need for these young people to be re-engaged with education to reduce the risk of re-offending, describing education as “crucial to breaking the vicious circle if disadvantage and disillusionment of young people.”
The literature review undertaken, as part of the Barnardo’s research, would suggest a number of key ingredients for increasing the probability of successful interventions with excluded pupils. These include:

- A whole system approach owned across the LEA, informed by a set of simple principles and underpinned by the experience of service users.
- Geographically and “cluster based” services drawing on a range of local community resources.
- The skills of support workers which include: worker style, flexibility of role and level of commitment.
- Holistic approaches building on the client perspective and implemented through a key worker approach.
- Partnership working with the whole family.
- Accessibility and speed of response (including early intervention).
- A key worker approach which includes advocacy, referral and co-ordination of a range of services, readily accessible, pro-active and intensive support.
- Access to a reasonable level of resources, flexibility of role, minimal bureaucracy.
- A range of flexible alternative curriculum provision.

The Connexions service

Connexions is the government’s new support service for all young people aged 13 –19 in England. The Service aims to provide advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for young people and to help them make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. Connexions joins up the work of six government departments and their agencies and organisations on the ground, together with private and voluntary sector groups and youth and careers services.

The service offers a differentiated and integrated support to young people. All young people will have access to a personal advisor. In this case the personal advisor will form a critical link in bringing together effective support for young people and their families

As with all Connexions activities, a key aim is to complement rather than duplicate existing activities. It is recognise that a young person who has been excluded may already be involved with a range of other professionals, for examples learning mentors (in EiC areas), education social workers, school pastoral and learning support staff.

The new role for Connexions is in line with the principles set by the Government, these are:

- Inclusion – keeping young people in mainstream education and training and preventing them moving to the margins of their community.
- Raising aspirations – setting high expectations of every individual.
- Meeting individual needs and overcoming barriers to learning.
- Taking into account the views of young people – individually and collectively.
- Partner agencies – collaborating to achieve more for young people, parents and communities than agencies working in isolation.
• Community involvement and neighbourhood renewal – through involvement of community mentors and through personal advisers brokering access to local welfare, health, arts, sport and guidance networks.

• Extending opportunity and equality of opportunity – raising participation and achievement levels for all young people, influencing the availability, suitability and quality of provision and raising awareness of opportunities.

• Evidence based practice – ensuring that new interventions are based on rigorous research and evaluation into what works.

The aims of the Pilot Project

In order to facilitate the development of the Connexions role it is proposed that the Connexions service support pupils who are at risk of being or who are the subjects of fixed term exclusions of 16 – 45 days in two ways:

• A Connexions Personal Advisor (PA) would initially become involved either when the pupil is at risk of exclusion or has been excluded and, depending on the level of need, the PA could provide a continuum of support to the young person for a three month period.

• Providing access to relevant activities, including personal development and alternative curriculum programmes.

The particular role of the personal adviser is to:

• support the rapid provision of an appropriate education plan
• engage other support services where necessary
• co-ordinate a holistic assessment of the needs of individual young people that will form the basis of a flexible and coherent support package to parents and young people
• act as key worker and co-ordinate and progress the support package
• support where necessary, reintegration into school of the young person
• feedback to all relevant agencies work undertaken with the young person.

Pilot period

The aim is to implement the pilot through the summer term 2003 up to the commencement of the autumn term 2003.

Confidentiality and information sharing.

To support this process, Connexions will require relevant information on the young person form the school and/or the LEA, namely:

• The name of the pupil.
• Date of birth.
• The length of the exclusion.
- The reason(s) for the exclusion.
- The pupil’s age, gender, ethnicity and whether they have recognised special educational needs (including those with a Statement).
- Whether the pupil is looked after by the Local Authority.

Issues of confidentiality will be strictly observed at all times.

It is recognised that permission for information sharing will need to be negotiated with the young person and his/her carers and that information will be shared on a need to know basis only.

At all times it will be acknowledged that the Connexions role will be a part of a partnership to prevent the disengagement of a young person. Information received whilst working with the young person will be shared if appropriate, with such agencies as School, the Education Social Worker, YOT (where applicable) and school PA’s. Each young person will be assured on the matter of confidentiality and all information will be kept secure and confidential, as in line with Connexions Young People’s Charter.

**Pilot sites**

It is proposed that this pilot be limited to a maximum of five secondary schools namely: Pennywell, St Aidans, Hylton Red House, Usworth and Sandhill View.

**Pilot sample**

The pilot will target those pupils subject to fixed term exclusion or on the verge of fixed term exclusion. The sample will be limited to a maximum of fifteen pupils who will be supported for a maximum of three months. As far as possible the sample will be representative of age, schools, gender, ethnic groups. The sample will include some pupils at risk of fixed term exclusion and some who have been excluded for between 16 – 45 days.

**Procedure**

- The relevant schools will contact the Connexions service to discuss the appropriateness of Connexions involvement.
- If it is agreed that Connexions can offer a service then school will obtain permission from pupil and parents for Connexions to become involved.
- If consent is obtained then the Personal Advisor (PA) will make arrangements to meet the young person and his/her parents/carers to discuss the Connexions involvement. At this point the PA will also seek agreement for the Research Worker to contact parents/carers in the first instance to explain the aims and nature of the research.
- For an agreed period the PA will act as key worker for the young person and will co-ordinate a package of support.
- A meeting will be arranged as soon as possible involving all relevant people to formulate a plan for the young person which addresses:
  - Arrangements for the pupil’s continuing education.
• How the wider needs of the pupil will be addressed during the exclusion period – this may include a programme of activities to address needs and build on strengths of the young person. This may include involvement of the projects/programmes of the Neighbourhood Support Fund, youth service activities, voluntary and community sector programmes and work experience.

• Plans for the pupil’s re-integration.

• A holistic assessment of the young person’s needs will be undertaken which will inform the support package. This will be done using the HARP assessment process (Holistic Assessment and Reintegration Programme). This will address educational, pastoral and behavioural needs of the pupil.

• The PA will facilitate the re-integration of the pupil through re-integration meetings and continue to offer on-going appropriate support where necessary.

Characteristics of the service

The service will aim to incorporate those characteristics of successful practice identified in the research (see page 3 above).

Advisory Group

An advisory group of relevant agencies and professionals will be established to ensure that appropriate consultation takes place and that there is a forum to consult, discuss issues as they arise and give feedback. The need to identify creative ways to involve young people and their parents in this consultation process is recognised.

Evaluation

The pilot will be evaluated as part of Barnardo’s current work in the LEA. The research already undertaken provides a baseline against which to compare the effects of the pilot. The research worker will be a member of the Advisory Group. The Research Worker will work up a detailed plan for evaluation and bring this to the Advisory Group for discussion and approval. The need to seek the permission of young people and their parents / carers for their involvement in this evaluation of the pilot is recognised. This will be discussed with parents and pupils at the point that the PA introduces him/herself.

Conclusion

It is recognised that these proposals are made within a climate of significant change within the LEA and schools. The following recent initiatives will impact upon the response organisations will make to school exclusions.
- New Regulations and guidance on exclusions from the DfES published in January 2003;
- The recent policy review on exclusions by the Education Review Committee; and
- The work and recommendations of the Secondary Head teachers / LEA Officer working party with recommendations.

It is suggested that this proposal offers the opportunity to pilot and evaluate an innovative approach to working with young people excluded from school and their parents. It seeks to incorporate the characteristics of good practice identified through recent research in the LEA and through a review of the relevant literature. It fills a gap in current service provision. It is line with current policy initiatives and aims to contribute to discussions of how appropriate service developments may take place in the LEA.

Bev Chismon, Connexions, Tyne and Wear
Malcolm Stone, Senior Research Worker, Barnardo’s.

April 2003
Appendix 4

Education Review Committee: summary of recommendations – March 2003

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The Committee makes these proposals to allow for development of policy in relation to how the Council enables, where possible and appropriate, opportunity for all children to be educated within the mainstream environment and to provide adequately for young people out of school. The recommendations can be categorised into six parts as follows.

Recommendations for training, guidance and support to schools

1. The LEA should ensure comprehensive details on exclusions procedures, support provision and how to access support are sent to schools and governing bodies annually and to new head teachers on appointment.

   The research and the literature review suggest how good practice could be developed in the ways in which support is offered to pupils, parents/carers and schools. (see attached “Summary of Key Features of Successful Interventions suggested by the Literature Review”).

2. LEA guidance should promote an expectation that governors will be required to receive introductory training followed by more advanced training in the issues around exclusion in order to fulfil their role on discipline committees.

   Feedback from both the research and the Workshops suggests that at present these meetings do little to promote the overall welfare of individual pupils. Parents and pupils perceive them as quasi-judicial “hearings” and feel as if they are on trial. Discipline committees, through the eyes of those who were interviewed as part of the research appear to be adversarial and are about the school “making the case for exclusion” rather than asking, “How can we best help the pupil, parents and school in this particular situation?” Parents also said that they would value more information and support prior to and during the meeting. These meetings often came towards the end of the exclusion period at a time when positive planning for return to school should be taking place; in effect they serve to further sour relations between pupil and school. Concern was raised at the workshops about the length of some of the meetings and the stress that parents and pupils were put under with very little benefit to anyone. In summary whilst these meetings have to take place, the focus of the meetings could be re-thought to make them more about “How can we deal constructively with a difficult situation” rather than “Is the case for exclusion proven”.

3. The LEA should unroll a training programme for head teachers and implement this as an ongoing requirement addressing the legal and best practice requirements of exclusion.

   The research and the literature review could feed into this training. The research (and on-going consultation with pupils and parents) could serve to ensure that the user perspective is heard within any training provided. Pupils and parents suggested several ways in which services might be improved. These suggestions referred to the support offered during the exclusion period, the provision of appropriate education and the process of re-integration. The general issue of continuing to work intensively with pupils and parents during the exclusion period was highlighted. All of these are specific requirements of 10/99, 11/99. The “Summary of Key Features of Successful Interventions” from the
current literature review suggests what the elements of good practice might be and could provide a “template” against which to evaluate current service provision.

A key issue raised at the Workshops was how learning from the many local initiatives that are underway could be disseminated more effectively around the LEA and how these could then be fed into “Guidelines for good practice” which could then be promoted through the training process.

One suggestion from the workshops was to identify one person from each school to act as the link person to disseminate good practice.

4. The LEA should promote an expectation that school staff will be facilitated to undergo suitable training in identifying behaviour or circumstances, which may lead to exclusion, and in the management of disruptive behaviour.

The remit of the research hasn’t focussed specifically on the prevention of exclusions but both the research and the literature review suggest general lessons for good practice e.g. taking a holistic approach, multi-disciplinary working, partnership working with pupils and their families etc.

One suggestion from the workshops was to identify one person from each school to act as the link person to disseminate good practice.

5. The LEA should issue guidance to pupils, parents, and schools on the proper use of Pastoral Support Programmes.

The research has not produced any information relevant to this, however a recent review of the literature on mentoring (referred to in the literature review) is very helpful in considering “what works” in mentoring in general.

6. Within the training programme, the LEA should examine how teachers could be trained to overcome stereotyping and be aware of the special circumstances of some groups of children and their requirements, statutory and otherwise.

Both the research and the literature would suggest the importance of taking a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to addressing individual pupil’s problems. Again developing evidence based “Good practice guidelines” would sensitise staff to effective working practices.

7. Within the training programme, the LEA should include training for school staff on the new SEN Code of Practice. The aim of this should be to address reducing the number of statements and the associated pressure on EP time for statutory work. This could include extending the use of Assistant EPs.

The research and literature review have not addressed this area specifically although it could be argued that a consideration of the literature, which addresses effective practice would be equally applicable to this objective.
8. Within the training programme, whole school initiatives on exclusion prevention should be addressed and encouraged. This could include developing the role of EPs in delivering customised training.

   *Again the value base underpinning “Good Practice” informed by the research and the literature review would be relevant here*

9. Within the training programme, the LEA should provide guidance to schools on the appropriate allocation of EBD places.

10. Schools should be encouraged to identify ongoing training needs by regular audit of needs.

   *Audits of need would be informed by a competency framework relevant to this area of work. Such a framework could be based on feedback from research and literature. For example, if a holistic approach to work with pupils is part of good practice there would be training requirements around this way of working (e.g. inter-professional working).*

11. The LEA should monitor the use of the Pupil Referral Grant in secondary schools in order to promote the use of the most effective strategies.

12. In all cases of more than one day’s exclusion, work should be set by the school and marked. The obligation of schools to set work for dual registered pupils and other pupils out of school should be monitored by discipline committees and the LEA should put systems in place to ensure schools notify discipline committees of work programmes set for pupils out of school to enable governors to have a monitoring role.

13. Schools should be requested to identify a designated governor who will act as a first point of contact within governing bodies for Looked After Children (LAC). This can provide links between LEA, school and all carers.

14. The Excellence in Cities Partnership should investigate the impact of Learning Support Units (LSUs) and Learning Mentors (LMs) in different schools: This will include:

   - Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of outcomes, impact and deployment of LMs and LSUs;
   - Use of LMs and LSUs to access the curriculum;
   - LMs promotion of effective multi-agency working;
   - Evaluate the contribution that shared LSU facilities may make within groups of schools.

15. The Partnership should disseminate good practice in order to maximize the success of the programme and ensure that LMs participate in dissemination of good practice and network support to establish consistent quality standards of service.

   *The issue of how good practice is disseminated across the LEA has been referred to above. The whole issue of evaluating different aspects of practice (as well as EiC) would be worthy of consideration.*
Recommendations with staffing and financial implications

1. The Committee recommends that there is a role within the LEA for an Exclusion Officer who will ensure that appropriate, effective and coordinated services are delivered to schools, pupils and parents. The Committee has identified the following requirements to improve access to education and these should be incorporated into the role:

- Encouraging co-operation by groups of schools, each with their own distinctive ethos, to take collective responsibility for preventing exclusions, including development of alternatives.
- Working in partnership with schools and encouraging schools to share experiences of effective practices.
- Ensuring equality of opportunity in schools for all pupils and consistency in approach across schools.
- Allowing for higher level support to those schools with higher exclusion rates.
- Ensuring LEA strategies and plans are understood and implemented and clear routes are in place to access support.
- Bringing together a range of professionals from agencies and services to support children at risk of exclusion.
- Developing support mechanisms to allow crisis response to be developed in liaison with Behaviour Support Panels.
- Producing, in consultation with schools, guidance and action plan for schools to develop their own behaviour policies.
- Advice or training for schools on developing the curriculum with a view to helping to manage behaviour.
- Overseeing alternative provision and criteria for nomination of pupils for reintegration.
- Monitoring specific support for all pupils permanently excluded.
- Producing a training package and providing training for head teachers and governors.
- Ensuring training and guidance is targeted to new head teachers as soon as possible in each academic year. (may be necessary.)

2. The LEA should prioritise the preventative work provided by PRU outreach staff in helping to reduce exclusions. An assessment should be carried out as to how the outreach service can be reinstated to its previous establishment, whether by restructuring or extra capacity. The literature review suggests how such teams could be constituted to achieve maximum effectiveness.

3. The LEA should carry out an assessment of the likely impact and cost of providing time-limited support for pupils immediately upon reintegration to mainstream schooling to increase the chances of successful reintegration. This could be through the reintegration team, PRU outreach staff, peer support or additional key staff.

The re-integration process is part of the holistic approach to addressing the needs of this group of pupils and this process would be part of the overall plan – not a separate plan. As such many of the comments above would be applicable here.
4. The LEA should carry out assessment of the further development of Behaviour Support Panels. This will include:

- Managing and monitoring the flow of pupils through the PRU.
- Provision for ‘fast tracking’ of pupils for quicker provision of support which can be confirmed / amended at subsequent Panels.
- As well as allocating the provision, Panels should monitor and evaluate the progress of the support.

Recommendations for collection and use of data

1. Schools should be asked to submit to the LEA monitoring data beyond the minimum legal requirements. This should include:

- All fixed term and repeat exclusions
- Incidents of bullying or racial harassment
- Exclusion by gender, ethnicity, SEN
- Reasons for exclusion (to determine pastoral care or earlier intervention).

2. The LEA should develop a pack of information to easily enable provision of data by schools e.g. template letters, forms for notification on the day of exclusion etc.

3. The LEA should carry out an early evaluation of electronic data registration as a tool to identify patterns of irregular attendance and lateness and for the systems to be extended to all schools.

4. The LEA should investigate the feasibility of developing a mechanism whereby feedback/complaints can be obtained from parents/guardians on the exclusion process.

*The research suggests that, approached in an empowering way, parents and pupils are able to give useful constructive feedback on their experiences, which can be used to improve practice. Thought would need to be given to the best ways to gather this feedback on a regular basis.*

Recommendations for communicating and working with others

1. The LEA should review the current multi-service and multi-agency groups and representation on them to assess opportunities for streamlining or re-focusing efforts. In carrying out this review the LEA should consider:

- The usefulness of a local exclusions forum with representation from schools to discuss trends and dissemination of good practice.
- How to improve involvement of schools e.g. multi-agency meetings in each school to identify particular needs.
- Agreement with agencies and services on their roles and responsibilities, agreeing terms of reference for each group.
- Sharing information to ensure co-ordination between agencies and timely referral of information at key points.
The importance of multi-disciplinary, multi-skilled working is highlighted in all of the research. It is closely linked, of course to holistic assessment and planning.

2. The LEA should develop a protocol to allow for issues of confidentiality and data protection when sharing information across services.

3. The LEA should investigate opportunities for joint financial planning and joint budgets across supporting agencies.

4. The LEA should explore development of a service level agreement with the City of Westby College for older excluded pupils to access regular vocational training and a wider range of accredited courses, including GCSE.

5. The LEA should investigate development of the role of Connexion’s personal advisors to carry out outreach work and engagement of young people.

   This service is currently developing its working relationships with schools and there would be scope to evaluate some of the pilot work and feed back the findings into this service development process. The Research worker will liaise with the Connexions service to progress this.

6. The LEA should investigate the feasibility of what the Youth Service could already provide in terms of expertise and experience and what further development could be made to support excluded pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4.

7. Where voluntary sector provision is used, the LEA must have its own quality assurance programme for parents to be assured of minimum standards of educational provision.

   The research has not evaluated any of the voluntary sector provision. Again “Good practice guidelines” would be part of the process of setting criteria against which services are evaluated.

Recommendations to support certain groups of pupils

   No specific work was undertaken in this area. Many of the general comments made above are equally applicable to this group of students.

1. The LEA should ensure that arrangements of a care placement for a LAC include arrangement of suitable education. No care placement should be made without the education element being satisfactorily arranged.

2. The LEA should ensure that arrangements are in place for all LAC to have a Personal Education Plan and that all new children entering the LAC system are provided with a PEP within 20 working days.
3. The LEA should ask schools to notify SEN Services when a statemented pupil is at risk of exclusion.

4. There should be an audit of current provision of EBD places and future requirements.

5. The outreach role of special school staff for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties should be clarified.

Recommendations to support pupils out of school

Issues related to holistic planning, multi-agency working, partnership working and evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions are relevant here (all of these are referred to above). Holistic planning also implies one key worker to co-ordinate and progress the plan and be the reference point for pupils, parents, schools and the range of other relevant service providers (in particular relevant to (4) below). The absolute minimum requirement for any excluded pupil should be a key worker; a holistic assessment and action plan (including educational, behavioural and pastoral targets) working in partnership with pupil, parents and school.

1. The LEA should develop and implement a strategy to continue to meet the target for full-time equivalent education for all permanently excluded pupils.

2. Targets for improvement in the Behaviour Support Plan should be extended to incorporate the following:
   - Soft targets for improvement in achievements of excluded pupils (academic, personal, social). This will involve adoption of agreed key measures of ‘successful outcomes’ that can be measured and compared.
   - Targets for increasing the numbers of pupils reintegrated within a term expressed as a percentage.

3. The LEA should ask schools to notify discipline committees of all unofficial exclusions. This may be by way of termly reports.

4. The Council should assess the establishment of a named contact to be available at the point of exclusion to the pupil and family to provide information and advice throughout the process.

5. A focus should be maintained on all pupils outside of school, not just those officially excluded. This will include:
   - As a priority the LEA should draw up a specification of requirements for the implementation of a comprehensive pupil-tracking database.
   - Establishing an individual with lead responsibility for each pupil out of school to track their progress from the point that they are first out of school to their return to education.
   - The Children Out of School Group to monitor current as well as new cases to ensure continuity of support.
6. New Admissions Forum to be used to retain and reintegrate excluded and at risk pupils:

- To manage alternative school placements for pupils at risk of exclusion in one school.
- To develop criteria for reintegration of temporarily excluded pupils.
- To consider the re-admission and placement of permanently excluded pupils.
- To have a monitoring role in the success of placements.
Appendix 5

CEEP PROJECT
Consultation session with School Governors 7th October 2003

This consultation session involved a group of approximately 12 Governors. The discussion focussed on a number of general issues about the exclusion process and particular issues relevant to Discipline Committees

It was agreed that the content of the discussion could be fed back to the LEA.

School Governor concerns

- Concerns at only 21 pupils in the research ("all this attention being focussed on such a small group").
- Services for parents are needed.
- Feel let down by professionals.
- Let down by lack of resources.
- Criticism of ranking process (this appeared to relate to school prioritisation for support service involvement/FSA referral).
- More intervention needed at primary.
- Change needed in resource levels.
- Timeliness of LEA response was criticised.
- In some instances lack of attendance officers appeared to affect ability to respond in a timely fashion to pupils’ needs.
- How effective will it be to use short term placements at alternative schools?
- Support from parents is crucial.
- One suggestion was that parents come into class and support the pupil.
- Concerns about talk of children’s rights but not their responsibilities.
- Need to think about impact on other pupils (bullying etc) – NB: need to consult parents of pupils who are affected in this way and to consider how to consult with other pupils who are affected.
- Feeling of failure within schools when everything that has been tried has failed and exclusion appears to be the only solution.
- Effect of badly behaved pupils on other pupils and the need to consider how these pupils could be included in the consultation process.
- Effect on aspirations of other pupils.
- NB: some pupils end up being withdrawn and being educated at home.

Concerning Discipline Committees

- Useful to seek views of other pupils but concerns expressed at using other pupils as witnesses (another governor expressed concerns that including views of other pupils would prejudice the outcome and reduce independence of the DC).
- Governors need to know about procedures – written guidance is very helpful.
- Felt useful to have DCs for less than 15 days (? these prevent longer exclusions).
- Stress caused by inability of DCs to look at strategies.
- It is helpful for the chair to talk to parents beforehand and try to reduce some of the stress.
- Stress caused by parents who are “anti” – need to defuse emotion (this seemed to be role of chair).
- Follow-up to DCs e.g. progress report can be useful.
- Varied opinion about input from clerks + LEA officers (NB: complaints about “one liners”).
- Criticism re unwillingness of some LEA officers to give a view.
- There needs to be an LEA rep who has both knowledge of the pupil at all meetings and sufficient knowledge to give a view.

**Needs of School Governors**

- School staff need to know what DCs are about – need to know about procedures and understand that they are carried out in a professional way.
- Governors need to see good practice e.g. videos and shadowing.
- Staff need support and training re discipline. Reference made to previous EP input with NQTs, looking at videos of class management and involving experienced teachers in discussing discipline.

14th October 2003
Appendix 6

Continuing Education of Excluded Pupils
Interviews with Pupils at the PRU
July 2003

Aim of the interviews

The aim of these interviews was to consult with young people (Key Stage 3) on what they have or have not found helpful during the time that they were having problems at school. These were not intended to be “in depth interviews” but rather conversations to elicit issues of general importance to these pupils.

Limitations

I was a stranger to them which inevitably would lead to a certain wariness on their part (although for some this did not seem to be a problem – they talked freely and openly). As a group they might have little experience of being consulted. Previous experiences of talking to adults in a position of authority would influence their response to me.

I carefully avoided issues that I thought the pupils might find difficult (e.g. family background etc) as these were intended to be “one-off” interviews with no individual follow-up planned.

Other than what the pupils told me there was limited information to place their comments in the broader context of their school careers.

Sample

10 pupils were interviewed in July 2003.

Methodology

1. I introduced myself to the whole group the week before the individual interviews were conducted.
2. Pupils were interviewed individually in school.
3. I explained who I was and what I did (some had heard this the week before).

I then asked general questions about what they had found helpful / unhelpful during the times when they have had problems in school. I then followed these general questions with more specific ones relating to people, activities etc (e.g. “Can you tell me more about that teacher / activity which you found helpful?”)
Outcomes

In discussing examples of what helped and didn’t help the following featured prominently:

**What did you find helpful?**

Being listened to (“I feel that they take the time to listen to me”)
Being talked to rather than shouted at (“It helps me when they talk to me – they talk me down - this helps me”)
Smaller groups (“I can get more help when I need it”)
Fresh starts (events being dealt with and then the pupil being allowed to “move on” rather than constantly being referred back to)
Variety of work (“I find it hard to concentrate I need to keep doing new things”)
Range of activities (“I like going bowling and I’m going on a ship in a few weeks time” “I get bored easily – so I like to have lots of different things to do”)
Respect (“If you are shown respect then you give it don’t you?”)
“It’s like being at home but being able to do work.” (referring to the PRU).
Rules applied fairly (“It’s important that I’m treated the same as everyone else”)
Balance of formality and informality (“They are friendly and listen to me but I know where the boundaries are”)

[This comment was made on a number of occasions. During one discussion with D, I was drawing a heavy line to represent this boundary as D. was talking. He said that it would not be so heavy and drew me a fainter line (which he said would be better in pencil) because the boundary is not a hard fixed one but there is some flexibility.]

Attention in small groups (“In the small group I could ask things – I didn’t have to fight for attention”)
Perceived commitment of staff (“I liked Mr X as a person – he really tried hard for me – I know he cared about me – he did more than he had to – I still messed up and let him down but I think he really tried to help me. He would go out of his way to talk to me without me having to ask him”)
At school the teachers were too “posh” and couldn’t be bothered with me. At the PRU the teachers are friendlier and “bother about me”.

**What did you not find helpful?**

Teachers who are “on my back all the time”. (“I just thought that they wanted rid of me anyway so I just kicked off to get it over with”)
Being shouted at all the time (“I was always being shouted at – couldn’t stick it”)
Bullying (“I was always being called “Thick c***t” by the others and no one did anything about it”)
Accessing help (“I could never get the teacher’s attention – I always seemed to be left until last” “I got pushed to the back – couldn’t get help – I thought they had it in for me”)

Page 87 of 129
Making the transition from LSU back into class (“I liked the Unit.”) I got lots of support there but I could never get back into class properly so I just kicked off again – it was the only way out for me”)

General comment

Pupils themselves made a distinction between their education before and after coming to the PRU. Many of the “helpful” responses referred to by pupils were associated with their experiences at the PRU, although some referred to teachers in mainstream schools.

Based on these interviews a number of characteristics of preferred teaching style can be identified which include:

- being listened to by teachers
- the use of humour in class
- the feeling that staff are bothered about pupils
- congruence of style between pupils and staff
- **being given the chance to leave a reputation behind (“fresh starts”)**
- perception of fairness
- activity based teaching strategies
- talking pupils down rather than shouting them down
- small group work with ready access to help and support
- “thin”, flexible boundaries rather than “thick” fixed ones.

Follow-up

Firstly, the above information was given to the PRU team.

Secondly, after undertaking the above interviews a follow-up was undertaken to give feedback to the whole group of pupils.

This was done two weeks after the interviews, shortly before the end of the summer term 2003. The group had changed during these two weeks with some of the original young people who were interviewed having moved on.

Feedback of the main points was given and the group were then invited to choose those issues which were of most importance to them and to design posters that contained these issues.

A number of posters were designed. I explained that these posters would be included in any work that was undertaken to promote good practice in work with young people excluded from school.

Malcolm Stone, Senior Research Officer. July 2003
Appendix 7

The Continuing Education of Pupils Excluded from School

Literature Review

The following is a summary of some of the literature, relevant to the subject of exclusion from school. References have been chosen to be representative of some of the broad approaches to be found in the literature.

A comment in one of the research reviews (Risk and Protective Factors associated with Youth Crime and effective interventions to prevent it, Youth Justice Board, November 2001) is relevant to many of the studies included in this review—“A more basic problem in the UK is the lack of rigorous evaluation studies. Small numbers of participants and limited duration (often due to short term funding) have been a common feature of projects, contributing to the lack of any evaluation “culture”. Few evaluations of UK programmes referred to in this report included a comparable control group to increase confidence that positive (or negative) outcomes were attributable to the intervention. Studies, in future, need to be large enough to achieve high standards in terms of sampling and research design if they are to yield findings that are capable of generalisation. Ideally, the impact of interventions should be evaluated using randomised experiments.” (p.112)

Whilst bearing these methodological considerations in mind, it is of interest how common themes relating to effectiveness or non-effectiveness were repeated in the literature and the summaries presented here are indicative of these themes.

Summary of key features of successful interventions

The literature review would suggest a number of key “ingredients” for increasing the probability of successful interventions with pupil at risk of exclusion, or excluded from school.

System level

- A whole system approach owned by the range of relevant stakeholders, informed by a set of simple principles and organised around the experiences of clients.
- The encouragement of small scale innovation.
- The provision of a range of creative, flexible alternative curriculum provision.
- Regular reflection on, monitoring and evaluation of performance.

Service delivery level

- Geographically and “cluster based” services drawing on a range of local community resources.
- Whole school approaches.
- Strategies for developing partnership working with families.
- Holistic approaches building on the client perspective.
A key worker approach through which a range of services are co-ordinated in partnership with the client and continuity of education is achieved.

- Services have a reasonable level of funding, have flexibility of role and minimal bureaucracy (“project-like”).
- Intensity of input.
- Accessibility and speed of response (early intervention).
- Effective support to front line staff.

Worker / client level

- Holistic assessment and planning, co-ordinated through one key worker, which builds on the client perspective, addresses a range of needs utilising a range of resources.
- The skills of support workers which include: worker style, ability to engage and form effective relationships, flexibility of role, consistency and level of commitment (informal, equitable and non-judgemental).
- Effective communication processes.
- Adopting a “solution focussed”, “can do”, approach to working with clients.
- The use of intensive skills based cognitive / behavioural interventions.
- Work to enhance expectations and ambitions of the young person, their families and their teachers.
- Creative activity based programmes tailored to the needs and interests of the individual delivered through trusting relationship with a “significant other”.
- Partnership working with the whole family.

Detailed descriptions of the research studies

General issues


While many research efforts have been undertaken to assess the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement, the literature does not indicate which form of parent involvement, if any, is more likely to be correlated with increased student achievement and other indicators of school success. Despite the lack of a clear research endorsement for any particular parent involvement strategy, efforts to increase the level of parent involvement seem to cluster around two major approaches: (1) encouraging parents to pursue at-home behaviours that encourage learning and indicate a value for schooling and (2) conducting at-school activities that support the teacher-parent relationship.

“One key to involving all parents is creating an atmosphere in which teachers, administrators, and families all are seen as valuing parental involvement. Schools that are serious about developing partnerships with parents can provide information to parents about different ways they can be involved and understand the barriers that keep parents from being more active.”

“Why do children avoid going to school? According to government research conducted in 1993, the main reasons are to do with difficulties within schools themselves. Young people cited poor teaching, irrelevant curriculum and boredom.”

Newvell, J, 2002, Don’t want to go”, *Community Care*, Nov 27th.

Suggests that young people recognise the value of education – “their disengagement from the education system as it stands lies at the heart of the problem, and urgently needs to be addressed.”

“14-19 Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards” – Green Paper, drafted in consultation with young people advocates a flexible approach to education e.g. the use of FE Colleges and work based settings.

Parents being targeted for non-school attendance when the disaffection can be rooted in the education system. “How useful is a catchall phrase [truancy] which implies that a child who decides not to attend school is solely to blame for choosing not to be there? And how will the levying of a fine or sentencing of parent to prison get to the core of the child’s disengagement from school or unhappiness at school?”

Effects of the pressure to achieve performance targets experienced differently by different groups of students.

“The fact is we need to change our approach to tackling truancy and exclusions. As well as asking what a pupil can do for a school, we need to look at what a school can do for a pupil; in other words, treating children and young people as the key stakeholders within the education system.”

While there is a lot in the Education Act about parents’ rights there is little about children’s rights. And the Ofsted world we live in, its all target related.”

“We don’t want no education”; *Community Care*, Jan 23rd 2003

Home school contracts are a contradiction in terms – how can co-operation be enforced?

“The government isn’t addressing the underlying reasons children don’t want to be in school. I don’t doubt there are a few parents who are so desperately lonely and inadequate that they like having their children around during the day. But it is generally the children who are voting with their feet and often for perfectly rational reasons. Some are bullied physically or psychologically by peers and teachers. Others find school demoralising and humiliating because they aren’t academic
and are constantly tested and found wanting.” (Harrison-Jennings, Brian, General Secretary of the Association of Educational Psychologists).

Problem of truancy fuelled by performance culture – if not up to standard children end up demoralised and stigmatised.
School focus is on tables rather than engaging disaffected pupils.

The truth is that the national curriculum is geared towards academic achievement. But a lot of children are not interested in modern languages, science or engineering. They need a more general, vocational curriculum, particularly between 14 and 19.”

**Stallard, P, 2003, Prevent or treat, Community Care, Jan 30th**

Discusses targeting vs. prevention in the light of the work of the Children’s fund (working with children aged 5 – 13)

Interventions at times of transition seen as more effective. Skills based approaches tend to be more effective.

“The Children’s Fund provides an opportunity to develop innovative services that are preventive, but there is a danger of prevention becoming synonymous with treatment. The tendency to adopt targeted programmes fails to address the issue of which risk groups should be targeted, how they will be identified. “

**Children and Young Person Unit, Learning to Listen – Core Principles for the Involvement of Children and Young People, DoH, 2001**

“The Government has set out its commitment to designing policies and services around the needs of young people. Ministers across departments are committed to giving children and young people a real say and real choices about the government policies and services they receive. We want to see them contributing to and benefiting from their local communities. We want them to feel heard and valued and be able to make a difference……The result of effective participation should be better policies and services. Getting this right should also help us to achieve our key ambitions for children and young people: preventing and tackling the social exclusion of the significant minority of children who are experiencing poverty and disadvantage; and making sure every young person benefits fully from the services and policies designed to help them.”

“Participation should be built into the departmental or agency values and is reflected in strategic planning, delivery, resourcing, communication and business improvement activities
Opportunities should be provided to enable relevant staff to develop the skills and attitudes to engage effectively with children and young people.”
Lloyd, G & Stead, J, 2001, Inter-agency working to prevent school exclusion, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York

Policies to prevent school exclusion advocate joined-up working. Scotland has a long history of inter-agency working in relation to vulnerable young people. This study focussed on school-based inter-agency meetings in three local authorities. The project explored issues of effectiveness for young people, their perceptions of success, those of their parents, and of relevant professionals. Its findings included:

- School-based inter-agency meetings were central to effective working to avoid or reduce exclusion from school.
- When young people and their carers attended meetings they often found them difficult but felt it was important to be there. There were issues of confidentiality in meetings where they were not present.
- There was evidence of effective support for young people, which reduced exclusion, but there was no single answer. Successful support was built on the individual circumstances and views of young people….. Being flexible, imaginative and just not giving up were crucial.
- The style of support affected how young people and their families received it. Most saw support as effective when professionals were informal, equitable and non-judgemental. Professional role was not seen as important.

Inter-agency work contributed to supporting pupils by:

- providing a joined-up, child-centred perspective on young people's lives
- offering a supportive forum for staff to exchange views and generate ideas
- widening awareness of other strategies and resources outside school
- assessing and planning for individual needs
- planning the contribution of a range of professionals
- reviewing and revising plans and developing additional or different approaches
- providing an avenue to out-of-school provision
- supporting school staff to keep trying with challenging pupils
- supporting staff in relation to school management or colleagues over issues of exclusion
- encouraging professionals to respond to the views and experiences of young people.

Hall, J, 2003, Mentoring and Young People - A Literature Review, University of Glasgow.

This is a comprehensive literature review, which addresses a number of questions including:

- What is mentoring?
- What works?
- What is the evidence for positive outcomes for young people?
- What doesn’t work?

Some of the key findings of the review include:
Mentoring is an ill defined concept.
The best US evidence is that mentoring may have a significant impact on problem or high risk behaviours, academic/educational outcomes and career/employment outcomes.
There is a very poor evidence base in the UK – little evidence to support the claims made.
The US literature has identified a number of key features, which help to make the mentoring schemes successful. These include: screening of prospective mentors, matching of mentors and youth on relevant criteria; on-going supervision and training; structured activities for mentors and youth; parental support and involvement, frequency of contact and length of relationship.
The UK literature reminds us that mentoring needs to be properly integrated into its organisational context and establish appropriate links with other services and opportunities.
The probability of mentoring being successful will reduce if there is social distance and mismatch between mentor and young person, inexpert or untrained mentors, mismatch between aims of mentoring and needs of young person, conflict of roles (is the mentor an advocate or “authority” figure?).
Mentees will react to mentoring schemes according to whether they are congruent with their own values.
There is little in the literature which explores the views of mentees in any depth.


Whilst many young people at risk of or subject to school exclusion will not re-offend the research literature on “what works” with offenders can suggest effective ways of working with young people who have arrange of significant needs.

This report contains an extensive review of the literature. “Research does not identify any single approach as suitable for all young offenders. However the evidence from meta-analyses suggests that programmes most likely to reduce re-offending are programmes designed to improve personal and social skills, those focused on changing behaviour and multiple service programmes combining a number of different approaches.”

Approaches which are holistic in nature and which address a “full range of criminogenic risk factors, including family and environmental factors as well as individual needs appear to contribute to effectiveness.”

“The most consistently effective programmes are multi-modal, tackling the multiple needs of offenders with multiple services. Programmes were also more effective where their content and methods were skills-oriented, concentrating on problem solving and personal and social interaction. Approaches with a cognitive or behavioural (or “cognitive-behavioural”) focus also tended to be more effective.” (p.105).

Effective programmes have a clear rationale linking their stated aims to the method being used. They are adequately resourced to achieve those aims and staff are appropriately trained and supported.
Programmes must be of sufficient intensity and duration to achieve their aims especially with those who are chronic or serious offenders – or at high risk of becoming so.

“Conversely interventions appear unlikely to have much impact if they are given to low risk offenders, use vague unstructured counselling, fail to recognise the influence of families, friends and peers in young offenders lives, are unable to address multiple problems presented by persistent and serious young offenders, including poor mental health and drug and alcohol abuse, are too brief or diluted to establish the conditions in which young offenders can make sustainable changes in their lives, focus on restraint, without significant effort in the direction of rehabilitation.” (p.112).

“As has been noted already, there is considerable degree of overlap between the risk and protection factors for youth crime and those relating to substance abuse, educational underachievement, youthful parenthood and adolescent mental health problems. It is also true therefore, that programmes that can prevent youth crime can contribute to the reduction of these harmful phenomena, which, taken together, underpin social exclusion. The potential benefits, therefore of a more holistic, integrated approach that combines “joined up” planning and working across the fields of health, education and tackling social exclusion cannot be overstated and are clearly established by the research.” (p.122)


The issue of school attendance is currently the focus of intense activity in schools and LEAs in England. It is also a high priority policy concern for which the government has set a target to reduce levels of non-attendance by one third by 2002. Despite these efforts pupils’ absence remains a puzzling and complex problem. This research presents results from a 12-month study of absence from school. The study explored the views of younger pupils, parents, teachers and others working closely with pupils about the causes of absence, the roles parents play in non-attendance, and the measures taken by LEA’s and schools to reduce absence levels. Information was gathered from 13 primary schools and 14 secondary schools in seven LEAs in various parts of England. In all, 143 education professionals, five police service representatives and 528 secondary school pupils were interviewed and 662 primary school pupils and 373 parents completed questionnaires.

A number of important issues emerge from this research which have implications for the way LEAs and schools encourage attendance and deal with poor attendance.

- The causes of truancy are complex. Respondents identify a combination of home, school and individual factors, which cause such pupils to skip school. The problem is unlikely to be resolved by a single approach.
Truancy starts young. Many pupils begin truanting in primary school and continue to do so in secondary school. Therefore, early intervention would be worthwhile to prevent pupils developing the habit.

An unrecognised problem. Although boys are more likely to truant than girls in primary school, the position is reversed in years 7, 8 and 9 in all-white secondary schools.

The causes of truancy are contested. Parents and pupils stress school-related factors as the main cause of truancy, but LEAs and teachers believe that parental attitudes and home environments are more influential.

Truancy causes harm. Most harm is done to truants themselves, who are a minority of the school population. The effects on other pupils and teachers varied, but returning truants disrupt the learning of other pupils, divert the teacher’s attention and frustrate and demoralise teachers.

Truancy is costly. Despite the fact the only a small proportion of pupils are regular truants, LEA’s, teachers and other professionals spend a disproportionate amount of time encouraging good attendance and dealing with poor attendance. The value for money of these measures needs exploring.

Distinguishing authorised and unauthorised absence is unhelpful because schools apply the terms in different ways.

A variety of strategies are employed. LEAs and schools employ a variety of strategies to encourage good attendance and deal with poor attendance. These include electronic registration systems, truancy sweeps, contact with parents and support for pupils with poor attendance. However, the efficacy of each has not been established.

Multi-agency working is advocated. LEAs and schools have begun to work with other agencies in order to address the complexity of truancy.

Schools need to change. Many persistent truants reported that they were bored with school. In addition, they were more easily able to truant when taught by supply teachers. A stronger focus on retaining staff, developing appropriate curricula, teaching styles and school ethos is needed. Very persistent truants may benefit from alternatives to school.


A review of English language literature was conducted to establish research findings on the relationship between parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment in schools.

Key findings:

- Parental involvement takes many forms.
- It is strongly influenced by family social class, maternal level of education, material deprivation, maternal psycho-social health and single parent status and, to a lesser degree, by family ethnicity.
- Parental involvement is strongly positively influenced by the child’s level of attainment.
- The most important finding from the point of view of this review is that parental involvement in the form of “at home good parenting” has a significant positive effect on children’s achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken
out of the equation. In the primary age range the impact caused by different levels of parental involvement is much bigger than differences associated with variations in the quality of schools. The scale of the impact is evident across all social classes and all ethnic groups.

- Research affords a clear model of how parental involvement works. In essence parenting has its influence indirectly through shaping the child’s self-concept as a learner and through setting high aspirations.

Two distinct bodies of literature were discerned. One focused on describing and understanding the nature, extent, determinants and impact of spontaneously occurring parental involvement on children’s educational outcomes. The second body of work is concerned with describing and evaluating attempts to intervene to enhance spontaneous levels of involvement.

“The achievement of working class pupils could be significantly enhanced if we systematically apply all that is known about parental involvement. A programme of parental involvement development initiatives taking the form of multi dimensional intervention programmes, targeted on selected post code areas and steered by a design research process is implicated.”


The project (January 2000 – December 2002) was concerned with factors which affect pupils’ progress between the ages of 7 and 14. It considered the primary side of the transfer divide and the transfer to secondary school and explored some areas where schools can intervene when progress stalls during key stage 3.

One issue explored during this research was how schools might intervene at Key stage 3 when progress stalls.

The project explored how tensions and pressures can lead pupils to adopt particular persona and the difficulties they have in dropping them. In one-to-one discussions some pupils said that they wanted to change from “dossers” or “shirkers” to “workers” but didn’t know how to: some described themselves as “addicted” to “messing about”; some found it difficult to escape the norms of their anti-work peer group; and others felt that their reputations were so indelibly inscribed in teachers’ minds that a fresh start was not possible. Some key observations:

- The process of disengagement can be reversed if pupils feel that significant others in the school are able to see and acknowledge their strengths.
- Anti-work identities, once established, are difficult to change and it is better to intervene early in pupils’ careers. Whatever support is given, it needs to be sustained over a period of time; one off sessions are not enough.
- Things that could make a difference for these pupils include more time in school to talk about difficulties; targets that they can identify themselves; and recognition of effort and small successes.
NFER was asked by the Merseyside Learning Partnership through its Inter Agency Development Programme (IADP) to carry out a study examining the perceived factors influencing pupil disaffection within the three Partnership authorities and how that disaffection was experienced by the youngsters and their families.

The study used qualitative methods, undertaking in-depth interviews with young people who had displayed a range of disaffected behaviour, their parents and teachers.

A number of issues are raised in this research:

- A correlation between non-continuous primary school careers and later disaffection is particularly striking. In a few instances, exclusion was the reason underpinning such movement, but in many other cases, pupil reports suggested relocation was due to family circumstances or sometimes a decision taken by parents because of their child’s difficulties with peer relations. The need to consider early school movement as possibly contiguous with later disaffection may be a useful finding for policy and practice.
- Equally noteworthy are the positive accounts of primary schooling provided by most of the sample. Out rightly disengaged attitudes were reported by pupils (and sometimes parents) to have emerged at later stages of their school career, suggesting that stage 3 and beyond is a common “incubation period” for disaffection. Hence whilst increasing services’ preventative activity in the early and primary years is a well recognised and much promoted policy option, it may be that other manifestations of disaffection, which equally require resources and provision, only emerge during secondary schooling. It was apparent that those with low academic ability were more likely to indicate behaviour difficulties in primary. Overall, given the warm regard with which many of the pupils recounted their primary school experiences, it might be valuable to look at the kinds of learning culture and affective support systems endemic in the primary sector – and how these might be significant for disaffected youngsters.
- Any direct association between disaffected behaviours, single-parent families or those where employment is absent does not stand out.
- The high ranking response of “teachers” as the most disliked aspect of school, whilst highly predictable, perhaps, starkly intimates the breakdown of relations with adults in authority which almost invariably accompanies school disengagement, and adds weight to those who see the re-establishment of positive relations with an adult as a sine qua non in constructing effective strategies to combat disaffection. “the need to change to youngsters attitudes towards these two central components of education [curriculum and teachers] remains a major challenge in resolving disaffection.” (p.23).
- The inevitable popularity of school activity which is physical, collaborative and creative also comes through. Given the notable findings that young peoples’ expression of disaffection was often voiced in terms of physical constraint and physiological discomfort, it may be that policy makers, practitioners and researchers have failed to appreciate the affective experience of school for a highly physically active and sociable young person. The fact that two core subjects (maths and science) rate highly as “disliked” subjects is also noteworthy.
- Breakdown in the learning relationship usually stimulates militant rather than evasive action.
Pupils cite teachers as the key factor, parents indicating the school system’s lack of facilities for supporting the individual child and professionals giving most emphasis to home and community influences.

A common view across all groups is that peers are influential in disaffected behaviour (implications for strategies to address the issue of peer culture and its physical and psychological strength in affecting behaviour and attitudes.

For both truancy and disruption the highest ranking suggestions from pupils were: make lessons more enjoyable; change teachers’ characteristics and; use rewards.

Re-engagement clearly requires a careful calibration of teaching and learning relationships with appropriate curriculum opportunities.

Aspects for alternative provision should include: an alternative curriculum; support for learning needs; support for emotional and behavioural needs.

**Ofsted, 2003, The Education of pupils with medical needs, HMI 1713**

This report outlines the findings from inspections of provision for pupils with medical needs carried out by HMI in 12 local education authorities between September 2002 and March 2003.

“The age of the pupils educated in the services ranged from 6 to over 16. By far the largest numbers are of secondary school age, in particular amongst those with anxiety, depression and phobia.” (p. 5).

The report makes a number of suggestions to improve services to this group of pupils including:

- Clarification of roles and responsibilities of LEA, schools and other agencies.
- Establish stronger links between different parts of the service and between schools and the service, so that expertise can be shared.
- Improve the procedures for monitoring the quality of education provided and evaluating the cost-effectiveness of each part of the service.
- Close liaison between LEA, schools and other agencies in drawing up personal education plans and ensuring continuity of education.
- Ensure there is a named person who is responsible for pupils who cannot attend school as a result of their medical needs.
- “A strong partnership between LEAs, schools, providers and other agencies is necessary if the education for these pupils is to be more effective. As the best practice seen in this survey demonstrated, when there is joint assessment and planning, on-going dialogue and the sharing of resources it proves possible to maintain effectively the momentum of learning for pupils whose lives are disrupted by serious injury or illness.” (p.26)


This chapter draws on evidence from a systematic review of controlled evaluations to reach some conclusions about how school based interventions can influence children’s mental health. Only one UK-based study met the review inclusion criteria. A much greater volume of work has come from the USA.
“Longer term more integrated approaches seem to offer a better chance of lasting improvements in children’s mental well-being. The health promoting schools approach, which addresses the school ethos and environment and the wider community as well as the curriculum, may offer a better chance of contributing to children’s positive mental well-being in the longer term than interventions directed at specific outcomes relating to mental health.”

Conclusions: School based interventions can have significant impact on the mental health of the general population of children. The majority of studies included in the review demonstrated a positive impact on a mental health related outcome. Benefits have been shown in interventions with a wide range of approaches, from changes in systems and environment affecting the whole school and community, to changes in the class environment or teacher behaviour, and intermittent approaches directed at developing specific skills or behaviours, improving achievement or promoting specific affective outcomes.

The diversity of interventions, and sometimes the absence of information, made it less easy to identify attributes responsible for their success, but there were some common factors.

Most of the interventions were relatively brief, intermittent, and class-based approaches, and these were the least likely to be effective. Maintenance of effect was only assessed in a minority of studies, but longer–term benefits were more likely after longer interventions. Approaches aimed at health promoting outcomes were more numerous, and generally more likely to be effective than those with a preventive focus, but there was a great deal of overlap between the two.

There is evidence to support the effectiveness of a multifaceted whole school approach, which may also involve the community, and of environmental changes within the school. There is some limited evidence to support the benefit of changes in teacher behaviour or learning environments, and increasing educational achievement can also improve mental health outcomes. Skills such as social skills can be taught in schools but an associated impact on affective outcomes was not demonstrated conclusively. It is also possible to increase children’s understanding of emotions through classroom intervention. Relaxation training has some potential in reducing stress and anxiety. Interventions aimed at reducing suicide potential, and reward-based or curriculum based interventions aiming to reduce problem behaviour, both had some immediate impact but long-term effects were not demonstrated.

Organisation and service development


Although the report focuses on services to older people it could be argued that all of the main points are equally applicable for re-designing and developing services for challenging pupils.
“The core issue addressed is how a range of service providers in a complex system of care can work together to promote integrated care”.

“Services for older people must work together if they are to meet people’s needs effectively. Many different agencies provide services and all too often they provide a disjointed, confused response when older people need help or advice, meeting only some of their needs, some of the time.”

This report suggests that whole system working takes place when:

- All services are organised around the user.
- All the players recognise that they are interdependent and understand that action in one part of the system has an impact elsewhere.
- The following are all shared:
  - vision
  - objectives
  - action, including redesigning services
  - resources
  - risk
  - users experience services as seamless and the boundaries between organisations are not apparent to them.

The report suggest that complex systems are inherently unpredictable, so attempts to control them through detailed planning and performance management are bound to fail. Minimum specifications, or simple rules, are more likely to engage creativity and encourage change.

“The experience of the study sites showed that simplicity is essential when building a shared whole system vision. There a number of sites in which the strength of the shared vision was clear, because all interviewees described the local direction and aspirations for older people's services in the same brief, clear terms. These may not have been recorded in formal planning documents, but had emerged over time and had been communicated up, down and across the system until they became the foundation of local activity. Complex systems are driven by a shared purpose so clarity and brevity of the statement of purpose is essential.”

An important early step in understanding the local whole system and in improving the way it operates is to map existing services, referral patterns and routes, and the pathways older people take between them. This will highlight any bottle necks in the system, as well as any duplication or gaps in services. The mapping process can take place on two levels:

- system level (creating a map of the services available and the flow between them)
- individual level (tracking the experiences of individual older people as a way of highlighting local issues).
It is suggested that service mapping can highlight systems issues, which demand a radical response at either a strategic or operational level, for example, by creating integrated services to reduce duplication.

The report quotes ten principles that have been used to guide efforts to redesign the US health care system:

- care is based on continuous healing relationships (i.e. continuity of care)
- care is customised according to patient needs and values
- the patient is the source of control
- knowledge is shared and information flows freely
- decision making is evidence based
- safety is a system property
- transparency is necessary
- needs are anticipated
- waste is continuously decreased
- co-operation among clinicians is a priority.

A successful whole system of care, in which services are organised around the older person, requires three key elements:

- a shared vision which is rooted in the views of older people
- a comprehensive range of services, including prevention services, which are delivered by flexible, multi-professional teams
- a way of guiding/accompanying older people through the system to make sure that they receive what they need, when they need it.

“The whole system will only operate smoothly if it contains both an appropriate local balance of services and robust processes for getting into and moving around these.”

What is the underpinning infrastructure required for successful whole system working?

- Leadership at a senior level in developing a whole system approach to older people’s services.
- Organisational culture which adopts a “can do” approach, is willing to take risks, flexible pragmatic work style, entrepreneurialism.
- Information flows easily between organisations and professionals with the full consent and participation of clients.
- Workforce planning to ensure that role development reflects the skills required
- The involvement of clients in service planning and development.
- Team working – the experience of all the research sites suggests that multi-professional, multi-agency teams are one of the most important routes for delivering integrated care within a whole system setting.

In conclusion, the Audit Commission suggests the following steps towards delivery:
start with the views and aspirations of older people
understand your local whole system
invest in development capacity
encourage small scale innovation
ensure there are well placed enthusiasts at key points in the whole system
exploit the opportunities for new alliances
create mechanisms to ensure that new approaches and ways of working penetrate mainstream services
monitor progress.

All of the above discussion is applicable for addressing service developments for pupils with complex needs.


These authors discuss those characteristics of organisations and systems that encourage innovation and service development. These authors list the key features of learning organisations as:

- Open systems thinking – the need to recognise the inter-connectedness of professional activities.
- Improving individual capabilities – the expectation is that individuals will constantly improve their proficiency but within the context of delivering health and social care through team working.
- Team learning – the importance of the development of the whole team.
- Updating mental models – identifying the mental models that people within different agencies hold about their profession, their organisation and their partner agencies and the ways in which these models constrain what people see as possible within and between organisations.
- A cohesive vision – developing a shared cohesive vision of common aims.

Primary specific literature

Francis Rickford, 2003, Primary Concerns, Community Care, Feb 27th.

Whole school approaches recognise that behaviour issues are partly a function of more general relationships in the school. – E.g. circle time, nurture groups, and lunchtime policies which introduce organised activities during playtime.

“Bewildering range of services to support children’s behaviour.” (“Intervening Early” DfES)

Circle times and nurture groups appear to be beneficial for those children with socialisation problems.

Interventions targeted at individuals are more likely to work in schools with a supportive ethos.

“Schools were positioned on a continuum: at one end, the “excluding” school isolated the “difficult child” and treated the child and family as the problem. At the other end, the school worked hard to promote a positive environment, anchoring the whole process of promoting mental, emotional and social health in their work and ethos.”

Support and inclusion for children with the greatest social and learning needs are being compromised because of the competitive culture in schools. The “current competitive climate of standards, attainment and formal academic curriculum” does not readily leave room for wider emotional and mental health needs.

Support agencies need to improve joint working and involve families.


What needs to be in place to support an intervention?

- positive support and leadership of the head-teacher and governors is essential
- staff involvement and understanding of the principles
- relevant policies e.g. anti-bullying, racism, homophobia etc.
- good links with other agencies
- home school partnerships
- resources (e.g. staff time)
- range and flexibility of interventions
- a whole school approach: developing ethos throughout the school, all children involved, groups/individuals not singled out, common language and set of principles throughout the school.

Specific Interventions

Circle time: can address socialisation problems, opportunity for shy children to have a voice.

Golden Rules: all members of the school discuss golden rules.

Nurturing Programmes: specific approaches to discipline etc that is reinforced throughout the school. Also can include parents. Address relationship skills.

You can do it! Education. Positive mindset for achievement. Confidence, persistence, organisation, and getting along.

Range of small group interventions e.g. groups that also address individual stress of families – support parents under stress.
Evans, J, Harden, A, Thomas J, Benefield P, 2003, Interventions for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties in primary Schools, NFER.

This is a systematic review of the research evidence relating to the effectiveness of strategies to support primary teachers to maintain disruptive children in their classes.

The review aimed to summarise existing research findings about effective strategies for supporting primary-aged pupils with EBD in mainstream classrooms in order to inform and guide professional practice. Potential users of the review were classified as primary classroom teachers, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs), heads and deputies, advisers and educational psychologists, parents and school governors, policy-makers and researchers.

The specific review question was:

**What are effective strategies to support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream primary classrooms?**

Emotional and behavioural difficulties can be seen as a continuum from infrequent episodes of problem behaviour which any child might be expected to experience to more persistent problems indicating an underlying medical or psychiatric condition. This review is focused on the middle range of this continuum and so excluded studies which focused on strategies for general discipline problems and those which focused on drug or psychiatric treatment. Our review was also influenced by a more context-based approach to EBD, where behaviour is seen as a response to particular situations or classroom/school organisation and environment. In line with this, we also sought studies which examined whole class strategies for their impact on pupils with EBD.

The kinds of strategies that have been evaluated by research to date have been underpinned by three main underlying groups of theoretical models. These are **behavioural** models, based on learning theory, which suggests that there is a linear relationship between behaviour and its outcomes for an individual; **cognitive behavioural** models, which are an elaboration of learning theory to take account of the capacity of individuals to understand and reflect on their behaviour; and **systemic** models which take account of the organisational context within which inappropriate behaviour occurs and attempt to change behaviour by modifying the context. The majority of the outcome evaluations we identified evaluated strategies based on behavioural or cognitive behavioural strategies (n=11 and n=14 respectively). Few evaluated strategies based on systemic models (n=4).

**Which strategies are effective for supporting primary aged children with EBD in mainstream classrooms?**

The following summarises what is currently known and not known from this systematic review about the effectiveness of strategies for supporting primary-aged pupils with EBD in mainstream classrooms.
a. Strategies based on behavioural models

Of the four sound studies which evaluated this type of strategy, two were judged by reviewers to clearly demonstrate positive effects. These were implemented with whole classes of children aged between seven and 10 in the USA and appear to be relatively simple for teachers to implement. Common to all was the provision of rewards such as minutes of free-time for play (sometimes with chosen peers) or listening to music for on-task and non-disruptive behaviour, and loss of rewards for off-task and disruptive behaviour. Teachers used visual aids such as graphs or symbols (e.g. smiley faces, red ribbons) to illustrate to children how well they were progressing towards receiving a reward. Reductions in off-task and disruptive behaviour amongst pupils with EBD were immediate and restricted to the period that the strategy was in place. Because of the whole class nature of these interventions, an element of peer support and pressure appears to be important for the success of these strategies.

Other types of strategies based on this model have not yet been sufficiently evaluated. Those identified by our review were assertive discipline (a package involving classroom rules posted for the whole class; reviewing these rules each day and the consequences of breaking them; and rewards for good behaviour); daily report cards sent to parents who are then responsible for determining rewards and sanctions; and training teacher to increase the amount of praise they give to children.

b. Strategies based on cognitive behavioural models for disruptive or off-task behaviour

Strategies based on this model strive for longer term changes and tend to require more intensive or longer intervention periods. Evidence for the effectiveness of this type of strategy for reducing off-task or disruptive behaviour was found to be limited to one study in this review. This study showed that an eight hour programme teaching children a self-instruction technique to monitor their own behaviour was effective amongst seven to nine year olds in the USA. This programme, taught by a researcher outside of the classroom, involved adult and peer modelling of the self-instruction; practising self-instruction and cueing to remind the children what they had been taught.

Other types of strategies based on this model and delivered by regular classroom teachers require further rigorous evaluation. Those identified by our review were a technique called ‘responsive instruction’ in which teachers are trained to better engage children who demonstrate a lack of initiative in learning and playing through taking the child’s perspective and challenging the child to take an active role; and a strategy which involved children learning how to recognise bad behaviour and the consequences of it. A further study highlighted the need for more work on whether complex packages involving several different strategies are more successful (e.g. peer tutoring combined with social skills training, home-school communication systems and rewards and sanctions).
c. Strategies based on cognitive behavioural models for reducing aggression or improving social skills

The four sound studies which evaluated this type of strategy aimed to reduce what they saw as the root cause of aggressive or socially inappropriate behaviour – feelings of anger or poorly developed social skills. In more detail, one strategy involved a ten session counselling programme for aggressive nine to 12 year old boys and girls in the USA in which a trained counsellor helped children deal with their feelings of anger and frustration; another involved a similar counselling programme for boys aged 11 years (also in the USA), but this also contained a teacher-training element to develop an awareness of the issues these children were facing; a 20 week social skills training programme for eight and nine year old children in Australia; and a strategy named ‘role-reversal’ in which seven year old aggressive boys in the USA were trained to monitor others disruptive behaviour. All four studies showed positive effects of these strategies immediately after the intervention but none showed long-term effects.

Because of the small numbers of sound studies it is not possible at the present time to build up a detailed picture of the essential components of these types of interventions. Variations on the above strategies have been tried out (e.g. training in conflict resolution; teaching children to value each other and raise each other’s self-esteem) but require more rigorous evaluation.

d. Strategies based on systemic models

This review found evidence from only one rigorous study about the effectiveness of these types of strategies. This was carried out in the UK and demonstrated that changing the seating arrangements in classes from groups to rows had a positive impact on time on task, particularly for the most distractible pupils.

e. Factors which may relate to successful implementation

Seven outcome evaluations included a process evaluation which examined factors relating to the implementation and acceptability of strategies. Views were sought from children, teachers or other providers on their experiences of the strategies. For teachers, the simplicity and acceptability of a particular strategy; consistent implementation by teams of teachers across the school; and avoidance of implementing strategies in ‘top-down’ fashion were important for a strategy’s successful implementation. Consulting and listening to children were important for ensuring the acceptability of a particular strategy and in highlighting the differences between their definitions of a successful strategy compared to teachers or researchers.

The researchers point out that there is a “lack of clarity about the effectiveness of a number of widely-used strategies”.
Secondary specific literature

Harry Daniels, Ted Cole, Edward Sellman, Jane Sutton, John Visser, Julie Bedward, 2003, Study of young people permanently excluded from school; School of Education, University of Birmingham, Research Brief No. 405, DfES.

This study tracked the post-exclusion careers of 193 young people (aged 13 – 16) from a representative sample of ten English LEA’s. The study investigated the impact of pre- and post-exclusion processes, provision and outcomes on the life chances of the young people during the two years of their exclusion (prior to new policy and when Connexions still in infancy.

Factors important in achieving engagement in education training and employment (50% were so engaged):

- Young people had belief in their abilities.
- Ongoing support after the permanent exclusion from a link worker or other skilled LEA staff.
- Supportive family members or friends who helped to “network”.

No one type of provision was associated with achieving more successful outcomes.

Re-integration into mainstream schools often failed. However it was possible in highly inclusive schools when well supported by the LEA; or when the young person was determined to make a success of the new mainstream school placement.

Those who offended prior to exclusion continued to offend. Half the sample was post exclusion offenders.

Actual or threatened assaults were the main reason for exclusions.

“Skilled, experienced staff, whatever the type of provision, were crucial to successful outcomes. There remained a need for improved inter-agency working in support of excluded pupils.”

Young people who had received more fixed-term exclusions prior to their permanent exclusion were more likely to be disengaged.

Young people in employment had often used family contacts / networks to obtain their job.

It is difficult to force young people who have been permanently excluded down routes they actively resist. Policy and practice have to be built upon the client perspective, taking into account:

- What motivates the young person in the present and likely future.
- What the young person believes s/he is capable of achieving in the present and the likely future.
“This study showed a variety of professionals building upon the client perspective across a range of sites. Where staff, with adequate resources, had skill and commitment, the prognosis could be relatively positive for many of the young people. Policy and practice, therefore, need to promote a variety of ways of working by staff, matching provision to an ongoing review of the young person’s needs but building upon his/her strengths. This can help young people to break into their sometimes engrained negative patterns of behaviour or undue expectancy of failure. This tends to be achieved by the strength of the relationship and a growing respect between young person and whoever becomes the “significant other” to the young person.”

Vicky Harris, Terri Van Leeson, June Thorburn, 2002, Evaluation of the Post Sixteen Projects for Include, Norfolk and Brent, University of East Anglia.

The Youth Justice Board commissioned the evaluation of two projects run by Include, a national charity that aims to provide alternative education or training for young people (aged 16-18) who have either been either excluded or have not attended mainstream education for some time.

The evaluation looked to establish whether either project reduced the risk of crime by reintegrating these young people into education, training and employment.

Negative experiences at home and school had led to a dislike of social situations and a lack of opportunities to develop social skills.

Since participating in the programme, the students’ social interactions had improved considerably.

Being welcomed and being part of a small group, plus the combination of formal education with positive social experiences (such as days out and project work) contributed to their increased sense of social ease.

Two outstanding themes of the research centred on their positive relationships with staff and improved confidence that training and education had given them.

Nearly all students identified the biggest plus as the care and support they had received from project staff and, in particular, the project manager.

Students commented on the “Laid back atmosphere”, “being treated like adults”.

Help and support they received in other areas, for example, with housing, and other practical matters, was also a crucial part of their experience.

Reduced use of drugs and alcohol was attributed to less contact with “undesirables” and “increased interest in building a future.”
Empathy of staff more important than the content of the course and that trust and empathy are all important. The young people reported that the daily sense of feeling safe, secure and supported was fundamental in being able to achieve a sense of achievement and social inclusion. They were thus reluctant to harm or break this by re-offending.

The key findings seemed to contradict the main direction of current policy, which lays great emphasis on the need to address exclusively address criminal factors, rather than take a holistic view which acknowledges the complexities of these young people’s daily social reality.

Any approach which offers a standardised approach and ignores the worker/client relationship may be mistaken – importance of the relationship with the project manager.

**Alex Dobson, 2003, A Useful Exercise?, Community Care, Feb 27th.**

Evaluation of Skillforce – an army backed programme of outdoor pursuits and life skills offering an alternative route to inclusion, which currently targets 14-16 year olds.

Attendance is two half days a week.

Exclusions reduced by 70% and non-attendance by 90%.

There is the opportunity to learn a range of vocational skills. – drop two GCSE’s. Work towards key skills, such as communicating better and solving problems through written assignments and library research. There is an in-built flexibility to the programme, which allows support to be tailored to individual needs.

Staff provided positive male role models.

The programme offers young people the chance to develop competence and confidence in practical skills, which the traditional school curriculum cannot provide.


A study, which compared a pilot school-based family social work service in project schools with a “standard” service in two comparative schools. It demonstrated significantly better outcomes in the project schools, halving truancy, reducing delinquency, and improving teachers’ morale and pupils’ educational achievements.
The project was based on an analysis of psychosocial factors related to poor outcomes namely:
aspects of family functioning, socio-economic circumstances, the school context, peer culture and
situational factors.

The intervention was “cluster based” (secondary with primary feeder schools).

Aspects of the successful service:

- dedicated project Education Social Worker (qualified, skilled, experienced)
- access to teacher counsellor
- school based
- speed of response (early intervention)
- availability of service
- intensity of service (much smaller caseload than average)
- pro-active nature
- co-ordination function – increasing collaboration of other agencies
- advocacy, referral, co-ordination
- catalyst around which virtuous spirals could be established
- reasonable level of resources, flexibility of role, minimal bureaucracy
- range of alternative curriculum provision (key stage four).

Over time the service moved from crisis to early intervention.

The service was found to be cost-effective along a range of measures.

Schnelling, K & Dew-Hughes, D, 2002, A Solution to Exclusion – a total involvement model
to support pupils and reduce exclusions, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, Vol 7(4),
229-240.

This research is the first phase of an ongoing research programme.

A total involvement project in a mainstream secondary school was initiated by an LEA as part of
their restructuring of support for pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Holistic model of support – total involvement of pupils, parents, school and other professionals is
the defining feature of the initiative.

Schools role was to initiate and take responsibility for delivering individual packages of support. It
acted as both the primary co-ordinator and the ultimate agency for delivery.

The total involvement project was founded on the following principles:

- Accurate and easily accessible information – continuous monitoring of incidents / absences –
  early intervention.
- Individual support packages targeting pupils’ specific areas of difficulty.
The delivery of support by multi-disciplinary teams.
- The programme was delivered through a whole school approach (staff development, staff mentoring).
- Personal involvement of parents and pupils.

“Initial evaluation of the project indicated that exclusion numbers have been reduced, the school’s behavioural management structure has been improved, and a higher quality of support for pupils is offered at earlier stages.” (p. 229)


This Home Office Programme Development Unit project places social work trained home-school support workers in three secondary schools to support pupils at risk of exclusion and keep them in mainstream education. It provided targeted assistance to children whose challenging behaviour indicates the possibility of later offending. The project aimed to reduce the number of school exclusions and to promote a cohesive local authority response.

The home-school support workers’ role included:

- befriending
- offering in depth ongoing counselling and support
- using individual approaches and group work to improve, for example, anger management, self-esteem and relationships with peers
- advocacy and mediation between pupil and peers, teachers, parents/carers
- identifying out-of-school leisure activities and facilitating participation
- advising on personal, social and health problems
- referral to other agencies.

The research showed that in four of the five schools the involvement of the support worker was seen as greatly reducing the number of exclusions, particularly fixed-term ones. The reasons for this are discussed.


The Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF), which was launched in September 1999, aims to re-engage disaffected and disengaged young people aged 13 to 19 back into education, training or employment. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is funding over 660 NSF projects in 40 disadvantaged areas in England. Three Managing Agents deliver NSF through local voluntary and community-based organisations that offer a range of activities and support for young people. The
results reported here are the key findings from research carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research between July 2001 and March 2002.

Initial engagement

In engaging young people in NSF projects, staff identified the need to take time to build a relationship with potential clients and gain their trust and emphasised the importance of designing activities that captivated the interest of the young people. Some projects offered young people the opportunity to sample projects on a ‘taster’ basis. They also noted that the style of delivery needed to be informal and as unlike school as possible in order to encourage participation. Clients’ needs were usually assessed on an ongoing basis.

Sustaining involvement

Projects adopted a range of strategies to sustain the involvement of young people who had rejected other forms of learning. These included providing a structure with flexibility and support, working with clients on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, and using a variety of short activities with frequent breaks. They stressed the importance of showing respect to clients and being non-judgmental. Staff also involved clients in taking decisions about provision.

Client views

Clients valued the security and support that projects offered them. They found project workers helpful and good at listening to them and understanding their needs. They appreciated the informal style of delivery and were motivated most by practical, creative and leisure activities.

Outcomes

More than a third (35 per cent) of clients who had left NSF projects had moved on to education, training, or employment with training, and a further 16 per cent had gone on to other positive outcomes, including Learning Gateway, New Deal, employment without training or voluntary work.

Around one in ten had left for other reasons, including, for example, health reasons, starting a custodial sentence, or to support a family.

Clients from ethnic minority groups were more likely than white clients to have moved on to education, training or employment with training. Clients who had spent a month or less on a project were significantly less likely then other clients to have moved on to further learning. Clients with serious personal issues, such as homelessness and alcohol or drug dependency, were less likely than other clients to go on to further learning.

Project staff reported that clients were working towards or had achieved a range of qualifications, including the ASDAN Bronze Award, NVQs, Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) and the National Youth Achievement Award.

Young people and project workers identified a range of other gains made by clients which underpinned their progress and transition. These included: enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem, increased career aspirations, enhanced IT and communication skills, improved literacy, and improved behaviour.
Project Worker Views

Project workers were positive about the overall structure of the NSF which allowed them to work as flexibly as necessary to re-engage young people. They considered that the local targeting of NSF resources was strength because it enabled them to respond to young people’s needs at appropriate times and locations. Project workers valued the infrastructure of support provided by the Managing Agents which gave them access to advice and guidance.

Future Developments

There was a high level of commitment among case-study projects to working with disengaged young people. They identified three main requirements for sustaining this type of provision: funding, staffing and developing links.

Project workers pointed out that the type of work that they undertook with young people, where they had to deal with their often considerable personal problems as well as learning needs, was very labour intensive and required appropriate funding.

Projects noted the importance of recruiting and retaining good quality staff that had the right mix of skills required for meeting the needs of a very demanding client group. This was a growing challenge given the increasingly competitive market for workers with these skills.

Projects acknowledged that the links they had with local agencies and organisations could be developed further and strengthened. This would enable them to draw more substantially on the resources in the local community in order to recruit and re-engage disaffected young people.


From January 1998 to March 1999 the Institute of Education, University of London undertook a research project funded by the Department for Education and Employment to evaluate the pilot projects supported under the Truancy, Disruptive and Disaffected Pupils category of the GEST 15c (Standards Fund) programme. The programme included three types of project: Multi-disciplinary behaviour support teams; the secondment of teachers from mainstream schools to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs); and In-school centres for pupils at risk of exclusion.

The context of the projects - to reduce exclusion from school three levels of intervention are required: whole school development work; class-based work; and work with individual pupils. The pilot projects addressed each of these three levels with a variety of emphases and combinations. The evidence from the research suggested a need for all three types of interventions. The particular combinations of geographical, social and educational context within which individual projects were established were important in determining the type of intervention necessary to complement existing provision and satisfy local needs.
The development of projects over time - the evidence suggested that successful projects evolved throughout their duration. Projects, which consulted and established needs from the outset and developed effective communication and collaboration, established the basis for the long-term development of good practice embedded in the life of the school. Successful projects assisted people within schools and those associated with them in a variety of ways; pupils with the responsibility for their own behaviour; teachers with the development of a wider range of skills and the confidence to use them and parents with understanding and an active role to play. This took time and, over time, needs and priorities changed. Successful projects adapted accordingly.

The setting up of multi-disciplinary behaviour support teams and in-school centres is not of itself guaranteed to reduce exclusions from school. Projects effective in reducing exclusions were implemented with the full commitment of school management; involved the whole school; included parents; and placed the responsibility for their behaviour on pupils. Where these criteria were satisfied the projects had cost benefits in the short and longer term; promoted a more positive school ethos; and generated change which is likely to continue in the long-term. “Their impact on the long term social inclusion of those children receiving support will benefit not only their future prospects but society as a whole”.

The evidence suggested no one type of intervention was more or less successful but successful projects, regardless of type, were those which:

- Complemented existing provision aimed at reducing exclusions.
- Were established to satisfy local geographical considerations.
- Evolved over the three years of funding.
- Consulted and defined needs from the outset.
- Established effective collaboration with all parties concerned.
- Established the basis for long term change.
- Assisted in establishing practices in the mainstream which became the norm.
- Involved the whole school staff team, including managers and support staff.
- Had positive effects on teacher behaviour, enabling them to develop a wide range of skills and the confidence to use them.
- Gave pupils responsibility for their behaviour.
- Gave parents an active role.
- Developed an understanding of the issues for all concerned.


This was a follow-up of an earlier study of work on children excluded from primary school.

46% received further primary school exclusions and over a 36% received exclusions in their secondary school.
75% of the children were involved with at least one agency associated with difficulties in school, at home or in the community.

Some evidence that attainment may be a protective factor both in the number of exclusions and individual's overall outcomes.

“Factors contributing to successful outcomes: Overall findings underline the argument for early intervention. Evidence from the analysis of case records indicates that the type of intervention needs to be flexible, recognise individual strengths and abilities and include an adult who continued to believe in the child’s ability to “make a go of it”.


This research report, commissioned by the DfES presents young people’s experiences and views of the Learning gateway. The Learning gateway provided support for young people aged 16-18 who were not participating in education, training or employment. It was provided through the Careers Service via individually tailored support packages.

The young people’s backgrounds and lifestyles revealed that many faced major challenges linked to multiple disadvantage. These include dealing with accommodation problems and coping with poverty and unstable family environments.

Low levels of self confidence and self esteem were common. Whilst some had poor motivation and time keeping, others displayed anger and frustration or were suspicious of those in positions of authority. Some young people had serious personal problems related to a history of offending, substance misuse, and pregnancy and parenthood.

Positive experiences were associated with having developed a trusting relationship with a PA who was someone they could talk to, who would listen to them, and who would do their best to help sort out their problems. Practical support in making job applications and job-search strategies was another valued aspect of front end provision.

Programmes of life skills were appreciated which were individually tailored to meet the needs and interests of the young people, and which included work placements or outward bound activities. Courses were also welcomed which provided training in practical tasks, help with finding placements and with developing job-search skills.

Young people appreciated courses which were conducted in a friendly, adult working environment.

Outcomes included a range of personal, learning and skills developments.
Littlechild, B, Rees, T, 2003, Research in Practice, Community Care, April 10th.

This article reports on the Young Citizens Project - a scheme in Hertfordshire to reduce the risk of social exclusion and offending among young people. The Young Citizens Project was set up to:

- Identify and work with young people whom two or more agencies were concerned were most at risk of becoming disaffected and offending.
- Identify blockages in the systems that serve young people, their families or carers and peers, and establish collective working practices across the main agencies.

The project was initially joint funded between 1997 and 2002 by the Youth Justice Board and Hertfordshire County Council, which now solely funds it. The project works individually and with groups of 10 to 17 year olds and their families. It intervenes in cases of family conflicts, parenting problems, offending or anti-social behaviour, educational problems and aggressive behaviour.

An important innovation in the project was consultation meetings with parents, young people and relevant professionals. These helped to consider ways to minimise risk factors for the young person, from a needs led perspective.

To gain the views of young people, focus groups and individual interviews were used. Activities and anger management groups were well received, but the most important element for the young people was the nature of the relationships with project workers. This provided comments such as “I can talk with/trust/have confidence in them.” They perceived they had received positive help to deal with, for example, family conflicts, getting back into school, preparing themselves for college, work or independent living and their problematic attitudes to police or teachers.

Overall, the research suggested that the project developed valuable interventions and services, as evaluated by parents, young people and other agencies, which would otherwise have been unavailable. It also showed the importance of voluntary, non-judgemental project interventions, with a take up rate of more than 90 per cent. It confirmed the positive work of the project in “gluing” together and co-ordinating activities from different agencies.


The main aim of this research, part of the Local Government Association’s Educational Research Programme, was to find out what sorts of alternative programmes schools used, what the students did on these schemes, and whether the programmes were effective in making a positive difference. The majority view of those involved in the research was that, such programmes could make the vital difference between success and failure, between social inclusion and social exclusion for the students involved. The programmes could also have positive effects on families, schools, the organisations participating and, as a result on local communities.
Key factors identified in effective provision for alternative curriculum programmes included:

**A supportive school context**

A supportive school context enabled effective provision for the alternative curriculum programmes by:

- Location of ‘the problem’ within the school itself, using data relating to disaffection, truancy, and underachievement as indicative of the necessity for curriculum reform to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Recognition of the need to extend or complement the key stage 4 curriculum through close relationships with external providers, whose approaches to engaging young people in learning were allowed to feed back to the school and influence the regular curriculum as appropriate.
- A willingness to learn from experience and regard alternative provision as part of a developmental process.
- A senior management team who regarded the alternative programme as part of a whole-school approach to teaching and learning and enabled it to operate effectively.
- The appointment as coordinator of a teacher who was given sufficient time and had sufficient status, professional experience, personal skills and motivation to carry out all the required tasks effectively.
- The involvement of a range of teachers within the school – reinforcing the point that the alternative curriculum programme was a whole-school responsibility.

**A supportive local context**

A supportive local context enabled effective provision to be made for alternative curriculum programmes by offering:

- A wide range of external agencies willing to work with schools in supporting 14 to 16-year-olds.
- Local coordination of alternative provision.
- Local awareness of social exclusion indicators leading to the development of local policies and partnerships which then addressed the problems within the community, for mutual benefit.
- Support from the LEA, willing to facilitate schools’ access to what was available.

The local context was further enhanced when it was also tied in to:

- Support from government policies and initiatives.
- Support from national non-governmental organisations.

**Selection procedures**

Key features of selection procedures that enabled effective provision of alternative curriculum programmes included:

- The offer of alternative programmes only when all other internal curriculum options and strategies had been tried with pupils.
- Efforts to ensure access to alternative programmes to all who would benefit and to prevent negative attitudes towards such programmes – attitudes emerging both from comparisons with
regular programmes and from reluctance of pupils to participate on account of concerns arising from issues of gender, socio-economic background and ethnicity.

- A balance between the need to address pupils’ needs and the need to give opportunities to succeed within the socially valued mainstream.

**Sustaining collaborative partnerships**

Collaborative partnerships between schools and other organisations helped alternative curriculum programmes to operate effectively by underpinning:

- Easy access to a range of off-site provision.
- Understanding on the part of schools of the range of ways in which partner organisations might be involved.
- Out-of-school tutors with well developed skills in working with young people who might prove a challenge.
- A good understanding on the part of schools of the interests, aspirations and preferences of the participating young people.
- A clear identification of partner organisations’ preconditions for participation.
- An appropriate match of young person and external placement.
- Early and regular liaison between schools and potential providers.

**Encouraging and acknowledging achievement**

Effective alternative curriculum programmes encouraged and acknowledged achievement. This was enabled by:

- An investigation into the range of alternative accreditation available.
- The selection of certification that was familiar to employers locally or that was recognised nationally.
- Accreditation that was flexible – for example, that could be gained in a modular fashion.
- Accreditation that could act as a basis for entry level courses.
- Accreditation which was appropriately designed for progression.
- Ways of celebrating achievement that helped to present a positive image of the alternative curriculum programme.

**Monitoring, review and evaluation**

Monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the alternative curriculum programmes helped to increase their effectiveness. These processes required:

- Consideration about how evidence could be collected to show the programme’s contribution.
- Consideration of the timing and phases of evaluation.
- Consideration of collection of different types of evidence.
- Efforts to ensure that stakeholders agreed on criteria for judging success or, at least, were aware of the different perceptions of this and the way in which they fitted together.
- Use of evaluation data to inform and develop future programmes.

When asked about tangible outcomes for young people participating in alternative curriculum programmes, adults interviewed during the course of the research cited many examples of individual triumphs and of the way the lives of individual your people had been turned round by
involvement in the scheme. In all cases, the salient feature was that a greater range of life chances had been made available to the young person concerned, largely because his/her attention had been focused on what s/he could do within an environment which was prepared to meet such young people at least half-way and show that it had room for them.

“As this paper has suggested, inclusion requires attention to be paid to inputs (the social milieu in which the young people live), processes (the programmes themselves) and outcomes. In a society that allows a widening gap between rich and poor, inclusion for our more vulnerable young people is likely to be achieved through alternative programmes at key stage 4. While the best of these programmes can and do improve young people’s life chances, the sense that they offer a “quick fix” to social exclusion must be resisted.” (p. 13).


This article, based on a small research project in two secondary schools in one Scottish education authority, looks at moves to reduce exclusions. The research focussed on the personal perceptions of “insiders” (school based, pupils and parents).

The overarching strategies which appeared successful across both schools were:

- identifying “at risk” pupils early
- recognising individual pupil needs
- tailoring support at the right time
- monitoring and reviewing support.

By ensuring that a named person had responsibility for collating information about pupils’ behaviour and responding quickly to events, and by having a “key worker” available for classroom support and staff development, these schools were gradually changing their cultures. The concept of positive pupil support was based on:

- enhancing the experiences of all pupils
- promoting inclusiveness
- providing opportunities for all pupils to develop more positive school identities and belief in themselves
- enhancing positive interpersonal relations.

Interviews with the majority of staff revealed a commitment to:

- keeping people out of trouble and “on track”
- vigilant monitoring – the “watching brief”

Key strategies in achieving these aims were:
- using non-confrontational ways of working
- adopting a more “therapeutic approach rather than punitive measures
- relating to pupils as individuals rather than as general categories
- viewing problems collectively with a shared ownership.

Staff were striving to keep pupils with problems (not problem pupils) “on track” and were prepared to shift boundaries to accommodate those in danger of falling out of mainstream to prevent pupils becoming “outsiders”. Though details varied, each school had developed a common and seemingly effective approach involving a shift in ethos away from punishment to a more diagnostic and supportive stance. A “watching brief” was kept on pupils with problems aimed at keeping potential excludes “on track”. Schools “A” and “B” (the subject of this study), managed to create an ethos of greater inclusiveness based on expectations of achievement and positive behaviour from pupils. One indication of cultural change was the tendency to see children with behavioural difficulties as individuals who need varied support. A team approach was deemed appropriate for solving pupil difficulties. Support systems worked positively within a “framework of entitlement” to enhance the experience of all pupils, not merely potential excludees. The schools appeared to be creating and developing opportunities for young people to believe in themselves. They attempted to develop pupils’ self-esteem creating a cultural expectation “that each person can achieve personally was well as academically. The schools were in effect avoiding the potential processes of negative labelling with its tendency of “emphasising what individuals cannot do”.

The strategy involves more than avoiding negative labelling. It positively employs a “watching brief” to prevent pupils getting into situations in which their behaviour might be viewed negatively.

Lloyd, G, Stead, J, Kendrick, A, (2003), Joined up approaches to prevent school exclusion, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, Vol.8 (1) 77-91

This article explores findings from a recent research project and contextualises these in a discussion of some current thinking about inclusion and exclusion. Although the research found that it was possible to prevent disciplinary exclusions from school and that inter-agency working was central to this, nevertheless strategies for preventing disciplinary exclusion often meant that young people were no longer very fully included in mainstream school curriculum.

Support appeared to be most effective when it was built on the individual circumstances and views of young people – the right help at the right time.

Being flexible, imaginative and just not giving up were central to successful interventions. The style in which support was offered also affected how it was received by young people and their families. Most saw support as helpful when professionals were informal, equitable and non-judgemental. Their formal professional status was less important…The school staff, and often the parents, felt that for the pupils with the most difficulties success was sometimes simply keeping in touch, being willing to keep trying.
Some alternatives to disciplinary exclusion do not always keep young people included in the curriculum or in school. This raises significant questions about the notion of inclusion and about the particular challenge of including young people whose behaviour is challenging to school discipline.

The key to appropriate support for the young people in the study was to take account of their lives, values and choices of the young people and to combine imagination and flexibility with a non-judgemental, human style. Listening to young peoples’ views is really important, yet still something that schools often struggle to find the time for.

“Our study found that there were professional skills associated with providing support for young people which were perceived to be successful in preventing exclusion from school. However, these were not highly technical skills; rather they were often counselling and group-work skills offered in an informal style and not difficult to develop. They were effective when young people were valued as individuals and when support was offered in a systematic approach and was evaluated, not when young people were defined in terms of disorders requiring a particular prescribed response.

The findings suggest the need for a wider discussion of the curriculum and pedagogy of schools, in particular an exploration of the priorities which make listening to individual pupils in difficulty so hard to achieve. When this was done in our case study, school staff felt that they often achieved this only by neglecting other things.

Our study suggests that preventing exclusion and providing support in school were effective when young people were responded to as whole individual human beings, their views valued and their responses to the curriculum taken seriously, and when this was seen as an important aspect of the work of school staff.” (p.89-90)


A project in Belgium working with young people who have been excluded from school is helping to prevent the downward spiral that can leave them with an education below their abilities. Flanders is experimenting by putting into practice four time out projects aimed at young people who, as a last resort, have been threatened with exclusions because of their behaviour.

“Removal from school is no solution to the problems of such young people, and can often cause a downward spiral whereby they end up receiving an education far below their abilities.”

The objectives of these time out projects are to:

- Reintegrate the pupil in the regular school system, preferably in the school he or she attended before, except when another solution is agreed to be in the best interests of the young people.
- Stimulate changes in the school to prevent young people from dropping out.
The time out projects try to meet these objectives through temporary out-of-school tuition and therapeutic guidance over a period ranging from two to twelve weeks. The methods are diverse and are divided into stages: entry, intake, the programme and after care. All of this happens in collaboration with different partners.

An early, limited evaluation of the time-out projects showed that the objectives outlined can be partly realised. Most of the young people did not return to the same class and school – mainly because of being kept back a year, or refusal by the school or the pupil – but they stayed in the regular education system. A change was seen in most cases: young people became more aware of their own actions and were prepared to change their behaviour.

Postlethwaite, K, Haggarty, L Towards the improvement of learning in secondary school: the students’ views, their links to theories of motivation and to issues of under- and over-achievement, Research Papers in Education 17(2) pp. 185 – 209

This paper reports on the views of students in a secondary comprehensive school on what made them want to learn, what made it difficult for them to learn, and what teachers could do to help them learn.

Students spoke of motivation being high when teachers “make the lessons fun” and are themselves enthusiastic about the work.

In general, students wanted variety in the classroom.

They wanted to work at their own pace and to have some say about what and how they learnt. Students wanted teachers to see them as individuals, to know their work well and to know where they had got to in their learning.

Many references were made to the importance of praise and encouragement, students stressing that these enhanced their self confidence.

Many students were critical of those of their peers who disrupted lessons. They expected teachers to “be firm with any student making nasty, mocking, cutting down ‘comments in the classroom’’. They also wanted teachers to tackle students who were “dossing about”.

Many students wanted teachers to be approachable so that they felt able to ask questions and make mistakes without fear of the consequences.

The research also compared under- and over-achieving students. Underachieving students reported more communication with their teachers than over-achievers. “One might expect such additional conversation to lead to improved learning and therefore to move the students from the
under-achieving group. The fact that this had not happened suggests that this additional conversation was not productive. The main idea that this raises for us is that in dealings with under-achieving students, teachers should take care to monitor the effectiveness of their communication with these students (and not be satisfied simply with the amount). This in turn raises questions about how such communication could be made as effective as possible. Maybe the other pointers offered in this paper are relevant again here: communication should be well planned to address good and bad points in the work under discussion; well matched to the individual; respectful of students’ different working methods; supportive of an individual students’ membership of groups within the class; attentive to the development of metacognition; and planned to support the development of effort based attributions.” (p. 204).
# Suggestions for Inclusion in Governors’ Training Video

DC = Discipline Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>“Training Question”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils</td>
<td>Negative attitude brought to DC (previous history).</td>
<td>How can we engage under these circumstances?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young person’s feelings of betrayal when members of staff who they trusted have to give “evidence” against them.</td>
<td>How might staff deal with this?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not able to contribute (“All above my head”).</td>
<td>How can we maximise the contribution of pupils?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No chance to make fresh start – feeling of having built up a reputation that they can’t get rid of.</td>
<td>How can DC’s help “move a situation on” in a positive way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Feels like I’m on trial.</td>
<td>How can we reduce the threat perceived by parents?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They’ve already made up their mind.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needed more preparation and support.</td>
<td>What preparation would be appropriate and who would do this?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling intimidated.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Didn’t know what to expect.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It made things worse.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Who?</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>“Training Question”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It certainly didn’t help us at all. It was very humiliating.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The chance to contribute was made by us not given – had we not been firm enough we don’t think that our views would have been asked for.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We felt that our views had been totally ignored. The Committee was no help at all and in fact made relationships worse than they were.</td>
<td>How can we ensure that parents’ views are adequately represented?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There was a lot of pressure. It was frightening to say anything. We felt that the decision was already made. It was all the bad things about S. – but he’s got good points as well.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It was held not long before he went back. It was all negative – all the bad things about him were said. D. went with me but didn’t say anything. I wondered what effect it had on him listening to all of that.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>More information about rights / the process.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I had no-one to turn to.</td>
<td>How can we ensure that parents / pupils have one person who supports them through the process and who addresses several of the issues above? (pro-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who?</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>“Training Question”</td>
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<td>active key worker / co-ordinator).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governors</td>
<td>Use of language.</td>
<td>How language / jargon can disadvantage pupils / parents.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Duty to think about the whole school as well as the individual pupil before them?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plan for education.</td>
<td>How do Governor’s deal with the three requirements of 10/99?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan to address the pupil’s needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan for re-integration?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head teacher</td>
<td>Need to draw a line to uphold school discipline.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to support staff.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA Representative</td>
<td>Sometimes they come unprepared.</td>
<td>What knowledge and preparation do LEA reps need?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other issues</td>
<td>The setting.</td>
<td>Type of room / seating arrangements / waiting area (corridor / suitable room).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The style</td>
<td>Level of formality.</td>
<td>Eg offer cup of tea?</td>
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</table>

It was suggested that of the following points /quotations could be included in the video:

Parents and pupils were keen to give ideas about how things could be improved.

All parents suggested that an alternative to school should be available right at the outset to the exclusion period.
I think that there should be some alternative education straight away – something for C. to do – someone to work with him – somewhere for him to go.

Many of the parents said that they needed someone to talk to.

It would have been helpful to have had someone to talk to like this discussion today [referring to research interview. This was referred to on several occasions].

Parents strongly felt that there should be ways to stay in touch with school during the exclusion period and in particular for the re-integration to be planned better with their involvement.

It was very upsetting for both of us. I just think there should be some way for the likes of D. to be kept occupied in some way if they are excluded. We felt forgotten by everyone. D. was frightened before he went back. He did not know what to expect. Just someone ringing us would have been helpful.

Concerns were expressed about how some parents who worked would manage to supervise their children during the exclusion.

There were no other problems at home that I needed help with. I do wonder though, how parents would cope if they did not have someone to help them with the supervision needed. I know that D. is old enough to be left on his own but I still felt I needed to have someone look out for him and I’m lucky because my mother and father live close by and they can help out. I just couldn’t stop going to work. Some people might not have the support that I have.

Some parents wanted more information about their rights.

There should be more information about the process – about what rights parents have. Without information I can’t challenge. When we have meetings in school, I think the member of staff should be there – not just the head of year reading from a piece of paper. These things are never one sided – but you never get to really see the other side. E.’s problems have always been with members of staff – not other pupils.

Two parents commented that there was a need for a “clean slate” to give the pupil the best chance possible of re-integrating was referred to.

When S. went back he should have been allowed to start with a clean slate and setting realistic demands of him rather than setting him off on report – he has to be perfect – which he can’t be. One small step out of line and he is dealt with severely. All of this should have been planned better.

We need more support to deal with these issues. We have been very much on our own – uncertain about what to do. We need help to get S. out of the negative spiral he is in. We are afraid that they are going through the procedures to get rid of him. Its difficult to discuss these things with school – although we do have faith in Mr G. who can see positives in S.
Parents queried why the length of the exclusion needed to be so long.

*I don’t understand why it was so long. For someone like J. who needs help with his work and self-esteem it was too long. He should have been made to do more work not less. There should be a Unit that they could go to.*

If education of excluded pupils is addressed by sending work home parents wanted guidance on how best to supervise this work and support their children and consideration to be given as to the best way to get work to and from school.

……….more contact with parents to offer them guidance on how to supervise the work. There should be a better way for work to be sent home and back again – it isn’t J’s brother’s responsibility to do this.

Where pupils are referred to other units concerns were expressed about the distance that some pupils then had to travel from home.

*There should be more local provision – rather than K. having to travel great distances to Castle Green.*

Parents highlighted the need for work to be done with the pupil on the reasons for exclusion during the exclusion period.

*If nothing happens whilst he is excluded how can they expect things to be any different when he goes back – they can only be worse can’t they? What purpose does it serve?*

Concerns about continuity of education were raised on a number of occasions

*There should be some way to ensure that education that is going right is continued Like J. could get GCSE science, and GNVQ computer studies – but both of these have been disrupted and it looks like they won’t happen.*